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“We’ve never danced anything like it”



The ballet “*I Love You, Peter’s Great Creation...*” was created by the choreographer Lar Lubovitch based on themes from Alexander Pushkin’s narrative poem *The Bronze Horseman*. What the ballet, featuring Glière’s *Symphony No. 3*, has in store will be a surprise not only for the audience, but also for the dancers themselves. In the run up to the premiere, the soloists shared their impressions of working on the new production.

On Pushkin

Anastasia Soboleva: “The ballet follows the plot of Pushkin’s poem, but not quite to the letter. The poet himself is a character in the production, perhaps even the main character. He literally sculpts Evgeny and introduces him to Parasha, who is either real, or a ghost, a figment of his imagination.”

Mario Labrador: “I’m performing the role of Pushkin in the new ballet. Many people tell me I look like him. It’s funny. My character is completely absorbed by the poem he’s writing. Nothing else exists except him and the world he has imagined. Pushkin makes us feel a degree of sympathy for the hero, whom he dooms to unhappiness with his pen.”

On Glière

Victor Lebedev: “The music is complex and incredibly beautiful. Interestingly, some parts are repeated in the first act, but Lar Lubovitch choreographs even these repetitions in completely different ways. For instance, at the beginning, the corps de ballet dances to a piece of music, and then a few minutes later, Evgeny starts his solo to the same piece.”

Anastasia Soboleva: “The ballet has been set to symphonic music, which was not written for dance. The lack of smooth rhythm makes it impossible to count out. But the complexity is what makes it so interesting. The same can be said of the choreography. Lubovitch doesn’t include conventional Russian dance moves, like the squat-and-kick for example, but the dance still seems Russian.”

Ivan Zaytsev: “The music chosen for the ballet is disconcerting. I think it reflects what happens in Pushkin’s work very well.”

Angelina Vorontsova: Some people think the music in Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet* or Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* or *The Firebird* is complex. One can’t argue with that, but those pieces are much more familiar to everyone’s ear than Glière *Symphony No. 3*, to which Lar Lubovitch has set the ballet “*I Love You, Peter’s Great Creation...*”. We heard this music for the first time when we began working on the ballet.“

On Lubovitch

Ivan Zaytsev: “Lar Lubovitch has his own system for putting on a production, different from the one practiced in Russia. We usually start preparing for a new ballet by learning the music. But Lubovitch asks us to learn the choreographic text first, after which we listen to the music with the choreography already in mind, and then connect the music to the dance. When we put together the first act, we finally saw the flood, and Evgeny being separated from Parasha. Prior to that, we had worked on the ballet in small chunks, which sometimes made it difficult to understand what was what. It was only by the nature of the movements that I could tell what was happening.”

Angelina Vorontsova: “Dancers are always more engaged when the creator of the ballet explains the concepts behind it. We have never danced anything like the choreography that we are working on now. When we got a first glimpse of this ballet, on the video which Lar prepared with [the dancers from his own company], we thought all this would be impossible to execute. It was only in the course of the work that we began to understand the particulars of his technique. Lubovitch has impressive working methods. During rehearsals, he demonstrates everything himself, and explains things very carefully. You can tell that he comes along with ideas already in mind, and a clear vision of how things should go. My character has no solo pieces, but there are many duets, difficult passes, and lifts.”

Anastasia Soboleva: “It’s a pleasure to work with Lar Lubovitch. The manner in which he stages a ballet is very interesting and unusual. He reminds me of an artist who starts out by drawing rough sketches, and then adds the paint.”

Victor Lebedev: “I’ve enjoyed working with Lar from the moment rehearsals began. Other foreign choreographers tend to focus on the first cast dancers and work with them, while the second and third cast sit under the barre and observe the process. Lubovitch doesn’t operate that way, with first and second cast members. He divided us into pairs from the start, and we all rehearse with the same intensity. He works with every pair individually, and takes a different approach with each one. All of the Evgeny-Pushkin duets are completely different from one another. He might show me and Andrey Kasyanenko one movement, and show Leonid Sarafanov and Mario Labrador a different one. Or rather, the movements are the same, but the passes that each dancer makes are different. So when the ballet reaches the audience, they will see something new on stage every day. No one has seen the ballet in its entirety. My character, Evgeny, appears on the stage more than anyone else — he hardly gets any time to rest at all. But the most interesting thing for me will be portraying my character when he loses his mind!”

Editor’s note: With joint support from the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company and the Mikhailovsky Theater, Lubovitch began creation of the dance this winter in New York City on the dancers of the Lubovitch company, joined by guest artists. He is now completing the dance this spring in St. Petersburg on the dancers of the Mikhailovsky Ballet, and the world premiere at the Mikhailovsky Theater will be performed by the dancers and musicians of the theater on May 25, 2016.

This article was posted on the website of the Mikhailovsky Theater at the following address:
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