

A LOCAL TWIST ON A CLASSIC

Central Pennsylvania Nutcracker' comes to Eisenhower

by Karina Yücel
STAFF WRITER

Carr-Chellman first took her
to "A Central Pennsylvania
four years ago.
her 7-year-old Aila will per-
form in the Central Pennsylvania
Nutcracker along with her brothers.
The show will be performed at 7 p.m.
and 3 p.m. Sunday in
the Eisenhower Auditorium.

Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$20 for sen-
iors and \$15 for children 12

and an education department head and
said she took her
to the performance when the 3-
year-old had an interest in ballet.

"I think she would make it
a wonderful thing. I told my hus-
band to be back by intermission."

Aila said she and Aila sat in
the audience throughout the whole
show and Aila danced and sang along

with Aila. Aila made it through the
show, Carr-Chellman said. "She

is playing a snow angel
with her brother and Jules, both 8, are
in the party scene and

"They are very excited that they all get
to be in the show this year," Carr-
Chellman said.

Carr-Chellman has been attending ver-
sions of the Nutcracker since she was a
young girl and said "A Central
Pennsylvania Nutcracker" is among her
favorites because of its historical aspect.

Sarah Kopac, administrative director of
the Ballet Theatre of Central
Pennsylvania, said the show is interesting
because its story takes place in the State
College area.

Alex and Andrea Hill, co-founders and
directors of the Ballet Theatre of Central
Pennsylvania, went on a visit with their
family to the Centre Furnace Mansion.

Kopac said the Hills were enchanted by
the history of the area, specifically with
important Centre County families like the
Thompson family and their friends the
Boals, the Curtins and the Irvins.

The Hills then wrote "A Central
Pennsylvania Nutcracker" based on their
interest in those families.

Kopac said the youngest Thompson
daughter, Annie, was the black sheep. All
of her siblings went on to have their own
businesses, while she did not.

Annie lived to be 55 and seemed to have
disappeared from all historical references
before then.

Annie's story fueled the Hill's interest
and is the back-story to "A Central

If you go

What: "A Central Pennsylvania
Nutcracker"

Where: Eisenhower Auditorium

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 11 and 3
p.m. Sunday, Dec. 12

Details: Tickets are \$25 for adults,
\$20 for seniors and students and \$15
for children 12 and under.

Pennsylvania Nutcracker." "The Party"
scene in Act I is filled with guests such as
Andrew Gregg Curtin, George Boai, Evan
Pugh and his fiancée Rebecca Valentine
and the Thompson family — sort of a
"who's who" of Centre County in 1863,
Kopac said.

As the ballet begins, the Civil War has
just moved to Pennsylvania, and the
United States has just celebrated its first
Thanksgiving.

In the Hills' take on the Nutcracker,
Annie replaces the original's Marie, and
the original's Drosselmeyer is a former
furnace employee of Moses Thompson.

The traditional "battle scene" in the
original performance was recreated by
the Hills as a Civil War reenactment, with
the original mice being Confederate sol-
diers.

Act II, "Kingdom of the Sweets,"
includes treats from traditional 19th cen-
tury central Pennsylvania. These special-
ties include "Matzabaum," a
Pennsylvania Dutch version of Marzipan,
"bellyguts," a type of taffy, and "mojhy," a
sugar glaze used with apples or plums.

Another difference in the Hills' version
of the Nutcracker is that the dancing
Amish children represent a key cultural
aspect of central Pennsylvania.

The original characters of sugar plum
fairies, mice and orphans can still be
found in this version.

Kopac said children ranging from five-
to 20-year-olds will perform. All the
dancers are either in the Ballet Theatre of
Central Pennsylvania School or its per-
forming company and live in the towns
surrounding State College.

Julia Ostrowski has been a ballerina for
13 years and is now in the Ballet Theatre
of Central Pennsylvania's ballet company.
This year Ostrowski (sophomore-art) said
she will be performing in the Nutcracker
as four different characters.

Ostrowski said her favorite part of the
performance is seeing the small children
after the performance.

"The cast does a greeting after the
show is finished," Ostrowski said. "It's
great to have the little kids come up and
talk to you."

Ostrowski said the Nutcracker is some-

thing that is part of the community -- a lot
of the performers are students in middle
school, high school and college.

Laurel Smail said she has seen the pro-
duction many times because her friend is
one of the performers.

"I think it is wonderful," Smail (junior-
vocal performance) said. "They practice
very hard, they stop classes for two
months to practice for the show. They do a
wonderful job."

Smail said she has seen many versions
of the Nutcracker and performances --
the Ballet Theatre of Central
Pennsylvania's version can stand toe-to-
toe with other larger productions.

"I love it. I have seen it in Chicago and
New York City, and I like the fantasy and
romanticism of other productions, but I'm
a bit of a history buff and this is a different
spin on the story," Smail said.

Along with the performance, the
Central Pennsylvania Youth Orchestra
will be performing a special number
before the show begins.

Kopac said "A Central Pennsylvania
Nutcracker" will get families ready for the
holiday season once they leave the audito-
rium.

"Families leave and are immediately in
the Christmas spirit and are ready to go
start their holiday traditions," Kopac said.

Contact reporter kzy5015@psu.edu