



Ballet through a video gamer's eyes

With its leaps and battles, 'Aladdin' resembles the classic Disney game

BY COREY GARRIOTT
THE GAMECOCK

The Columbia City Ballet Company performed "Aladdin" in the Koger Center on Friday and Saturday. Although it's best known as an Arabian fairy tale, as I watched the dancing, I couldn't help viewing the ballet through the eyes of a video gamer. The company's phenomenal international cast, including Jose Serrano and Evgueny Tourdiev, had a new take on Player 1, "Aladdin," and end boss "Vizier."

In Stage 1, peasants and rogues pranced in the marketplace until Aladdin arrived.

The rogues obviously fought in the same party; they were dressed alike in the familiar abbreviated vest and silk pants. Aladdin was clearly the rogue squad leader — his vest was a royal-purple hue.

Aladdin was played by Serrano, who is quite the acrobat. Serrano can jump as high as Luigi, or at least Mario. His tornado spin earned applause throughout the night.

The production was clever. While Aladdin led the others in a series of exercises, strong workers toted four carpets in the background, inconspicuous in the background until the stage cleared. They were dropped on the ground and unrolled to reveal four scantily dressed gypsies smuggled into town.

So the first challenge of Stage 1 was to flirt with the gypsies. Aladdin and three of his rogues

partnered with the girls for a series of dueling dances. The men and women executed harder and still harder moves and lifts, probably scoring millions of points, only to be interrupted by the royal parade.

As in the game, he would go on to pursue the princess using magic powers discovered in a genie's

lamp, winning the princess's hand just before Vizier was to marry her.

Tourdiev was majestic in his role as the evil Vizier. It is striking how powerful male dancers have to be — he can lift and hold effortlessly, as if Ganondorf exchanged his desert boots for a pair of slippers. Tourdiev certainly

seems like Ganondorf of Zelda fame — he doesn't seem to operate by real-world laws of physics. His jumps are way powered up; they have too much hang time.

A Russian, Tourdiev is from Samara, Russia, and learned ballet at the State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre before coming to the United States. As for Serrano, he trained in Puerto Rico and found his way to Columbia through the School of American Ballet in New York City.

Stage 2, the Harem, was an excellent excuse for many of the troupe's dancers without starring roles to have solo performances. Just like Parappa the Rappa, they leap and balance to the soundtrack.

In the end, Aladdin and Vizier engage in a battle of swords. Aladdin hasn't leveled up enough, so he lacks the hit points necessary to succeed — so in a last-ditch effort, he summons the genie for one last wish to beat the game.

In the ending sequence, Aladdin is held up as the maypole in the middle of several concentric circles of dancers.

In the ballet, choreographers Mazilier, Petipa, and Starrett focus a lot on concentric circles; Aladdin and his rogues run in circles through most of the first stage. Perhaps the circles explore a sci-fi theme — though it would tire your thumbs to spin the control pad for the whole play.



Top and above: "Aladdin" featured the gravity-defying, acrobatic jumps of an international cast.

PHOTOS BY AISHA AHKAWALA / THE GAMECOCK

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CD REVIEW

Mattea comes up short on 'Roses'



"ROSES"
Kathy Mattea
★★ out of ★★★★★

BY MARIANNE PARRISH
THE GAMECOCK

Kathy Mattea's new album, "Roses," is her first release for the Narada label. It includes songs about both spiritual and romantic love. She will be stopping at the Newberry Opera House on tour to promote this latest offering.

On "Roses," she taps Celtic, folk and country music springs to interpret some rather unorthodox musical pieces. Mattea's vocal style is reminiscent of Anne Murray, the 1970s songstress whose hits compilation is advertised endlessly on late-night TV. With a deep, velvety, sing-babies-to-sleep quality, Kathy Mattea's voice mingles with the simplistic musician-

ship also displayed.

Not that there is much opportunity for display, since the music is all but trivial, but it is apparent that these songs were chosen for their lyrical content, not the profundity of their composition. After all, it is folk music.

This record could reasonably be labeled as contemporary Christian, and many of the songs are about clinging to God or being tempted by sin. Many other religious images are also used to interpret spiritual life, but the strong thread of self-deprecation and tense, fearful longing for vindication that is written in the lyrics of some tracks contrasts highly with the unassuming, calm mood of the music.

All of the songs seem pretty sedate, until you listen to the words and find some surprises. If you could take a song like "Till I Turn to You" and replace the words "Lord," "God" and "Jesus" with the name "Kenny," it would sound a lot less spiritual and a lot more like begging for domination. "Blind my eyes ... break my stride ... tie my hands ..."

Overall, this S-and-M-type prayer does not sit well with the Celtic fiddles and mandolin, but that's just one opinion.

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Garrett

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too much confusion. The seeds of spontaneity are germinated and fertilized, but it's not chaotic.

There is strong continuity and intention here. The middle of the album has a minimalist slant. The composition is unveiled and uncovered, ending with a sax solo by Kenny Garrett called "Just a Second to Catch my Breath." It's slow and sweet, but it sets your ears up to be bombarded by

"Gendai," a modern, quick, challenging piece that heightens the pace just before the three-part "Standard of Language," which closes the record.

If you want to get a feel for what's current and relevant in jazz music today, this is a good, intelligent element to include. Skill; composition; and good, spontaneous interpretations are all evidenced on Garrett's latest release. Cheers to "Standard of Language."

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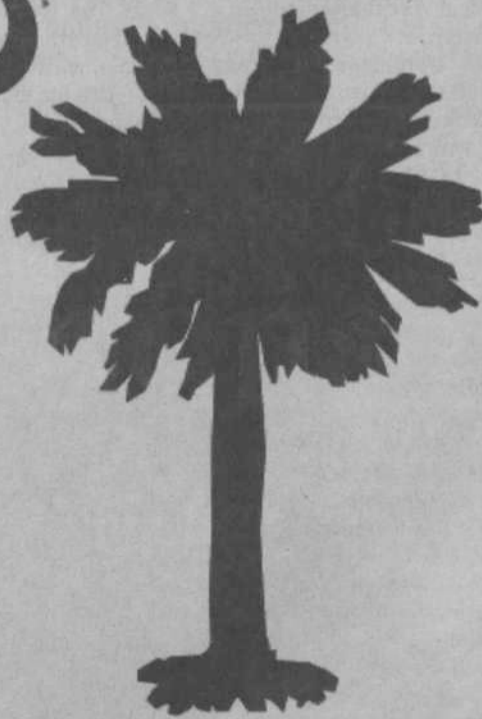
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