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REVIEW

ballet.*magazine**American Ballet Theatre**'Swan Lake'**March 2009**London, Coliseum**by Bruce Marriott*

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Last week was big on Swan Lakes in London with both The Royal Ballet (RB) and American Ballet Theatre (ABT) trotting out the big gun of balletdom to fill large theatres in difficult times. Over-familiarity with the English production means I walk out at the earliest opportunity if things are not going so well and that happened the night before seeing ABT's show. Not the best of portents perhaps but I actually came away from seeing the Americans feeling pretty happy, and having seen it all too!

First impressions count for much and I have to say that Zack Brown's sets and costumes come out looking desperately poor as oddball Disney design meets shoddy realisation. It all looks very cheap and 'Russian' 70's with fabric hanging limp and lifeless. While ABT might invest serious bucks in dancing talent, this Swan Lake announces itself as badly as any work I've seen in many years. But from here on it was all up.

Kevin McKenzie's production (from 2000) is traditional with a twist which is mainly about having a duplication of Rothbarts to go with a duplication of Swan Queens. The second Rothbart (played by a different dancer in this case) crops up in the Act 3 Ball and shamelessly sets about chatting up every female in sight, including the Queen Mother. If you are an evil sorcerer why wouldn't you enjoy yourself, just as your daughter is enjoying herself ensnaring Siegfried? I thought it worked rather well, as did having only one interval, though the final Lakeside scene is abbreviated somewhat to keep things to a manageable length.

In the leads were Irina Dvorovenko and Maxim Beloserkovsky, both trained in



the Ukraine, which means Russian to the core in terms of ballet presentation. Dvoroenko impressed me much with her confidence and stage hauteur - she delivers a grand mix of crisp technique and jaw dropping sparks (Odile) and aloof pain and rippling fluidity (Odette). Beloserkovsky is a complimentary partner - technically strong, clean and quietly supportive - he doesn't have the stage presence of Dvoroenko, but just as well really.



Irina Dvoroenko as Odette and Maxim Beloserkovsky as Prince Siegfried in *Swan Lake*

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The corps swans passed muster, if they don't have so much to do as in other productions. Cory Stearns was the James Bond-style Rothbart, having a great OTT time, but not to the exclusion of all else. I also liked Hee Seo in the pas de trois: everything was pushed a little further than most. Pushed also was the score which cantered along faster than we are generally used to under Charles Barker. I rather liked that greater sense of urgency. All up a good matinee from one of the world's great companies (if one in need of better costuming).



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written by Bruce Marriott © [email](#)

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