

'Swan Lake' stars return to perform in Syracuse City Ballet's brand new 'Nutcracker'




Party Scene from Nutcracker (Photo courtesy of James M. Peluso)




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on October 27, 2016 at 12:27 PM, updated October 27, 2016 at 12:31 PM

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Syracuse City Ballet's new production of "The Nutcracker" will blend all the tradition of Tchaikovsky's holiday classic with colorful sets and costumes and new choreography while bringing back dancers who have thrilled area audiences.

Performances are Saturday, Dec. 3 at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 4 at 2 p.m. at the Oncenter Crouse Hinds Theater.

Tickets, ranging from \$17-\$75, are available at www.syracusecityballet.com or by calling the Oncenter box office at 315-435-2121. Tickets for children 12 and under are \$10.

Central New York's professional ballet company welcomes Cincinnati Ballet soloists Abigail Morwood as the Sugar Plum Fairy and James Gilmer as the Cavalier. Morwood and Gilmer starred in the SCB's 2015 production of "Swan Lake." Zachary Downer and Claire Rathbun, both featured in the company's recent "An Intimate Evening with Syracuse City Ballet" will perform as soloists as well.

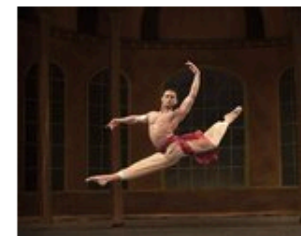


Abigail Morwood

James Peluso

Morwood, who won audience acclaim in 2015's "Swan Lake," has had an unusual path to ballet stardom. "I got my first contract when I was 15," she says. With her parents' support, Morwood left formal high school to dance full-time with Montgomery Ballet, earning her diploma in the evenings after rehearsal. "I had only been dancing five years, but I studied YouTube videos and books about ballet technique like a crazy person all day, every day. I had to learn somehow." After years of formal training and dedication she is now a Senior soloist with the Cincinnati Ballet.

Gilmer, also a star of 2015's "Swan Lake" has climbed through the rankings of Cincinnati Ballet, from Apprentice to Corps de Ballet to Soloist. In addition to dancing, Gilmer is an avid weight lifter- enhancing the strength and power of his artistry as a dancer.



James Gilmer

James Peluso

Downer, who has been seen by millions on "So You Think You Can Dance," will explode across the stage as the soldier doll, in the Russian dance and in the Spanish Dance, new to this year's production.

"I've wanted to add Spanish for years," said company Artistic and Executive Director Kathleen Rathbun, "but I really wanted to do it justice and make it unique and special. When we found out Zach was available, given his amazing talent and artistry, I knew it was time."

Claire Rathbun, who grew up with Syracuse City Ballet, was a 2014 Youth America Grand Prix New York City medalist and has danced with Washington Ballet. Currently, she is featured in the New York developmental lab production of the musical "Little Dancer," based on the art of Edgar Degas.

The production also features the company's outstanding Corps de Ballet and the cast includes retired news anchor Mike Price as Drosselmeyer, joined in the party scene by Shakespeare Festival director Ronnie Bell and local emcee and former Syracuse Sync winner Scott Lombardo.

Costumes and sets include a new Mother Ginger and new lamp designed by Paul Capotosto. Kathleen Rathbun describes Capotosto's work as "magical," and adds that "the new sets and costumes will add to the excitement of this year's production. Paul brings my ideas to life."

Schools and home schoolers alike are welcome to bring students to "A Children's Nutcracker," Friday Dec. 2 at noon. (The 10 a.m. performance is sold out) This is a one-hour long performance designed to fit within the school day and part of the company's commitment to reaching students throughout Central New York.

"This has to be the highlight of our performance run", Stephanie Dattellas, Ballet Mistress and Outreach coordinator says. "I love to peek out to see the thousands of kids eager for the curtain to rise, sitting on the edge of their seats with excitement. Their enthusiasm energizes the cast." For details, contact the company at syracusecityballet@gmail.com.