

■ SOCIAL

Nutcracker Christmas tradition for KM dancer Sarah Kate Fedyschyn

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

For Sarah Kate Fedyschyn and her family it would not be Christmas without the Nutcracker ballet.

Fedyschyn, a sixth grader at Kings Mountain Intermediate School, is a ballerina with the Gaston Dance Theatre. She'll dance four parts in this weekend's performances at Gaston Day School.

This is Fedyschyn's seventh Nutcracker. She performed for three years with the Carolina City Ballet in Columbia before moving to North Carolina.

As a four-year-old, Fedyschyn became infatuated with ballet after her mother read her the book "Dance, Tonya, Dance." Pam Howze assumed her daughter would soon lose interest. Instead, Fedyschyn repeatedly asked for dance lessons.

Howze realized her young daughter was serious and enrolled her in a school. Fedyschyn has danced since then.

"She's relentless in her pursuit," Howze said.

Fifteen months ago Fedyschyn reached a milestone - dancing en pointe. She wears leather shoes crafted in Russia. Small pieces of wood in the shoes allow the dancer to stand literally on her toes.

Fedyschyn's next goal is to join the theatre's professional company. Then it's off to college where she hopes to major in both dance and marine biology.

In this weekend's performance, she'll be a mouse, tea from the Orient and a member of the snow and flower corps.

The Christmas classic tells the story of Clare who receives a Nutcracker from her uncle. Clare's brother Fritz breaks the present. Clare falls asleep while attempting to retrieve the nutcracker. In her dreams she goes to a mystical land with dancing chocolate, tea, mice, toy soldiers, bon bons, flowers and snow.

Some of the younger students dance as bon bon candies, appearing from beneath Mother Ginger's oversized dress.

"It's adorable," said Howze.

Fathers of some of the dancers even make a short appearance in one scene showing off the dance they've learned.

The cast, with dancers ranging from age six to 18, practices five days a week. Fedyschyn says dance has helped her learn to focus and be a better manager of her time. She uses the 20-minute ride to and from practice to do homework. Fedyschyn is a straight A student.

"Dance helps me with my discipline. I pay attention better," she said.

In addition to the moves, dancers at GDT learn Russian and French dance vocabulary.

Tammy Wall and Ed Campbell are the instructors at the non-profit Gaston Dance Theatre. Both have performed internationally.

Because the school is non-profit, parents have an active role. Howze is the costume captain for this performance. Parents do much of the costume making and set design.

The school also has an annual spring ballet based on a fairy tale, an autumn gala and a spring performance.

The Nutcracker will be performed Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for students and seniors and \$20 for adults. All tickets are sold in advance. For more information, call 704-865-5943.

Fedyschyn's brother Andrew, 14, plays football. Sister Natalie, 8, is involved in gymnastics.

Fedyschyn's parents are Pam and Gary Howze of Kings Mountain and Gary Fedyschyn of ColUmbia, S.C.

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Sarah Kate Fedyschyn models one of the costumes she will wear in the "Nutcracker" which opens Friday in Gastonia. ANDIE L. BRYMER/HERALD



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD
Darrell Thornburg, left, Donald Crawford and Buck Jolley visit Saturday morning at the Barber Log House. The men are part of the Kings Mountain Backcountry Militia.

Christmas in 1700s comes alive at cabin

Kings Mountain Backcountry Militia members and other re-enactors gathered at the Barber Log House Saturday to show folks what a Revolutionary-era Christmas looked like.

The house was decorated with holly, other evergreens, apples and oranges. Docents Shirley Brutko and Rose Turner greeted guests and offered hot cider and cookies.

Outside by the fire militia members gathered to keep warm and answer questions about their clothing.

Bluegrass and dulcimer was performed. Knives and jewelry from animal horns and teeth were for sale. The log house is located behind the Kings Mountain Historical Museum. For more information, call 704-739-1019.



Buck Jolley helps his granddaughter Brooke Jolley tie her apron strings during Saturday's living history program at the Barber Log House. Sidney Jolley is also pictured.

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