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BACKSTAGE BLUES

As Eugene awaits the poise, polish and professionalism of *The Firebird* ballet, the cast and crew work long, hard, unglamorous hours backstage

S-H-O-W-T-I-M-E
BALLET: The Eugene Ballet Company will present *The Firebird* on Saturday, Oct. 19, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Oct. 20 at 2:30 p.m. Both shows will take place in the Hult Center's Silva Concert Hall. Advanced tickets, ranging in price from \$7 to \$35, can be purchased by calling the box office at 687-5000. Half-price student tickets, from \$3.50 to \$17.50, will also be available, but only a 1/2 hour prior to each show.

Backstage at the Hult Center, dancers of the Eugene Ballet Company compare ballet to the military as they sweat out the last days before their season debut this weekend. Dancers will change from their frayed sweats into exotic costumes for a dazzling production of *The Firebird*, a Stravinsky classic that turns this ballet company into an army. At rehearsal, the ballet looks nothing like the fairy tale glamorous princes and princesses it will later produce. Technical director Marco is preparing explosives while half-naked dancers fit around the props. The audience will never know what goes into these shows and the dancers and stage crew of EBC are always disguising their hard work.

During *The Firebird*, an orange blossom tree will blow up on stage, but Marco described arranging the dynamite as "artistic fusing or supervising powder amounts." When asked about her work, costumer Lynn Bower gives a sigh of relief. Her most challenging experience with production of *The Firebird* occurred when a choreographer flew in from New York



Dancers of the Eugene Ballet Company put the finishing touches on their season debut of *The Firebird*. The ballet will be performed Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon at the Hult Center.

goes on backstage. "Part of the job is to make it look easy," said dancer Verna Carter. "That's the art part." In addition to that "art part," dancers will fight gravity, age, injury and exhaustion. Dancers also fight against time. Most of EBC's dancers are around 20 years old. "Time is against you," Bell said.

"The older you get, it's not like the better you get. Dancing is for the young." Some dancers try to get a second job, since they aren't paid even as much as the stage hands. But for most of the EBC dancers, ballet is their sole source of income. Just this year the company will travel to Canada, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Idaho, Montana and Washington. Free time is almost out of the question.

All in all, backstage is nothing even close to glamorous. But both the dancers and the stage crew stress that the final product is worth the unseen hard work. For all of them, the glamour comes, ultimately, when the curtain rises.
By Beckie Daub
Emerald Contributor

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