12-12-1996

Hansel and Gretel

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American Dance Center Ballet

PRESENTS

HANSEL and GRETEL

A Holiday Tradition
20th Record Breaking Year

An original ballet by Jack Villari

Six Spectacular Performances

GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY - CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Thurs., December 12th 
10:00 a.m. & 12:15 p.m.

Fri., December 13th
10:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.

Sat. December 14th
2:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.
Greetings:

As governor of the State of Illinois, I am pleased to extend my best wishes to the American Dance Center Ballet Company on the celebration of its 22nd season and 20th year of "Hansel and Gretel," Chicago’s longest running original production.

I commend the members of your ballet company on the presentation of this holiday tradition which has earned itself the honor as the "area’s primary annual winter holiday fare." The American Dance Center Ballet Company has generated community and world-wide ties, both on and off stage. The Company should be proud of its 50-member dance company. Especially in an age when arts institutions are struggling to keep afloat, it is inspiring to witness the continued success of this home-grown effort.

On behalf of the citizens of Illinois, please accept my best wishes for another successful season and for continued success in the future.

Best regards,

Jim Edgar
Governor

HANSEL AND GRETEL

As a child, I would wait with great anticipation for December to arrive. It was always an exciting time of year with music, dancing, presents, candy and family traditions taking on special meaning. And... the magic seemed to grow as the holidays approached...

Yes, children’s dreams are special dreams, entwined in the world of fairy tales and make believe, where dreams come true and everyone lives happily ever after.

As an adult, I wanted to recapture the innocence of all that embraces Childhood and expand these magical moments by creating a holiday production that would appeal to all ages.

The classic children’s fairy tale, "Hansel and Gretel" interested me. One of the best known stories throughout the world and a traditional Christmas opera in Europe, it seemed appropriate to create a "Hansel and Gretel" ballet that families could share together. With this in mind, I put together a score with varied musical selections, tempered some of the cruelties of the original Brothers Grimm story, and added choreography and dialogue to expand the visual and emotional moments.

This year, we celebrate the 20th annual presentation of this holiday ballet, now a family tradition in our area.

It is my hope that we will all share the spirit of children through our common bond of memories and the universal language of dance.

JACK VILLARI
Artistic Director
HANSEL AND GRETEL

ACT I

Our story starts out early one morning in the village square. Hansel and Gretel earn enough money selling brooms to buy fresh-picked strawberries, a delicious dinner treat for the poor family. Anxiously, they rush home to complete their daily chores and await the return of their mother and father. As time passes, they become restless and begin to sing and dance. In the midst of all their merriment, Gretel accidentally knocks over the bowl of berries. Mother comes home to find everything in disarray and angrily sends them off to the forest to pick more berries.

As night falls, father arrives and discovers that Hansel and Gretel have not returned. Afraid of possible danger, they rush out in search of the two children.

Darkness has enveloped the forest. Hansel and Gretel are frightened, weary and lost. As they search for the pathway, ordinary trees appear to be grappling monsters. Coming into a clearing, the two tired children decide to say their prayers and go to sleep. The Sand Mädchen sends them to dreamland and calls upon the Guardian Angels to protect the innocent children through the night.

— INTERMISSION —

ACT II

As dawn approaches, the Guardian Angels bid farewell to the children and herald the beginning of a new day. An Enchanted Forest Fairy appears and greets the Morning Sun. Hoping to rid the forest of a witch’s evil spell, she leads the children to the witch’s gingerbread house. Tempted by all kinds of sweet things to eat, they hungrily sample the tasty offerings. The Sugary Witch catches them and threatens to turn them into delicious, life size cookies. But Gretel outwits the witch and pushes her into the cookie machine. The witch herself becomes a gingerbread cookie and Hansel and all the other young children are released from her spell.

The Forest Fairy excitedly returns with the mother, father and other townspeople, who had joined in the search. Together they rejoice in a grand celebration of dance. Suddenly, the greatest moment of joy, the Guardian Angels reappear with a multitude of the heavenly host and they bless the family saying “Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace among men of good will”.

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The AMERICAN DANCE CENTER BALLET... is a not-for-profit resident company representing almost every south suburban community. As the performing wing of the American Dance Center school in Olympia Fields, its main goal is to develop professional level performances and cultural opportunities in the area. Serving as a springboard for gifted area dancers, it bridges the gap between classroom studies and professional theatre. Participants are selected annually and perform with international dance soloists under the guidance of director, Jack Villari and choreographer, Kathleen Sims Villari.

Helping to develop close ties and understanding between nations, it has arranged prestigious cultural exchange programs. The Company received national attention in '78 when soloists from the famed Bolshoi Ballet of Russia danced as guest artists in Hansel and Gretel. Featured dancers have also represented the New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, The Joffrey Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, Stuttgart Ballet, Zurich Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Kirov Ballet.

Performing in all styles of dance the Company has been supported and recognized by the Illinois Art Council, Urban Gateways, the Daily Southtown and Star Newspapers, Target Stores, national dance critics and other arts organizations for its professional standards and contributions to greater Chicago. As south suburban's resident ballet company, it has provided a variety of cultural programs that respond to community needs including, chartered ballet tours, a film festival of dance, senior and junior performing groups, international guest artists, master teachers, university affiliated shows, touring ensemble shows, lecture-demonstrations, scholarship programs and school field trip grants.

COMPANY PROFILES

JACK VILLARI, (Artistic Director) of the American Dance Center Ballet Company is responsible for all creative and managerial decisions. He has created and directed all of the company's original ballets including "To Live is to Dance", "Leaves of Gold," "The Magic Toyshop", "Peter and the Wolf" and "Hansel and Gretel." He is founder of the American Dance Center School and developed the college credited dance curriculum for Prairie State College and Governors State University. As an accomplished singer-actor, he has appeared with top personalities on numerous TV shows, Broadway musicals, night clubs and movies. He is recipient of the Silver Award of Excellence from the International Film Festival for his work in the television commercial field and is listed in International Leader's in Achievement and Who's Who in Entertainment. Jack is a member of Screen Actors Guild, American Guild of Variety Artists, Actors Equity and Morality in Media.

KATHLEEN SIMS VILLARI, (Sugar Witch) is choreographer for the Ballet Company and director of dance for the American Dance Center School. She holds a BA in Dance from Butler University, Indianapolis and furthered her classical training at the renowned Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and American Ballet Theatre schools. She is former dance director of the Royal Academy of Performing Arts in New York and was named in "Outstanding Young Women of America" for her professional accomplishments. She has worked in association with Warner Bros., Hanna-Barbera and Walt Disney Productions. Ms. Sims has danced in the national company of "Camelot", supper clubs, Broadway musicals, Illinois Ballet, as the Snow Queen in televised versions of "The Nutcracker" and as a soloist with the Butler Ballet, Chicago, Cincinnati and Indianapolis symphonies.

Together, Jack and Kathleen have performed for presidents, John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. They authored the world's top selling anthology on the phenomena of Disco and have been recognized "as a vital force in the world of dance" in Dancemagazine "for their significant role in the development of America's rich dance heritage."
PRINCIPAL DANCERS
For the past 17 years, the American Dance Center Ballet has commissioned young professional dancers from the Joffrey II Concert Dancers in New York City. Dancing the roles of the Guardian Angels in this year's production are...

ANGELICA BURGOS was born in Armenia and trained in Russia and the Dominican Republic. She has been on scholarship at the Joffrey Ballet school in New York City for the past 4 years and is a member of the Joffrey II Concert Dancers. Miss Burgos has danced leading roles in Nutcracker, Raymonda, Waltzes and Etudes.

LEE-WEI CHAO of Taiwan, studied ballet, modern and Chinese dance at the National Institute of the Arts. He danced with Singapore Dance Theatre, Four Seasons Ballet and Henry Yu Modern Dance Co. Leading roles include, Paquita, Graduation Ball and Birds of Paradise. Lee-Wei is currently dancing with the Joffrey II Concert Dancers.

* * *

WILFREDO RIVERA, (Hansel) was born into a musical family in Honduras and graduated from the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts. He has danced in videos and industrials both regionally and nationwide. Wilfredo is on the faculty at the Lou Conte dance studio and a former soloist with River North Dance Company.

JENNIFER LAGGER, (Gretel) debuts in this role after dancing the Forest Fairy last year. As an American Dance Center Aspiring Artist, she danced at the '96 World Olympics, International Dance Festival, Disneyland and Great America. Jennifer was nationally selected to attend the Robert Joffrey Summer Workshop for 2 years.

SOLOIST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

MELODY GERACI, (Mother) holds a M.A. in Communications from the University of Illinois where she performed with UIC Circle dancers. A former member of the Joel Hall Dance Co., she has danced overseas in London, Belfast, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Melody has been a faculty member at the American Dance Center for the past 6 years.

SUZANNE ROSE, (Sand Madchen) returns for her ninth year as a soloist in Hansel and Gretel. This will be her second year dancing this role having previously been seen as the Forest Fairy. Suzanne danced in Chicago's Nutcracker at Arie Crown theatre for 7 years and holds a B.A. in dance from Indiana University.

SARAH PAVLACKA, (Forest Fairy) is an American Dance Center Aspiring Artist scholarship trainee and has danced in Hansel and Gretel for 5 years. Versatile in jazz, modern and tap, she makes her debut as a ballet soloist in this production. Sarah performed at the Robert Joffrey and Disney World Workshops for the past 2 years.

TRACY TRITT (Forest Fairy) makes her solo ballet debut as an American Dance Center Aspiring Artist scholarship trainee. She performed with the company at the '96 World Olympics, Atlanta and the International Dance Festival, Hollywood. She was an All-American winner for the '96 National Cheerleader Association.

MARIA VILLARI, (Morning Sun) is rehearsal captain for the company. An American Dance Center teacher for 10 years, she choreographed numerous award-winning pieces in tap and jazz. Graduated Phi Theta Kappa from Prairie State College on a performing arts scholarship, she has worked in theatre, videos, TV, fashion shows and industrials.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During this season of gift giving, we are happy to present our gift of “Hansel and Gretel” to the area.

We wish to thank the news media for their excellent coverage of this major event and for special courtesies extended to our ambassadors of dance during their stay with us. Of course, a production of this kind would be impossible, if it were not for the volunteer help and participation of so many. We would particularly like to thank all the unseen individuals who support our efforts, our continuing business and individual sponsors, and of course you, the theatre-goer who makes it all worthwhile.

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