

# Ballet companies stage 'Nutcracker'

"The Nutcracker," the world's best-loved ballet, has reached its centennial year, and the Oakland Festival Ballet Company will perform the work at the Birmingham Theatre, Dec. 16-20.

Curtain times are 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, Dec. 16-17; 2:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 18; 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 19 to 20.

Tickets are available through all Ticketmaster outlets and the Birmingham Theatre box office, 644-3533; prices start at \$14 for children and senior citizens, and \$16 for adults. For group rate information, call Eleanor Becker, 644-3576. The Birmingham Theatre is at 211 South Woodward.

Under the direction of Cornelia Sampson, the troupe of professionals will stage eight performances in all, three evening and five matinee.

Originally choreographed by Lev Ivanov to the now universally familiar music of Peter Tchaikovsky, "The Nutcracker" was first performed in Russia in December 1892.

Supporting the OFB in its centennial celebration will be soloists Katrina Killian and Michael Byars of New York City Ballet, portraying Sugarplum Fairy and Cavalier in the first four performances.

Soloist Shawn Black and principal dancer Gil Boggs of American Ballet Theatre will assume those roles in the remaining four.

The role of Clara, around whom the enchantment revolves, will be performed by OFB principal Laura Skousen, 15, of Shelby Township, recipient of a full scholarship for the summer dance program of the School of Cleveland Ballet.

Michael Anderson — a former OFB principal and Joffrey Ballet

scholarship recipient, now performing professionally with Tulsa Ballet Theatre — returns as Clara's Nutcracker Prince. "We do sweat the small stuff," said Sampson, a radiant woman with a natural elegance not surprising in a former member of the famed Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo — the company which, coincidentally, introduced "The Nutcracker" to the United States in 1940.

"We want the audience to become immersed in the fantasy during the show, and to feel they've experienced a thoroughly top-notch production when it's over."

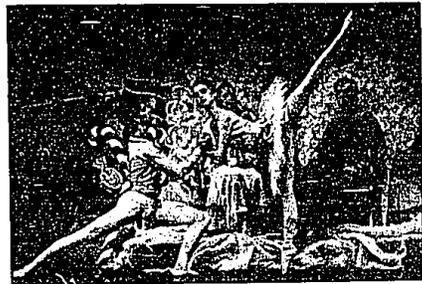
Sampson founded the Oakland Festival Ballet in 1979 as a source of performance opportunities for her most promising students, and for the cultural enrichment of the communities in southeast Michigan. Based in Rochester, members are chosen each fall through

an open audition judged by a panel of visiting experts.

The holiday spirit comes alive with the music, gaiety and dance of the timeless classic, "The Nutcracker," presented by the Michigan Classic Ballet Company, 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12 and 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13 at Novi's Puerst Auditorium, 24062 Taft Road. For tickets, call Ticketmaster 646-6666. For group information, call 661-2430.

A special event, The Sugarplum Tea, will be offered 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12. The tea follows the 2 p.m. Saturday performance. Tickets are \$5 and includes tasty refreshments. Children will be given special attention with such activities as face painting, meeting the dancers, and having their picture taken with some of their favorite characters.

Michigan Ballet Theatre, based in the Farmington/Novi area, is presenting "The Nutcracker" 8



"The Nutcracker": The Oakland Festival Ballet Company will present "The Nutcracker," a holiday favorite, at the Birmingham Theatre, Dec. 16-20.

p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6 at South Lyon High School, 1000 North Pontiac Trail. Tickets are available at the door, and by calling 437-8105. Performances at West Bloomfield

High School, 4925 Orchard Lake Road, are 3 p.m. Friday, Dec. 11, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12 and 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13. All seats are reserved, call 788-1185 or 471-4180.

## UPCOMING THINGS TO DO

**CLASSICAL**  
**ROCHESTER SYMPHONY**  
 The Rochester Symphony will present the "Many Moods of Christmas," 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4 at St. Andrew Church, 100 Englewood. Call 651-4181.  
**LIVONIA SYMPHONY**  
 Livonia Symphony presents three

holiday concerts, 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4, 1:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 at the Church of the Holy Spirit, 10000 Grand Blvd., Livonia. Call 421-1111 or 458-6576.

um, 8900 Newburgh, Livonia. For tickets, call 421-1111 or 458-6576.

**AUDITIONS**  
**ST. BEDE PLAYERS**  
 St. Bede Players are holding auditions for leads and chorus for

their spring production of "Naughty Marietta," 7 p.m. Dec. 17 and 18 and 2 p.m. Dec. 20 in the St. Bede Social Hall at 12 Mile and Southfield. For information, call 657-6527 or 657-7245.  
**TROY PLAYERS**  
 Auditions for "South Pacific," 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3 at the Troy Community Center, 520 W. Big

Beaver Road, off of I-75. For information, call the Troy Players, 879-1285.  
 Deadline for the Upcoming enter-

tainment calendar is three weeks ahead of publication. Send items to be considered for publication to: Keely Wygonik, Entertainment editor, The Observer & Eccentric, 36261 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48160.

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The concert will be performed at 2 p.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church, located across from the Fox Theatre. Tickets are \$12.00 for children and \$25.00 for adults. We encourage you to pick-up your tickets early, as seating is limited. For more information, phone (313) 962-7358.

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