



Madeleine Riddle and Makenna Ortiz, alternately play Clara in *The Nutcracker*. Photos by SunWest Photography

Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* to feature 103 Ventura dancers

A cast of international and local dancers, plus a 52-piece symphony orchestra will dazzle audiences with timeless ballet while performing *The Nutcracker*. The Ventura County Ballet Company (VCBC) continues to reinvent this family classic by delivering professionally choreographed performances.

As this year's production of "*The Nutcracker*" ballet ushers in the holiday season, 103 dancers - all residents of Ventura - will make up the majority of this all-star cast.

Anchoring the cast, Madeleine Riddle and Makenna Ortiz of Ventura alternately slip into the coveted role of Clara, a role both young women have dreamed of since they began dancing ballet at the ages of 4 and 5.

Madaleine Riddle is a 14 year old

student at Foothill Technology High School in Ventura.

Madeleine told us "I started dancing when I was four, and have been dancing for ten years, and this will be my twentieth performance at OPAC (Oxnard Performing Arts Center). When I found out that I was Clara, I felt it was like a dream, just like the dream scene in the *Nutcracker*, where Clara is dreaming about her *Nutcracker*. I feel like I'm going to wake up, but I know this dream is reality. I'm Clara, and I have a role to dance."

"Last year was the first year that my company danced with a live orchestra. It was an amazing experience, especially since I had never danced with an orchestra before. I also play the piano, and so the music was even more amazing and beautiful than it seemed to others who don't play an instrument. I share the role with one of my friends, Makenna Ortiz, we've grown up dancing together. This production is really bigger than anyone can imagine. Over a hundred dancers, with ten professionals, amazing scenery, and a 52-piece orchestra. It truly is the best way to get your family in the holiday spirit."

New staging and video effects will sprinkle the classic production with modern flair, and a freshly installed snow scene will dazzle crowds as characters pirouette through twinkling flurries and dance to Tchaikovsky's immortal score. The 52-piece Ventura College Symphony Orchestra (VCSO) will create a live and interactive musical compliment to the dancing.

"*The Nutcracker*" will play at 2 and 7 p.m on Nov. 19 and 2 p.m. on Nov. 20 at the Oxnard Performing Arts Center, 800 Hobson Way.

The cost is adults: \$10 - \$25, children 10 years and under \$12 (excludes center orchestra) and seniors: 65 and older \$17 (excludes center orchestra).

A complimentary sugar plum cookie reception for ticket holders will follow each 2 p.m. matinee. Tickets may be purchased at <http://www.oxnardpacc.com> or the theater box office 486-2424, or visit <http://www.venturacountyballet.com/Performances.html>

The Ventura County Ballet Company and Ballet Academy Ventura, founded in 1998, presents two to three large scale productions each year.