

Candied Dreams

Variations keep ballet fresh

BY DANELL MCCOY
Staff writer

A young girl's godfather brings her a small wooden doll at the family's holiday party. Falling asleep with the doll that night, the young girl finds herself swept off to a world of magic, princes and dance.

The story never changes, yet every year around the holiday season "The Nutcracker" captures the hearts of children and adults alike.

"I think children love it because of the beautiful music, the colorful costumes and the adventure in the story," said Robin Welch, choreographer for the Omaha Theater Company Ballet's rendition of the ballet. "Adults also like it because it takes them back to when they were younger and their imaginations were fertile, taking them on their own wonderful journeys."

Shari Shell-True, director and choreographer for the Lincoln Midwest Ballet's production of "The Nutcracker," agreed.

"I think people make it a holiday tradition. They make it a part of their Christmas celebration," she said. "It's a beautiful and enchanting children's story with a lot of spirit. I think that it has a wide audience appeal because there is something in it for everyone."

Another reason audiences find the ballet appealing is because each production is different.

"Every city has a different version," said Welch. "There is no original. There is always going to be the same story idea and the same music, but every choreographer visualizes it differently."

The Omaha Theater Company Ballet's production is different in that it sets the story in Omaha.

"Our story takes place in the 1920s, which is about the same time that Omaha was really starting to grow," Welch said. "We incorporate the history of Omaha into our version. In our story, Clara's uncle is a movie producer in Hollywood, and he comes to Omaha to put on a movie at the Orpheum Theater, which was built during this time period."

"I personally love this period in history. I think that it was a time of lavish sets and a wonderful time for choreography. We use that choreography in a classical ballet style. Our production is art deco."

Shell-True said the Lincoln Midwest Ballet's rendition differs in that it leaves the ending of the story open for audiences to decipher.

"I believe in happy endings," she said. "I want Clara's adventure to be true and not a dream because that's the way I believe it."

"Most companies stamp it as a dream in the end, and I think that can leave some audience members disappointed. We like to leave it to the audience. We let the audience decide what happened, if it was a dream or if it was real. This way each person walks out with their own perception of the story."

Please see **NUTCRACKER** on 11

Lincoln Community Playhouse puts twist on Dickens' 'Carol'

BY JOSH NICHOLS
Staff writer

"There are lots of surprises, and we do our own creative take on the play."

RHONDA LAKE
play director

Those feeling like a scrooge this Christmas season need to attend "Mr. Scrooge: The Musical" at the Lincoln Community Playhouse.

For the first time in its 54 years, LCP presents its own unique twist on Charles Dickens' classic "A Christmas Carol."

The musical, written by Richard Morris, Dolores Claman and Ted Wood, is about the greedy old Mr. Scrooge and the lessons he is taught in compassion, loving and sharing.

The play features a cast of 35 actors, mostly children, and a 30-person children's choir.

Play director Rhonda Lake said the choir will sing four carols during the play.

She also said special children's roles were incorporated into the ghost characters.

Children surround the adults play-

ing the ghosts and have speaking parts throughout the performance, she said.

"There are lots of surprises, and we do our own creative take on the play," she said. "But we are still doing everything the way Dickens had it written."

Lake pointed out that every "Christmas Carol" is done a little differently.

"In this version, we highlight other characters from the original story," she said. "The maid, who was a little known character in the original, does a whole singing piece by herself in this play."

Lake also said Mr. Scrooge, who very seldom has singing parts in other versions, sings a couple times in this

play. This includes a song at the end of the musical where he sings Merry Christmas to all those he has been mean to in the past.

Patrick Lambrecht, who plays Scrooge, described the musical "Mr. Scrooge" as the "Reader's Digest" version of the original story.

"It's an extremely condensed version," he said.

Not only that, he said, but this story takes a much lighter tone than Dickens' original, somewhat haunting Christmas tale. It is listed as a musical comedy in

Please see **SCROOGE** on 11



SHARON KOLBET/DN
CAST MEMBERS OF "MR. SCROOGE" rehearse scenes from the musical to be presented at the Lincoln Community Playhouse.