

OUTINGS

The 'Nut' dons a zoot suit

CARL MACGOWAN

December 12, 2004

What: "Clara's Dream: A Jazz Nutcracker," at the Colden Center, Flushing.

Why: Roll over, Drosselmeyer, and tell Tchaikovsky the news. "The Nutcracker" dances to a whole different beat in this production by MaD Theatricals.

The Portsmouth, N.H., company's artistic director, Drika Overton, created the jazz-tap version of the venerable holiday ballet four years ago. The "Jazz Nut," as she calls it, was inspired by the Duke Ellington-Billy Strayhorn version of Tchaikovsky's masterpiece.

In this version, the Nutcracker wears a red zoot suit, and little Clara finds herself transported to Duke's Place, a 1940s nightclub. In her dreams, Clara sees herself dancing like a jazz princess, but she is admonished by her restrictive parents.

Her liberated aunt and uncle teach her to follow the beat of her own drummer. During her journey, Clara encounters leaping cowboys, Irish music, jazz, swing, African dance and drumming, tango, the lindy hop, bebop and Latin music.

The cast is led by Katey Yoder as Clara, with Brenda Bufalino as Auntie Groove, Bob Thomas as Uncle Dross, Dean Diggins as the father, Overton as the mother and Josh Hilberman as the Nutcracker. The music is by the Paul Arslanian jazz sextet. Arslanian composed and arranged the score.

When and where: Sunday, Dec. 12, 7 p.m., at the Colden Center, Queens College, 65-30 Kissena Blvd., Flushing.

How much: \$15, \$12 children 12 and younger.

Getting there: By car, take the Long Island Expressway to the Main Street exit, and take the eastbound service road (Horace Harding Expressway). Turn right onto Reeves Avenue and drive into parking lots.

More questions: 718-793-8080.

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