

BALLET REVIEW: 'Swan Lake' staging showcases companies' best

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BalletMet Columbus and the Cincinnati Ballet have collaborated on major productions in the past. But in their latest partnering, they've set a new standard.

In a joint staging of the beloved classic Swan Lake, which opened Friday night at the Ohio Theatre, the two companies have brought out the best in each other - and this poignant drama.

Their new Swan Lake, carefully reconstructed after the Petipa/Ivanov original by Gerard Charles of BalletMet and Victoria Morgan and Devon Carney of the Cincinnati Ballet, beautifully re-creates the magic that must have enchanted audiences at the drama's premiere more than 100 years ago.

The principals last night seemed well-cast (roles alternate). Carrie West successfully portrayed the shy, self-effacing Odette, Queen of the Swans. Her performance last night, however, seemed overly careful and hesitant. Zoica Tovar convinced as Odette's alter ego, Odile, in a bravura interpretation full of flash and fire.

Andres Esteves not only imbued Prince Siegfried with a regal bearing. His characterization seemed wedded to his dancing to an unusual degree.

An equally strong male dancer is Cervilio Miguel Amador, whose Benno is impressively virtuosic. Amador's pas de trois with Dawn Kelly and Janessa Touchet featured some of the finest dancing of the evening. Von Rothbart, danced by Jimmy Orrante, did not seem to have a particularly strong presence in this version.

The four little swans, or cygnets, get to perform one of the most popular dances in the ballet. Emily Gottschall, Samantha Lewis, Christine Mangia and Emma Misner certainly made the most of their charming moment last night.

Special delights of this substantial production are the scenery by Carla Risch Chaffin and costumes jointly designed and built by the two companies. The autumnal hues of the production are not only enchanting but, of course, timely.

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Swan Lake will continue at 8 tonight and 2 p.m. Sunday at the Ohio Theatre, 39 E. State St. Tickets are available through BalletMet (1-800-745-3000 or www.balletmet.org) and Ticketmaster (1-800-982-2787 or www.ticketmaster.com).

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