

THE INTERNATIONAL DANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH
No. 143 AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2010 £2.95

DANCE

EUROPE

New Season Guide
2010 - 2011

Istanbul

Ballet Competition

Stéphane Bullion

Ángel Corella

Estela Merlos

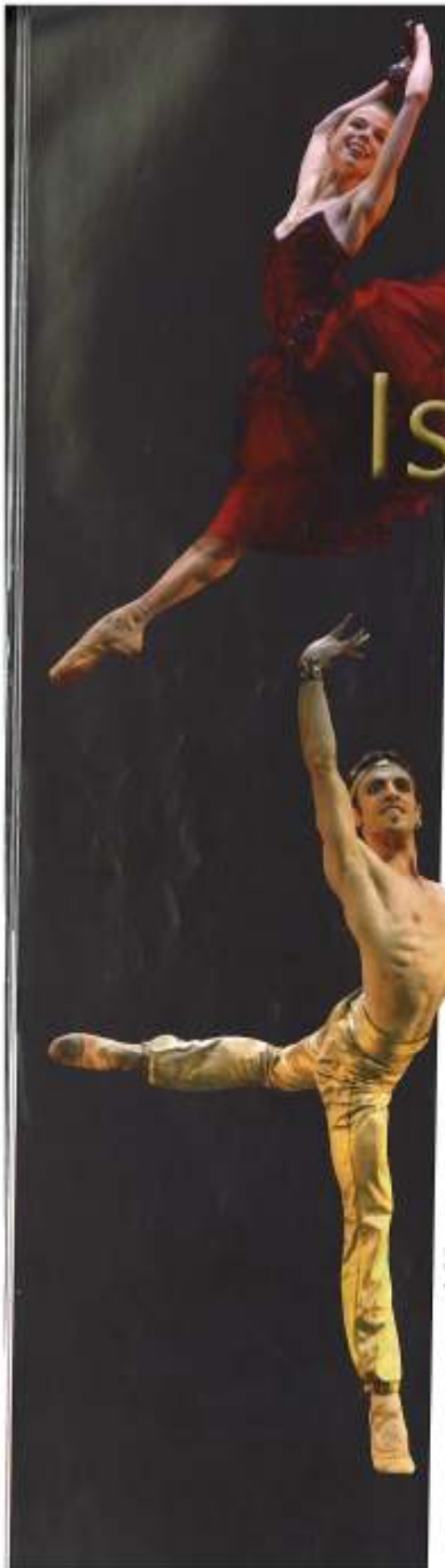
Sharon Watson

SCHOOL SHOWS

Focus on a Variation: Siegfried Act III

UK £2.95; Austria 6.05€; Australia A\$8.95; Belgium 6.70€; Canada \$10.50; Denmark DKK 63.90; Finland 8.50€
France 5.30€; Germany 4.80€; Greece 5.50€; Hungary 1600 HUF; Italy 7.30€; Japan ¥1500; Netherlands 5.50€
New Zealand \$11.90; Portugal Cost 6.25€, Russia 160 rubles; Spain 6.95€; Switzerland Sfr 8.5; USA \$ 7.95





Lisa Bruckas Photo: Niyaz Samoylov

Arvid Karpman Photo: Niyaz Samoylov

Istanbul International Ballet Competition

EMMA MANNING reports from
the European City of Culture

Ballet may have equated woman for Balanchine, but with 11 men in the final line-up of 16 dancers at this year's Istanbul International Ballet Competition, ballet is now clearly a man's game. Under founding artistic director Niyaz Yegiltape Güngör, the second edition of the competition happily coincided with Istanbul's reign as European Cultural Capital, and attracted 102 competitors from 28 countries, a substantial increase on the number of entries for the inaugural contest in 2008. Likewise, the standard was much higher, with professional dancers aged up to 26 (in the senior group) competing for generous prizes.

Following an initial selection round by DVD, the entrants were shortlisted to 50 semi-finalists who were invited to Istanbul in July, and the 16 finalists were picked from this group by the jury. Each finalist presented three variations - two classical and one modern, although most of the latter employed a classical vocabulary, as opposed to a true contemporary genre, in a variety of guises, some of which were refreshingly innovative and/or humorous.

Lisa Bruckler, the first of the juniors (aged 15 - 19) to appear on the stage of the Cernel Resit Bay Concert Hall, set the standard with a beautifully measured *Poquito* in which her attitude turns sailed round effortlessly. This accomplished performance, along with her delicate *Givelle* and J. H. Asschoto's *How Can I?*, won her the 1st Prize in her section.

Vanessa Csorika's *Poquito* was, in turn, seamless yet a tad bland, and the young Hungarian dancer impressed more in Antal Fodor's *The Girl*, set to Carl



Maxime Mathieu Quiroga. Photo: Yuya Senozaki

Karapetyan has a magnetic stage presence, and his Don Q and Corsaire variations were laced with thrilling virtuosity. His manège of jetés was magnificent - no dancer made better use of the stage.

Ort, showing off a lovely split jeté. She was placed 2nd. Scooping the 3rd Prize in the Junior Section, the buoyant Alvin Tostigovray from the Ukraine presented variations from *Coppélia* and *Saturnalia*, along with Parish Maynard's *Luxions*, with much spirit.

Of the others in the younger group, Turkey's own Can Beirganoglu caught the eye with his mix of control and daring. His rubbery jump was shown to good effect in his *Papito* and *Olona and Acteon*, while his talent for comedy was shown in Berk Serbay's *Finot Tour* to Shostakovich, a humorous piece in which a medal dangled on a fishing line from the wings continually eluded his reach. He did, however, win Dance Europe's special prize for an Outstanding Young Dancer.

A mention also for Hungarian Tamas Kristof Darai, an elegant dancer struggling a bit with some of the technique but possessing potential danseur noble qualities. He really need not be so serious!

On to the Senior Section and, as one would expect, the standard ratcheted up considerably as some of the competitors are working as professional dancers. First on was Maxime Mathieu Quiroga, a French

dancer currently with the Royal Ballet of Flanders, who presented a finely honed *Siegfried* variation. Elegantly built - he sparks of Paris Opéra - he went on to carve his way through a clean yet dynamic *Paquita*, and showed off his choreographic skills in a *Sugar Plum* spoof that played on the [joyful (or not)] business of waking up, aptly called *Good Morning*. Very deservedly, he won the Grand Prix and 12,500 euros.

Very close on Quiroga's tail was Armenian Avetik Karapetyan, who was awarded the 1st Prize in the Seniors. More of a showman, Karapetyan has a magnetic stage presence, and his *Don Q* and *Corsaire* variations were laced with thrilling virtuosity. His manège of jetés was magnificent - no dancer made better use of the stage - and he also sold *Fenete Zanella's Leichter Blot* with much aplomb.

Placed second was Irina Sapozhnikova, a Russian with all the requisite ballerina qualities. Grigorovich's *Nutcracker* is loaded with technical feats, but the serene Sapozhnikova (who dances with the Bashkir State Opera and Ballet Theatre) delivered triplas and multiple fouettés without making them look like a



Can Beşiranoğlu
Photo: Yasar Sarıoğlu

circus, and then demonstrated her lovely, light jump in *Walpurgis Night*, and her soubrette qualities in Abuhakhanov's *La Marionette*.

Joseph Gatti is no newcomer to competitions, having already bagged many a gold and silver medal on the international stage. He is a charismatic performer and his Corsaire, notably, was technically polished. His selling card, though, was his own choreographic tribute to Michael Jackson, which had the fans going wild. Gatti won the 3rd Prize.

Other prizes went to Yassau Mergaliev from Kazakhstan, whose big, fluid jump won him the Duygu Aykal Jury Special Award, and Erhan Günel, a soloist with the Istanbul State Opera and Ballet, who was clearly overjoyed to win the Turkish Special Award. His warm personality shines through his animated dancing - whether it's James from *La Sylphide*, Basilio from *Don Quixote* or the sleepless competitor in Berk Seribay's wittily apt *The Night Before the Finals* - and made us wish that we'd had the chance to see him perform along with his company.

The day after the final round called for an awards ceremony and a gala, and with the indefatigable Mehmet Balkan on board as an advisor, it's no surprise that he managed to bring Spain's *Compañía Nacional de Danza 2* plus three of the world's starriest couples to Istanbul to perform in tandem with the prize-winners.

Opening the evening, the Madrid-based troupe gave a wonderful rendition of Nacho Duato's *Growo*. Perhaps some have tired of his fluid carvings, but I still find his work uplifting and quietly sensual. His dancers are marvellous interpreters of his soulful language. Then followed the prize giving, and the general consensus was that the jury chaired by Yuri Grigorovich - Julio Bocca, Fabienne Cerutti, Meriç Sümen Kanan, Sue Jin Kang, Jana Kurová, Vladimir Malakhov, Irak Mukhamedov, Marguerita Parilla, Salt Sökmen and Septime Webre - had chosen fairly and well. The gala

then proceeded with Meriç Sümen and Salt Sökmen, two of Turkey's most eminent dance legends, who kicked off the show with a nostalgic waltz.

The first guests on the stage were the Bobho's Olesya Novikova and Leonid Serafanov in a keenly manicured *Don Quixote*. Exquisitely proportioned, Novikova is more of a porcelain *libri* than Latin fire, and was arguably better suited to the *Tchekovskiy Pas de Deux* (which the two later performed), in which her polished technique was even more appreciable. Serafanov, of course, is a wonderfully fluid dancer, who manages to make everything look effortless.

From the Royal Ballet, Alina Cojocaru and Johan Kobborg chose to present a *Coppélia pas de deux* rather than a gala warhorse. They were, as ever, totally engaging, and Cojocaru's ability to make something slight look amazing stems from her musical sensibility. Her beautifully shaded *manège* was no exception, and her balances were sublime. She is no *fouetté* Olympian, but the short burst she delivered was a sparkling diversion as opposed to a circus trick. Kobborg, a nonchalant and agreeable Franz, returned later in the programme to present a contemporary take on *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. Quite whether such a dense fog of dry ice was intentional or not, I wouldn't care to guess, but much of the time his languid postures were barely discernible. A colleague lamented that he was disappointed that Cojocaru did not appear. Well, she could have been there; a wayward nymph lost in the mist.

For the packed audience, the biggest attraction was the Cuban pair, Viangray Valdés and Eiler Bourzac, who gave cracking performances of *Diana and Acteon* and the *Black Swan pas de deux*. Quite how they managed to deliver such fireworks after jumping off a plane from Havana is incredible. Valdés, in particular, never ceases to amaze, not only with her wicked balances, but with the calm surety that she begins a set of *fouettés en diagonal* with five velvet turns.

That Turkey has six national ballet companies is surely offers to open the door to the country's dance profession, which is struggling for more recognition (and better organisation). Hats off to Nilay Yaşlıtepe Güngör and Mehmet Balkan.

THE WINNERS

Seniors

GRAND PRIX

Maxime Mathieu Quinga (France)

1st PRIZE

Avetik Karapetyan (Armenia)

2nd PRIZE

Inna Sapozhnikova (Russia/
Baskortostan)

3rd PRIZE

Joseph Michael Gatti (USA)

DUYGU AYKAL JURY SPECIAL AWARD

Yassau Mergaliev (Kazakhstan)

TURKISH SPECIAL AWARD

Erhan Günel (Turkey)

Juniors

1st PRIZE

Lisa Breuker (Germany)

2nd PRIZE

Vinetta Csönka (Hungary)

3rd PRIZE

Alvin Tovstogray (Ukraine)

DANCE EUROPE OUTSTANDING

YOUNG DANCER AWARD

Can Beşiranoğlu (Turkey)