

# BURBANK LEADER

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Education

## Dancers show amazing grace

**Burbank School of Ballet's 150 performers wow a packed crowd at GCC auditorium.**

By Alison Tully

Don Cohen's palms started to sweat in anticipation of his goddaughter Milo Siles taking the stage in the Burbank School of Ballet's 10th annual recital.

"All the dancers just rose to the occasion and were absolutely spectacular," Cohen said, gripping a bouquet of red roses after the performance.

"They have all grown and matured and have beautiful moves."

Cohen was among a packed audience at the Glendale Community College Auditorium on Saturday afternoon to take in dance performances by the school's 150 dancers.

The performance was the third and final recital and was based around "a magical, mystical garden."

Butterflies fluttered, ladybugs buzzed and fairies danced in celebration of the coronation of the dragonfly queen and king. Mischievous elves and bumblebees navigated around colorfully painted mushrooms and flowers.

"I was nervous about getting on stage, but you just have so much adrenaline when you get up there that you want to perform well," said Lauren Van Vleet, who played the queen.

This year's performance marked several hours of hard work, as much as 24 hours a week of practice for students such as Natalie Krakirian, who has danced with the school since she was 3.

"This recital not only showed me how much my technique has improved but also really allowed me to get into my character, an evil spider," said Krakirian, who has received worldwide acclaim for her dancing. "

It is one thing for someone to look at you and say, 'Oh she is pretty,' but when you actually emote to the audience, it is a whole different experience."

As an evil spider, Krakirian moved along the stage trying to eat bugs and sabotage the coronation of the queen.

Watching the students dance on the auditorium's large stage was a joy to see, said Lisa Sutton, the school's founder and director.

"Our studio is tiny, so seeing my students perform on this 1,800-square-foot stage is just amazing," she said.

"I feel very accomplished when I sit up in the light booth and see them dancing their hearts out."

The performance was both a happy celebration of the school's 10-year anniversary and of the departure of several students for the summer. Jeremy Zapanta, who

played the dragonfly king, will attend the American Academy of Ballet in New York City on a scholarship, and others will participate in the State Street Ballet in Santa Barbara.

"Dancing at this year's performance made me realize how I have matured and grown as a dancer," Zapanta said.

"I didn't know what I was doing when I started at the school."

Audience members like John and Diane McManus clapped and cheered as the performers bowed, proud of the dedication and mastery the dancers brought to the stage.

"This is the most professional dance group I have ever seen," said Diane McManus, whose granddaughter has been dancing with the school for the past seven years.

"They grow more and more and have blossomed into gorgeous dancers."

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