

reviews



Vladimir Arhangelski in *Cassandra*. Photo: Harn Rospu

the way that he has blended the forms to make a distinctive and accessible work.

There are many scenes to savour - Paride (Paris) returns from America in a burst of show-biz steps and jetés performed by Jacksonville Gold Medallist, Sergei Upkin. Cassandra's father, the Mayor, played menacingly by Vitalo Nikolajev, has a deliciously pompous dance for his declamation at the unveiling of a statue. The ensemble sections include vibrant social dances as well as episodes of conflict and death that haunt Cassandra's dreams. Particularly memorable are the scenes that tell of her clandestine love affair with Enea, the waster who redeems himself by striving to save the community against the American cultural tidal wave. Their duets are both tender and passionate, employing striking lifts and floor work that underline Cannito's skill as a dance maker.

I saw two contrasted portrayals of the central role. Kaie Korb uses her fine technique and her Greek heroine looks to explore the desolate nature of Cassandra's plight and the final scene of separation from her lover fitted the drama perfectly. While Marina

Chirkova places great emphasis on the heart and vulnerability of the character and her supple dancing in the love duets generates waves of emotion. You can understand why this is one of her favourite roles. In both these performances Vladimir Arhangelski danced the role of Enea with good jumps and attentive partnering, but it is his expressive qualities that I enjoy above all. When, at the end of Act I, Enea is rejected by his lover in favour of family duty, he sinks to his knees in a simple, but poignant move.

The composer Marco Schiavoni uses his own tunes and references from Prokofiev to Presley to create a score which complements the action and the unfolding of the relationships. The atmospheric lighting by Carlo Cerri works admirably with the elegant and unfussy sets by Nicola Rubertelli and the costumes by Elena Cicorella. Overall, this is an impressive and succinct example of ballet theatre that deserves to be seen further afield.

Stuart Sweeney

ESTONIAN NATIONAL BALLET

Cassandra

Opera House, Tallinn

Tiit Härm, the Artistic Director of Estonian National Ballet, spent the 1990's with a variety of companies around Europe, seeing the work of many choreographers. He is now putting this experience to good use in selecting new repertory for his company and *Cassandra* by Luciano Cannito is a fine addition. Although inspired by Christa Wolf's eponymous novel, the choreographer has shifted the time to the 1950s and the location across the Mediterranean to Sicily. Nevertheless, the basic elements of the story of the prophetess, doomed never to be believed, are preserved, with the final tragedy transformed from the sack of Troy to the destruction of traditional Sicilian life, symbolised by the introduction of television.

Cannito uses a varied palette of styles and, although off-pointe ballet steps are never far from the action, folk, modern and show dance are used to define the characters and establish mood. If this sounds indigestible, I was impressed with

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