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'I sometimes have stage fright': Goh Ballet's Nutcracker offers more than 200 roles for tiny dancers

By Frank Luba

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Young dancers prepare to be fitted for mouse costumes Sunday.

Tracy Wang wanted to be a lamb but the seven-and-a-half-year-old from Richmond will settle for being one of the mice in the The Goh Ballet's sixth edition of the Nutcracker in December.

“I’m excited,” said Tracy, who was trying on her mouse costume Sunday at the Goh company’s headquarters on Main Street in Vancouver.

While the furry grey outfit was very cute, Tracy said it was “extremely hot.”

Conditions should be a little more suitable by the time the curtain goes up on the show Dec. 18-22 at The Centre.

Tracy admitted she’s a little nervous about performing.

“I sometimes have stage fright,” she said.

That’s something many performers have to face and Tracy would be well advised to take some advice from an ex-mouse, Amanda Conway.

“I wasn’t scared because what I thought was, ‘No one’s here, I’m at home in my TV room,’” said the seven-year-old from Vancouver.

After making her debut as a mouse, Amanda went on play a “naughty lamb.”

Mice and lambs are just some of the parts open to more than 200 dancers and other performers participating in traditional Christmas-time event.

There are a total of 36 mice, with 12 in each show. But there are also 18 lambs, 36 soldiers, 34 little angels, three gingerbread dolls, 45 party boys and girls, 13 members of the cavalry, 11 reindeer, 10 giant mice and professional dancers that include Paloma Herrera as the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Herrera is the principal dancer for the American Ballet Theatre in New York.

But the mice are also very important, according to Nutcracker executive producer Chan Hon Goh.

“They have some pretty challenging steps,” said Goh, a former principal dancer with the National Ballet of Canada.

There’s more than just dancing, though.

“They have to squeak very loudly on stage,” said Goh. “They have to pick up the cheese — that’s part of the battle scene. They have to dodge the solders.”

Auditions for the various roles were held in May.

The hard work for the mice begins next weekend when they start weekly rehearsals for three months for their 15 minutes on stage.

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