



Selene Muñoz. Photo: Teatro Español

SANGRE NUEVA Teatro Español, Madrid

The *Sangre Nueva*, *Jóvenes Flamencos* (New Blood, Young Flamencos) performance cycle, organised by producers and talent agents Paco Ortega and Eugenio Gurumeta, comprised five galas featuring young and relatively unknown flamenco instrumentalists, singers and dancers. The instrumentalists were all top-notch musicians, the singers left much to be desired, and the dancers struck a happy medium by combining two disastrous performances with three riveting ones.

Upon reading Miryam "La Arquilleja" Reiumúndez's biography, one is left with nothing but the highest of expectations, as she's studied under a veritable who's who of flamenco dancers and danced with Sara Baras' company. Yet audiences were stunned by a performance that can only be likened to that of a disoriented, stampeding rhino. Describing this performance as graceless and

awkward is being kind, so let's leave it at that.

Asunción Demartos, a former dancer with Rafael Amargo's Company and a familiar face at Madrid's various *tablaos*, was nowhere near as big a train wreck as Reiumúndez, but she is also nowhere near ready to make an honest go of a solo career. Demartos tried to dress up her uninspired choreographies with a wide selection of flamenco props, such as a *mantón* (shawl), castanets and Cordovan hat, a gimmick that ultimately hindered more than it helped, as evidenced by the uncomfortable moment in which her shawl unintentionally wrapped around her face and head while she attempted to nimbly manoeuvre it.

A pleasant surprise came in the form of Mexican dancer Karen Lugo, who has a highly defined and contemporary style that emphasises angular movements and an almost overpowering rigidity. The severity of her facial expressions and movement are both intriguing and distancing. Although impressed with the powerful dance and figure that Lugo

represents, one might also wonder whether a smile or two isn't such a bad idea.

David Morales was the only male dancer to perform in the cycle, and probably the most experienced, having created and toured with his own productions. Morales is the quintessential canonical flamenco dancer. With a flamenco scene leaning towards fusion and modernisation, it is refreshing to see a dancer who makes traditional flamenco pulsate with raw energy. His jaw-droppingly precise, fast and tireless footwork made his performance pop, despite a choreography that could have been somewhat more distinctive.

Saving the best for last, Selene Muñoz was without a doubt the queen of the cycle's dance performances. As this half Spanish, half Danish dancer struts on stage, her long, willowy frame seems somehow incompatible with the dances she is about to perform, but one mustn't be fooled by appearances, for as soon as she begins to dance, Muñoz is all power and charm. Her remarkable timing and agility make her highly stylised and varied choreographies thrilling, as does her unquestionable rapport with the audience, as she smiles and winks her way through the lighter, more festive sequences. Muñoz shows every promise of becoming one of the next great flamenco dancers, and if Spanish audiences are lucky, we'll see her again very soon.

Justine Bayod Espoz

ROYAL BALLET OF FLANDERS The Evolution of Ballet Antwerp

To open their 2009 -10 season, Royal Ballet of Flanders chose a documentary style of programme designed partly as a homage to the Ballets Russes and partly as a (very compact) historical journey highlighting the development of ballet. Disappointingly, apart from a few projected photos, there was little in the programme to portray the dazzling brilliance and originality of the era of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Where was the reference to Michael Fokine, surely one of the greatest choreographers of that period and whose innovative ideas and ballets so radically changed the direction of ballet?

The early and later romantic periods were depicted in two pas de deux; one from *La Sylphide*, with choreography attributed to both Taglioni and Bournonville; and another from *Giselle* Act II. Guilia Tonelli danced a delightful sylph. Delicate, fleet-footed and flirtatious, she was well matched by her James, Sonny Kleef, who showed precise batterie and an abundance of ballon, while the seamless partnership of Aki Saito and Wim Van Lessen ideally suited the romanticism of *Giselle*. His clean dancing and her feather-light quality shone throughout. However, neck strain does mar her work somewhat.

From the era of Marius Petipa, two showpieces of bravura dancing were chosen - the pas de deux from *Don Quixote*, and the *Grand Pas Hongrois* from the last act of *Raymonda*. First soloist Yurie Matsura may well match today's Cuban dancers with her brilliant fouettés and endless balances, but her Kitri was nevertheless rather lacking in fire. While she and her Basilio, Garrett Anderson, coped well, they obviously