

# Ventura County Ballet Company preps for 'Nutcracker'

By [Amy Bentley](#)

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DAVID YAMAMOTO/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Anna Miller, 15, playing the Snow Queen and Kenny Borchard, playing the Snow King, practice a duet during a rehearsal of the Ventura County Ballet Academy's "The Nutcracker" at the Ventura County Ballet Academy studio in Ventura.

Ballet fans who attend an upcoming performance of the Ventura County Ballet Company's "Nutcracker" are in for some special treats.

Three of the county's top student dancers – 15-year-olds Anna Miller, Victoria Smith and Madeleine Riddle – take the stage with internationally known ballet stars for six performances accompanied by live symphony music.

The shows are Nov. 17-18 at the Oxnard Performing Arts Center and Dec. 1-2 at [Ventura College](#)'s newly renovated Performing Arts Center.

The second weekend of the company's shows at Ventura College will be headlined by Russian-born star Sergey Kheylik, who has danced with several major ballet companies internationally. Most recently, Kheylik performed with Rock the Ballet, which was featured in Sting's charity event at Carnegie Hall, performing onstage with Elton John, Lady Gaga and Bruce Springsteen.

Aaron Smyth, a finalist in Australia's Got Talent in 2008 and who is now with the Royal Ballet in London, will dance in the Oxnard performances. Both men play the role of the Prince.

The Ventura College Symphony Orchestra and the Ventura College Choir will perform at all six shows, adding a new dimension of live music instead of prerecorded music.

"It's just like going to Lincoln Center in Ventura County," said Kathleen Noblin, owner and director of the Ballet Academy Ventura and executive director of the Ventura County Ballet.

"To bring in the caliber of international stars that we bring in is just remarkable. For the students to have danced in a professional performance alongside stars of this caliber, it's an opportunity that many students do not get. The professionals push them to a new level," Noblin said.

**(Photo gallery: [Top dancers will perform in Nutcracker](#))**

For Anna, a Ventura resident, and Victoria, of Oxnard, this season's performances may be their last with the local company before they leave to dance on scholarship at top foreign ballet academies.

Beginning next fall, Anna plans to study at the Vaganova Academy in St. Petersburg, Russia, as she pursues a professional ballet career.

"It's one of the best ballet schools in the world. Baryshnikov studied there," said Anna, who attends school at El Camino High School on independent study and Ventura College.

Ballet is Anna's passion and outlet.

"I'm shy in person, and when I dance I feel like I can let all of these emotions out. It's really, really special to me," she said.

Anna has been a national training scholar for the past three years with the American Ballet Theater. She's spent the past three summers with the ballet theater in New York, training intensively for five weeks and helping younger dancers for an additional two weeks.

Anna would like to eventually join a European ballet company.

"I really want to explore and go to different countries. I really love Russian ballet," she said, noting that European and Russian ballet companies are starting to accept Americans as principal dancers.

Anna will dance the role of the Snow Queen and three other characters in the company's "Nutcracker." She also continues preparing to dance in a pair of major student ballet competitions early next year: the 2013 Youth America Grand Prix in February, the world's largest student ballet competition for young dancers. She placed third last year in the classical dance category for the junior Age Division. She also plans to perform at the Los Angeles Music Center Spotlight Awards Competition in March.

Victoria, a sophomore at Saint Augustine Academy in Ventura, is dancing the role of the Marzipan Candy and is a demi-soloist in two separate numbers. She has received scholarships to the Rock School of Pennsylvania Ballet for the last two years. She attended a summer program two years ago and was offered a full-time scholarship but decided to stay local for now so she can study ballet later in Germany, where she was born. Victoria is also training to compete in the 2013 Youth America Grand Prix and the Music Center Spotlight Awards Competition. A lot of companies from around the world attend the contests to scout for students, she noted.

Victoria hopes to attend the Stuttgart Ballet's John Cranko Training Center in Stuttgart, Germany in the fall of 2013. She will travel there to audition in December. Then she would like to join the Stuttgart Ballet or another major European company.

"I find the careers have greater longevity in Europe," said Victoria, who also plans to pursue a business degree.

Madeleine, a sophomore at Foothill Technology High School, will be the first dancer to play both the highly coveted role of Clara and Fritz in this season's "Nutcracker" for the Ventura County Ballet Company.

"It's very challenging to switch. They both have separate personalities," said Madeleine, who aspires to become a teacher. Madeleine said she would like to attend UCLA after high school and earn a degree in the arts, dancing, music or literature.

For show tickets, visit: [www.venturacountyballet.com](http://www.venturacountyballet.com).

<http://www.vcstar.com/news/2012/nov/15/ventura-county-ballet-company-preps-for/>