

Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo



“The funniest night you will ever have at the ballet.”

- *Sunday Times*

**“This is a company that brings its audiences
pure joy.”**

-*The Seattle Times*

History

Celebrating its 40th Anniversary season, **Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo** was founded in 1974 by a group of ballet enthusiasts for the purpose of presenting a playful, entertaining view of traditional, classical ballet in parody form and *en travesti*, Les Ballets Trockadero first performed in the late-late shows in Off-Off Broadway lofts. The TROCKS, as they are affectionately known, quickly garnered a major critical essay by Arlene Croce in *The New Yorker*, and combined with reviews in *The New York Times* and *The Village Voice*, established the Company as an artistic and popular success. By mid 1975, the TROCKS' inspired blend of their loving knowledge of dance, their comic approach, and the astounding fact that men can, indeed, dance *en pointe* without falling flat on their faces, was being noted beyond New York. Articles and notices in publications such as *Variety*, *Oui*, *The London Daily Telegraph*, as well as a Richard Avedon photo essay in *Vogue*, made the Company nationally and internationally known.

The 1975-76 season was a year of growth and full professionalization. The Company found management, qualified for the National Endowment for the Arts Touring Program, and hired a full-time teacher and ballet mistress to oversee daily classes and rehearsals. Also in this season, they made their first extended tours of the United States and Canada. Packing, unpacking, and repacking tutus and drops, stocking giant sized toe shoes by the case; running for planes and chartered buses all became routine parts of life.

Since those beginnings, the TROCKS have established themselves as a major dance phenomenon throughout the world. They have participated in dance festivals in Bodrum (Turkey), Bogota, Holland, Finland, San Luis Potosi, Madrid, Montreal, New York City, Paris, Lyon, Rome, Spoleto, Turin, and Vienna. There have been television appearances as varied as a Shirley MacLaine special, the "Dick Cavett Show," "What's My Line?" "Real People," "On-Stage America," with Kermit and Miss Piggy on their show "Muppet Babies," and a BBC Omibus special on the world of ballet hosted by Jennifer Saunders. There have been solo specials on national networks in Japan and Germany, as well as a French television special with Julia Migenes. A documentary was filmed and aired internationally by the acclaimed British arts program, *The South Bank Show*. The Company was featured in the PBS program, *The Egg*, about arts in America, winning an emmy award for the director, and appeared in a segment of *Nightline* in December 2008. Several performances were taped by a consortium of Dutch, French and Japanese TV networks at the Maison de la Danse in Lyon, France, for worldwide broadcast and DVD distribution. Awards that the Trocks have won over the years include for best classical repertoire from the prestigious Critic's Circle National Dance Awards (2007) (UK), the Theatrical Managers Award (2006) (UK) and the 2007 Positano Award (Italy) for excellence in dance. In December 2008, the Trocks appeared at the 80th anniversary Royal Variety Performance, to aid of the Entertainment Artistes' Benevolent Fund, in London, attended by members of the British royal family.

The TROCKS' numerous tours have been both popular and critical successes - their frenzied annual schedule has included ten tours to Australia and New Zealand,

twenty eight to Japan (where their annual summer tours have created a nation-wide cult following and a fan club), nine to other parts of Asia, twelve to South America, three to South Africa, and seventy six tours of Europe, including twenty one tours of the United Kingdom. In the United States, the Company has become a regular part of the college and university circuit in addition to regular dance presentations in cities in 49 states. The Company has appeared in over 34 countries and over 600 cities worldwide since its founding in 1974. Increasingly, the Company is presenting longer seasons, which have included extended engagements in New York City (at the Joyce Theater) Amsterdam, Athens, Auckland, Bangkok, Barcelona, Beijing, Berlin, Brisbane, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hamburg, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, Leipzig, Lisbon, London, Lyon, Madrid, Melbourne, Moscow (at the famed Bolshoi Theater), Paris (at the Chatelet Theater and Folies Bergere), Perth, Rome, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo, Vienna and Wellington.

The Company continues to appear in benefits for international AIDS organizations such as *DRA* (Dancers Responding to AIDS) and *Classical Action* in New York City, the *Life Ball* in Vienna, Austria, *Dancers for Life* in Toronto, Canada, London's *Stonewall Gala* and Germany's *AIDS Tanz Gala*. In addition, The TROCKS have given, or participated in special benefit performances for Connecticut Ballet Theater, Ballet Hawaii, Indianapolis Ballet Theater, Rochester City Ballet, Dancers in Transition (NYC), Sadler's Wells Theater in London and the Gay and Lesbian Community Center and Young Audiences / Arts for Learning Organization, and the Ali Forney Center, benefiting homeless gay youths in New York City. In 2009, the Trocks gave a benefit performance for Thailand's Queen Sirikit's Scholarship Fund in Bangkok, which helps finance schooling for children of impoverished Thai families. The benefit helped raise over four hundred thousand dollars.

The original concept of **LES BALLETS TROCKADERO DE MONTE CARLO** has not changed. It is a Company of professional male dancers performing the full range of the ballet and modern dance repertoire, including classical and original works in faithful renditions of the manners and conceits of those dance styles. The comedy is achieved by incorporating and exaggerating the foibles, accidents, and underlying incongruities of serious dance. The fact that men dance all the parts--heavy bodies delicately balancing on toes as swans, sylphs, water sprites, romantic princesses, angst-ridden Victorian ladies--enhances rather than mocks the spirit of dance as an art form, delighting and amusing the most knowledgeable, as well as novices, in the audiences. For the future, there are plans for new works in the repertoire: new cities, states and countries to perform in; and for the continuation of the TROCKS' original purpose: to bring the pleasure of dance to the widest possible audience. They will, as they have done for forty years, "Keep on Trockin'."

“The Trocks are a guaranteed hoot for people who know nothing of ballet and an absolute must for those who think they know the originals.”

- Sydney Star Observer

Meet the Artists

COLETTE ADAE was orphaned at the age of three when her mother, a ballerina of some dubious distinction, impaled herself on the first violinist's bow after a series of rather uncontrolled fouette voyage. Colette was raised and educated with the "rats" of the Opera House but the trauma of her childhood never let her reach her full potential. However, under the kind and watchful eye of the Trockadero, she has begun to flower and we are sure you will enjoy watching her growth.

VARVARA BRATCHIKOVA. People's Artist and Cat's Meow, was educated at the Revanchist Institute. She began her career as Pistachia in V. Stolichnaya's production of the "The Nutcracker" and achieved stardom as Odette/Odile/Juliet/Giselle/Aurora in the famous "Night of the 1000 Tsars." Her repertoire encompasses nearly all the works in which she appears.

NADIA DOUMIAFEYVA. No one who has seen Heliazpopkin will soon forget the spiritual athleticism of Nadia Doumiafeyva, a child of Caucasus who changed her name for show business reasons. Her fiery attack combined with lyric somnolence produce confusion in audiences the world over, especially when applied to ballet.

LARISKA DUMBCHENKO. Before defecting to the West, Lariska's supreme agility aroused the interest of the Russian space program and in 1962 she became the first ballerina to be shot into orbit. Hurling through the stratosphere, she delivered handy make-up tips to an assembled crowd of celebrities back on earth, including the now legendary...."Whitney Houston, we have a problem...."



HELEN HIGHWATERS has defected to America three times and been promptly returned on each occasion -- for "artistic reasons." Recently discovered "en omelette" at the Easter Egg Hunt in Washington, D.C., she was hired by the Trockadero, where her inexplicable rise to stardom answers the musical question: Who put the bop in the bop-shibop shibop?

NINA IMMOBILASHVILI, for more years than she cares to admit, has been the Great Terror of the international ballet world. The omniscient and ubiquitous Immobilashvili is reputed to have extensive dossiers on every major dance figure, living and/or dead. This amazing collection has assured her entree into the loftiest choreographic circles; the roles she has thus been able to create are too numerous to mention. We are honored to present this grand dame in her spectacular return to the ballet stage.



SONIA LEFTOVA, “The Prune Danish of Russian Ballet,” abandoned an enormously successful career as a film actress to become a Trockadero ballerina. Her faithful fans, however, need not despair as most of her great films have been made into ballets: the searing “Back to Back,” the tear-filled “Thighs and Blisters,” and the immortal seven-part “Screams from a Carriage.” Because of her theatrical flair, Sonia has chosen to explore the more dramatic aspects of ballet, causing one critic to rename her Giselle, “What’s my Line?”

IDA NEVASAYNEVA, socialist Real ballerina of the working peoples everywhere, comes flushed from her triumphs at the Varna Festival, where she was awarded a specially created plastic medal for Bad Taste. Comrade Ida became known as a heroine of the Revolution when, after effortlessly boureeing through a minefield, she lobbed a loaded pointe shoe into a capitalist bank.

MARIA PARANOVA’s remarkable life story, only now coming to light after 19 dark years in near hopeless conviction that she was Mamie Eisenhower, will never fully be told. The discovery of her true identity (at a Republican fundraiser in Chicago) brought her to the attention of the Trockadero where she is slowly recovering her technical powers.

EUGENIA REPELSKII. The secrets of Mme. Repelskii’s beginnings lie shrouded behind the Kremlin wall; in fact, no fewer than six lie within the wall (in jars of assorted sizes). Dancing lightly over pogroms and other sordid reorganizational measures, Eugenia has emerged as a ballerina nonpareil whose pungency is indisputable.

MOUSSIA SHEBARKAROVA. A celebrated child prodigy back in the Brezhnev era, Moussia Shebarkarova astounded her parents at the age of two by taking a correspondence course in ballet. Sadly, due to the unreliable Russian postal system, she has only just graduated.

ALLA SNIZOVA enjoyed great success as a baby ballerina at the mere age of 9. Being a child prodigy, she developed serious allergy problems and could only perform short pieces. Known as the “little orphan,” Miss Snizova joined the Trockadero on tour, appearing cloaked in an enigma (complete with zip-out lining). A consummate actress, she has danced the part of Little Miss Markova and the title role of Glinka’s *Popoy-the Sailor Man*.



OLGA SUPPHOZOVA made her first public appearance in a KGB line-up under dubious circumstances. After a seven-year-to-life hiatus, she now returns to her adoring fans. When questioned about her forced sabbatical, Olga’s only comment was “I did it for Art’s sake.” Art, however, said nothing.

YAKATARINA VERBOSOVICH. Despite possessing a walk-in wardrobe so large that it has its own post code, Yakatarina remains a true ballerina of the people. Indeed, she is so loved in her native Russia that in 1993 the grateful citizens of Minsk awarded her the key to the city. That might well have remained the “golden moment” of this great ballerina’s career, had they not subsequently changed the locks.

DORIS VIDANYA. The legendary Vitebsk Virago first achieved recognition as a child performer, appearing with the famous Steppe Brothers in the world premiere of *Dyspepsiana* (based on an unfinished paragraph by M. Gorki). As a favorite of Nicholas, Alexandra, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia, and the czarovich, La Effhrvia (as she is known to her admirers) was compelled to flee St. Petersburg disguised as a Karsky shashlik. Upon arrival in the New World, she established herself as the Prima

TATIANA YOUNBETYABOOTSKEYA comes to the ballet stage after her hair-raising escape from the successful (but not terribly tasteful) overthrow of her country’s glamorous government. She made a counter-revolutionary figure of herself when she was arrested for single-handedly storming the People’s Museum, where her fabulous collection of jewels was being insensitively displayed alongside a machine gun. The resilient Madame Youbetyabootskaya is currently the proprietress of American’s only mail-order course in Classical Ballet.



JACQUES d’ANIELS was originally trained as an astronaut before entering the world of ballet. Strong but flexible, good natured but dedicated, sensible but not given to unbelievable flights of fantastic behavior, Mr. d’Aniels is an expert on recovering from ballet injuries (including the dread “Pavlova’s clavicle”).

ILYA BOBOVNIKOV, the recipient of this year’s Jean de Brienne Award, is particularly identified for his Rabelaisian ballet technique. A revolutionary in the art of partnering, he was the first to introduce crazy glue to stop supported pirouettes.

ROLAND DEAULIN. Having invented the concept of the “bad hair year” (or “annus hairibilis”) French born Roland now devotes his spare time to selling his new line of Michael Flatley Wigs on the QVC shopping channel.

PEPE DUFKA. The ballet world was rocked to its foundations last month when Pepe Dufka sued 182 of New York’s most ardent ballet lovers for loss of earnings. Mr. Dufka claims that nineteen years of constant exposure to rotten fruit and vegetables has led to painful and prolonged bouts of leafmould, cabbage root fly, and bottom-end rot. Sadly, this historic court case comes too late for a former colleague, whose legs were recently crushed by a genetically modified avocado. He will never dance again.



STANISLAS KOKITCH. “The Forgotten Man” of ballet, is hardly ever mentioned in reviews by critics or in discussions by devoted balletomanes despite having created several important roles in now forgotten ballets. He is the author of *The Tragedy of My Life*, an autobiography not at all reliable.

ANDREI LEFTOV, “The Prune Danish of Russian Ballet”, abandoned an enormously successful career as a film actor to become a Trockadero premier danseur. His faithful fans, however, need not despair as most of his great films have been made into ballets: the searing *Back to Back*, the tear-filled *Thighs and Blisters*, and the immortal seven-part *Screams from a Carriage*. Because of his theatrical flair, Andrei has chosen to explore the more dramatic aspects of ballet, causing one critic to rename his Siegfried “What's my Line?”

THE LEGUPSKI BROTHERS - Araf, Marat, Sergey, Vladimir and Vyacheslav - are not really brothers; nor are their names really Araf, Marat, Sergey, Vladimir or Vyacheslav; nor are they real Russians; nor can they tell the difference between a pirouette and a jete...but...well...they do move about rather nicely ...and...they fit into the costumes.

BORIS NOWITSKY has been with the greatest ballerinas of our time; he has even danced with some of them. One of the first defective Russian male stars, he left the motherland for purely capitalistic reasons. Amazingly, between his appearances on television and Broadway, in movies, commercials, magazines and special events, and women’s nylons, he occasionally still has time to dance.

VELOUR PILLEAUX, whose political adaptability saw him through two world wars and numerous police actions, comes to America in conjunction with the release of his tenth cookbook, *Ma Brie*. When asked by an American reporter to describe his most exciting experience in ballet, M. Pilleaux referred to pages 48-55: the night he danced the Rose Adagio (*en travesti*) in Buenos Aires with four political figures, the names of whom he assured us we would recognize.

YURI SMIRNOV. At the age of sixteen, Yuri ran away from home to join the Kirov Opera because he thought Borodin was a prescription barbiturate. Luckily for the Trockadero, he soon discovered that he didn’t know his arias from his elbow and decided to become a ballet star instead.



INNOKENTI SMOKTUMUCHSKY is known only to the most cultured and refined balletomanes in the dark alleyways of St. Petersburg. Originally a promising dancer-choreographer, his only ballet, *Le Dernier Mobicain*, was stolen by the director of the

company. In severe depression and shock, he burned his ballet slippers and fled to the sewers, only to surface these forty years later.

KRAVLJI SNEPEK comes to the Trockadero from his split-level birthplace in Siberia, where he excelled in toe, tap, acrobatic and Hawaiian. This good natured Slav is famous for his breathtaking technique--a blend of froth and frou-frou centered on a spine of steel, painfully acquired at the hands and feet of his teacher, Glib Generalization, who has already trained many able dancers. As an artist in the classical, heroic, tragical mold, young Kravljji wrenched the heart of all who saw him dance Harlene, the Goat Roper in *The Best Little Dacha in Sverdlovsk*.



The gentlemen of the Trocks have been entertaining us for nearly 40 years. In that time they have risen from their origins in a New York loft to become one of the greatest acts on the planet. By the time their 40th birthday rolls around they ought to be designated an “international treasure”. They make you believe that the Statue of Liberty is a drag queen.

- Neil Norman, *The Express*, London

Repertoire

Ballets

Stars & Stripes Forever	Choreography by Robert La Fosse after George Balanchine
Raymonda's Wedding	Choreography after Marius Petipa
Paquita	Staged by Elena Kunikova after Marius Petipa
Nutcracker	Choreography by Pamela Pribisco
Majisimas	Staged and with additional choreography by Raffaele Morra
The HumpBack Horse	Choreography by Alexander Gorsky and Marius Petipa
Gaite Parisienne	Choreography by S. Trevino after Massine
Ecole de Ballet	Choreography by Peter Anastos
Don Quixote	Choreography after Marius Petipa and Alexander Gorsky
Yes Virginia...	Choreography by Peter Anastos after Robbins
Harlequinade	Staged by Elena Kunikova after Petipa
Pas de Quatre	Choreography after J. Perrot and A. Dolin
La Vivandiere	Staged by Elena Kunikova after Arthur St. Leon
La Trovatiara Pas de Cinq	Choreography by Peter Anastos
Go For Barocco	Choreography by Peter Anastos after George Balanchine
Giselle Act II	Staged by Y. Tchernychova after J. Perrot and Marius Petipa
Les Sylphides	Staged by Alexandre Minz after Michel Fokine
Swan Lake Act II	Staged by Trutti Gasparinetti after Lev Ivanov

Modern Works

I Wanted to Dance with You	Choreography by Roy Fialkow after P. Bausch
Debut at the Opera	Choreography by Agnes de Mille
The Dances of Isadora	Choreography by Lori Bellilove after Isadora Duncan
Lamentations of Jane Eyre	Choreography by Roy Fialkow after Martha Graham
The Dance of Liberation	Choreography by Richard Goldberger
Patterns in Space	Choreography by Meg Harper after Cunningham

Pas de Deux and Pas de Trois

The Black Swan	Choreography after M. Petipa
Blue Bird Pas de Deux	Choreography after M. Petipa
Don Quixote Pas de Deux	Choreography after M. Petipa
Fairy Doll	Choreography after N. Legat
Gran Pas Classique	Choreography after Gsovsky
Le Corsaire	Choreography after M. Petipa
Les Fetes des Fleures	
Pas de Trois de Odalisques	Staged by E. Kunikova after M. Petipa
Paquita Pas de Trois	Choreography after M. Petipa
Spring Waters	Choreography after A. Messerer

Solo Works

The Swan	Choreography after M. Fokine
Ribbon Dance	Choreography after L. Lashchilin
Russian Dance	Staged by E. Kunikova after A. Gorsky

FINANCIAL TIMES DECEMBER 23, 2014

The Trocks, Joyce Theater, New York — review

Apollinaire Scherr

The spoof troupe hilariously parody all the tropes of ballet — yet dance with real feeling too

Ballet loyalists are so often defending the venerable art against charges of frou-frou inconsequence that we only allow ourselves to titter publicly over it when we are watching Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. “In accordance with *zee* greatest tradition of *zee* Russian bal-*let*,” as a villainous Slav straight out of *Rocky & Bullwinkle* puts it before every show (both programme A and B), the troupe of divo- ballerinos improves on the absurdities we have been silent about all year.

The relief can be riotous. And if not relief — because your total ballet exposure amounts to a single *Swan Lake*, say — then laughter. At best, a Trock send-up hits every note on the ballet-familiarity scale, from physical comedy to sophisticated parodies of style, including the Romantic, the Balanchinian and, of course, the *Russesian*, to dub the bastard form brought to American backwaters and back alleys by travelling troupes from the 1930s until the 1960s.

The humour is sometimes Chaplinesque: both the Little Tramp and the Trock ballerina wheel around — with a board on the shoulder of the first and a stiff leg protruding behind the second — innocently to fell a line of beefy men. The Trock men just happen to be posing prettily in tutus.

Some gags are specific to story ballet. The lackadaisical prince (Giovanni Goffredo as Sergey Legupski) whom the Swan Queen Odette (Robert Carter

as ferocious Olga Supphozova) recruits to liberate her from her bird disguise does not understand a word of her pantomimed plea. (I know how he feels.)

And a few antics are funnier when you are clued in to the conventions: that Cupid is usually played by a diminutive dancer, not the likes of hairy, zaftig Maya Thickenhighya (Ihaia Miller); that the dour composer (Carter again) in the Cunningham parody is hardly an exaggeration, despite trousers hitched up to his armpits, the weight of the avant-garde on his shoulders, and “music” made from popping paper bags, tootling on a bazooka and clucking like a chicken.

The ballets do not consist merely of gags, however. Serious loveliness alternates with the comedy, heightening both. All 18 performers are fine dancers — better than they’ve ever been, in fact — with Carlos Hopuy, Chase Johnsey and Philip Martin-Nielson masters of the edgeless, floating quality in the upper body that defines ballet grace.

In *Don Quixote’s* famous wedding pas de deux, this virtuosity slipped toward poignancy. The male characters in Trock ballets are usually nothing to swoon over. The glazed-eyed princes and poets seem zonked on Quaaludes; the peasant lads and prince’s helpers are two species of dork; the evil sorcerer is a closet femme. But Paolo Cervellera as Basil the barber proved a studly beau for Johnsey, arguably the prettiest girl in the house. With bravado and silky technique, respectively, and an intense rapport, they were electric together. I stopped laughing and believed in this wedding, which at last is allowed to take place outside the theatre too.

As for the season premiere, *The Naiad and the Fisherman* is a work in progress. As stager, the troupe’s reliably hilarious Raffaele Morra has yet to decide what to exploit in the triangle romance between nymph, fisherman and village sweetheart. But he has started in the right place, where the Trocks often begin — with the dancing. In style, *Naiad* resembles *Giselle*, also by Jules Perrot and from the 1840s. The steps, as leading lass Martin-Nielson beautifully demonstrated, endearingly combine humbleness and buoyancy. The ridiculous and the sublime should soon follow.

The New York Times

NEW YORK TIMES
December 17, 2014

DANCE | DANCE REVIEW
by Brian Seibert

Gentle Laughter for a Swan's Well-Timed Flutter and a Besotted Water Nymph

Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, at 40, at the Joyce Theater



Nina Immobilashvili (Alberto Pretto) and Yakatarina Verbosovich (Chase Johnsey) in "La Naïade et le Pêcheur," performed by Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, at the Joyce. Credit Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

The men of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo — and in this troupe, that means everyone — are comedians and dancers. But perhaps even more essentially, they are aficionados of their art. Their sendups of ballet conventions show the close attention of true fans and are rendered with such love that, while they are always entertaining, they aren't always especially comic. The comedy can be a mask for serious aspiration and ballet-nerd connoisseurship.

In the 40 years since the company was founded in New York, as its technical standards have risen and the culture of the country around it has grown less rigid about gender and sexuality, this enacted fandom has distinguished the Trocks from your average drag act. At the Joyce Theater on Tuesday, the company

celebrated its anniversary true to form, with the debut of a 19th-century curio.

This was “La Naïade et le Pêcheur,” originally choreographed by Jules Perrot and staged here by Raffaele Morra after a Bolshoi version. Mr. Morra, in his alter ego of Lariska Dumbchenko, takes one of the title roles, the water nymph who falls in love with a Sicilian fisherman, Matteo (Ihaia Miller, as Mikhail Mypansarov). The comedy, such as there is, arises from gentle exaggeration: the silly head tilt added to Matteo’s skipping entrance.

Mainly, though, this is one of the less parodic pieces. Its mild pleasures are the well-rendered period details, especially in the ensemble sections, and the light and clean dancing of Matteo’s girlfriend, Giannina. This role is played by Nadia Doumiafeyva (Philip Martin-Nielson), who despite her name needs no favors: She has technique and grace aplenty.

That’s true as well of Alla Snizova (Carlos Hopuy), whose rendering of the pas de deux from “Le Corsaire” was, save for some wobbles in her fouetté turns, exemplary. Her partner, Araf Legupski (Laszlo Major, who joined the troupe in September), is a marvel, an especially buff ballet buff with spectacular male technique. I wonder what he’s like as a woman.

This program, the first of two this season, opens with two Trock classics. “Go for Barocco,” a Balanchine parody, remains the wittiest work in the repertory, all dance jokes and timing. “Swan Lake, Act II” is more slapstick, with jokes about weight and hyperbolic expressions of gender, though it, too, is funnier if you know the original well.

Playing the tragic swan-princess Odette is Olga Supphozova, the alter ego of Robert Carter, who has been with the company nearly 20 years. That’s a remarkable career for any ballerina, but the longevity is even more striking and inspiring considering that the very idea of such a ballerina, the idea of the Trocks, might once have inspired nothing more than smirks.

Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo continues through Jan. 4, 2015 at the Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Avenue, at 19th Street, Chelsea; 212-242-0800, joyce.com.



CALGARY HERALD

Review: Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo blend humour with athletic artistry

STEPHAN BONFIELD

Published on: January 17, 2015



Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo in Go for Barocco.
Sascha Vaughn / Sascha Vaughn

The Trocks were in town on the weekend for two sold-out performances at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium Friday and Saturday night. Hosted by Alberta Ballet, there could be no doubt of the popularity of the all-male ballet company, now in their 40th anniversary season, as they so completely delighted their audience while dancing in tutus and pointe shoes, equally comfortably as in full ballet cavalier.

Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo are not exactly the mad satirists of ballet that some claim. They are the best kind of artful parodists, capable of illuminating the most gripping sections of academic classical ballet, albeit via a wink and smile and the occasional well-placed shtick.

Despite the fact that such an international reputation precedes them, there were times when the ensemble took long breaks from their perfectly deranged, yet nuanced self-mocking humour, to bedazzle with a stunning virtuosity that I frankly can't understand, at a physical level, just quite how they pulled it off. From every pirouette, fouetté, brisé, and stock classical ballet moment that would clearly have been meant for women to dance, they acquitted each movement with such aplomb, it made my body hurt just to watch them. I couldn't imagine getting myself to do that for any sustained amount of time.

While several people at intermission could be heard to exclaim that their faces hurt from laughing so hard, for me it was my core that hurt the most, from marvelling at how hard — very hard — it was for each of them, from a feather-shedding Dying Swan to swan diving, to pull off such refined moves. For a man to dance like a woman is a truly difficult role to train for — both extraordinarily fun and extraordinarily difficult at the same time.

The Trocks are unspeakably talented, and there were times, many times, that their lines and execution could make you forget that these were not women, but men performing, and that captivated me more than their equally successful, wonderful humour.

Moving past dancing en pointe, which is hard enough for a man, I was impressed with their ensemble work in *Go for Barocco* set to Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 3 in G, a parody of Balanchine's Concerto Barocco (itself set to Bach's D minor Double Violin Concerto). It is hard enough to dance to intricate counterpoint, but the Trocks' Third Movement fugue was enthralling. At the same time, while the tribute to Balanchine was meticulously pulled off with an enviable poise that made the evening thoroughly enjoyable for me, I loved the mocking description of the dance found in the program, a perfect parody of academic and old-world journalese employed by critics, characterizing the work as a "primer in identifying stark coolness and choreosymphonic delineation on the new (neo) neo-new classic dance."

That twisted language describes many of the Trocks' best moments in their signature hit *Swan Lake*, Act II. It was a great way to lead off the show,

stealing everyone's hearts right away, while at the same time leading us through not only standard-bearer classical balletic language but also highlighting what that language is all about through a healthy degree of wit and charm. Occasionally, the show could devolve for a few seconds into slapstick, to the delight of many, such as an unwitting leg extension impacting an apparently unsuspecting member of the corps, and knocking him (her) momentarily unconscious. Or, sometimes a few tutued swans would fall out of line, or just on the floor, from a little too much enthusiasm. The Trocks ended their presentation with astounding scenes based on Petipa's Paquita, set to a stunning set of five unforgettable variations.

I realize I haven't mentioned any names of the touring company, but in a way, their male and female aliases seem to be serious projected alter egos, blurring the dancers' individual and collective identities. After a while, I wasn't sure I could tell male from female, or parodistic pillory from serious artistic travesti. And at the end of the show, during the thunderous applause, all I knew was that behind the humour there were very always beautiful and aesthetically moving experiences, not too far hidden beneath the Trocks' carefully concealed dual artistic identities of truth and travesty. Bravo!



EXPRESS

Home of
the Daily and
Sunday Express

Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, Birmingham Hippodrome

NEIL NORMAN, THE EXPRESS
FEB 8, 2013

The gentlemen of the Trocks have been entertaining us for nearly 40 years. In that time they have risen from their origins in a New York loft to become one of the greatest acts on the planet.

By the time their 40th birthday rolls around they ought to be designated an “international treasure”. They make you believe that the Statue of Liberty is a drag queen.

The secret behind their unique appeal is the balance between their comic pastiche and sheer skill. I have said this before but it is worth repeating: not only can The Trocks dance really well they can dance really well like women. Pointe work, arabesques, floating arms and feminine gestures are executed with a grace and elegance that would not shame a genuinely gendered ballerina. The facial expressions provide much of the incidental humour when they are not bumping into each other, missing cues or sliding unwittingly out of position.

The opening number here Les Sylphides is a case in point. A long piece with the company in white tutus and a self-absorbed Prince it is hysterically funny but also beautifully executed. They can surprise at will, as when a dozy member of the corps sleepwalks off the edge of the stage. The central section, with three works in quick succession, ended with Ida Nevasayneva’s legendary Dying Swan in which Paul Ghiselin cavorts across the stage in a flurry of falling feathers, Twiglet limbs and exaggerated gestures.

No Trocks show is complete without his sublimely grotesque act and I dread the day Ghiselin finally hangs up his pointe shoes.

The Black Swan pas de deux, Odile (Yakatarina Verbosovich/ Chase Johnsey) and her Prince (Innokenti Smoktumuchsky/ Carlos Hopuy) being moved around the stage by an absurdly coiffured Von Rothbart (Marat Legupski/Giovanni Ravelo) is performed with such drop-dead brilliance that Johnsey even manages the 32

fouettés in a performance that would pass muster on the stage of Covent Garden, in spite of being administered oxygen at the end.

The concluding Walpurgis Night is a Bacchanalian romp with horny little devils, Pan's People perhaps, cavorting with miscellaneous maidens in a kind of celebratory feast. It is not only exquisitely danced but rises to a climax of Fokine-like intensity that is genuinely exciting. OMG! If they carry on like this we are going to have to start taking these guys seriously.

BOOKING INQUIRIES:

Liz Harler
General Manager
liz.harler@gmail.com
+1 202 251 4176

Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo

Box 1325, Gracie Station
New York, NY 10028
www.trockadero.org



@TrocksB



@lesballetstrockadero



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