

'Nutcracker' history goes on the Web

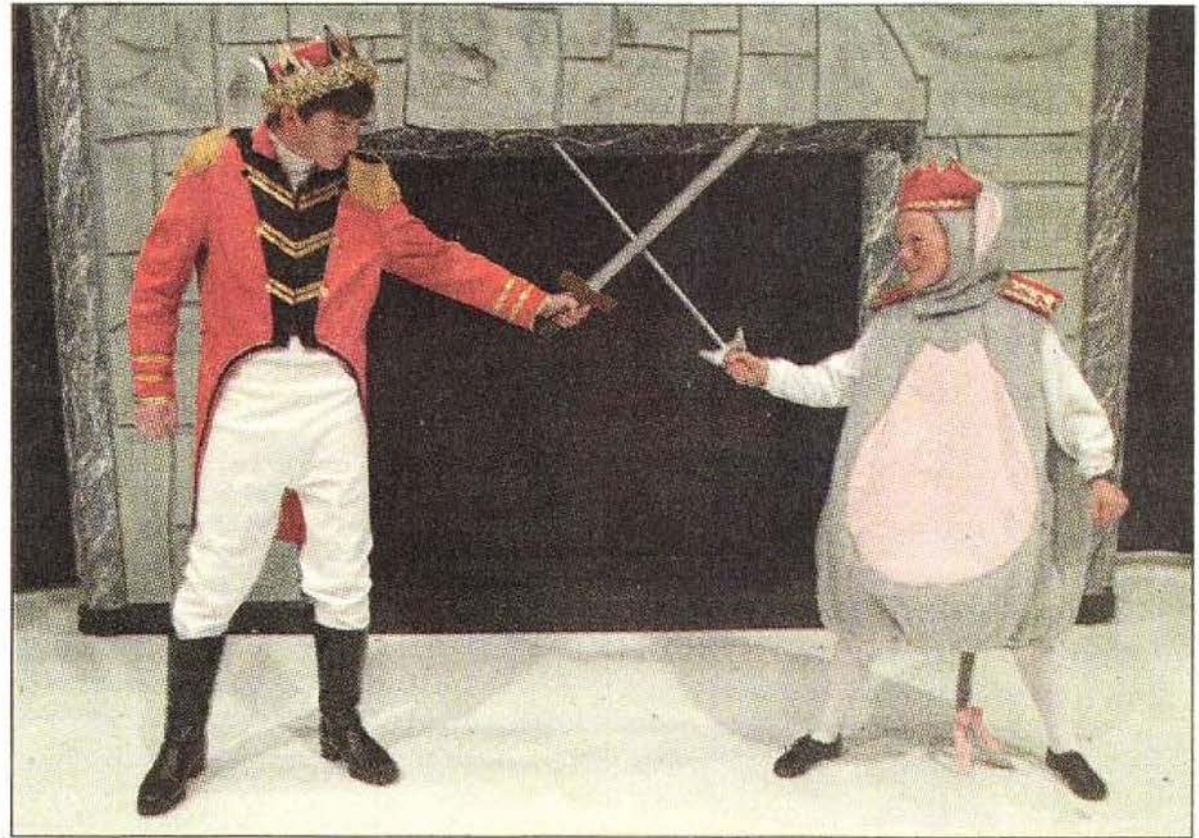
By Jeff Hudson

Enterprise staff writer

The most interesting new development in the 26-year tradition of the "Davis Children's Nutcracker" isn't happening at the Veterans' Memorial Center.

It's happening online, where a virtual history of the popular holiday production that stars 250 Davis children is being assembled by Seth Duffy, who is both an information specialist with the city of Davis and stage manager of this year's "Nutcracker."

Duffy has created a Web site — www.cityofdavis.org/pcs/nutcracker/ — that features nearly 1,500 photos dating back to the first "Children's Nutcracker" in 1977. Also included on the site are copies of programs, newspaper articles about the



Greg Rihl/Enterprise photo

EN GARDE! The Nutcracker Prince (Harry Green) does battle with the Mouse Queen (Joyce Pexton) in a scene from the popular holiday production of the "Davis Children's Nutcracker."

show, and (in some years) streaming video.

"We're still adding to it," Duffy said. "I've got another box of photos, and whenever I have time I scan them and post them to the Web site."

Duffy, incidentally, was a per-

former in the show himself from 1983 to 1985. "I was a Russian twice, and a Clown," he said.

Meantime, at the Veterans' Memorial Center, this year's show is taking shape. There are

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about 250 kids in the cast, ranging in age from 6 to 12. Kids graduate from performers to behind-the-scenes volunteers at age 13, and can serve as paid staff from age 14 into their 20s, creating a continuum of experience.

New to the show is Madison Graft, 6. "I'm a Snowflake," Madi explained. "And I went to the snow at Lake Tahoe last week."

Janine Hopmans, 17, is a staffer working with the Snowflakes.

"This is my third year as a leader," she said. "It's fun for the Snowflakes, because they get to float around the Forest Fairy — she's pretty."

Kathleen Tyson, 8, played a Mouse last year. This year, she's a Troll. "I get to do the troll dance and the troll walk, and wear a big troll head," she said.

Tom Sprankling, 17, is a leader with the Gnomes and Trolls. "You get them to put on a blue shirt, a red hat and a brown beard, and then they're practically set," he explained. (Eleven years ago, Sprankling played a Little Party Guest in his "Nutcracker" debut.)

Matthew Karoly, 6, is making his debut this year as a Mouse. "I carry a sword and fight with the Soldiers," he explained.

Sitting next to Matthew was John Ryan Gomez, 6. "I play Pipsqueak the Mouse, and I get to fight the Soldiers, too," John said. His older brother, James, is also in the show this year — "he's an Arabian."

Meanwhile, "Nutcracker" mom Laura Anderson was in the lobby, keeping tabs on her 20-month-old daughter Molly, who wore a broad smile as she toddled up and down the ramps leading into the theater.

"I've got two sons in the show — Connor, age 8, and Logan, age 6," Anderson explained. "This is their first chance to do something on stage. So we've invited everyone in the family to come."

"My sons are playing Soldiers, so they'll be fighting the Mice. But their swords can't touch!"

Leads in this year's show are Emily Dimond (Clara), Ashley Gohring (Grandmother), Caroline Gohring (Nanny), Harry Greer (Nutcracker Prince), Dard Hunter (Grandfather) and Kian Kelsh (Gnome King).

Other leads are Savannah Kopp (Mother), Joyce Pexton (Mouse Queen), Ariel Pytel (Narrator), Tyler Raabe (Fritz), Karl Schmiegel (Drosselmeyer), Emily Taylor (Sugar Plum Fairy), and Anna Wilen (Forest Fairy).

Performances are at the Veterans' Memorial Theater, 203 E. 14th St., on Friday at 7 p.m., a dress rehearsal; Saturday at 7 p.m.; Sunday at 2 and 7 p.m., Monday at 7 p.m. and Tuesday at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$5.50 for the dress rehearsal and \$7.50 for regular performances. Tickets can be purchased at the Parks and Community Services Office in City Hall, 23 Russell Blvd.

— Reach Jeff Hudson at jhudson@davisenterprise.net



Greg Rihl/Enterprise photo

ALL SMILES: Among the performers in the "Davis Children's Nutcracker" are, from left, Emily Taylor as the Sugar Plum Fairy, Emily Dimond as Clara and

Anna Wilen as the Forest Fairy. The annual holiday production opens Friday with a dress rehearsal and continues through Tuesday.