each individual’s unique gifts; it seemed that a kick or jump directly incited a reaction in the music. Tyler Guefré and Aya Okumura stood out for wholehearted and fully fused grasp of Forsythe’s electrifying choreography. And Sarah Brodbeck went wild in the finale, her hair flying and body crumpling and thrashing in fascinating contrast to the angular, taut movements of the group.

Richard Siegal’s Ovál is the weakest of the three works; the ring of light encircling the dancers is blinding and distacts from the movement—however intriguing; but the dancers’ commitment continued on, unflinching, as though they were metal balls suspended on strings, destined to knock against each other in perpetuity. Vladimir Marinov and Ksenia Ovsyanick were the standouts here: their bodies seemed to become thick, viscous liquid, where every muscle fibre took part in circular, wavelike motion.

With the next step in Staatsballett Berlin’s artistic leadership once again unknown, the dancers have found an outlet for uncertainty. Instead of stopping to worry, they step onstage and don’t hold back.

Lucy Van Cleef

RAMBERT
AISHA AND ABHAYA
LINBURY THEATRE

Rambert and De Valois have been on separate tracks for the best part of 100 years. Both legacies have survived and are now thriving. After the world premiere in the Linbury Theatre of Aisha and Abhaya, Rambert’s latest project, the current director of The Royal Ballet, Kevin O’Hare, celebrated opening up the Royal Opera House by offering hospitality, resources and production support to Rambert in a vastly ambitious venture in collaboration with BBC Films. To give you an instant flavour, it concludes with Grandmother (Angela Wnter) giving her granddaughters, Aisha (Salomé Pressac) and Abhaya (Maëve Berthelot), a reassuring hug as celebratory digital fireworks fill the sky, heaven bound; the end was followed by more creatives on stage than dancers, by about two to one, soaking up the applause. How we got there in this film/dance/film sandwich was not quite so certain or straightforward.

At Rambert’s invitation to make a piece about a fairy tale, award-winning film-maker Klwwe Tavares Andersen’s Little Match Girl. He divided her in two and renamed her Alisha and Abhaya, and then divided the story into several distinct sections, Journey, Before, Journey, trading between memory, traditional and modern cultures, a little jewel box serving as a metaphor for precious memories. Thanks to Russian designer Ulris Bakhtiozina, our eponymous heroines are bedecked in mock traditional garb, covered in strings of pearls, topped with mock Slavic headgear framing their faces. They are shipwrecked, but they survive and end up on a shore, from which they wander into the hinterland, only to discover an all-night rave or an all-embracing indeterminate religious ritual. Curious? On-trend choreographers - Hofesh Schechter, Crystal Pite, and now Sharon Eyal among them – confront the refugee crisis.

By small gradations this cinematic world gives way to Rambert’s dancers and to an alien cityscape throbbing with the pulsating energy of clubland Europe. It is the world of Ori Lichtik and Tavares’s brother, Galia, both of whom supply it with its digital soundtrack and its visuals. We were offered earplugs to protect our delicate hearing, but frankly it was an over-protective gesture. The score is base-driven electronica, loud, but not oppressively so. Dark glasses may have been useful to shield the visually challenged against the onslaught of digital images, fired at the audience in an endless display behind the dancers - cleverly and imaginatively done.

Choreographer Sharon Eyal occupies that clubbing world to perfection: raised arms in sculptural gestures, gyrating hips, the rhythmic pulse rippling through the dancers’ bodies. The seven dancers, often in unison, adjust each gesture slightly to pursue their own individual journeys, forging alliances, formed and reformed as weight and bodies shift; drifting in and out of each other’s worlds and consciousness. The four men, (Daniel Davison, Liam Francis, Juan Gil, Guillaume Queau) with their chests out (again? I am told it brings in the punters) and the three women (Maëve Berthelot, Edim Domoszlai, Hannah Rudd) Lyrcrad, share a common and powerful movements vocabulary. For over half an hour they inhabit the same stage space, magnificent, yet joyful and endlessly alienated. The sexual come on, teased but not reciprocated, conjuring a kind of emotional cruelty. The little match girl died cold and friendless in Copenhagen’s sad streets, two centuries earlier.

But it didn’t end there. Somehow Aisha and Abhaya got together with granny and, with a hug, put the world to rights. It was not a narrative but a series of fragments that almost cohered into something meaningful, too often obscured by a multiplicity of gestures.

Robert Penman

ST PETERSBURG EIFMAN BALLET
THE PYGMALION EFFECT
LATVIAN NATIONAL OPERA, RIGA

Eifman Ballet’s The Pygmalion Effect performances in Riga marked the end of their European autumn tour, while, and so far, one of the highlights of this year’s dance season in the Latvian capital. The relationship between acclaimed Russian choreographer Boris Eifman and Riga goes back to his beginnings, when he restaged his first full-length ballet, Gayane, in Char of the Riga Ballet (nowadays, the Latvian National Ballet). Now he has come with The Pygmalion Effect, which premiered this year. This production is a reinterpretation of the
Gonzalo Preclado-Azanaza

TANZTHEATER WUPPERTAL PINA BAUSCH
BLUEBEARD. WHILE LISTENING TO A TAPE RECORDING OF BÉLA BARTÓK’S OPERA “DUKE BLUEBEARD’S CASTLE”
SADLER’S WELLS

Even by Pina Bausch's standards, this was heavy going. The snappy title ought to have given it away: Bluebeard. While Listening to a Tape Recording of Béla Bartók’s Opera “Duke Bluebeard’s Castle”. To be fair, that's exactly what we got – a man listening to a tape recording of Béla Bartók’s opera Duke Bluebeard’s Castle, so no complaints there. It's a reel-