

What's On

Review

Dance

Riveting Rhapsody

The performance of DanceCyprus' latest production, *Rhapsody* took place on Wednesday evening at the Latsia Municipal Theatre. The event was well attended and mention must be made about what a nice theatre this is, with its marble entrance and comfy, staggered seating making the stage clearly visible from all seats.

The founders of DanceCyprus aspire to provide a permanent, professional company to uplift and entertain audiences as well as inspiring dancers and choreographers to believe that they have a future in this country.

The tragedy is that Cyprus still does not have a permanent ballet or opera company. Where is the permanent government with funding for these cultural necessities imperative for our artistic and intellectual development?

We should all be up in arms that our dancers, singers and musicians are forced to make careers out of the country returning only for a few select presentations.

Wednesday night's performance was absolutely superb – the dancing, choreography, and selection of music – a truly European standard achieved through sheer determination and hard work.

The evening, a bill of three distinct and new ballets under the single title of *Rhapsody* began with *Rhapsody in Blue* to Gershwin's eponymous music, choreographed by Julien Ficely, who currently dances with Ballet de Lorraine.

The movements – a combination of ballet and modern dance was perfectly suited to this jazzy masterpiece displaying the athleticism of dancers Justin Cumine, Sergio Giacomelli, Amy Lazarou, Sebastien Mari, Elsa Sabbatini and Galatia Savva who were all exceptional.

Not only did they dance well alone, but the interaction between them was extraordinary. The figure, supposedly an embryo on the side of the stage, was for me rather distracting and unnerving with the contortions made by the extremely supple dancer seemingly superfluous.

The second ballet, *Une Nuit Blanche*, also created by Ficely to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Pafos Aphrodite Festival used music from Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly*. The set was simple and effective.

A black and white checked board created a 'room' which had a chair and the dancer Elsa Sabbatini, wearing in a black dress. Together with the dramatic music, her entire soul was bared to us. With great physical agility and strength, she portrayed in a dramatic and moving way the pathos and yet passionate feelings she had.

The superimposition of ringing bells into Puccini's music further increased the sense of her desperation and urgency.

She then meets with her lover, danced by Sebastien Mari, shedding her dress and both semi naked with undulating freedom dance a passionate *pas de deux*. This was a large step away from the opera's libretto – but Puccini too, took gigantic steps and moved away from convention...

The highlight of the evening for me was the final ballet *Amoroso*, theatrically and brilliantly choreographed by Carolina Constantinou, currently a soloist with the Munich National Theatre.

The exhilarating work begins with riveting drums with the dancers' dark shadows against a white background. The set and costumes, designed by Andy Bargilly were cleverly enhanced with hanging balls which ingeniously captured the light. The powerful dancing and movement suddenly altered with the music – the stage became a beautiful and dramatic red with the choreography was just perfect to Bach's Brandenburg Concerto.

The contrapuntal texture of the music imitated by the dancers in their smaller, faster movements – so stylised, just superb! The suspended balls, touched by the dancers moved, stopping time from freezing...and then suddenly in the dark auditorium, the whistling of Piaf's *La Vie en Rose*.

The ballet was given intrinsic logic and connection through the recurring music of the drums and Bach before bursting into the full song of Edith Piaf. This careful attention to detail displayed the experience and strength of Constantinou's artistic leadership.





This was not an ordinary evening of ballet but rather a celebration of relationships between dancers, or rather artists which transcended deeply into the mind of the viewer. A fresh and exciting approach in a high quality production of which we should be proud and offer our support.

Rhapsody

Three-part DanceCyprus performance inspired by opera pieces and Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue.

September 5. Paphos Castle. Tel: 26-822270

September 7. Rialto Theatre, Heroes Square, Limassol.

Shows start at 8.30pm. €20/16. Tel: 7777745

By Saskia Constantinou

CYPRUS MAIL

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