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Photo: Wide Eyed Studios

## A Sweet Holiday Adventure at Tapcracker

by Courtney Colón

The audience is alive and electric, hitting all the right cues. There's laughter when a cheeky mouse sticks out their tongue, hooting and hollering during a soldier's rhythmic solo, and a standing O at the beginning of the final production number. The audience is totally invested. And how could it not be? The Lady Hoofers' *Tapcracker* enchants. Set against the backdrop of Paris, this refreshing take on *The Nutcracker* follows Clara, played by the joyful Aria McGill, as she journeys to see the Eiffel Tower. Along the way, she encounters the mouse queen and her subjects, tower guards, and all the members of the court at Versailles, who serve Clara treats.

The show opens with dancers outfitted in white cinched coats, red scarves, and berets. They tap across the stage holding hat boxes and walking ridiculously tiny stuffed dogs at the end of comically long leashes. The overture ends in a kick line, all long legs and stratospheric kicks, that sets the tone for crisp technique and high energy performance. Next, a dinner, where Clara receives her Nutcracker. No music here, just the rhythm of tap shoes and the percussion of any and all items on the table. Who needs music when you have the rat-tat-tat of dancing feet and the swish of a whisk dragged along the interior of a bowl? But wait! Here comes a mouse, sly and smirky, to steal some pastries!

Enter the tower guards, in search of those pesky mice. There's marching in formation that is simple but oh-so-satisfying to hear, and a call-and-response section danced with military precision. The solo of the lead guard is rapid-fire, fast feet winging out to the side and back, one leg jumping over the other as it slides under, and ending with a solid toe stand that seems to go on forever.

The younger company dancers play the mice with virtuosity and impeccable comedic timing. Packed with personality and backed by a jazzy soundscore, they dance in a conga line holding one another's tails. When the soldiers catch up to the mice and engage in a matrix-style slo-mo fight scene, the audience howls with laughter.

The second act takes us to Versailles, where Clara is served some coffee, tea, and chocolate alongside a can-can. The can-can in particular delighted, with lead

Meg Sarachan\* channeling Lucille Ball-level physical comedy. At the very beginning of the number, it appears she has forgotten her skirt, and she never truly gains her footing, stumbling through choreography and taking down her fellow dancers as she goes. The show ends with a rousing production number that sees every dancer onstage.

*Tapcracker* has all the right ingredients for a quintessential holiday tradition. Terrific dancing, plenty of laughter, and an imaginative retelling of a classic story should keep the whole family coming again and again.

[Tapcracker](#), The Lady Hoofers Tap Ensemble, Suzanne Roberts Theatre, December 9 & 10, 2023.

\* CORRECTION: We previously stated that Sarah Vogan danced this role. However, in the performance our writer attended, the role was danced by Meg Sarachan.

By Courtney Colón  
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