EUROPEAN-NEWS-AGENCY.COM

EUROPEAN NEWS AGENCY

International Press Service

Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Triumph of Dance, Drama, and Historical Poise

Volksoper, 13.02.2026 [ENA]

On a winter evening in Vienna, the stage of the Volksoper Wien was transformed into a canvas of sumptuous restraint and emotional depth with the recent performances of Marie Antoinette. In this compelling new production — choreographed by the distinguished French artist Thierry Malandain — the Vienna State Ballet delivered an evening of ballet that was as intellectually rich as it was visually captivating.

Malandain's Marie Antoinette, originally premiered in 2019 with his own company at the Opéra Royal de Versailles, is not merely a retelling of a well-known historical narrative. Rather, it is an atmospheric ballet that privileges movement as historical expression, using a highly refined neoclassical vocabulary infused with baroque gestures to evoke the texture of an era and the inner world of its mythic heroine. At the Volksoper Wien, Marie Antoinette is not merely performed — it is lived, in every precise line and meaningful pause. This is ballet at its most resonant: historically informed, emotionally intelligent, and exquisitely danced.

Set to the eloquent music of Joseph Haydn and Christoph Willibald Gluck — composers contemporary to the ill-fated French queen — the production elegantly alternates between moments of ritualized courtly splendour and quieter, more introspective passages. The score itself becomes a character, its lilt and gravitas shaping the arc of the evening. From the opening tableau — Marie Antoinette's youthful arrival at the French court — to the culminating, heart-wrenching suggestions of isolation on the eve of her downfall, Malandain's choreography demonstrates remarkable restraint and poetic clarity.

He resists the temptation of overt melodrama, instead offering a sequence of expressive set pieces that coalesce into a mosaic of a life both public and deeply private. What sets this production apart is its eloquent integration of form and narrative. Rather than staging a literal chronological biography, Malandain juxtaposes key episodes — the wedding day, the inauguration of the opera house with Jean-Baptiste Lully's Persée as a "ballet within the ballet," scenes of opulent festivity, and the thwarted flight to Varennes — in a way that feels instinctively dramaturgical yet daringly elliptical.

In this framework, Vienna's dancers find a perfect synthesis between technical precision and refined theatrical presence. The title role, performed with luminous artistry by Elena Bottaro, is a revelation. Bottaro's Antoinette is neither a caricature of aristocratic excess nor a simple tragic heroine; instead, her

Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

Haftungsausschluss:

Der Herausgeber übernimmt keine Haftung für die Richtigkeit oder Vollständigkeit der veröffentlichten Meldung, sondern stellt lediglich den Speicherplatz für die Bereitstellung und den Zugriff auf Inhalte Dritter zur Verfügung. Für den Inhalt der Meldung ist der allein jeweilige Autor verantwortlich.

performance embodies a nuanced emotional spectrum — regal dignity, fragile hope, and poignant vulnerability — all conveyed through a choreography that demands both athletic prowess and interpretive subtlety.

Equally commendable is Andrés Garcia Torres as Louis XVI, whose aristocratic lyricism in movement complements Bottaro's line while adding a layer of understated pathos. Their pas de deux are moments of true balletic poetry, striking a balance between intimacy and formal refinement that speaks directly to Malandain's artistic vision. The supporting cast shines with distinction as well. Rebecca Horner as Empress Maria Theresa provides a commanding presence that anchors the ballet's more ceremonial sequences, while ensemble moments — from the courtly dances to the group scenes of celebratory balls — reveal a corps de ballet of striking uniformity and expressive engagement.

Visually, the production is equally compelling. Set and costume designs by Jorge Gallardo evoke the splendour of 18th-century Versailles with a restrained palette that enhances the choreography — sumptuous yet never overwhelming. Lighting by François Menou bathes the stage in atmospheres that shift from radiant courtly brilliance to subtle twilight, reinforcing the ballet's emotional contours. The success of this Marie Antoinette lies in its capacity to balance historical resonance with contemporary relevance.

By eschewing overt dramatization for a more suggestive, movement-led narrative, Malandain invites the audience into an intimate dialogue with history, where every gesture carries meaning and every ensemble passage contributes to a larger emotional architecture. In an era where narrative ballet can sometimes default to spectacle, this production stands out as an exemplar of intellectual choreography and theatrical refinement. It is a work that rewards close listening to music, close attention to movement, and an appreciation for art that challenges as much as it delights.

Bericht online lesen:
https://culture.en-a.eu/kunst_kultur_und_musik/triumph_of_dance_drama_and_historical_poise-93002/

Redaktion und Verantwortlichkeit:
V.i.S.d.P. und gem. § 6 MDStV: Dr. Nadejda Komendantova

Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

Haftungsausschluss:

Der Herausgeber übernimmt keine Haftung für die Richtigkeit oder Vollständigkeit der veröffentlichten Meldung, sondern stellt lediglich den Speicherplatz für die Bereitstellung und den Zugriff auf Inhalte Dritter zur Verfügung. Für den Inhalt der Meldung ist der allein jeweilige Autor verantwortlich.