

Classical family affair settles in back home

Music and dance notes

PAUL HORSLEY The Kansas City Star

In 1996, Overland Park native Jeremiah Enna and his wife, Finnish dancer-choreographer Mona **Störling-Enna**, were contemplating a relocation. After years in Europe, they wanted a fresh start.

Stay in Sweden? Move to London? Or Helsinki? In the midst of deliberations, Enna paid a visit to a brother in Kansas City. He found that since his departure in the early 1980s, his old home town had taken on a decidedly artsy flavor. So the couple decided to move to the Kansas City area, where before long they had formed their own dance company.

Founded in 1998, the **Störling** Dance Theater has begun to gain local recognition. The 12-member company, which performs Saturday at the Lyric Theatre, has started to dance elsewhere around the country. Their highly successful Project Dance in April 2002 in New York, in which a whole city block was cordoned off for an outdoor performance, is apparently about to become an annual event.

The **Störling** company may have been born from the Christian-oriented Culture House in Johnson County, but it's not a group that's easily pigeonholed.

"We believe the Christian faith brings a lot of wonderful things to life," said the 38-year-old Enna, the company's director. But **Störling** is in many ways a regular dance troupe, he added, a "neo-classical modern dance company" in which all the dancers have strong foundation in ballet.

Still, it's hardly coincidental that the centerpiece of **Störling's** program Saturday is "The Prodigal Daughter," a bold but respectful retelling of the biblical prodigal son by **Störling-Enna**.

Think of it as a dance equivalent of Conrad Susa's "The Wise Women" performed here each year by the Civic Opera Theater. "The Prodigal Daughter" has a bit of a surprise ending, but essentially it's a modernization of the ancient story.

"We tried to show more of the contemporary problems that a woman faces," he said, such as self-image issues or issues of love and romance and sex. When the Bible's prodigal son hits rock bottom, he ends up in a pigsty. In **Störling-Enna's** dance version, she's in a strip club, where the men are dressed in "pig pink."

Störling Dance Theater now boasts several professional dancers, including former and present members of the Kansas City Ballet. It has its own non-profit status separate from that of the Culture House, and it is currently forming its own board of directors.

"We've been working very hard making sure that the quality is excellent," Enna said. "That takes a lot of work, so we haven't spent as much time performing and getting out into the community."

Gradually that is changing, he said, and the 2003-2004 season will feature a fall and a spring performance.

Saturday's program also includes **Störling-Enna's** "High Heel Blues," Ann Meyers' "Cleansing," Stephen Wynne's "Stargazing" and Steve Rooks' "In a Flash." Tickets cost \$18 and \$20, with discounts for groups of 10 or more. For ticket information call (913) 393-3141 or go to www.culturehouse.com.

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