Abstract

Originally created in late 19th Century Russia, *The Nutcracker* has become one of the most widely recognized ballets in the world, and in spite of its Russian origins, no other country seems to value *The Nutcracker* more than America. In America, *The Nutcracker* is a cherished holiday tradition, with millions of people filling the seats of participating theaters every winter. Unfortunately, *The Nutcracker* is historically stereotypical and exclusive. The Act II variations, notably Chinese Tea and Arabian Coffee, often present ill-informed stereotypes of the cultures they are tied to. Additionally, the ballet typically revolves around a young girl from an Anglo European family, thereby excluding alternate ethnicities from the central narrative. Thankfully, choreographers like Mark Morris (*The Hard Nut*, 1991), Donald Byrd (*The Harlem Nutcracker*, 1995), and Christopher Wheeldon (*The Nutcracker*, 2016) have demonstrated that it is possible to alter *The Nutcracker* in ways that both challenge and maintain tradition. Inspired by these artists, I decided to produce my own version of *The Nutcracker*, titled *A 21st Century Nutcracker*, this past fall (2017). In pursuing this project, I had three primary goals: to expand my knowledge and broaden my skillset, to validate my research and demonstrate *The Nutcracker*’s openness to change, and to encourage other dance artists, particularly dance students, to challenge tradition and take risks in their own artistic endeavors. In this work, I explain my creative process, beginning with the preliminary research, followed by the conception of the project, the creation and development of the work, the production aspects, and, finally, the outcome of the project.