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Live 'Nutcracker' ballet returns to the Orinda stage

By Sora O'Doherty



The Orinda Ballet Academy & company will return live to the Orinda library auditorium stage Dec. 10 through 12 to perform Pyotr Tchaikovsky's classic ballet, "The Nutcracker." Evening performances of "A Sweet Dream Nutcracker" will be on Friday and Saturday at 6:30 p.m., with matinee performances on Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. Local students will be joined by professional guest artists Vinnie Jones and Maurice Monge.

Artistic Director Patricia Tomlinson is a graduate of Saint Mary's College. She went on to study at the NYC School of American Ballet, training for five years with George Balanchine and Alexandra Danilova. After that, she danced as a soloist for over 17 years, first with the Houston Ballet, then the Pennsylvania Ballet, then coming to California to dance with the Diablo Ballet.

Second Act Land of the Sweets Photo Jorge Gomez

After retirement, Tomlinson started the school in Orinda. The school, located in the Orinda Community Center, is

currently in its 13th season. "The school has had some really nice dancers through the years, including a student who danced with Atlanta Ballet and is now with the Nevada Dance Theater, a professional ballet company," Tomlinson says. "Some students went off to dance colleges, either (with a) major or minor in dance."

In addition to performing a full-length "Nutcracker" in two acts, the academy also presents a story ballet annually in the spring, such as "Swan Lake," "Sleeping Beauty," "The Firebird," "Peter Pan," or "Cinderella." Students from age 3 to 18 dance with guest artists. Classes at the academy run year-round, with sessions in the fall, winter/spring and summer. During the pandemic, Tomlinson started virtual classes. Many of her students, she says, got ballet barres at home; some got special dance flooring. "There were lots of challenges, but everyone stayed super positive." Tomlinson teaches the majority of the classical ballet classes. She employs another teacher to focus on contemporary dance.

In "The Nutcracker," a young girl, Clara, is given a special magical Nutcracker Doll from by her uncle Drosselmeyer, who performs magic for her family and friends. That evening Clara looks for her Nutcracker Doll under the Christmas tree. She finds the doll has grown life-size as well as the toy soldiers and mice. There is a battle scene. A terrible Mouse Queen tries to attack the Nutcracker. Clara throws her shoe at the Mouse Queen. The Mouse Queen breaks and the magic spell placed on the Nutcracker Doll is broken. He returns to his true self, the Nutcracker Prince. In thanks for Clara's bravery, the Prince takes Clara on a wonderful adventure, to the Land of Sweets, where he is from. They pass through an Enchanted Winter forest where the Snow Queen and her snow-maidens dance for Clara and the Prince. Once they arrive at the Land of the Sweets, the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Sweets greet Clara and the Prince. They celebrate the Prince's return with joyous dancing.

Tickets are available in advance or at the door. Advance tickets for children 2-12 are \$22 and \$25 for adults. At the door, tickets will be \$25 for children and adults. Seating is general seating.

INFO & TICKET LINKS HERE www.orindaballetacademy.com/2021-nutcracker--ticket-information.html

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