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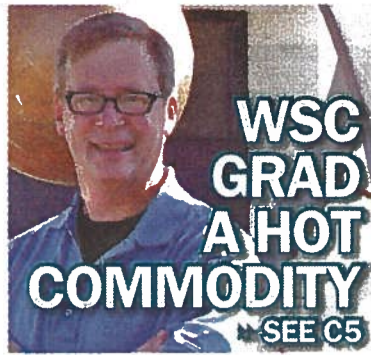
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WINTER'S dream



❄ ❄ ❄ 30 local dancers take center stage in original ballet ❄ ❄ ❄

Matt Smith
Times Staff Writer

The Gunnison Arts Center (GAC) School of Dance plans to whisk the crowd away to a snowy wonderland of enchantment this Saturday, Dec. 19, in a one-night-only production of the original ballet, "A Winter's Dream."

The ballet will take place at 7 p.m. in Western State's Taylor Auditorium. Tickets are for reserved seating only and can be acquired by calling 641.4029 or stopping by the GAC (102 S. Main Street).

After playing supporting roles in professional productions of Christmas classics brought to Gunnison in the past, the GAC troupe is taking center stage in this year's show. Taking over full creative ownership of the annual holiday tradition is a sign of the school's maturation process, according to Crystal Ashe, the GAC's director of dance and arts education.

"It was the next step in a natural pro-



GAC dancers were full of enthusiasm at a rehearsal last weekend.

Photos by Matt Smith

gression for us," she said. "We have all the dancers that are good enough to play lead roles and now they can get that experience of being on stage in a

big production of their very own."

Ashe can be thanked for the school's leap forward in independence. She's been responsible for everything from

writing the original script and mixing the music, to choreographing the hour-long performance and everything in between.

Sue Mundell was instrumental in the design and construction of the costumes seen in the ballet.

"When you're starting a ballet from scratch, all odds are against you," said Ashe.

That's where years of experience in the Asheville (N.C.) City Ballet and Fletcher School of Dance helped. Ashe also dipped into a knowledge bank she acquired from performing in time-honored productions like "The Nutcracker" and "The Wizard of Oz" for inspiration in concocting the fairy tale that unfolds on stage.

A total of 30 dancers, ranging from age 7 to 19, will make the dream come true. Among the most impressive techniques delivered in their display is when the more advanced dancers go

Dance on page C3



Crystal Ashe, putting on the finishing touches to her original ballet.

Photo by Matt Smith

Dance

► from page C1

“en pointe” — a form of ballet presented on the tips of the toes.

“We’re really excited to do it on pointe shoes,” said Bobby Corn, who plays the Snow Fairy. “I really like the fact that we all have bigger parts to play.”

The tale begins with a young girl named Abbey — played by Taylor O’Neal — in the good company of her friends, playing in her snowless home village. When Abbey is left sleeping in the forest later that day, she slips into a dream world where her imagination sets sail.

In the winter world that Abbey awakes in, she is welcomed by a cheerful cast of dancing snowflakes, icicles and woodland creatures. It isn’t until she meets the sinister Snow Witch, played by Talia Martinez, when Abbey discovers the twisted battle between good and evil.

It’s up to Abbey, her personal guardian the Snow Fairy and all the frolicking creatures (see cast of characters) to save the winter wonderland from the Snow Witch and her web of treachery.

“It’s been quite a bit to learn,” said Martinez. “(Crystal) has put so much time into this ... I couldn’t imagine trying to do her job.”

The effort hasn’t gone unnoticed by Ashe’s peers either.

“It’s been a huge effort to put a production like this on, so I really have to applaud (Crystal),” said Sandy Mueller, a dance teacher at the GAC for six years. “Instead of taking a traditional story that’s already been told, she’s added her own specific parts and uniqueness.”

“A Winter’s Dream” begins at 7 p.m. in the Taylor Auditorium. For more information, contact the GAC at 641.4029.

(Matt Smith can be contacted at 970.641.1414 or mattsmith@gunnisonontimes.com)

Who: Gunnison Arts Center School of Dance

What: The original ballet “A Winter’s Dream”

When: Saturday, Dec. 19, at 7 p.m.

Where: Western State’s Taylor Auditorium

Tickets: Ticket prices are \$8, \$15, \$18 or \$25 for premier seating with an invitation to the cast party after the show. Tickets are reserved seating, so drop by the Gunnison Arts Center or call 641.4029 to choose from three ticket prices and sections.

Cast of Characters

Abbey: Taylor O’Neal

Sister: Jessica Mast

Mother: Rita Bohn

Father: Bob Wojtko

Friend 1: Sarah Orth

Friend 2: Dori Scott

Evil Snow Witch: Thalia Martinez

Trees: Michaela Butts, Melissa Duetsch, Kelly Mundell.

Lead Snowflake: Savannah Nelson

Snowflakes: Caylor Albers, Jessica Mast, Sarah Orth, Dori Scott.

Mini Snowflakes: Hannah Mueller, Eileen Richter, Jayde Wilkerson, Madison Vickers.

Snow Fairy: Bobbie Corn

Field Mice: Jordan Preston and Mary Standard.

Penguins: Megan Jenkins, Molly Klowas, Julia Novak, Gemma Vincent, and Carmen Zeikus.

Swans: Camilla Alarcon, Michaela Butts, Melissa Duetsch, Kelly Mundell, Rhiannon Parent.

Lead Icicle: Caylor Albers

Icicles: Jessica Mast, Sarah Orth, Dori Scott.

Erin Guy

Guards: Shawnda Arnett, Ingrid Butts, Kate Orr.