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DANCE REVIEW

The Moscow Festival Ballet in an Elegant *Swan Lake*

By [Barry Salwen \(author.cfm?authorId=36\)](#)

March 7, 2012 - Wilmington, NC:

The [Wilmington Concert Association](http://www.wilmingtonconcert.com/) concluded its 2011-12 series at Kenan Auditorium with an impressive presentation of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* by the [Moscow Festival Ballet](#) (<http://www.cami.com/?webid=324>). This was a performance in which grace of movement and beauty of line dominated. Virtuosity was amply present, but it was the expressive content which impressed most of all. Even energetic scenes gave off grace, not muscularity.

The choreography was the standard and wonderful Petipa version, with its close and evocative connection to the music. The music to this ballet may well be Tchaikovsky's finest score. It is unusually symphonic and elaborate for ballet, with much that is of beauty and passion.

The first festive scene featured some showy dancing, while the following famous waltz of scene two was finely elegant. This set the tone for much of the following. Still, in the first act, the jester, danced by Dmitry Shchemelinin, was a standout with his athletic and brilliant spins and jumps. He was also entertaining, playing the role as a bit of a ham. The pas de trois includes some inherent imbalance between the power and energy of the music and the scale of the setting for the small group of dancers. Where the balance was effective was when the larger corps was engaged. In those sections there was a symbiosis of music and movement.

The true passion of the piece set in during the second act, when Siegfried, danced by Aydos Zakan, arrived at the lake with his friends. The latter are quickly sent off, the famous *Swan Lake* theme resounds, and Zakan's expressive weight in the role began to fully show. Rothbart (Alexander Daev) hovered over the scene like the angry spirit he is; the appearance of Odette (Ekaterina Egorova) was a powerful moment which inspired a passionate reaction from Siegfried. While there was a good deal of vehemence in the Siegfried-Rothbart interaction, the Siegfried-Odette duo captured gentleness along with the passion. As they danced together with growing intensity, their grace and expression were entrancing. Odette in particular had gorgeous lines, with *en pointe* dancing that appeared effortless in its technical perfection.

The following dances of the swans showed the full beauty of the corps. Gentle, flowing movements are intrinsic to swans, but the dancing of the corps was nonetheless both exact and exquisite. Along with the individuals, the layered quality of the tableau made it visually rich. The Siegfried-Odette pas de deux against the corps in suspended motion gave a wonderful gentle feeling, while beauty and energy resulted when the corps danced alongside the pas de deux. At one point they surrounded the two lovers almost like a magic ring.

The third act brought more exciting acrobatics from the jester and engaging national dances as the princesses unsuccessfully competed for Siegfried's attention. Rothbart's entrance injected the demonic, while Siegfried, in the radial quality of his movements, exuded expression. The frenetic end of the act carried the full power of despair.

The relatively brief fourth act was strong. There was more beautiful ensemble dancing from the corps. Siegfried, when he appeared, was both dramatic and expressive at once. A passionate high point was when he finally finds Odette, where she has been hidden behind the other swans. It was followed by effective drama as Siegfried and Rothbart danced in the most forcible of cross purposes. When Rothbart finally expired, it was lyrical, like so much of the other dancing. The apotheosis, with the music finally in the redeeming major mode, left the impression in this performance that the lovers might live on to be happy together.

Much of the rest of the production was as successful as the dancing. The costumes ranged from elegant to sumptuous. The sets made the most of the small Kenan Auditorium stage; especially the castle was well-rendered. The lighting used only a few changes; one might have imagined more variety there. The smoke machine, with its audible hissing on cue, was the weakest link, but hardly a major matter in this beautifully-rendered performance.

EVENT INFORMATION

Wilmington -- (Wed., Mar. 7, 2012)

[Wilmington Concert](#)

[Association: Russian National](#)

[Ballet Theatre \(eventDetail.cfm?](#)

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\$50, students \$20. -- Kenan

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