



Photo courtesy Eugene Ballet
 Toni Pimble dances the mystical title role in Igor Stravinsky's "The Firebird," produced by the Eugene Ballet. Riley Grannan portrays the evil monster Kastchei.

Firebird

Ballet to encore Stravinsky classic

Elaborate costumes and a 25-foot 'exploding' tree complement the Eugene Ballet Company's production of "The Firebird," Saturday and Sunday at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts.

The Igor Stravinsky classic follows the format of Russian legends where the hero, naive and pure-of-heart, is victorious over the clever, cruel and powerful forces of evil.

Prince Ivan, a simple hunter, stumbles into the garden of a terrible monster, Kastchei, and falls in love with the beautiful princess Elena, who is being held captive. Ivan rescues Elena through the supernatural powers granted him by a magical bird of fire. This bird is where the ballet gets its title, according to Charmane Landing, EBC administrative assistant.

Artistic Director Riley Grannan dances the part of Kastchei, the evil character whose monsters are released from the bowels of a tree that 'explodes' after Ivan picks an apple to please Elena.

"(The Firebird) is in the great Russian tradition, where the prince is often caught in a web of circumstance and needs supernatural powers to help him out," Grannan says. "(Czars) often had 'evil spirits' doing what they were told to do, and without them (the Czars) were helpless."

The ballet was first performed in Paris in 1910, seven years before the overthrow of Czarist Russia. It marked Stravinsky's entry into the field of ballet music.

Toni Pimble, choreographer and co-artistic director with her husband Grannan, dances the elusive and mystical Firebird, whose powers are strong enough to overcome the evil Kastchei.

Douglas Zalud-Mackie combines his theater background with dance to play Ivan. Zalud-Mackie also painted designs on the monster's costumes.

The beautiful but entrapped Elena is danced by Catherine Guerin, a graduate of the University dance department. Twenty other dancers complete the cast.

The EBC first presented "The Firebird" in

September 1982 during the opening of the Hult Center. Following its premiere, much critical praise was directed toward the extravagant sets, designed by Peter Dean Beck of New York City. The costumes, part of which include elaborately painted masks were also highly praised. This weekend, the EBC will use the same set and costumes as were used for the 1982 production.

Along with "The Firebird," two other short pieces, "Irish Suite" and "Five Humoresques," will be presented.

"Irish Suite" is the premiere of a new work by Dennis Spaight of the Keith Martin Ballet Company in Portland. The music was written by LeRoy Anderson.

"It's a very lovely, folksy piece using peasant costumes," Grannan says.

"Five Humoresques," was written by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, and choreographed by Pimble.

"(It captures) the spirit of life's sorrows and rays of sunlight," Grannan says. "It's an emotional ferris wheel that viewers can relate to from their feelings on a day-to-day basis. Five basic feelings come out of it and the viewers are left to their own interpretations."

The EBC has come a long way since its founding in 1978 by Grannan and Pimble, and this production highlights both the talents of the dancers and the choreographic abilities of the directors.

"It's been an uphill battle, but we are becoming more well known because folks can expect quality," Grannan says. "Our strong point is that our company has a strong sense of theater and of what they are communicating. If we've something to say, then the audience will be entertained and challenged to figure out what that is."

Performances are at 8 p.m. on Saturday and 2:30 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets are available at the EMU Main Desk, the Hult Center box office and all Hult Center outlets. Tickets range from \$5.50 to \$18.50 with student and senior discounts available.

Story by Amy Moss

Director

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financially-unstable musical world, Hall says he gives students this advice: "study as much of your own personal discipline as you can, study everything you can about your instrument, yeah, study."

Studying has no doubt helped him. He's got his job to show for it. But Hall is also a musician saddened with the reality of having little opportunity to share his skills with an audience in Eugene. As the leader of the Eugene Jazz Orchestra, Hall says his group stopped playing biweekly at the Oregon Electric Station because the club could no longer afford to pay for the big band's performances.

"It's very disheartening for players like myself who've spent years studying, and who

are going to spend a helluva lot more years studying a great American art form such as jazz, and there aren't enough places where we can go out on a consistent basis to share the years of concentrated study with an audience," he says.

Meanwhile, Hall says he and others in the orchestra are hoping to do guest-artist-type concerts at the Lone Star on Sunday afternoons in the future.

He also forms quartets on occasion for weekend gigs at Jo Federgo's and the Oregon Electric Station.

"I've been given the opportunity to learn so much about myself through my musical experiences," he says. "I've fallen down, but I've managed to pick myself up by the bootstraps. Learning about yourself. That's what it's all about."

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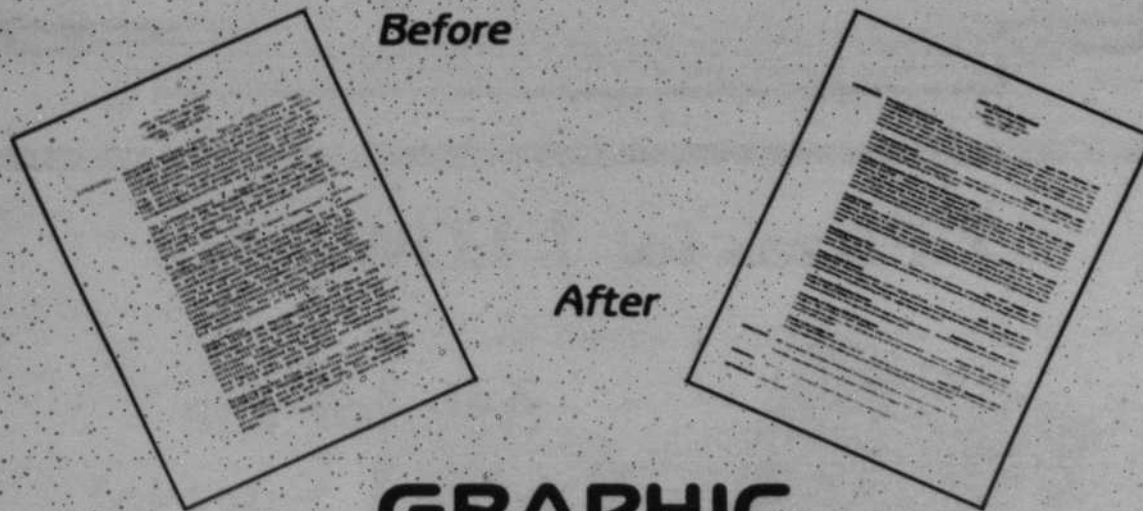


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