

Saturday, December 4, 2004

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Local teens dance in Nutcracker

BY BEA LEWIS

Northern Lakes Region Bureau

WOLFEBORO — Three Lakes Region teens are thanking their lucky stars that they had the opportunity to dance in a professional production of *The Nutcracker*.

Brooke Harding, 14, of Gilford; Jenna Rogato, 16, of Laconia; and Maria Ambrose, 15, of Meredith — each an accomplished dancer — were selected by audition to perform in the Christmas classic with the Boston Dance Company.

Performances took place on Nov. 27 at Kingswood Regional High School in Wolfeboro and drew capacity crowds to both shows. A second series of performances will be take place today at the historic Rochester Opera House, at 3 and 7 p.m.

"It's pretty exciting," Harding said of the chance to dance on the same stage as Elizabeth Gates of Houston, Texas, who played the Sugar Plum Fairy and male lead Christopher Alloways-Ramsey, also of Texas, who danced the role of the Cavalier.

Harding, who has been dancing for eight years, working with Claire Jordan and Edgewater in Gilford, said she was encouraged by her grandmother. When her friends began dancing, she started with them.

"They've all quit and I'm still dancing," she says with a smile.

She hopes to study dance at college and perhaps land a spot in a professional company.

The three young women had to commit to Saturday practices for eight weeks in preparation for them to dance the roles of candy canes in Kingdom of the Sweets.

Her mother, Marilyn, who studied dance in college and has choreographed many area productions, encouraged Ambrose who starting dancing at age 5, said she.

"It's the largest audience I've every danced in front of," said Ambrose. WMUR-TV Channel 9 filmed Ambrose as she practiced for the production. The segment will air on *New Hampshire Chronicle* on Thursday, Dec. 16, at 7:30 p.m.

Ambrose began dancing with Sally's School of Dance in Meredith, working with Sally Downs and Lois Berry.

Rogato has show business in her blood. Her father, Jim, acts, dances, and sings and plays lead guitar in the Rusty Rock Star Road Show. She recounted that,

when she was just a toddler, her mother said she would try and mimic dancing that she saw on television. Her mother enrolled her in a ballet class at age 2. She studied at Diane's Dance Academy and its predecessor, Edgewater.

"It was an amazing experience. It was like everything was meant to be," Rogato said of the full-length professional production that includes lavish costuming, sets, and special effects.

Harding said they had the opportunity to watch members of the Boston Dance Company perform from the wings.

"They made everything look so perfect," she said.

The production was possible through collaboration between the Boston Dance Company, Edra Toth's Academy of Dance and Music and the Rochester Opera House.

"Working with this group of young dancers has been a personally fulfilling experience. Their dedication and commitment to *The Nutcracker* is very impressive and you will see it shine in their performance," said Toth, a former prima ballerina with the Boston Ballet.

Tickets for the performance can be obtained by calling the Rochester Opera House Box Office at 335-1992.

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