Dance company puts new step in ‘Wolf,’ Broadway show tunes

By MICK FORGEY
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If you want a feature with comedy, death-defying drama, cleverly choreographed chase sequences and a swell soundtrack, think outside the local 24 cinema and try the Creighton Dance Company’s rendition of Sergey Prokofiev’s “Peter and the Wolf.”

To be honest, I usually do not go to events involving the words “dance” or “Sergey Prokofiev.” It’s not that I’m completely uncultured (though some might argue otherwise), it’s just that I know little to nothing about dance, so this assignment did not exactly thrill me.

I attended the dress rehearsal on Tuesday and saw the performance. I still know very little about dance, but I do know that “Peter and the Wolf” is a lot of fun, even if you are uncultured.

Don’t worry, there’s none of Prokofiev’s foreign tongue here. In fact, with the exception of the colorful, prerecorded narration of cross-dressing comedian Dame Edna, no one speaks. Instead, the story of farmboy Peter, his agile animal friends the Cat, the Bird and the Duck, and the nefarious Wolf is told through energetic choreography and colorful, creative costumes.

Despite not having lines, each character’s essence is effectively relayed through assigned musical instruments and character-specific dancing moves. The Wolf’s cunning is revealed through his bold, quick, mid-air turns. Characters like the Hunters adorn atypical costumes, like Charlie’s Angels-esque army fatigue mini-skirts.

The fun of “Peter and the Wolf” is in its execution. The dance sequences, including the Wolf making a feathery snack of one of the animals and Peter’s hectic tug-of-war struggle with the rope-ensnared Wolf are executed with graceful goodness and humor.

Choreographer and associate professor of dance, Lisa Carter, said that the story itself came with no blueprint or ballet, so she choreographed it creatively and comically.

“I wanted to keep it going, keep it lighthearted and up to date,” Carter said, referencing contemporary elements like the Charlie’s Angels themed costumes.

After “Peter and the Wolf,” audiences will be treated to a medley of Broadway hits, choreographed by adjunct dance professor Patrick Roddy and featuring songs from “Chicago” and “A Chorus Line.” Again, the energetic dance numbers have creative sequences. Dancers portraying murderous songbirds in jail recreate the humorous end of a former boyfriend who didn’t know when to keep quiet, while the number “I Hope I Get It” features dancers “practicing” a big dance number in anticipation of a big audition.

Both performances also reflect the hard work of both student dancers and stage tech hands.

“The dances are what you see, but there’s lots going on behind the scenes,” Carter said.

The dancers make it look easy, but they have been practicing the show every Friday for the past two months and every night for the past three weeks, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Carter hopes students try to attend the performance: “A concert or ballet is kind of an unknown, and a lot of people might think it’s only for snobbish people, and it’s not,” she said. “Students should see what’s on the other side of the road, and see if they like it.”

It’s a good time, ladies and gentlemen. Stay home from “Dawn of the Dead” or “Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed,” and try a little “Peter and the Wolf” and “Broadway Melodies.” It’s a symphony of music and dance. And, you’ll get a little culture.

“Peter and the Wolf” and “Broadway Melodies” will be performed at the Lied Education Center for the Arts tonight at 7:30 p.m. and also at 5 p.m. on Sunday.