

"The Weir" at the San Jose Rep is a heart-stopper, if there ever was one!

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L to R: Robert Sicular & Zillah Glory photo credit: Kevin Berne

This week's reviews and previews provides us with an opportunity to look forward, to look back, and to revel in the joy of discovery this writing job brings to both me and you! This past week, I was privileged to witness the incredible beauty and harmony engendered through the exquisite artistic dance and choreography skills of the Smuin Ballet Company when I attended "Fly Me To The Moon" in the Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts. Then, this past Saturday, I had the opportunity to drive to San Jose to immerse myself in the chilling art of Irish story telling, by taking a seat in the San Jose Repertory Theater to witness the ghostly tale entitled, "The Weir". Finally, those boys and girls from Disney On Ice are taking to the Ice again, this time in an all new fantastical visit for children, both young and old to their "Worlds of Fantasy", opening near the end of this month in San Jose and in March, in Oakland, and I'm ready to fill you in on all the details.

Smuin Ballet soars high with "Fly Me to the Moon" in Walnut Creek this past week!

Two weeks ago when I visited with Celia Fushille-Burke by telephone, in preparation for writing my preview of the show ([Fly Me To The Moon](#)) that opened this past weekend, I sensed a real connection with this artist. In that discussion, Celia enthusiastically engaged me in the joy she felt about her company (Smuin Ballet) and this show. She took great pleasure in telling me how excited and transformed I would be after the experience of seeing ballet performed in modern style, as modern dance. She told me that my upcoming experience with their ballet program was guaranteed to be a departure from anything I had ever witnessed before, an experience that would leave me wanting more of the unique theatrical vision created exclusively by Smuin Ballet. Wow, was she ever correct!

I am revisiting this experience briefly with you, so that perhaps if you have not taken the time to witness the beauty and excitement generated by the Smuin Ballet, the next time they come around, you will perhaps purchase a ticket and come away converted! Or, better yet, you will take the drive down to the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts and witness this spectacular production, with "this" marvelous cast, on February 24th through the 28th!

As Karen and I took our seats, I noticed that the two ladies seated behind us seemed to be worrying about a number of vacant seats and one of them, a lady (who later identified herself to me by the name of Marilyn) spoke of her concern that empty seats would translate into less opportunity to see this company in Walnut Creek in the future. Her friend, Janice (I believe), took note, as did Karen and I, of the empty seats. Within a few moments, the anxiety went away as the unoccupied seats in the checkerboard attendance pattern disappeared prior to the opening curtain. I later spoke with Marilyn and Janice and learned that Marilyn had recently moved to California and to Rossmore after spending a lifetime in New York, a lifetime subscriber to and attendee of the arts, both theater and ballet. She expressed great admiration for the Smuin Ballet Company, looking forward with great anticipation to each and every production they create and share

with their fans. I admitted that I personally had never seen their company's performances before and settled in to see what was to unfold before me.

Within a few moments following the darkening of the theater and raising of the crimson stage curtain, the Smuin Ballet Company created before my eyes romantic and colorful visages of an African flavored ballet, as men and women dressed in beautifully colored body suits, bounded gracefully across the stage. Within minutes I envisioned a fanciful mindscape with colorful gazelles gliding gracefully and effortlessly across the dry African plains, driven on by the sweet African musical sounds of the Krono's String Quartet's "Pieces of Africa". This enthralling production segment is entitled, "Soon These Two Worlds" and has been created by choreographer Amy Seiwert.

The next segment, entitled "Medea", is a re-creation of the Greek tale of Medea's revenge on her husband Jason's infidelity with the Princess of Corinth. The production focuses on the five principal characters immortalized in the Greek play by Euripides, and is a brutally dark and powerfully poignant encapsulation of this tale of love, love lost and revenge taken. Medea (Robin Cornwell) and her two twin sons Mermeros and Pheres (Ryan Camou and John Speed Orr) are shocked by Jason's acceptance of King Creon's gift to him of his daughter Creusa (Terez Dean). Jason appears to be totally seduced by the young and very beautiful Creusa. Medea, destroyed by the anguish created through her husband's infidelity, vows revenge. This powerful tale of anguish and revenge holds the audience on the edge of their seats from beginning to end.

The final segment of the evening's entertainment, a tribute to the music and memory of Frank Sinatra entitled, "Fly Me To the Moon", provides a most delightful, fun-filled, escape down memory lane. The entire company, dressed in brightly colored fidora's and vests for the men and flowing colorful party gowns for the women, is reminiscent of a scene from a 1950's Gene Kelly movie dancing to a variety of Frank's most memorable songs. Songs such as "I've Got You Under My Skin", "Fly Me To the Moon", "Moonlight Serenade", "That's Life" and closing with "New York, New York" as their finale. This brought light-hearted joy, fond memories and allowed the audience to secretly wish they were able to dance all the way home following this terrific evening of entertainment.

Celia Fushille-Burke, the artistic and executive director of the Smuin Ballet (who was kind enough to introduce herself to me at the theater) was absolutely correct, I will never envision ballet again only as the staid and formal women and men in tutus and tights, as I previously envisioned it. I now am converted and Smuin Ballet is high on my list of future entertainment options.

You can still catch "**Fly Me To The Moon**" between the 24th and 26th of this month by calling the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts at (650) 903-6000 or if you have access to the internet, by visiting their website at <http://www.smuinballet.org/>. Tickets for this production range between \$18, \$41 and \$56 each. Similar to the Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts, the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts is an equally grand theatrical venue. The center is located at 500 Castro Street, at the corner of Mercy Street, in downtown Mountain View. The show will move on to Carmel in the Sunset Center on March 5th and 6th and tickets and information are also available on their website. The San Jose Repertory Theatre beckons you for your attention with a terrific production of the Lawrence Olivier BBC Award Winning play, *The Weir*, now playing through February 21st in their beautiful venue in the heart of downtown San Jose.

The Weir sets the night on edge with its tales of the supernatural!

Valerie (Zillah Glory) has moved from the city of Dublin to a rural area some distance away, but not far from the big city. Her realtor, Finbar (Andy Murray), has been taking his personal time to show the young lady the surrounding area and introducing her to the villagers, supposedly to make her more at ease. In the process, he ends the day's tour with a visit to Brendan's pub, in a little village near the sea. At this time, the pub has only two local patrons inside, Jack (Robert Sicular), an older gentleman who runs an auto garage down the road, and Jim (Mark Anderson Phillips), a much younger man who works as a day laborer, where ever and whenever he can get work. The bar owner, Brendan (Alex Moggridge), is probably in his early 30's, and like the other two men in his bar, is single. They have been discussing what everyone in the village has been talking about all day, the fact that realtor, Finbar (a married man), shouldn't be paying so much attention to the new comer to their village and are a bit concerned that Finbar's attentions may be a bit inappropriate.

However, these three unmarried men in the bar are a bit more vocal about the inequity of the situation, as they are unmarried, with not many female prospects available locally. They are bit perturbed that this local boy (gone away, turned professional and apparently financially successful), has come back to his village, flaunting his attention on this lovely lady. It just doesn't seem fair!

When Valerie and Finbar finally arrive at the bar, the verbal jousting begins when Finbar introduces his old neighbors and friends to Valerie, but in an awkward and not highly positive way. In some fashion, he puts them down by making light-

hearted fun of their lack of accomplishments. As the evening and the pints of ale flow, Finbar lets slip a request for Jack to tell one of the local fantasy tales, the story of “fairy road” and the purported fairies who have caused mischief to those who live along the road’s path. Finbar has forgotten however, that the story Jack is encouraged to tell, is a rather fearsome and haunting story about the very house that Finbar has just let to Valerie. This sets the tone for more spooky tales to follow, including the most frightening of all, the story behind the story of how and why this lovely young lady lost her darling daughter and has left her husband for solitude in the country!

The Weir is a powerful, well paced and engaging tale of love, resentment, longing and fear hidden deep in the hearts of many, brought to the surface and out into the open, in an unexpected yet engaging fashion. The set designed by Annie Smart is a spectacularly well detailed pub, as beautiful and real as those I remember from my trip to England and Wales. Director Rick Lombardo has selected a pluperfect cast to bring this tale to its full and powerful conclusion. The Weir is a heart-stopper, if there ever was one!

The Weir, a spellbinding play written by Conor McPherson (a Dublin born playwright), plays Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m., Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., with matinees on Saturdays at 3 p.m., and with Sunday performances at 2 p.m, closing on Sunday, the 21st of February. The San Jose Repertory Theatre is a beautiful facility, easy to reach and always rewarding. Ticket prices range between \$21 and \$74 each. The San Jose Repertory Company Theatre is located at 101 Paseo de San Antonio, between 2nd and 3rd Streets, one block north of East San Carlos Street. Call (408) 367-7255 for reservations or visit their website online at <http://www.sjrep.com/> for more information.

Disney on Ice returns to Bay Area with Worlds of Fantasy!

Disney On Ice has announced that it is bringing more of its popular animated figures back to the Bay Area. This time, they will introduce the newest princess, Tiana, from their latest animated feature movie, The Princess and the Frog, as well as the characters of “Pixie Hollow” and Lightning McQueen and the crew of Disney/Pixar’s “Cars”, and the story of Tinker Bell, all wrapped up in a new show entitled **Worlds of Fantasy**. This show will first open at the HP Pavillion in San Jose on February 24th through the 28th, and will move on to the Oracle Arena in Oakland on March 3 through the 7th . As always, Mickey and Minnie take us all on an action-packed adventure that brings us through each of these wonderlands, from New Orleans, to Pixie Hollow, to scenes engaging The Little Mermaid, to scenes bringing us a bit of Pride Rock from The Lion King, but the life-sized Cars characters may be the most innovative in the whole show, as we are taken on this wonderful “road-trip” with Disney!

Feld Entertainment brings the magic of Disney back on the ice with a show that turns the arena into Pixie Hollow with an explosion of color and brilliant costumes. The audience is transported to colorful locations all with the feeling of magic in the air. The children will have an opportunity to meet the newest Disney princess, Tiana, as part of the Pre-show beginning 60 minutes before each show.

Tickets will be available for **Worlds of Fantasy** by contacting Ticketmaster by calling (800) 745-3000 or by visiting their website at <http://www.ticketmaster.com/> for more information. Show times at the HP Pavilion in San Jose are Wednesday through Thursday at 7:30 p.m., with Friday performances at 10:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., and on Saturday and Sunday at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., and 7 p.m. in the Pavilion located at 525 West Santa Clara Street, in downtown San Jose. Show times at the Oracle are Wednesday through Thursday at 7:30 p.m., with Friday performances at 10:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., and on Saturday and Sunday at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., and 7 p.m.. The Oracle is located at highway I-880 at 66th Avenue in Oakland. While tickets range in price between \$16 and \$70 for each show, ON OPENING NIGHTS AT EACH VENUE, ALL TICKETS ARE ONLY \$15! WOW, Grab the grandkids and call for your tickets now!