

The Grinch Who Stole The Nutcracker

For the dancers at Festival Ballet Providence, the year's production of *The Nutcracker* will be remembered as the year "The Grinch Tried to Steal Misha's Nutcracker." For nearly 20 years, the company has been staging artistic director Mihailo "Misha" Djuric's version of this holiday classic.

About one week before Thanksgiving, Djuric and his assistant went to the company's storage facility in Pawtucket to pick up some costumes so they could begin fitting them for several upcoming promotional appearances. Although Djuric observed some of the crates were "in a little bit different order," he wasn't overly alarmed. It wasn't until he returned to the studio and opened the crates that his worst fears were realized — many of the costumes were missing.

All told, 52 items worth an estimated \$30,000 were gone. Djuric figures the rental costs to replace the stolen items will be about \$60,000. A partial inventory of the stolen items includes one of the three tutus for the Sugar Plum Fairy (the ballet's principal female lead), the Mouse Queen costume, dozens of Swarovski crystal-studded hand-made tutus (valued at about \$600 each), and the large, iconic Nutcracker headpiece - worth \$2,000 alone!

But, in the true Christmas spirit, once news of the theft broke, dozens of ballet companies from around the country offered to lend them costumes. Among them, Rochester City Ballet, the Kansas City Ballet, Southern New Hampshire Dance Theater and Youth Ballet, Connecticut Ballet, Neglia Conservatory of Ballet, Commonwealth Ballet and Mobile (Ala.) Ballet.

With opening night just days away, costumes have started to arrive. Djuric is simply overwhelmed by the number of "individuals and companies who expressed their support and wanted to help. And it's so, how do you say, so nice. It's like *It's a Wonderful Life*," he proclaims. And, in addition to the donations, company spokesperson Ruth Davis notes "dozens of skilled costume and apparel sewers will work together with designer Freda Bromberg and FBP Artistic Director Mihailo Djuric to sew new pieces from scratch and make alterations to costumes."

So while many have certainly earned their angel's wings this Christmas, FBP dancers are most thankful that the show will go on. And, if they could, I am sure they would collectively echo the memorable words of Albert Finney's Scrooge: "Thank you very much, that's the nicest thing that anybody's ever done for me."

FBP's "The Nutcracker" will run from December 16 - 18 at PPAC. For tickets or more information visit: ppacri.org.