

Speedy trip...

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Inside his plush patrol car, I squeezed in between all the state-patrol junk he has in the front seat. From the back seat speaker, an easy-listening radio station played to calm open hostilities toward the Nebraskan State Patrol.

The officer told me that my mom's car is bad luck and I told him any car is bad luck for me. He then got a great idea.

HE RADIOED IN for my driving record and a few minutes later we listen to someone somewhere expound on my offenses.

After a couple of minutes, I told him that he could tell the guy to stop—so what? I'm a chronic speeder. I have a lead foot, no patience for driving. No big deal.

Not in Nebraska. The officer told me about this rule. He said that drivers racking up more than 12 points in one year in traffic offenses lose their licenses. I narrowly missed. In a year's time I had racked up quite a few points but not 12. Whew.

But he wasn't sure. So he decided to check his handy statute book in the back seat. No, it said 12 points in two years and I already have 9 points for two years.

"If you are convicted on this count you will lose your license, Cynthia," the officer said, lacking any compassion for such a moment.

"Oh well, so what?" I kidded myself. I don't even have a car. Why have a driver's license?

He handed me the ticket to sign and bid me farewell.

"Let's stop meeting like this, Cynthia," he said in his State Patrolman's authoritative voice.

Omaha ballet young but eager

By Penelope Smith

A regional ballet company is an extremely difficult thing to critique. Like many regional companies, the Omaha Ballet has young dancers who are still learning their art. As such, it is not fair or proper to compare them to large, established companies.

Omaha Ballet's performances can be a

dance review

mutually enjoyable learning experience between dancers and audience. What they lack in professionalism is often compensated for by their enthusiasm and exuberance.

The Omaha Ballet opened its 1979-80 season with a three act ballet, "Orpheus," choreographed by the company's director, Thomas Enckell. The ballet follows the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, a tale of love, loss and reunion in death.

Unfortunately for Enckell and his promising young dancers, the ballet illustrates a company out of its depth. The myth of Orpheus requires a sustained eloquence of passionate longing and an intensity of presence to which few older and more experienced companies can do justice. It is emotion that is central to the story and, like so many other productions, it fails because dancing is not enough.

Without acting, dancing in a dramatic ballet becomes empty movement. In "Orpheus" the port de bras become not eloquent gestures of wordless thought, but mere movement without the color of emotion. The demons in the underworld in the absence of an underlying driving frenzy became a hodgepodge of waving hands and feet.

Enckell's greatest choreographic problem seems to have been how to deal with his small stage space. As choreographer and director, he must deal with his stage with the unity of his creation and the finished picture he presents to the audience. The stage of the Orpheum is a "music box" stage, a stage in miniature. Enckell could

have helped his production by cutting the number of dancers on stage at any one time.

Ideally, any of his productions should give as many of the company's dancers a chance to perform as possible, but when this creates a confusing mass of ten or twelve dancers on stage at once, performance time should be sacrificed for quality.

In "Orpheus" the stage looked crowded and the dancers cramped. They could not expand and there was a psychological reluctance on the part of the audience to be drawn in.

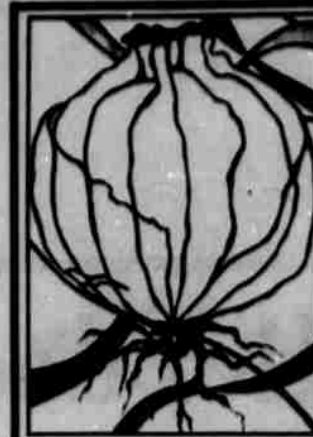
The costumes and set could have been more effective. The costuming was done in blue, pink and green. The Muses wore little tunics and the Villagers longer ones. A uniformity of color and length could have created a clearer and less fragmented visual harmony. Also, a more floating line would have expanded and softened the surrounding space. Some of the costumes seemed inappropriate.

The Ghosts of the underworld in their mummy wraps and body suits evoked none of the bloody pathos of Greek tragedy nor did they enhance the grace of the dancers. The costuming of the Thracian women should have been given a bit more thought.

These women were god-possessed ecstatic dancers who ran wild through the mountains and ripped Orpheus apart with their bare hands. Traditionally, they wore animal pelts and vegetation. They should not have been wearing red vamp costumes with a hint of the gypsy.

The lighting started out with promising Maxfield Parrish silhouettes and degenerated as the columns became neon green, red, orange and blue. Rather than a hellish light, the stage had a Christmas tree glow. Sometimes the columns showed so intensely that the dancers were barely visible in the alternate darkness. The situation was not aided by the black box platform props; they blocked the light and seemed to crowd the dancers off an already crowded stage.

"Orpheus" needs more craftsmanship and, most of all, more care. The Omaha Ballet is a young company without the necessary experience needed to perform a dramatic ballet.



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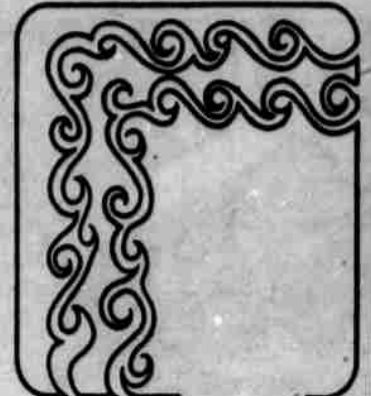
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