

Hints for playing the second flute/piccolo part of

*Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker*





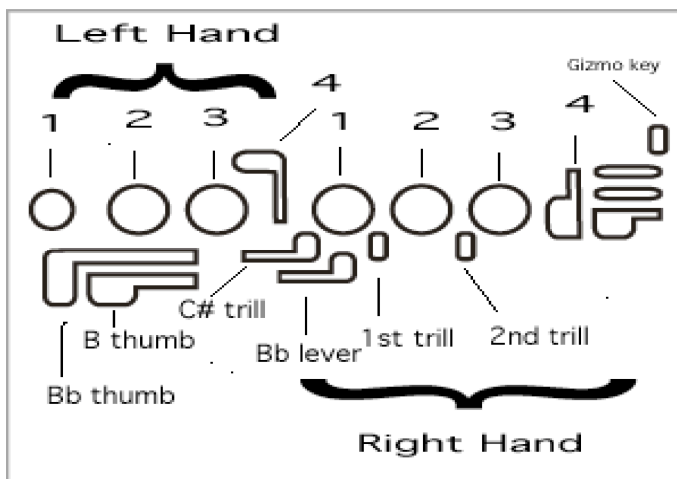
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## INTRODUCTION

Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* is one of the piccolo player's bread and butter works. The following material outlines some performance and fingering suggestions, as well as note errata for the reduced orchestra edition of that piece. When identifying note octaves, I use the flute designations, e.g. I call the C above the staff C3, even though on most piccolos, there is no low C.

Using a piccolo with a C# trill will allow you to play the 2<sup>nd</sup> octave C-D, C#-D, and the F#-G trills much more in tune, and provides a much easier G3-A3 trill.



*Fingering key*

## ACT I TABLEAU I, NO. 1



*E3-F#3 trill fingering*

For that awkward mm. 36 and 69 passage, finger the F#3 using the fingering displayed to the left: Add LH 2 to the fingering for the E3s, and the C# using the C# trill.<sup>1</sup> Mm 115-116 I put the thumb Bb on in the first E3 in 115, and put it on the B2 natural on the final E3 in the following measure.

## No. 2 MARCH

In mm. 51-60 and mm. 74-84, listen for and play off of the downbeat in the strings on beat 3 to be more secure in the 16<sup>th</sup> note off-beat entrances.

## No. 3 PETIT GALOP DES ENFANTS ET ENTRÉE DES PARENTS

For the C#3s in mm. 28, 30, 36, and 38, use the fingering at right.



*Alternative C#3 fingering*

In m. 33, I lift the thumb on the E3 and put it on the low C# key on the following note so you can add the RH index finger to the G3 fingering, outlined below, to play the F#3s. Ditto for m. 40, and for all the F#3s in the following measures through the 3<sup>rd</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> note of m. 48. Use your usual F#3 fingering for the descending scale.



*Alternate F#3 fingering*

Coordinate with your 1<sup>st</sup> flute player where to take breaths in mm. 41-48. I take a breath after the G2 in m. 39 and a big one after the D3 in the following measure. In m. 44 I take a breath in place of the first D3, and thereafter in place of the first D3 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> big beats in the mm. 45-47, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> beat D3 in m. 48 in preparation for that tricky scale passage leading to the downbeat of m. 49. That means, should your first flute crash & burn there, at least *one* of you will cover

the part. That scale, by the way, is chromatic on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> notes, and diatonic on the 5<sup>th</sup>.

## No. 4 SCÈNE DANSANT

If using the transcription where the clarinet takes the 3<sup>rd</sup> flute part, in upbeat to m. 34 through rehearsal letter B, not using the right hand pinkie on the arpeggi makes them easier. In m. 97 make sure the D3 is sharped (it is not in my copy). Though not indicated in the score, play piccolo on mm 203 to the end of the scene. This has the added benefit of avoiding having the picc sit unplayed on your lap between no. 1 and the challenging no. 6. *Watch for a delayed downbeat the last beat of the scene.*

<sup>1</sup> Use the E3-F#3 part of the above as a trill fingering especially in the Mozart D flute concerto 1<sup>st</sup> movement

## No. 5 SCÈNE ET DANSE DU GROSS-VATER

Be sure to take several deep breaths during the entire almost 2 measures before B to oxygenate and be able to play the Tempo 1 passage in one breath. M. 28, lift the RH pinkie on the G1 and put it on the C# key on the downbeat in the following measure to prepare for the C#1. You can also slur to it from the preceding A1 if articulating it is a problem. Do the same in mm. 32 & 33.

It is generally helpful to recognize patterns when playing measures with lots of accidentals. With that in mind, the scale in m. 88 is a harmonic minor scale, and the passage in measure 89 is chromatic through the D2, diatonic to the downbeat of m. 90, then chromatic again.

## No. 6 SCÈNE



*Better in-tune F3-G3 trill*

Listen closely to the bass clarinet in the measures preceding m. 86's solo entrance to give you the subdivisions of the beat. I use both the 1<sup>st</sup> & C# trills for the D2s in that measure. Exhaling on the 1<sup>st</sup> beat of m. 94 will get the air moving before the piano entrance on G3. Use the fingering at left for the F3-G3 16<sup>th</sup> notes in m. 96 (and generally for a better in tune trill).<sup>2</sup>

I divide the scale in mm. 154 and 156 into 8 and 6, and, depending on the tempo, use harmonic fingerings on the A3, B3, and G3.

Make sure you take lots of breaths in mm. 157-159 so you don't need to take any in m. 160 when most of the rest of the orchestra drops out.

## No. 7 SCÈNE

Use the same C#3 fingering in mm. 38, 39, 86, and 87 as you do in no. 3, m. 28. Make sure you are taking deep breaths during the rests from m. 33-45 to oxygenate yourself. M. 37 use the F3-G3 fingering as outlined in No. 6. In addition to breathing deeply as outlined above, take breaths after several of the dotted 18<sup>th</sup> notes mm. 48-49 so you have enough air to make it through the G3-A3 trill in mm. 50-51. It also helps not to play that note too loudly. If it helps you can play mm. 103-104 without the RH pinkie that Michel Debost calls one of the "little devils."

## No. 8 SCÈNE

Be sure to swab out the piccolo during the scene's last measures' rest in preparation for the piano entrances in No. 9

## No. 9 VALSE DES FLOCONS DE NIEGE

It's helpful to exhale through the nose to get the air moving slightly before the piano G3 entrance in m. 4. and use the fingering at right for the C#s in m. 8:

Play mm. 321- the downbeat of 323 without the right



*Sharper C#3*

<sup>2</sup> This is also good on the flute.

hand pinkie. The last note of m. 329 you can finger with the left hand index finger and right hand middle and ring fingers staying down.

## No. 10 SCÈNE

In the opening of Act II, be sure to keep the support up through the 16 (!) repeats of the E scale going to B3, especially for the pitches in the 3rd eighth note. Be sure lift the right hand pinkie to play the final B3s. Play the first four 32nd notes on the first 1/8th note, the next six on the 2nd (from F#2 to D#3), and then the last four as written. This allows you a little more time on the complicated fingerings at the beginning & end, with the more sequential fingerings in the middle. Make sure you start each scale on the beat. If you are ahead or behind, the passages will be much more difficult to play. As Robert Dick says, "most note mistakes are rhythm mistakes first."

## No. 11 SCÈNE

If you have a B foot, there is no reason not to take the opening arpeggi down to low B. The following one, play down to low C#. In mm. 78 and 80 use the C# and first trill keys for the C3-D3 triplets. M. 84 I use harmonic fingerings on beat 2, and so have the LH thumb on the Bb key. In m. 89 I like to use the F3-G3 trill as outlined in No. 6, and trill fingering at right on the 2nd half note since it has a clearer sound:<sup>3</sup>



*E3-F3 trill*

## No. 12 DIVERTISSEMENTS

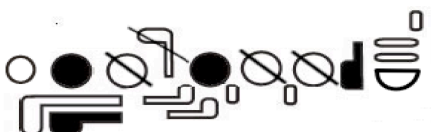
### A) LE CHOCOLAT

A couple measures in advance of the entrance, I like to tongue 1/8th notes to know more exactly where to begin the piccolo entrance in m. 20. M. 22 use the C#3 fingering shown in No. 3. Be sure to put the m.31 downbeat exactly on the beat to facilitate the Eb arpeggio and avoid accenting the last note.

### C) LE THÉ

Probably the most challenging of the variations. In mm. 18 and 22, I use harmonic fingerings from D3 to G3 and think of them as leading to the downbeat as opposed to coming in on the 4th beat.

### F) LA MÈRE GIGOGNE ET LES POLICHINELLES



*G#3-A3 trill*

In mm. 36-52 we split the octaves with the first flute playing 16th notes on the top F#s and the 2nd playing the bottom. Use the trill fingering at left for the A3-G#3 16th notes in the last 7 measures.

<sup>3</sup> This works on the flute, too, and for the E natural to F natural trill put your thumb on the Bb key. Thanks to Andras Adorjan for showing me these.

It also helps to grab several breaths in the previous 5 measures (e.g. after each slur in mm. 145-148) to have enough air play the last 7 measures. I like to begin mm. 149-152 a bit softer in order to have an exciting crescendo in the last measure.

## No. 13 VALSE DES FLEURS



In the upbeat to rehearsal G through m. 214 if your D3s are flat compared to the first violins, use the fingering at right for those notes.

In mm. 322 – 325 and 338 - 341 I use the following fingerings for the triplets: m. 32: hold down the F key throughout the measure; m. 323 use the lever Bb; for the triplet D3s in the following two measures and in mm. 340-349, trill both the C# trill and 1<sup>st</sup> trill key. Grab several breaths in measures leading up to 350 to be sure you have enough air to play through the fermata that is usually taken on the A3 in m. 351. You can grab breaths between the m. 352 quarter notes.

## No. 15 VALSE FINALE

As with the soft entrances discussed above, I find it helpful to get the air moving by blowing air through my nose before the soft entrances like the one at rehearsal letter F. If you have a printed F#3 on the m. 144 downbeat, it is supposed to be a D3.

## APOTHEOSE

Use the fingering at right for the mm. 20 and 28 C3s (actually C2 on the picc) to be sure you're sharp enough: For those interminable F3-G3 trills, you can disguise your breaths by trilling through the downbeats of measures 37, 41, and 45 where there's a big cymbal crash.



*Sharp C3*

## SOME OTHER SPECIAL FINGERINGS

For a piano A2, add the right hand 3 fingers (minus the pinkie).

If you ever need to play a C#4 on the piccolo, add the right hand index finger to the 4 fingers you are using on the left hand.

This is a more in-tune B3 on the flute and good for soft entrances.

