

Fiddle and the Drum stirring triumph

REVIEW
By **Stephanie Classen**
of **The StarPhoenix**

Her storied career has made Joni Mitchell legendary. How fitting, then, that her music, art and ideals have inspired a ballet set to become a legend in its own right for the Alberta Ballet.

The Fiddle and the Drum, a collaboration between Mitchell and choreographer/artistic director Jean Grand-Maitre, is a spectacular modern ballet that explores atypical ballet themes of environmental neglect and war.

This is no ordinary ballet. Its dressed-down set — a stark, thought-provoking installation by Mitchell — and simple costumes force the dancers to be strong. The weaving, pulsing ensemble shares the spotlight and, to its benefit, functions more like a fluid, many-limbed alien than 30 individual dancers.

The dancers' athletic, emotionally raw performances are stunning. And the choreography fits the them as tightly as their skin-clinging, barely there costumes.

As the ballet opened, the troupe of 30 filtered into a single, large spotlight to the piece's title song. One by one, several of the dancers donned army helmets and crumbled to the ground. Later, a small girl was revealed in the mass, leaving the audience to ponder what her future holds. Some of the most chilling moments in Fiddle and the Drum came courtesy of this little ballerina, whose innocence and playfulness starkly contrasted with the ballet's dark themes.

The show contains 14 of Mitchell's songs — including Woodstock, If I Had a Heart I'd Cry and a Big Yellow Taxi encore — predominantly sung in her soulful, older voice. The former Saskatoonian's careworn wisdom sounds even better set to Grand-Maitre's exquisite choreography.

Mitchell, who looked on from the audience Friday, received a rousing round of applause as she entered following intermission and during the curtain call.

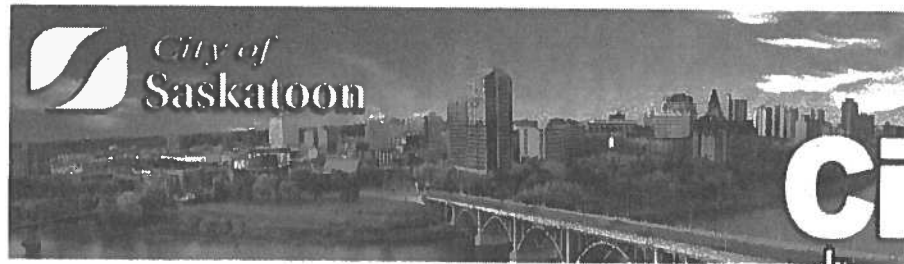
While Mitchell is the more recognizable face attached to Fiddle and the Drum, Grand-Maitre deserves a greater measure of praise for his continually astonishing choreography. Foregoing the tutus, elaborate backdrops and the familiar romantic storyline, he has created an entirely unique piece. The shapes he creates, particularly in partner work, are extraordinary.

Mitchell's visual installation is beautiful, painted mostly in greens and pinks, but could understandably go unnoticed due to the strength of the dancers.

A highlight of the ballet, and recent addition to the formerly nine-song piece, was the song Ethiopia. The movement evoked a dry and desperate place so convincingly you could feel the heat, despite the renewed Saskatchewan cold.

Grand-Maitre and Mitchell have created a stirringly deep, and at times sad, piece with Fiddle and the Drum. But while the themes are heavy, the piece also has a wonderful weightless quality — in part because the dancers are so light on their feet. The hope and joy that accompanies the despair is lovely and so necessary.

The Fiddle and the Drum is a triumph of modern ballet, a piece that is totally contemporary that could realistically become a classic. For now, it's a legend in the making.



www.saskatoon.ca



Public Meetings

MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2009

Visual Arts Placement Jury

Committee Room E, Ground Floor, City Hall at 4:00 pm

City Council

Council Chambers, City Hall at 8:00 p.m.

Council meetings are broadcast live on Cable 10 starting at 8:00 p.m., and will be rebroadcast Thursday, January 29, 2009 at 2:00 p.m., and the following Monday, February 2, 2009 at 8:00 p.m.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2009

Municipal Planning Commission

Committee Room E, Ground Floor, City Hall at 12:00 noon

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2009

Saskatoon Accessibility Advisory Committee

Committee Room A, Second Floor, City Hall at 12:00 noon

The next regular City Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 17, 2009.

Letters for this City Council agenda must be received at the City Clerk's Office by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 10, 2009.

Agendas for public meetings may be viewed at all branches of the Saskatoon Public Libraries, the Main Lobby of City Hall, or visit our web site at www.saskatoon.ca/org/clerks_office. For further information regarding these meetings, contact the Committee Secretary in the City Clerk's Office at 975-3240.

Closed Meetings

The following meetings are being held, but are not open to the public because they deal with issues that are sensitive in nature and meet the requirements of Part III of *The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. No final decisions may be made at closed meetings.

MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2009

Visual Arts Placement Jury

Committee Room E, Ground Floor, City Hall following public meeting at 4:00 p.m.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2009

City Mortgage Appeals Board

Committee Room B, Second Floor, City Hall at 11:30 a.m.



Property for Sale

PROPERTY FOR SALE UNDER THE TAX ENFORCEMENT ACT

Sealed bids addressed to the Superintendent, Boards and Agencies, Infrastructure Services Department, Facilities Branch, City of Saskatoon, 1101 Avenue P North, Saskatoon S7K-0J5, and plainly marked on the envelope "Bid for the Purchase of a Property Under Tax Enforcement Act" will be received until 2:00 p.m. CST, Thursday, February 5, 2009.



Development

City of Saskatoon Development Number 8738

The Council of the City of Saskatoon has passed an amendment to the City of Saskatoon Bylaw No. 7799.

The amendment referred to is an amendment to the City of Saskatoon Bylaw No. 7799.

The amendment referred to is an amendment to the City of Saskatoon Bylaw No. 7799. The amendment referred to is an amendment to the City of Saskatoon Bylaw No. 7799.

PROPOSED Bylaw No. 8738 (No.2)

Bylaw 8738 amends Section 10.1 of the City of Saskatoon Bylaw No. 7799 in the following manner:

Current Guideline:

"Offices will be limited to 30 percent of gross floor area of 100,000 square feet of gross floor area, where possible."

Proposed Guideline:

"Offices will be limited to 30 percent of gross floor area where it can be demonstrated that the use of offices is in the context of the site and should be located above the first floor."

Reason for the Amendment: To provide flexibility and latitude to consider the use of gross floor area devoted to offices.

PUBLIC MEETING - City Council will consider and vote on the above matter on Tuesday, February 24, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall. All submissions received by the City Clerk by 12:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 17, 2009, will be forwarded to City Council. Council will also hear all persons who are present at the meeting and wish to speak to the matter.

Dated at the City of Saskatoon in the Province of Saskatchewan on January 9, 2009
Janice Mann, City Clerk