



The **NUTCRACKER** *A Cast from History!*

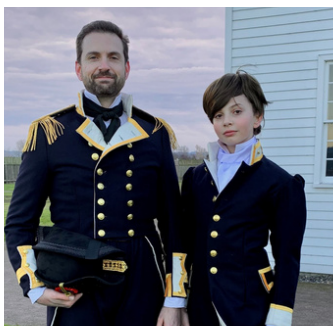


The Douglas Family

Instead of the traditional "Clara," our lead character is named Cecilia. She was the daughter of James and Amelia Douglas. James served as the Chief Trader, and later, Chief Factor, for the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver. Amelia was the daughter of a Hudson's Bay Company officer and a Cree woman. Amelia wears a woven métis sash in our ballet. Women at the fort often wore a hybrid of European and Indigenous styles. Cecilia was born in 1834 and described as "small and dainty and very musical."

Dr. John McLoughlin

Dr. McLoughlin serves as our "Drosselmeyer," bringing magic to our Nutcracker tale. He was the Chief Factor of Fort Vancouver from 1825 to 1845 when it was a Hudson's Bay Company Trading Post. He was well known for his generosity to American settlers who crossed the Oregon Trail. He is also given credit for the planting of the first apple tree in the region which gave a start to the Northwest apple industry.



Lieutenant William Peel

A Royal Navy Lieutenant and the son of a British Prime Minister, he arrived at Fort Vancouver in 1845 aboard the 50-gun-frigate 'HMS America'. The ship arrived at Fort Vancouver that summer to establish a British military presence in the Pacific Northwest at a moment in history when Britain and America were at odds about which nation had possession of the region. In our production, he arrives with 3 navy midshipmen. Boys as young as 14 worked on ships.

Dr. Forbes and Maria Barclay

Dr. Forbes Barclay oversaw the hospital and Trade Shop at Fort Vancouver. He trained as a doctor in Edinburgh, Scotland, and London before coming to the Northwest. Here he met and married Maria Pambrun, who was then 16. Maria was a Métis woman whose father had been a Hudson's Bay Company officer. After her father's tragic death, Maria's mother moved their family, including Maria's younger siblings Harriet and Jean Baptiste to Fort Vancouver.



William and Mary Kaulehelehe

William Kaulehelehe and his wife, Mary, came to Fort Vancouver in 1845 following a request from Chief Factor Dr. John McLoughlin for a Hawaiian to educate and minister to the Hawaiian workers of Fort Vancouver. The Kaulehelehes established a small church inside the fort's stockade, and later lived in the Fort Vancouver Village. They lived there until 1860.



The NUTCRACKER Why Beavers?!

Columbia Dance's Nutcracker Battle Scene features a fight between beavers and fur trappers, as opposed to the traditional mice and soldier skirmish.

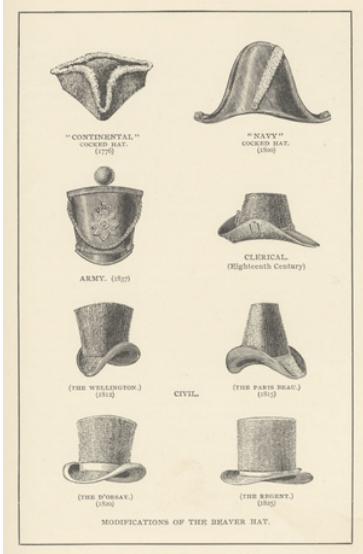
From the late 16th to mid-19th century, beaver top hats were an essential wardrobe item in Europe. They were water resistant, extremely valuable, and denoted an individual's social status. This demand for beaver pelts nearly wiped out the European beaver population by the late 17th century, driving the fur trade to North America.



The profit to be gained from beaver pelts brought people from all over the world to present-day Vancouver, where in the 1840's the English Hudson's Bay Company housed it's pacific headquarters. Luckily for the beavers, Prince Albert, consort to Queen Victoria, popularized the silk top hat in the 1840's and the demand for beaver pelts diminished, saving beavers from the brink of extinction.

Beaver Facts:

- As a keystone species, they shape ecosystems, building dams and creating wetland habitats.
- Beaver dams have been known to survive for 150 years and to be visible from outer space.
- Beavers are the largest North American rodent, second in the world to the capybara.
- A stamp-sized patch of beaver skin has 126,000 hairs (more hairs than an average human has on their head).
- Beavers use their tails as kick stands, rudders, and as an alarm system. A tail slapping water sounds shockingly similar to a gun shot and alerts other beavers of danger.
- Beaver castoreum oil has been used to flavor food, scent perfume, and supposedly cure an array of maladies. While its medicinal properties were overblown, it often contains salicylic acid, the active ingredient in aspirin.



Chief Factor's Dining Room
at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site



Columbia Dance's
Party Scene Set



The
NUTCRACKER
Iridescence in the Moonlight

We were honored to collaborate with representatives from the Chinook Nation, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and the Cowlitz Indian Tribe to find ways to highlight the Indigenous groups who have lived in Vancouver since time immemorial. It was during a conversation with Sam Robinson, vice-chair of the Chinook Nation, that our curiosity was piqued by the story of Ilchee. Ilchee was the daughter of Chief Comcomly. As was typical for a female of this time period, her marriages were arranged with political motivations. She was first married to Duncan McDougal, a Scottish fur trader, and later to Chief Casino. However, what stood out about Ilchee's reputation some 200 years later is that she was remembered not just as a daughter and wife, but as an independent woman leader. She is recorded as being a powerful shaman and referred to as "She who paddles her own canoe" and as the "Moon Woman."

Given that the clock strikes midnight during our Battle Scene, it seemed quite fitting to make our Snow Scene a moonlit one. Most Nutcrackers have a Snow Queen and King. We have instead decided to have a Moon Woman in honor of Ilchee. To determine how to costume the scene we looked for inspiration from the crafts that were traded amongst the tribes. Abalone and mother of pearl were often used in jewelry and in button blankets. We felt that the subtle iridescence of those materials would be absolutely stunning in the moonlight.

Did you notice that the moon appears in the night sky as the Moon Woman enters the stage and transforms into an abalone moon later in the scene? Could you spot the iridescent colors in the dancing, moonlit snowflakes?



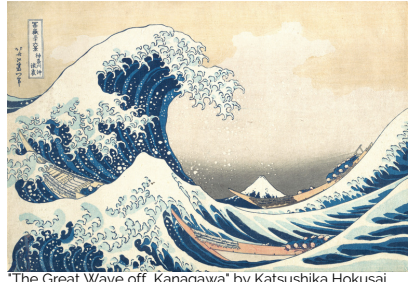


The **NUTCRACKER** The Who's Who of Act 2

The Castaways

Plans for the Hojun-maru and its 14-member crew to travel 400 miles from Nagoya to Tokyo with a cargo of rice and porcelain were destroyed when a typhoon snapped their ship's rudder. At that time, Japan was closed to the outside world and as part of that effort, the construction of ocean faring ships was prohibited.

The crew was at the mercy of the ocean's currents and survived on rice, fish, and rainwater. With no vitamin C, most of the crew succumbed to scurvy. After 14 months adrift at sea, the 3 surviving sailors finally sighted land. However, they did not arrive on the shores of Tokyo, but rather present-day Washington state. News of their arrival reached Dr. McLoughlin who arranged for the men to be brought to Fort Vancouver where they enjoyed the Fort's hospitality for 5 months.



"The Great Wave off Kanagawa" by Katsushika Hokusai



The Voyageur and her Canoe

"Voyageur" means boatman in French. French was one of the dozens of languages spoken in the village outside of Fort Vancouver. Many French-Canadians had followed the fur trade south. For the boatman, the canoe was essential. Did you notice the interesting double tipped paddle shape of the oars featured in our Voyageur Scene and our Battle Scene?

This notched shape was typical of Chinookan oars as it helped with maneuverability in estuaries where they could push off from roots. We had to round ours slightly to ensure safety on stage.

Samen Ishish in a River of Wapato

The wapato plant was a staple part of the diet of many Indigenous groups. To harvest this potato-like plant, Indigenous women would wade into the cold water and loosen the bulbs with their feet. The plant would then float to the surface and be put into the canoe.

Can you spot our bulb loosening foot movement in the wapato dance?

Chinuk Wawa was the primary language of everyday use at Fort Vancouver. "Samen" is Chinuk Wawa for "Salmon." "Ishish" is Chinuk Wawa for "to dance." In our Nutcracker production, audiences get to watch a dancing Salmon struggle to swim upstream through a wapato filled river.



Wapato Plant

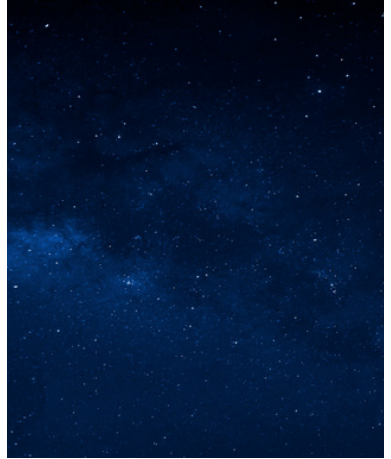




The **NUTCRACKER** *The Who's Who of Act 2*

The Stargazers

The curators at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site piqued our interest in the Hawaiian presence at Fort Vancouver in the 1840's, but it was in a dialogue with Kepulekaneokealoha 'Pete' Fritsch that the Stargazer idea was born. He said "I think the important thing to always remember and celebrate is that the Hawaiians who first came to this area came here not simply as deck hands aboard the ships, but were highly sought after due to their skill of being master navigators of the seas . . . by using only the elements of nature." And thus, we dedicate a piece of music to reading the starry night sky.



The Clerks of the Trading Post

You might notice one of our Act 1 characters reappears in this scene- Dr. Forbes Barclay. The post surgeon not only ministered to the sick and injured, he also oversaw the trade shop. He is joined by a group of clerks. Being a clerk was a desirable, yet demanding job at the fort.

One had to have strong math and handwriting skills as they oversaw an immense array of inventories, bills, exchanges, payments, and correspondence. Having to make 3 copies of each record, they often were up late, scribbling by candlelight. Many clerks hailed from England, but there were also a number of Scottish clerks which inspired us to dress our clerks in the Washington state tartan.

Children of the Oregon Trail

Imagine packing your life into a 6x12 foot covered wagon and embarking on a 2,000 mile journey that would likely take 5 months to complete. The promise of a better life in Oregon inspired hundreds of thousands of American pioneers to emigrate west. The journey was littered with peril- from dysentery and cholera to dangerous river crossings to the constant rush to complete the journey ahead of winter storms- one in ten pioneers did not survive the journey. Those who did, arrived hungry, tired, and lacking supplies.

Many of these settlers arrived at Fort Vancouver where, lucky for them, Chief Factor, Dr. John McLoughlin extended them store credit to the Hudson's Bay Company Trading Post. Watch our children of the Oregon Trail perk up when Dr. McLoughlin gifts them food from the Fort's bountiful garden.



Gary Halvorson, Oregon State Archives



Our tale draws to a close with a bouquet of exquisite dancing Camas Flowers, flora native to Vancouver.

This is followed by a brilliant Plumeria, a flower native to Hawaii. We are reminded, once again, that Vancouver's cultural heritage is diverse and rich!