**Le Villi       Nilas Martin Dance Company**  
Premiere : New York

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Michael Popkin ----- Danceviewtimes ----- 4/3/2006  
....there were also moments of substance and beauty, particularly in the works by Pier  
The most stunning of these works was the dance for Meunier by Stephen Pier to the soprano aria, 'Would I Could Be Like to the Flowers.' This is the song of the abandoned maiden in 'Le Villi' whose death the Wilis will avenge (Giselle, if you will). One doesn't have much chance to see Meunier these days and many in the audience were there to see her.

The results were every bit what they wished for. Meunier had the stage to herself. The soprano air, though from early in Puccini's career, was characteristic of his best vocal writing for the female voice:long floating vocal lines in which the voice seems to hover suspended in the air.Meunier was costumed in dance slippers and a long peasant dress. Forget that the action of 'Le Villi' is set in the Black Forest; the costume and mood here were Spanish. Since we speak of opera, Azucena, the gypsy heroine of 'Il Trovatore,' comes to mind. The choreography integrated large sweeping bends from the waist with the dancer brushing at the floor. At other times the movement became nearly convulsive, as Meunier repeatedly brought her knees to her chest and then almost stamped the foot, leaping forward in a Flamenco like motion. Until she herself went to the floor, her dress about her waist, rocking herself from side to side. The impression was conveyed of constricted grief and of emotional pressure. The dance ended with Meunier escaping to demi pointe, her arms pushing up above her head as if on an atmosphere which weighed her down-all this while the soprano's voice soared instead into a floating, empyrean Puccini-esque diminuendo on the Italian refrain 'Do not Forget Me.'  
.....the preceding work for Meunier by Pier, provided the real displays of 'passion' on this bill.  
  
*-Review*

**Eloquence in Motion**New York Sun ----- 3/27/2006

By JOEL LOBENTHAL | March 27, 2006  
...Ms. (Monique) Meunier's only appearance, in a solo cho reographed by Stephen Pier, was the evening's highlight. Mr. Pier's solo, choreographed to an aria from 'Le Villi,' provided her with elements of earth-mother lamentation. Rising from the ground to her full height, her body palpitating with emotion as she stood on half pointe, Ms. Meunier was riveting. She is the kind of protean performer who, if paired with the right choreographic collaborators, could develop new possibilities of dance language and expression.