

# Around the City

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## S.F. Ballet Puts New Spin on Classics

By Hilda Scheib  
Bay City News

The San Francisco Ballet's second program of the season is a graceful mix of the classicism of George Balanchine, the modern sensibility of Mark Morris and the theatricality of Yuri Possokov's version of a Russian folktale.

The program opens with Balanchine's "Divertimento No. 15," set to Mozart's chamber music of the same name. Absolutely stunning in its stateliness, the ballet's variations gave female dancers Katita Waldo, Frances Chung, Rachel Viselli, Vanessa Zahorian and Kristin Long an opportunity to display their acumen through a series of solos and the men — Nicolas Blanc, Gennadi Nedvigin and Hansuke Yamamoto — their



Rachel Viselli and Damian Smith perform in the San Francisco Ballet's "Firebird."

musical athleticism.

But Balanchine's ballet also has the five women at one point in a chorus line and corps women in the opening and closing sections, all to joyous effect.

In 1993, Morris' "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes" was described as "arguably the freshest, most original ballet produced in America since the death of Balanchine."

Some 15 years later, the choreographer's 1988 ballet clearly retains its appeal. Set to 13 piano

etudes by Virgil Thomson, the ballet is performed with pianist Natalya Feygina squarely on stage, making it impossible to ignore the relationship of the dance to the music.

Twelve dancers in elegant, simple white move outside the symmetry of classical ballet. Still, a recurrence of motifs — including surprising tilts and horizontal lifts — give pattern to the beautifully performed solos, duets and ensemble movements.

Possokov's "Firebird" cov-

ers plenty of dramatic ground in its 35 minutes. On an evocative set, the malevolent Kaschei — danced with demonic zest by Pascal Molat — leads proto-human figures who have barely shed their primal clay (in Sandra Woodall's terrific costumes) as they threaten the human realm.

There, a prince (Damian Smith) and princess (Viselli) have fallen in love. Only the intervention of the firebird saves the lovers but at an enormous price to itself. Yuan Yuan Tan, in brilliant orange, is stunning as the magical bird.

Program 2 continues at 8 to-night and 2 p.m. Sunday. For more information, visit [www.sf-ballet.org](http://www.sf-ballet.org) or call 861-5600.

## Party marks beginning of library renovations

The Bernal Heights Branch Library will hold a celebration Saturday before closing for renovations until early 2010, according to the San Francisco Public Library.

An expanded children's room and a designated teen area will be added during the renovation. A new elevator and restrooms are also part of the work.

The renovations will also include an addition to book and materials collections, wireless Internet access, improved lighting, heating and ventilation, and new seating choices, according to library officials.

The work is part of the Branch Library Improvement Program, a plan funded by a \$106-million bond measure passed in 2000 that calls for the renovation of 17 branches, according to the library Web site.

During the closure, Bookmobile service will be offered on Holly Park Circle in front of Junipero Serra Elementary School from 2 to 5 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays.

Children's story times will be held at Red Hill Books, 401 Cortland Ave. Hold materials not picked up before the branch closing will be rerouted to the Excelsior Branch or to alternate branches if requested.

The closing party, with food and entertainment at 500 Cortland Ave., will be from 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday.

Information about the Bookmobile is available by calling 557-4343.

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