

DANCE REVIEW

# A Ballet Company Has Plenty of Support

## Les Ballets de Monte Carlo at the Joyce Theater

By GIA KOURLAS

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Certainly being Monaco's official dance company has its advantages. There's the association with royalty — Caroline, the Princess of Hanover, was behind the company's 1985 formation — studios by the sea and access to fabulous people like Karl Lagerfeld. Need costumes? Call Karl.



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Andrea Mohin/The New York Times  
Les Ballets de Monte Carlo Bernice Coppieters being held by Jérôme Marchand, left, Gaëtan Morlotti and Chris Roelandt at the Joyce Theater.

Les Ballets de Monte Carlo returned to New York on Wednesday evening with a pair of dances by its choreographer and director, Jean-Christophe Maillot. The group, making its Joyce Theater debut, began with "Altro Canto I," a 2006 work set to a collage of Monteverdi, Biagio Marini and Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger. The shiny flair of Mr. Lagerfeld was evident in gold costumes that paired straight-legged jeans with bustiers, or short poof skirts with tank tops. Gender played no factor in who wore the skirts, hinting at the masculine and the feminine in us all. It was stale from the start.

Despite Mr. Maillot's perplexing program note ("This music, because it does not itself dance, requires that the dancers go to the extremes of themselves," he writes), the piece had little texture beyond its vague exploration of liturgical themes and lighting worthy of a restaurant on [Valentine's Day](#).

The candle-heavy set Rolf Sachs created for the dance might have made a difference, but the company elected not to bring it. Instead dancers tried to create some heat of their own: fingers flicker like sparks, or straight arms melt into flames. While holding hands, they cross and uncross their arms rapidly — it's a play on the ribbon arms of voguing — as if to stir up smoke.

"Altro Canto" is a dance in moments without a categorical arc. The company has one star, at least on paper, the veteran Bernice Coppieters, whose appearance here signifies her diva

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status without revealing exactly what the source of her power is.

The rangy, red-haired Ms. Coppieters also led the dance that followed. Even though “Opus 40” was choreographed in 2000 when Mr. Maillot turned 40 — it’s described as an ode to youth — the pairing of Meredith Monk’s music and George Condo’s scenography and costumes still gives it some life. Women wear simple, bright dresses in solid colors; the men are dressed in straightforward pants and shirts in muted earth tones. Lighting on the glossy gray floor creates the faintest of waves, which appear on a scrim behind the dancers.

It’s a clean, sophisticated frame that, again, spotlights Ms. Coppieters but allows some others to get in on the action too. Two group sections, one for men and the other for women, show an airier side of Mr. Maillot’s propensity for sleek movement, offering a snapshot of what happens when innocence morphs into adulthood.

Ms. Monk’s gorgeous “Gotham Lullaby” gives the final section a tinge of melancholy. Ms. Coppieters becomes entangled with three men, but chooses none and walks off alone. It’s a strange, abrupt ending, but there’s solace in Ms. Monk’s voice: it’s like having a friend in the room.

*Les Ballets de Monte Carlo continues through Sunday at the Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Avenue, at 19th Street, Chelsea; (212) 242-0800, joyce.org.*

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