

Finnish tradition is setting for duo's theatrical stories

BY DAVID STEINBERG
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Albuquerque's Scott Darsee and Johanna Hongell-Darsee are a duo who use more than the spoken word in their storytelling.

Much more.

Woven into their presentations are instrumental and vocal music, dance, mime and masks.

"All of our shows are storytelling theater with music ... to create different moods for what's happening in the story," Darsee said.

Hongell-Darsee is the main performer in the duo. Darsee usually accompanies his wife on guitar and writes original music.

The traditional tales they tell are from around the world.

Some of their stories are from the Finnish epic "The Kalevala." Hongell-Darsee was born on an island off the coast of Finland.

One "Kalevala" story the couple likes to do is about an anti-hero who gets into trouble because of girls, and another is about an old hag who steals the sun, the moon and fire.

The duo will be on stage at two Albuquerque venues on Saturday, Aug. 18. In the afternoon, they'll do "Ballads and Runes — Scandinavian Stories and Ballads" at the Albuquerque Balloon Museum.

In the evening they'll perform with guests Larry Otis and Chris Carlson at the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area. It is part of the Elena Gallegos Summer Series.

The couple's new CD is "The Island Furthest Away," a collection of medieval ballads from

Scott Darsee and Johanna Hongell-Darsee



WHEN and WHERE: 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 18, at the Albuquerque Balloon Museum, 9201 Balloon Museum Drive NE; and 7 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 18, at the Elena Gallegos Picnic Area off Tramway north of the Academy traffic light to Simms Park Road.

HOW MUCH: Balloon Museum — free with museum admission, \$4 general public, \$2 seniors, \$1 ages 4-12 and free for those under 4. Elena Gallegos — admission is free but parking is \$2

Finland.

They have been performing their storytelling theater for seven years; Hongell-Darsee had begun doing it as a solo performer in 1986. They met in Denmark, where Darsee worked as a physical therapist with the Royal Ballet.

"I wanted to get into more creative aspects that I hadn't done since my late teens," he said.

"I started back into songwriting and guitar playing. When we met I had all this music I wanted to apply to something. My strength is in creating melodies and textures.

"I create what I call orches-

tral music on guitar," Darsee added.

Hongell-Darsee's storytelling proved to be the ideal setting.

The Saturday performances are sponsored by the New Mexico Humanities Council. They're also doing other council-sponsored shows at libraries and schools statewide.

They were the opening act at the Summer Solstice Festival in Los Angeles.



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