

NYC Dance Stuff

Dance in New York City by Darrell Wood

Of Iphigenia and Helen of Troy: Rioult Dance New York at the Joyce Theater....



Rioult Dance New York in Pascal Rioult's "Iphigenia". Photo by Sofia Negrón

Pascal Rioult pulls from the annals of Greek mythology for his newest work *Iphigenia*. Referring to Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Mr. Rioult explores the tale of the sacrifice of Iphigenia to the goddess Artemis by her father, Agamemnon.

The music for the work is by Michael Torke, it was commissioned through the company's *Dance to Contemporary Composers Series*. Performed live by the *Camerata New York Orchestra*, Mr. Torke's score is based on a unique orchestration for eight instruments: two clarinets, two bassoons, two French horns, a cello and a contrabass.

When the curtain rises we see Jane Soto as Iphigenia, behind her stands a Chorus of six dancers, three women and three men. The six dancers are stamping their feet and slamming their hands against their thighs, the body language is one of anguish.



Rioult Dance New York in Pascal Rioult's "Iphigenia". Photo by Sofia Negron

The set that was designed by [Harry Feiner](#) consists of a circular white floor and a standing scaffold of wood, a geometric design of planks veering off at different angles. The abstraction of the wooden structure allowed it to be seen in many different ways, buildings surrounding a plaza, a grove in which to seek comfort or the towering masts of a ship.

Jacqueline Chambord comes on stage; as narrator she guides us as we witness the fate and fault of House [Atreus](#). She is a somber figure, dressed in all black, she uses her voice, deep with a slight accent, as an instrument of forewarning for what is to come.

Ms. Soto begins to dance the light-hearted, care-free dance of the young; she is woman/child reveling in her innocence, unknowing that her world is soon to turn to tragedy.



Rioul Dance New York's Jane Soto and Jere Hunt in Pascal Rioult's "Iphigenia". Photo by Eric Bandiero

Marianna Tsartolia, who portrays Clytemnestra and Brian Flynn, who dances the role of Agamemnon, come together in a battle of wills. Ms. Tsartolia confronts Mr. Flynn in the hopes of wresting her daughter's fate from him. You sense her feelings of powerlessness and frustration. It is a fierce struggle, she pushes and hits Mr. Flynn, but to no avail...the die has been cast...

Mr. Flynn's stance is heroic, a man who is committed to doing what needs to be done for what is thought the greater good. When Iphigenia is made aware of her fate, Achilles, danced by Jere Hunt, tries to console her, to assure her of his care and concern, but its a dark duet tainted by sorrow. Achilles' anger is evident in his stance and in his facial expressions.

Ms. Soto's solo of farewell was beautiful, filled with longing, grief and a little fear but still brave, she has accepted her fate as becoming of a princess of Greece. Bravely she withdraws one step at a time into the darkness and death's embrace.



Rioul Dance New York in Pascal Rioult's "Iphigenia". Photo by Eric Bandiero

With *Iphigenia*, Pascal Rioult has woven a tapestry of tragedy, filled with loss, longing, angst and emotion. Ms. Soto's dancing was effortless and exhibited great depth as a woman who struggles with the reality of her fate. Jere Hunt created a caring yet heroic Achilles who was dedicated to Ms. Soto's Iphigenia. Marianna Tsartolia did a brilliant job portraying Clytemnestra as a complex woman of great emotion who struggled internally with her frustrations and grief.

Pascal Rioult's *On Distant Shores – a redemption fantasy* is a bit of revisionist history, for Mr. Rioult sees Helen of Troy as having been somewhat maligned through the ages. In [Euripides's play *Helen*](#), the goddesses Athena and Hera were angered by Paris' declaring Aphrodite as the goddess with the most beauty. In retaliation the two goddesses created a phantom of Helen from the stuff of clouds. The real Helen had been whisked away to Egypt by divine means, where she stayed for the duration of the [Trojan War](#), she never traveled to Troy. It is Euripides' *Helen* from which Mr. Rioult takes his inspiration.

Charis Haines is the rare dancer who's every step, every gesture is poetry. Her movements flow through her body to merge seamless with the music. Her portrayal of Helen was brilliant and an emotionally charged performance.



Riolt Dance New York's Charis Haines in Pascal Riolt's "On Distant Shores" Photo by Sofia Negron

The stage opens with four men, Brian Flynn, Josiah Guitian, Jere Hunt and Holt Walborn, all reclining at the at the ocean's edge that was cleverly conceived by Lighting Designer David Finely. Ms. Haines dances a solo of grief and passion with the realization of all the destruction and death that has occurred in her name.

Ms. Haines has brief duets with all four men who represent the Trojan War Heroes, those that perished on the battlefield in Helen's name. With the score by [Aaron Jay Kernis](#), *On Distant Shores*, is a perfect piece to show along side of *Iphigenia*, showing both the tragedy and vanity that were the true causes of the Trojan War.

Martha Graham's influence is evident in Mr. Riolt work, from his approach of the body in motion and the manner of movement, he embraces the deep contraction, the sweeping movements of the body from floor to standing and the hands cupped, though not a severely as other Graham dancers.

Though there are echoes of Martha Graham's influence, Mr. Riolt voice is his own.....

...Now, if Mr. Riolt would choreography his version of [Homer's Odyssey](#) with Odysseus he would have a full evening devoted to the Trojan War....and I would be there front and center to see it....hint, hint.....

Riolt Dance: New York