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Peterson added that there is a silver lining to the forced changes: the limitations have worked well for the dancers and might be kept in future years. Dancers range in age from 7 to about 80.

“It’s a mixture of the young and the old. It’s a family,” Peterson said. “A lot of the adults have been with us for years.” The dancer who portrays Drosselmeyer has been with the production for about 30 years.

The dancers rehearsed in the Astoria High School Auditorium, which has a newly remodeled performance floor.

“We’re enjoying putting it together with the challenges. It’s all working,” Peterson added.

The challenges Peterson referred to are primarily associated with maintaining proper COVID-19 protocols while organizing a large-scale dancing production.

“Our priority is keeping the dancers safe,” Peterson said.

A rigorous cleaning process was in place every day. Temperature checks were given to the cast and crew each day, and everything was sanitized, including the dancer’s shoes. All involved also donned face masks for the entirety of the rehearsal period and recorded performance.

Sixth grader Maddie Jo Dielman is dancing in this year’s ballet. This is her fifth year in the production. She’ll appear three times, as a puppet in the party scene, a snow flurry in the snowstorm dance and

**“THERE’S MORE FOCUS
THAN EVER BEFORE
BECAUSE THEY JUST
WANT TO DO IT SO BADLY.
EVERYBODY WAS LOST
LAST YEAR WITHOUT IT.”**

- Jeanne Peterson,
‘The Nutcracker’ Artistic Director

will dance in the “Waltz of the Flowers.”

The dancer said she’ll miss performing in front of a live audience, but she’s excited to be back.

“As long as I’m dancing I’m happy,” Dielman said.

While an orchestra has traditionally performed the music live for prior performances, the plan is a little different this year. The film’s director will edit the video to the soundtrack from the Little Ballet Theatre Orchestra’s 2019 performance. The virtual version will use special effects to create digital snow and place the dancers in a wintery snowstorm.

“It’ll be like a Hallmark movie,” Peterson laughed.

Favorite elements of past productions from the ballet will still appear in the show, like the growing tree which has new lights on it.

“We couldn’t not do it this year after not doing it last year,” she said. “We decided whatever way we have to do it, we’ll do it. The show must go on.”



Akiko Miller

Dancers rehearse for the party scene in the Little Ballet Theatre’s ‘The Nutcracker.’



Rehearsals for ‘The Nutcracker’ began in early October.

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THE NUTCRACKER
2021

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