

Dani's Papers

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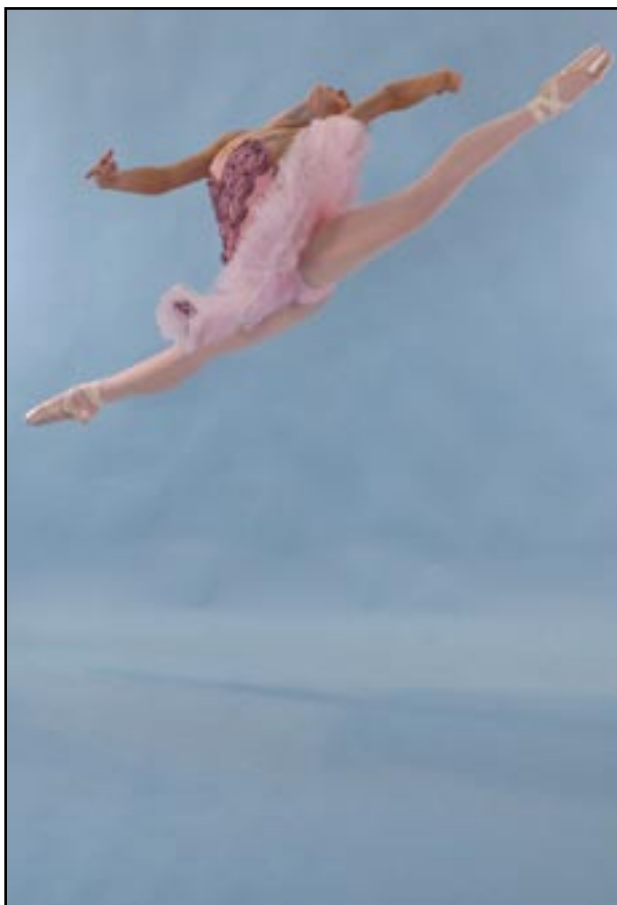
Entertainment In The Hamptons

review: nutcracker at stony brook university

The Seiskaya Ballet's performance of the Nutcracker premiered this past weekend at the Staller Center at Stony Brook University. There was not an empty seat in the house, as families patiently awaited the opening of this traditional holiday spectacular, and once the performance began, our imaginations were transported to another time, another place and another world filled with fantasy and dream-like characters.

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker (an odd fairytale he composed in 1891) has been dazzling audiences for years, and the Seiskaya Ballet delivered a first rate version with its young talent, elegant costumes and vibrant set designs. The storyline has been modified by some in the past with slightly different variations apart from the original Nutcracker, but the main thread of this quirky tale remains. Although the story is not a typical fairytale, because of its unusual combination of puzzling segments and strange characters that don't quite fit together, a feeling of delightful enchantment filters through the haziness.

Dancers Christina Schifano, Sara Dowd and Kiersten Engel, with special guests Luciano Lazzarotto and Michael Cusumano, display stupendous talent and captured our undivided attention with every leaping bound. Each dancer brings something special to the show with of course a few standouts including a beautiful performance of "Sugar Plum Pas de Deux" by Christina Schifano, whose poise and grace light up the stage, and the powerful Luciano Lazzarotto (who studied at the American Ballet and San Francisco



Ballet School in addition to a long list of international credits).

The choreography of every scene was seamlessly orchestrated by Choreographer Valia Seiskaya, who founded the Seiskaya Ballet School in 1974. Seiskaya has trained many students who have gone on to professional careers and who have been awarded scholarships at ma-

ior theater companies such as the American Ballet Theater, New York City Ballet, and Boston Ballet, just to name a few.

Some of the more visually beautiful scenes in this performance of the Nutcracker included the "Dance of the Snowflakes" and the "Dance of the Flowers." It was almost like each scene became more magical than the next, with the exact combination of movement, music and set design.

The costumes were outstanding and Costume Mistress Ronni Camhi's creativity and use of bold colors, specifically with the Victorian gowns, were radiant. Also her use of soft muted tones highlighted with a splash of sparkle on a few costumes added to the dream-like mood of several scenes.

And finally, through the innovativeness of Set and Scenery Designer Margaret Piotrowska, an ordinary stage was transformed into a magical land with colorful and interchangeable scenery that was perfectly matched with impeccable lighting created by Lighting Designer Elizabeth Silver. This complemented by brilliant stage direction by Stage Manager Ted Kastrinos made for a flawless show.

The Seiskaya Ballet delivers one of the most memorable and delightful versions of the Nutcracker that should not be missed! The Staller Center for the Arts is like a little slice of Broadway set in the middle of Long Island.

For more information on future performances and ticket sales, please call 631-632-ARTS.

-Kelly Krieger