



**Bakhtiar BAKHTIAROV
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**

or passion Shakespeare style

...We are in the Mimi Ohio Theater at the Playhouse Square, filled over capacity. The audience slowly falls silent in anticipation of immersion into the Dream. But instead of a fairy tale, cruel reality and pain burst into the hall.

A video requiem for the dead Ukrainian girls-warriors is projected onto a huge screen. The orchestra is playing the poignant melody of a Ukrainian song - a cry for grieving. And an endless series of photographs of perished beauties. Those that have never experienced the miracle of love.

The stunned hall rises as one - adults and children. The impression is overpowering!

And, as if in the memory of the lost girl-hood dreams, life after life begins...the mystical Dream of love - A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Millions of people, including yours truly, got married to Mendelssohn's "Wedding March". With lofty thoughts and radiant faces... Completely unaware that the author of the music for Shakespeare's comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream, including the famous Wedding March, seemed to be mocking the pomp and circumstance of the marriage ceremony, comparing the groom to a donkey, and the bride to a distraught queen.

This is amusing...

But fast forward to 1826. The then seventeen-year-old Felix Mendelssohn performs A Midsummer Night's Dream for the first time in four hands with his sister Fanny. "Ah, this is an improved version of the young Mozart," admire the music critics. Not without reason. The young man is incredibly productive: between the ages of 11 and 14, the young genius composed about a hundred works.

No surprises there. Felix, the son of Abraham Mendelssohn, a Hamburg banker, was talented and educated. As they say, the genes did not fail him. Moreover, his grandfather was the legendary Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, the founder of the Haskalah Jewish Enlightenment movement.

A carefree bohemian life, a penchant for mysticism,

a heredity of philosophical perception of the world - is this not enough to create music for Shakespeare's bright comedy about love and fairy-tale creatures?

Dream intertwined with reality...

Oberon, the lord of the Fairy Forest, the King of Fairies and Elves quarreled with his wife, Queen Titania, and ordered Puck, the forest spirit, to bring a magical flower pierced by Cupid's arrow. When the juice of the flower is squeezed on a sleeping person's eyelids, it enchants the sleeper to fall madly in love with the first one he or she sees upon waking.

At the same time, couples in love wander through the magical forest: happy - Hermia and Lysander, and unhappy - Helena and Demetrius. Helena burns with love for Demetrius but is not getting his love in return. Using the flower, Puck puts a spell on Lysander who then confesses his love to Helena. Puck continues to work his magic - now the spell is wrapped around Demetrius, who quarrels with Lysander because of being favored by Helena. The sleeping Queen Titania wakes up at the touch of a magical flower and falls in love with a wandering actor, whose head is turned into a donkey's head by Puck just for fun...At the same time, there is the world of Theseus, the ruler of Athens, and the Queen of the Amazons. They exist in their own reality; have their own misunderstandings. Very confusing, our dear William Shakespeare!

"I believe, it is quite possible to enjoy this ballet without even knowing its content. At least that's what I hoped when creating my performance," wrote George Balanchine in the book "101 Stories of the Big Ballets," recalling his production of A Midsummer Night's Dream in 1962 for the New York City Ballet.

Let's not argue with authority. Especially because this performance caused a cultural shock to the theatrical America.

Seventy years later, the two-act A Midsummer Night's Dream ballet once again emerged in the United States. This time here, in Cleveland, on the Playhouse Square stage performed by the Cleveland Ballet. It seems to me that the new production has become a kind of continuation of the explorations by the great Balanchine. Pure classics combined with the grotesque and pantomime.

Flight of imagination



This is not the first fairy tale immersion experience for Gladisa Guadalupe, Cleveland Ballet Choreographer and Artistic Director. The preceding brilliant production of The Nutcracker demonstrated the choreographer's ability to deal with multi-faceted characters and crowd scenes, easily combining genre images with lyrical, the whimsical fantasy with the defined plot. All done with humor and poignancy...

The orchestral prelude of the ballet - glissando of strings, plucking of harps, silvery peals of celesta. We fly into a magical forest, a quivering, lively, enchanted forest, into beautiful romantic thickets by designer Jeffrey McLaughlin...

The magic calendar shows the Eve of Ivan Kupalo or the eve of St. John's Day in Europe. Remember how the girls read their fortunes about their betrothed on the wreaths.



A moonlit dream with flying elves and fairies makes you forget about the cruelty of our earthly world.

Now, it's time to just watch and enjoy the flight of imagination of Gladisa Guadalupe and her troupe.

Perpetual motion



Fans of the Cleveland Ballet have already noticed that despite the apparent diversity of events on the stage and a variety of staging techniques, every ballet by Gladisa Guadalupe has a very deliberate dance style. Let us recall the tradition of fiery Spanish street improvisations she used in Carmen or the sophisticated measured classics in The Nutcracker.

In her new ballet, Gladisa follows the music of Mendelssohn in masterly fashion: a swirl of highlights and colored spots, the flickering of lights. Everything is in continuous motion, in mesmerizing circles and spirals.

The choreographer subordinates everything to this movement: the decorations, the lighting solution, and the stunning beauty of the costumes of all kinds of dragonflies, bugs, butterflies, and ladybugs.

Sprinting nightmarish hounds penetrate the stage. Angelic children, pupils of the Cleveland Ballet School, lead enchanting round dances.



Insanely beautiful!

The costumes in this performance represent a particularly wonderful, tender world. Perhaps only ladies could come up with such a world. Tanya Grinberg, Elizaveta Kaplan, Irina Mochalova and other costume designers created this moonlit poem, ghostly and transparent, like the wings of elves.



Chitons, tunics, romantic tutus - literally all types of ballet costumes for dozens of characters were created in excellent quality in the company's own workshop.

The actors in these costumes are like amazing drawings of Cleveland Ballet illustrator, artist Alexandra Brin, come to life.

The mischievous Puck performed by Bruno Palheta is quite pliable.

The two "entangled" love couples gracefully danced and played by Marla Minadeo with Mattia Teora and Erinn Crittenden with Emanuel Tavares are ironic and ethereal.

The wandering actors are surreal, especially the humorous Bottom played by Covington Pearson.

Zachary Catazaro as Oberon and Kaela Ku as Titania are wonderful.

The Wedding March

The main surprise of the Dream is the central pas de deux, which opens the second act, in a delightful performance by Albina Ghazaryan and Narek Martirosyan. The two real diamonds of the troupe demonstrate impeccable classical choreography, outstanding skill and inspiration.

The pas de deux transitions into the grandiose Wedding March, the finale of the performance when all loving hearts are united.

Ah, if only Mendelssohn knew where his music would be played...By order of the Russian Emperor Alexander II, the Wedding March became the official regimental march of the Imperial Guards of the Cossack Regiment.

The music of this march accompanied the wedding ceremony of the Crown Prince of

Prussia Friedrich Wilhelm IV and the English Princess Victoria Adelgeid; in fact, its worldwide popularity started with this event.

In the Cleveland production, the Wedding March is transformed into a parade of achievements of the Cleveland Ballet:

it developed a large, full-fledged troupe of dancers. Of bright and beautiful dancers in possession of the entire arsenal of classical and modern choreography;

the well-trained pupils of the School of Ballet became an integral part of the team;

their own staging workshops appeared - production of complex theatrical scenery and magnificent costumes began directly in the company.

Gladisa Guadalupe is a master of closing scenes. When all the participants of the performance emerged to take their bows, the audience was amazed by the magnificent panorama that opened up: dancers, costumes, scenery, lights - a clear proof of the great, difficult, and tireless work of the creators of the Cleveland Ballet, Dr. Michael Krasnyansky and Gladisa Guadalupe.



Victory

...We don't know how Ukraine's war for independence will end. But the performance of Cleveland Ballet, which began with a Requiem for the dead Ukrainian girls, concluded in a storm of applause from grateful spectators. And it was a creative victory. Victory!

P.S.

The President & CEO of Cleveland Ballet Dr. Michael Krasnyansky and Artistic Director of Cleveland Ballet Gladisa Guadalupe announced that the proceeds from the sale of tickets for the performances of A Midsummer Night's Dream totaling \$12,000 were donated to the Ukrainian Foundation for Helping Disabled Children and Their Families.

In total, Cleveland Ballet has recently donated \$28,000, as well as various merchandise including food, socks, children's chairs and more to Ukraine.

Photos: New Image Photography