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Ballet 4

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Don Quixote

Don Quixote is Bolshoi’s symbol. The ballet was created for the Moscow Ballet and has   
continued to be its pride and joy. This particular performance was back on the original historic stage accompanied by new costumes and sets. Ekaterina Krysanova danced the role of Kitri. Kitri is a very optimistic role, requiring a lot of energy and enthusiasm. The ballet as a whole requires acting skills for the characters all have strong, developed personalities. In order to fulfill the ballet’s story, the dancers must double as actors and become invested in their own characters.

To begin the show, Don Quixote gets the inspiration to go on an adventure. He takes his friend along and they set out to the village. This scene opens up the show and possess more pantomime than actual dancing. However, having acting open the show sets up the characters and personalities for the rest of the performance. With Don Quixote having many characters, the introduction of each is important. The audience has now met the first two characters and the pantomime has established their role in the ballet.

When the first act officially begins, Don Quixote enters the village where the audience is introduced to the rest of the characters, including Kitri and her love Basilio. The plot comes in when the audience learns that her father has plans for Kitri to marry Gamache, a nobleman, instead. The whole group accompanied by Kitri’s friends follow Don Quixote on his adventure as everyone travels around together. This ballet has a strong Spanish influence and was based off that culture. Act one takes place in a village where the stage is flooded with warm colors. Full of yellows, rusts, reds, and oranges, the village portrayed the Spanish influence well. They also used props such as tambourines, fans, and capes to continue the cultural flare. The majority of the dances performed had a variety of hitch kicks, pas de chat, and attitudes which imitated folk dances. With the laid back, folk feel, they could use the props to their advantage. One dance in particular used the daggers. The men set them up in formations for Kitri to quickly and precisely move through. She dodges each dagger and impresses the men of the village. Much like the opening sequence, all the other characters contain strong personalities. Kitri in particular, had a bright personality and stood out among the others with her fast paced movements. Ekatrina, the ballerina who danced the role of Kitri, made sure to hit her apex and was sharp in her movements. Since Ekatrina danced sharply, she stood out on the busy stage. The stage was filled with villagers creating a friendly attitude and further creating a realistic village scene.

The second act was broken up into three different backgrounds as the group traveled around on Don Quixote’s adventure. The first was at a bar where they dimmed the lighting to create a dark red. This made the mood change from a welcoming village to a mysterious night out. The bar background was carried throughout all the other aspects as well. The costumes were vibrant and fun, containing ruffles and tassels and the props were more ordinary items such as mugs and guitars. In this section, the dances performed contrasted each other. At some points the dances were upbeat and energetic and at other times they were slow and more seductive. This kept the audience interested and unaware of what would come next.

The gypsy field and the woods were the next two sections in the second act. They were both set outside at night and therefore had dark blue lighting. In the gypsy field, the costumes were bright and contained many colors. In this section, there was more acting which gave the dancers the ability to build unique characters and not focus solely on the dances. The woods, however, are very different. The dancers were in white which portrayed a dream like quality. The large groups all traveled together and lengthened their lines increasing the mystical feeling of the woods. The songs were quick and required the fairies to have small jumps and fast pointe work. Contrasting to the small movements of the group, Kitri’s entrances were grand with large movements. This concept, kept the focus on Kitri and made her stick out among the other dancers. The woods scene emphasized more dancing and specific technique while the gypsy field showed more character in their dances.

The final act took place in a castle where the village was celebrating the wedding of Kitri and Basilio, her true love. The lighting was bright, along with vibrant and elaborate costumes. In this act, everything was big. There were large groups that danced completely synchronized which added to the feeling of a full stage. All the dances, overall, were full of big movements like lifts and jumps. The focus was less on the characters and more on impressive tricks, such as Kitri’s famous thirty two fouettes. Ending with technique filled dances left a lasting impression on the audience.

Don Quixote had many interesting parts to it. Not only did it contain tricks that required impressive technique but also emphasized the importance of building characters and specific personalities. Though there were no noticeable mistakes during the performance, there were small things such as the daggers shaking when Ekaterina danced around them or hops in order to complete turns. Overall, Bolshoi clearly told Don Quixote’s story and impressed the audience with their dance technique as well.