

MAG ZINE
DANCE
THE WORLD AT YOUR FEET

Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo
American Theatre, Hampton, VA
February 21–22, 2006
Reviewed by Lea Marshall

Imagine sitting at a fancy dinner party, bewildered by too many forks and bored by too-serious conversation, when suddenly the elegantly dressed woman next to you belches loudly and throws a roll at the man across from her, knocking off his toupee. Why, it's just like ballet with the Trocks!

The all-male Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo has, for more than 30 years, performed loving parodies of classical ballet with to-die-for technical skill and impeccable comic timing. They deliver moments that, in a straight ballet performance, would fill the audience with horrified embarrassment: a principal dancer landing a grand jeté with a thud that shakes the corps members' lovely poses into disarray. But in the Trocks' version of *Les Sylphides*, for example, we expect nothing less than cutting glances between dancers, apples surreptitiously devoured onstage, tumbles in a froth of tulle, and a spaced-out danseur who forgets that his partner is there (as she reminds us with exasperated grimaces).

A pas de deux titled *The Flames of Paris* featured Prince Myshkin (aka Fernando Medina-Gallego) and Irina Bakpakova (aka Lionel Droguet), whose gorgeous technique was deliciously colored by absurdity. Bakpakova's impressive hops on pointe were accompanied by head bobbles that filled the house with laughter. Her clean series of smiling fouetté turns complemented Myshkin's crazed circle of fast chaînés, the force of which spun him eventually into the wing.

Also on the program was *Le Grand Pas de Quatre* (what I might call the "Battle of the Ballerinas") with Gerd Tord (Bernd Burgmaier) as a haughty Marie Taglioni in pearls, casting withering glances at three younger ballerinas who could not do her enough reverence (or roll their eyes enough behind her back).

Throughout the evening there were, of course, the moments of obvious hilarity—as when the whirling soloist in *Les Sylphides* kicks over a corps member. But a treasure trove of comedy lay in the subtlest of glances, the byplay that was easy to miss if you were looking elsewhere. With a tiny shrug, or just too arched an eyebrow, a tutued Trock can elicit deep belly laughs, and at this performance, frantic cries of "Bravo!" from the back of the house.

