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DANCE REVIEW

## A Goddess Is Back, as Huntress Alessandra Ferri Performs a Work by Lar Lubovitch

By GIA KOURLAS OCT. 17, 2014



Alessandra Ferri, center, with Juilliard School dancers in Lar Lubovitch's work "Artemis in Athens," at the Joyce Theater. CreditMichelle V. Agins/The New York Times.

Alessandra Ferri retired from American Ballet Theater in 2007, but that hasn't kept her off the stage. The latest sighting of the ballerina is as a guest artist with the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, a pairing that makes sense. Mr. Lubovitch is in the mood to tell stories this season; Ms. Ferri is one of the most cherished dramatic ballerinas of our time.

The first half of Mr. Lubovitch's two-act program, "Ancient Tales," which opened at the Joyce Theater on Wednesday, is devoted to "Artemis in Athens," a reimagining of a work created for Ballet Theater in 2003. The new dance is set at a summer camp, where the cast, including Ms. Ferri and an ensemble of 10 Juilliard dancers, wear scout uniforms by Naomi Luppescu. The musicians aren't let off the hook, either; Le Train Bleu performs Christopher Theofanidis's score in regulation khakis.

Ms. Ferri is Artemis, the goddess of the hunt; her father, Zeus, has given her a forest glade and declared that if any mortal sees her, he will die. Akteon (Tobin Del Cuore), transfixed by the sight of her, is smitten, just as Artemis is of him. They mesh in flowing lifts and balances in which Ms. Ferri, wearing point shoes, delicately pricks at the floor with her finely arched feet.

Patently gliding through the choreography's twists and turns, and gamely partnered by Juilliard students, Ms. Ferri — though, truthfully, more den mother than goddess — is as sensuous as ever. To shield Akteon from death, Artemis transforms him into a deer; after the ensemble whips off Akteon's red beret and uniform to reveal a brown-speckled unitard — it's an impressive metamorphosis — his hands form loose fists as he cuts across the stage in loping, two-dimensional leaps.

Mr. Lubovitch's...whimsy — melding Greek mythology with an end-of-summer pageant — reads...as if he had been watching Wes Anderson's "Moonrise Kingdom" on repeat.

His second premiere, "The Black Rose," more peculiar, veers into lurid young-adult territory. In this macabre landscape, which takes place at a ball and a witch's sabbath, Reid Bartelme, a sensitive poet type, romances Mucuy Bolles with a red rose, until Barton Cowperthwaite shows up with a black one. He seduces and rapes Ms. Bolles, blinds Mr. Bartelme — he's left with bloody sockets — and beats him.

Ms. Bolles gives birth, and Mr. Cowperthwaite, razor-sharp in his maliciousness, drops the baby on a platter held by another dancer and chases it offstage with an enormous knife and fork. Accompanied by Scott Marshall's score, which borrows liberally from Tchaikovsky's "The Sleeping Beauty,"...petals fall from the ceiling, birds chirp, and the couple swoon...

The Lar Lubovitch Dance Company performs through Sunday at the Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Avenue, at 19th Street, Chelsea; 212-242-0800, joyce.org.