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A pirouette is worth a thousand words

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Anyone who doesn't think dancers can act clearly has not seen The Pacific Northwest Ballet's performance of "Romeo et Juliette." Cancel your plans and rush to McCaw Hall, as this is a performance that is not to be missed.

The Shakespearian play is familiar to almost all, and that should be a prerequisite to seeing this ballet. Without knowing the story, the subtlety of the dancing may make the story hard to follow. Without dialogue, it takes a couple minutes to work out which dancer is which character.

As Mercutio, Principal Dancer Jonathan Poretta was, in a word, underchoreographed. While he put forth a brilliant performance, anyone who has seen him at work knows that he could have done more. However, it did capture the carefree spirit of Mercutio. He got to taunt the Capulets in



childish fashion and kiss the girls and make them swoon. Compared to his usual caliber of work, this must have been a break, and it looked like he was having fun.

Romeo (Lucien Postlewaite) need not have worried about being upstaged, because his performance was powerful. "I cried two times," said ballet fan Veronica Topacio. Somehow Postlewaite was able to soundlessly convey disinterest, anger and love with subtlety.

You could almost feel the silent scream of despair of Lady Capulet (Ariana Lallone) when she discovers a lifeless Juliet (Carla Körbes). Lallone's performance is not a dancer trying to act, rather, it is a mother on stage that just lost her daughter.

Körbes shows the whole range of emotion. Clearly, she is conflicted over the death of Tybalt (Batkhurel Bold) and her love for Romeo. Ultimately, we know which way she goes.

Removing the cumbersome Old English dialogue, the dancers seamlessly tell the story on a very simplistic stage. With screens in the back and two moving walls, there is little to distract from the dancing. Do not, however, fall into the trap of just following the movement. This is acting, not just dancing.

Romeo wanders in the background for the first few movements, disinterested in the women that his friends so happily pursue. Focusing only on the dancing will cause you to miss the change in his demeanor when Juliet takes the stage.

Except for the two "slow motion" scenes, there are no exaggerated movements to convey an image. There was no head tossing back to illustrate the drinking of poison.



ALL PHOTOS BY ANGELA STERLING

Lucien Postlewaite and Noelani Pantastico in "Roméo et Juliette."

There are no insignificant parts to the ballet; every dancer, every movement has a purpose. You have to watch the whole stage to be able to pull everything in. Focus too much on one thing and you will miss something else. The other dancers are not props; they are an integral part of the performance. Watching "Romeo et Juliette," you realize how spoiled you have been by television. On the stage, there is nothing to direct your focus, so you are forced to take it all in.

The subtle acting, the simplicity of the sets and, of course, the dancing made "Romeo et Juliette" a joy to watch. The orchestra, led by music director/conductor Stewart Kershaw, set the stage for one of the most brilliant ballet performances I have ever seen. If you have not seen it yet, get to McCaw Hall and get your ticket. Seats are half price with a student ID 90 minutes before every performance. "Romeo et Juliette" runs through Oct 5.