

What the critics saw and thought...

- **Gavin Roebuck in *The Stage*, August 4, 2005**

Daria Pavlenko was a ravishing Nikiya, at first reserved and then, with the appearance of Leonid Sarafanov as Solor, she became alive with a gorgeous, meltingly languorous style.....

- **Tobi Tobias in *ArtsJournal*, January 6, 2004**

Daria Pavlenko, dancing Odette-Odile, was far and away the best thing about the three performances I saw (all three casts) of the Swan Lake the Kirov Ballet brought to Kennedy Center. She has, beside formidable technique, the magisterial authority of a ballerina. This is rooted in the ability to draw the audience into an imaginary universe of which she is the center.

Pavlenko is gifted for both lyrical and dramatic dancing—a perfect endowment for the dual personality of her Lake assignment. Her Odette displays an infallible harmony of line coupled with a flowing quality that prevents the sculpted shapes from being reduced to a series of handsome poses. The Russians call this the cantilena—singing—style, and Pavlenko lends it an added touch of grace with her delicate and eloquent use of her hands.

There's more to this Odette, though, than ravishing dancing. Using—what, exactly? belief? fantasy? her big, flashing, dark eyes?—Pavlenko creates a potent expressive figure, an innocent young woman struck by tragedy. She calls to mind literature's legendary victim-heroines as well as girls whose terrible fate you read about in the newspapers, the promise of their youth blighted by a random act of destiny.

- **Sarah Kaufman in *The Washington Post*, January 1, 2004**

Daria Pavlenko was a supremely tragic Odette. Rarely lifting her eyes, she danced under a veil of melancholy. She has a singularly pliant spine -- a hallmark of the Russian style -- and in her use of it one saw a series of resonant images.

She arched away from Prince Siegfried (Igor Zelensky) like a loaded crossbow, melted against him like water, burst into the air with avian longing. Extraordinarily supple and small-boned, she was nevertheless steel-strong. Underlying the gliding smoothness of her dancing was an ironclad technique.

This precision was used with deadly force in the second act, where Pavlenko transformed herself into Odile, the predatory daughter of the magician Rothbart, deployed to seduce Siegfried away from Odette. Ballerinas relish this dual role, with its madonna-and-whore extremes.

(...) It was, however, Pavlenko's eyes that made the most startling impression, flashing with Elizabeth Taylor heat as her gaze swept from Rothbart to the audience. She lured us into her scheme as surely as she ensnared Siegfried. But the source of her attraction wasn't taunting sex appeal, as many ballerinas play it. Rather, it was Pavlenko's fierce assurance.

- **Sarah Kaufman in *The Washington Post*, December 25, 2003**

The viper like Snow Queen -- performed Tuesday by Daria Pavlenko -- etched herself into memory because as she danced, she made clear just what kind of a creature she was, and her razored angles and ferocity drew me into her world. I can say this about few other moments in the ballet.

- **Clement Crisp in *The Financial Times*, October 28, 2003**

With Darcey Bussell on maternity leave, the Royal Ballet has taken the excellent decision to invite Daria Pavlenko from the Kirov Ballet to replace her in *La Bayadere*. What Pavlenko brings to the role of Nikiya is entire understanding. *La Bayadere* is in her bones, its manner as much part of her identity as MacMillan's choreography is the grain in Bussell's art.

Pavlenko knows, and showed perfectly at her debut in the Royal Ballet staging on Tuesday night, how the machinery of the role - its drama; its dance splendours - can take a ballerina, and the ballet, to glory. She has an emotional veracity that never bursts the bounds of style; she has an academic grace that, in those sublimities which come with the Shades scene, illuminates the central matter of the dance - Nikiya's luminous beauty and her all-forgiving love for Solor. "Remember your vow" she breathes to him, poised in arabesque as he kneels by her. "Be true to me." All this Pavlenko offered with loveliest clarity, the dance clear and beautiful. I am increasingly of the opinion that this scene is the touchstone for that most honourable rank of "ballerina", with nowhere to hide, nowhere to cheat the dance, nowhere to disguise essential truths about training and temperament and spirit.

- **Laura Jacobs in *The New Criterion*, September 2002**

Pavlenko is a beauty, with a face of Art Deco exoticism, as if drawn by Erté. Though offstage she's small as a mosquito, onstage she reads tall and has an endless line that could have come as well from Erté's pen. But she doesn't overplay that line. Pavlenko is one disciplined dancer, and she brings her own hushed momentum to the stage, an awesome technique that is flush with dignity, and music. Her *Diamonds* was all about hearing—the horns in the distance, the woodwinds rising, her own beating heart. She gave us plunges of emotion in steps wholly performed. Her fourth positions on stork points — huge and deeply crossed — were displays of majestic chiaroscuro. Her *sous-sus*, tight as a top, were star bright and absolutely still ("at the still point, there the dance is"). And her arabesque—a gleam, a comet's tail. In everything Pavlenko did she was thrilling. But this, after all, is what a ballerina must be.

- **Sarah Kaufman reviewing the Mariinsky's *Diamonds* in *The Washington Post*, February 16, 2002**

On Thursday, 23-year-old Daria Pavlenko, a second soloist, gave a more satisfying interpretation, less extreme and more mystical. Her footwork was absolutely silent, and her unsupported balances were so serene that she made her cavalier wait before placing her hand on his. She signals a promising, poetic future for the company.