

Luzicka Ballet - Kora Smith

Title: Taking the Stage

Subhead: Ballet students prepare for traditional performance.

Engaging every muscle in their bodies, junior Izzy Downing and senior Gillian Calder rehearse for the Nutcracker at the Luzicka Ballet School during their Saturday rehearsals. They are holding up their entire weight while dancing en pointe. The familiar classical music piece Waltz of the Snowflakes is heard surrounding them as they move across the room.

Students of Luzicka Ballet School in Liberty, MO prepare to perform the Nutcracker, on December 20 and 21 at the Liberty Performing Arts Theater by persistent rehearsing.

“We work really hard, and it's harder to get recognition, getting this recognition and seeing people come watch is very rewarding,” Downing said.

Luzicka Ballet is a local classical ballet studio owned by Hannah and Luke Luzicka, and they work together to put on multiple shows each year, including The Nutcracker. The students have rehearsal every Saturday from 10:30-4 and additional practices during their Monday and Wednesday 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. class time.

“The long hours are definitely not easiest, and it's hard on our bodies in the beginning but as we rehearse more our stamina increases, so it does get easier,” Downing said.

Rehearsals started on Oct 5 for this show and will continue until show time. The highest level of ballet offered at this school lost six dancers at the end of last season, the head ballet students including Downing and Calder stepped up to take on lead roles. This level at Luzicka Ballet only holds five dancers to date, which is a change from the 11 present in class last year.

“We have to be more responsible and step up because we've lost our leaders, so we have to become leaders ourselves. We are also getting better because we are proving ourselves.” Calder said.

The top-level students began getting familiar with all the main roles far earlier than Oct 5. Since starting to practice earlier would give them more time to adjust to the most challenging roles.

“It's been a little bit more on us to create a positive atmosphere as far as ‘you can do it, it's okay, it's only your first time,’” H. Luzicka said.

This is the first year some of the dancers have practiced and with the top level being a smaller group and the “leaders” gone, the Nutcracker rehearsal dynamic has changed.

“Luke and I are trying to create that energy to help them to feel confident in taking on some of the roles they haven't done before and not being afraid of it,” H. Luzicka said.

Though the top-level lost members, they have discovered benefits as well. Having a smaller number of students gave them more time and room for personal corrections from their teacher.

“It is more of a group and less of people we just have to dance with. We work together more, and with a smaller group we can communicate better dance-wise,” Calder said.

Kansas City Ballet puts on multiple shows of The Nutcracker every year, so why should someone go see a local, smaller studio show instead? The Luzicka's found themselves asking this question too.

“We didn't know there would be an audience for it because there is a big ballet company in town, and we thought everybody would just want to go downtown,” H. Luzicka said.

However, when going to see KCB Nutcracker, ticket prices are higher, parking can be an issue, and for Liberty families, a trip downtown is more of a hassle. Luzicka Ballet is Liberty's only

classical ballet studio which puts on a true classic student Nutcracker. Here you can see people you know. It is a student showcase, and it's more affordable.

“So we discovered there was a need for a local, smaller Nutcracker, even though we weren’t sure if there would be,” H. Luzicka said.

The Luzicka’s had a goal of selling out two Nutcracker shows. This goal was met both last year and the year before. So, a new goal of selling out three shows has been put into play for this year’s performance.

“I've always wanted to constantly move that goalpost. My goal is to sell so many tickets this year that maybe the year after next year, we will have four shows instead of three,” L. Luzicka said.

The three anticipated sold-out shows will take place at the Liberty Performing Arts Theater on Fri, Dec. 20 at 6:30 p.m., and Sat, Dec. 21 at 2:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. After the Nutcracker, Luzicka Ballet’s top level will perform in a Chinese New Year gala on Jan 18. The whole school will then go on to perform in the to-be-decided annual ballet in June, where new challenges and achievements will be established once again.

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