

# Dancing On My Grave

Classical *Giselle* gives audiences the Wilis.

**F**antastical, supernatural *Giselle* ain't no wimpy fairy story. With an original libretto by Théophile Gautier, the production has been the consummate, romantic classical ballet since it premiered at the Paris Opera in 1841.

By the time *Giselle* was written, however, its themes had become a mite formulaic: "Disguised male suitor seeks lovely lady of the spirit realm for creepy walks in haunted forest ..." But *Giselle's* innovations find their origins not only in unparalleled footwork but also in the spooky Slavonic tales of the Wilis. Legend tells us these gals — chilly maidens who died before their wedding day — now haunt the forests of the night and excise their jilted fury through dancing.

Eugene Ballet takes on this macabre fable with grace and finesse Oct. 8 (8 pm) and Oct. 9 (2:30 pm) at the Hult Center Silva Hall.

For new members of the company, *Giselle* proves to be a fertile ground to explore both technical and dramatic expression. Heather Wallace, 19, has just joined the company. Even after all-day rehearsals, she still musters great enthusiasm for the ballet's beauty. "The style is soft, romantic, correct," she says. Her roommate, Elizabeth Belyea, 20, also new to the company, echoes Wallace's appreciation. "*Giselle* is different, because in so many roles, you're just there to smile and look pretty. But in playing the Wilis, we're cold, alienating and meticulous. The Wilis are elegant, almost regal in their movement."

The story opens in the German Rhine. Giselle, an innocent peasant maiden, catches the eye of a new fella in town, Loys. Now, this girl comes from a good home, where Mom frets that Giselle's penchant for dancing will send her to an unseemly future as a Wili. And in this case, mom's right. In the era of Romanticism, the "innocent peasant maiden" moniker does not usually bode well for a long and prosperous future.

As *Giselle's* courtship with Loys blossoms into real love, she's devastated to find out that he is actually Count Albrecht, a philandering



EUGENE BALLET COMPANY, 2005

churl already betrothed to a princess! Shocked by betrayal and seemingly unaware there might be more than one fish in the sea, Giselle succumbs to madness and dances herself into a deranged state and ultimately to her death.

Act II finds Count Albrecht haunted by his role in sweet Giselle's crack-up, and he visits her forest grave to reconcile himself. There he finds the Wilis and their queen Myrtha on New Wili Networking Night. The Wilis ensnare Albrecht's trusty sidekick, Hilarion, who actually wanted Giselle to himself, and we're left wondering if Albrecht will be saved by Giselle's undying love. Will the Wilis force this scum to dance to his own demise? Will Albrecht be left alone to ruminate on his lost love? Or will he return to his princess, put his feet up, and try to forget the whole thing ever happened?


Haunted houses are more fun in the dark, and as my Halloween treat to you, I'll let you find out what damp, dramatic, vampirous musings come crawling out of the grave on this October night. **EW**

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## opening nights

**Sugar at Cottage Theatre Opens Friday, Oct. 7**

Based on the hit 1959 comedy film *Some Like It Hot* starring Marilyn Monroe, Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon, *Sugar* chronicles the mishaps of two men in prohibition America, who are forced to disguise themselves as women after witnessing a mob hit. Hilarity ensues when they join an all-girl band and both find themselves attracted to Sugar, the band's sexy ukulele player. The theater adaptation includes the music of composers Jule Styne and Bob Merrill. The show runs Oct. 7-9, 14-16, 21-23, 28 and 29. Purchase tickets by calling 942-9195, or visit [www.cottagetheatre.org](http://www.cottagetheatre.org)



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