



Submitted

# Winter Wonderland Ballet

**JULIE McCOY**

It is a performance that will get you in the holiday spirit, celebrate winter and warm your heart. The Academy of Classical Ballet will present “A Winter Wonderland Ballet” at the Campbell Heritage Theatre, 1 W. Campbell Avenue, on Saturday, December 12, at 7pm; and Sunday, December 13, at 2pm.

“I want people to enjoy the excitement and wonder of the winter holiday,” said Crystal Petzel, Owner and Director of the Academy of Classical Ballet. “If they have never seen a ballet, this is a

good one to start with. There is something for everyone to enjoy and it could become a family’s new holiday tradition.”

A Winter Wonderland tells the story of a young heroine, Beatrice (Abigail Moody), who after trying to skate with her friends on a frozen lake, gets lost in the woods. She goes on an adventure through enchanted woods, where she encounters penguins, reindeer and other animals. She then discovers a winter wonderland, where she meets magical characters like the Winter Fairy, the

Peppermint Princess and Jack Frost.

Moody, who is playing the role of Beatrice, explains, “She is kind of an outcast in the beginning. She doesn’t know how to skate. [But] at the end of the ballet, everyone loves her. They realize how great she was. They just didn’t give her a chance.”

She has taken on a number of different roles in A Winter Wonderland Ballet since its inception in 2010, and getting to play the lead role this year has allowed her to grow and develop as a dancer, she pointed out, “You

have to be happy and sad... these different emotions,” she explained.

It’s a challenging role, she admits, but she has friends who previously played Beatrice, so she has been able to rely on them for tips.

Moody likes ballet because it gets her in the spirit for winter. “I have been doing it since I was little. It’s kind of become a tradition for me,” she said.

After each performance, there will be a Snowman Soiree, during which audience members can come on stage and meet the dancers

in costume. The show runs for approximately one hour and fifteen minutes with no intermission.

Changes are made to A Winter Wonderland Ballet each year to ensure it is not an exact repeat of the year before. "We change and add things to the ballet every year, so if you have seen it in the past, come back and see what's new," Petzel said.

"A Winter Wonderland Ballets great for people of all ages," Petzel emphasized. "The variety of the characters, the story, the pace of the dances, and the ages of the dancers keep everything interesting. Younger audience members might see children their own age performing as elves or penguins and other will appreciate the advanced dancers and guest artist."

There is a total of sixty-five dancers in A Winter Wonderland Ballet, who range in age from six years old to adult and are all students at the Academy. Guest artist Anton Pankevich is a professional dancer.

"Attendance at A Winter Wonderland Ballet increases every year," Petzel said, noting that both performances are expected to sell out this year. The theatre has seating for eight hundred people.

"Any student who wishes to be in A Winter Wonderland Ballet can participate," Petzel said. "However, it is a big time commitment for the dancers, and their families need to be prepared to help with such things as costumes, marketing and community outreach."

Petzel is the artistic director and choreographer for A Winter Wonderland Ballet.

"I teach and coach all the dancers, I run rehearsals. I manage the costuming," she said.

Daniel Simmons is a new teacher on staff this year. He is helping with the new choreography and rehearsals.

Ellen Polito, of San Jose, has attended Winter Wonderland Ballet for years and is looking forward to seeing it again this year. "You see the kids," Polito said, and "You get to see them progress in stages as they grow up. I am looking forward to seeing her (Moody) shine on her own. I do love ballet. But it's also fun to see the little kids learning and growing and what Crystal has done. It's a cute story. It's fun to see how the story morphs a little bit; how it changes and grows."

Polito's friend, Julie Blake, of Campbell, who accompanies her every year, said she enjoys supporting Petzel and her school. "Campbell doesn't have any ballet schools of the caliber she is offering," Blake said. "It's a step above a typical dance school. She is training at a pre-professional level. She has got little kids, but her older kids could go on to audition at companies all over the country. It's exciting to see the little ones; how excited they are to be on stage. It's a Christmas tradition for us at this point."

**Interested?**

Tickets can be purchased on Campbell Heritage Theatre's website, at <http://www.cityofcampbell.com/560/Ticket-Information> or by calling 408.866.2700. The cost is \$20 per ticket, plus an additional \$5 if you chose to participate in the Snowman Soiree.

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