

‘Nutcracker’ leaps onto Ventura County stages



Credit: Chuck Kirman

CHUCK KIRMAN/THE STAR Ballet student Sophia Parker holds the Nutcracker as she rehearses for the upcoming performances of “The Nutcracker.” The rehearsal is at the Ballet Academy Ventura.

By Amy Bentley

Yesterday 12:15 p.m.



Credit: Chuck Kirman

Choreographer Marina Fliagina works with ballet student Alexandra Roth for upcoming performances of “The Nutcracker.”



Credit: Chuck Kirman

Executive director Kathleen Noblin holds the Nutcracker at a rehearsal for upcoming performances of “The Nutcracker.” The rehearsal is at the Ballet Academy Ventura.



Credit: Chuck Kirman

A ballet student waits to perform at "The Nutcracker" rehearsal at the Ballet Academy Ventura.



Credit: Chuck Kirman

CHUCK KIRMAN/THE STAR A prop is used at "The Nutcracker" rehearsal at the Ballet Academy Ventura.

When the Ventura County Ballet's performances of "The Nutcracker" debut this season, top student dancer Alexandra Roth, of Oxnard, will be on stage dancing not one but two challenging pre-professional roles — the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Dew Drop Fairy.

Roth is a Ballet Academy Ventura "2015 Dancer of the Year," along with Jazmine Quezada, 15, of Oxnard, who will dance the role of the Snow Queen when the Ventura County Ballet's

"Nutcracker" comes to stages in Oxnard and Ventura this year. Roth has been dancing ballet since she was 3 years old, but taking on two roles in a major ballet requires a higher level of skill and concentration.

"It's always hard to learn two different things. It's a challenge," said the Rio Mesa High School senior who hopes to study dance and forensic science in college next year.

Roth has danced in the Ventura County Ballet's "Nutcracker" for over 10 years in a variety of roles. She danced the Sugar Plum Fairy part last year but has never been the Dew Drop Fairy in the "Nutcracker" shows. She began rehearsing right after auditioning for the roles in September.

"I like being able to perform and go into different characters and see what I can do," said Roth, who also is in the advance dance class and club at her school and dances year-round with school and the local ballet company. She enjoys dancing other styles too, including hip-hop, contemporary, tap, jazz and lyrical, and she performs in two shows her school puts on each year, one in the winter and one in the spring.

The Ventura County Ballet is one of several area ballet companies staging "The Nutcracker" this season at theaters in Ventura, Oxnard and Thousand Oaks. The companies are hosting matinee and evening performances, featuring Peter Tchaikovsky's beloved musical score.

International dance professional Aaron Smyth from Australia joins the Ventura County Ballet in the role of Nutcracker Prince in Ventura County Ballet's 17th annual "Nutcracker" production at the Oxnard Performing Arts Center on Saturday at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Smyth has danced with the Royal Ballet in London and the Joffrey Ballet in Chicago.

Roth said she's danced with Smyth previously with her company as he's been a guest dancer here in the past, and she's excited he is returning again this year for the Oxnard performances.

"I love watching amazing professionals dance. It just inspires me so much more," she said.

In addition, there will be four other Ventura County Ballet performances at the Ventura College Performing Arts Center featuring different guest dancers, on Dec. 4 at 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 5 at

2 and 7 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 6 at 2 p.m. All seven performances in Oxnard and Ventura will be accompanied by live music from the 52-piece Ventura College Symphony Orchestra.

Student dancer Natalie Burkhart, 13, of Ventura, will dance the role of Clara at the Oxnard performances and Sophia Parker, 13, of Ventura, will dance the role of Clara at the Ventura performances.

"We are thrilled to have Aaron back dancing with us for his fifth season. It's a joy to watch our pre-professionals dance with such a fine young man and to have him serve as mentor to so many them," said Ventura County Ballet Executive Director Kathleen Noblin.

Information and tickets: Call 648-2080 or visit www.venturacountyballet.com.

A Listing Of 'Nutcracker' Performances

Ballet for the holidays

Conejo Civic Ballet Company

Who: The Conejo Valley's oldest established dance company presents its own original choreographed "Nutcracker."

What: Each year this company's "Nutcracker" is different as the choreographer tries new ideas.

When: Dec. 13 at a 2:30 p.m. matinee.

Where: Fred Kavli Theatre at the Civil Arts Plaza in Thousand Oaks, 2100 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.

Info and tickets: Visit www.civicartsplaza.com/nutcracker-conejo-civic-ballet. Tickets are \$22-\$36.

Footworks Youth Ballet

Who: Footworks Youth Ballet presents two performances of "The Nutcracker" with The Footworks Community Orchestra and singers from the Carpe Diem Chorus.

What: Footwork's 12th annual performance includes a cast of 70 children and teens, with student dancers having the opportunity to dance the main roles. A free family educational lecture and

storytime will begin one hour before performance time, making these performances a unique educational opportunity.

When: Shows are Dec. 12 and Dec. 13 at 2 p.m.

Where: The Oxnard Performing Arts Center, 800 Hobson Way.

Extra: Footworks Youth Ballet, a nonprofit ballet company, also offers free to low-cost outreach performances for students, with the cost on a sliding scale up to \$5 per ticket. This year's outreach performance is Dec. 11 at 10 a.m. for Act 1 and 11:30 a.m. for Act 2.

Info and tickets: Call 486-2424, visit www.footworksyouthballet.org or email outreach@footworksyouthballet.org. Tickets are \$16-\$26.

Moorpark Civic Ballet

Who: The Moorpark Civic Ballet Company.

What: The performance features lavish costumes, beautiful choreography and professional guest artists plus over 85 dancers.

When: Dec. 19 at 1:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Where: Scherr Forum Theatre at the Civic Arts Plaza, 2100 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.

Extra: As an added bonus, young "Nutcracker" fans can meet Clara at a special Nutcracker Luncheon for children that takes place at 11 a.m. on Dec. 6 at the Moorpark Country Club.

Info and tickets: For the lunch, purchase tickets at 650 Flinn Ave., Suite 6 in Moorpark, visit www.moorparkballet.com or call 529-1958. Tickets are \$20. For the ballet, visit www.civicartsplaza.com/nutcracker-moorpark-civic-ballet. Tickets are \$25-\$30.

Pacific Festival Ballet

Who: Tiler Peck and Gonzalo Garcia, principal dancers with the New York City Ballet, will bring their professional skills by joining these productions that also features opulent sets and costumes and a cast of 200 dancers. Members of the Kalinin Russian Dance Troupe are other guest dancers participating this year.

What: Snow will fall on the audiences at the "Nutcracker" performances of the Pacific Festival Ballet, semiprofessional resident ballet company, which presents its 22nd annual "Nutcracker."

When: Dec. 19 and 20. Show times both days are 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Where: The Fred Kavli Theatre at the Civic Arts Plaza in Thousand Oaks, 2100 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.

Info and tickets: Call 449-2590 or visit www.pacfestballet.org or www.civicartsplaza.com/the-nutcracker-pacific-festival-ballet. Tickets are \$28-\$44.

Ventura County Ballet

Who: Ventura County Ballet's "The Nutcracker," featuring student dancer Alexandra Roth, of Oxnard, dancing two challenging roles. International dance professional Aaron Smyth from Australia joins the Ventura County Ballet in the role of Nutcracker Prince in November shows.

What: 17th annual "The Nutcracker." All seven performances will be accompanied by live music from the 52-piece Ventura College Symphony Orchestra.

November performances: Saturday at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Where: Oxnard Performing Arts, Center 800 Hobson Way.

December performances: Dec. 4 at 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 5 at 2 and 7 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 6 at 2 p.m.

Where: Ventura College Performing Arts Center, 4700 Loma Vista Road.

Info and tickets: Call 648-2080 or visit www.venturacountyballet.com. Tickets are \$14-\$40 in Oxnard and \$20-40 at Ventura College.

Amy Bentley, Special to The Star

<http://www.vcstar.com/topstories/nutcracker-leaps-onto-ventura-county-stages-244c0701-2d43-7299-e053-0100007fc69e-351842361.html>