



GREG GILBERT

The lavish "Nutcracker" production of Seattle's Pacific Northwest Ballet celebrates its 20th season.

Dancing through the holidays with Christmas 'Nutcrackers'

By **BOB HICKS**
THE OREGONIAN

Nutcrackers, nutcrackers everywhere — but this year, things are changing as swiftly and emphatically as the ballet's burgeoning Christmas tree.

Here's where to get your sugarplum fix:

Oregon Ballet Theatre: It's a whole new ballgame, as OBT has retired its 10-year-old production of "The Nutcracker" and is replacing it with the version created by the great George Balanchine in 1954 for New York City Ballet. It will be the only Balanchine "Nutcracker" on the West Coast.

Campbell Baird's gorgeous sets and costumes, inspired by the enameled eggs and other jewelry of the Russian designer Fabergé, are gone. So is James Canfield's choreography.

New artistic director Christopher Stowell is ushering in the classic American version, the one that did more than any other to spread Nutcrackermania across the country. Expect to see more, and more sophisticated, dance than in the Canfield version. Peter Farmer's sets and costumes were designed originally for Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre.

Dec. 11-27, Keller Auditorium, 222 S.W. Clay St.; \$10-\$90; family

performances Dec. 16, 17, 18, 22 and 24, \$7-\$75; Ticketmaster; 503-222-5598, www.obt.org.

Pacific Northwest Ballet: The Seattle company's lavish production, designed by children's author and illustrator Maurice Sendak, is celebrating its 20th season. This one pulls out all the stops. Choreography is by Kent Stowell; he and Sendak returned to E.T.A. Hoffman's original, and slightly darker, 1816 story "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King" for part of their inspiration.

Nov. 28-Dec. 28, Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, Seattle; \$15-\$94; 206-441-2424.

Pacific Festival Ballet: More than 100 children will join professional guest dancers Diana Perez, Zachary Carroll and Shalene Eve in this community ballet company's 10th "Nutcracker."

Dec. 5-7 and 12-14, Forum Theatre, Portland Community College/Sylvania, 12000 S.W. 49th Ave.; \$17-\$19; 503-977-1753.

Mt. Hood Ballet Academy: More than 40 students from the Gresham dance school, ages 4-18, plus some adult dancers, in the academy's 11th annual "Christmas With the Nutcracker."

Dec. 5-6, Reynolds High School,

1698 S.W. Cherry Park Road, Troutdale; \$10-\$13; 503-667-6698.

Eugene Ballet Company: Artistic director Toni Pimble's traditional version, with live orchestra, professional company and lots of young dancers and singers.

Dec. 19-21, Hult Center for the Performing Arts, Eugene; \$18-\$42 (7 p.m. Dec. 21 performance, with recorded music, \$12-\$27); 541-682-5000.

"La Boutique Fantastique" at Pacific Artists Ballet Theatre: No, it's not "The Nutcracker." But "The Fantastic Toyshop," as it's called in English, is a holiday ballet, and it's a rarity that promises to be one of the most intriguing dance projects of the holiday season. Based on an 1888 Viennese ballet by Joseph Bayer ("Die Puppenfee," or "The Fairy Doll"), it was created in 1919 for impresario Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Léonide Massine choreographed to a score by Rossini and Respighi. Sets and costumes have been re-created based on Andre Derain's designs for the original production. The dance is short, and the company is billing it as an ideal first ballet for younger children.

Dec. 19-21, Performing Arts Center, Portland Community College/Sylvania, 12000 S.W. 49th Ave.; \$10-\$15; 503-452-8448.