

## HER STORY

Local author Mim Eichmann pens historical fiction novel

By RENEE TOMELL

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**DOWNERS GROVE** – From pirouettes to perfect pitch to literary phrasing, creativity runs deep in Mim Eichmann, a longtime Downers Grove resident whose first novel is about to be released by Living Springs Publishers in Colorado.

For more than two decades, she was the artistic director/choreographer of Midwest Ballet Theatre in Downers Grove, producing annual performances of “The Nutcracker” along with her many original story ballets at the Tivoli Theatre. Now living in Wheaton, she has retired from teaching ballet, but sings and plays hammered dulcimer with her acoustic folk music quartet, Trillium, which is celebrating its 15th year.

“A Sparrow Alone” is a historical fiction novel she set in Colorado from the 1890s to 1908. Years of research went into the book, set for release April 15.

“I got intrigued reading the writing and diaries and journals of women from [starting around] 1880,” Eichmann said. “Just their hardships and their insight, just the daily grind that they went through to make things happen for themselves.

“We’re still struggling as women. ... Men still are making more money and all that,” she said. “Women were basically perceived in history simply as pawns in a man’s game. We see this all the time: his story, not her story.”

She shares a synopsis of the book’s plot.

“Following her mother’s sudden death, 13-year-old Hannah Owens is hired as domestic help by a wealthy doctor’s family in Colorado Springs. When the doctor declares bankruptcy and abandons his family to finance his mistress’s brothel, Hannah is thrown into a world of gold mining corruption, rampant prostitution and the economic, political and cultural upheavals of the late 19th century. Two of Cripple Creek, Colorado’s most colorful historic characters, Winfield Scott Stratton, the eccentric multimillionaire owner of the richest gold mine in Cripple Creek, and Pearl DeVere, the beautiful madam of the Old Homestead, come to life as this old-fashioned, coming-of-age saga unfolds.”



Novelist and singer-songwriter Mim Eichmann, holding her hammered dulcimer, performs with the folk ensemble Trillium.

Photo provided

### Know more

**WHAT:** “A Sparrow Alone” is a new historical fiction novel by Mim Eichmann  
**WHEN:** Publisher’s release date is April 15  
**INFO:** [www.mimeichmann.com](http://www.mimeichmann.com)

It’s a story of female empowerment and about women of all walks of life, said Eichmann, a songwriter and prize-winning short story writer.

While Owens, the first-person narrator, is a complete invention by Eichmann, the author stuck to history for the depiction of Stratton, a prospector before he struck a rich vein of gold at the Independence Mine.

“He was a ruthless man in many

ways, [but he] had a great deal of talent as well,” Eichmann said, noting a biography about him is titled “Midas of the Rockies.”

She has been living with the characters since her research began in 1990, the story evolving as her research grew exponentially.

“I was always adding to it as I was reading more things. ... The sketch was getting colored in,” she said.

As Eichmann completed the saga of “A Sparrow Alone,” she found she couldn’t let go of Owens’ story and was moved to work on a sequel titled “Muskrat Ramble,” expected to be released early next year.

There are interesting corners in a woman’s life as a woman gets older, Eichmann said, noting the sequel begins in 1913 in New Orleans and tracks

six decades.

“What I had put forward in the way of situations, I personally had to find out what happened,” she said.

“A Sparrow Alone” is for readers ages 16 through adult, and Eichmann points out her book is not a romance novel but historical fiction.

Readers will be treated to the sequel’s first chapter at the conclusion of “A Sparrow Alone.” Copies are available by visiting Eichmann’s website at [www.mimeichmann.com](http://www.mimeichmann.com).

She is part of the second annual Local Author Fest at Wheaton Public Library, tentatively scheduled from 1 to 4 p.m. April 18, an event at which Elizabeth Berg is booked as the keynote speaker.

Eichmann’s current writing project is a mystery thriller set in the 1970s.