



Vanessa Duarte Da Silva in "The Rite of Spring" by the Mystic Ballet. The piece was choreographed by Sergei Vanaev to music by Igor Stravinsky.



Top, the opening of "The Rite of Spring" by the Mystic Ballet. Bottom, Vanessa Duarte Da Silva during the performance in the Mashantucket Pequot Auditorium at the Pequot Museum.

A review of Mystic Ballet's performance at the Pequot Museum Auditorium

differences one would expect. The traditional costuming (muted pastel tutus), subdued lighting and Minkus' waltz-time piece showed a growing corps of talent.

By Elizabeth Yerkes
Press Writer

NOT A NOTE OF the Nutcracker or a frisson of holiday spirit crept into the Mystic Ballet's Tenth Anniversary performance, *Fire & Ice*. And hallelujah for that!

Ludwig Minkus composed the music for the first piece, the garden scene of "La Bayadere," in 1877. A contemporary of Tchaikovsky, Minkus created music to allow classical ballet dancers to show their technique, not to overshadow them. Mystic Ballet corps' younger dancers, who were paired well, demonstrated all the promise and developmental

music tested the Mystic Ballet dancers' preparation and improvisation skills.

As if the music weren't tricky enough, female dancers kept fiery dreadlock wigs affixed to their heads throughout. The snaky locks matched their primal camisoles and gossamer loin-cloths. Males danced bare-chested, wearing burnt orange velvet pants. There's nothing quite like seeing dancers make their stage entrance by being lowered in cargo nets, like bodies from a slave ship. Nothing, except perhaps watching the lead Elder, Vanessa Duarte Da Silva wield a large, sharp broadsword around fellow dancers, and, to end the wild, savage romp of the dance, lop off the Lenin-like head of a massive, sculpted statue/prop.

The chorus combinations and circle dances looked wonderfully like Broadway hoofing, with a soupcon of threat tossed in. You know that tipping point every spring, when the sap starts to run in maple trees? Imagine that moment, bulging and clenching, set to music and movement. The combined effect of costumes, lighting, manic music, and rich dance storytelling captured the audience's utter fear and curiosity.

Keep an eye on Jamar Goodman, who's from



Photos by Susannah H. Snowden
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Waterbury and trained with American Ballet Theater. He told as much of the spring fertility/sacrifice story with his body language as with his facial expressions. Paired with Carey McGuire, who's from Westerly, R.I., he has met his match in fluidity, grace and strength.

When she needed to, McGuire used her supple legginess to emphasize her character's fragility. Duarte Da Silva joined Mystic Ballet this year after dancing in Brazil and Germany. Her rigorous ballet training crossed over well in *Le Sacre*, which might be described as modern with balletic improv.

Ballet is for the strong and gutsy, but not too gutsy. Now it's

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Far left, a dancer during a performance by the Mystic Ballet in the Mashantucket Pequot Auditorium at the Pequot Museum. Near left, Jamar Goodman (left) and Carey McGuire (right) in "The Rite of Spring" by the Mystic Ballet. Below, a dancer is cast in shadow as others are seen in the background during a performance. The piece was choreographed by Sergei Vanaev to music by Igor Stravinsky.



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the audience to which I refer. Much to my horror, when their little darlings pirouetted below in the first piece, some audience members let out whoops suited only to an NHL playoff game. I'll have to train myself to accept the Pequot Museum's stadium-style seating for a ballet performance. Maybe others could train themselves, too. And audiences forewarned about Stravinsky's music knew they were entering a riot of sound and rhythm and should let the energy take them rather than kvetch about it.

Don't wait until next December to see a non-holiday performance by Mystic Ballet and choreographer Sergei Vanaev.