

Bunch was hailed as “a composer to watch” by *The New York Times*, and Alex Ross, music critic for *The New Yorker*, included Bunch’s 2006 chamber opera *Confessions of the Woman in the Dunes* in his list of significant contemporary works in his book *The Rest is Noise*.

As of early this month, Bunch had worked his way through all 45 minutes of Act I of the two-act ballet and was starting on Act II. In much of his previous work, Bunch has drawn on vernacular American sources like jazz and folk music. Not here. “I wanted to capture an Old World aesthetic that both supported the story and honored the long tradition of evening-length orchestral narrative ballet scores,” he says. “So my influences here are closer to Prokofiev and Stravinsky than American folk or jazz idioms.”

If all goes well, OrchestraNext will record his completed score in late December, giving Pimble and her dancers a soundtrack on which she can begin to work out choreography.

The show won’t be fully cast until January, Pimble said, but EBC principal dancers Yuki Beppu and her husband, Hirofumi Kitazume, will dance the roles of Gerda and Kay, while Danielle Tolmie will dance as the Snow Queen.

The overall look of *The Snow Queen* will be created by its set and costumes, which are being designed, respectively, by Nadya Geras-Carson and Jonna Hayden, both local designers with experience in ballet and opera. The fairy tale’s battle between good and evil takes place in two distinct worlds — the icy realm of the Snow Queen and the warmer (both visually and in terms of weather) world of the village.

Called into the production after a previous designer quit the show, Geras-Carson began by sitting down with Pimble to imagine possible looks for *The Snow Queen*. They decided to rely heavily on visual projections, which Geras-Carson will design, and on a color scheme that divides the universe into the cool, icy realm of the Snow Queen and the warm autumn colors of the village where the story begins.

“The set is progressing, albeit more slowly than we would have liked, but there are many factors involved in the building of a set,” Geras-Carson says. “Also, *Giselle* is the first show this season, so it deservedly takes precedence.”

With the physical sets now under construction, Geras-Carson — a former Disney Imagineer — is starting work on the static and video projections.

The look of Hayden’s *Snow Queen* costumes takes much of its inspiration from the visual melodrama of the late British fashion designer Alexander McQueen.

Sometimes called “the hooligan of English fashion,” McQueen is credited with, among other things, the dark, fantastical, over-the-top romantic look in his clothing lines. Hayden took online images of McQueen’s work to Pimble (“I don’t sketch,” Hayden says) and instantly sold her on the concept of using a similar approach for the Snow Queen.

Getting the concept down was the easy part. By the beginning of this month, Hayden had moved on from ideas and drawings to hands-on production.

“I have various team members working on headdresses, armor, snow people, crow tails and the flower girls,” she said. “We’re tackling the most complex costumes first, along with the principal characters, and we’re dropping by the Midtown Arts Center (where the ballet is based in South Eugene) every few days to do fittings.”

A big challenge is working out the practical details of creating such lavishly ornate costumes for dancers whose bodies — unlike runway models — must move, twist, leap and sweat in every rehearsal and performance.

“Just the crafts aspect of this show is daunting,” the costumer said. “We’re trying to figure out how to make dancers look partially frozen, but still be able to dance.”

To pull this off, Hayden and her stitchers are using everything from silicone, glitter, paint and fabric to cast crystals and glow-in-the-dark powder. “I also have a person working on antlers that are light enough to wear on a headdress, along with sturdy enough to hold a fabric shroud,” she says. “This show has so many interesting details.”

When the curtain goes up on the ballet’s world premiere in April, though, its prime patron won’t be in the audience.

Sadly, Richard Haugland, a co-founder along with his wife, Rosaria Haugland, of the hi-tech Eugene firm Molecular Probes, died Oct. 5 in Thailand, where he has lived the past few years to be near the schools his foundation has funded there for needy and orphaned children.

“Richard’s commitment and trust in myself and EBC to create a ballet of this magnitude is very special, a dream come true,” Pimble says. “I so wish he could be here to see it performed.” ■

The Snow Queen will have its world premiere 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 8, and 2 p.m. Sunday, April 9, 2017, at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts in Eugene; for more info, visit eugeneballet.org.



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