

La Bayadère finally returns to the Colón

Ludmila Pagliero was here at last — and the wait was worthwhile

BY PABLO BARDIN
FOR THE HERALD

Back in 1992 famous Russian dancer Natalia Makarova brought to the Colón her version of a Petipa classic, *La Bayadère*, with music by Ludwig Minkus, months after presenting it at Milán's La Scala. It was a great success, but we've had to wait a long time before seeing it again. Last week the *Herald* gave readers a preview of it written by Esteban Colombari.

Before it reached the West it had several versions in Russia: Gorski and Tikhomirov at Moscow's Bolshoi (1923); Vaganova at Leningrad's Kirov (1932); Ponomarev also at the Kirov (1941). When Nureyev danced the Kirov version at Paris' Palais Garnier it was the Second Act that made a special impression, "The Shadows"; and then he made his own version when he stayed in the West. The same thing happened with Makarova: first "The Shadows" in 1970 at the American Ballet Theatre (she also left the USSR), and later the complete ballet (in 1980); she has staged it in many places since.

But what is "The Shadows"? It's what the warrior Solor sees in his dream after Nikya (the Bayadère) dies from snake poison (she is attacked whilst sniffing flowers sent

by Gamzatti). He sees the Kingdom of the Shades: thirty-six dancers in Petipa, twenty-four in Makarova, slowly zigzag dancing a very simple and brief series of steps, creating an astonishing vertical complexity as they intercross; then three Shadows dance a variation, Solor a virtuosic one, a beautiful *pas de deux* with Nikya, and then all together end a perfect *ballet blanc*.

Why did Petipa choose an India setting? Because the Prince of Wales had visited it recently and Russia's Tsar had a good relationship with Queen Victoria!

Ballet productions were lavish at that time, so here we see temples and palaces. The 1992 production responded to the needs of this period piece. Pier Luigi Samaritani pretended no modernity, so we have a reasonably evocative India: the Sacred Wood in front of the Temple, the Rajah's Palace and garden. The costumes by Theoni V. Aldredge are pure and beautiful in the ballet blanc, and luxurious for the Rajah and his daughter Gamzatti, but the fakir Magdaveya looked like an Indian... from South America. Adequate lighting by Rubén Daniel Conde, especially his contribution to the final destruction of the Temple. Uncredited special effects produced a realistic

steady stream of falling boulders!

And now comes the enigma: we are told that this is a production of the Ballet Nacional del Sódre co-operating with the Colón. What? This is 1992's Colón production, afterwards rented by the Corella Ballet and presented in September, 2008 at Madrid and July, 2009 at Barcelona. And *La Bayadère* was announced in 2010 (the season of our theatre's reopening) but was cancelled due to the conflict with the Colón Ballet due to the lack of proper dance floor. How is it that the Sódre has this production?

Makarova's version is mostly admirable, though it doesn't fix an old Petipa problem: the weak dramatic gestures of parts where miming rather than dancing prevail: the Brahmin, the Rajah, the fakir. But there's a feast of classical ballet and the show is a pleasure to behold. She was helped by Susan Jaffe and Laura Martin for the revival and was assisted by Agneta Vaicu; Dina Makakroff coordinated the production. A detail: the *Pas d'Action* that closes Act I is by Vakhtang Chabukiani, revising the Ponomarev version.

Ludmila Pagliero finally was here and the wait was worthwhile: her figure is lithe and elegant, her steps are impeccable and she projects a



TEATRO COLÓN/MAXIMO PARRAGNOLI

likeable personality. It was for her Gamzatti that she was made an étoile at the Paris Ballet, but here she was Nikya, so she knows the dramatic implications inside out. Herman Cornejo was an admirable foil: his Solor was decided and commanding, danced with amazing technique and stamina. And Macarena Giménez was quite interesting as Gamzatti, a part that also has a lot of complex steps to solve and needs an assured artist.

The smaller parts were in the picture, but it is the girls of the Ballet Blanc (including the soloists) that must be singled out for their discipline and taste, and Williams Malpezzi for his brilliant Bronze Idol.

The agreeable Minkus score was arranged by John Lanchbery and Richard Bonyngue. Emmanuel Siffert got a fine performance from the Buenos Aires Philharmonic, with accomplished violin solos. ♦

Canadian conductor Julian Kuerti offers debut performance

A plethora of music from two pianists and two orchestras

Our city offers so much music that it's really difficult to select and every week I have to discard valuable stuff, but neither am I ubiquitous nor can the *Herald* (or any other medium) cover all the interesting things. A pity in a way, but also a clear sign that BA is one of the great musical centres of the world.

Two admirable pianists from different origins teamed up to give us a wonderful night at the Coliseo for Nuova Harmonia: the Muscovite Boris Giltburg, well-known here for acclaimed earlier seasons, and Tokyo-born Kotaro Fukuma. Both in their early 30s and with important individual careers.

They offered an intelligent programme of contrasting music for two pianos: Brahms' 40-minute magnificent *Sonata* (later transformed into the *Quintet for piano and strings*), Gershwin's two-piano transcription of his *Rhapsody in Blue*, and Rachmaninov's *Second Suite for two pianos*.

Giltburg and Fukuma have in common an astonishingly precise technique up to any difficulty, a sense of form and style always led by impeccable taste and a comprehension that good dual piano playing needs the blending of two sources of sound by means of rhythmic precision. They are ca-

pable of massiveness and its opposite, delicacy of touch, but that doesn't mean that they are identical: Giltburg has an easy *fortissimo*, never clangorous, whilst Fukuma excels in refined *pianissimo* of beautiful touch. But they play together with visible enjoyment and mutual respect.

The encores were quite nice: one of Schumann's *Canonic Etudes*, originally for an obsolete instrument, the pedal pianoforte (all were played last year by Argerich and Barenboim), and two charming pieces from Fauré's *Dolly*, *Cradle song* and *Le pas espagnol*, for four-hand piano (and they seemed quite comfortable in this other type of collaboration too).

ORCHESTRAL PANORAMA

And now a panorama of two recent concerts by Colón orchestras: the Buenos Aires Philharmonic and the Estable (Resident). All at the Colón (worth mentioning because this year there are many concerts by these entities at other venues). The Phil offered its 12th subscription programme with their Principal Conductor, Enrique Arturo Diemecke, and a distinguished guest, harpist Ann Hobson Pilot (debut).

The night wasn't long, and considering that the stated idea was to

stress the Latin character of the music (so said Diemecke in the hand programme) the youthful *Petite Suite* by Debussy, orchestrated by Henri Büsser, could have been advantageously substituted by Debussy's later *Iberia*, thus providing a Spanish pendant to Manuel de Falla's splendid two suites from *The Three-Cornered Hat* and surrounding Ginastera's *Harp Concerto*. Debussy was nicely done, but where the conductor really shone was in the extrovert and brilliant ballet music — surely Falla's masterpiece — admirably played by the Phil.

Few concerts have been written for harp; Ginastera's is curious inasmuch it mostly avoids the typical washes of sound of little substance. Generally the harp has to be accompanied by a small chamber orchestra and the music is discreet; not here, where there's plenty of percussion and there are huge climaxes. And indeed sometimes the harp is drowned, but there are also attractive chamber passages and interesting ideas. Carefully accompanied by Diemecke, Hobson Pilot, a veteran artist who was first desk of no less than the Boston Symphony for 29 years, proved to be in fine form, showing the subtleties and resources of the instrument with complete command.

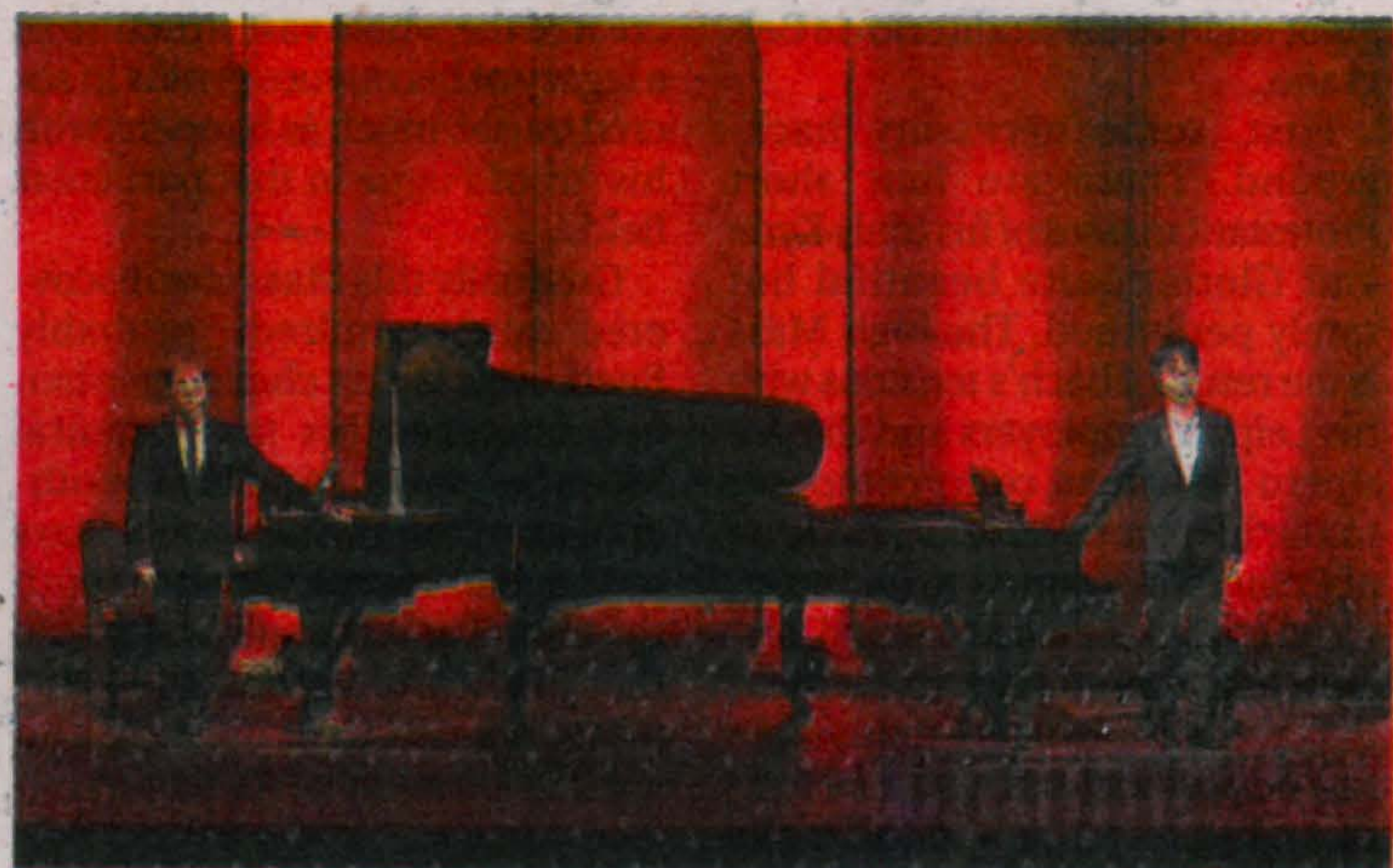
The Estable rarely gives concerts at the Colón, though it certainly could, considering that it refuses to play ballets and only has operas as its main source of work. But they are good when they give them, as they were in a free Sunday afternoon programme featuring the debut of Canadian conductor Julian Kuerti, currently principal conductor of the Concepción Symphony in Chile.

The main score was no less than Bartók's tough and marvellous *Concerto for Orchestra*, five movements that tax the orchestra to the limit in music that always has imag-

ination and freshness at its core. An orchestra on their toes and a conductor who knows his business brought the music to safe harbour.

In the first part, Beethoven's stark *'Coriolan' Overture* had a strong reading, and Haydn's *Concertante Symphony*, written during the period of his last symphonies and a splendid example of mature classicism, was interpreted with real artistry by the Estable's first desks: Freddy Varela Montero (violin), Stanimir Todorov (cello), Gerardo Bondi (oboe) and Ezequiel Fainguersch (bassoon). ♦

P.B.



ENRICO FANTONI

Boris Giltburg and Kotaro Fukuma take the applause after a sterling performance at the Coliseo.