

THE MONITOR

City Recognizes Rio Grande Valley Ballet for Over Three Decades of Community Service



Photo: Members of Rio Grande Valley Ballet's Nutcracker cast Amanda Kauffmann, Mathew Kauffmann, Bonnie Rankin, William Kauffmann, Regan Licciardello, Elizabeth McKeon, Madeline Gonzalez and Artistic Director Deborah Case with McAllen City Proclamation honoring the dance company's 37th Annual Nutcracker Production.

Mayor Richard Cortez and McAllen's City Commission have proclaimed December 10-13, 2009 as "37th Annual Nutcracker Ballet Production Days" to honor Rio Grande Valley Ballet's newest presentation of the holiday classic ballet.

"It's wonderful for the entire ballet company to be honored in this fashion," responded Artistic Director Deborah Case. "Every one of our dancers puts his or her heart, as well as hundreds of hours of work and rehearsal, into The Nutcracker each year. I applaud the mayor and city commission for recognizing their dedication in this public fashion."

Rio Grande Valley Ballet began presenting Tchaikovsky's ballet to South Texas audiences in 1972, when Donna, Texas native Doria Avila returned to the Valley from a career spanning Broadway and Hollywood films to Paris's famed Moulin Rouge. He claimed two goals when establishing the ballet company. First, he sought to teach area children the joy and discipline of classical dance. Just as importantly, Avila wanted to present dance performances to local audiences, and he started with the world's most famous ballet, The Nutcracker.

According to Case, Avila's goals have been met and surpassed over the years. "Doria wanted to be sure every child had an opportunity to witness the excitement and beauty of classical dance. From the beginning, he arranged with local school districts to present low-cost

matinees for school students of all ages. We don't have records of the earliest years, but on average, Rio Grande Valley Ballet has presented The Nutcracker to six thousand children each year, for thirty-seven years. That's hundreds of thousands of young people introduced to the fine arts through one show!"

"Just as important," continues Case, "is how many of our Valley children have personally benefitted from learning dance. The discipline, developing talent, gaining self-confidence and worth – they are all a big part in every dancer's education. And we've presented over three thousand dance students on our Nutcracker stage over the many years. Some of those dancers have gone on to work with professional ballet companies, especially in the last dozen years or so. But the benefits of dance, and the confidence earned in public performance by our many cast members, have certainly enriched the lives people and businesses all across the Rio Grande Valley."

Rio Grande Valley Ballet's 37th Annual Production of The Nutcracker begins with school matinee shows on December 10 & 11, with public performances on Saturday, December 12th at 7:00PM and Sunday, December 13th at 2:00PM at McAllen's Civic Center Auditorium. Tickets are available online at ez-tixx.com, through the McAllen Convention Center Box Office. Further information is available by calling the ballet offices at 682-2721.