

enterprise

Arts Sacramento Theatre Company presents Mexican nativity play



FRED GLADDIS/ENTERPRISE PHOTO

Linnea Ransom, a sophomore at Davis High School, taps each Snowflake on the shoulder to prompt her to twirl around as the first- and second-graders rehearse their routine Thursday for the 2008 version of the "Davis Children's Nutcracker."

Local tradition

What: "Davis Children's Nutcracker," a city-sponsored holiday show featuring 250 local children ages 6-12

When: 7 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday; and 2 and 6 p.m. Sunday

Where: Veterans' Memorial Theatre, 203 E. 14th St.

Tickets: Alas, they're all sold out!

Info: City of Davis Community Services Department, (530) 757-5626 or <http://www.cityofdavis.org>

It's time to go 'Nuts'

High schoolers patiently teach holiday dancers

By Devin Kelly

ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

In a room at the Veterans' Memorial Center, a line of 13 giggling little girls in colorful school-day outfits twirl in place. Some wear ballet

shoes, others kitten-pattern socks. The ethereal "Waltz of the Snowflakes" plays in the background and leaders give direction over the music.

"Stay in your line," calls out Katherine Eadie, 15, a Davis High School sophomore.

One girl in a blue sweater rushes in late, and Linnea Ransom, also a sophomore, gently shepherds her to the right place. Then 17-year-old Morgan Appezzato touches

each girl on the shoulder as a sign to spin around. The Forest Fairy actress will do just that to the Snowflake dancers during the actual "Davis Children's Nutcracker," which opens Wednesday.

Teen leaders like Eadie, Ransom and Appezzato burnish the well-oiled machine that produces the popular holiday children's production year after year. Leaders

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The lead roles in the 2008 "Davis Children's Nutcracker" are played by, from left, Riley Hickman, as the Nutcracker Prince; Alex Sprague as the Sugarplum Fairy; Sydney Maguire as Clara; Brittany Aldredge as the Mouse Queen; and Devon Hayakawa as the Forest Fairy.

NUTS: Leaders were performers

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forfeit studying and sports practices to spend several hours per week helping young performers learn dances and acts.

Of the 70 teens, 15 are unpaid volunteers in their first year heading a group.

In addition to teaching packs of energetic children, the leaders choreograph the dance routines themselves. Eadie, Ransom and Appezato watched movies for last year's performance for the gist of a typical Snowflake dance. The personal touches come later.

"Katherine added a 'wand dip' move," Appezato said. For all the circling and dipping in the Snowflake routine, the girls (aged 6-8) learned fast, she added.

In the adjacent room, a medley of boys and girls clashed noisily with gray wooden swords: Mice versus Soldiers. Julia Spangler, 17, stood in the center, holding a script in her hand and reading lines periodically in a loud, clear voice.

Spangler, a lifelong theater

participant, believes all kids should have the chance to perform onstage.

"You develop a relationship with the kids," she said. "You get to know their names, personalities and help them to perform."

At one point during the rehearsing, Patric Kreidler dropped to his hands and knees to demonstrate how to crawl without letting swords touch the ground. The "mice" immediately imitated him, giggling and whispering.

Kreidler, a freshman at Harper Junior High, recalls happy days as a participant in the show.

"My favorite thing ever was being a Russian dancer," he said. "At the end they do the kicking thing, (and) I could kick way higher than all the other kids."

A cycle creates the tradition of youth leaders. All the current leaders performed in "The Nutcracker" themselves from an early age, as Mice or Gumdrops or Dancing Bears.

After years of having fun and admiring their own lead-

ers, at age 13, the students become the teachers.

"What they tell us in the interview is that they all looked up to their leaders and always wanted to be one," said Shannon Clegg, co-producer of the "Davis Children's Nutcracker."

And the job just looked like a good time.

"It seemed like the leaders were having fun," said 16-year-old Isiah Hale. Hale, who runs the Chinese dancer group with Madeline Kelsch and Taylor Difuntorum, mixes up learning with a multitude of games, such as Red Light, Green Light and Sharks 'n' Minnows.

All of this hits home with their kids.

"(The leaders) all play games with us a lot," fourth-grader Jessica Block said. "I really think they're good leaders."

"The Children's Nutcracker" opens Wednesday and runs through Sunday. The sold-out show features performances from 250 local children in grades kindergarten through six.