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REVIEW

ballet.*magazine**San Francisco Ballet**'Swan Lake'**February 2009**San Francisco, Opera House**by Renee Renouf*

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Comments made during one intermission indicated Lorena Feijoo and Pierre-Francois Vilanoba as Odette/Odile/Siegfried in Swan Lake debuted Wednesday, February 25, instead of Sunday, February 22, reinforced when Lorena Feijoo received a mammoth bouquet of white roses. The company only gives bouquets for debuts.

Before quelling over the dancing, second looks at the production. The moon doesn't rise during any of the acts, nor go from nearly full to completely full. A few clouds scattered across the moon's face would aid the symbolism; it really dominates. Knowing that full moons draw the most intense human reactions reinforces the story's psychology.

I think the granite cliff could be modified, or at least the suicide launching pad placed a tad lower so that Odette doesn't have to alter her death rush to a pony trot. Elsewhere, Allan Ulrich has asked "Where is the lake?"

Those swan feather caps suffer because of a black edge; despite trying to reflect an actual swan, it doesn't aid dancers' profiles. The black swan eyes look like the make up artists laid in a supply of the widest available Marks-A-Lot; bingo, black holes rampant, from Odette/Odile to the Cygnets. Correct the eyes to traditional lines and the feather caps might not look so distasteful to my vocal balletomane friends.



Pierre-Francois Vilanoba's Siegfried is a courteous, friendly young prince with a genuine relationship with Isaac Hernandez of the pas de trios. I have said elsewhere he could have been the model for Michelangelo's David. There is an emotional ease in his body lines where Helimets deports himself with more classic precision. He conveyed evident confusion and bewilderment at the Queen Mom's dictum that he choose a bride with his eloquent dancing soliloquy. Vilanoba conveys moodiness and anguish with conviction; his growing elation with Odile in Act III compensated for technical flubs coming after double tours.

In Act I Elizabeth Miner and Clara Blanco appeared with Isaac Hernandez in a felicitous trio; Hernandez matches Dimitro in height and breadth, but a larger body mass and height make the results more commanding than quick silver. Miner, all smiles, and Blanco emphasized the quickness of their variations. Blanco's port de bras and eye contact exuded their usual charm. Managing a heavy assignment, she was one of Act II's cygnets and danced in the Neopolitan in Act III.



San Francisco Ballet in Helgi Tomasson's *Swan Lake*
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Paciotti's Queen Mother has developed a hard line from nose to chin on the right side; she's not about to be nurturing, the dynasty must be perpetuated. However, in Act III, she was more engaged, thanks to Vilanoba's responses to the regional dances; watching the pas de deux the Queen Mum sat forward in her seat.

Spaulding's Von Rothbart is very birdlike; eloquent finishes in the arms, fingers and back, he is into character, if not yet fully developed. The makeup given him is pasty, malevolent.

Feijoo's sensual supple torso conveys the preen of a beautiful bird, passing from supported arabesque into supported pirouette with fluttering intensity, vulnerable, immediate. She was in her element as Odile; at one point even giving the shoulder to the seated line of reject princesses rushing toward her final triumph with Siegfried. Odile really toyed with him, enjoying the game and needing little reinforcement from Von Rothbart. Her fouettes, while traveling, were spectacular, sprinkled with doubles and an occasional triple.



Christine Elliott, one time soloist with ABT now teaching at Stanford University, pointed out Feijoo acknowledged the corps de ballet at the final curtain in one of her spontaneous gestures, so on the mark.

I was sad to miss both of Tina Le Blanc's final two performances. Ulrich was unstinting in his praise.

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