

Orindan Pens Dark Holiday Humor

By Sophie Braccini



Sean Murphy evokes some scary holiday fun with his new book, shown here with it at Orinda Books.

Christmas" is a delightful, frightfully funny comic book created by young Orinda author and illustrator Sean David Murphy.

"Twas the night before Christmas, though night would soon fall, not a creature was stirring in the old castle hall..." Sean David Murphy's spin on Clement Clarke Moore's poem does start with some familiar words, but soon, the quaint feel of an English cottage slides into the frightening cold of a Transylvanian winter that has not had a Santa visit lies together, and humor is somein many centuries. But old St. Nick thing that Murphy has in an abunfeels brave this year, and he doesn't dance. want to postpone his visit to the forsaken land. Will Santa survive ings a very cool atmosphere for the

Photo Sophie Braccini n Undead Night Before the ordeal, or will he and his reindeers become the Christmas feast for the undead of Transylvania?

Murphy explains that every year, his family meets family friends, the Downs, and that is has become a custom to read a different version of Moore's 19th century classic tale. "Variations have been written for different regions," says the author, "but nothing had been done yet for Transylvania. I had to do something!" Humor and good cheer is what gets these two fami-

Murphy created with his draw-

album. Most of the drawings are in black, white and grey shades, with the powerful red of Santa matching the red eyes of the undead piercing the night. This simple color contrast immediately creates a frightful feeling, though the very primary color red is a reminder that this is all a joke.

The young author, who says that he wants to orient his career toward animation, gives good example here of how drawing can create movement. The first pages are still, to establish the atmosphere of the tale, but as the action unfolds Murphy drew pages where readers get the feeling of the characters moving, faster and faster.

It is obvious that the young man is attracted to the fantastic and mythical world, and that he had a lot of fun drawing his undead monsters.

The text itself rhymes nicely, and the story itself progresses a little bit predictably, but all in good fun. This album is perfect for any tween or teen with a sense of humor and an attraction for what's a bit out of the ordinary. Don't worry, parents! Santa will survive in the end.

The author of the book selfpublished his work on Amazon and it can be purchased locally at Orinda Books.

Murphy was raised in Orinda and still lives there. He graduated from U.C. Santa Cruz with a degree in environmental studies but decided that his passion was in illustration and animation. For more information visit seandavidmurphy.com.



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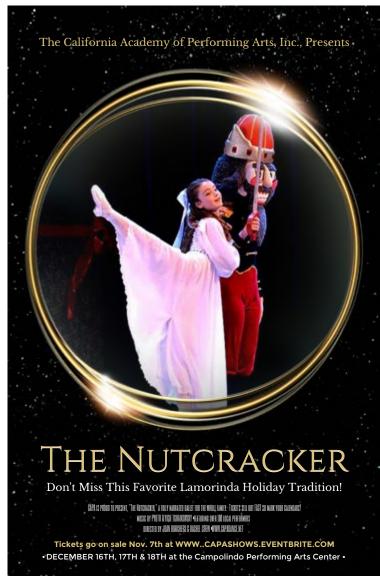
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CAPA's 'Nutcracker' is a Holiday Treat

Submitted by Lynn Davis



grows to great heights in the Cal- Performing Arts Center. ifornia Academy of Performing Arts presentation of "The Nut- tion for over 20 years is a feast

Image provided now falls onstage and the forming Arts Center from Dec. Christmas tree magically 16 through 18 at the Campolindo

This Lamorinda family tradicracker" at the Campolindo Per- for the eyes, filled with surprises

and delights for all ages. The story is narrated as it unfolds, guiding young viewers through the beautiful ballet and making it much more enjoyable for little ones (and grown-ups!) who might not be familiar with the timeless story of Clara and her magical Christmas Eve dream.

Anything is possible with enough talent and enthusiasm, and both are abundant in this group of young dancers. This production is large, with more than 100 local performers, extravagant sets, live narration, and elegant costumes, many of which are new this year including handsewn tutus from Russia.

While the studio demands excellence and precision in the dancing, it also seeks to involve ballet students of all ages, adding to the spirit of the performances. Six- and 7-year-olds are delightful as the spun-sugar Christmas angels, and advanced high school ballerinas take on the more demanding, classic roles of the Snow Queen, Rose Queen and Sugar Plum Fairy. Local high school football players and other athletes even appear as party guests.

Two Performances will be held at 5:30 and 8 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 16, at 2 and 7 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 17 and at 1 and 5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 18. Tickets for the general public are \$22 and can be purchased at www.

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