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Witches, Wolves & Wizards

By Scott Timm

As Serge Prokofiev first set about writing his ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, he reasoned, "Living people can dance, but the dead cannot dance well lying down." So he wrote a happy ending, one in which Romeo arrives to find Juliet still alive.

This tampering with the plot did not sit well with the artists of the Kirov Ballet. Despite the fact that they found the score tiresome and difficult, they asked Prokofiev to continue writing, while insisting he go back to Shakespeare's original. It is with Shakespeare's tragic ending that we now know the ballet, but it makes us wonder how a new version of the tale with a happy ending might have been received.

Adapting plots to fit new uses is hardly a new problem. In fact, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is itself his dramatic version of Arthur Brook's poetic *Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, written 34 years earlier.

The "adaptive re-use" of melodic themes might also be a problem if such a rich history of arranging didn't already exist. Bach and Handel were masters of economy, borrowing their own themes and re-using them in new compositions. Many later composers, among them Beethoven, Wagner and Richard Strauss, did the same. By combining and rearranging musical passages, they were able to extend their output, and give old melodies new life.

Such a rationale is behind *Witches, Wolves & Wizards*, a family entertainment presented by the Dance Alloy and The Carnegie over Thanksgiving weekend. This dance and theater performance of fairy tales and children's stories will include three new versions of well-known tales: "The Three Little Pigs," "Merlin and the Magic Mirror" and "Hansel and Gretel." The three works are being created by three different artists: Jerry Pearson, guest artistic director of the Dance Alloy; Gary Race, artistic coordinator of the Pittsburgh Opera Theater; and Mitchell Rose, New York-based choreographer and dancer. Each artist has taken an individual approach in adapting musical sources and plots to create new interpretations of these familiar tales.

Jerry Pearson began work on "The Three Little Pigs" by listening to the well-known musical portrait of a wolf in Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. This score invited listening to more of Prokofiev's works, and Pearson became interested in his *Lieutenant Kije Suite*.

Pearson's first alteration of the



Ric Evans

From "Merlin and the Magic Mirror"

The Dance Alloy has a special brew of dance, music and theater to celebrate Thanksgiving at The Carnegie

traditional story is in having not one, but three wolves. An attraction develops between a pig and a wolf, and these star-crossed lovers must deal with warring families. This similarity to *Romeo and Juliet* also brought to mind the musical *West Side Story*, yet another adaptation of the same story. Just as Leonard Bernstein used a contemporary musical idiom in *West Side Story*, Pearson has incorporated the rap, reggae and rock of 30 years later into his retelling of the porcine tale.

The use of these many interconnecting ideas lends itself to subtle musical jokes, none of which I'll spoil here. These references, coupled with pigs on pointe and rapping wolves, make "The Three Little Pigs" fun for the whole family.

Unlike Pearson, who started with a composer, Gary Race began with a character. "Merlin and the Magic Mirror" tells the tale of the young King Arthur's tutor, and Race looked for music that created a mood of mystery, grandeur and power. His search yielded music of Richard Wagner, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Jerry Goldsmith and John Williams.

Race has woven excerpts from opera, electronic compositions and film scores together with music from the medieval period. Because of Race's background in opera, his segment is more like a theater piece than it is like dance. The legend of Merlin and Arthur has been re-told throughout the ages, and has even been on Broadway as the musical *Camelot*. Like the many retellings of the Arthurian legend, "Merlin and the Magic Mirror" weaves together traditional elements of the story with modern ideas.

In contrast to Race's original blending of ingredients, the story line for "Hansel and Gretel" is not only well known, but also exists in a definitive musical version. Rather than simply create a danced version of the Humperdinck opera, choreographer Mitchell Rose used the opera as a starting place, and then added and subtracted sounds and movements as he worked. In the same manner as the other segments of *Witches, Wolves & Wizards*, musical and narrative elements are juxtaposed, rearranged and developed to present a new look at old stories. The juxtaposed elements create variety and tension, and inspire new directions in movement.

The Dance Alloy is accustomed to such work. As Pittsburgh's premier contemporary dance company, the Alloy has commissioned over 50 new dances by

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are essentially the same. For Korot, and for the other three artists in this exhibition, video was an important means of expression early in their careers, and each contributed significantly to the early development of this medium. For them video was a Point of Departure. ■

Bill Judson is curator of the Department of Film and Video at The Carnegie Museum of Art

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some of the country's leading choreographers. The Dance Alloy presents a subscription series in Pittsburgh and tours throughout the northeast United States, bringing the best of contemporary dance to its audiences. Now celebrating its 15th season, the Alloy has been in residence at The Carnegie since 1984, teaching classes for both children and adults through the School of The Carnegie.

The Thanksgiving weekend performances of *Witches, Wolves & Wizards* will become a regular part of the Dance Alloy's calendar. It is envisioned the show will remain the same for several years, but the rich heritage of fairy tales and children's stories provides many opportunities for new tales in future productions.

Witches, Wolves & Wizards heralds the beginning of the holiday celebration at The Carnegie, which this year develops the theme of Children's Classics. Children of all ages may enjoy their favorite stories in art, music, dance and theater. Come for the trees. Come for the singing. Come for the dancing pigs. ■

Witches, Wolves & Wizards is sponsored in part by AT&T, and is being made possible through a grant from the Howard Heinz Endowment. Performances are November 23 and 24 at 2:00 p.m. in The Carnegie Music Hall. For ticket information, call the Dance Alloy at 621-6670.

Scott Timm is company manager at the Dance Alloy.

SCIENCE

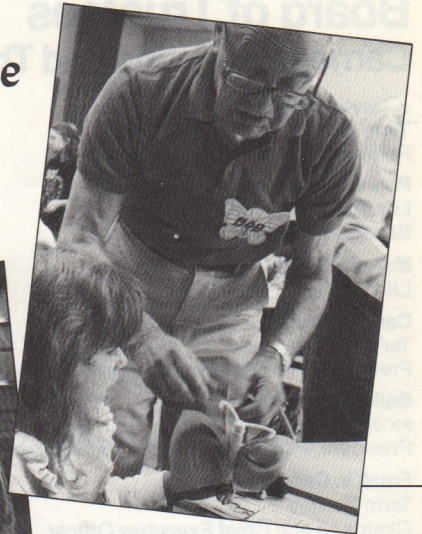
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the mined and quarried sites are rich concentrations of fossil brachiopods and trilobites.

By collecting and studying these fossil specimens, invertebrate paleontologists can better understand the evolution of life, the biostratigraphic and paleogeographic distribution of species over the Earth, and the ancient deposition of rock—in short, these fossils help us to better understand the history of the Earth. ■

Albert Kollar is the invertebrate fossil collection manager in The Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

Museum-On-The-Move Volunteers... magic carpets for thousands of children!



Bob Larsen and one of the students at Mon Valley School for Exceptional Children "create" a butterfly... while Carol Lerberg and a young patient at Children's Hospital "dig" for dinosaur fossils.

Bob Larsen and Carol Lerberg are just two of more than 50 specially trained volunteers with The Carnegie's "Museum-On-The-Move" program.

Subjects range from dinosaurs to butterflies, and from ancient Egypt to Native American cultures. And with each volunteer's visit, excitement and wonder are brought to the children at more than 25 Pittsburgh area schools and hospitals.

Bob, a retired Alcoa engineer, and Carol, a former medical technician, have been with Museum-On-The-Move practically since its inception in 1982! And each year, Geyer Printing has been the program's sole underwriter.

All of the dedicated volunteers bring the many wonders of The Carnegie's Museum of Natural History to life through learning, touching and seeing. Children can hold a real robin from a Carnegie display... dig for actual dinosaur fossils thousands of years old... create a sand painting... decorate an Egyptian collar!

You, too, can transport these youngsters to new and magical worlds by becoming a Museum-On-The-Move volunteer. Call Marsha Plotkin, Program Administrator, at 622-3238. And prepare yourself for a moving experience!

Discover the pleasures of being involved.

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