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Kickoff the holidays with 'The Nutcracker'

By Greg Migliore
STAFF WRITER

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It's the signature holiday performance — "The Nutcracker" — and it's coming to Novi.

The Metropolitan Ballet Academy & Theatre will perform the 19th Century classic at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Saturday at Novi High School. Tickets are \$12.

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The ballet features more than 40 area dancers ages 6-17. Thirteen of the dancers are from Novi. A portion of the gate receipts will be donated to the Novi Youth Assistance program.

It's designed to be family friendly, said Michelle Streicher, administrative director of Metropolitan Ballet.

Performances of "The Nutcracker" can exceed two and a half hours, but this version is streamlined to about an hour and 15 minutes with an intermission.

"It's really geared to families," said Streicher, a 37-year-old mother of two, who juggles her kids, the Metropolitan Ballet and her day job as a law professor at the University of Detroit Mercy.

This is the third year the group, which is based at The Sports Club of Novi, has put on "The Nutcracker." It also performs different ballets in the spring.

Talented dancers

The dancers train several days a week and many play multiple roles in "The Nutcracker."

"It's sort of like you're playing offense, defense and special teams," Streicher said.

While it's a youth performance that's family oriented, Streicher said the group has plenty of future potential. The dancers are classified as intermediate or pre-professional, which is ballet jargon for talented.

Future careers aside, the dancers say they simply enjoy the show, being on stage and getting into the performance.

"It's sort of the flowing movement that I enjoy," said Elyse Brusher, gesturing with her hands to illustrate her point.

The fair-haired 12-year-old has been performing ballet for eight years, and "The Nutcracker" was one of her favorite childhood tales. She said the hours of training are worth it at showtime.

"It takes discipline, but when the performance comes together, it's really rewarding," said Brusher, a Novi middle school student.

Dana Czekaj, a 16-year-old Novi High School junior, plays the shepherdess whose sheep are taken by a wolf. She said her character spends much of the ballet plotting to get the sheep back.

"It's just a really cute, fun little piece," said Czekaj, who has done ballet for three years and also dances and golfs for the Wildcats.

International instructors


The story and the veteran instructors Jay Kim and Victoria Stocki-Kim attracted 12-year-old Katherine Ferriss to "The Nutcracker."

"I just really like the ballet, and the instructors are really nice," said Ferriss, who attends Novi Middle School.

They're nice — and also experienced. The husband-and-wife team have performed in the United States and internationally, including extensive stints in Korea.

The Kims are also prolific teachers and hold ranking positions with the Ford Center for Arts and Learning at the Detroit Opera House.

Greg Migliore is a staff writer for the Novi News. He can be reached at (248) 349-1700, ext. 107 or gmgliore@gannett.com.

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Originally published December 7, 2006

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