

The New Criterion

Dance

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Ratmansky

by [Laura Jacobs](#)

On Alexei Ratmansky, *Rabbit and Rogue* at American Ballet Theatre, and *Jupiter Symphony* at Pennsylvania Ballet.

When Alexei Ratmansky's *Bright Stream* was presented during the Bolshoi Ballet's 2005 engagement at the Met, it was New York's first good look at his work. A full-length ballet set on a Soviet collective farm ("tractor ballet," this genre was called), *Bright Stream* possessed a first act of charming manners and a toylike scale, which was ingratiating. The ballet lost its way in Act Two, devolving into a barnyard farce, a cross-dressed switcheroo so lumbering and unfunny it trampled the charm. And it wasn't just that. In this act as well, one saw that Ratmansky had trouble focusing his more classical pas, having a penchant for dualities that split the stage, frustrating the eye—for instance, two duets danced simultaneously. And yet, *Bright Stream* received raves, as if it had answered something quite a few critics were hungry for. What that was, though, I couldn't say at the time.

Laura Jacobs's *Landscape with Moving Figures* is available from Dance & Movement Press. She has been the dance critic for *The New Criterion* since 1994. Before that she wrote about dance for *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Ballet Review*, and *Boston Phoenix*. Jacobs is a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*, where she writes about fashion as well as performing arts. From 1987 to 1994, Jacobs was editor in chief of *Stagebill*, the national program magazine. In this position she edited and wrote articles on opera, music, theater, and dance. Jacobs has written two books on fashion (*Beauty and the Beene*, Abrams, 1999; and *The Art of Haute Couture*, Abbeville Press, 1995). Her first novel, *Women About Town*, was published by Viking in May 2002.

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