

# Mini-Nutcracker concludes it's 36th season at the Davis Auditorium

Nashville, TENN – The holiday season is a time to celebrate the joy of annual Nashville traditions and there one tradition that children of several generations look forward to as it is a dance performance of a well loved ballet that is revised to engage and entertain the younger minds of the blooming artistic city.

The Centennial Youth Ballet performs the Nutcracker each year at the theater at Harpeth Hall's Davis Auditorium and it recently wrapped up this year's 36 annual Mini-Nutcracker with four amazing performances on Friday, December 1st, to Sunday.

First danced in 1981 as a 15-minute segment of Hickory Hollow Mall's Christmas entertainment, the show has become one of Nashville's favorite holiday traditions.

It is called the 'mini' Nutcracker – not because all the performers are little, though some are as they are in any performance of this holiday tradition, but rather it is miniaturized and abridged to engage children with the best parts of this wonderful story that leads Clara on a magical tale through a wonderful world filled with candies, and a

beautiful sugar plu



Designed to introduce young children to ballet as a performance art, The Mini-Nutcracker is an abbreviated, narrated version of the Nutcracker Suite Ballet. The young dancers in the Centennial Youth Ballet perform the ballet's shortened scenes and variations with poise, technical precision, and polish.

The costumes worn by the students are as professional as the student's themselves. Both the costumes and the performers soared above any expectation one might have about a performance designed to entertain a younger audience. It was, in fact, the perfect length for most adults!

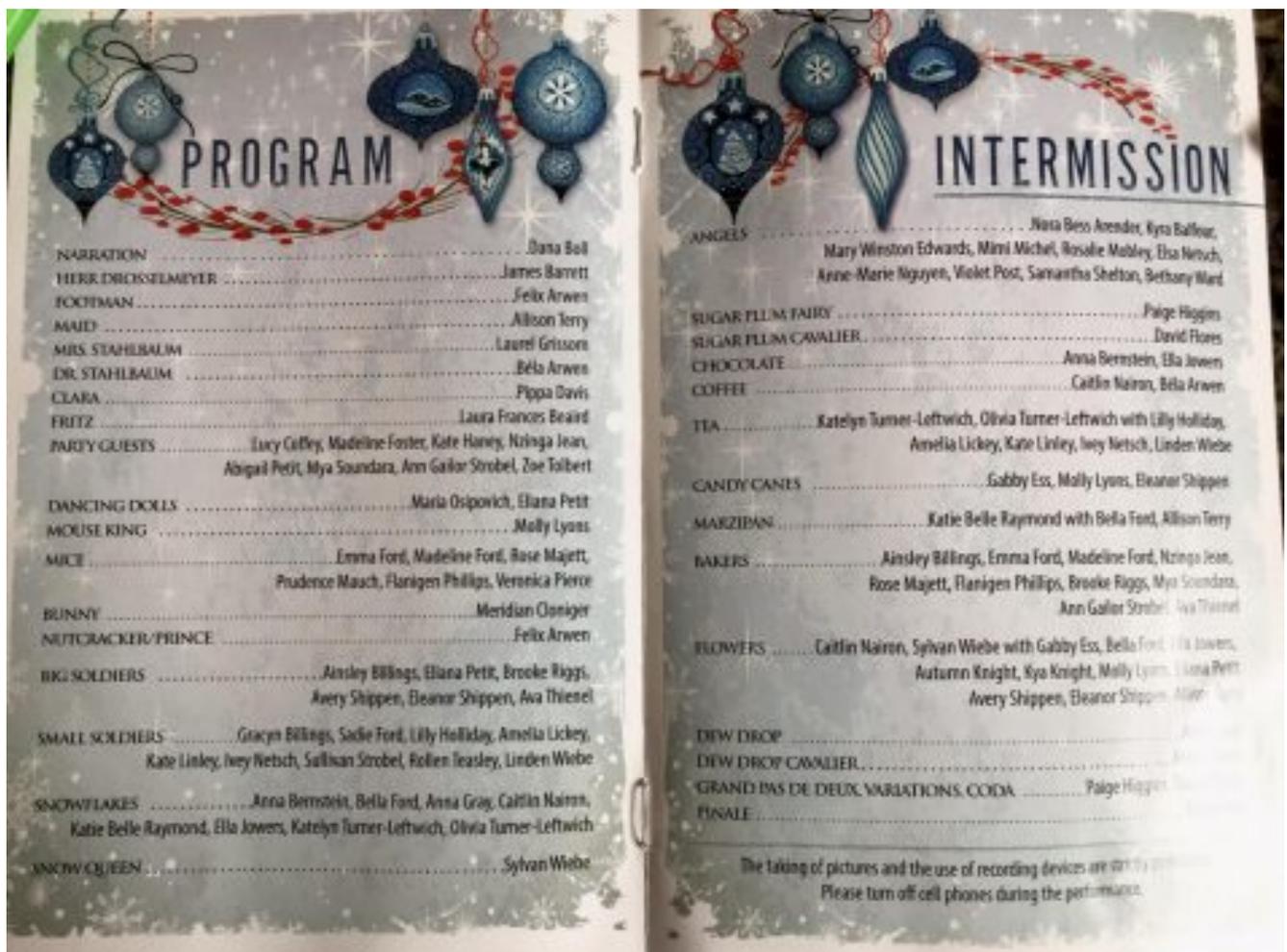
As a Nashville tradition for 36 years, the Mini-Nutcracker has created opportunities for multiple generations to begin the holiday season together as it is the first of many events for families in December.

And like so many dancers before them, it was the last Nutcracker performance for five seniors who will be graduating this year. Moving on to college next year are: Ella Jowers, Anna Gray, Caitin Narion , Katie Bell Raymond, and Paige

Higgins.

Three of these top performers are Hillsboro students: Pippa Davis (Clara) Katelyn Turner-Leftwich (Snow and Big Tea) and Olivia Turner-Leftwich (Snow and Big Tea).

If you missed the performance this year, set your calendar for the first weekend in December for next year as it will be a tradition you will want to add for years to come.



Mini Nutcracker's Cast

# Centennial Youth Ballet is Prepping for a Holiday Tradition

For the students of Centennial Youth Ballet, Mini-Nutcracker season is already in motion; started off this season on Saturday, Aug. 19, 2017 with this seasons round of Nutcracker auditions.

This year will be the 36th year of performances of the Centennial's Mini Nutcracker. Under the direction of Mr. Matthew Christensen, students of Centennial Youth ballet will perform an adapted version of Tchaikovsky's ballet, The Nutcracker.



Described as a performance that is, "Designed to introduce children to ballet as a performance art, this longstanding local Nutcracker tradition is an abbreviated, narrated version of Tchaikovsky's 'Nutcracker Suite Ballet' and features young dancers from the parks program."

The Sugar Plum Fairy will be performed by Paige Higgins. The performance features two professional dancers this year. The Sugar Plum Fairy's Cavalier will be performed by David Flores and Drosselmeyer will be performed by Tony Montalvo.

Each student in the Centennial Youth Ballet program that wishes to perform in the Mini-Nutcracker, is required to audition. These auditions are divided into two groups, the advanced and the intermediate/beginner students.

For the advanced students, the audition consisted of class with of more character and pointe work. School director, Katherine Wilkening, explained younger dancers were "taught a bit of choreography because it brought out hidden qualities and allowed the teachers to know the students better." Ms. Wilkening is a native of Franklin, TN and has been with the Centennial Youth Ballet since 2014. Previous to her coming home to Tennessee, she spent 17 years living and working in New York.

When asked if she and the other teachers were looking for specific



attributes during the audition, Mrs. Silkening responded that they were looking for a few different things, "We were looking for how

accurate dancers are... musicality, personal expression, how they react to mistakes, corrections, and attitude.”

She also stressed the importance of knowing how it is to work with the dancer; that the difference between having a work ethic versus becoming frustrated could be a deciding factor.

Although the school already knows their dancers, Mrs. Wilkening, the school director, still finds importance in this audition. “If a dancer is going out in the real world to audition they need to know some skills to audition with.” she responds when asked about the necessity of the audition.

Mrs. Wilkening stated that these skills include adaptability, quick learning, and quick thinking. She also included that even if students are not going to dancing field, these skills would be important for whatever profession they are going into.

The audition was designed to be as close to a real audition the dancers might do if they were trying to get into a summer dance intensive. However the dancers did notice that

there were a few differences.



Because the teachers know their students so well, they were able to challenge them at their level, instead of opting for easier combinations to learn the levels of the dancers. One student, Caitlin Narion commented that, "There was more complex combinations in the beginning of the class."

During the audition, the teacher, Christensen, explained that this was to check that the dancers were paying attention to the details of the combination.

After the audition, most dancers felt good about how they did. However, as in all auditions, some dancers were anxious about mistakes they had made. Results were posted Tuesday the 22nd, and many of the dancers were excited for their roles.



Rehearsals started the weekend of the 26th, and the dancers are already off to work learning their various roles. With preparations

for the performance already underway, it's promising for another brilliant year of Centennial's Mini-Nutcracker.

To purchase tickets for this year's performance, all tickets will be sold through Brown Paper Ticket's website or over their phone service.

No ticket sales go through Metro Parks for this performance. A select few tickets will be sold at the door of Harpeth Hall auditorium, however, these tickets sell very fast.

**Tickets go on sale to the public**

**Monday, Oct 30, 6 am.**

**Friends of Metro Dance Membership**

**Pre-Sale begins Friday, Oct 27, 6 am.**

**Friday, December 1, 7 pm**

**Saturday, December 2, 2 pm & 7 pm**

**Sunday, December 3, 1 pm**