

REVIEWS

Swan Lake Gaiety Theatre

SEONA MAC RÉAMOINN

Ballet Ireland can take a curtain call. This is a small, perfectly formed and even translucent production of the romantic classic. The narrative is simply, coherently and stylishly elaborated through clever touches with the choreography, performances and staging.

The two guest soloists for these first few performances gave immaculate lift-off to the production. Rainer Krenstter's Siegfried and Ludmila Konovalova's Odette/Odile were a highly attuned partnership, not just to each other but to the overall company and to artistic director Gunther Falussy's intent. They led inspiringly as stars ought, with Konovalova's technique and Krenstter's

acting, but the corps, all magical white froth and delicate arms, were seamlessly in their wake. The essentials were also all in place. In Act I, the scene was set with clever touches. The queen's bereavement was underlined by her handmaidens evoking the House of Bernarda Alba while her abstracted son Siegfried, weighed down by impending regal responsibilities, is intrigued by a passing flight of swans. The motif is now introduced and taking his birthday gift of a gilded arrow, sets out to hunt the swans by the lake.

Krenstter dances the role with all the transparent naivety of youth, unable to resist the temptation to touch the swan's plumage and then is overcome by Odette's fragile radiance. Konovalova's fine technical ability allows each aching, soaring note of Tchaikovsky to be matched with an arching leg or shuddering arm. Not a feather out of a place, she shimmers, and he is lost. Rothbart the evil sorcerer (Falussy himself) is in luck;

the destruction of the royal family is at hand.

By Act III, we are back at the palace, or perhaps a marquee suggested by the blue and white backdrop, where a party for the expected engagement of the prince is in train. Tragically, as we know, he is duped by the conniving Rothbart into imagining that the brittle daughter Odile might be his love match. Konovalova's role is to convince Siegfried that Odette and she are one and the same. But not the audience. Way too much blingy showmanship which, down to the whiplash fouettes, she performs stunningly.

The sorcerer even has his insiders in the entertainers. In a nice touch, not always included, the Spanish dancers, all sinister in black with menacing haircombs, are revealed as acolytes of evil. And so to the final Act, the last waves of the romantic tragedy, the final heartbreaking duet and the line of fluttering swans. Don't miss it as it tours the country. Until Oct 18, tours Oct 24- 30 and Dec 2-18.