

Two ballet youngsters, two Nutcrackers

By Constance Scrafield

Two young Orangeville dancers, Marissa Manzerolle and David Fair, are going to dance in the Nutcracker with professional ballet companies this month, but in opposite directions and with somewhat different stories.

Marissa began dancing with Orangeville's Citrus Dance studio when she was four years old, although her father assured us, 'she's always been dancing around the house.'

'We met a friend at the church who recommended Citrus and she's been there ever since,' he added.

Now 12 and already at Orangeville District Secondary School, as she 'skipped Grade 8,' Marissa 'loves dance so much that she is at the Citrus studio every day, including some Sundays.'

'I love it,' she said, referring to high school. 'I'm part of the dance team at ODSS. I'm taking a lot of arts programs and maths and French. I like those extra classes.'

She also plays flute, trombone, saxophone and piano.

At some point, she auditioned to take classes as well with Canada's Ballet Jorgen Company, a professional troupe performing at the River Run Theatre in Guelph and taking their ballets on tour across the country.

David's parents took him to see the Nutcracker at the Sony Centre, Toronto, when he was three years old.

His mother said that after the show he declared: 'I'm going to be on that stage one day.'

'He came dancing out of the womb,' his mother smiled. 'He was always performing and dancing. We finally took him to the Academy of Performing Arts on Broadway, where the wonderful teacher, Susie, taught him. The program was fantastic. Miss Susie, she welcomed him with open arms. He was in an all girls class and when they did Pirates of the Caribbean, she put him in the lead role as the Pirate.'

However, Fair did not want her son to be the only boy; she wanted him to expand his talents; so, she took him to audition at the school associated with the National Ballet, Canada's Ballet School. He got in to the Associated Program.

Last year, he was cast as a student to dance in the Nutcracker as one of the Mice.

Amazed, his parents recalled his affirmation that he would dance on that stage.

Now six, young David plays the guitar and is working on writing songs. And he is back to Toronto's Nutcracker with the National Ballet again this year.

Asked about watching the Nutcracker for the first time and knowing he wanted to do that too, he replied, 'I looked at the dancing and it looked really fun to do with the costumes.'

As for how he feels when he is going on stage, 'I'm excited and I know what I'm doing too.'

Marissa only sees her future self involved in dance, ballet mainly, she thinks, although she does the full scope at Citrus with jazz, hip hop and others. Her ambitions are to have a job with Citrus and to become more involved with 'Ballet Jorgen,' travelling with them when they take their ballets on tour. Last year, she performed in Nutcracker and Sleeping Beauty in the spring of this year.

Says her father, 'We are definitely proud of her.'

From the wild and woolly David, we learned his plans: 'I'm going to be doing ballet and something else ' when I grow up ' singing.'

Apparently, he wants a Michael Jackson costume for Christmas: the glasses, the hair, the works.

Surely Santa will see to it. We'll have to ask him after a performance of Miracle on 34th Street at Theatre Orangeville.

Ballet Jorgen's Nutcracker is on at the River Run Theatre in Guelph Dec. 23 and 24.

The National Ballet's Nutcracker opens Dec. 10. Check the website for all the dates, but David is dancing in addition on the 16th, 18th and 21st.