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Companies combine for spectacular 'Swan Lake'

Review

By David Lyman
Enquirer Contributor

Joining forces was a no-brainer for Cincinnati Ballet and BalletMet Columbus.

They're both medium-sized companies. They're filled with dancers of roughly the same caliber. They both have budgets that have been squeezed considerably in the past year.

By working together, the three choreographers – Victoria Morgan, Gerard Charles and Devon Carney – have been able to cobble together a production of "Swan Lake" that is far beyond what either company could have done on its own. (It runs through Sunday at the Aronoff Center.)

The most obvious upshot of the collaboration is the large female corps de ballet – the swans. There are 24 of them, 50 percent more than you'd see if Cincinnati were staging the ballet on its own.

So what impact can a few more swans make?

Huge.

"Swan Lake's" corps is more than a bunch of tutu'd women standing around the edges of the stage. It is, in many ways, the dramatic anchor of the ballet, carrying every bit as much visual and choreographic weight as the principal dancers.

And on Friday, those principal roles – both from Cincinnati Ballet – were powerful competition. Anthony Krutzkamp was a stately Prince Siegfried, who is smitten by Odette, the elusive Swan Queen, danced by Kristi Capps. Introspective and underplayed, they take an almost poetic approach to the roles.

But after intermission, Capps changes gear. As Odile, Odette's sinister alter ego, she is sparkling and seductive. Capps has danced this role before. But this time, it seems to have endowed her with a new vigor.

"Swan Lake" is sprinkled with nearly a dozen little choreographic showpieces, each one offering some flashy entertainment before the ballet returns to the love, betrayal and treachery that are at the heart of the story.

Dawn Kelly, Maizyalet Velázquez, Courtney Hellebuyck and Jacqueline Damico are marvelous in the show-stopping variation for four cygnets, while Adrienne Benz, Emily Ramirez and Andres Estevez are surprisingly subdued in their pas de trois. Later, Kelly is joined by Cervilio Miguel Amador in a wonderfully spicy Neapolitan dance.

But in the end, it is the corps that rules. When Odette finally summons up the courage to combat the sorcerer Von Rothbart, played with glee by Zack Grubbs, all 24 of her sister swans turn their wrath on him. Swirling and whirling around their tormentor, they fill the stage with a bristling energy that, quite literally, overwhelms their enemy.

One more note. When the companies performed in Columbus last week, it was with recorded music.

The dancing was fine. But this week, they were accompanied by maestro Carmon DeLeone and his Cincinnati Ballet Orchestra. The difference was palpable. You can feel the music as much as hear it, from the rumble of the tuba and the achingly difficult trill at the end of Kris Frankenfeld's violin solo right down to the ear-poundingly dramatic finale. Rich and robust, it filled the hall with sound – just the way it's supposed to.

“Swan Lake” will be performed at 2 p.m. & 8 p.m. today and 2 p.m. Sunday. For information, go to www.cincinnati.ballet.com or call 513-621-5282.

E-mail davidlyman@gmail.com
