

Ballet Rogue presents 'The Nutcracker'

The dance company's 23rd annual holiday show is this weekend



Heather Jackson, the Snow Queen, and Scott Trumbo dance the Snow pas de deux in Ballet Rogue's 2008 production of "The Nutcracker." Photo by Beyond Images

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By [Teresa Thomas](#)
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Movement, color, emotion and excitement intertwine to form Ballet Rogue's 23rd annual performance of "The Nutcracker." This year's performance features new costumes, choreography, dancers and aerialists, said Diane Hyrst, Ballet Rogue's artistic director and choreographer.

The ballet is based on "The Nutcracker and the Mouse Kings," written by E.T.A. Hoffman in 1816. It was then transformed into a ballet nearly 80 years later by Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and choreographer Marius Petipa. The story surrounds young Clara's nutcracker doll which was broken by her jealous brother, Fritz. The story evolves from a holiday Victorian setting into a magical realm where snowflakes and fairies dance and the nutcracker fights life-size mice.

What: "The Nutcracker"

When: 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 18; 2:30 and 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 19; and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 20

Where: Ginger Rogers Craterian Theater

Tickets: \$18 for Friday's show; \$27, \$25 and \$22 for all Saturday and Sunday shows.

Call: 779-3000

Ballet Rogue first performed the show in 1987. The late Eric Hyrst initiated all of the original choreographies. Each year Diane Hyrst has made subtle changes to the choreography, but Eric's original choreography for Act 1 remains the same.

"I was able to work more this year on the presentation and technique and the technical aspects of the choreography," Hyrst said.

Hyrst, who has been producing the performance since 1996, will retire this year leaving "The Nutcracker" to a new producer who will be announced in the new year.

"I feel really positive about it," she said. "You know 30 years (with Ballet Rogue) is a long time, and I think I've done wonders and I think I've done a great service to the community by sticking to doing the ballet in the park and 'The Nutcracker.' I would like to continue being involved in dance but not be so busy with it."

Preparations for the each performance take nearly a year, and cost about \$25,000.

"The moment the curtain comes down the next year begins," Hyrst said.

This year, 70 local dancers, age 7 to 77, and six additional guest artists comprise the 2009 Nutcracker cast. In September, the dancers began rehearsing for the show and began fittings for new costumes prepared by Nanci Eledge.

The ladies and children will be dressed in Victorian garb while the men will wear tuxedos, Hyrst said.

"I tell the dancers that not everybody that comes to the ballet loves the ballet ... but when they leave they have to love the ballet," Hyrst said.

Six guest artists will share the stage this year with Ballet Rogue's dancers. Portland's BodyVox dancers Melissa Framiglio as the Sugarplum Fairy, and Scott Trumbo as her cavalier will dance the Sugarplum pas de deux. Hannah Bontrager, executive director of Ballet Fantastique, will perform as the Snow Queen, and Russell Capps of Washington State Ballet will perform as her cavalier, in the Snow pas de deux. Also of Ballet Fantastique, Leanne Mizzoni will dance in Spanish, and Southern Oregon University's Nikolas Horaites will play the soldier in the first party scene.

"It's great for our local dancers to be on stage with and warm up with these mature dancers," Hyrst said. "It's an enlightenment and a learning experience."

This year returning company veteran dancers include Sarah Avery-Meyers, who has performed "The Nutcracker" for 10 years; Laura Eledge, eight years; and Kayla Garrett, 10 years. Junior company dancers who have performed for about seven years include Emma Dauterman, Caroline Eledge, John Fiore, Baylee Toney and Jahna Thompson.

Six-year veteran Madison Hogan will perform as Clara.

In honor of Hyrst's last year producing the show, her family decided to join the cast including her husband Michael Moylan, son Iansun Hyrst, daughter-in-law Jennifer Hyrst, 16-year-old grandson Brenden Hyrst (as the nutcracker, the Russian bear and the China man), 8-year-old grandson Davin Hyrst (as Fritz) 7-year-old granddaughter Hayley Hyrst (part of the party scene) and 14-year-old Fox Anthony Hyrst (as a stage hand).

While Ballet Rogue and the Hyrst family will command the stage, Le Cirque Centre aerialists will be dancing in the air above. Aerialists will perform as mice in the growing-tree scene and as snowflakes in the snow scene as well as in the apotheosis. The aerialists will demonstrate a nearly weightless grace as they spin, twist, balance and maneuver through the air on aerial fabric and hoops.

"They will bring a fresh element and an element of surprise ... and make it unforgettable for the audience and memorable for my last production," Hyrst said.

Tickets are \$18 for all seats Friday evening; \$27, \$25 and \$22 for all Saturday and Sunday shows.