

Plié to the **Past**

*French company dances
tribute to Opera conductor*

By Josh Nichols

Staff writer

Like everything else, ballet has changed in the past century.

Some of the significant performances that helped change the face of dance will be performed this evening at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

The Ballet de l'Opéra de Bordeaux, a prominent French dance company for more than two centuries, will present "Tribute to Diaghilev," a performance in tribute to Sergei Diaghilev, a famous Russian opera conductor who has been called the originator of modern dance.

The piece includes well-known performances such as "Les Sylphides," "L'après-midi D'un Faune," "Le Spectre de la Rose" and "Petrouchka."

The ballet is an innovative one. "These performances changed how we look at ballet," said Lisa Fusillo, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor of dance.

Mark Moore, senior events coordinator at the Lied, said viewers will see some "really classical stuff" at tonight's show.

He also said this performance is unique in that local dancers will be taking part in the performance.

The local performers will be able to take part in a performance that brings back the dances going on when the century began.

The first performance, "Les Sylphides," originally called "Chopiniana," is a dance classic that doesn't tell a basic story.

Instead, it involves dancers in long white dresses and a "danseur," which is a male ballet dancer wearing white and black velvet.

The danseur's romantic movements to the classical music tell a story of wondrous creatures who dance in the moonlight.

Presented for the first time in 1909, "Chopiniana" was a restoration of ballet blanc, a style of ballet that was lost midway through the 19th century.

Brushed away by an emphasis on elaborate stage spectacle, ballet blanc was a return to dancers' romantic movements that told a story of their own.

The second performance, "L'après-midi D'un Faune" (The Afternoon of a Faun), opens with an innocent faun relaxing on a hot summer afternoon.

Dressed in dotted brown tights, the half faun, half person soon encounters seven beautiful maiden sisters who are in awe of the creature.

When the faun begins to leap about the maidens are scared away, but return shortly.

The faun once again tries to befriend them, scaring all but one of the sisters away.

Feeling an attraction to the girl, the faun tries to embrace her, but scaring her away in the process. As she flees, she drops a scarf, which the faun cherishes.

At this time, the faun handles the scarf in a provocative manner, which upset many people in 1909, Fusillo said. The other contemporary aspect of this early 20th-century performance was the static movements of the dancers in a flat, two-dimensional scene.

In dance, people were used to smooth, flowing movements by dancers in a soft, round curve, Fusillo said.

The last one-act performance in the group, "Le Spectre de la Rose," is about a lovesick girl who returns home from a ball carrying a rose.

When she falls asleep, the rose slips from her hand and falls to the floor where the spirit of the rose suddenly appears dancing about the room.

She dances with the spirit until the morning light peers into the room and the spirit sneaks away.

PREVIEW

Ballet de L'Opera de Bordeaux, "Tribute to Diaghilev"

WHERE: Lied Center for Performing Arts, 12th & R streets

WHEN: Feb. 2, 8 p.m.

COST: \$28, \$32 and \$36,

half price for students

THE SKINNY: French

dancers perform early

20th Century ballet.

She wakes up and sees the rose lying on the floor beside her, picks it up and then cherishes the memory of her night at the ball and dream that followed.

The final performance, "Petrouchka," contains four scenes and is set at a carnival in Russia.

It is a love story centered around Petrouchka and his battle with a rival to win over the love of a ballerina.

In the beginning, the three characters are puppets controlled by a charlatan playing a puppeteer. It seems as if the puppets become human, taking on characteristics of living people.

The audience is shocked in the end when Petrouchka is struck over the head with a sabre by his enemy.

When Petrouchka's supposedly dead body is picked up, the beholder discovers that Petrouchka is only a puppet.

At this time, the charlatan says, "It's only me being a puppeteer."

But after that, Petrouchka's soul reappears, leaving the audience to question the meaning of the piece.

Fusillo described Petrouchka as "a psychological insight into personality."

Fusillo said people need to look at these performances with a sense of history and think about seeing them in 1912.

"We are delighted to have this in Nebraska for people to experience the tradition in ballet history," Fusillo said. "People will see a wonderful reflection of early 20th-century ballet."

