

on and on, and someone has these leaps — so choreographing to each of the Clara's strengths is always fun, and it keeps it fresh."

Madsen also looks for different places to put Clara in each year. This year, Clara gets to do more in Act 2's Kingdom of Sweets, dancing with the Candy Ribbons and a Chef played by Nathaniel Condit, before the surprise of the traditional Bons Bons choreography with Mother Ginger.

"It is a fun-packed scene full of new and traditional moments that we are so excited to share," Madsen says.

With a cast of more than 70 dancers and a 50-piece live orchestra and choir conducted by Cory Pederson, there's a lot of local talent and holiday cheer to enjoy.

Audiences can be on the lookout for special guests in Act 1's Party Scene: Astoria Mayor Arlene LaMear will make an appearance on stage for both of Saturday's performances, and Oregon state Sen. Betsy Johnson will step on stage Sunday, mingling with party guests. Audiences can also enjoy

'THE NUTCRACKER'

2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3

2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4

Astoria High School

1001 W. Marine Drive, Astoria

Tickets available at TicketsWest.com, the Liberty Theater box office, Maddox Dance Studio and Astoria High School

Tickets \$11 to \$51

the talented dancing of Michael Linsmeier and Ansa Deguchi of the Oregon Ballet Theatre in the ballet's Pas de Deux.

At a November rehearsal, some high school-aged dancers took a pause from their normal routine to pose for portraits and talk about being a part of this community tradition.



Maddox Dance Studio teacher Emily Gilbertson Madsen, center, coaches dancers as they rehearse for the Little Ballet Theatre's production of "The Nutcracker."



THE NUTCRACKER PRINCE

Joe Justice, junior at Warrenton High School, trains at Astoria School of Ballet

Other parts: Mechanical Bear, Dance of the Reed Flutes

Being in "The Nutcracker" is another way to perform and show people what I can do. I realized the first year that it's just a bunch of families coming together like one big one. I'd probably say Reed Flute is my favorite part; it's more technical than anything. I don't really get nervous. I've been told that there were not a lot of Nutcracker Princes who have done actual dancing before. And the best part about it, for me, is seeing all the kids, just the looks on their faces when I come out.



CLARA

Anita Barbic, junior at Seaside High School

You only get Clara once. It's insane. I never thought that I would get it. I don't think I have a favorite part about dancing Clara. With dancing, you get into a character and you throw all your emotions into it, and when you feel the music, then it becomes believable — not only for yourself but for the audience. So, being Clara, being able to grab people's attention and not having to be in the background, it's really nice because you get to take charge and show people, "This is the story and this is what's happening: She's having a dream and she's going through this magical land." I'm excited to see all the little kids and their reaction because to them it's real.



DREAM FAIRY

Hikari Wajima, Japanese exchange student, Seaside High School

Other parts: Dance of the Snowflakes, Chinese Tea, Finale

First I went to the Seaside dance studio, but there were only little dancers. Then I came here. I like classic ballet. Especially I like this ballet show — the Russian, Chinese and Arabian dancing, it's so nice. The finale — because I can dance just me — is so exciting.