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## Kang Hyo-jung's Tatiana leaves local fans in awe - Hoon Sook Moon

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*Prima ballerina Kang Hyo-jung of Germany's Stuttgart Ballet dances a solo during a performance of "Onegin," Tuesday at the LG Art Center in southern Seoul. / Courtesy of UBC*

There are trademark scenes that make or break a ballet performance, such as the balcony "pas de deux" in "Romeo and Juliet," where the two lovers profess their love for each other.

In "Onegin," the most important parts of the story take place in the heroine Tatiana's bedroom in the first and third acts.

During the first part, Tatiana is a young girl who instantly falls in love with the arrogant aristocrat Onegin. In the third act, she is married to another man, tragically forced to deny Onegin's belated declaration of love.

Prima ballerina Kang Hyo-jung's debut as Tatiana in Seoul this week left many in the audience in awe of her breadth of acting and flawless technique.

The latest addition to the roster of principal dancers at Germany's Stuttgart Ballet had never danced a full-length production on the local stage.

At the invitation of her mentor Julia H. Moon, general director of Universal Ballet, Kang came to Seoul



*"Onegin" is one of the major works of South African choreographer John Cranko (1927-1973), a former director of the Stuttgart Ballet. / Courtesy of UBC*

last week to take on the main role as Tatiana in “Onegin.”

The 26-year-old made a much-anticipated appearance on the stage at the LG Art Center Tuesday, dancing for the first time in her career a coveted role reserved for the most seasoned prima ballerinas.

The performance began with Moon’s introduction of the choreographer John Cranko and the story of “Onegin,” an unfulfilled love story set in 19th century Russia.

“This is one of Cranko’s signature masterpieces. Cranko was a genius of creating storytelling ballets,” Moon explained. “His choreography is marked by explosive and detailed movements.”

Acting is immensely important for executing the roles of Cranko’s works. Along with Frederick Ashton and Kenneth MacMillan, Cranko is considered one of the most successful choreographers of narrative dramatic ballets in the 20th century.

He once said “I don’t do ballet. I do theater.”

Universal Ballet’s casting of Kang is a landmark in the young dancer’s career.

To prepare for the role, she has rehearsed with Georgette Tsinguirides, the renowned ballet mistress at the Stuttgart Ballet who once served as assistant to Cranko. “She has been teaching me the details of the work that Cranko wanted to incorporate in the work,” Kang said in a recent interview with a local culture magazine.

The Universal Ballet, a top Korean ballet company, has set a landmark in its history with the current production of “Onegin,” which will continue until Saturday.

Despite its popularity, the masterpiece by legendary South African choreographer John Cranko (1927-1973) is seldom performed. This is because the John Cranko Foundation has strict standards about granting the rights to perform or commercialize the work.

The Universal Ballet is only the second Asian dance company to stage one of the finest dramatic ballets of the 20th century, after the China’s National Ballet in 2008. The Universal Ballet’s principal dancers have been taking turns portraying Tatiana this week, but it is Kang’s performance that has captured the most attention from the media.

After a sudden promotion to principal dancer at the Stuttgart Ballet in April, local fans have anticipated a change to see just what makes her so special.

The ballet premiered in April 1965 at the Stuttgart Ballet, set to a score arranged by Kurt-Heinz Stolze from several works of Tchaikovsky. Stolze did not use any music from Tchaikovsky’s opera of the same name. Instead, he orchestrated some little-known piano works by Tchaikovsky such as “The Seasons,” along with themes from the opera “Cherevichki” and the latter part of the symphonic fantasia “Francesca da Rimini.”

Kang is now one of eight female principals at the major European company, particularly renowned for the legacy of Cranko.

Her previous lead roles with her company have been Juliet in Cranko’s “Romeo and Juliet,” Princess Aurora in Marcia Haydee’s “Sleeping Beauty,” and the female lead in Uwe Scholz’s “Siebte Sinfonie.”