

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2016

147 Years after Premiere, Don Quixote Rides into Capital

By Lyazzat Shatayeva

ASTANA – Astana Opera has enriched its repertoire with yet another classical production. The ballet troupe premiered “Don Quixote” filled with Spanish charm, fervour and humour Nov. 25, attracting a full house and mesmerising the audience.

The ballet is based on episodes taken from the famous novel “Don Quixote de la Mancha” by Miguel de Cervantes. It was initially choreographed by Marius Petipato to the music of Ludwig Minkus and first presented at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in 1869. The ballet has subsequently been staged in every major classical theatre.

In an age when technology is transforming theatre, the new production is a unique combination of the classic plot, original music, traditional Spanish costumes, beautiful, somewhat monumental, stage design and animated visual graphics.

Stage designer Ezio Frigerio recreated the authentic and festive atmosphere of 17th-century Barcelona with the help of grand



installations which change insensibly with the ballet scenes. Topped with skilful use of animation and lighting effects, the ballet was an aesthetic feast that left the audience wanting more. The spectators burst into wild applause when Don Quixote came on stage on a horse

accompanied by his squire Sancho Panza riding a pony.

“The focus of my character is a soul. Immersed in his fantasies Don Quixote looks quizzical, but through his character, the author is trying to tell us that we are not entirely material in this material world. I have to re-

veal the inner world of my character. In the ballet, we are immersed in his fantasy world, into his dreams. He goes through different adventures,” said Frigerio.

Zhanibek Imankulov, who played Don Quixote at the premiere, noted the choreography for his part was

technically simple, requiring more acting than dancing.

Unlike the immortal novel, where the central character is the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance, the key characters in the ballet are Kitri, the innkeeper Lorenzo's daughter, and Basil, a barber. At different times, the legendary Maya Plisetskaya and Mikhail Baryshnikov played the parts. The grand pas-de-deux from the third act is considered one of the major career pinnacles in ballet.

According to the plot, the chivalrous Don Quixote and Sancho Panza travel across Spain looking for adventure. They arrive in Barcelona, where they witness the raging love and passion between Kitri and Basil. Kitri, however, is forced by her father to accept the marriage proposal of rich nobleman Gamache. Don Quixote challenges him to a duel, but Gamache is mocked and chased away. Meanwhile, Basil fakes suicide and asks Kitri's father with his dying breath for her hand in marriage. Thinking Basil is dying, Lorenzo agrees, at which point Basil stops pretending and is happily united with Kitri. The noble knight and his servant bless the young couple and join the festivities.

Altynai Asylmuratova, ballet master, choreographer of the production and former prima ballerina of the famous Mariinsky Theatre, has played the leading female role of the playful and flirtatious Kitri. Comedy is a delicate genre; it requires balance to prevent turning a masterpiece into kitsch, which puts pressure on the actors and dancers, she said.

Madina Basbayeva and Gaukhar Ussina, who play the part in the new production, have had the chance to portray the character in many other theatres. Ussina noted the part has many pirouettes and spins and requires great technique. Despite the demands, during the second day of the performance the ballerina looked well-rehearsed, at ease and dynamic and her flamboyant Kitri floated on stage.

Promising young dancer Bakhtiyar Adamzhan played Basil at the premier. His character, who is a commoner in the novel, appeared slightly prince-like and sophisticated, but undoubtedly in love with Kitri.

The theatre troupe earned standing ovations on both days of the premiere, a highlight in the capital's cultural life.

Kazakh Auteur Filmmaking Focuses on Social Issues

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – In recent years, the Kazakh film industry has released a plethora of historical dramas, crime films, comedies and romantic pictures designed for a mass audience. Yet there are still a good number of films that sometimes do not meet viewers' expectations and draw more attention at various festivals.

The Astana Times interviewed well-known film critic Oleg Boretskiy and promising young filmmaker

them stop working in this direction because such films are not in great demand in our country. Art house films basically aim to take part in the festivals. The directors need wide release and recognition of the audience. Maybe this is one of the reasons why young people refuse to make eccentric and social pictures,” said Boretskiy.

Emir Baigazin's works stand apart from other films, he added. His debut picture “Harmony Lessons” won more than 25 international awards, including the Silver Bear at the Ber-

lin Film Festival and Grand Prix at festivals in Sao Paulo and Seattle.

“The master of the classic auteur cinema in the country is Darezhan Omirbayev. His works have been recognised at international levels and are better known to his supporters and students. Ermek Tursunov's films ‘Kelin’ (‘Young Wife’), ‘Shal’ (‘Old Man’) and ‘Kenzhe’ (‘Youngest Child in the Family’) do not fit into a specific genre. His latest work ‘Zhat’ (‘Stranger’) may even get the Oscar nomination,” he said.

Boretskiy also delivers lectures on history and the philosophy of science for graduate students at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University.

“I use the auteur films that relate to the history of science in my programme. For example, we discuss the Spanish film ‘Agora’ when we study the ancient science. We discuss the films ‘A Beautiful Mind’ and ‘Interstellar,’ which I consider refer both to feature motion picture and art house. The film's ideas are the

as well as films created by the Bas-tau international festival participants. But, to me, the director should create more than one or two films to be recognised as the author of exceptional films,” he said.

Azimzhanov, a New York Film Academy (NYFA) graduate student, is representative of the young generation of directors experimenting with genres and directions.

His debut picture “Moments of Enlightenment” won the Award of Recognition at the Hollywood International Moving Pictures Film Festival. He said sometimes art house films tell the stories of people we see every day in the streets, in a bus or at work.

“Such films are more appealing to people at the subconscious level, in connection with the identity of their life situations and similar characters. Social films can be closer to a greater number of people and not only to a certain category of people with strong analytical skills,” he said.

His film touches upon suicide issues. Two friends from different countries and with different social status live together in the U.S. Kate is a student and Elly is an immigrant with a drug addiction. Once Elly learns that she has HIV, she falls into a state of emotional isolation.

Social issues require research and training, together with a full immersion in the story on set. I consulted with psychologist. I have used the acting techniques of Sanford Meisner and Stella Adler (in order to direct actors),” said Azimzhanov.

Future directors study acting skills at the academy and there are no exceptions at NYFA, he added.

“We have the same requirements as actors because in the future, while directing we should be able to talk to them in the same language. My experience gained after participating in the directing courses delivered by Konstantin Sarkisyan in Almaty also had a positive effect during the filming,” he said.

One of the important tasks and challenges for the director is the ability to look at history and evaluate it through the eyes of the viewer, noted Azimzhanov. He recently finished shooting his second short film entitled “ULTIO,” which is currently in postproduction



Dias Azimzhanov and the crew during the filming of “ULTIO.”

Dias Azimzhanov to learn about the current state of auteur Kazakh cinematography and their activities in this sphere.

Auteur Filmmaking and Its Importance

A qualified film expert, Boretskiy presents the Radio Classic live show Kino Blues, contributes to the news portal Tengrinews.kz and initiated the launch of the Almaty cinema club in 2003.

“Auteur films are the most interesting to me, as there is a search of cinematic language. Of course, there is a story and a plot. The directors often use figurative language. As a rule, these films usually do not get into wide release as they are non-commercial ones. In this category I would like to mention two recognised Kazakh directors, Adilkhan Yerzhanov and Nariman Turabayev. They have their own vision and style and they are not interested in wide

and embrace their sensuality,” said Kurmangaliyev.

Argentine tango is a regulated social dance with strict rules of conduct. Codigos, or tango dance etiquette, has been developed through many years to create an optimal dance experience at milongas, or tango dance parties.

The rules are aimed to maximise choice, freedom and pleasure from dancing while avoiding embarrassment and awkward and unsafe situations on the dance floor.

“The tango was born in a seaport, where there was an abundance of working-class men and scarcity of women. To win women's attention, men danced the tango. Quite often, those dance gatherings got rowdy and ended in fights. Later, the government of Buenos Aires introduced regulations, rules that defined ways of inviting a woman to dance, agreeing or rejecting the invitation and keeping a distance on a dance floor to avoid collision with another pair,” said Kurmangaliyev.

Cabecero is, perhaps, one of the most important codes. It is the way people invite and agree to dance together, a system of mutual respect and tactfulness. A gentleman invites a lady from a relative distance by catching her eye and nodding. If a woman accepts the invitation, she nods back. If the woman does not want to be invited, she subtly looks away. This ensures women are not dancing out of obligation and men are not having their advances rejected or feelings hurt.

Inviting a follower verbally at her table in the traditional milongas is considered an encroachment and is often rejected.

Argentine tango has a variety of dance styles developed in response to many cultural elements. Tango Vals is danced to waltz music in a smooth, continuous and flowing movement. Tango Milongero is a style with a close embrace. Tango Nuevo is the new age dance. Tan-

go Salon was danced throughout the Golden Era of Argentine Tango in the mid-1930s to early 1950s, when milongas were held in large venues accompanied by full orchestras.

Music in a milonga is set up in tandas (sets of three or four songs played by one orchestra) and cortinas (non-tango bits of songs played between tandas). The cortina signals the end of the tanda and is the time for gentlemen to escort their partners to their seats.

Kurmangaliyev and Adilshakhova moved to Argentina two months ago and currently live, work and teach tango in Buenos Aires. The community of devoted tango dancers they built in their native capital continues to practice and attend weekly milongas.

Ukraine natives Oleksii and Anna Tymchenko opened Estudio de Tango 348, another school in the city which is receiving acclaim among novice dancers. The pair also hosts Sunday milongas, bringing the entire community of dancers together.

Oleksii Tymchenko, an architect by day and tango instructor year-round, recalled the way the couple was introduced to the dance.

“We started dancing tango more than five years. Ines Nikolulias, a professional dancer who had lived and worked in Buenos Aires, opened the world of tango for us. We were fascinated and still are. For us, tango is like a second life or even our first life, because when it captivates you, you start living in it. You start walking in tango steps. Even when you buy new clothes, you first think, ‘can I wear this to a milonga,’” he said.

“Argentine tango happens only when a leading partner leads and a follower follows. This is when harmony and unity are achieved. You don't dance Argentine tango for the public eye. It is a dance for two,” he added.

Hot Argentine Tango Finds New Home in Cold Astana

By Lyazzat Shatayeva

ASTANA – The captivating Argentine tango is stealing the hearts of social dancers, offering an excellent alternative to traditional ways of socialising during the capital's long, freezing winters.

The history of the tango is fascinating and complex. The sensual dance originated approximately 150 years ago in the lower-class districts of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Its evolution has led to its international spread, making tango music one of the world's greatest genres.

The history of the dance in the city began in 2013 when Bulat Kurmangaliyev, a former lawyer, and Saltanat Adilshakhova, a former accountant, abandoned their successful careers, moved to the capital and founded Tango Academy, the city's first tango school. The couple, with almost a decade of experience and training from famous dancers like Sebastian Arce, Julio Balmaceda, Corina de la Rosa and Mariano Chicho Frumboli, began by giving private dance classes in a rented apartment. With only a few followers, the world's second oldest capital did not appear to be a culture particularly receptive to passionate, expressive art forms. In just a few years, however, the tango culture has caught on and evolved into several schools with a growing number of supporters.

“The reason why tango is popular in the modern world is quite obvious. We live in a digital age where most of our communication happens online without real physical contact. But an interpersonal [world], tactile touch is a fundamental value of human nature. Many of us don't get to have it in our everyday lives. Apart from its aesthetics, the tango is a tool for many dancers to feel comforted

