



December 11, 2009

Must-see magic: 'Nutcrackers' offer 3 visions of holiday classic

By Carol Motsinger I

For the next few weeks, there will be some new rulers of the stage in Asheville: The Mouse King and the Sugar Plum Fairy, the sovereign of sweets, courtesy of the multiple stages of "The Nutcracker."

The classic ballet is a holiday tradition across the globe since its debut in St. Petersburg in 1892, and this year boasts one of the bigger local helpings of the Candy Castle world to date.

"As a classical ballet dancer, you lose count of how many you do it," said Angie Lynn, director of Ballet Conservatory of Asheville. "The music is just so beautiful you never really get tired of ("The Nutcracker")."

Newcomers Ballet Conservatory of Asheville, which opened in October, will be performing "The Nutcracker" Dec. 18 at the Diana Wortham Theatre, and The Asheville Ballet, which has performed the ballet for 37 years, is producing its largest version ever, starting Friday, said Ann Dunn, artistic director of the ballet.

The whimsical story follows a young girl's journey into the Land of Sweets with her Nutcracker Prince on Christmas Eve. She encounters everything from a mouse army to a dancing gingerbread house in the piece from choreographer Marius Petipa and composer Peter Tchaikovsky.

"It's our first year, and we have some fabulous dancers," Lynn said. "We've just been thrilled with our students ... and we will do it again next year and build on it each year."

The dancers from the country of the ballet's birth are also coming to town: Moscow Ballet will present its "Great Russian Nutcracker" at Thomas Wolfe Auditorium Dec. 22.

For The Asheville Ballet version, Dunn added a couple of pieces at the beginning of the second act that she typically has cut. A cast of more than 90 dancers will perform more than 300 roles, she said. All of the dancers will be decked out with elaborate costumes, hand-made in Ukraine especially for Asheville Ballet.

It seems like a lot of options, but don't wait to get your tickets. The Ballet Conservatory of Asheville 7 p.m. Dec. 18 performance has already sold out, Lynn said, so the group added a 4:30 p.m. show that day.

The conservatory's cast of 64 students will be producing a traditional take on the story, Lynn said.

"It's just a holiday classic," she said. "We try to bring that tradition to our 'Nutcracker' and tell the story ... it gets every one in the festive mood."

Additional Facts

IF YOU GO

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The Asheville Ballet , 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 2:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at the Diana Wortham Theatre. Tickets \$20-\$49; call 257-4530. For more, visit www.ashevilleball et.com.

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Ballet Conservatory of Asheville , 4:30 p.m. Dec. 18 at the Diana Wortham Theatre. Tickets \$10; call 257-4530 or visit www.dwtheatre.com.

• **“Great Russian Nutcracker” from Moscow Ballet** , at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 22, at Thomas Wolfe Auditorium. Tickets \$26.50-\$54; visit www.wncap.org (see **Page 3**), www.nutcracker.com or call Ticketmaster at 800-745-3000.
