

Holiday classic to return

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior Reporter

For more than 100 years, visions of Sugar Plum Fairies have danced in our heads.

The tradition continues this year in Omaha and Lincoln with productions of "The Nutcracker" ballet by the Ohio-based Dayton Ballet and the Lincoln Midwest Ballet Company.

"I think the reason 'The Nutcracker' has remained so popular is because it's about the holidays and it's about magic," said Beth Common, director of marketing and development for Dayton Ballet. "It's apple pie and Houdini."

A holiday classic, "The Nutcracker" tells the story of a young girl named Clara and her trip to the Land of Sweets with her Nutcracker Prince.

It begins with a Christmas party at the Stahlbaum house, where two children, Clara and Fritz, anxiously await the guests' arrivals. One of the guests is the children's godfather, Herr Drosselmeyer.

Drosselmeyer delights the party guests with two life-size dancing dolls and gives Christmas presents to Fritz and Clara.

Clara's gift, a brand new Nutcracker, is the star of the party, but Fritz, overcome with jealousy, breaks it. Drosselmeyer tries to fix the Nutcracker by tying a handkerchief around its jaw.

As the party guests leave the Stahlbaum house, Clara sneaks back to the Christmas tree to check on her Nutcracker.

Here, strange things begin to happen.

The Stahlbaum Christmas tree grows to 10 times its height, mice scurry around the room, and a battle ensues between the Nutcracker and the Mouse King. The Nutcracker calls on his soldiers to help him, but it is Clara who saves him by killing the Mouse King with a blow from her slipper.

As the mice carry the Mouse King away, the Nutcracker turns into a prince. He whisks Clara off to the Land of Snow where the Snow Queen and her dancing snowflakes perform.

After the Land of Snow, the Prince and Clara proceed to the Land of Sweets. They are entertained by a variety of characters, including the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier.

As the dream ends, Clara finds herself once again by the Christmas tree with her beloved Nutcracker.

The ballet originally premiered in December 1892 at the Marinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia. Choreographed by Kirov Ballet Master Marius Petipa with music by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, the ballet was based on a revised version of E.T.A.

Hoffman's story "The Nutcracker and The Mouse King."

The ballet first made its debut in the United States in 1954 under the direction of Kirov-trained George Balanchine.

Since then, hundreds of productions of "The Nutcracker" have been performed every year. Each company tries to give the ballet a distinctive mark. Differences include time periods and costumes.

The Dayton Ballet always sets its production exactly 100 years ago. In the program, directors include a list of events that occurred in 1897 in the world, in the nation and in the city in which they are performing.

"One of the interesting things that happened in 1897 is that the gentleman from the Chicago Tribune wrote 'Yes, Virginia, There Is A Santa Claus,'" Common said.

Dayton Ballet also allows the party guests to represent families that lived in 1897. The families honored this year during the Omaha performances will be the Michaelsens, the Holmquists and the Englishes.

"Nutcracker" productions are also distinguished by their use of children in the ballet. In the original production, Petipa used students from a nearby school - now called the Vaganova Ballet Academy - who were being trained for the Kirov company.

Lincoln Midwest Ballet Company's production uses more than 200 local and regional dancers. Sara Mahoney, a Pius X High School sophomore, plays Clara. Kevin Gibbs, a senior University of Nebraska-Lincoln dance major, plays the Russian Jester Doll.

Ballet Omaha in September auditioned more than 200 children from the Omaha-Council Bluffs area for Dayton Ballet's production. One hundred children between the ages of 5 to 13 were chosen and divided into two casts. They have been rehearsing since the first weekend in October.

"A lot of 'Nutcrackers' try to use children, but a lot of times they're like living scenery," Common said. "In this one, they really dance. They are an active part of the show."

Derrick Wilder, the managing director for Ballet Omaha, said the children performing were students with avid dance interests who might consider dancing professionally.

"This is a great opportunity for them to interact with a professional company," Wilder said.



Lincoln 'Nutcracker' variations to appear

The Dayton Ballet will perform their version of "The Nutcracker" at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at the Orpheum Theatre, 409 S. 16th St. Tickets are \$18, \$25 and \$29.50 for adults and \$12, \$17.50 and \$19.50 for people 60 and older and children 12 and younger. For further information, call (402) 346-7332.

The Lincoln Midwest Ballet Company will perform their production of "The Nutcracker" at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln Saturday, December 20 at 2 and 7 p.m. and Sunday, December 21 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$24, \$20 and \$18. Tickets for children under 18 are half price.

To order tickets, call the Lied Center Box Office at (402) 472-4747.

Literary magazine seeks broader horizons

BY BRET SCHULTE
Senior Reporter

You don't have to smoke Camels, wear a black turtleneck or even have a ponytail to submit your literary accomplishments to the English department's creative writing magazine.

Laurus, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's only exclusively undergraduate literary publication, has notoriously been an outlet for English majors wishing to publish their poems, stories and essays. But student editor Joe Burns said he is looking for voices that don't normally ring through Andrews Hall to be featured in this year's edition.

"It is a chance for all undergrads of all colleges to be recognized as writers, thinkers and artists, not just English majors," Burns, a senior

Involvement

English major, said. "There are people that publish books of poetry that are lawyers and insurance agents. Not all writers are teachers or English students."

Since its conception about a decade ago, Laurus has served as a forum for creative writing efforts of any UNL student. Throughout these years, magazine editors have hoped to create a publication indicative of a diverse student body with unique interests, goals and dreams.

However, the overwhelming percentage of entries to the magazine has consistently sprung from the English department, which, Burns said, is to be expected. But this year, editors are actively seeking non-English majors alongside their more

bookish counterparts to submit their thoughts, essays and ideas to the journal to guarantee a magazine more representative of the UNL student body.

To encourage such participation, Laurus editors are expanding the magazine's literary format from the poetry, fiction and non-fiction of previous years. Now, Burns said, students can submit almost any type of composition, including one-act plays, free-form essays, literary criticism and "anything written and written well."

"This is being done to receive a broad range of work, to extend it beyond the realm of standard English compositions," Burns said.

In the past, Laurus has tried a variety of angles to attract readership, said Greg Kuzma, the magazine's faculty adviser and a UNL English professor. The active plan to

diversify the magazine may not be the correct one, Kuzma said.

"The interest is in the subject of diversity," he said. "It's just an experiment. Should Laurus dare to have a focus topic with maybe 20 percent of its material within that realm?"

A new plan can't hurt the magazine, which may sell consistently within the confines of Andrews Hall, but rarely attracts attention elsewhere, resulting in boxes of unsold books year after year.

Kuzma believes the problem lies not in the content of the magazine, but rather in the properties of the magazine itself.

"The challenge here is how can a magazine that comes out once a year have a constituency," Kuzma said. "How can it have an urgency and be an annual?"

The publishing of the magazine dates back further than the participa-

tion of the board's current members, who are not quite sure about the name of the magazine, or even its founder. But their dedication seems certain.

By guaranteeing space strictly to undergraduate writers of all beliefs, colleges and experiences, the beloved magazine of the English department intentionally is being designed to allure the artist and poet in every UNL student.

Submissions will be reviewed by a four-student editorial board, which will select entries and produce the magazine during the spring semester. The magazine will be published over the summer, Kuzma said.

Entries to the magazine are due by the end of the semester, and can be submitted to the Laurus mailbox in the English department. Contact Greg Kuzma at (402) 472-1802 for more information.