

# arts/entertainment

## Houston Ballet presents diversified dance forms

By Christian S. Thompson

The premiere of The Houston Ballet at Kimball Recital Hall was definitely a great performance. Performing Oct. 1 through 3, the Houston Ballet presented a masterpiece showcase of ballet as a highly diversified dance form. The program included five separate works, each with its own live orchestra accompaniment, ranging from the classic "Raymonda," to the contemporary "Pi r2."

### dance review

The first piece on the program was the "Bartok Concerto," choreographed by the ballet's artistic director, Ben Stevenson, and inspired by Bartok's "Third Piano Concerto." The ballet consisted of two vigorous movements for seven couples surrounding the central movement, which is a lyric pas de deux.

The first movement of the concerto was done with a simple burlap backdrop. The couples whirled about in a flush of rusts and russets. The extensions were beautiful, the pirouettes perfect.

Although set to music by Bella Bartok, some of the isolation movement bore a resemblance to contemporary movements pioneered by Bob Fosse.

#### Slow-motion movement

The second movement of the concerto, a pas de deux, was dominated by slow-motion movements in a wonderful performance by Andrea Vodehnal. Accompanied by blue lighting by Matthew C. Jacobs, the movement had a very tidal, liquid feeling.

The third movement was strongly rhythmic, accented with several series of marvelously executed grand jetes. Truly, one of the highlights of the evening was an all-too-short pas seul by Li Cuxin. His double and triple mid-air pirouettes were breathtaking.

The second piece, "Three Preludes," also choreographed by Ben Stevenson, was set to music by Serge Rach-

maninoff. In 1972, Stevenson won first prize with "Three Preludes" in the category of modern choreography at the International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria. Since then it has been performed internationally by many companies.

#### Contemporary setting

A tender pas de deux, "Three Preludes" was a wonderful example of classic ballet movements in a contemporary setting. The stage was clear, except for a single practice bar centerstage, and a grand piano, stage right. Rachel Jonell Beard deserves special recognition for a virtuoso performance of this idyllic ballet. Beard's movements were precise in every instance, from her pinpoint-perfect entrechats to her simple contractions, extensions and arabesques.

Next on the program was "Don Quixote Pas De Deux," performed by Janie Parker and Li Cuxin. This traditional ballet, with choreography patterned after Marius Petipa, was executed in the traditional sequined Spanish costume.

Characterized by dramatic poses and latin rhythmic movement, "Don Quixote" was a flawless piece of classical ballet. Once again, Li Cuxin's performance was a show-stopper. The elevation in his entrechats was incredible, and his fouettes looked as if they were turned on a dime.

Cuxin's partner, Janie Parker, appeared somewhat shaky on points at first, but she possessed an unmistakably dramatic flair appropriate for this ballet.

The most memorable piece on the program was "Pi r2." With nothing on stage but a red cushion, "Pi r2" was an exercise in avant-garde dance. The soundtrack was an intriguing combination of R2D2 noises and moog synthesizers. Some of the movements were similar to Martha Graham stiff, non-traditional positions and flexes.

#### Lighter fare

At one point, Rosemary Miles stuck her head out between Steven Brule's legs and grabbed his calves. She was then picked up from the rear and the three stiffly walked about in a circle. "Pi r2" was a rather humorous work, and lighter fare than the rest of the show. The facial expressions of the dancers added a great deal to the dance.

## Belushi is lighter spot in dark forest

By Casey McCabe

*Continental Divide* is one of those happy, harmless movies where the action on screen vies with the quality of the popcorn and the person sitting next to you for your attention.

The predictable boy meets girl plot has a few nice twists. John Belushi shows he can go the distance with one character, a frumpy, crusading journalist named Ernie Souchak who's recognized and respected on the streets of his beloved Chicago.

### movie review

Blair Brown gets the best strong-willed heroine role since *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. She's Nell, a Boston-born ornithologist who shucks civilization to live in independent solitude studying bald eagles in the Rockies. The unlikely meeting we all suspect comes at the



Photo courtesy of Universal City Studios

John Belushi and Blair Brown star in *Continental Divide*.

urgings of Souchak's editor, who fears his prize columnist may be endangered by all the political skeletons he's been uncovering. The solution: a trip to the timberline wilds of Wyoming (actually Colorado for you discerning panorama fans) where he will write a piece on the woman and her studies, but more importantly, get out of Chicago where the muggers respect him and the cops beat him up.

Problem is, Souchak doesn't want to leave Chicago, and his chain-smoking persona has little regard for where the deer and the antelope play. Nell has even less respect for journalists and greets the idea of his unannounced two-week stay with only the most humanitarian of concerns for his survival, lest she turn him out in the snow.

Anyone with traditional cinematic instincts should be able to see the embers glowing by now. Nell displays her rugged individualistic charm while Ernie is disarmingly unconvincing in displaying his backwoods prowess.

Realizing that their pairing is unavoidable for at least two weeks, when a guide will come to retrieve Souchak, they play coyly off their differences.

When the vast mountain scenes fade to the wilds of Chicago we see that not only has Souchak fallen hard for the woman he left behind, but he has lost his crusading spirit, covering his walls with pictures of Nell and the eagles.

From here *Continental Divide* falls into a series of climactic moments culminating in a prolonged happy ending that would likely have fallen flat if not for Belushi's irresistible comic presence.

Of course, the mountain scenes are beautiful and the shots of the bald eagles in action are tasteful and spectacular. Director Michael Apted should also be commended for showing the splendor of Chicago as fitting competition to the wonders of nature.

Script-wise there are a few hitches. For one thing, we never really see what makes Nell fall for Ernie, though it is very apparent that the civilization-starved Souchak would probably have begun making passes at elk if trapped for more than two weeks.

Still, it is a love story and a successful light comedy. Few will find it either offensively banal or profoundly moving. Belushi's presence should not mislead anyone into expecting a *Saturday Night Live* style farce, but it is his special flair and maturing comic approach that pulls *Continental Divide* out of the woods.

Unfortunately, the only piece on the program that was not outstanding was the last piece, "Raymonda, Act III," by Petipa. The technical performance of this ballet was not as polished or precise as the other works. Although the elaborate Tudor backdrop and Tudor costuming were marvelous, the dance that went with it was out of sync at times, and just a little sloppy. However, the thematic variations were worth waiting for. Perhaps the best part of "Raymonda" was the pas seuls in the Pas Hongroise movement.

The Houston Ballet is something of a newcomer in the realm of contemporary ballet companies. It was formally established in 1966. Since its inception, the company has premiered in New York and gained international status as an innovator in modern ballet.

The Houston Ballet represents an ideal chance to view a highly regarded professional and expressive ballet company, exemplifying diversified influences and schools of thought. Both in its soloists and its "toute ensemble," the Houston Ballet gave a great performance.

## NETV fall season includes new series, local, national specials

By Cydney Wilson

Nebraska Educational Television has recently kicked off its fall programming. This season's line up includes six new national series and one new local series. This year NETV is trying to broaden the sports, public affairs and business programming while still retaining the fine arts and science programming.

*The Nightly Business Report*, is one of the new series offered in order to expand business programming. It is a nightly report telling of the days economic news. This program begins Oct. 19 at 6 p.m. It intends to provide broad coverage, with in-depth studies of our nation's economy and economics internationally.

#### Local programs

A locally produced program, *Nebraska Journal*, will be featured Thursdays at 9:30 p.m. *Nebraska Journal* will focus on major social, political and economic issues facing Nebraskans.

Some of the program subjects include the Faith Christian School in Louisville, Neb., Sandhills irrigation, uranium mining, cancer and birthing.

*Miller's Court*, featured on Thursdays at 8:30 p.m., examines legal aspects of social issues facing Americans. Harvard Law School professor and Supreme Court adviser Arthur Miller is the host. Topics for the show include the public employees right to strike, creationism vs. evolution, landlords vs. tenants, censorship, women and the law and the death penalty.

*Ask a Lawyer* is a monthly program for people with questions concerning specific legal issues. The program airs Oct. 22 at 8:30 p.m., and provides the opportunity for audience members to phone in questions.

*Enterprise*, a new program with Eric Sevareid as host, examines the "market place" in a documentary fashion. The program begins Oct. 9 at 8:30 p.m. and examines such issues as price wars, bankruptcy and "agri-mania."

#### Sports show

In the area of sports, a new program, *Soccer Made in Germany*, will air Sundays, beginning Oct. 11, at 5 p.m. Each 60-minute program highlights major international games featuring stars from the European circuit.

This fall's programming also offers a variety of specials dealing with people and society. Specials include, *Stepping Out*, airing Oct. 7 at 8 p.m. The program offers a look at 40 people who are labeled mentally handicapped, who give a performance at the Opera House in Sydney, Australia.

*Just Another Missing Kid*, Oct. 14 at 8 p.m., is a true detective story about a Canadian boy who disappears in the U.S. It raises questions about police practices and the judicial system in the United States.

*Board and Care*, follows at 9:30, with a story of two mentally handicapped teen-agers who are building a meaningful relationship. *The Hunter and the Hunted*, is a documentary focusing on the continuing search for Nazi War Criminals, airing Oct. 21, at 8 p.m., hosted by Jose Ferrer.

A four-part special, *Who's Keeping Score?* premieres Oct. 24 at 5 p.m. The program examines minimum competency testing in U.S. schools.

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