

Our Town

Wednesday, August 10, 2005

Coming to an Amphitheater near you

Where can you find Pirates and ballet all in one? Certainly never before in Kannapolis.

“Pirates!”-an original, full length ballet, written by Rebecca Massey, and performed by Piedmont Dance Theater- will be performed free in Village Park amphitheater this Friday, starting at 7p.m.

Massey is the director and founder of the nonprofit Piedmont Dance Conservatory and Piedmont Dance Theater.

The ballet is the story of the Rackham family-Samantha and Jack. The scene opens in their household where Samantha, played by Alana Isiguen, and her husband, Jack, played by Colby Damon, are preparing to go to a party.

While they are away, the head maid in the house, who is secretly in love with Jack, writes in his journal recounting an untrue affair between her and Jack. Later, Samantha finds the journal, reads it, believes the account and fakes her own death to avoid humiliation and heartbreak.

Jack and the maids find her supposedly dead, and Jack leaves to take a ship to the New World to rebuild his life. Samantha wakes up from her fake death and runs away on a merchant ship, dressed as a man.

The next scene opens on a pirate ship, where one rebellious pirate attempts mutiny against the female captain, Leigh Parker, played by Jillian Vincent. After much fighting, the mutiny fails and the pirates celebrate as they spot a wealthy merchant ship, headed for the New World.

Meanwhile, this merchant ship just happens to be the one that both Jack and Samantha are on, though Jack doesn't recognize Samantha, still dressed as a man.

Samantha sees a young couple who remind her of her and Jack at that age then falls into a deep sleep. The dancing in her dream scene originated from a ballet called “La Bayadere,” mainly from the part called the Kingdom of Shades.

Samantha wakes up to find the merchants dancing. Suddenly, peace is broken by the news of a pirate attack. During the fray, Samantha finds Jack fighting a losing battle with Leigh Parker. Samantha jumps in and attacks the pirate captain from behind, and then forced to swear allegiance to Jack, and all peace is restored. This

original ballet shows that in truth, ballet concerts are not restricted to ballet dancing. “Pirates!” includes character dancing, contemporary, lyrical, jazz, and classical ballet. Each character has his or her own type of dancing that helps them define them.

For instance, Jack Rackham, respectable gentleman, does mainly classical ballet, while the merchants and ladies are character dancers, and Leigh Parker, the captain of the pirate ship, does more contemporary movements.

The three choreographers who helped shape this ballet were Rebecca Massey, Colby Damon, and Jilian Vincent.

Damon, of the Sacramento Ballet, is also guest principal dancer of the production. His great-grandmother is originally from Cabarrus County.

About 40 students round out the cast, not all of who are dancers.

“It’s a new experience,” said Mitchell Raymond, on being a character dancer.

Even the dancers aren’t dancing all the time. In addition to classes, all of the students help with the production of the ballet, including assembling and painting the sets, making costumes, and doing whatever else needs to be done. The students get a lot more out of this camp than just instruction on ballet technique. Massey teaches her students discipline, character, and how to work hard and also how to act in a professional environment, whether it be dance or otherwise.

Piedmont Dance Conservatory students were at the studio from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every weekday in preparation for the production. The camp and the ballet are both non-audition. Whoever wanted to come and work hard got a place in class and in “Pirates!” The camp is also nonprofit, as is being performance is being performed for free to the public.

The production will be the first dance concert to be performed at the Village Park amphitheater and is performed in conjunction with the Kannapolis Parks and Recreation Department.