

Another en pointe holiday performance

Celebrating 45 years of 'The Nutcracker'

BY KATHERINE LACAZE

More than four decades ago, Jeanne Peterson set in motion an idea that would, over time, evolve into an annual tradition that engages not only local dancers but the North Coast community at large.

This weekend, Little Ballet Theatre's production of "The Nutcracker" celebrates 45 years of holiday joy with three performances at Astoria High School.

"It's such an emotional feeling," Peterson, owner of Maddox Dance Studio and founder of the nonprofit theater, said. "I had no idea it would be like this."

"The Nutcracker," which follows the magical story of young Clara receiving a nutcracker from Dr. Drosselmeyer that transforms into a prince, is a classic set to an iconic score by composer Pyotr Illich Tchaikovsky. Most studios attempt some variation of the ballet during the holiday season, choreographer Emily Madsen said.

The local theater's approach is fluid and responsive, adapting to the skill levels of the children and adults

who audition, said Madsen, who has participated in "The Nutcracker" for 25 years — 15 as a choreographer and 10 as a dancer.

The choreography developed each season "really depends on who comes out to dance," she said. This keeps the production fresh and engaging for the audience and encourages dancers to participate year after year.

"We can get the full experience by trying a bunch of different parts," said 14-year-old Emelia Cameron, who began dancing in "The Nutcracker" when she was 7.

Elizabeth Varner, 17, added it's fun "seeing yourself grow in 'The Nutcracker.'"

Anyone wanting to dance in the show can do so. The audition process is geared toward finding the parts that

If You Go

Little Ballet Theatre's "The Nutcracker"

2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday

Astoria High School Auditorium, 1001 W. Marine Drive.

Tickets are \$16 and \$21 for general admission and \$31 and \$51 for reserved seating. Active military gets \$5 off for the Saturday matinee. Tickets are available online at libertyastoria.org, at the Liberty Theatre box office and at the door one hour before each performance. For more information, contact 503-861-1971.

Kilee Svensen dancing the role of grandchild and her sister Hailey Svensen dancing the role of young lady in the 2019 production of Little Ballet Theatre's 'The Nutcracker.'

