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The Dakota Dance Association presents its biennial production of "The Nutcracker" at the YHS/Summit Activities Center theatre Nov. 23-25. RIGHT: The ballet tells of a girl named Clara (McKenna Golden) who dreams of a Nutcracker prince (Jase Likness). ABOVE: Among the many memorable characters in the dream ballet is the Sugar Plum Fairy (Savannah Chambers), who dances in the Kingdom of Sweets.



Nutcracker

The Dakota Dance Association Presents Its Biennial Holiday Offering Of This Classic Ballet



Among the many characters in "The Nutcracker" are the lead angel (above, played by Rachel Frick) in the Snow Country and the Mouse King (right, Tierney Scoblic) in the Kingdom of Sweets. (Kelly Hertz/P&D)



BY DEREK BARTOS
derek.bartos@yankton.net

During Victorian times, a young girl named Clara and her family are hosting a Christmas celebration at their home. Clara is presented with a special gift — a nutcracker prince doll. After falling asleep, she dreams about the doll coming to life in a fantasy filled with candy and adventure.

The story of the "The Nutcracker" is one of imagination and hope, and it will be on full display as the biennial ballet performance returns to Yankton this Thanksgiving weekend.

"It's just a joyous story about the fun things that we look forward to having as part of our holiday season," said first-time director Linda Haar.

The Dakota Dance Association of Yankton will be presenting its biennial production of "The Nutcracker" at the Yankton High School/Summit Activities Center theatre. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 23-24 and 2 p.m. Nov. 24-25.

"You can think of it two ways — as the dessert for your Thanksgiving meal, or a way to kick off your Christmas holiday time," Haar said.

The original "Nutcracker" ballet debuted in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1892. Featuring a classic score by composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky, the ballet has become a time-honored staple of the holiday season.

The local performance features more than 150 local cast members ranging from second graders to adults, as well as various new costumes, props and artistic updates to the classic story.

"It's pretty inspiring to see all these people come together," Haar said. "As an audience member, you get to see not only all the talent, but also the joy the performers bring to it. It is an uplifting thing in the midst of a lot of tragic circumstances in our world today."

Haar is a Yankton College theatre graduate who has directed more than 80 shows, primarily at Bon Homme High School and Lewis and Clark Theatre Company. The new "Nutcracker" director said she has enjoyed the opportunity to join the production, especially since it has given her the chance to reunite with the show's choreographer, Dorota Dannenbring. Haar and Dannenbring worked together previously at the Lewis and Clark Theatre Company more than 20 years ago.

"It's just a pleasure to work with Dorota," Haar said. "It's been a lot of years since we've worked together, but I so enjoy working with her because she is a consummate professional. It's pretty exceptional to get to work with someone of her caliber."

Dannenbring is a graduate of the Con-



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More than 150 people have been cast in the Dakota Dance Association's production of "The Nutcracker," directed by Linda Haar and choreographed by Dorota Dannenbring. Among the many small groups that comprise this ballet are Garland Candy dancers (above) and the Chinese Tea dancers (below), both of whom inhabit the Kingdom of Sweets.



servatory of Dance in Warsaw, Poland. She has been a dance instructor in Yankton for 23 years, including choreographer for "The Nutcracker" for the past 18 years.

Thanks to her experience with the show, Dannenbring said she has been able to add several layers of choreography to the performance over the years. This has helped with the Dakota Dance Association's goal of improving "The Nutcracker" ballet each time it is performed, she said.

"We are presenting double levels of different groups overlapping and floating and moving and changing," she said. "With beautiful lights and costumes and everything else that comes with it, this production just becomes more and more entertaining."

Dannenbring said the dancers have been working hard on the performance, practicing seven days a week for the past few months. That effort has paid off, she said.

"We can just put on our costumes and perform tomorrow," she said. "We are so ready, and we are so excited."

Tickets can be purchased at the JCPenney entrance to the Yankton Mall. The booth is staffed 6-8:30 p.m. weekdays and 1-4:30 p.m. weekends. The mall is closed Thanksgiving Day, and tickets go on sale

again from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday, Nov. 23. Tickets are also available at the door prior to each performance.

If you are unable to purchase tickets during these times, call LuAnn Kennedy at 664-4747 and leave a message, or write to the Dakota Dance Assoc., P.O. Box 264, Yankton, SD 57078. All seats are reserved.

"I think it's a wonderfully rich family experience that young and old and men and women will enjoy," Haar said. "And I encourage anyone that has not been to a ballet to come check out 'The Nutcracker,' because I think they would be very richly rewarded."

THE CAST

CLARA — McKenna Golden (performs Saturday 7:30 p.m. and Sunday 2 p.m.) and Mariah LaCroix (performs Friday 7:30 p.m. and Saturday 2 p.m.)
SUGAR PLUM FAIRY — Savannah Chambers
NUTCRACKER PRINCE — Jase Likness
SNOW CRYSTAL — Jessica Winterringer
LEAD ANGEL — Rachel Frick
CLOWN DOLL — Sarah Pearson
MOUSE KING — Tierney Scoblic
RUSSIAN LEAD — Shelby Mastilir
ARABIAN MEN — Connor Chambers, John Dannenbring
DEW DROP — Frae Binder
SNOW QUEEN — Cassie Pospishil
WINTER FAIRY — Elizabeth Pearson

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