

DANCE

Review: 'David Hallberg Presents: Legacy' at the Koch Theater

By SIOBHAN BURKE APRIL 19, 2015

David Hallberg is an extraordinary dancer. How did he get there? On Friday at the David H. Koch Theater, he took us through parts of that journey in “David Hallberg Presents: Legacy,” a showcase of companies with which he has danced, supplemented by his own commentary. (Because of an injury, he’s on hiatus from performing.) These included the troupes for which he is a principal dancer — American Ballet Theater, represented by its Studio Company, and the Bolshoi Ballet — as well as the Mariinsky Ballet, Australian Ballet and Tokyo Ballet, in its American debut.

Mentorship was a theme of the night, which capped off a week of Youth America Grand Prix finals. Mr. Hallberg’s impeccably rehearsed remarks seemed geared toward aspiring ballet stars, as he shared anecdotes from his career and lavished praise on his colleagues. (“Each one reigns supreme in its part of the world,” he said of the assembled groups.) As he expounded on the five “Ps” of dancerly excellence — “principle, precision, possibility, passion, presence” — the studied tone and delivery became hard to bear.

Yet Mr. Hallberg did all this in a spirit of generosity, of propelling ballet forward while honoring its past, and his greatest gift was a commission for Ballet Theater’s Studio Company, where he got his professional start. Choreographed by Pontus Lidberg, the work, “Untitled,” swept 14 men and women, all in diaphanous skirts by Reid Bartelme and Harriet Jung, through

eddy patterns and entwining tableaux that flowed over and into one another: beginnings within endings within beginnings.

If this was the future — looking good — then Evgenia Obraztsova and Semyon Chudin represented the past in a pas de deux from “The Pharaoh’s Daughter” (by Pierre Lacotte after Marius Petipa’s 1862 original), pristinely yet dutifully danced. The Mariinsky’s Yekaterina Kondourova embodied a more recent history in Balanchine’s “Diamonds” pas de deux, all but eclipsing her partner, Mr. Chudin, with her quiet resplendence.

In other selections, Mr. Hallberg showed us choreographers not often seen in this country. Mizuka Ueno and Kazuo Kimura, of Tokyo Ballet, led Maurice Bejart’s “Bhakti III”: spiky, elastic pointe work with classical Indian inflections. Anton Pimonov’s jaunty “Choreographic Game 3x3,” for six Mariinsky dancers, displayed an affinity for stylized play not unlike Alexei Ratmansky’s. Amber Scott and Rudy Hawkes, of Australian Ballet, enacted a generic push-pull romance in Stephen Baynes’s “Unspoken Dialogues.” With the last-minute inclusion of Lar Lubovitch’s “Scriabin Dances,” buoyant and gracious as interpreted by the Ballet Theater principal Veronika Part, Mr. Hallberg brought his legacy closer to home.

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