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Dutch National Ballet's "Transatlantic": an energetic summer finale

★★★★★ ?

By Lambrecht Wessels, 12 June 2016

Summer has arrived and the dancers of Dutch National Ballet send us off into the summer with four modern pieces.

Justin Peck's *Year of the Rabbit* has a beautiful set up with vivid blue costumes, good lighting and high speed choreography set to great music. It is an angular Balanchine-inspired piece that really takes off halfway through with some surprising and daring jumps by a playful Wen Ting Guan and a light Erica Horwood into the arms of Jozef Varga. The pas de deux by Varga and Horwood is elegant and meditative. I feel the piece underuses Remi Wörtmeyer's and Anna Tsygankova's talent (the two are recent winners of most expressive dancers award at the St. Petersburg Open Dance Ballet Festival). Tsygankova – always feminine and great to watch as she moves from fast strength to incredible subtlety - deserves grander gestures and more romantic movement. The piece is too show-y at times, and lacks urgency and clearer aesthetics, though it features a great virtuoso solo by the steady and powerful Young Gyu Choi. Overall, the work is likely to pick up as the show progresses.



The Year of the Rabbit
© Hans Gerritsen

George Williamson's *Crane* has an early sci-fi feel to it with spectacular costumes and round, hurried dances in solos and groups.



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“a great pick-me-up”

Reviewed at Dutch National Opera and Ballet, Amsterdam on 11 June 2016

PROGRAMME

- Year of the Rabbit: Selections from the Chinese Zodiac (Ernst Meisner, Justin Peck)
- Crane (George Williamson)
- Merge (Ernst Meisner)
- Overture (David Dawson)

PERFORMERS

Dutch National Ballet
Matthew Rowe, *Conductor*

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Borg would have been blue with envy at these outfits and the individuality of the ballerinas. The dance gives ample space especially for the female dancers to express themselves in short, driven solos. Aya Okumora's style is very well suited to the work: fast, modern and with a hint of evil wizardness staring from blackened eyes. Suzanna Kaic's light and sharp dancing across the floor is always very pleasant. Jessica's Xuan's and Amanouela Merdjanova's entries on stage also grip the audience's attention with a dynamic range of deliberate moves from slow to fast speed. The solos are among the best in this piece. The group work is not as gripping perhaps due to the lighting. It lacks the visual coordination and viscosity of the gold standard set by Canadian choreographer Crystal Pyte. At times it reminded me of Chinese choreographer Shen Wei's *Sacre du Printemps* (2013) as a vortex of ongoing energy. Sho Yamada stood out among the male dancers, but the dance vocabulary of the men was too similar to that of the women's to provide a great counterpoint. Unisex dancing is fine, but here it resulted in lack of polarity. There is just so much tiptoeing that male dancers can do, before they need to put their foot down.

Ernst Meisner's *Merge* sees young corps the ballet dancer Martin ten Kortenaar against first solist Igone de Jongh, to Lowel Liebermann's *Gargoyles* with Ryoko Kondo on piano. Ten Kortenaar, in his early twenties, makes powerful jumps and turns very fast in his solo. He has clear potential and a lot of power for his age and height. De Jongh, in a beautiful summer dress, rejects him and exudes calm. "You make too much of an effort" she seems to say in the beginning as she sends him off stage. This is the exact dynamic that Meisner seems to want to portray between these two dancers. Enthusiastic youth versus subtle experience as the audience falls silent to De Jongh's movements. As the music gets more beautiful the dancers get closer and the lifts higher.



Crane

© Hans Gerritsen

Matthew Rowe's conducting of the orchestra in **David Dawson's** *Ouverture* set to Szymon Brzoska's romantic new (2013) score is great. Dawson's piece is an inverted love story from winter to spring, ending rather than starting with 'first love'. Background knowledge of the piece is not needed to grasp and enjoy this 50 minutes long ballet of pure aesthetic that feels like it's only 25 minutes long. The sky is filled with white light beams that change position, the stage with a cadre of 20 panting dancers in fluorescent yellows, oranges and pinks. Wherever you look there is something beautiful going on. In fact, so much attention is paid to coherent framing and Dawson's signature overstretched poses, that you could cut out parts of Dawson's tableaux and hang them on a wall. Went Ting Guan and Sebastian Galtier's pas de deux is especially graceful and beautiful featuring long stretches and large, expansive lifts, she trusting him enough to engage in a long daring backward fall over his shoulder and into his confident grasp.

Artur Shesterikov and Michaela De Prince's pas de deux is fast and exciting as both dancers continue to notably improve their skills over time. Vito Mazzeo's pas de deux with Jing Jing Mao is beautiful and tender. He carries her outstretched above him onto the stage. But before the gallant gentleman can reach out and finally touch her, she is dragged from underneath him leaving him empty handed. James Stout and Sasha Mukhamedov's duet is pleasant and happy. Edo Wijnen finally clears the stage of all the dancers with a long focused solo. *Ouverture* is balanced and beautiful. It works for regular and new audiences alike.



Miami Heat

Andrew Blackmore-Dobbyn, 17th April

Miami City Ballet bears a marked resemblance to the New York City Ballet under Balanchine.

★★★★☆ [READ MORE](#)

SFB: program 7

Jaime Robles, 9th April

What Wheeldon seems to have used from this musical concept for the formation of the choreography is the idea of a mechanical universe, overrun by the presence of time.

★★★★☆ [READ MORE](#)

PNB: Director's Choice

Pia Lo, 21st March

This season's *Director's Choice* presents three works by choreographers Justin Peck, Alejandro Cerrudo and Paul Gibson, who, according to PNB Artistic Director Peter Boal, are among the "truly gifted" of our time.

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NYCB's signature styles in DC

Hilary Stroh, 2nd March

A high-spirited divertissement from the New York City Ballet.

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Millepied's Dance Project's starts 2016 in L.A.

Jeff Slayton, 31st January

Benjamin Millepied, choreographer for the movie *Black Swan*, presents his company L.A. Dance Project at the Wallis Annenberg Center of the Performing Arts.

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Year of the Rabbit: Selections from the Chinese Zodiac

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Dutch National Ballet deserves credit for its continued gutsy investment in new modern ballets. Transatlantic is a great pick-me-up to start the summer.



Ouverture

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