

‘Don Quixote’ ballet in Oxnard has a touch of Bolshoi



RICHARD QUINN/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Lead choreographer Marina Fliagina (front, left) speaks to dancers during a rehearsal for the Ventura County Ballet Company's presentation of "Don Quixote." The dancers are wearing costumes created for the Imperial Bolshoi Theatre of Russia.

By Anne Kallas, Special to The Star

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The Ventura County Ballet Company's production of "Don Quixote" on Sunday in Oxnard will have a classic Russian accent, thanks to costumes and backdrops created for the esteemed Imperial Bolshoi Theatre of Russia.

"Everybody likes the classics, and we're so thrilled that we're able to make them happy. There's something magical about the classical music, the Bolshoi sets and the costumes," lead choreographer Marina Fliagina said between shouting instructions to the dancers during a recent rehearsal. "We don't get the crazy energy from audiences in response to ultra-modern productions. But with 'Don Quixote,' based on Cervantes, we make magic."

"Don Quixote," which was introduced as a ballet in 1740 in Vienna, comes from the Miguel de Cervantes novel that was published in 1605 in Spain.

IF YOU GO

What: Ventura County Ballet's "Don Quixote of La Mancha"

When: 2 p.m. Sunday

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

Of note: The production features 11 professionals as well as Ventura County Star Publisher Shanna Cannon in the role of the Duchess and 15-year-old Olivia Miller, of Ventura, in the role of the Street Dancer.

Information: 323-6620 or go online to www.venturacountyballet.com.

Ventura County Ballet founder Kathleen Noblin said the costumes and theatrical backdrops being used in Sunday's production were created by Russian artist Valery Leventhal in the 1980s and 1990s. They were purchased by a friend, Sayat Asatryan, who was a principal ballet dancer for the Moscow Kremlin Ballet before settling on the California coast.

Asatryan put the costumes and sets in storage with Santa Barbara's State Street Ballet. The costumes reflect the different cultures depicted in the ballet, including Spanish, French, Russian and Gypsy.

Now, Ventura County Ballet is renting the costumes and sets from the State Street Ballet — and incorporating some of their dancers, a collaboration that Noblin said is common among small ballet companies.

Noblin said it costs \$120,000 to put on an elaborate production like this one. The decision of which ballet to produce each spring tends to boil down to logistics and economics.

"We decide which ballets are good for the girls and which professionals can come help out. Then we make sure we can get costumes and drops," Noblin said. "Then we narrow it down to one or two possibilities and bring them before the (Ventura County Ballet) board and weigh the pros and cons."

About 60 dancers will take part in Sunday's production, 11 of them professionals from State Street Ballet dancing the principal roles. The professionals also teach the younger members of the Ballet Academy Ventura, the school of the Ventura County Ballet Company.

Emma Armstrong, whose daughter Jane is a student at the academy, said such arrangements offer the younger dancers a deeper understanding of the art of dance.

"My daughter is inspired by the mentors, one of which is her dear friend," said Armstrong, who is on the ballet company board. "The history of the ballet helps young people flourish, and they learn about Don Quixote and how he loved his dreams."

The music and choreography in Sunday's performance will be based on the classical Bolshoi production.



RICHARD QUINN/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Jazmine Quezada strikes a pose on a hand-painted piece of scenery that will form part of the proscenium for the Ventura County Ballet Company's production of "Don Quixote." Quezada is dancing the role of Cupid.



RICHARD QUINN/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Alyssia Troutman (left) and Sierra Myers rehearse for the Ventura County Ballet Company's production of "Don Quixote." The girls are dancing the roles of gypsies. Their costumes were created for the Imperial Bolshoi Theatre of Russia.



RICHARD QUINN/SPECIAL TO THE STAR The name of a Russian ballet dancer is sewn into one of the costumes being used in the Ventura County Ballet Company's production of "Don Quixote." The company is using costumes originally designed for the Imperial Bolshoi Theatre of Russia.



RICHARD QUINN/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Julia Fickenscher (from left) gets help with her costume from Juliana Jacobson, who gets help with her costume from costumer Bridget Goleta during a rehearsal for the Ventura County Ballet Company's presentation of "Don Quixote." The girls are playing dryads in the production. The costumes were originally designed for the Imperial Bolshoi Theatre of Russia.

<http://www.vcstar.com/news/local/oxnard/don-quixote-ballet-in-oxnard-has-a-touch-of-bolshoi-2f718c1a-475d-094a-e053-0100007fcf7f-375441191.html>