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REVIEWS

Ballet Fantastique, OMP successfully execute a well-crafted collaboration with 'Crouching Tiger'





Amanda Coleman is Jade Fox in Ballet Fantastique's "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon." (Stephanie Urso)

BY ALISON KAUFMAN

For The Register-Guard

MARCH 6, 2017



The sold-out audience at the Hult Center on Friday greeted Ballet Fantastique and Oregon Mozart Players for their world premiere performance of “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” and an encore performance of “Tales from the Floating World.”

Friday’s performance began with excerpts from “Tales from the Floating World,” which depicted stories from Asian folklore. These were all accompanied by Mitsu-ki Dazai on the koto, a traditional Japanese plucked instrument. Dazai’s melodies make use of bent pitches, quarter tones and disjunct rhythms, which can be very difficult for dancers to follow.



The first scene, “The Tale of the Morning Glory,” tells of the lovers Miyuki and Asojirô — separated by status and duty, but brought together in the end by fate. The opening of this scene had some issues with the corps de ballet, who played the fireflies. Several times the dancers were out of sync. However, Leanne Mizsoni as Miyuki was a delight. Her emotion during the scene where she cries herself blind was palpable, and the choreography during her pas de deux with Natanael Leal as Asojirô was flashy but sensitive.

Jane Morgan as the Rain Goddess in the “Legend of Thunder” showcased a great

depth of poise and grace, even as a large and rather boisterous group of latecomers arrived. Ashely Bontrager and Gustavo Ramirez had a charming scene in the “Robe of Celestial Feathers.” The choreography of Bontrager’s attempt to retrieve the stolen robe from Ramirez was specific, communicative and fun. The chemistry between these two dancers also was very exciting to watch.

The second half brought the world premiere piece and the Oregon Mozart Players to the stage. The music for this ballet is a reduction of the “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” film score by Tan Dun into the 30-minute Crouching Tiger Concerto for cello and chamber orchestra. Cellist DaXun Zhang performed the solos with incredible specificity and passion. An extended a cappella solo between the fifth and sixth scenes was filled with challenging extended techniques, which Zhang navigated with flair and drama, as well as heartrending emotion.

Conductor Kelly Kuo led his orchestra through the challenging music with a steady hand and a positive aura. He seemed to particularly enjoy conducting the large percussion section which played with a thundering, driving pulse in several fight sections. Flautist Kristin Halay was particularly lovely on both the alto flute and piccolo, bringing a vulnerability to the soaring motives which perfectly suited the dancers’ expressions on stage.

The choreography of the ballet was a condensed and simplified version of the plot for the original film. Ashley Bontrager as Yu Shu Lien was magnificent, as was the dancer who played her lover Master Li Mu Bai, Gustavo Ramirez. Their opening duet craftily navigated the complicated relationship of the two aging warriors. The choreography by Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager featured a push and pull of distance and proximity, mirroring the hidden desire of the two characters to be with each other yet separated by duty.



Local Memorial Day Services

9:00 AM - Mt. Calvary Cemetery

10:00 AM - Springfield Memorial Gardens

12:30 PM - Lane Memorial Gardens

2:30 PM - West Lawn Memorial Park

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Hannah Bontrager as Jen Yu was superb, with a youthful energy and franticness of spirit that was well conveyed in her fight scenes, as well as enhanced by the tragic ending she witnesses for Li Mu Bai and Yu Shu Lien.

Overall, this collaboration between Ballet Fantastique and the Oregon Mozart Players was well crafted and wonderfully realized. Hopefully more projects will occur in the future.

Musicologist and soprano Alison Kaufman reviews classical performances for the Register-Guard.

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Performance review

Ballet Fantastique's Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 4 and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, March 5

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

Tickets: \$28 to \$53, and \$18 to \$43 for full-time college students with ID and high

school students (hultcenter.org)

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This is the final track season for the British superstar before he transitions to road racing

Arms spread wide, chest pushed forward, and head held high, Mo Farah soared across the Hayward Field finish line one last time. And in typical Farah fashion, everyone else was behind him. Farah, the most ...



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