

ENB
emerging

DANCER

Emerging Dancer, held annually by English National Ballet, has rapidly become a date not to miss. Selected by their peers, audiences and staff, the team of six finalists is required to do a classical pas de deux and a contemporary solo.

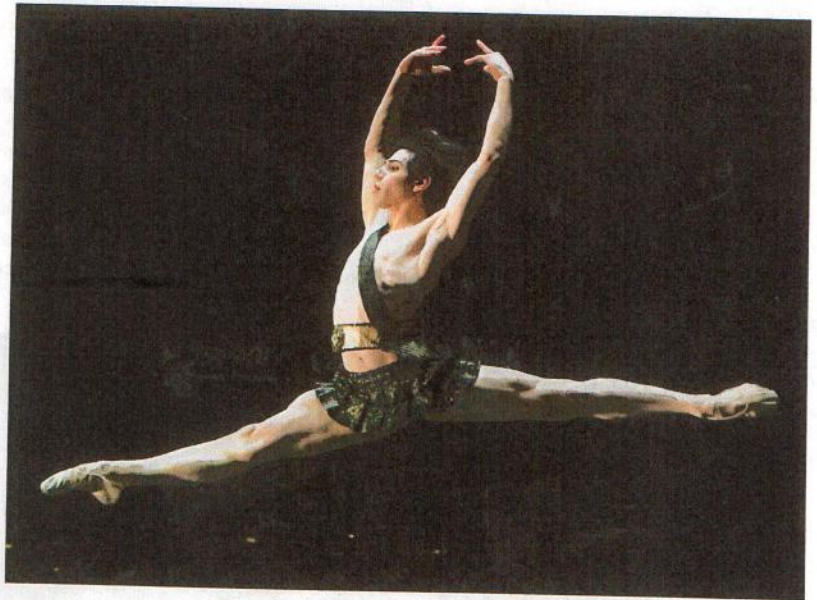
Natasha Kaplinsky resumed her role as host in this seventh edition of the competition, and there were brief filmed interviews and excerpts with each of the finalists as well as contributions from Tamara Rojo, Hua Fang Zhang and Antonio Castilla. Rojo is a wonderful ambassador for the art form and company, explaining very eloquently that each and every one of the dancers is a winner and that this was about developing the potential. Her pride in them and their achievements spilled over as she talked about their individual journeys, the improvement, the blossoming of talent.

The Palladium is always larger than I remember, both the stage and the auditorium. In an absolutely packed house, the orchestra, led by Gavin Sutherland, was situated to the rear of the stage. The tension was palpable. Isabelle Brouwers and Erik Woolhouse opened with *The Talisman* pas de deux. Brouwers made the final cut in last year's competition and the promise she showed then has increased tenfold within the last season. She has lengthened and strengthened, and delivered a performance of sparkling ballerina quality, musicality and fragility. Woolhouse is still in his first season and has charm and talent in plenty. The pas de deux requires immense stamina and partnering skills and he did remarkably well – if the final lift defeated him (and let's remember, both are exhausted by this stage) it was a minor fluff. Jeanette Kakareka and Daniele Silingardi chose *Black Swan* pas de deux. In many ways it would be preferable if participants in any kind of ballet competition would avoid it. Kakareka also made the final last year, choosing the pas de deux in the Shades scene of *La Bayadère*. Both pas de deux will draw comparisons to previous interpretations, are very exposing, and taken out of

DEBORAH WEISS sums up ENB's annual competition

context from the whole ballet, will incite a more intense criticism. Both Silingardi and Kakareka are ideal physically. She is extraordinarily bendy and lithe, with stunning lines and feet. She's also very striking looking. He, too, is very beautiful, with a clean technique and a princely air. But whilst this was very well danced indeed, the roles were ill defined. Kakareka, especially, looked unsure of how to present herself, and Silingardi needs to free up his neck and shoulders in order to improve his posture and pirouettes. The youngest member of English National Ballet, Rina Kanehara, and her partner Cesar Corrales, who is only in his second season, set the stage on fire with *Diana and Acteon*. Corrales has come a long way in the last season, adding many principal roles to his repertoire. Kanehara is

Her natural ability combined with exemplary attention to detail, sublime phrasing and delicacy all mark her out as one to watch. Corrales is exciting from whichever way you choose to look. Physically, he is sculpted; technically he is a wizard, dishing out airborne tricks as if he arrived from the womb doing them. His brooding presence is dynamic, but if he is to progress into more princely roles, his attack, which is admirable, will need to be refined and polished. Needless to say, this pair had the crowd yelling bravos until they were hoarse. The most engaging of the contemporary solos was Brouwers in a new piece by Charlotte Edmonds, called *Pelican*. Interesting vocabulary combined with essentially fascinating delivery made this the standout solo, though Corrales smouldered through *Contrabajo para Hombre* with great panache.



Cesar Corrales in *Diana and Acteon*. Photo: Emma Kauldhar

While the judges deliberated and the public took a break to make their bets, we soon returned to past winners and finalists, Lurretta Summerscales and Max Westwell in Nureyev's *Romeo* and Jinhao Zhang and Shiori Kase in *Le Corsaire, pas d'esclave*. Excellent in presentation and execution, this alone would be enough to convince that the competition is worthwhile in terms of developing the dancers. The reality is that all six of the participants have a great deal to offer the world of dance and will hopefully fulfil their aspirations in diverse ways. It was down to 'who pipped who' to the post, and with judges Matthew Bourne, Viviana Durante, Thomas Edur, Russell Maliphant, Oxana Panchenko, Tamara Rojo and Morgann Runacre-Temple, it was Corrales who took the honours. And as it happens, the Audience Choice agreed and he took both awards. Rojo also graciously explained that there was another award that the recipient wasn't expecting – the Corps de Ballet Award – and said how very important the corps of ENB was. This was to go to someone who had given above and beyond the call of duty. A surprised Jennie Harrington then had to scramble her way through the auditorium and onto the stage, blatantly overwhelmed, to the very warm applause and cheers of her fellow dancers and a delighted audience. Rojo is pushing the company