

AROUND TOWN

FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2009

PAGE 13



Right: Prima ballerina Uliana Lopatkina and principal dancer Danila Korsuntsev pose in *Swan Lake*. Above: The company performs *Sleeping Beauty*. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARIINSKY BALLET COMPANY

It's a good thing that the seats in the National Theater are comfortable. Ballet lovers will be spending a great deal of time in them now that the Mariinsky Theater Ballet Company and Orchestra have returned to Taipei for six performances, beginning tonight.

For its third visit, the company — better known by its Soviet-era name, the Kirov Ballet — is bringing back its much loved version of *Swan Lake* (is there a law that says every Mariinsky tour must include the swans?), but dance fans can't wait to see *Sleeping Beauty*.

This is the first time the troupe has brought its new(ish) *Sleeping Beauty*. The production has been drooled over and praised since it debuted on April 30, 1999, because ballet master Sergei Vikharev and dance historian Alisa Sveshnikova went back into the archives to reconstruct the ballet as it was first performed in 1890, recreating the original sets, costumes and music — and as much as possible the original choreography, perhaps the most difficult job because a full notation does not exist.

Like *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty* was set to the luscious music of Peter Tchaikovsky and choreographed by Marius Petipa. But while many people think of *Swan Lake* as the pinnacle of classical ballet, dance historians say *Sleeping Beauty* had a profound impact on the development of the art form in the 20th century. Anna Pavlova was inspired to become a dancer after seeing it, just as years later her performances would inspire the 13-year old who would become Sir Frederick Ashton, founding choreographer of Britain's Royal Ballet. It was the first ballet seen by Serge Diaghilev, the Russian impresario who launched the first private ballet company. It was his troupe, the Ballets Russes, which brought Pavlova and Vaslav Nijinsky to Europe and the world.

A word of warning is needed. Both ballets are products of a much more leisurely era. The running time of the three-act *Swan Lake* is three hours and 15 minutes, including two intermissions. The three acts and prologue of *Sleeping Beauty*, including intermissions, come in at just under four hours — three hours, 50 minutes to be precise. Audience members will probably want to make sure they have dinner before heading to the theater. Just don't drink too much.

The Mariinsky company arrives in Taipei straight from the nine-day IX International Ballet Festival at their home theater that featured special galas for two of its leading ladies, Uliana Lopatkina and Diana Vishneva. The two, now in their 30s and the prime of their careers, are a study in contrasts. The dark-haired, wide-eyed Vishneva is allegro — famed for her lively physicality and dramatic flair, while the tall, cool Lopatkina is adagio — exquisite in those slow movements she put to such good use in Mikhail Fokine's *The Dying Swan* during a previous visit.

Unfortunately for Taipei audiences, as of press time, the cast lists show just one appearance for Lopatkina, dancing Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake* on Monday. There will, however, be two chances to see Vishneva. She opens the tour as Princess Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty* tonight and will dance the swan lead on Tuesday.

Two fast-rising first soloists will also dance Aurora, Yevgenia Obraztsova and Anastasia Kolegova, while prima ballerina Irma Nioradze will be the final Odette/Odile. Principal dancers Leonid Sarafanov, Evgeny Ivanchenko and Danila Korsuntsev are all familiar faces from previous visits. A listing of who is dancing when can be found on NTCH's Web site at event.ntch.edu.tw/2009/tif/en/p13_1.html.

Ticket prices are pretty steep. The only ones left range from NT\$3,000 to NT\$8,000, NT\$2,000 more than the top seats for the company's previous visits. But considering that for that price you get a full company, full orchestra and full sets — unlike the traveling trunk productions of the Russian Festival Ballet — it is value for money, even if it works out to about NT\$35 a minute for a *Sleeping Beauty* orchestra seat.

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: The Ballet Company and Orchestra of Mariinsky Theater, (*Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*)

WHEN: Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm, Sunday at 2:30pm (*Sleeping Beauty*) and Monday to Wednesday at 7:30pm (*Swan Lake*)

WHERE: National Theater (國家戲劇院), 21-1, Zhongshan 5 Rd, Taipei City (台北市中山南路 21-1號)

ADMISSION: NT\$3,000 to NT\$8,000; available through NTCH ticketing or online at www.artsticket.com.tw

Tutu much

The Mariinsky Ballet returns with 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'Swan Lake'

BY DIANE BAKER
STAFF REPORTER



Right round like a record

Spin was dark, dirty, it smelled and the floor was sticky. Revisit what was once the best club in town tomorrow night at Huashan Culture Park

BY RON BROWNLOW
STAFF REPORTER

At the first Back to Spin party in October last year the crowd danced so hard you could feel the floor shake and tiles fell from the ceiling in the movie theater downstairs.

It happened at the venerable Paris Night Club (夜巴黎舞廳) in Ximending but the atmosphere felt like opening night at Luxy. Outside, the line snaked half a block down Wuchang Street (武昌街) while inside celebrities including Wong Kar Wai (王家衛) and Faith Yang (楊乃文) grooved with clubbers who were too young to have ever seen the inside of the party's namesake, the old Spin disco on Heping East Road (和平東路).

Tomorrow it's going to happen all again — only this time on a much larger scale. Organized by 10 former Spin patrons who are

now in their mid to late 30s and mostly work in the entertainment industry, the second Back to Spin takes place in a converted warehouse at Huashan Culture Park (華山文化園區) on Bade Road (八德路). A capacity crowd of 550 attended the first party and 200 people had to be turned away. This time there's room for 1,000, but as of Sunday 500 tickets had already been sold.

Opened in 1993, Spin was Taipei's version of CBGB, the New York club where The Ramones, Blondie and The Talking Heads got their start. Spin wasn't so much a place to drink and hook up — though there was certainly a lot of that going on — as it was a mecca for people who liked music and knew that here the DJs always played the latest releases from the US and Europe, which in those days were hard to find anywhere else.



Get ready to Spin again. PHOTO: RON BROWNLOW, TAIPEI TIMES

It was "an information center" in the words of Back to Spin organizer Arthur Chen (陳彥豪) where you could meet "lots of weird people."

Customers would rendezvous at 45 — the bar was a major hangout before it got chopped in

half to make room for a parking lot — and buy a drink to get free ticket to Spin. Then they'd head to the 7-Eleven at Heping East and Jinshan South (金山南路) roads, down a few beers outside and hide a couple more in their pockets before descending into the pit next door. Spin was dark, dirty, filled with dancing, sweaty, head-banging bodies, it smelled of smoke and stale beer and the floor was sticky. The police often visited and nasty fights frequently started inside. It was the best club in Taipei.

Tomorrow, former house DJs Alex 36, Mykal, Fish and Randy will play a mix of old favorites like Pulp, Suede, Rage Against the Machine and Nirvana along with new rock and electronica. As with the first Back to Spin, you must partake in a "ceremony" upon entering: downing a (free) shot of tequila. And if in the

unfortunate event you can't get in, you can always go to Underworld (地下社會) on Shida Road (師大路) where Back 2 the Future (回到未來) is holding another one of its DJ parties that bring to mind the way things used to be at Spin.

EVENT NOTES:

What: Back to Spin

When: Tomorrow from 9pm to 4am

Where: Central Warehouse No. 5 (中五館), Huashan Culture Park (華山文化園區), 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號), near the intersection of Jinshan North (金山北路) and Zhongxiao East (忠孝東路) roads

Admission: NT\$800 at the door, NT\$500 advance tickets on sale at the Fucking Place (操場), 2F, 169 Heping E Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市和平東路二段 169號2樓) or online through tickets.books.com.tw