

Dreams Can Come True

Teens get their big break with the ballet

December 16, 2015, 12:00 am

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SANTA FE
REPORTER



Technical excellence, some serious acting skills, dedication and a considerable amount of stamina: That's what it takes to dance in the Aspen Santa Fe Ballet Co.'s annual production of *The Nutcracker*, and not just for the professional company members.

Every Saturday for the past four months, the children and teenagers who dance alongside the professionals have been rehearsing tirelessly to hone their craft before their big moment arrives, when they take the stage at the Lensic Performing Arts Center.

"You have to think about being sharp and making sure that you're doing it well," 15-year-old Grace Alexander says. "If you're not being sharp about it, it's not going to look the way you want it to."

Alexander, who shares the role of Marionette with 14-year-old Indiana Warrior, says that although the acting involved comes naturally to her, the combination of acting and staying sharp in her technique is much more difficult.

Although playing a marionette doll has its challenges, both girls light up with enthusiasm when describing their experience dancing the part.

“It’s kind of like one of your dreams. You want Clara, you want the doll, you want Sugarplum,” Warrior says. “I love performing. It’s so much fun to go out there and play a character. The preparation and the time that goes into it is really, what you put in is equivalent to what comes out in the end.”

Getting to perform one of their dream roles isn’t the only reward for all of their hard work; they also get to interact with the company members, both on- and offstage. Alexander and Warrior, both of whom have aspirations to continue their dancing careers in the professional arena, are extremely honored by this opportunity, if not a bit starstruck.

“It’s kind of like a fairy tale because I’ve always looked up to them, and then I was right there next to them onstage,” Alexander says.

In this production, which includes flamenco dancing, aerialists and a Chinese sword dance to boot, it is the infectious energy of the younger cast members like Alexander and Warrior that truly brings this beloved holiday classic to life.

The Nutcracker

2, 7:30 pm Saturday, Dec. 19,
1,5 pm Sunday Dec. 20 \$25-\$72
Lentic Performing Arts Center,
211 W San Francisco St.
988-1234

- See more at: <http://www.sfreporter.com/santafe/article-11350-dreams-can-come-true.html#sthash.Mw6qdvol.dpuf>