

# arts & entertainment



Photo by Scott Svoboda

## Dancing quality varies in six ballets at Kimball

Review by Carla Engstrom

The Stars of American Ballet touched on a hidden nerve that answers to the vibrations of beauty.

The dancers' movements were fragile and powerful, expressing a story without words, in their performance Sunday night at Kimball Recital Hall.

The program consisted of six short ballet numbers with solo and group dances performed to pre-recorded music.

The modern ballet, *After Eden*, was by far the most challenging and spectacular. It began with the lights down and a spotlight that silhouetted dancers Larry Rhodes and Hilda Morales.

The Stars of American Ballet dance on a bare stage without sets.

**Adam and Eve story**

The ballet retells the Adam and Eve story but carries the theme of people alone in the world and the struggles between man and women.

The realization of being alone is illustrated in graceful movements that transmit a feeling of agony.

The first ballet, *Valse-Fantaisie*, was a divertissement, which is a short ballet without a plot. The music was light-hearted and the lead couple (John Sowinski and Betty Chamberland) danced in a carefree manner.

Morales has a beautiful expansion of arms and legs, and she dances in a flowing manner.

The Stars of American Ballet performed Sunday in Kimball Recital Hall before a sellout crowd. Foreground: Phyllis Papa and John Sowinski perform a duet from *Flower Festival*, while Hilda Morales and Larry Rhodes perform *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux* at bottom right.

Rhodes' dancing clarifies the theme and mood of the music well; his leaps were tremendous.

Yet, the whole divertissement was badly choreographed. Even though it didn't have a plot, it should have appeared planned.

Sowinski's performance was acceptable, but not spectacular.

The second ballet, *Don Quixote Pas de Deux*, is a dance for two persons. Morales and Kirk Peterson were featured in Spanish costumes.

**Morales 'shaky'**

They danced well together, but Morales's pirouettes (a complete turn of the body resting on one foot) were shaky at first. She trembled on her turns, but by the end of the ballet she had control of her movements.

Peterson was fantastically powerful and leaped tremendously. His body left the stage and seemed like a bird in flight. It was absorbing and entertaining.

*Flower Festival* was a ballet in one act and is an example which set the standard for classical ballet.

Sowinski's fouettes (turns executed with a whipping movement of the free leg) were performed well. But his body appeared heavy in his leaps. He was better in his second performance.

Phyllis Papa was simply beautiful; she did peasant-like steps that carried the ballet.

*Swan Lake Pas de Trois*, a ballet for three dancers, was well planned. Meg Gordon, Peterson and Chamberland danced well together. The last ballet, *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux*, was performed by Rhodes and Morales, who also work well together.

## Chapin's latest gives new meaning to mundane

By Douglas Weil

Harry Chapin/*On the Road to Kingdom Come*/ Elektra 7E-1082.

*"The Smoke-Witch says—Wahoo!  
And the wise man says—Me too!  
And the Guru says—Wazoo!  
So do what you do."*

Mother Goose? Walt Disney? Dr. Seuss? Would you believe Harry Chapin?

Sadly, it's true. Chapin has been a personal favorite since his first two albums, *Heads and Tails* and *Sniper and Other Love Songs*.

For these two albums Chapin wrote personal, emotional and haunting lyrics. The music was arranged to create images and evoke feelings from the listener. Chapin's real talent was that he could make a song an intimate experience. Flanked by *Smoke-Witches* and *Gurus*, Chapin's only talent exhibited on his sixth album, *On the Road To Kingdom Come*, is giving new meaning to the word mundane.

Watching Chapin's career take this meaningless direction is a shock similar to finding out that your girlfriend's father is having an affair with your mother and that you are actually the illegitimate son of that affair.

If you think this is a strange comparison, wait until you hear the song "The Mayor of Candor Lied," Chapin

wrote this song about just that situation.

It's quite possible that three or four years ago Chapin could have made this into a believable song. If you're able to listen to this song without getting sick, or at least disgusted, it might be a good time to check in with a psychiatrist.

One of the big faults on the album other than unbelievably weak material is that Chapin's voice is lost in an amorphous mass of overproduction.

Chapin's voice is by not stretch of the imagination a pretty voice. It's a weak voice, a bit gravelly and crude. Still it's a voice that possesses a great deal of character. Production on the last three Chapin albums has managed to strangle every bit of that character.

*On the Road To Kingdom Come* also suffers from a serious lack of self-restraint. There are some bearable songs on the album—"If My Mary Were Here" and "Fall In Love With Him"—but even they are casualties in the album's quest for unrestrained verbosity.

Since the release of those first two albums Chapin and

his music have become isolated from each other.

As a result, *On the Road to Kingdom Come* is a futile effort by Chapin to preserve his image as a storyteller by performing this collection of creatively, emotionally sterile music.

### fresh tracks



Apparently Chapin understands that his career in music may be drawing to a close as he tells us in "On the Road To Kingdom Come":

*"Well it started out exciting  
But it ended up ho hum ...  
And my brain is still a virgin  
Though the rest of me's well done"*

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