

Bloodthirsty Dracula turns to dance

Ballet Omaha comes to Lied

DANCE

Preview

By Paula Lavigne
Staff Reporter

Don't "bat" an eye. He may fly away.

From the pages of Bram Stoker's "Dracula," the infamous master of the undead will come alive as a Ballet Omaha production comes to the Lied Center for Performing Arts Wednesday.

The villainous vampire ballet, choreographed by Jill Bahr of the Charleston Ballet, is a direct revival of Stoker's haunting novel.

"The story had such a tremendous amount of passion to be easily created into a theatrical production," Bahr said.

"Bram Stoker wrote an excellent novel. The character of Dracula painted such a vivid picture."

Bahr's Dracula is played by Ballet Omaha member Reed Scott, who said he was enjoying his role as the bloodthirsty vampire.

"Dracula is definitely evil," Scott said. "I think of the blood as a drug. He's like a drug addict, only his addiction is to blood."

Scott said Dracula's relationship with Lucy, played by Ballet Omaha dancer Susan Chowning, tested Dracula's addiction.

"He has a strong passion for people and life," Scott said. "He has a passion and love for Lucy, but in the end he does resort to his desire for her blood."

Scott said he enjoyed the story behind the ballet because it differed from his previous roles.

"Dracula" is unusual as a ballet because it differs from classical ballets such as the "Nutcracker" and "Swan Lake," Bahr said.

She incorporated some of the same steps and techniques as the early 1900 ballets, she said, but added more variations.

"My ballet isn't what you'd call a classical ballet," she said. "It's very of the '90s age."

Bahr said she was bringing to the theater the interests of theatrics similar to those on MTV and magician David Copperfield's magic shows.

"These theatrical advantages give a more modern approach to ballet," she said.



Courtesy of Ballet Omaha

Reed Scott plays Dracula and Susan Chowning plays Lucy in the Ballet Omaha production of Dracula. The ballet will be performed tonight at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

The ballet has another added twist — through the use of dialogue.

"Dracula expresses his thoughts to the audience," Scott said. "It helps tell the story."

Scott's physical movements differ from the typical assortment of pirouettes and arabesques, Bahr said.

Scott said the ballet was a mixture of various styles of dance.

"It's almost a combination feel of jazz, modern, and classical ballet," he said. "It is very sharp and 'undead' because it has a very bro-

See DRACULA on 10

Strangers rank high in Lincoln

Some bands have attitudes, but few have the talent to back it up. The Rank Strangers have both.

The Minneapolis-based band will visit Duffy's Tavern tonight with perhaps the best live show Lincoln has seen in quite a while — maybe since the last time they were here.

The band's brand of alternative rock and roll evokes memories of the Replacements — if not in sound, then in performance. The Strangers have plenty of heart, and anyone who has seen vocalist Mike Wisti sing knows he means it.

In short, these guys are good. And they're getting better.

The band has shown steady improvement in the last year as lead guitarist Jacques Wait has evolved into a talented musician.

The band was born five years ago in Lansing, Mich., but the members have known each other for longer than that. Bassist L. Wisti is Mike Wisti's brother and drummer Doug Durbin has known the siblings since grade school. The three met Wait in high school.

In 1991, the band moved from Lansing to Minneapolis.

"There weren't a lot of places to play in Lansing," Mike Wisti said. "Any band from there that wants to tour or make a record will find it kind of tough to do."

Since relocating, the Rank Strangers have regularly toured the Midwest.

The band plays Lincoln often — tonight will be their third visit to Duffy's in the past year — and not just because it's on the Midwest circuit, Wisti said.

The Rank Strangers' first full-length record, "Far Cry from Here," was released early this year on Crackpot Records. The first pressing sold out quickly.

"Everyone I talked to at Crackpot was pleasantly surprised," Wisti said.

The band is now in the process of recording its second album, which has yet to be named. Wisti said the band hoped to be done recording by November and have the record out by April.

Although Wisti said he was enjoying the band's recent success, he's really just having a good time.

But he conceded that it probably couldn't last forever.

"If we all thought we were getting worse, or if things weren't moving along for us — say, we were making even less money or getting even less shows and people whose opinions we care about liked us even less — well, then we'd feel it's time to pack it in."

—Bryce Glenn

Comedian rumblin', bumblin', tumblin' into Lied

theater preview



He's a nut, he's a gas, he's the clown supreme. Jerry Lewis is coming to Lincoln's Lied Center for Performing Arts. He will sing, dance, mime and narrate his multimedia autobiography Friday at 8 p.m.

Lewis is the American comedian, period. He began performing at the age of 5, and has since appeared in more than 50 movies, grossing more than \$800 million at the box office.

Like Al Jolson and the Marx Brothers, he blazed the path with his career for Jewish-American comedians like Woody Allen and Billy Crystal. He toured the burlesque theaters and clubs of the '40s. In 1946, he joined Dean Martin on stage, and the two created a routine that carried them from stage to screen.

Lewis' style has transformed humor films from a series of one-liners to true cinematic comedy. In the '50s and '60s, he blended colorful film characters and strong film plots

masterfully. Like Kafka with a laugh track, Lewis created a view of modern man that audiences were able to laugh at. Today, comedians like Steve Martin gratefully admit their debt to "the king of comedy."

Like the story-line of "Cinderella" or "The Errand Boy," the New Jersey boy's fame has risen to hilarious, unheard of proportions. The Nutty Professor has been made a member of the French Foreign Legion, was praised in an official resolution by Congress, and is the only entertainer ever to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. He has become a director, producer, film-writer, author, telethon host and professor at the University of Southern California.

In foreign countries Lewis's work is regarded as cinematic genius, perhaps because the films exaggerate and lampoon the American myth so accurately.

The Lewis character is a sweet, optimistic buffoon who bumbles through life with an indestructible faith in life's mercies. He tumbles through careers, stumbles through romance, veers and careers through society with a strange mix of brave insecurity and blind bravado.

See LEWIS on 10



Courtesy of Columbia Artists

Performer Jerry Lewis will appear at the Lied Center for Performing Arts on Friday.