

## Hartford City Ballet Nutcracker better than ever!

This year's production of the *Nutcracker* by the Hartford City Ballet was truly excellent. I've seen the last several, and it's not just my imagination, they are getting better every year. Several of the dancers have been in nearly all of the productions and they have clearly grown and matured



over the years. By the same token, some of the newer dancers, especially this year's Clara as danced by Sydney Alleyne showed an amazing level of skill, poise and athleticism.

So I sat down with Dartanion Reed, the Artistic Director of Hartford City Ballet to get a better understanding of what's been going on. This year marks the fifth production of *The Nutcracker* for HCB and while in the early years, the production was mostly professional dancers with a few of the younger parts going to the students from the School of the Hartford City Ballet, this year all of the dancers were either students or graduates of the school with the exception of Nancy Ritter van der Hulst who danced the part of Drosselmeyer.

It seems that *The Nutcracker* is just the tip of the iceberg. While this is the big annual holiday production, it is hardly the only thing they are working on. In a few short weeks three of the dancers will be competing in the Youth America Grand Prix in Boston. This is the largest international competition where more than \$300,000.00 in scholarships will be awarded. It is the competition that Dartanion won that put him on the path to American Ballet Theater.

Dartanion began dancing at the age of 9 right here in Asylum Hill with the Hartford Ballet and was successful enough that he went on to tour the world with ABT from New York City for five years. It was during that time that he met and eventually married Keiko Nakamura a ballerina from Japan who trained with the Vaganova Academy in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Now they have found their place here in Hartford with the School of Hartford City Ballet as the source of dancers and HCB as the performance opportunity for the pre-professional students as well as the little dancers. The pre-professional are the students who want to make ballet their life. For those who only want to dance for enjoyment there is the Young Dancers Program, which is fed by the Little Dancers Program starting with music and movement classes as young as 3. At the other end are the Adult Open Division Classes for anyone interested in developing this most physical of art forms.

As Dartanion and Keiko see it, their mission is to provide the opportunity for classical ballet to be learned and enjoyed by the community and perfected by any with talent and desire, even to the professional level, touring the world and dancing as long as they are able. Those who dance and their families, become the core of the audience that enjoys, appreciates and supports this most physically demanding and beautiful art form.

For more information on classes and schedules go to;

<http://www.hartfordcityballet.org/school-of-hartford-city-ballet/> or call 860.233.8552

For more photos of the performance go to; <https://goo.gl/photos/uTBPbizZCkkHd7UY6>