

THE NUTCRACKER

Music by Peter Ilitch Tchaikovsky

Choreography by Stoner Winslett

Richmond Ballet at Chrysler Hall

Dec.5 - 7, 2008

For tickets call: (757)671-8100

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

Artistic Director and Choreographer of the Richmond Ballet, Stoner Winslett, created this relatively new and widely acclaimed "Nutcracker". The production has cost over a million dollars. Money does not necessarily guarantee artistic excellence, but in the instance, it has produced an outstanding creative endeavor. With the Virginia Symphony Orchestra in the pit and the opulence of the scenery, costumes and lighting on the stage, plus 185 dancers, including 62 from this region, there is a near sensory overload of beauty that permeates Chrysler Hall. Included in all this grandeur is a 50 foot dragon. And, I must not forget: REAL snow at the end of the first act.

But far more important than all these stunning visual effects are, of course, the dancers. There is a remarkably strong and most impressive group of attractive, well trained performers who make up the Richmond Ballet Company. The young dancers from Hampton Roads were incorporated with these more experienced performers with professional aplomb.

Sometimes the long pantomime sequences of Act One are tedious to me. Not so in Winslett's production. Every bar of music from the Tschaikovsky score is used to provide exceptionally clear and amusing action. The children are outstanding and never cloying. They aren't just cute, they perform with skill as lambs, Mother Ginger's Children, party guests and servants. Our local dance teachers are apparently providing quality training.

I wish had time to mention by name the exceptionally fine work of the performers in the major roles. Without exception, the partnering in the pas de deux was superb. The men and women danced with elan, classic grace and attitude. The many innovations and changes in this version of "The Nutcracker" were effective and enchanting.

You may be a bit of a Scrooge and feel you've seen all the dancing mice you care to see in one life time. However, this production has a new, fresh quality about it that will make you think differently,

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.