

Ventura

Thursday, April 12, 2012

A Cyrillic spin on Cinderella

Russian family dances in Ventura County Ballet

By Anne Kallas
Special to The Star

Dancing is more than a vocation for the Domrachev-Fliagina family of Ventura.

It is a passion born in the dormitories of the Perm State Choreographic College in Russia, where generations have learned demanding classical Russian ballet techniques.

The family members will bring that rigorous training to the stage when they perform in the Ventura County Ballet production of "Cinderella" at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday at the Oxnard Performing Arts Center, 800 Hobson Way.

Mom Marina Fliagina will dance the role of the Wicked Stepmother, dad Sergei Domrachev will perform the role of a Wicked Stepsister and daughter Sasha, 9, will play a Flower Blossom.

The oldest daughter, Leeza, 11, is in Russia studying dance at the Perm State, following in the ballet slippers of her mother and father. She is the third generation of Domrachevs to have attended the school.

Leeza was selected after a rigorous audition at which more than 300 students tried out for 23 spots. She will be studying ballet until graduation at 18.

The family stays in touch through Skype, and Domrachev will be leaving to collect Leeza in a few weeks for her summer break.

Although Domrachev

and Fliagina attended the school, considered one of the best in Russia, they didn't become romantically involved until after summer break.

See CINDERELLA, 2B



PHOTOS BY CHUCK KIRMAN/THE STAR

Dancers rehearse Tuesday evening at the Oxnard Performing Arts Center for the upcoming ballet production of "Cinderella."



Sergei Domrachev (from left) is a Wicked Stepsister and his wife, Marina Fliagina, plays the Wicked Stepmother. The couple's 9-year-old daughter Sasha will play a Flower Blossom, while 11-year-old daughter Leeza is studying dance in Russia.

IF YOU GO

What: Ventura County Ballet's production of "Cinderella"
When: 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday
Where: Oxnard Performing Arts Center, 800 Hobson Way

Cost: \$10 to \$25 for general admission, \$12 for children and \$17 for seniors in selected seating; call 486-2424 or go to www.venturacountyballet.com or www.oxnardpacc.com

CINDERELLA

from 1B

they graduated.

Domrachev was dancing as a soloist with the Los Angeles Classical Ballet.

Fliagina, who was dancing with a Russian ballet troupe traveling the world, arrived in San Francisco during a break in her schedule to visit a girlfriend. The two decided they wanted to drive to Los Angeles.

Fliagina laughs at the memory of how she and her friend, who had just received her driver's license, made their way down the coast.

"We didn't even know how to put in the gas," she said. "We didn't know anything."

After arriving in Los Angeles, Fliagina connected with Domrachev, whom she had known in school in Russia. He gave the young ballerina a tour of Hollywood.

"We knew each other in the past — we were in the same company — but there wasn't anything," Fliagina said. But when the young man showed her the razzle and dazzle of Hollywood, Fliagina was impressed.

"We saw the stars on Hollywood Boulevard and all the lights," she said.

"She fell in love," Domrachev said.

It took some doing, but eventually Fliagina moved to Santa Barbara, where she joined Domrachev,



CHUCK KIRMAN/THE STAR

Sergei Domrachev and his daughter Sasha will perform in "Cinderella" this weekend.

who was then a principal dancer at the State Street Ballet. Fliagina said she hung up her pointe shoes after having her first child, but when she was asked to fill in as a stepsister during a performance of "Cinderella" on stage in Montana, she had to get in shape quickly.

"I had two weeks to get in shape. I had to do Pilates every day," she said.

After second daughter Sasha was born, however, Fliagina decided her

days as a prima ballerina were over and she turned to teaching. She discovered the Ballet Academy Ventura, founded by Kathleen Noblin.

Noblin said she was thrilled to be able to hire the Russian dancer to complement the staff of her school, which teaches the Russian Vaganova technique.

"I just knew of her fantastic teaching," Noblin said, explaining that she hopes to train dancers

who can go on to professional ballet companies or dance programs in colleges and universities.

While Domrachev continues to dance starring roles in Santa Barbara and around the world during tours, Fliagina is able to express her creativity in choreography. The family lives at Working Artists Ventura. They enjoy its creative energy.

"In Santa Barbara, you have old people and young college kids," Domrachev said. "Here you have the middle."

"Cinderella" was selected as the spring production of Ventura County Ballet, the performing company of the Ballet Academy Ventura, because it's a family-friendly show that is familiar and fun, Noblin said.

The family is excited about the upcoming production, although Domrachev, who everyone — even Sasha — admits is hilarious, said wearing pointe shoes has proved tough.

"Men don't wear pointe shoes," he said, although the role of Wicked Stepsister requires it, even for men.

In the role of Wicked Stepmother, Fliagina is able to avoid the dreaded pointe shoes.

She said Sasha gets a kick out of her parents' roles.

"She keeps saying, 'My papa is Mama's daughter,'" Fliagina said.