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's 'Sleepy Hollow' ts

Ballet Fantastique proved fantastic at their premiere of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” Dancing, choreography, music, costumes and sets all took us to the site of Washington Irving’s popular ghost story of this drowsy quiet mystical town on the Hudson River of 1790.

Natanael Leal was ideal as Ichabod Crane, the lean, lanky superstitious new schoolmaster from Connecticut. The Bontragers creative choreography emphasized his loose joints, and nervous demeanor using his amazing technique and farcical gestures.



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Gustavo Ramirez, as Abraham Van Brunt, aka Brom Bones was handsome and dashing as the swaggering blade and rival of Ichabod for the hand of Katrina Van Tassel, plus the headless horseman. His excellent technique and form were pleasurable to watch.

Ashley Bontrager was perfect as Katrina Van Tassel, the country coquette, flirting and entrancing the local men with her beauty, grace and spirited dancing skill. Whether enpointe or folk dance, she delighted us with her boundless energy and charming style.

Mr. Baltus Van Tassel, a gentleman farmer, was danced by Jim Ballard with his excellent acting and dancing ability. He also was part of the life-size haunted horse, a breathtaking puppet.

The lovely Carolin Koeplin danced the role of Mrs. Rebecca Van Tassel with precision and a refreshing on stage presence.

Hannah Bontrager, Tracy Fuller and Della Griffin were the Golden Girls and the Spectres. Hannah is always pleasurable to watch with her perfect technique and lively form. Tracy Fuller is new to Ballet Fantastique and a refreshing addition. Della Griffin was perfect as part of this trio.



There were no “dead” spots in the production. Using dancers to bring on and take off props and furniture was a welcome addition. Kalan Guetti, Zephan Holt, Faith Slater and Peace Van Den Elzen were unobtrusive and always part of the show. First rate dancers all. The Sleepy Hollow girls and boys from the Academy of Ballet Fantastique were captivating to watch, with nary a stumble or misstep.

Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager’s weaving of ballet and folk dance lent historical precision and captivating movement for the whole performance.

Allison Ditson and the costume design team provided exquisite costumes that mirrored the time period and made it easy for the dancers to move. The shredded wedding dresses for the Spectres were eerie to watch. Gustavo’s headless horseman was spooky enough to add to the overall fantasy.

The book bed design and the rolling graveyard pillars by Don Carson were captivating.

The Arthur Rackham illustrations of a hand painted forest by Kelle DeForrest with Katey Finley provided the exquisite backdrops for the show.

I loved the shadow puppet video animation by Kevin Kerber.

It takes a village to create a successful production and Ballet Fantastique always uses live music by local musicians. “Sleepy Hollow” musicians included Dreos and the Gerry Rempel Ensemble. I was entranced by the violin introduction of Brandon Vance. Rebecca Conner’s vocals added a bewitching sound. Eliot Grasso’s fiddle, tin whistle and uilleann pipes lent just the right flavor. Gus Russell, Glen Waddell, Rick Carter, and Brian West rounded out the treasurable sound.

Gwen Curran of Eugene reviews dance for The Register-Guard.

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REVIEW

Ballet Fantastique’s The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 28, and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 29

Where: Soreng Theater, Hult Center, Seventh Avenue and Willamette Street

Tickets: \$35 to \$48 and \$23 to \$35 for students (hultcenter.org)

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