Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo

“The funniest night you will ever have at the ballet.”
- Sunday Times

“This is a company that brings its audiences pure joy.”
- The Seattle Times
Celebrating its 40th Anniversary season, **Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo** was founded in 1974 by a group of ballet enthusiasts for the purpose of presenting a playful, entertaining view of traditional, classical ballet in parody form and *en travesti*, Les Ballets Trockadero first performed in the late-late shows in Off-Off Broadway lofts. The TROCKS, as they are affectionately known, quickly garnered a major critical essay by Arlene Croce in *The New Yorker*, and combined with reviews in *The New York Times* and *The Village Voice*, established the Company as an artistic and popular success. By mid 1975, the TROCKS' inspired blend of their loving knowledge of dance, their comic approach, and the astounding fact that men can, indeed, dance *en pointe* without falling flat on their faces, was being noted beyond New York. Articles and notices in publications such as *Variety*, *Oui*, *The London Daily Telegraph*, as well as a Richard Avedon photo essay in *Vogue*, made the Company nationally and internationally known.

The 1975-76 season was a year of growth and full professionalization. The Company found management, qualified for the National Endowment for the Arts Touring Program, and hired a full-time teacher and ballet mistress to oversee daily classes and rehearsals. Also in this season, they made their first extended tours of the United States and Canada. Packing, unpacking, and repacking tutus and drops, stocking giant sized toe shoes by the case; running for planes and chartered buses all became routine parts of life.

Since those beginnings, the TROCKS have established themselves as a major dance phenomenon throughout the world. They have participated in dance festivals in Bodrum (Turkey), Bogota, Holland, Finland, San Luis Potosi, Madrid, Montreal, New York City, Paris, Lyon, Rome, Spoleto, Turin, and Vienna. There have been television appearances as varied as a Shirley MacLaine special, the "Dick Cavett Show," "What's My Line?" "Real People," "On-Stage America," with Kermit and Miss Piggy on their show "Muppet Babies," and a BBC Omnibus special on the world of ballet hosted by Jennifer Saunders. There have been solo specials on national networks in Japan and Germany, as well as a French television special with Julia Migenes. A documentary was filmed and aired internationally by the acclaimed British arts program, *The South Bank Show*. The Company was featured in the PBS program, *The Egg*, about arts in America, winning an emmy award for the director, and appeared in a segment of *Nightline* in December 2008. Several performances were taped by a consortium of Dutch, French and Japanese TV networks at the Maison de la Danse in Lyon, France, for worldwide broadcast and DVD distribution. Awards that the Trocks have won over the years include for best classical repertoire from the prestigious Critic’s Circle National Dance Awards (2007) (UK), the Theatrical Managers Award (2006) (UK) and the 2007 Positano Award (Italy) for excellence in dance. In December 2008, the Trocks appeared at the 80th anniversary Royal Variety Performance, to aid of the Entertainment Artistes’ Benevolent Fund, in London, attended by members of the British royal family.

The TROCKS' numerous tours have been both popular and critical successes - their frenzied annual schedule has included ten tours to Australia and New Zealand,
twenty eight to Japan (where their annual summer tours have created a nation-wide cult following and a fan club), nine to other parts of Asia, twelve to South America, three to South Africa, and seventy six tours of Europe, including twenty one tours of the United Kingdom. In the United States, the Company has become a regular part of the college and university circuit in addition to regular dance presentations in cities in 49 states. The Company has appeared in over 54 countries and over 600 cities worldwide since its founding in 1974. Increasingly, the Company is presenting longer seasons, which have included extended engagements in New York City (at the Joyce Theater) Amsterdam, Athens, Auckland, Bangkok, Barcelona, Beijing, Berlin, Brisbane, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hamburg, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, Leipzig, Lisbon, London, Lyon, Madrid, Melbourne, Moscow (at the famed Bolshoi Theater), Paris (at the Chatelet Theater and Folies Bergere), Perth, Rome, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo, Vienna and Wellington.

The Company continues to appear in benefits for international AIDS organizations such as DRA (Dancers Responding to AIDS) and Classical Action in New York City, the Life Ball in Vienna, Austria, Dancers for Life in Toronto, Canada, London’s Stonewall Gala and Germany’s AIDS Tanz Gala. In addition, The TROCKS have given, or participated in special benefit performances for Connecticut Ballet Theater, Ballet Hawaii, Indianapolis Ballet Theater, Rochester City Ballet, Dancers in Transition (NYC), Sadler’s Wells Theater in London and the Gay and Lesbian Community Center and Young Audiences / Arts for Learning Organization, and the Ali Forney Center, benefiting homeless gay youths in New York City. In 2009, the Trocks gave a benefit performance for Thailand’s Queen Sirikit’s Scholarship Fund in Bangkok, which helps finance schooling for children of impoverished Thai families. The benefit helped raise over four hundred thousand dollars.

The original concept of LES BALLETS TROCKADERO DE MONTE CARLO has not changed. It is a Company of professional male dancers performing the full range of the ballet and modern dance repertoire, including classical and original works in faithful renditions of the manners and conceits of those dance styles. The comedy is achieved by incorporating and exaggerating the foibles, accidents, and underlying incongruities of serious dance. The fact that men dance all the parts--heavy bodies delicately balancing on toes as swans, sylphs, water sprites, romantic princesses, angst-ridden Victorian ladies--enhances rather than mocks the spirit of dance as an art form, delighting and amusing the most knowledgeable, as well as novices, in the audiences. For the future, there are plans for new works in the repertoire: new cities, states and countries to perform in; and for the continuation of the TROCKS’ original purpose: to bring the pleasure of dance to the widest possible audience. They will, as they have done for forty years, “Keep on Trockin’.”

“The Trocks are a guaranteed hoot for people who know nothing of ballet and an absolute must for those who think they know the originals.”

- Sydney Star Observer
COLETTE ADAE was orphaned at the age of three when her mother, a ballerina of some dubious distinction, impaled herself on the first violinist’s bow after a series of rather uncontrolled fouette voyage. Colette was raised and educated with the “rats” of the Opera House but the trauma of her childhood never let her reach her full potential. However, under the kind and watchful eye of the Trockadero, she has begun to flower and we are sure you will enjoy watching her growth.

VARVARA BRATCHIKOVA. People’s Artist and Cat’s Meow, was educated at the Revanchist Institute. She began her career as Pistachia in V. Stolichnaya’s production of the “The Nutcracker” and achieved stardom as Odette/Odile/Juliet/Giselle/Aurora in the famous “Night of the 1000 Tsars.” Her repertoire encompasses nearly all the works in which she appears.

NADIA DOUMIAFEYVA. No one who has seen Heliazpopkin will soon forget the spiritual athleticism of Nadia Doumiafeyva, a child of Caucasus who changed her name for show business reasons. Her fiery attack combined with lyric somnolence produce confusion in audiences the world over, especially when applied to ballet.

LARISKA DUMBCHENKO. Before defecting to the West, Lariska’s supreme agility aroused the interest of the Russian space program and in 1962 she became the first ballerina to be shot into orbit. Hurting through the stratosphere, she delivered handy make-up tips to an assembled crowd of celebrities back on earth, including the now legendary....”Whitney Houston, we have a problem....”

HELEN HIGHWATERS has defected to America three times and been promptly returned on each occasion -- for "artistic reasons." Recently discovered "en omelette" at the Easter Egg Hunt in Washington, D.C., she was hired by the Trockadero, where her inexplicable rise to stardom answers the musical question: Who put the bop in the bop-shibop shibop?

NINA IMMOBILASHVILI, for more years than she cares to admit, has been the Great Terror of the international ballet world. The omniscient and ubiquitous Immunobilashvili is reputed to have extensive dossiers on every major dance figure, living and/or dead. This amazing collection has assured her entree into the loftiest choreographic circles; the roles she has thus been able to create are too numerous to mention. We are honored to present this grand dame in her spectacular return to the ballet stage.
SONIA LEFTOVA, “The Prune Danish of Russian Ballet,” abandoned an enormously successful career as a film actress to become a Trockadero ballerina. Her faithful fans, however, need not despair as most of her great films have been made into ballets: the searing “Back to Back,” the tear-filled “Thighs and Blisters,” and the immortal seven-part “Screams from a Carriage.” Because of her theatrical flair, Sonia has chosen to explore the more dramatic aspects of ballet, causing one critic to rename her Giselle, “What’s my Line?”

IDA NEVASAYNEVA, socialist Real ballerina of the working peoples everywhere, comes flushed from her triumphs at the Varna Festival, where she was awarded a specially created plastic medal for Bad Taste. Comrade Ida became known as a heroine of the Revolution when, after effortlessly boureeing through a minefield, she lobbed a loaded pointe shoe into a capitalist bank.

MARIA PARANOVA’s remarkable life story, only now coming to light after 19 dark years in near hopeless conviction that she was Mamie Eisenhower, will never fully be told. The discovery of her true identity (at a Republican fundraiser in Chicago) brought her to the attention of the Trockadero where she is slowly recovering her technical powers.

EUGENIA REPESKII. The secrets of Mme. Repelskii’s beginnings lie shrouded behind the Kremlin wall; in fact, no fewer than six lie within the wall (in jars of assorted sizes). Dancing lightly over pogroms and other sordid reorganizational measures, Eugenia has emerged as a ballerina nonpareil whose pungency is indisputable.

MOUSSIA SHEBARKAROVA. A celebrated child prodigy back in the Brezhnev era, Moussia Shebarkarova astounded her parents at the age of two by taking a correspondence course in ballet. Sadly, due to the unreliable Russian postal system, she has only just graduated.

ALLA SNIZOVA enjoyed great success as a baby ballerina at the mere age of 9. Being a child prodigy, she developed serious allergy problems and could only perform short pieces. Known as the “little orphan,” Miss Snizova joined the Trockadero on tour, appearing cloaked in an enigma (complete with zip-out lining). A consummate actress, she has danced the part of Little Miss Markova and the title role of Glinka’s Popoy-the Sailor Man.

OLGA SUPPHOZOVA made her first public appearance in a KGB line-up under dubious circumstances. After a seven-year-to-life hiatus, she now returns to her adoring fans. When questioned about her forced sabbatical, Olga’s only comment was “I did it for Art’s sake.” Art, however, said nothing.
YAKATARINA VERBOSOVICH. Despite possessing a walk-in wardrobe so large that it has its own post code, Yakatarina remains a true ballerina of the people. Indeed, she is so loved in her native Russia that in 1993 the grateful citizens of Minsk awarded her the key to the city. That might well have remained the “golden moment” of this great ballerina’s career, had they not subsequently changed the locks.

DORIS VIDANYA. The legendary Vitebsk Virago first achieved recognition as a child performer, appearing with the famous Steppe Brothers in the world premiere of Dyspepsiana (based on an unfinished paragraph by M. Gorki). As a favorite of Nicholas, Alexandra, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia, and the czarevich, La Effhrvia (as she is known to her admirers) was compelled to flee St. Petersburg disguised as a Karsky shashlik. Upon arrival in the New World, she established herself as the Prima

TATIANA YOUBETYABOOTSKAYA comes to the ballet stage after her hair-raising escape from the successful (but not terribly tasteful) overthrow of her country’s glamorous government. She made a counter-revolutionary figure of herself when she was arrested for single-handedly storming the People’s Museum, where her fabulous collection of jewels was being insensitively displayed alongside a machine gun. The resilient Madame Youbetyabootskaya is currently the proprietress of American’s only mail-order course in Classical Ballet.

JACQUES d’ANIELS was originally trained as an astronaut before entering the world of ballet. Strong but flexible, good natured but dedicated, sensible but not given to unbelievable flights of fantastic behavior, Mr. d’Aniels is an expert on recovering from ballet injuries (including the dread “Pavlova’s clavicle”).

ILYA BOBOVNIKOV, the recipient of this year’s Jean de Brienne Award, is particularly identified for his Rabelaisian ballet technique. A revolutionary in the art of partnering, he was the first to introduce crazy glue to stop supported pirouettes.

ROLAND DEAULIN. Having invented the concept of the “bad hair year” (or “annus hairibilis”) French born Roland now devotes his spare time to selling his new line of Michael Flatley Wigs on the QVC shopping channel.

PEPE DUFKA. The ballet world was rocked to its foundations last month when Pepe Dufka sued 182 of New York’s most ardent ballet lovers for loss of earnings. Mr. Dufka claims that nineteen years of constant exposure to rotten fruit and vegetables has led to painful and prolonged bouts of leafmould, cabbage root fly, and bottom-end rot. Sadly, this historic court case comes too late for a former colleague, whose legs were recently crushed by a genetically modified avocado. He will never dance again.
STANISLAS KOKITCH. “The Forgotten Man” of ballet, is hardly ever mentioned in reviews by critics or in discussions by devoted balletomanes despite having created several important roles in now forgotten ballets. He is the author of The Tragedy of My Life, an autobiography not at all reliable.

ANDREI LEFTOV, “The Prune Danish of Russian Ballet”, abandoned an enormously successful career as a film actor to become a Trockadero premier danseur. His faithful fans, however, need not despair as most of his great films have been made into ballets: the searing Back to Back, the tear-filled Thighs and Blisters, and the immortal seven-part Screams from a Carriage. Because of his theatrical flair, Andrei has chosen to explore the more dramatic aspects of ballet, causing one critic to rename his Siegfried “What's my Line?”

THE LEGUPSKI BROTHERS - Araf, Marat, Sergey, Vladimir and Vyacheslav - are not really brothers; nor are their names really Araf, Marat, Sergey, Vladimir or Vyacheslav; nor are they real Russians; nor can they tell the difference between a pirouette and a jete...but...well...they do move about rather nicely ...and...they fit into the costumes.

BORIS NOWITSKY has been with the greatest ballerinas of our time; he has even danced with some of them. One of the first defective Russian male stars, he left the motherland for purely capitalistic reasons. Amazingly, between his appearances on television and Broadway, in movies, commercials, magazines and special events, and women’s nylons, he occasionally still has time to dance.

VELOUR PILLEAUX, whose political adaptability saw him through two world wars and numerous police actions, comes to America in conjunction with the release of his tenth cookbook, Ma Brie. When asked by an American reporter to describe his most exciting experience in ballet, M. Pilleaux referred to pages 48-55: the night he danced the Rose Adagio (en travesti) in Buenos Aires with four political figures, the names of whom he assured us we would recognize.

YURI SMIRNOV. At the age of sixteen, Yuri ran away from home to join the Kirov Opera because he thought Borodin was a prescription barbiturate. Luckily for the Trockadero, he soon discovered that he didn’t know his arias from his elbow and decided to become a ballet star instead.

INNOKENTI SMOKTUMUCHSKY is known only to the most cultured and refined balletomanes in the dark alleyways of St. Petersburg. Originally a promising dancer-choreographer, his only ballet, Le Dernier Mobican, was stolen by the director of the
company. In severe depression and shock, he burned his ballet slippers and fled to the sewers, only to surface these forty years later.

KRAVLJI SNEPEK comes to the Trockadero from his split-level birthplace in Siberia, where he excelled in toe, tap, acrobatic and Hawaiian. This good natured Slav is famous for his breathtaking technique—a blend of froth and frou-frou centered on a spine of steel, painfully acquired at the hands and feet of his teacher, Glib Generalization, who has already trained many able dancers. As an artist in the classical, heroic, tragical mold, young Kravljii wrenched the heart of all who saw him dance Harlene, the Goat Roper in *The Best Little Dacha in Sverdlovsk*.

The gentlemen of the Trocks have been entertaining us for nearly 40 years. In that time they have risen from their origins in a New York loft to become one of the greatest acts on the planet. By the time their 40th birthday rolls around they ought to be designated an “international treasure”. They make you believe that the Statue of Liberty is a drag queen.

**Ballets**

- *Stars & Stripes Forever* (Choreography by Robert La Fosse after George Balanchine)
- *Raymonda’s Wedding* (Choreography after Marius Petipa)
- *Paquita* (Staged by Elena Kunikova after Marius Petipa)
- *Nutcracker* (Choreography by Pamela Pribisco)
- *Majisimas* (Staged and with additional choreography by Raffaele Morra)
- *The HumpBack Horse* (Choreography by Alexander Gorsky and Marius Petipa)
- *Gaite Parisienne* (Choreography by S. Trevino after Massine)
- *Ecole de Ballet* (Choreography by Peter Anastos)
- *Don Quixote* (Choreography after Marius Petipa and Alexander Gorsky)
- *Yes Virginia...* (Choreography by Peter Anastos after Robbins)
- *Harlequinade* (Staged by Elena Kunikova after Petipa)
- *Pas de Quatre* (Choreography after J. Perrot and A. Dolin)
- *La Vivandiere* (Staged by Elena Kunikova after Arthur St. Leon)
- *La Trovatiara Pas de Cinq* (Choreography by Peter Anastos)
- *Go For Barocco* (Choreography by Peter Anastos after George Balanchine)
- *Giselle Act II* (Staged by Y. Tchernychova after J. Perrot and Marius Petipa)
- *Les Sylphides* (Staged by Alexandre Minz after Michel Fokine)
- *Swan Lake Act II* (Staged by Trutti Gasparinetti after Lev Ivanov)

**Modern Works**

- *I Wanted to Dance with You* (Choreography by Roy Fialkow after P. Bausch)
- *Debut at the Opera* (Choreography by Agnes de Mille)
- *The Dances of Isadora* (Choreography by Lori Bellilove after Isadora Duncan)
- *Lamentations of Jane Eyre* (Choreography by Roy Fialkow after Martha Graham)
- *The Dance of Liberation* (Choreography by Richard Goldberger)
- *Patterns in Space* (Choreography by Meg Harper after Cunningham)

**Pas de Deux and Pas de Trois**

- *The Black Swan* (Choreography after M. Petipa)
- *Blue Bird Pas de Deux* (Choreography after M. Petipa)
- *Don Quixote Pas de Deux* (Choreography after M. Petipa)
- *Fairy Doll* (Choreography after N. Legat)
- *Gran Pas Classique* (Choreography after Gsovsky)
- *Le Corsaire* (Choreography after M. Petipa)
- *Les Fetes des Fleures* (Choreography by E. Kunikova after M. Petipa)
- *Pas de Trois de Odalisques* (Choreography by M. Petipa)
- *Paquita Pas de Trois* (Choreography after A. Messerer)
- *Spring Waters* (Choreography after A. Messerer)

**Solo Works**

- *The Swan* (Choreography after M. Fokine)
- *Ribbon Dance* (Choreography after L. Lashchilin)
- *Russian Dance* (Staged by E. Kunikova after A. Gorsky)
DANCE

Review: The Trocks Delight With Fabulous Charm

By ALASTAIR MACAULAY  DEC. 15, 2016

Ballet is a completely absurd art — and we love it to pieces: that’s what Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo proclaims with every move. The divas and cavaliers of this all-male troupe are — as they present themselves to us in performance — fabulously stupid, artificial, hammy, clichéd, superficial, dated, monstrous. But they simply adore dancing and their audiences, even more than they love makeup and costumes. So, while you laugh at their demented antics, you find yourself watching them with a special tenderness. You’re on their side.

The absurdity and the adorability are perfectly fused in the latest addition to the Trockadero repertory, the pas de six from August Bournonville’s “Napoli” (1842). This production of a dance, made for four women and two men, casts two of its tiniest members as the men, and, despite their male attire, renders them somewhat more feminine in manners and makeup than their four ballerina companions. This is immediately funny, and some of the consequent jokes are funnier: When the men take turns lifting the women, the fourth and largest ballerina solves the imbalance by lifting him instead.

But both the women and the men love Bournonville’s dances, and take wonderful trouble about detailed points of style. There are numerous passages here that aren’t comic — they’re simply joyous. And to watch divas and divos in bliss delights the audience. And then along comes an assortment of other jokes. When one ballerina is doing rather too well in a long solo variation, another one tries — unsuccessfully — to trip her. As yet another ballerina pauses on flat feet to prepare
for a multiple pirouette, her features show an expression of goggle-eyed terror: It lasts less than a second, the pirouette goes just fine, and she sweetly resumes the marvelously long, complex phrases of her dance.

The Trocks (as the dance world knows them) are dancing out the old year with a three-week season at the Joyce Theater; there are two programs. Program A, which opened on Tuesday, was announced as a quadruple bill, but was rendered quintuple at short notice by the addition of “The Dying Swan,” a staple of Trocks repertory, in which the ballerina’s tutu molts enough feathers to stuff pillows. She (Maria Paranova) finds time to wave at her audience, but, in her own Trockish way, she takes acting — her idea of acting — very seriously indeed: She executes industrial quantities of swannishness, and gorges herself on the swan’s death throes.

“The Dying Swan” (Saint-Saëns music) seldom shares a program with “Le Lac des Cygnes (Swan Lake, Act II)” (Tchaikovsky music). But here both occur. It’s in “Swan Lake” that I get most bewildered about which sex these performers really are. Prince Siegfried (Vladimir Legupski) and his confidant Benno (Pepe Dufka) have such splendid maquillage. I love the prince’s hairpin, too; and cherish the long sequence when he slowly crosses the stage, pointing his legs and feet elaborately, stretching them straight from the hips like spears — to silence, while nothing else happens. The swans, meanwhile, several of whom have hairy chests visible above their tutus, throw themselves into their dances and their swan behavior with enchanting aggression.

As the Swan Queen, Yakaterina Verbosovich’s often more absurd than anyone, but no less often she’s an outstandingly good dancer. Those quivering petits battements serrés at the end of the adagio, in which the ballerina beats one foot rapidly beside her ankle, like the rapid fluttering of a wingtip, surpass those by quite a number of “real” ballerinas. The amalgam of ballerina finesse and daft diva antics is brilliant, unsettling, riveting: the epitome of Trocks style.

“Patterns in Space” (“choreography after Merce Cunningham”) — the title is a play on Cunningham’s 1986 “Points in Space” — goes straight for all that’s nuttiest about the separation of dance and music in the Cunningham ethos. Lariska Dumbchenko and Yuri Smirnov are the musicians, seated on one side of the stage, and they’re far
more solemn than any Cunningham musician ever was, gloriously intense in their percussion effects and farmyard noises.

The program ends with “Raymonda’s Wedding,” a plotless divertissement that nonetheless brilliantly evokes the inexplicable silly story of Marius Petipa’s 1898 ballet. The White Lady (Ida Nevasayneva) presiding graciously over the nuptial celebrations, which, though occurring in Provence, are danced in Hungarian style. The Trocks adopt intensely Hungarian dance behavior (every hand-clapping, head-shaking czardas mannerism) when they remember. Petipa left out fouetté turns, so they rectify that omission; and their joy is infectious.

The best-timed joke of the whole evening comes when Raymonda’s husband, Jean de Brienne (Boris Mudko), runs, mid-exit, straight into a wing and falls flat. Never fear: he’s soon up and dancing. Fire, flood, illness, trauma — nothing could stop Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo from dancing, and all for you, you, you.

**Correction: December 15, 2016**

An earlier version of this review misidentified the Swan Queen ballerina in the Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo program. It was Yakaterina Verbosovich, not Alla Snizova. Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo continues through Dec. 31 at the Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Avenue, Manhattan; joyce.org.

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Fun Is a Thing With Feathers: Boy Ballerinas, Hissy and Fit

BY ELIZABETH ZIMMER

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2016 AT 8 A.M.

Romances are interracial (and interspecies), gender codes are switched, and all the dancers have triple identities in Tony Dobrin's wonderful travesty ballet troupe, Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. The 42-year-old ensemble is a haven for strong male performers who, because they are short or gangly or chunky, may have trouble finding spots in other companies. What they have in common is superb ballet technique and comic timing; dancing delicate female roles en pointe, they're capable, in the blink of an eye, of transforming themselves into fishwives or prizefighters. Not afraid to play to the house, they
conspire with us to pay homage to tradition even while giving it a kick in the tutu. Trockadero swans squawk and snap, vicious as the real thing. They shatter the smooth, passive Swan Lake stereotype without breaking character.

Ensconced at the Joyce through New Year's Eve with two different programs, the eighteen Trocks – half American born, half from abroad, four of them Italian – each play male and female roles, with different Russian stage names for each gender. A standout in Program A is Yakatarina Verbosovich, a petite blonde who plays the Swan Queen in Act II of Le Lac des Cygnes; in male parts she's known as Roland Deaulin, and out of costume she's Chase Johnsey, a Floridian who this year was nominated as the best male dancer in England, the first time such recognition was given to a guy in a female role. Johnsey's a marvel, a ringer for Madonna; in Program B, on view three times next weekend, he plays the ballerina in a reconstruction of Marius Petipa's Paquita. That bill opens with the troupe's notorious Act II of Giselle, which has décor by the late, great Edward Gorey.

In addition to the birdy warhorse, Program A offers the New York premiere of a pas de six from the 1842 Napoli, an homage to Copenhagen-born choreographer August Bournonville. A much lighter, sunnier style than the Russian technique for which the Trocks are famous, this Danish pastry, set in Naples, foregrounds two smallish male dancers, Carlos Hopuy and Long Zou, both fleet of foot and game to partner the four much larger "women" in their care.
Also on this bill is *Patterns in Space*, a tribute to Merce Cunningham that includes three dancers, plus live music by Lariska Dumbchenko (who also distinguishes herself in *Raymonda’s Wedding*) and Yuri Smirnov (the endlessly versatile Robert Carter, celebrating his 21st year in the Trockadero) on such instruments as a kid's xylophone, kazoos, and castanets, not to mention kitchen equipment, hair clippers, cans of hairspray, gargling, and a panoply of imaginative animal sounds. As was often the case with the late, lamented Cunningham company, the actions of the musicians are as compelling as those of the deadpan dancers.

As the Dying Swan, a famed Trocks item in which a neurasthenic ballerina’s tutu molts all over the stage, Carlos Renedo as Maria Parano plays the audience like a violin, surreptitiously demanding more and more adulation. And for their triumphant final outing, a pair of scenes from Petipa’s 1898 *Raymonda*, sixteen dancers pull out all the stops.

Every piece here is a reminder of the core of the troupe’s appeal: Though wildly funny, it's also dead serious about ballet history and technique. Director Dobrin, who began dancing decades ago in Los Angeles and came up through the ranks of the Trocks, learned his history on the fly, falling in love with old videos of Russian ballerinas. The company’s style, abetted by real Russian coaches, is much more florid, and fluid, than our other local troupes. We eat their stuff up because they serve it with such affection, and in such huge helpings.

**Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo**  
Joyce Theater  
175 Eighth Avenue  
212-242-0800, joyce.org  
Through December 31
THE TIMES

Les Ballets Trockadero at the Peacock Theatre

Debra Craine
Published at 12:01AM, September 18 2015

Why should girls have all the fun? That could be the mantra of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, the spoof troupe of male dancers who don tutus and tiaras to show that boys can be ballerinas too. With their affectionate cross-dressing tributes to the heyday of the Russian ballet, they have been making audiences laugh for 40 years. Now the New York-based company is back in London (with two programmes of short ballets) to make us laugh again.

Sure, the fright wigs, pratfalls, sight gags, silly stage names and oversized pointe shoes set the scene for comedy, but what I always love about the Trocks is their devotion to the 19th-century classical repertoire. When they aren’t busy making merry with parody and slapstick, they are dancing their hearts out in some of the most difficult choreography in the canon. Not for them the easy way out.

In the iconic Act II lakeside scene of Swan Lake I don’t know which made me laugh more —
Paolo Cervellera’s girlie Prince Siegfried, the coquettish swans or the ridiculous chorus of duck quacks. Our Odette, Philip Martin-Nielsen, wiggled his man boobs and flirted shamelessly on opening night while still making a truly impressive job of Ivanov’s poetic choreography.

I was bowled over by Carlos Hopuy (as the ballerina) and Laszlo Major (as her male partner) who delivered *Le Corsaire pas de deux* with enormous flair — forget the jokes, the dancing from both of them was filled with the wow factor (Hopuy’s fouette turns; Major’s backflips!). The *Esmeralda* pas de six was more subtle but still winning, while *The Dying Swan* solo got the requisite big laugh when Joshua Thake shed his feathers like a gloriously deluded diva.

Programme one ended with my personal favourite, the variations from *Paquita*. Set to Minkus’s infectiously buoyant music, here are allegro dances to gladden the heart. The Trocks performed the whole thing with gusto and aplomb without overplaying the humour. And how extraordinary is Chase Johnsey: as *Paquita*’s central ballerina his moves were not only beautiful but imbued with the utmost in feminine virtue.

Yes, the music is recorded, some of the jokes are getting stale and the Peacock is an unprepossessing venue for dance — but if you’re looking for a happy night out, it’s hard to beat the Trocks.

**Box office: 0844 4124300 to Sep 26**
**Touring the UK until Nov 11. Details: danceconsortium.com**
Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, Peacock Theatre, London — review
Clement Crisp

September 17, 2015

At the heart of the Trocks’ saucy mockery lies a deep love for ballet

“I think it comes off twangingly,” wrote Sir Walter Scott about a passage in a novel he had lately completed. My thoughts exactly as I left the theatre after the dear Trocks’ opening performance on Wednesday. There the chaps were, gorgeously caparisoned, mascara-ed to the limit, pouncing on their choreography with an eagerness that speaks of understanding as well as the ever-present ludicrous; chest hair for the most part in abeyance, and — in this first of two programmes — the Mariinsky Theatre a ghostly presence.

Rampant sauciness was on offer, but speaking of a love for revered choreographic texts. Swan Lake’s second act was taken to the cleaners and, even so, more honourable than a version seen this summer in London from a tedious Russian troupe. The glorious Paquita divertissement was, alas, too earnest, and missing its comic possibilities: there are, also alas, dancers around the world who massacre it with deader pans, more errant manners.

I thought the account of the sextet from La Esmeralda — that haunting survival from the St Petersburg ballet of the mid-19th century — the triumph of the evening. Its narrative (shades of Notre Dame de Paris) concerns Esmeralda dancing and grieving as she watches her beloved Phoebus with another love. Generations of Petersburg ballerine, armed with a tambourine, tears and the occasional goat, have moped and drooped in the service of this old and splendid choreography. Alberto Pretto (as Nina Immobilashvili) gives it what-for with tremendous style — yearning and agonising with the best of those Petersburg divinities whom I have seen play it to perfection — and is vastly funny. (So too Matthew Poppe — as Ilya Bobovnikov — a spindle-shanked Gringoire to number among the best.)

The quartet of gypsy girls, furiously emoting from beneath wigs like the rear ends of yaks, were marvels. Admiration also for Laszlo Major (aka Araf Legupsiki), who roared ecstatically through the steeplechase that is the Corsaire duet. The whole
programme is a mocking, loving, beady-eyed and wildly merry view of ballet. Not to be missed.
Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, Birmingham Hippodrome

NEIL NORMAN, THE EXPRESS
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The gentlemen of the Trocks have been entertaining us for nearly 40 years. In that time they have risen from their origins in a New York loft to become one of the greatest acts on the planet.

By the time their 40th birthday rolls around they ought to be designated an “international treasure”. They make you believe that the Statue of Liberty is a drag queen.

The secret behind their unique appeal is the balance between their comic pastiche and sheer skill. I have said this before but it is worth repeating: not only can The Trocks dance really well they can dance really well like women. Pointe work, arabesques, floating arms and feminine gestures are executed with a grace and elegance that would not shame a genuinely gendered ballerina. The facial expressions provide much of the incidental humour when they are not bumping into each other, missing cues or sliding unwittingly out of position.

The opening number here Les Sylphides is a case in point. A long piece with the company in white tutus and a self-absorbed Prince it is hysterically funny but also beautifully executed. They can surprise at will, as when a dozy member of the corps sleepwalks off the edge of the stage. The central section, with three works in quick succession, ended with Ida Nevasayneva’s legendary Dying Swan in which Paul Ghiselin cavorts across the stage in a flurry of falling feathers, Twiglet limbs and exaggerated gestures.

No Trocks show is complete without his sublimely grotesque act and I dread the day Ghiselin finally hangs up his pointe shoes.

The Black Swan pas de deux, Odile (Yakatarina Verbosovich/ Chase Johnsey) and her Prince (Innokenti Smoktumuchsky/ Carlos Hopuy) being moved around the stage by an absurdly coiffured Von Rothbart (Marat Legupski/ Giovanni Ravelo) is performed with such drop-dead brilliance that Johnsey even manages the 32
fouettés in a performance that would pass muster on the stage of Covent Garden, in spite of being administered oxygen at the end.

The concluding Walpurgis Night is a Bacchanalian romp with horny little devils, Pan’s People perhaps, cavorting with miscellaneous maidens in a kind of celebratory feast. It is not only exquisitely danced but rises to a climax of Fokine-like intensity that is genuinely exciting. OMG! If they carry on like this we are going to have to start taking these guys seriously.
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