

~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Live 'Nutcracker' ballet returns to the Orinda stage



Second Act Land of the Sweets

Photo Jorge Gomez

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda Ballet Academy & company will return live to the Orinda library auditorium stage Dec. 10 through 12 to perform Pyotr Tchaikovsky's classic ballet, "The Nutcracker." Evening performances of "A Sweet Dream Nutcracker" will be on Friday and Saturday at 6:30 p.m., with matinee performances on Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. Local students will be joined by professional guest artists Vinnie Jones and Maurice Monge.

Artistic Director Patricia Tomlinson is a graduate of Saint Mary's College. She went on to study at the NYC School of American Ballet, training for five years with George Balanchine and Alexandra Danilova. After that, she danced as a soloist for over 17 years, first with the Houston Ballet, then the Pennsylvania Ballet, then coming to California to dance with the Diablo Ballet.

After retirement, Tomlinson started the school in Orinda. The school, located in the Orinda Community Center,

is currently in its 13th season. "The school has had some really nice dancers through the years, including a student who danced with Atlanta Ballet and is now with the Nevada Dance Theater, a professional ballet company," Tomlinson says. "Some students went off to dance colleges, either (with a) major or minor in dance."

In addition to performing a full-length "Nutcracker" in two acts, the academy also presents a story ballet annually in the spring, such as "Swan Lake," "Sleeping Beauty," "The Firebird," "Peter Pan," or "Cinderella." Students from age 3 to 18 dance with guest artists. Classes at the academy run year-round, with sessions in the fall, winter/spring and summer. During the pandemic, Tomlinson started virtual classes. Many of her students, she says, got ballet bars at home; some got special dance flooring. "There were lots of challenges, but everyone stayed super positive." Tomlinson teaches the majority of the classical ballet classes. She employs another teacher to fo-

cus on contemporary dance.

In "The Nutcracker," a young girl, Clara, is given a special magical Nutcracker Doll from by her uncle Drosselmeyer, who performs magic for her family and friends. That evening Clara looks for her Nutcracker Doll under the Christmas tree. She finds the doll has grown life-size as well as the toy soldiers and mice. There is a battle scene. A terrible Mouse Queen tries to attack the Nutcracker. Clara throws her shoe at the Mouse Queen. The Mouse Queen breaks and the magic spell placed on the Nutcracker Doll is broken. He returns to his true self, the Nutcracker Prince. In thanks for Clara's bravery, the Prince takes Clara on a wonderful adventure, to the Land of Sweets, where he is from. They pass through an Enchanted Winter forest where the Snow Queen and her snow-maidens dance for Clara and the Prince. Once they arrive at the Land of the Sweets, the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Sweets greet Clara and the Prince. They celebrate the

Prince's return with joyous dancing.

Tickets are available in advance or at the door. Advance tickets for children 2-12 are

\$22 and \$25 for adults. At the door, tickets will be \$25 for children and adults. Seating is general seating.

INFO & TICKET LINKS HERE

www.orindaballetacademy.com/2021-nutcracker-ticket-information.html

Food Bank receives \$35K donation from MCC's Turkey Shoot Tournament



Photo provided

Submitted by Paul Boero

The Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano received about \$35,000 in net proceeds from the MCC Turkey Shoot golf tournament, held Oct. 28 at Moraga Country Club. Nearly 100 members participated in the scramble tournament which included a pre-round breakfast and concluded with lunch and awards. The top five teams, as well as

closest to the hole and accurate drive contests, were presented with 25 certificates for turkeys. The event chairman, Paul Boero, thanked the many participants who contributed as underwriters and hole sponsors as well as in-kind donors who contributed tee prizes, bottles of wine for on course prizes, and gift certificates for turkeys to competition winners.

All contributed to the success of the event's goal, having a fun-filled day of golf while simultaneously contributing to The Food Bank. Following lunch, Joel Sjostrom, president of the Food Bank, presented information about its increase in demand since the onset of the pandemic and the great number of persons needing food in Contra Costa and Solano counties. Joel also cited a new emphasis in servicing victims of wildfires and providing ready-to-eat meals for the many families displaced due to the firestorms. This year's event marked the 9th Annual Turkey Shoot and the proceeds generated are able to feed over 700 families for one week. With this year's contribution and sums raised in prior years, the total Turkey Shoot contribution exceeds \$310,000.

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