



# Worth the trip north

## dance

### La Bayadere

**Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Brisbane; until July 4, \$65-\$220, 136 246, parisoperaballet.com.au**

IT HAS murder, jealousy, forbidden love and opium-induced hallucinations.

There is nothing dull about the classic Indian-inspired ballet *La Bayadere*, especially when it is performed by the illustrious Paris Opera Ballet. At the pinnacle of the ballet world, they are a company with a wealth of history and experience and they are setting a benchmark in dance.

Following a visit to Sydney two years ago, the Paris Opera Ballet have this time travelled to Brisbane to present a spectacular production of Rudolf Nureyev's version of *La Bayadere*, which he created in 1992 to mark the end of his tenure as artistic director.

This production remains faithful to Nureyev's vision, from choreography to design, and time has not wearied the glorious colour and sumptuous nature of the work.

The story centres on a beautiful young temple dancer called Nikiya (Aurelie Dupont),

who falls in love with dashing warrior Solor (Herve Moreau) and declares her love for him despite the attempts of the Grand Brahmin (Richard Wilk) to keep her for himself.

However, things start to fall apart when it is revealed the romantic young Solor is set to marry Gamzatti (Dorothee Gilbert), the bejewelled and pampered daughter of a rajah (Jean-Marie Didiere).

When the romance between the warrior and the temple dancer is revealed, the bride-to-be seeks revenge with the help of a poisonous snake and, when Solor loses his lover, he consoles himself by indulging in opium and dreaming of rows and rows of ghostly white visions of his Nikiya.

Dupont is delicate yet feisty as the wronged Nikiya, who fires up when pushed into a corner and yet ultimately accepts her fate. Her willowy limbs and graceful manner are mesmerising and it is not hard to understand why Solor is so madly in love with her.

Gilbert bravely allows her Gamzatti to be quite unlikeable as the bitchy, egotistical, territorial bride who believes she should have it all. Yet she has the goods to back it up.

At the centre of it all is Moreau's Solor, who cuts such a dashing figure, performs with such elegant power, is so unselfish in the pas de deux and so captivating in his solos, that it

is easy to understand why two women are fighting over him.

The scenes in which many of the members of this large company are on the stage, such as the one depicting the festivities following the marriage of Solor and Gamzatti, are full of colour and life, with a dash of humour.

In the final scene in the Kingdom of the Shades, the white tutu clad corps de ballet shine, proving the core strength of this company is the quality of all the dancers, not just the soloists.

A slight disappointment is the way the depth of emotion in the main characters seems to wane as the story develops, but the dancing is so beautiful this hardly matters.

Highlighting the dancing, and breathtaking in its own right, are the set, costume and lighting designs for this production (by Ezio Frigerio, Franca Squarciapino and Vinicio Cheli), which are vast, lavish and beautiful.

Also delightful is the performance by the Queensland Orchestra, under the confident baton of Kevin Rhodes.

Although the season is short and seeing the show requires a visit to sunny Brisbane (not a hardship in this chilly weather), this is a unique opportunity to see a ballet company at the top of their game do what they do best.

**Alex Lalak**



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Page 2 of 2



Spectacular: The Paris Opera Ballet production of *La Bayadere* is full of colour and life, with a dash of humour

Picture: Rob Maccoll