

# lifestyle

## Metter dancer to star in 'Nutcracker'



### A time to create

by Martha Cannady

There's no time like winter to create your cozy home with quilts and greens ... Now that the weather has turned frosty, think about filling rooms in your house with pine, juniper, paisley and needlepoint ... Don't wait until Christmas to create a wintry mood ... We don't need to let our rooms resume their ordinary lives the minute the holidays are over ... If you use evergreen garlands on your front porch, they can last through March if you choose to leave them on the porch for a fresh green effect ... If they get too dry, you can spruce them up so their color and fragrance stay fresh ... Winter is about home ... It's about creating a warm and cozy welcome for family and friends ... Come December, that means indulging in deep colors such as tartan cloth for the dining table and a bowl of pomegranates for the foyer and sensual textiles, including faux fur throws, pillows covered in chenille flannel or cashmere and needlepoint, kilim rugs layered on top of your regular rugs for coziness underfoot ... In days gone by, a winter decor was created by changing slipcovers and curtains, but most modern homeowners take time for a major seasonal overhaul ... Go simple, like dressing your bed in a mix of quilts and comforters or filling a creamware jug with boxwood and variegated ivy ... In the dining room, play up the beauty of winter light by setting your table with the icy sparkle of crystal and the mellow tones of pewter and antiqued brass ... Wherever you can, play tribute to nature with accessories that are burnished in hue or woody in theme ... Search your cupboards for carved serving pieces, leaf embroidered napkins, faux mixed plates or dark-covered containers that can hold flowers or pine branches (just insert a plastic container to hold water) ... As for greenery, the Christmas tree doesn't have to be the whole holiday show ... You can head to the woods and gather branches of pine or spruce to set in galvanized steel buckets or large cylindrical glass vases ... To add a winter look to your flowers, mix the deep red of roses or the snowy white of amaryllis blossoms with evergreen boughs, berry sprigged holly branches or cutting eucalyptus and magnolia ... Add dark brown hues by tucking in pheasant or other bird feathers ... You might want to keep things a little on the wild and woody side ... If you try what I have discovered and like it, I'll share more quick decorating tips next week ...

**Tommie Marsh**, formerly of Metter, drives back to Metter regularly from his home in Moreland to visit relatives, friends and his older friends, always bringing each person a beautiful pot plant ... Tommie says he has been so blessed with his flower ministry, just to see the joy of the recipient ... I have been on his list for many years and I treasure every plant he chooses for me ... I am overjoyed and so thankful to be remembered ... **Tommie** plans to continue his plant ministry for a long time and the visit with each person ... Thank you, Tommie, for the blessing you bring each of us ...

We are so proud of our Metter Tiger football team ... The players, the coaches, the cheerleaders and everyone involved ... Thank each of you for being, we think, the BEST ... We older ones, like the younger ones, are still your supporting cheerleaders ...

Please let the following names know you are thinking about them with a cheery card, call or visit ... They will be so blessed, and so will you ... **Brian McGowan ... Steve Starling ... Rickey McDaniel ... Joey Wright ... Wendell West ... Melva Cadwell ... Mary Ellen Thrift ... Nell Collins ... Howard Cook ... R. E. Hendrix ... Faye and Vaughan Lanier ... Elliott Lanier ... Kim Jones Campbell ... Elder Tom Deal ... Kelly Grimes ... Edna Lanier ... Brealey Monroe ... John Waddell ... Amanda Webb ... Mildred Bland ... Janice Collins ... Gordon Colson ... Jean Culbertson ... Berry Donaldson ... Bill Patterson ... Annette Turner ... Carlton Stafford ... Dot and Don Rabitsch ... Lana Funderburke ... Jenny DeLoach ... Charles Tucker ... Allen Hadden ... Buck Spears ... Louise Ryckewaert ... Martha Faye and Gene Collins ...** and all shut-ins that I didn't hear about ... Our prayers of encouragement go out to all patients in the hospital, nursing home and assisted living ...

Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to the families of **Herschel 'Little Van' Thompson ... Joe Southwell ...**

Call in your news ... I can be reached at 685-2223 ... Or email [news@metteradvertiser.com](mailto:news@metteradvertiser.com) ... Until next week ...

by Suzanne Tyson

Many young ballerinas have dreams of dancing a leading role in one of the classic ballets. For Metter's Tessa Salter, that dream is coming true as she has been cast in the role of Clara in Statesboro's Averitt Center's 2021 production of The Nutcracker.

Blonde-haired, blue-eyed Tessa worked hard to earn the honor and continues that work to make sure that her audience won't be disappointed when the curtain goes up for performances in the Emma Kelly Theater later this month.

Tessa is not new to dance. She began taking dancing lessons from Blair Rackett and Logan McElveen at Studio South Dance Studio when she was only 3 years old. Now 11 years old, Tessa is in her eighth year of studying dance. This is her third year of participating in the Christmas ballet at the Averitt Center.

Wendy Salter, Tessa's mother, explains that in 2019, when Tessa was 9 years old, she was unable to take dance classes at Studio South. Knowing of her daughter's love of dance, Wendy agreed to allow her daughter to audition for that year's Nutcracker production. Even though Tessa had experience with various types of dance, including tap, hip-hop and lyrical ballet at Studio South, she had no training in classical ballet.

"I had no idea what to expect and I didn't want to get Tessa's hopes up, so I encouraged her to try out in order to learn and have fun," explains Wendy.

Both Tessa and Wendy were thrilled when Tessa was chosen to be the understudy for the dancer who was playing Clara. An understudy is a performer who learns another character's role in order to be able to act as a replacement at short notice should that character be unable to perform. Additionally, Tessa was assigned several other roles in the holiday ballet. That meant that the youngster had to learn all of Clara's dances as well as the dances for her other roles.

Wendy shares that the instructors at Studio South deserve kudos for Tessa being chosen for those roles. She says, "For Tessa to walk in and do so well in auditions is a testament to Studio South and the instruction she received there."

As that first Nutcracker experience progressed, the young dancer broke her shoulder. She didn't let that stop her.

"Even with her injury, Tessa missed only one practice," Wendy says, "but she did have to have a doctor's approval to continue practicing and for performances."

After that year's holiday performances, Tessa began studying dance at The Averitt Center, a pre-professional ballet program. Because the Averitt Center presents The Nutcracker every other year, Tessa performed as a dwarf in the 2020 production of Snow White. She also continued her study of ballet throughout the year.

When auditions for 2021 rolled around in August,

Tessa again participated. She was thrilled to be selected to play the prized role of Clara. In the same round of auditions, Tessa's little sister Stella also auditioned. Only 5 years old, Stella was selected to play the parts of baby mouse and an angel. Ironically, one of Tessa's parts in that first Nutcracker was playing an angel.

Along with Tessa and Stella, another Metter girl, Ava Cliett who is a first-year dancer, will play the roles of a soldier, a party boy and a bon bon in this year's production.

With a couple of years' experience with productions, Tessa and Wendy both realized the commitment that is required for Tessa's dance dream to come true. According to Wendy, rehearsals began in August and were held each Friday and Saturday.

She says, "A dancer has to enjoy it to put in the work that being in such a production requires."

This is not a 'dance recital,' it is an actual production involving dancers of all ages and ability levels. Tessa is dancing with adults as well as professional ballerinas. The two lead adult dancers are instructors at the Averitt Center who are following a college track while continuing their pursuit of dance.

"Tessa absolutely loves it," explains Wendy. "Being involved in The Nutcracker has opened many opportunities for her." Among those opportunities are learning new things and meeting so many people.

When it comes to what Stella thinks, Wendy says that Stella looks up to her big sister and tries to follow in her footsteps. One of the sweetest things that Wendy is looking forward to is when her two daughters dance together on stage. No doubt, some tears will be shed.

Wendy admits having two daughters involved in this type of production is a big parent commitment as well.

"Because my girls are so young, I, of course, am responsible for driving them to rehearsals and classes," she explains.

Wendy finds herself biding her time in Statesboro while her girls are dancing because the Salter family lives west of Metter in Aline - too far to drive home and return to pick up the girls.

Even though her girls are dancers, Wendy is not a typical 'dance mom,' especially for the Averitt Center productions.

"Everything about the production is top notch. They use professional props and sets, and parents are not backstage," she states.

That means that Wendy and her husband Jeremy are able to enjoy the productions from comfortable seats in the audience on show nights.

Tessa says of her upcoming debut as Clara, "Playing the role of Clara has been pure Nutcracker magic. I am counting down the days until opening night."

A part of Tessa's Nutcracker magic is performing the role of Clara 'en pointe,' meaning she will perform wearing toe shoes and will be supporting her entire body weight on the tips of her fully ex-



Tessa Salter as Clara  
photo by Danielle Adams

tended feet within pointe shoes. This requires additional physical strength and mental readiness. As far as Wendy knows, Tessa is the first dancer to perform the role of Clara en pointe in the decade that the Christmas classic has been presented at the Averitt Center.

Little sister Stella has a novice's viewpoint of The Nutcracker.

"My favorite things are dancing on stage with Tessa and going 'squeak, squeak' as a baby mouse," she shares.

The two Salter girls are gung ho about dance. Both are homeschooled. Tessa is a fifth grader, and Stella is in kindergarten. One would think that they would say that dance is their main interest, but Wendy says that is far from the truth. In addition to dance, both Salter girls enjoy something that is practically the opposite of classical ballet. That is barrel racing!

The Nutcracker is the fall activity for the Salters, and barrel racing season runs in the spring, so the schedule works out perfectly.

"If anyone asks Tessa what she wants to do when she grows up, she says she wants to be a professional rodeo star," laughs Wendy as she explains her older daughter's passion.

A hands-on horsewoman, Tessa takes care of her horses and trains her barrel pony on her own. Wendy proudly shares that her pre-teen daughter saved her money in order to pay for a month of professional training for her pony. She earned

money by doing various chores for people, including walking dogs for people camping at the family's business Camp South RV Park.

In addition to caring for her horses, Tessa does chores around the Salter property. She works on the farm and feeds the chickens. Her other interests include playing guitar. She is truly a well-rounded young lady.

As Tessa continues counting down the days, it won't be long until opening night for The Nutcracker at The Averitt Center.

Performances are scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 18; Friday, Nov. 19; and Saturday, Nov. 20 at 7 p.m. The final show will be a Sunday afternoon matinee on November 21 at 3 p.m. Tickets sell for \$25 per seat with discounts available for military, first responders, and students.

To order tickets, visit [www.averittcenterforthearts.org](http://www.averittcenterforthearts.org) or call 912-212-2877.

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Until He Comes

"I tell you, no; But unless you repent you will likewise perish."

Luke 13:3

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