

# The short set: baby's first 'Nutcracker'

By --

December 13, 2007

## **THE SHORT SET: BABY'S FIRST 'NUTCRACKER'**

Nipper has had an admittedly stunted childhood. By age 5, he had enjoyed only the first halves of "Peter Pan," "Annie" and "Dr. Doolittle." One day he'll discover there's more to these popular stage musicals, maybe learn a little something about closure, but during his fidgety post-toddler years I had no qualms about bursting into applause as the curtain came down for intermission, gleefully exclaiming, "Wasn't that great?!" and then hurrying both of us to the exit. But he's 6 now, so I decided it was time to test his limits with "The Nutcracker." We went with the Los Angeles Ballet, mounting its well-received "Nutcracker" (pictured) for the second year. Would we make it to intermission without the boredom squirmies? Was there a chance of seeing an actual ending? Between the youngsters in Victorian costumes, flamboyant Uncle Drosselmeyer and a lissome Clara, Nipper was transfixed until intermission. (Full disclosure: A scrumptious \$2 brownie bridged the gap.) Act 2 held new wonderments, including a Mother Ginger perched atop her movable gingerbread house like a cheery Bride of Frankenstein, and fine displays of athletic prowess by the Spanish, Arabian and Russian dancers. When Nipper finally witnessed his first true ending, he applauded like he was related to the Sugarplum Fairy. "I want to see it every year until I'm a skeleton" came his review from the back seat on the drive home. His favorite part? "The fight between the Mouse King and the Nutcracker." His least favorite part: "When it ended." On the car stereo came Emerson Lake & Palmer's overwrought, manic prog-rock version of the Nutcracker theme. Nipper was appalled. "Turn that off!" he ordered. "That's not what Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky wanted us to hear!" Ilyich? Guess the kid is all grown up. **For the Nutcracker mother lode, go to [theguide.latimes.com](http://theguide.latimes.com).**