

TIME



SIGN UP FOR OUR IDEAS NEWSLETTER POV

SUBSCRIBE



MARTHA DUFFY

APRIL 3, 1978 12:00 AM EST

## A bravura triumph for Baryshnikov and Kirkland

Whatever his private anguish at having left the Soviet Union may be, Mikhail Baryshnikov's professional motto must be "Don't look back." Last week, in an American Ballet Theater premiere at Washington, D.C.'s Kennedy Center, he took Don Quixote, a favorite Russian ballet little known in this country, and turned it into—a classical vaudeville? A romantic comedy? A Broadway musical en pointe? The new Don Q is in part all of these, a marvel of speed, timing and razzle-dazzle. The setting is Spanish and the tradition Russian, but the flavor is distinctly American.

Don Q's subtitle, Kitri's

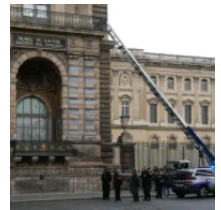
Wedding, more accurately describes both the Russian and the Baryshnikov versions. It is based on an episode in the Cervantes novel in which an innkeeper's daughter, Kitri (danced by Gelsey Kirkland), manages to marry her true love, Basil the Barber (Baryshnikov), in defiance of her father, who has a richer son-in-law in mind. The visionary Don Quixote (Alexander Minz) and his faithful Sancho Panza (Enrique Martinez) are on the periphery of the raucous doings but play no real part.

It would be a mistake to stretch the comparison to an American musical too far. Don Q does have

## YOU MAY ALSO LIKE

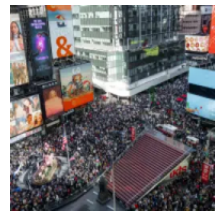
### WORLD

Louvre Robbery: How Thieves Carried out Heist of 'Priceless' Jewels



### POLITICS

'No Kings' Protests Against Trump Draw Huge Crowds Across U.S.



### WORLD

Major Global Outage Impacts Amazon and More: What to Know



### POLITICS

Will SNAP Benefits Be Delayed Due to Government Shutdown?



a purely classical dream sequence as well as the familiar wedding pas de deux. Many of the steps come from the century-old Marius Petipa choreography (as revised by Alexander Gorsky). It is in the brashness, polish and satirical twists that Don Q seems transplanted. As Jerome Robbins broke up the anonymity of the old musical chorus line, Baryshnikov has livened up the role played by the corps de ballet, giving many of the 50-odd dancers at least some individuality. Several brief solos, small ensembles or fleeting bits of stage business make for nearly nonstop action. For the A.B.T. corps it must be an exhilarating ballet to dance.

**The most exuberant girl**

THE MOST CAUCASIAN girl around, Kitri, makes a bravura triumph for Gelsey Kirkland. One tends to think of her playing an unearthly maiden in a romantic ballet. But despite her fragile body, she is a gutsy, bold dancer with almost palpable physical courage. She flings herself into the role of Kitri. Her foot hits the back of her head when she jumps (and she leaps the night away). Her attacks are almost stabbing. Her fan flips constantly — unless she is using it to poke Basil. She so clearly relishes keeping him in line that one wonders if there isn't a bit of a shrew in his future.

The ballet should belong to Kitri— and eventually it will as it

enters the A.B.T. repertory and other men take Basil's part. Right now Baryshnikov's dynamism puts things off balance, much as Marlon Brando's Broadway performance in *A Streetcar Named Desire* obscured the fact that the play was really about Blanche DuBois. Baryshnikov is the Figaro of Spanish barbers. He flirts recklessly, he fumes, he pouts. He does a wonderful bit with two mugs, leaping and drinking out of both at once. He has a hilarious, hollow-eyed mad scene in which he stabs himself— a sort of male *Giselle*. No choreographer-dancer is more generous to his colleagues than Baryshnikov in *Don Q*, but his acting makes it

Basil's story.

The part is interwoven into Baryshnikov's life. He danced the wedding pas de deux at his graduation recital at the Kirov Ballet school in Leningrad. Basil was his first full-length role, one he danced often. Playing it, he says, taught him a great deal: "Technical control, mime, how to use a cape, how to give a flower to a girl, how to be funny, touching, a lover . . . a lot." He is giving those gifts now to the A.B.T. dancers and, one suspects, a profligate present to the company at the box office as well.

**MORE MUST-READS  
FROM TIME**

**Experts** Are

## Sounding the Alarm on DOGE

- Meet the **2025 Women of the Year**
- The Harsh Truth About **Disability Inclusion**
- Why Do More **Young Adults Have Cancer?**
- **Colman Domingo** Leads With Radical Love
- How to Get Better at **Doing Things Alone**
- **Michelle Zauner** Stares Down the Darkness

**CONTACT US AT**

**LETTERS@TIME.COM**

U

Discover

Jeff Bezos Says the 1-Hour Rule Makes Hi...  
Thousands swear by the morning routine of the ...

B | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

Cardiologist Reveals: "Americans Were Lie...  
The health food industry cannot deny these results

... | Sponsored

[Watch Now](#)

Trump Says Some People 'Don't...  
President Donald Trump signaled that the White ...

TIME

Cognitive Decline Has Been Linked To a...

Memory Active | Sponsored

Dementia Has Been Linked To a Commo...

M | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

## Seniors Born 1939-1969...

Super Saving Online | Sponsored

## Bald for Years? Tr...

LifeGlow | Sponsored

## Side Sleepers Get Achy Shoulders, Few Kno...

Sleep Digest Public... | Sponsored

## Costco Shoppers Say This Knee Pain Relie... "It's truly worth every ...

h | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

## Vinegar: The...

Zensulin | Sponsored

## Trump... "Is the English language

too difficult for many?" as  
TIME

## Pink Salt: The

TIME OUT. THE

## Ultimate Ally to...

B | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

## 23 Cool Products That Will Sell Out Before...

... | Sponsored

[Shop Now](#)

## Neuropathy is not from Low Vitamin B...

FootRenew | Sponsored

## Stephen Colbert's... Stephen Colbert plays a late night host who win...

TIME

## Here Are The 25+...

to | Sponsored

[Learn More](#)

# TIME



[Home](#)

[U.S.](#)

[Politics](#)

[World](#)

[Health](#)

[Business](#)

[Tech](#)

[Entertainment](#)

[Ideas](#)

[Science](#)

[History](#)

[Sports](#)

[Magazine](#)

[The TIME Vault](#)

[TIME For Kids](#)

[TIMECO2](#)

[Coupons](#)

[TIME Edge](#)

[Video](#)

[Masthead](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[Digital Magazine](#)

[Give a Gift](#)

[Shop the TIME Store](#)

[Careers](#)

[Modern Slavery Statement](#)

[Press Room](#)

[TIME Studios](#)

[U.S. & Canada Customer Care](#)

[Global Help Center](#)

[Contact the Editors](#)

[Reprints and Permissions](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Media Kit](#)

[Supplied Partner Content](#)

[About Us](#)

© 2024 TIME USA, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Policy \(Your Privacy Rights\)](#) and [Do Not Sell or Share My Personal Information](#).

TIME may receive compensation for some links to products and services on this website. Offers may be subject to change without notice.