

# dance

INTERNATIONAL

SUMMER 2019 | \$7.50

## Kidd Pivot Unleashed



**Creations and Collaborations:  
Company 605, Wizard of Oz,  
David Dawson and more**





INFORMING EQUITY  
THROUGH  
DATA ANALYSIS,  
ADVOCACY  
& PROGRAMMING

to learn more, visit:  
[dancedataproject.com](http://dancedataproject.com)

CANADA'S  
**dance**  
INTERNATIONAL

CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY  
DANCE IN CANADA AND ABROAD

SUMMER 2019 VOL. 47 NO. 2

**PUBLISHER** Vancouver Ballet Society

**EDITOR** Kaija Pepper

**ART DIRECTION** Brenda Finamore

**COPY EDITOR** Margaret Jetelina

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR** Sojin Kim

**FULFILLMENT** Inovva

**PRINTING** Horseshoe Press Inc.

**MAILING** Mail-O-Matic

**ADVERTISING** Jorssen Media

**WEB MANAGER** Brynn McNab

**SOCIAL MEDIA** Tessa Perkins Deneault

DANCE INTERNATIONAL is published quarterly by the **Vancouver Ballet Society** (vbs@telus.net), a not-for-profit organization established in 1946 to support dance.

Opinions expressed within are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of DANCE INTERNATIONAL magazine, the Vancouver Ballet Society, its directors or editors. The editors reserve the right to make changes in materials selected for publication to meet editorial standards and requirements. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission.

**Advertising enquiries:**

[advertising@danceinternational.org](mailto:advertising@danceinternational.org)

**Subscribe online:** [www.danceinternational.org](http://www.danceinternational.org)

**By email:** [subscriptions@danceinternational.org](mailto:subscriptions@danceinternational.org)

DANCE INTERNATIONAL  
Scotiabank Dance Centre  
677 Davie Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 2G6  
Tel: (604) 681-1525  
[info@danceinternational.org](mailto:info@danceinternational.org)  
[www.danceinternational.org](http://www.danceinternational.org)

Distributed by Magazines Canada



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada

*We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, which last year invested \$153 million to bring the arts to Canadians throughout the country.*



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ARTS COUNCIL  
An agency of the Province of British Columbia



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

*We acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia.*

ISSN 1189-9816  
Federal Tax Exemption No. 0308353-22-27  
Public Mail Agreement No. 40050848



Czech contemporary choreographer and educator Jan Kodet was in Vancouver recently working with a group of young dancers here at Scotiabank Dance Centre. One morning, I headed into the studio to take a look, as I often do during Vancouver Ballet Society seminars.

The movement phrases Kodet gave to the dancers had them weaving a physical tapestry of high and low, fast and slow, precision and abandon. Once they got the facts of the moves right and headed out across the floor in groups, yet another layer was added: interpretation.

Even in sweaty exercise clothes, with just a couple of stray viewers, the dancers knew they had to inhabit the movement — to bring something deep inside, something of themselves, to it. Only then could they begin to transform those choreographic phrases into moments of dance and, beyond that, into expressive theatrical art.

We ask a lot of dancers, and of dance. The amazing thing is how often they deliver.

I am happy, once again, to have a space to feature some of those dedicated artists and some of their art.

This issue's offerings range from our cover story on *Revisor*, by one of the world's most in-demand choreographers, Crystal Pite; to a showcase of three stellar ballerinas tackling the lead role of Dorothy in an international co-production of *The Wizard of Oz*; to the cornucopia of dance featured in our quarterly city reports, including a London show with the surprising presence of jugglers.

*Kaija*

KAIJA PEPPER

[editor@danceinternational.org](mailto:editor@danceinternational.org)

FOLLOW US ON



Dance International



DI Magazine

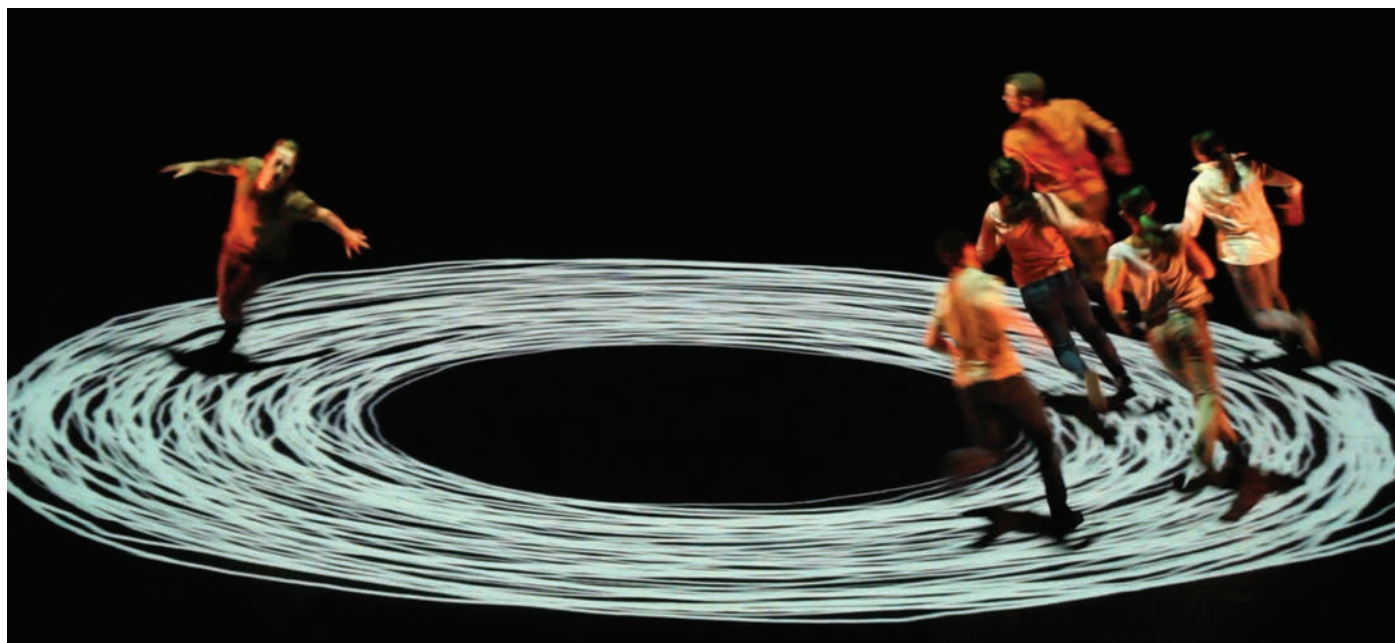


[danceinternationalmagazine](https://www.instagram.com/danceinternationalmagazine)



Read our digital edition

VISIT [www.danceinternational.org](http://www.danceinternational.org)



Company 605 in their *Inheritor Album*  
Photo: Josh Hite

# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

### CREATIVE COLLABORATORS

Company 605's Lisa Gelley and Josh Martin

BY HILARY MAXWELL

6

### BEHIND THE SCENES WITH KIDD PIVOT

Banff Centre's avant-premiere: Crystal Pite and Jonathon Young's *Revisor*

BY KAIJA PEPPER

10

### BECOMING DOROTHY

Three ballet companies join forces to co-produce Septime Webre's *The Wizard of Oz*

BY HOLLY HARRIS

18

### SOLOIST ZHONG-JING FANG

Moving up the ranks at American Ballet Theatre

BY CARLA ESCODA

22

### SPRINGBOARD TO OPPORTUNITY

Montreal's powerhouse summer dance program

BY VICTOR SWOBODA

25

## DEPARTMENTS

### MEMOIR

Ingmar Bergman in the Dance Studio  
BY FREDRIK RÜTTER

31

### DANCE NOTES

32

### NOTEBOOK

BY MICHAEL CRABB

34

### DIRECTORY

38

### INSIDE ED

Gaga People

BY GDALIT NEUMAN

40

## MEDIAWATCH

### QUOTABLE

Excerpt from

*Making Dances That Matter: Resources  
for Community Creativity*

By Anna Halprin,  
with Rachel Kaplan

16

## CLOSEUPS

### CREATIVE DECOLONIZATION

Jeanette Kotowich explores her  
Indigenous identity

BY TESSA PERKINS DENEALT

28

### POSITIONING BALLET

The culture and place of ballet in the  
21st century

BY JUDITH DELMÉ

30

### FLAMENCO IN THE SACROMONTE CAVES

In the tradition of the zambra

BY JUSTINE BAYOD ESPOZ

36

## GLOBAL REPORTS

### VANCOUVER

BY KAIJA PEPPER

41

### WINNIPEG

BY HOLLY HARRIS

42

### TORONTO

BY MICHAEL CRABB

43

### MONTREAL

BY VICTOR SWOBODA

45

### SEATTLE

BY KAITLIN MCCARTHY

46

### NEW YORK

BY ROBERT GRESKOVIC

47

### COPENHAGEN

BY ANNE-MARIE ELMBY

49

### LONDON

BY SANJOY ROY

50

### MILAN

BY SILVIA POLETTI

51

### OSLO

BY FREDRIK RÜTTER

52

### PERTH

BY RHYS RYAN

53

## COVER STORY

Kidd Pivot's Doug  
Letheren in Crystal  
Pite and Jonathon  
Young's *Revisor*

Photo: Michael Slobodian



## REVIEWS

### MALPASO

Barton, Delgado, Tayeh, Naharin /  
Mixed Bill

BY SHEENAGH PIETROBRUNO

54

### VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL

BY TESSA PERKINS DENEALT

55

### BALLET WEST

Guzmán, Sklute, Fonte / Mixed Bill

BY ROBIN J. MILLER

57

### SKÅNES DANSTEATER & KOREA NATIONAL CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY

Melo, Jang, Ahn / Mixed Bill

BY MAGGIE FOYER

58

## IN STUDIO AND ONSTAGE

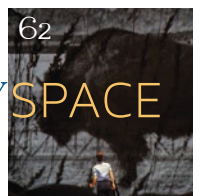
David Dawson's *Requiem* for Dutch National Ballet

BY JUDITH DELMÉ

60

## GALLERY SPACE

THE PORTRAIT BALLET  
JEAN GRAND-MAÎTRE





# Creative Collaborators



Lisa Gelley  
Photo: David Cooper

Company 605's Lisa Gelley  
and Josh Martin

BY HILARY MAXWELL

If you've ever seen Company 605 perform, the words versatile, athletic and boundary pushing might come to mind as a way to describe the contemporary dance group. Since emerging onto the Vancouver scene in 2006, the company, led by co-artistic directors Lisa Gelley and Josh Martin, has established itself as a leading dance force in the country.

But, says Gelley, their aspirations go beyond creating and touring: "605 is very much about connecting people and community." The place the company holds for collaboration in their approach to the art form is at the heart of who they are.

The desire for creative exchange drives Gelley and Martin to lead ambitious, busy lives. In the past few years, they've toured across Canada, and were presented internationally at showcases in Germany, Australia, Japan and Costa Rica. Company 605 premiered six new works, including a collaboration with Brussels-based choreographer German Jauregui and a commission for Ballet BC. Most recently, the artistic directors debuted their full-length *Loop, Lull* at Vancouver's 2019 PuSh International Performing Arts Festival. The duo also became parents to their now two-year-old daughter. In addition to dancemaking and performing, they take on guest teaching, host intensives and undertake independent projects.

Company 605 is known for producing physically demanding ensemble works. Playing between interconnection, risk and endurance, they construct rhythmically intricate phrasing, with bodies making unusual lines, shapes and formations onstage. Just as much as you see the group performing as a unit through space, the individual is also pronounced. With an emphasis on movement invention and an interest in the human experience, Gelley and Martin draw on collaboration to inspire ideas and inform the direction of their art form.

Primarily a performance-based company, 605 is budding into a multi-armed organization that nurtures professional development through mentorship and workshops, facilitates networking and supports new initiatives. "We have a goal of being a meeting place of people," says Martin, and, essentially, this is how Company 605 began, as a small collective of spirited young dancers.





Gelley, 36, and Martin, 34, first teamed up artistically in 2004. They were hired to develop and perform a hip-hop, jazz and tap dance show for the Canadian forces in Afghanistan. This was back in the days of what they call their “commercial lives,” working in urban styles, taking gigs to perform in fashion shows or for films, or dancing in clubs.

They are part of a generation of contemporary dance artists who emerged from the studio world with a diverse base of training. Straight out of high school, Gelley, from North Vancouver, joined the Source Dance Company, aimed at creating opportunities in the entertainment industry. Several years later, Martin, from Alberta, came on board. “If you talk to many people of our generation,” says Gelley, “there would be a connection to the Source.”

After returning from Afghanistan, they were eager to expand their skillset. “We didn’t know what to call it,” says Martin, “but we wanted to do something that wasn’t commercial dance focused” or in their usual style of training. Their solution was what they now call peer-to-peer exchange. The two would meet up with friends, after hours at a local dance centre, to jam and teach one another movement. “We were trying to learn about contemporary dance,” says Gelley, “though we wouldn’t have called it that at the time.”

Their interest in professional development eventually led them beyond Vancouver to Europe, where they were introduced to different contemporary dance practices and were inspired by companies like Belgium’s Ultima Vez.

When the couple returned home, they moved into the ARC, a work-live space in East Vancouver, and rented apartment number 605. They built a dance floor in the building, and the ARC became a gathering place where the 605 Collective, as they were called then, was born. It was made up of core artists Gelley, Martin and Shay Kuebler (now artistic

director of Shay Kuebler Radical System Arts), with collaborators Maiko Miyauchi (now co-artistic director of OURO Collective) and Sasha Kozak.

Martin recalls that the initial goal was not about making work, but about satisfying their needs as “movement junkies.” Things that looked cool or required a lot of skill held priority in the collective. They would explore innovative ways to generate movement that required risk-taking or one-upping each other. Developing and learning material stemmed from the culture of their training in urban dance; it was instinctual, fast and competitive.

The collective worked in a non-hierarchical structure. Each artist’s contribution was encouraged, and leadership ebbed and flowed. Martin says, “Everyone was putting stuff in a pot and then if something sparked for someone, we’d run with it, and quite often things snowballed from there.”

What emerged was a fast-paced, rough-and-tumble aesthetic, where men and women exhibited the same level of physicality. Their breakout piece *Audible* (2006) exemplifies the raw expressions of endurance, rigour and athletic power that is a signature of the company. Performed by all five members, *Audible* was a playful comment on human disconnection in a technologically driven world. The piece, set to percussive electronic music, showcased a vernacular that bridged elements of urban dance with robust partnering and floor work, punctuated by explosive acrobatics. “We valued doing crazy physical stuff that was hard for us, movement that looked thrown and out of control but required a lot of precision,” says Gelley. This trademark piece toured for almost 10 years in Canada, the United States and Central America.

After *Audible*, Gelley, Martin and Kuebler became co-directors. They created another piece together, *Inheritor Album* (2012), before Kuebler’s focus veered toward his own projects.



Gelley and Martin assumed the artistic helm in 2013, and renamed the group Company 605. While the organizational structure changed, the value of shared creative process remains. “It’s not just a meeting of an artistic team to carry out a singular vision,” says Martin. Each new project is an opportunity to gather with people and ask questions, fuel ideas and work toward producing something that leads to more curiosity, a mindset that ultimately gives space for them to grow as choreographers.

Their 2016 *Vital Few* demonstrated a shift in priorities, away from a focus on slick, musically driven movement toward a greater consideration of process. One intention of the work was to establish a physical cohesiveness within the group, while emphasizing the individual, a “non-unison unison,” as they describe it.

The cast of six included both choreographers, until Gelley became pregnant, when she then focused on directing. From this point, the pair moved from being solely dancer-collaborators inside the work to also choreographing from the outside.

Unlike with *Audible* and *Inheritor Album*, in *Vital Few* the dancers were tasked to develop movement for the choreography. Martin explains the process as “everyone building around a kernel of an idea but creating their own particular way around it.” Before, there was prescribed material and a set way to execute it physically, with slight variations through

numerous apprentices, several of whom became core members of Company 605. They have also nurtured artists’ professional development through projects such as F-O-R-M (Festival of Recorded Movement), which they developed with company member Sophia Wolfe. This international festival, now run by Wolfe, is geared toward youth and emerging artists, and celebrates the body in motion through film.

As established artists with a company embedded in Canada’s contemporary dance milieu, Gelley and Martin’s artistic vision has matured. Laura Avery, a dancer with Company 605 for nearly 10 years, has experienced the evolution of their practice as creators. “They’re really making an effort to open up the discussion around the work as it’s unfolding,” she says. The artistic directors carve out space in rehearsal where dancers can freely offer input and give feedback on what’s working for them, or not, in the process. In their latest piece, *Loop, Lull*, this exchange happens in real time onstage.

*Loop, Lull* is Company 605’s most experimental work to date. Bringing practice to performance, five artists perform an improvised score that revolves around simultaneously creating, learning and modifying movement. “It’s a practice in paying attention,” Gelley says. Throughout, the performers put their multi-tasking to the test in game-like sequences of building movement into continuous loops that gradually transform. The dancers are each responsible for developing a

## With an emphasis on movement invention and an interest in the human experience, Gelley and Martin draw on collaboration to inspire ideas and inform the direction of their art form.

individual interpretation. Gelley adds, “Even if the movement came from a collaborative place, we would all learn how to do it in one particular way.” For *Vital Few*, 95 percent of the movement was generated by the dancers, using explicit propositions given by the choreographers.

Working with guest artists is also key to broadening Gelley and Martin’s creative sensibilities. “Maybe we’re headed for a specific target and we bring in someone who is going to help us answer certain questions and define the work,” says Gelley. For instance, when they commissioned Jauregui to create what became *Albatross* (2016), they wanted to redefine their partnering techniques.

They met Jauregui, a longtime collaborator with Ultima Vez, while taking his workshop at Vienna’s 2010 ImPulsTanz. Jauregui’s partnering methods test the limits of risk and trust, exploring concepts such as power, dependency and protection in relationships. His collaboration with Company 605 resulted in a 75-minute physical feat in which two bodies maintain connection throughout the majority of the work, moving continually through resistance and momentum.

With so much experience behind them, Gelley and Martin are keen to invest in a younger generation of artists. Since 2011, they have hired five artistic interns and

loop with repeatable pathways and material, while, at the same time, tracking the other dancers’ patterns and movements, all while working together to sync up their loops. Layered on top of that, they communicate brief directives and cues to either invite or acknowledge change, and to affect the timing and quality of their interconnecting looping.

Gelley and Martin are seen in the work, discreetly crouched on the periphery across from one another, running the lighting and soundboards. Having the choreographers in a performance about practice makes sense.

“It feels rewarding to be in a process where the choreographers are honest about taking risks and being in unknown territory, a vulnerable place for creators to be,” says Avery. *Loop, Lull* is a reflection of how Gelley and Martin’s ideas and curiosities have grown from their early days as “movement junkies.” While still working within an athletic vocabulary, they are delving into deeper questions about composition and intention; they are considering what they’re saying through their choreographies, and how their work will resonate with viewers.

These are big questions — but if Gelley and Martin have proven anything throughout their years making dance, it’s that they’re in it for the long haul. *DI*

# Behind the Scenes with Kidd Pivot

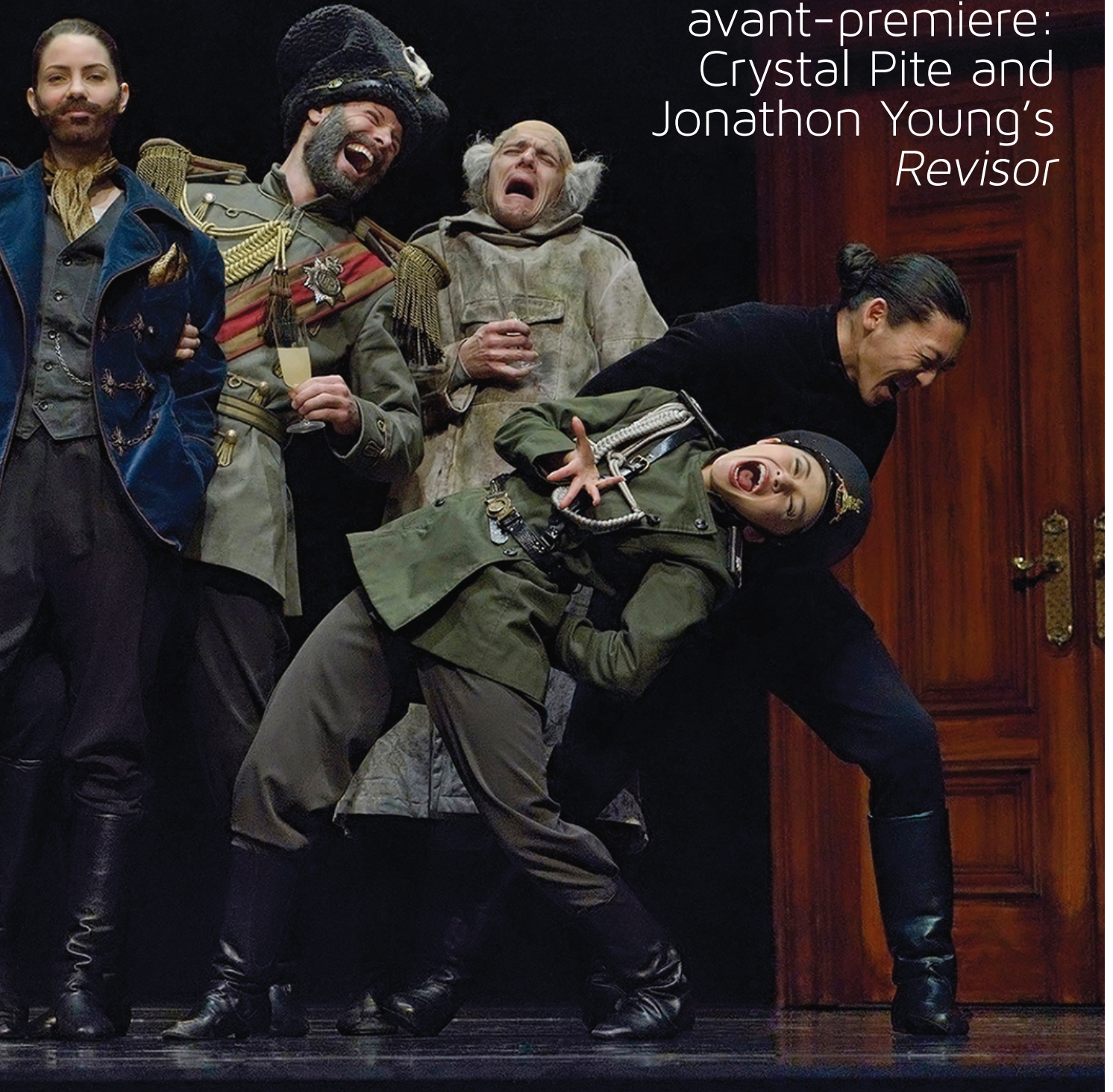
by Kaija Pepper



Above: Kidd Pivot's Ella Rothschild, Cindy Salgado, Jermaine Spivey, Tiffany Tregarthen, Doug Letheren, David Raymond, Rena Narumi and Matthew Peacock in Crystal Pite and Jonathon Young's *Revisor*  
Photo: Michael Slobodian



Banff Centre's  
avant-premiere:  
Crystal Pite and  
Jonathon Young's  
*Revisor*



Inset: Crystal Pite, Jonathon Young, Eric Beauchesne and Nancy Bryant  
Photos: Michael Slobodian



In rehearsal

Top: Doug Letheren, Jermaine Spivey and Ella Rothschild  
 Middle: Tiffany Tregarthen and Cindy Salgado  
 Bottom: Matthew Peacock, Ella Rothschild, Cindy Salgado and Jermaine Spivey

Photos: Michael Slobodian

On the February morning of *Revisor's* avant-premiere — set for that evening at Banff Centre's Eric Harvie Theatre high within Alberta's Rocky Mountains — it's minus 26 degrees centigrade when I leave my hotel room. The air grabs at my lungs, sucking moisture from my body, and I walk quickly over to the bistro to meet Eric Beauchesne, the associate artistic director of Kidd Pivot, the company behind the production. He's agreed to an interview on what is possibly the tensest morning of all for everyone involved in this co-creation between Crystal Pite, Kidd Pivot's founding director, and Jonathon Young from Electric Company Theatre.

Pite is the celebrated Vancouver-based choreographer known for her magical, inventive creations for Paris Opera Ballet, London's Royal Ballet and Nederlands Dans Theater, among many others. *Betroffenheit*, the Kidd Pivot dance-theatre hybrid she co-created with Young, won awards and toured widely around the world. Following hot on the heels of that blockbuster success, *Revisor* comes with high expectations.

Kidd Pivot was at Banff Centre as part of a three-week residency to get the work up on the boards and polished before its official Vancouver premiere a week later. When I ask Beauchesne how the dancers have been coping in the high altitude, he says it took the first week to get acclimatized. "But it's good," he says, "it's like Olympic training." Once you master dancing on the mountain, "you're like a rock star on the plain!"

He adds, "We have pretty much the entire team here to finish the piece. It's also pretty much the same team we had for *Betroffenheit*. We're like a family, we understand each other, which means you don't lose time learning how people will work together."

Collegial dynamics are something he negotiates constantly through his involvement in a range of activities that seem to intersect with everyone on the creative and production teams. Although he acts as rehearsal director on tour whenever Pite is busy with another project, "right now, Crystal is really hands-on with the dancers, so I might clean some sections a little, but most of my work is assisting her."

Beauchesne danced with Kidd Pivot for 10 years; his last onstage role was the dramatically weighty father figure, Prospero, in Pite's *Tempest Replica*. This means he has a lot of firsthand physical knowledge about Pite's choreographic vocabulary. "I've probably developed more instinct than I'm even aware of," he says.

Beauchesne's daily schedule is multi-faceted, including attending rehearsals where he films run-throughs and takes notes for Pite. "Afterward, Crystal and I will have a two- or three-minute

chat about the next day, to talk about priorities, and what I should share with the dancers or collaborators. I also brief her about a bunch of things.” He compares his job to that of a curler, frantically sweeping the ice to clear the path of anything that might impede the stone as it approaches its target. “I need to think ahead to what Crystal might need in 10 minutes or even five seconds!”

He’s in close touch with the dancers, too. Four of the eight who perform in *Revisor* are new to Kidd Pivot, and there’s one swing, Renée Sigouin, who must be ready to fill in when needed. *Revisor* comes with challenges even for the most experienced Kidd Pivot dancer, says Beauchesne, because with the other shows behind them they are hyper-aware of the myriad angles and subtleties possible for them to tap into. Plus, he adds, “The roles in *Revisor* are epic, emotionally and physically.”

The 80-minute work is built around a script by Young, inspired by playwright Nikolai Gogol’s farce, *The Inspector General*. Pite, as director and choreographer, is working with the script in several complex ways, including sections where the dancers move expressively in tight relationship to the dialogue.

As I shuffle into the dark auditorium, they are in action onstage. Once my eyes adjust, I can see Pite sitting at the back of the auditorium alongside technical crew and lighting and sound designers, a whole row of their computer screens glowing. Young is sitting alone several rows down.

“We’re going to build a new little scene,” Pite announces quietly before running down the aisle and climbing onto the stage. Her manner is low-key as she works with the dancers, but there is dogged determination as, over and over, she asks, “Can we try it one more time?”

Each run-through involves a team effort because the dancers’ movement is so closely integrated with sound, lighting and scenic design. As Beauchesne says, “The way things are put together — the *mise-en-scène* — gives a real depth of meaning” to the choreography. Clearly, having the actual theatre space in which to rehearse for the last two weeks has been invaluable.

At 3.15 p.m., a new music track arrives from one of *Revisor*’s composers and sound designers (there are three in the double role: Owen Belton, Alessandro Juliani and Meg Roe). Once it’s confirmed the material is in the system, Pite announces yet another “one more time.” Just hours before

Crystal Pite’s manner is low-key as she works with the dancers, but there is dogged determination as, over and over, she asks, “Can we try it one more time?”

“Crystal did a bit of that in *Betroffenheit*,” says Beauchesne, “where the body would move exactly on the text. It was like the text was almost possessing the body.” As with lip sync, if the movement is behind by even a fraction of a second, “it looks wrong.”

Each dancer is matched with an actor who is the voice for their character; the voiceovers were recorded last summer and are now layered with music, typically with several tracks playing at the same time.

“Yesterday morning, I uploaded the newest versions to the dancers so they could listen to them on their phones before our dress rehearsal,” says Beauchesne. Changes this late in the day for such a complex orchestration of sound and vision are, he admits, “very nerve-wracking.”

A few minutes before 10 a.m., Beauchesne leaves for the theatre to assist Pite, with light and sound cues as the main agenda. I head down the mountain to the small resort town of Banff, a short walk away, returning that afternoon to catch some of the rehearsal with the dancers.

the audience arrives, the theatre is not yet a place to dream, as action explodes in spurts and starts, the stage going to dark and coming to light again and again.

The dancers are in rehearsal clothes, but I’ve been told that character-rich costumes are part of the finely calibrated web of design supporting their performances. I had hoped to talk to costume designer Nancy Bryant, but she begged off until the next day.

That night, as the audience streams into the theatre, there is the usual sense of anticipation that precedes any new work. As *Revisor*’s opening scene begins, the hush is intense. The familiar themes of the Gogol farce, in which corrupt and inept officials from “the centre” are shaken up by the arrival of an underling they mistake for a high-level inspector, play out. The story is told with those stunning integrations of movement and text we have come to expect from Pite’s work with her own company, now in collaboration with Young. As the dancers physically express the emotions and intentions, the text and subtext, the truths

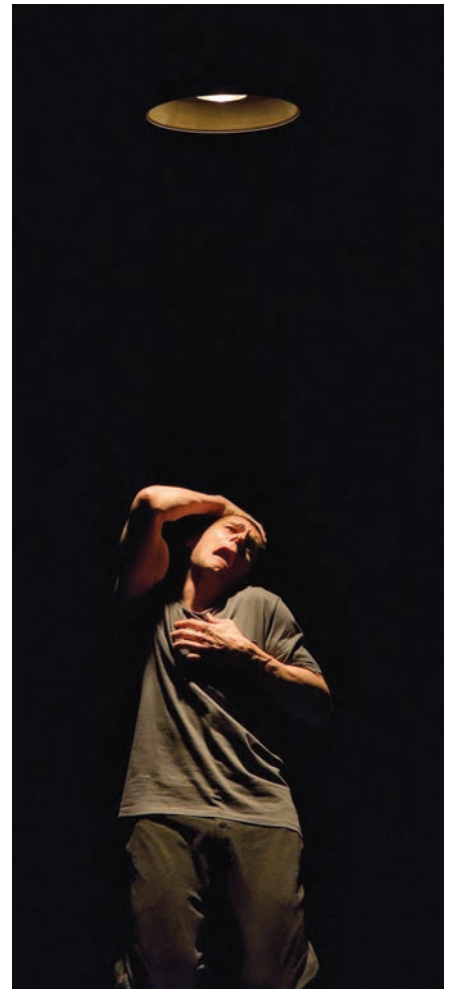
“The roles in  
*Revisor* are epic,  
emotionally  
and physically.”

— Eric Beauchesne

Right: David Raymond in Crystal Pite  
and Jonathon Young's *Revisor*

Below: Kidd Pivot in Crystal Pite  
and Jonathon Young's *Revisor*

Photos: Michael Slobodian





and lies of their eccentric characters, the audience chuckles at all the right places.

The next day, the atmosphere has notably lightened. When I visit the costume department in the basement of the theatre complex, Bryant is chatting quietly with Stevie Hale Jones (wig and wardrobe co-ordinator) and Elena Vandakurova (Banff Centre's wardrobe maintenance technician). They're discussing small fixes and tweaks Bryant has on the day's to-do list: a belt needs attaching to some pants, a top needs to be dyed a lighter shade and a headpiece needs adjusting. The headpiece is key to the hilarious transformation of dancer David Raymond into a bent, bushy-browed old man, complete with mutton-chop sideburns; it lays on a nearby table, its bald top frankly and comically false. "I'm going to move the eyebrows up," explains Bryant, "because they're covering David's eyes too much."

In addition to creative vision, costume design for dance involves great practical forethought. Bryant says that adding large gussets in the underarms ensures arms can be freely and fully extended, and that acetate lining makes the sleeves slippery and easy to get into during quick costume changes.

"There's a lot of bribing with wads of bills that have to be stuffed into pockets, so some of the coats have slits on the side to help the dancers access their pant pockets easily," she says.

There are extra deep pockets in the trousers for the title character of the *Revisor*, a dandy who receives numerous bribes; he's the underling, a mere reviser of legal documents, mistaken for an important government inspector. Performed by Tiffany Tregarthen (to a voiceover by Young), the role is another hilarious transformation, this time of gender as well as personality.

Bryant, like many on *Revisor's* creative team, has had a

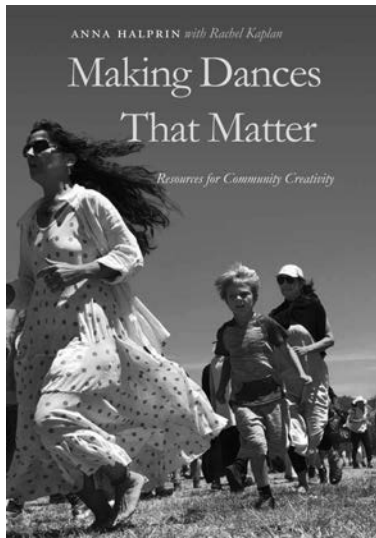
long working relationship with Pite. Hers goes back to 1996 and the costume design for the domestic drama, *Moving Day*, which Pite made for Ballet BC just before she left that company to dance with Frankfurt Ballet. As Beauchesne puts it, the team is like a family. And they have history together.

Pite's real-life family also made the journey to Banff Centre — her husband Jay Gower Taylor, a scenic designer who devised the set for many of her works, including *Revisor*; and their young son.

When I run into Gower Taylor in the lobby before the performance on the second night, he explains the technology he came up with for the light paintings that are a major visual element of the piece. It involves Mylar and two spotlights high up in the flies behind a rear projection screen. *Revisor's* action is conventionally framed by a few realistic set pieces, including a desk, a chair and a doorway, while the icy shards of light on the backdrop seem to support the poetic, more ephemeral aspects that are so crucial to Pite's aesthetic.

After the bell sounds a five-minute warning, we follow the crowd into the auditorium. Gower Taylor sits near the front with several colleagues. Pite joins them just before the lights go down, slipping into an aisle seat. Although I'm near the front as well, once the show starts I never even think to look for any of the small changes that had been fussed over after opening night.

It's not that they are unimportant, but I want to do my thing as a critic and member of the audience, unencumbered with practical or technical backstory. I immerse myself in the art that rushes past onstage, allowing *Revisor* to reveal itself through the unfolding of its uniquely imaginative choreographic and theatrical vision. *DI*



Excerpt from  
**MAKING DANCES THAT MATTER:  
 RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY CREATIVITY**  
 By Anna Halprin, with Rachel Kaplan  
 Wesleyan University Press  
[www.wesleyan.edu/wespress](http://www.wesleyan.edu/wespress)

WHEN ORDINARY MOVEMENT BECOMES DANCE

“What is the connection between ordinary, everyday movement and ‘dance’? How do we make the shift from one to the other? I believe this shift happens when we choose our movement for reasons other than the purely functional. When our awareness is focused on the expressive qualities of movement, we begin to experience it as dance. This awareness is available to anyone, regardless of any specific movement training. Dance, in these terms, is about intention, and not about the specific movements or actions themselves. Deep breathing can be a dance if we come to it with a quality of awareness and curiosity. Setting the table or sweeping the floor can be a dance. Imagine the possibilities for invigorating our lives when we bring this kind of awareness to movements we do every day.

The ‘techniques’ I want to impart are ones that cultivate the whole person as a dancer rather than ones that make the dancer into a physical technician. When the four main levels of awareness — physical/kinesthetic, emotional, mental, and spiritual — are equally included in the process of creative expression, a bridge is made between unconscious and conscious awareness connecting the individual’s inner experience with external expression. It is because of the connections between movement, emotion, image (content), and spirit that we are able to uncover our personal stories and myths, as individuals and in community. The discovery of the personal myth and its relationship to the collective myth is the first step in creating a dance that will speak to the real-life situations and needs of the dancers and witnesses.

I want to make dances in which the movement itself is so real and direct that it will create an experience in the present that does not need to be mediated by an act of interpretation. It is not so much a matter of inventing interesting, clever, or evocative moments to access the body’s inner wisdom. It is more a process of finding an ordinary movement that is essential, one that serves the intention of the dance. Reaching, stretching, backing up, turning around, running, falling, rising are all ordinary movements, but when they are selected in relation to an intention and you notice the emotions and images they evoke, they transform into an artistic expression of who you are. When done with self-awareness, these ordinary movements create a visceral response in both dancer and witnesses. This kind of dance is filled with meaningful movements that serve a special intent.”

“

**DANCE LIVES HERE**

For over 25 years Arts Umbrella Dance has been shaping intelligent, motivated dance students into strong, in-demand dance artists. Our ballet-based program focuses on the complete dancer, providing rigorous physical training as well as intellectual development, making Arts Umbrella Alumni some of the the most sought-after dance graduates in the world.

**Discover where your talent can take you.**

**ARTS UMBRELLA** [artsumbrella.com/dance](http://artsumbrella.com/dance)





[www.twitter.com/DanceProducts](http://www.twitter.com/DanceProducts)  
[www.facebook.com/DanceProducts](http://www.facebook.com/DanceProducts)  
[www.pinterest.com/DanceProducts](http://www.pinterest.com/DanceProducts)  
[www.instagram.com/DanceProducts](http://www.instagram.com/DanceProducts)

**STAGESTEP**  
**Flooring Solutions**

*For Dance, Theater & the Performing Arts*

### **Ballet Barres**

Freestanding Barres, Portable Barres,  
Wall and Floor Mount Barres  
and Brackets

### **Dance Floors**

Stagewise Subfloor Systems  
and Vinyl Dance Flooring

### **Glassless Mirrors**

Wall Mount Mirrors,  
Mirrors on Rolling Stand

### **Staging**



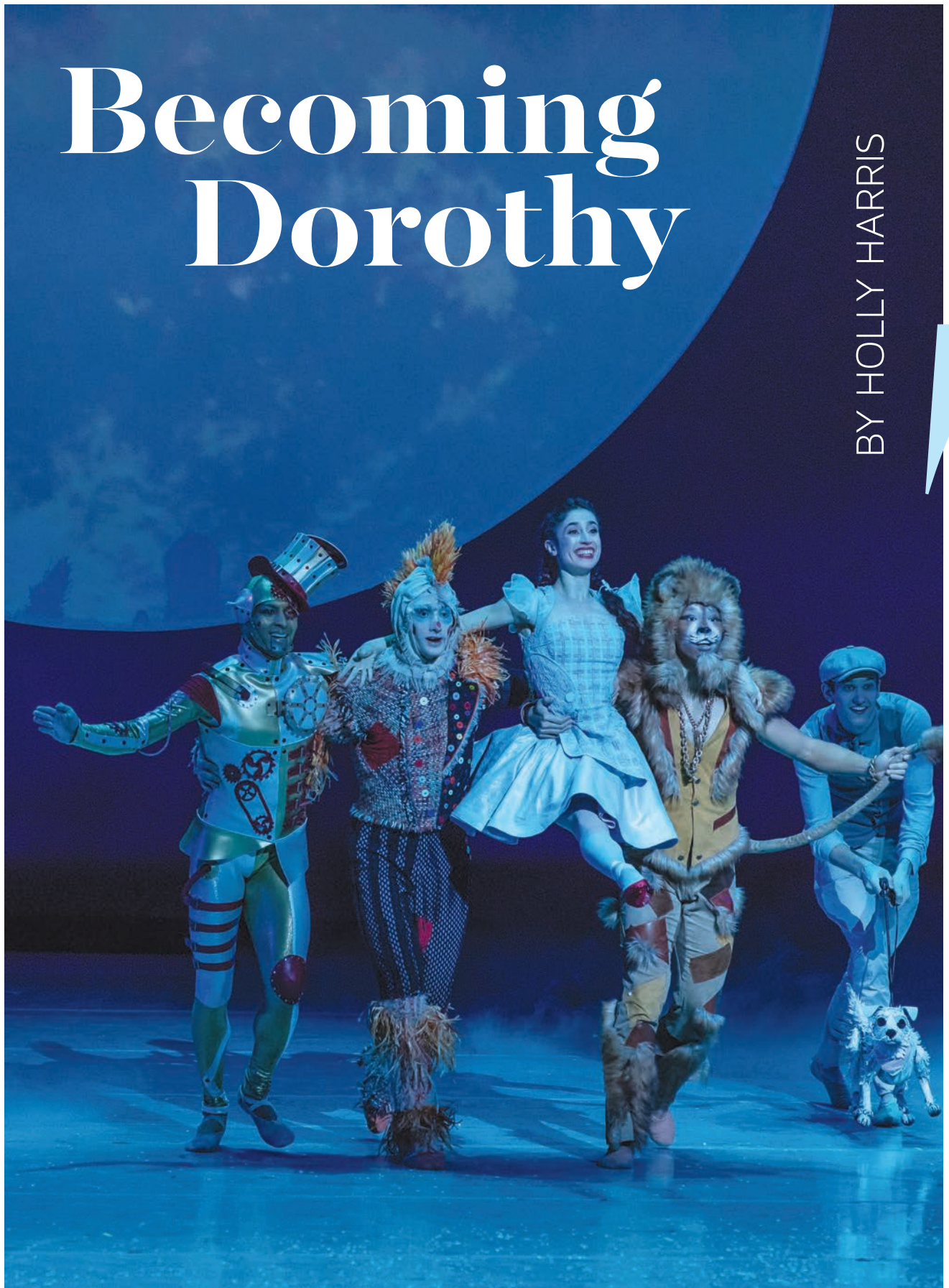
en **pointe**

Quality Products  
*designed by dancers for dancers*

1-866-491-9019   [info@en-pointe.com](mailto:info@en-pointe.com)   [www.en-pointe.com](http://www.en-pointe.com)

# Becoming Dorothy

BY HOLLY HARRIS



# Three ballet companies join forces to co-produce Septime Webre's *The Wizard of Oz*

Three mid-sized North American ballet companies recently joined forces to whisk viewers to the land of Oz courtesy of Septime Webre's *The Wizard of Oz*. Kansas City Ballet, Colorado Ballet and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet each staged Webre's full-length story ballet based on L. Frank Baum's children's tale *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, which inspired the 1939 Hollywood film *The Wizard of Oz* starring Judy Garland, and later, Broadway hits *The Wiz* and *Wicked*.

The two-act ballet began shaping up in August 2016 after Webre, the New Orleans-born artistic director of Hong Kong Ballet, travelled to Kansas City, Denver and Winnipeg to cast dancers, workshop ideas and plant choreographic seeds. "Dancers bring a ballet to life better when they've had a hand in creating the work, as they leave their fingerprints or DNA in the production," he said over the telephone from Hong Kong. This collaborative approach, he says, "also made the three artistic directors and their administrative staff feel a greater sense of ownership as well."

The ambitious co-production, with its budget of more than \$1 million, shared equally by the three organizations, features an original orchestral score by American composer Matthew Pierce (played live at all three company premieres), costumes by Liz Vandal and Nicolas Mahon's puppets, including a troop of winged monkeys and mechanical dog, Toto, operated by an onstage puppeteer.

The contemporary work had its genesis after Webre approached the artistic directors — Gil Boggs in Kansas, Devon Carney in Colorado and André Lewis in Winnipeg — with his lifelong dream of creating his own ballet version of *The Wizard of Oz*. It's his third incarnation; the first was a puppet show created when he was 12, using 99 cent Mexican marionettes (Mahon's puppets were inspired by those original stringed prototypes). His second production came several years later, presented through the Texas School for the Blind and a local service organization for children with Down syndrome where Webre worked as a volunteer.

The artistic directors, with their executive directors, conferred every two weeks via conference calls on telephone and Skype, which accelerated to weekly meetings as the pace quickened and the Kansas City Ballet world premiere in October 2018 loomed.



One challenge was gaining licensing rights from Warner Bros., which holds tight rein over the film's intellectual property, including the show's title, Dorothy's iconic ruby slippers and images of Toto. In return for their permission, the film company executives were consulted on all details, ultimately approving publicity and marketing materials as well as attending the premiere.

Costumes were built in Winnipeg by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's wardrobe department, with the elaborate sets and puppets constructed in various locales throughout the United States. Design elements were jointly approved by the directors (through Dropbox, for instance), with final decisions made by a democratic majority vote.

All three artistic directors affirm that this international co-production's success relied fundamentally on mutual trust, respect, and a shared aesthetic and organizational values, including each company being similar sized with an interest in offering family-friendly programming.



The Royal Winnipeg Ballet's Sophia Lee (Dorothy) in Septime Webre's *The Wizard of Oz*  
Photo: David Cooper

The intrepid dancer also flew onstage for her first time during the Act I tornado scene, drawing on childhood memories of rollercoasters to dispel any fear of heights. She garnered rave reviews for her role debut, with a “life-essence that was larger than just ‘innocence,’” according to the *Independent*.

DeVenuta began training at 13 with Fabrice Herrault in New York City for two years. She moved to Boston Ballet’s pre-professional program for the next three years, becoming a company trainee in 2012. She joined Kansas City Ballet in 2014, with her inaugural season including Webre’s *Alice (in Wonderland)*.

Ballet dancers are accustomed to nomadic lives, honing international careers that often take them around the globe. DeVenuta, who has already lived in multiple cities, is comfortable wherever dance takes her.

“I’m at a place in my life where I felt I could really connect with Dorothy and her longing for something more,” she reveals. “But I have also come to realize that ‘home’ is where the heart is. As Dorothy, I want audiences to feel that love I feel for my home, which is now Kansas.”

#### KANSAS CITY BALLET’S AMANDA DEVENUTA

Amanda DeVenuta, 24, not only had the privilege of performing the inaugural Dorothy during the world premiere of *The Wizard of Oz*, she also had the thrill of performing it in the same state where Baum’s tale is set.

“I had performed lead roles before, but this was my first full-length show,” states the raven-haired company dancer (there are no traditional ranks within the troupe) over the telephone from Kansas City. The lion’s share of the choreography was created on her, including Dorothy’s breathtaking opening solo that took advantage of DeVenuta’s naturally lyrical lines.

In addition to re-watching the film numerous times and devouring all of Baum’s books, the Bronx-born artist fleshed out her character by hitting the road for the Oz Museum in Wamego, located approximately two hours northwest of Kansas City. Driving past “rows and rows” of waving cornfields in the Kansas flatlands inspired her, as did playing *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* in her dressing room each night before going onstage.

With many eyes on her on opening night — including all three artistic directors, several ballet presenters and Warner Bros.’ executives — DeVenuta’s positive, can-do spirit — not unlike Dorothy’s — helped her handle the pressure, including nailing the enthralling lifts that are Webre’s calling card.

#### THE ROYAL WINNIPEG BALLET’S SOPHIA LEE

Royal Winnipeg Ballet principal dancer Sophia Lee, 27, first saw *The Wizard of Oz* as a young girl growing up in South Korea, with *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* dubbed in Korean.

“I remember having a hard time relating to this girl named Dorothy,” the willowy dancer recounts over the telephone prior to the Canadian premiere in May 2019. “She’s a brave girl who leaves home and takes on adventures with strange creatures ... I was never allowed to have sleepovers or even walk outside alone when I was young, so you can imagine how shocking that was for me.”

She thoughtfully refers to her creative journey as “becoming Dorothy,” digging deeply to find ways to authentically connect with her character, a Kansas farm girl who she describes as a “light-hearted risk-taker.”

Lee emigrated with her family to Langley, B.C., at age 12, where her parents would take her and her younger brother to art galleries and museums, which she now credits for her strongly visual approach to learning new choreography. One of her teachers at Vancouver’s Cameron Dance Academy, recognizing her talent, suggested she audition for the RWB

School Professional Division, where she was accepted at 16.

Upon graduating in 2010, Lee joined the Royal Winnipeg Ballet as an aspirant, with her first season including Webre's *Alice (in Wonderland)*. She joined the corps de ballet in 2011 and was made a principal in 2015.

She was handpicked by Twyla Tharp to perform the Queen of the Underworld in *The Princess & The Goblin*, crediting the American icon for encouraging her to take creative risks. Svengali's First (as in first victim) in Mark Godden's *Svengali*, created for her, is one of her favourite ballets to date for the way it challenged her to grow dramatically.

The word "trust" runs through our conversation as Lee recounts initial rehearsals with Webre in March 2018, in which he shared personal stories of his childhood and invited the dancers to share their own memories of growing up. She says that built invaluable rapport and connection while creating a spirit of trusting, open discovery.

"I feel really grateful that I have been chosen to portray this role," she says, keenly aware of the challenges that come with any new creation, which pushes dedicated artists to even greater heights.

"A lot of dancers worry that something's going to go wrong or they won't dance well, but I want to let all of that go," Lee reveals. "My goal during this process was to find ease in the process of becoming Dorothy, and just have fun."

## COLORADO BALLET'S DANA BENTON

Throughout her career, Colorado Ballet principal dancer Dana Benton, 36, has demonstrated a steely grit and drive that would make Dorothy proud.

The Hamilton, Ontario-born artist credits her training, which began at age nine at Canada's National Ballet School, for instilling in her the rigour and discipline that fuelled her youthful dream to dance. She also drew inspiration from the company's legendary former principal dancer, now artistic director, Karen Kain.

"I remember Karen's final *Swan Lake* in 1994, which was actually my first time watching her. Her dancing seemed so seamless and easy," recalls Benton.

After graduating from the school in 2000, she apprenticed one season with Alberta Ballet before joining Colorado Ballet as a corps de ballet member in 2001, becoming a principal in 2014.

"Septime is a ball of energy," she reveals over the telephone from Denver. "He's go-go-go in bringing his ideas out and you have to try to show him what you think he's asking for."

Benton, who first saw the Hollywood film at age five, was enthralled with the fantastical characters.

"I tried to imagine what Judy Garland was feeling as Dorothy during her transition from Kansas to waking up in Munchkinland, trying to portray some of those same kinds of emotions," she reveals of crafting her character, which she describes as a more "playful" protagonist than Garland's version.

She also drew on experience performing Webre's *Alice (in Wonderland)* and *Where the Wild Things Are*, which boosted her confidence with his virtuosic movement vocabulary. Equally important, she built physical stamina with intensive rehearsals that facilitated her being onstage for nearly the entire show.

Benton had proved her mettle earlier: she was seven months pregnant with her now two-year-old daughter, Poppy, when Webre first arrived for rehearsals, donning her pointe shoes and ready for action. For safety, her fellow company members stepped in to work out the intricacies of Dorothy's precarious lifts and tosses with Tin Man, Scarecrow and the Cowardly Lion — and often all three at once.



The highly focused artist returned to daily class two weeks after giving birth, and was onstage 10 weeks later.

Two favourite roles are Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty* and Tinkerbell in *Peter Pan*. But perhaps closest to her heart is *Travelling Alone*, created on her in 2012 by San Francisco-based choreographer Amy Seiwert.

"I could relate to this ballet as it's very much like real life," Benton explains. "You have your group of friends, and then your friends move on to a different company and you make new friends. I was in transition back then, so *Travelling Alone* is about that person, who is me, finding out where they belong.

"When I'm performing Dorothy, I want to take viewers on their own journey, and perhaps bring them back to when they first watched *The Wizard of Oz*," she adds. "I want to help them experience that same sense of wonder and joy they had then." <sup>DI</sup>

# Soloist Zhong-Jing Fang



BY CARLA ESCODA

Moving up the ranks at American Ballet Theatre

A pillar of the corps de ballet at American Ballet Theatre since 2004, Zhong-Jing Fang earned the coveted title of soloist last summer. Over the years, the elegant, long-limbed dancer seems to have softened the edges of a quirky, brittle style and made striking impressions in roles ranging from a fiery Mercedes in *Don Quixote*, a sorrowfully majestic Zulma in *Giselle*, an otherworldly soloist Shade in *La Bayadère* and a side-splitting Mademoiselle Marianne Chartreuse in Alexei Ratmansky's *Whipped Cream*.

Known to friends and colleagues as ZJ, or just Zee, Fang is much admired within the company for her work ethic and dogged optimism.

She has also received a number of choreographic commissions, her dance-making instincts first ignited in a series of choreography initiatives at American Ballet Theatre.

In 2017, New York Theatre Ballet commissioned her to co-create a 48-minute piece with one of their dancers, Steven Melendez, to a suite of Philip Glass' piano études

arranged for steel drums. In *Song Before Spring*, their dancers would share the stage with a 12-piece steel drum ensemble. The undertaking was risky, given the length of the work, the overpowering presence of the drums and the relative inexperience of the choreographers, but the results were exhilarating.

Fang has tackled challenges before. At the age of 25, she was sidelined for two years by a serious ankle injury. She underwent surgery to repair an ankle tendon and was forced to grapple with the possibility that she would never return to dance.

She hit her first crossroad, however, when she was only 10. She had been one of a handful of young dancers to make it through the prestigious Shanghai Ballet School auditions, and had to leave her family behind in Jinshan.

She reflected on that experience and more when I caught up with her between *Nutcracker* rehearsals at ABT's studios in New York. Here is some of our conversation.

Above: Zhong-Jing Fang in American Ballet Theatre's *Don Quixote*  
Photo: Gene Schiavone



“Each role is important, and acting helps complete the characters of the ballet.”



**CE:** There are still surprisingly few Chinese dancers, especially women, in soloist ranks at many of the world’s leading companies. Do you feel pressure to be a role model?

**ZJF:** I didn’t when I first started my journey. I was just so passionate about dance, and to dance with one of the best companies in the world was a dream come true. I was extremely focused on how I could make myself better.

But today there are many younger Asian students and dancers who come up to me or write me messages on Facebook or Instagram, and say, “You inspire me.” And that opened my eyes to the idea that I have a bigger voice, not just to represent myself, but also to inspire the next generation.

**CE:** You got your big break after winning competitions — starting with a scholarship at the 2000 Prix de Lausanne. Do you think young dancers today are much different than when you were competing?

**ZJF:** I don’t know that much about competitions today, but I see much younger dancers doing very difficult things. They are not only stronger technically, but they also have a wider view of dance. You can watch dance on the internet, on YouTube, which we didn’t have before, and you can see dancers from different countries. That really helps dancers to be more aware.

My own experience with competition was very positive; it opened doors, created opportunities. But, for me, competition was not just about winning. I wanted to have the broader experience. Very few dancers from China, and from our school, were picked to go to the competition. I knew how rare that opportunity was.

**CE:** During the two years that you were recovering from injury, you took drama classes. How did that experience nurture you as a dancer?

**ZJF:** I learned so much from acting class. When I was coming back from my injury, I wasn’t doing pointe work. However, I was doing a lot of character roles and really worked hard to build on the characters — for each role is important, and acting helps complete the characters of the ballet.

**Carla Escoda:** What was your introduction to the Shanghai Ballet School like?

**Zhong-Jing Fang:** I knew I was very lucky. Especially because my generation [she is 35] was probably the last generation of government-supported students.

But when I first started, I couldn’t get through it. I had a “crying buddy” — a friend. Every day we cried after class, and at night we would be homesick and cry some more.

I had thought it was just going to be dancing, that it was going to be fun. But it turned out to be exercise, all the difficult sit-ups, stretches, all that training. My ballet teacher was concerned. She had a talk with my dad and said, “Maybe she doesn’t want to be a dancer.”

My dad asked me, “Do you want to dance? Because if you don’t, we can go home.” I realized that, if I wanted to be good enough, I had to focus. I said, “Yes, I want to dance.” And from then I started to work really hard and make sure I mastered everything. Half a year later, I became one of the best students. I knew so little at that time in my life but, somehow, I figured out that to succeed I had to work hard.

My very first role coming back was in Alexei Ratmansky's *Nutcracker*. I was originally second-cast Sugar Plum Fairy. At the time I was doing research, I watched Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* and fell in love with the two queens — the red queen and the black queen. I asked myself, if I were in *Wonderland* as a fairyland queen and these were my people, how would I be? I took that role to a different level in my acting, and after the dress rehearsal Alexei switched me to first cast.

**CE: How did acting class influence your choreography?**

**ZJF:** The first piece I did was for Cassie [Trenary] and Sterling [Baca]. Called *The Final Frame*, it premiered in 2011 at the Joyce Theater.

They had just joined the company, and I told them, "I know you guys are very talented. But I want to see who you are." That's something I learned from acting, it's not about hiding yourself, it's about showing who you are, being more connected to yourself.

I wanted this ballet to be like a film — rather than watching a movie you're watching a live show that's like a film. I wanted the audience to feel like they were zooming in on the dancers.

**CE: How did you get picked to create this piece?**

**ZJF:** I had taken a women's choreography workshop at ABT and really liked it. I was injured at the time and made my very first piece of choreography, a solo for me in a chair, for one minute. I put everything I was going through [with my injury] into that piece. It felt therapeutic as an artist to be able to express myself without thinking "I can't dance."

Then, in the second year [of being injured], I was chosen to create the work on Cassie and Sterling.

**CE: What inspires you to make dance?**

**ZJF:** I recently did a piece for five women at Columbia University, which was performed in November at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater studios. I was fascinated by the women's different journeys — they are dancers, but some of them are also becoming doctors, for example. I was blessed to have a composer who created music for me, and we had text written by three of the dancers about dance and vulnerability, and who they are as women. It felt very empowering.

Every piece I've made so far is connected to my own journey. Like *The Idea of Becoming*, created for 14 students at JKO [ABT Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School]. When I saw them, I saw myself in their shoes; they were just so young, they didn't know much, but they all seemed hungry, they all had an urge to dance.

At that time, I was back to dancing [post-injury], but I didn't know how far I could go. Could I still push myself forward or was I just going to stay in one place? I had a lot of fear. And when I saw those dancers, I was inspired by them. I thought, "What is the idea of 'becoming' for them?"

The music was composed by a friend of mine. He composed the music literally on me, inspired by my life. He created three different movements — the first one was very avant-garde, very mysterious, Stravinsky-like, suggesting something intriguing is about to begin. The second one was very competitive, very fast, very technical, very fun, with a lot of colour in the music. The third was the most emotional, slow and sentimental, very big music.

**CE: The music was a portrait of your journey?**

**ZJF:** Right! I wanted the dancers to start at the beginning of their journey, when there's a lot they don't know. Just like me when I first left my home in China — you're following your dream but you still have no idea what is going to happen. Later, you are experiencing a certain level of success — you're meeting all these people, you're having fun.

In the last part — which was the hardest part for the dancers because they were only 14 to 17 — I asked them to imagine, "If you had already had your career and 50 years later you would look back, how would you look at yourself?" Somehow it was very transforming for the dancers; I could see in them a sense of soul.

That also helped me to face my fear.

**CE: In an industry of notably stylish people, you stand out as a style icon. How did you develop your vivid personal style?**

**ZJF:** When I joined the ballet company, I just wore jeans and T-shirts ... this was until my injury. After my injury, I was able to escape the bubble that I had felt trapped in — I became free.

One day I went into a hat store on 19th St., and this lady, I call her my fairy godmother, told me each of her hats was inspired by a Hollywood movie star and encouraged me to try them. That's when I started to love wearing hats.

My fashion style came after taking a drawing class. I started to use that imagination visually on myself. I would make myself a kind of homework to come up with bizarre outfits — like green tights, a blond wig, huge earrings. Every day I would have a different vision, maybe related to the weather or my mood. On New York streets, I would either get compliments — "Girl, love that wig!" or "Great outfit!" — or people would roll their eyes. It was nerve-racking, but every day felt very organic and from there I built my fashion sense. No judgments of myself, just encouragement. <sup>01</sup>



Zhong-Jing Fang in Alexei Ratmansky's *Whipped Cream*  
Photo: Rosalie O'Connor





# SPRINGBOARD

## TO OPPORTUNITY

Montreal's powerhouse summer dance program

From its modest beginnings in 2002 as a largely improvised summer dance program in Montreal, Springboard has become a closely managed three-week powerhouse in June that attracts hundreds of international candidates to its auditions. Those who are chosen work with well-known choreographers in some of Montreal's best-equipped studios. As a place to learn, network and audition for professional companies, the program has become true to its name — a springboard to new opportunity.

At Springboard's annual end-of-session shows on the expansive stage at Usine C, I have marvelled over the years at the dancers' level of technical accomplishment, as well as by their ability to form cohesive ensembles and to learn complex routines in a short time.

"Springboard's first year had 27 students, and there were 45 in the second year," recalls Susan Alexander, director of Ballet Divertimento, the downtown Montreal classical dance school where Springboard was launched and which

remains a rehearsal site along with studios in the central Montreal Wilder Building. "For several years, there were between 60 and 80 participants, but, since 2015, there have been 100 or more. This past year, there were 120."

Alexander co-founded Springboard with Alexandra Wells, a teacher at New York's Juilliard School. "Alexandra was a third-year advisory teacher at Juilliard in 2002 when she called me to ask about summer programs," says Alexander. "Her graduating students were going to be auditioning and needed experience working with a company. I told her that I'd see what I could put together."

She hoped to persuade company directors to accommodate one or two apprentices. Gradimir Pankov, then director of the city's biggest dance company, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, was on board first. He took not one but eight students, assigning his ballet master, Pierre Lapointe, to teach them an excerpt from Nacho Duato's lively, folkloric *Jardí Tancat*.

Many of the participants in Springboard's early years



Alexandra Wells  
Photo: Courtesy of Springboard Danse Montréal

As a place to learn, network and audition for professional companies, the program has become true to its name — a springboard to new opportunity.

were senior students either from Montreal dance schools or from Juilliard.

“For the first few years, dancers were put in five different choreographic situations hosted by local companies,” says Alexander. “We called it an apprentice program to give the participants a relationship with choreographers and companies that was different from what they found in school.”

Discipline was imposed from the outset. “The kids had to be professional — it wasn’t a school situation,” says Alexander. “We were strict on that from day one. That’s why it was a success. A lot of that was due to Alexandra Wells. I handled more the structure and arrangements with studios and companies.”

The audition process to get into Springboard has stringent criteria. Auditions are held in January and February in New York, Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto. A live audition is always preferable, but those who cannot attend can mail in their application.

Skill alone is not enough to ensure acceptance.

“Participants have to be A-one human beings. We’ve turned down a lot of terrific dancers if they didn’t have good references,” notes Alexander. “The dance community can really trust the dancers Springboard presents: any of them would be a sterling addition to a company.”

As Springboard’s reputation and size grew, the composition of participants changed. Today, the dancers are mainly in their 20s, although in 2018, the oldest was 32.

They come from across North America and, in recent years, between 10 and 15 dancers have come from Asia or Europe. The experience has proved so rewarding that 28 of the participants in 2018 had already attended at least one previous Springboard session; some return three or four times.

“The first time, they’re just surviving like at a boot camp. There’s so much information that it’s a little overwhelming even for a mature dancer,” says Wells. “The second time, they know how to navigate, taking away what they need or came for. They make sure to introduce themselves to people, be proactive and show interest in choreographers’ work. It’s a hub for networking, but you’ve got to be grounded enough to do it in an authentic way.”

Over the years, Alexander notes, the program has moved away from its Montreal roots and become more international.

“Canadian dancers want to learn with international companies, not just with people they’ve already worked with. It was a bit of a problem attracting Montrealers because they had worked with many of the choreographers in the local schools.”

Participants in 2018 learned works from the repertoires of 10 companies, including Crystal Pite’s Kidd Pivot, Sharon Eyal and Gai Behar’s L-E-V Dance Company, Margie Gillis’ Legacy Project, Batsheva Dance Company and Maxine Doyle’s Punchdrunk. In the course of Springboard’s history, its participants have performed new or repertoire works staged by representatives from some 40 well-known Canadian and international companies.

“Most companies wanted to return every year because it was a lot of fun to work with wonderful young dancers,” says Alexander. “But my criterion for choosing a company was whether they were hiring. One time, [Montreal choreographer] José Navas got a big grant to do a new work, so I took him because he was hiring. The last big piece of his that I saw, every single dancer was from Springboard!”

Participants sometimes make a plea to work with a choreographer who interests them. “Some might want to work specifically with ballet repertory or contemporary

rep,” explains Doyle, a British choreographer who was first invited to create a short work for Springboard in 2014. “Most of the dancers I worked with were interested in being part of a new creation or creative process rather than adapting or interpreting an existing language.”

Doyle herself has benefited from the Springboard experience, using the opportunity to research a new idea or work. Next year, she will return in the hope of workshopping a new work for Punchdrunk.

Over the years, Doyle has recruited at least 10 Springboard dancers for her company. The chance to work with a group over the course of a session gives choreographers a good idea as to which one will fit their style and needs. A Springboard session becomes an extended audition.

Stephan Laks is one dancer who has used Springboard to launch his career. He was one of Wells’ students at Juilliard when he took part in the very first edition.

“Choreographers like H el ene Blackburn and Shawn Hounsell and people from Les Ballets Jazz de Montr el were teaching,” recalls Laks, who began working this year as ballet master with Ballet Berlin. “It felt like a different experience than anything else at that time, certainly for the students going from school to professional work.”

Immediately after Springboard, Laks received a contract with Les Grands Ballets, where he danced for two years, later working at G teborg Opera Dance Company and Royal Swedish Ballet.

Today, Springboard caters to dancers at different places in their careers, “either professional dancers in transition or those looking for different information,” says Christoph von Riedemann, who ended a stint as a dancer with Ballet BC shortly before participating in the 2018 Springboard. “There’s a connection to the American dance scene that I hadn’t experienced much in Canada. Many dancers and choreographers come from the U.S. and there are also many international dancers and choreographers. It’s kind of a microcosm of the real dance world.”

Von Riedemann looks at Springboard almost as though it were a dance company that appears briefly and then disappears.

“The classes are broken down quite a bit. You have a smaller class in the morning for the first week while everyone is getting to know one another. In the afternoon, there’s a different group, so you meet new people. The next week, there’s the casting, which changes the people you’re with, though maybe there’s some common ground. Then there’s a third layer, the emerging choreographers — that’s another group.”

In recent years, Springboard has offered excellent opportunities for emerging and young choreographers. Kyle Abraham, Sidra Bell and Roderick George are three who later went on to successful careers. Like many emerging choreographers, Abraham had no money to pay for experienced dancers and relied on dancer friends to perform his works.

“When Abraham came here and worked with the best of the students, he was able to use all his choreographic skill,” says Alexander. “Also, he could take his distance from the

dancers and push them in ways that he couldn’t when people were donating their time. It transformed him.”

Last year, Springboard started a resident choreographer program with two emerging choreographers. “They got more studio space and got to meet presenters,” says Wells.

“We also launched a collaboration with New York’s Gibney Dance whose senior director, Amy Miller, once took part in Springboard. She came to Montreal to select an emerging choreographer to go to New York to create a work for her company. Micaela Taylor from Los Angeles was selected to receive our first EMERGE Choreographic Award and its \$5,000 commission.”

Emerging choreographers who want to apply to Springboard need to mail a written proposal, artistic statement, r sum  and internet links to their recent work. The annual deadline is December 1.

“A panel of six goes through each application,” says Wells. “They narrow down the applications a few times to see who’s a match for Springboard. For instance, we’re not



Susan Alexander  
Photo: Ilia Khodos

going to have a Balanchine-style classical choreographer. We have to find the right stylistic fit as well as someone who is experienced working with large groups of at least 12 dancers.”

Although Springboard separated administratively from Ballet Divertimento in 2016, and Susan Alexander withdrew from Springboard’s administration in 2017 to focus on managing her school, she remains a keen observer. As such, she has advice for Springboard participants.

“They should take jobs when they’re offered because if they hesitate, the job will be gone,” she says, citing the case of two Springboard dancers who declined offers at Les Grands Ballets Canadiens and with Nacho Duato in Spain, ultimately to their regret.

In other words, when you are on a springboard, be ready to jump. ❖

# CREATIVE DECOLONIZATION

## JEANETTE KOTOWICH EXPLORES HER INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

BY TESSA PERKINS DENEALT



Jeanette Kotowich in her solo *Eloise*  
Photo: Daniel Paquet



As a dance artist of Cree, Métis and mixed European descent from Treaty 4 Territory in Saskatchewan, Jeanette Kotowich's cultural heritage is a source of inspiration for her work. She explores identity through dance, telling stories of culture, land and Indigenous traditions. To her, dance is a language that can express a unique worldview in a contemporary context, as well as a spiritual practice and an intergenerational tool to pass on tradition and culture.

Along with creating her own solo works that explore her personal Indigenous heritage and connection to her ancestors and the landscape of Saskatchewan, Kotowich is a member of a number of Vancouver-based dance companies whose work is rooted in Indigenous traditions. One of those is Yvonne Chartrand's company V'ni Dansi, which presents traditional and contemporary Métis jigs and Chartrand's contemporary works inspired by her Métis heritage.

Raven Spirit Dance is another; Kotowich has performed in all of artistic director Michelle Olson's contemporary choreographic works, which are inspired by an Indigenous worldview, since 2010.

Above: Jeanette Kotowich in her work *Steppin'*  
Photo: Alistair Maitland

In 2014, Kotowich joined the Dancers of Damelahamid. Hailing from the Gitksan First Nation of the north-west coast of British Columbia, this intergenerational dance company, now based in Vancouver, was founded by artistic director Margaret Grenier's parents in the 1960s. As Kotowich explains, "The commitment extends beyond being a contracted dance artist — I've been adopted as part of the family." While the company began in the Gitksan tradition, other Indigenous influences have been incorporated through marriage, including Cree traditions.

Moving through different Indigenous dance traditions may seem complex, but Kotowich explains that Indigenous identities are always multi-faceted. Just as her own identity includes Cree, Métis, German, Polish and Scottish heritage, many Indigenous identities are a blend of various traditions and cultures. Through her own work as a choreographer, Kotowich is exploring the many facets of her background to discover how they have shaped her worldview and connection to culture, land and tradition.

In her latest solo, *Valley*, Kotowich wants to explore how the landscape of her home in Saskatchewan lives in her body. She has a sense that her body is archiving all the dance languages of her mixed heritage, and she is digging deep to access them.

The process of exploring identity this way began at the Indigenous program at Alberta's Banff Centre, where she met Chartrand and many other members of the Indigenous dance community who continue to inspire her, including Starr Muranko, Gaetan Gingras and Santee Smith. "I didn't know about the Indigenous contemporary dance world," says Kotowich, "but all of a sudden I had all these people to look up to; some are mentors to this day." In 2010, she participated in an intensive training program with Smith, the artistic director of Kaha:wi Dance Theatre in Toronto.

Kotowich's training began with childhood ballet and modern dance classes in Regina, where she grew up, and she has a bachelor of fine arts in dance from Simon Fraser University. Later, wanting to go beyond mainstream European and American forms, she says, "I had to decolonize my dance practice to make room for other cultural dance practices."

After building up a network of collaborators in Vancouver, she began to feel something was missing. "I started to feel the pull

toward investigating my own artistic voice and dedicating time for my own practice." In 2015, she created her first solo, *Steppin'*, a jig that combines Métis traditions with contemporary influences. In 2016, she began work on *Valley*, described as "a creative returning to land, body and identity." Developed over a number of residencies, the full-length work will premiere in 2020.

At the 2019 Vancouver International Dance Festival, she performed *Eloise*, a character-driven solo exploring the practice of land acknowledgment, and appeared in Raven Spirit Dance's *Gathering Light*. She helped co-ordinate Dancers of Damelahamid's annual Coastal Dance Festival, and in September, she will perform with Damelahamid at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa for the premiere of *Minowin*, described on the centre's website as a "multimedia dance work" that connects "to landscapes from contemporary perspectives of customary Indigenous dance forms."

For Kotowich, the journey of learning about her identity through dance embodies the idea of being a steward of traditional knowledge and contemporary Indigenous perspectives. The journey continues with her collaborative work as well as her solo choreography, which bridges Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Kotowich tells stories from a unique perspective informed by her heritage and cultural influences. *DI*

**CONTEMPORARY**  
**DYNAMIC**  
**EXPRESSIVE**  
**REFINED**  
**POWERFUL**

200 Crichton Street  
 Ottawa, ON K1M 1W2  
 T 613-238-7838  
 F 613-238-7839  
[www.theschoolofdance.ca](http://www.theschoolofdance.ca)

*Mariou Lépine by Sarah Schorlemer and Charles Cardin-Bourbeau by Gilles Vézina.*

**The School of Dance**

# POSITIONING BALLET

## The culture and place of ballet in the 21st century

BY JUDITH DELMÉ

The art and working culture of ballet have come under a great deal of scrutiny in the past decade. Serious questions have been raised about the responsibilities of leadership, the relevance of heritage works, and gender and race representation. To tackle such concerns head on, Ted Brandsen, artistic director of Dutch National Ballet, initiated a working conference entitled Positioning Ballet. First held in 2017, the second edition took place in February 2019. Brandsen's co-curator, Peggy Olislaegers, a leading European dance dramaturge and organizational strategist, was recently appointed Dutch National Ballet's associate on research and development. This appointment, as well as the conference itself, says much about Brandsen's forward-looking approach.

Among the large group who travelled to Amsterdam this year were artistic directors from around the globe, including Kevin O'Hare (London's Royal Ballet), Tamara Rojo (English National Ballet), Christopher Hampson (Scottish Ballet), Ingrid Lorentzen (Norwegian National Ballet), Nicolas Le Riche (Royal Swedish Ballet), Nikolaj Hübbe (Royal Danish Ballet), Kevin McKenzie (American Ballet Theatre), Mikko Nissinen (Boston Ballet) and Tara Birtwhistle (associate artistic director, Royal Winnipeg Ballet). Conspicuous by their absence were representatives from any of the major French or Russian ballet companies.

In addition to around 40 leaders from the ballet community, a group of about 80 academics, writers, journalists and members of other dance forms also attended.

The two-day itinerary was packed with talks, panel discussions and networking during the many receptions and working lunches, as well as an evening and matinee performance by the host company, Dutch National Ballet.

Ingrid van Engelshoven, the Dutch culture minister, opened the conference with a short speech in which she stressed that authority and prestige are not enough to guarantee even a major dance company a prominent position at the artistic and financial top of the cultural pyramid. With today's technology and social media focus, much more needs to be done to ensure that the art of ballet remains relevant to future generations.

The first day's working sessions were intended exclusively for the artistic top guns, who discussed issues around repertoire, leadership, working practices, cultural and social developments, and artistic policy, meeting in separate groups in the spacious entry walkways of the Muziek Theater. Everyone else was kept well-informed during the open panel discussions, which took place at the conclusion of day one and the morning of day two.

The focal points of the conference were the keynote speeches by two American women, both ex-dancers, whose latter-day careers involve writing, researching and critically examining the art form.

Jennifer Homans, director of the Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University, spoke of a two-headed threat facing the art form. One, the deep-rooted intransigence (she called it "stuckness") of ballet's working culture poses an internal threat, and, two, the "anti-social and



Left: Els van der Plas, general manager, Dutch National Opera and Ballet Centre: Working session  
Right: Theresa Ruth Howard keynote

Photos: Marieke de Bra

isolationist tendencies connected with the resurgence of populism and nationalism throughout the world” is an external one. Because ballet’s history has always been that of continuous reform, she suggested the art itself could prove to be a catalyst for societal change.

But it was the deeply researched, no-holds barred address given by Theresa Ruth Howard that truly offered a way forward. The founder of MoBBallet (Memoirs of Blacks in Ballet), and a consultant and diversity strategist, Howard has worked with and interviewed a variety of people whose business is ballet. By taking a step back out of the working arena, she feels she has been able to look at the art from a broader perspective, giving three examples which to her mind reflect a deep underlying corrosion of dance culture: serious allegations of sexual and physical abuse at New York City Ballet; a survey of Paris Opera Ballet dancers that reflected their highly negative views on the company’s management; and the culture of humiliation in Jan Fabre’s Belgian company, Troubleyn, whose dancers accused Fabre “of making them the target of painful often bluntly sexist criticism.” The #metoo movement has also pierced the ballet bubble; today’s generation should not and will not accept or support the old cultural paradigms.

It was no good papering over the cracks, Howard argued; change has to come from within. She offered a “12-step” recovery plan and asked what if dancers, both men and women, were allowed “agency” and were part of a company’s agenda “to question standards and participate in finding solutions” instead of being taught simply to acquiesce? Might there then not be more women choreographers, directors and leaders, and might innovation (both in repertoire and working practice) come from within? If directors committed themselves to a system of transparency by setting out a core set of shared values, wouldn’t it be far easier to deal with abuse at all levels?

Ideas broached during the conference sparked plenty of discussion, with few immediate answers perhaps, but with vital new paths of thought necessary to help secure the future of this beautiful — and resilient — art form. *DI*



BY FREDRIK RÜTTER

Front: Lena Wennergren (Juliet),  
Fredrik Rütter (Mr. Capulet) and  
Karin Thuli (Mrs. Capulet, on shoulders)  
in Birgit Cullberg’s *Romeo and Juliet*, circa 1969  
Photo: Gert Weigelt

Memoir

## Ingmar Bergman in the Dance Studio

The great Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman was celebrated in Scandinavia and worldwide during 2018, which marked 100 years since his birth. His footprint within film history is enormous, but he was also active in television and theatre, and for many years he was the head of the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm. Bergman was known for using dance and movement in his productions there, working very closely with choreographers such as Donya Feuer, an American living in Stockholm. Sweden’s Mats Ek helped out at times.

Stockholm was a small town in the 1960s and 1970s. Most people within the arts knew each other. Ek’s mother, Swedish choreographer Birgit Cullberg, for instance, once married to the great actor Anders Ek (Mats’ father), was a good friend of Bergman’s. Her company, Cullberg Ballet, founded in 1967, was busy internationally from the start. When the company was in town, it performed every Sunday on the main stage at the Royal Dramatic Theatre. During some months they also had a rehearsal room in the theatre.

I met Cullberg in Oslo when she staged her ballet *Miss Julie* with the Norwegian National Ballet, with whom I was dancing. As a result, I was invited to join her company in Stockholm and I moved there at the end of 1968.

When Cullberg Ballet got its own studios, in the centre of the city not far from the Royal Dramatic Theatre, the period of moving around came to an end. When Cullberg started rehearsing her third version of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1969, there was a period when Bergman would drop in to watch rehearsals. He would sit for a while and he might make some small comments to the dancers. Sometimes he expressed his joy at seeing the development of the piece. He never interfered and stayed quietly on the bench where the people in charge of the rehearsal also sat. But it was impossible not to feel his charisma, which filled the room. After maybe three quarters of an hour, he would slip out as quietly as he had arrived.

We dancers never heard what he eventually said to Cullberg about his impressions, but we understood that he usually had strong opinions on what he had seen. The result was often that, even if the scene he had watched was finished and, we thought, nailed, Cullberg would return to it and sometimes make changes. The word from Bergman had obviously had some effect. *DI*



## Dorothea Tanning

Tate Modern's exhibit of the work of Dorothea Tanning (1910-2012), up until June 9, 2019, explores how the Illinois-born artist expanded the language of surrealism. From her early enigmatic paintings, to her ballet designs, stuffed textile sculptures, installations and large-scale works, it offers a rare opportunity to experience the artist's unique internal world. Among the works shown is the artist's self-portrait, *Birthday* (1942) which attracted the attention of Max Ernst, whom she married in 1946, and examples of her set and costume designs for ballets by George Balanchine and John Cranko in the late 1940s to 1950s.

Dorothea Tanning (1910-2012)  
 Costume for *Night Shadow: A Guest*  
 1945, Watercolour and wash on paper  
 353 x 251 mm  
 The Destina Foundation, New York  
 © DACS, 2018

Photo: © 2019 British Broadcasting Corporation and Magnolia Mae Films

## Nureyev Film

A new feature film, *The White Crow*, follows the life and career of ballet superstar Rudolf Nureyev, including his impoverished childhood in Ufa, his student years in Leningrad and his 1961 defection from Soviet Russia in Paris. The film is written by David Hare and directed by Ralph Fiennes, with Oleg Ivenko in his screen debut in the role of Nureyev. Fiennes also appears in the film as Alexander Pushkin, Nureyev's teacher at the Kirov Academy.



### OLYMPIC BREAKDANCERS

Organizers of the 2024 Olympic Summer Games hope to include four new sports at the Paris event: breakdancing, skateboarding, sport climbing and surfing. The International Organizing Committee wants to make the Olympic program gender-balanced, more youth-focused and more urban. Breaking, skateboarding and sport climbing all appeared as medal events at the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires in 2018, while skateboarding, sport climbing and surfing make their debuts on the Olympic program in Tokyo in 2020.





Loretta Pelosi Oliveira in her *Delores*  
Photo: Lars Menzel

## Celebrating Solos

Prizewinners in the 23rd International Solo-Dance-Theatre Festival Stuttgart were choreographers Leïla Ka (France), Nina Plantefève-Castrick (Belgium) and Shirly Barbie (Israel). Winning dancers were Linda Cordero Rijo (Italy), Seth Buckley (Canada) and Loretta Pelosi Oliveira (Brazil). The five-member jury included choreographers Itzik Galili and Katja Wachter of the company Selfish Shellfish.

### ERIC BRUHN PRIZE

Catherine Hurlin, 23, an American Ballet Theatre soloist, and Siphesihle November, 20, a National Ballet of Canada corps de ballet member, are the winners of the International Competition for the Erik Bruhn Prize, presented by the National Ballet of Canada in Toronto in March. Kristian Lever from Hamburg Ballet won the Choreographic Prize for his work, *An intimate distance*.

## Hall of Fame Inductees

Dance Collection Dance presented the 2019 Encore! Dance Hall of Fame in March, celebrating 13 honourees for their lifelong contributions to dance in Canada.

Among the inductees are practitioners of kathak (Menaka Thakkar), ballet (the National Ballet of Canada's artistic director Karen Kain), Indigenous dance (Chief Kenneth Harris and elder Margaret Harris) and modern dance (Louise Lecavalier). Writer Michael Crabb, a longstanding contributor to *Dance International* magazine, was honoured with the first William J.S. Boyle Dance Luminary award.



Michael Crabb  
Photo: Courtesy of Dance Collection Dance

### DANCE DATA PROJECT LOOKS AT GENDER INEQUITIES

The Dance Data Project launched its first report documenting gender inequities in leadership positions and pay among the 50 largest ballet companies in the United States. The report, compiled from public source reporting as well as data received directly from some of the companies, shows significant disparities between men and women in both leadership positions and pay.

DDP found women rarely get top jobs at those companies and, when they do, they are usually significantly underpaid compared to men who do the same jobs. On average, women make 75 cents for every dollar men make in either artistic director or executive director positions. Learn more at [www.dancedataproject.com](http://www.dancedataproject.com).

## WCD A.D.



Photo: Gary Sewell

Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers new artistic director is Jolene Bailie, succeeding Brent Lott, who was at the helm from 2005 to 2017. Bailie, a Winnipeg-based choreographer, director and producer of contemporary dance, is the founding artistic director of Gearshifting Performance Works. She begins her leadership as WCD enters its 56th season.

### MICK JAGGER BALLET

The XVIII International Ballet Festival Mariinsky presented its Creative Workshop of Young Choreographers at the end of March in St. Petersburg. One piece, the eight-minute *Porte Rouge* by American Ballet Theatre corps de ballet dancer Melanie Hamrick, was set to music by Hamrick's boyfriend, 75-year-old Mick Jagger, lead singer with the Rolling Stones.

# Notebook



In late February, a mixed-gender cast of students at the University of Florida performed José Limón's *The Traitor*. This apparently was the first time women had performed the work.

*The Traitor* was made in 1954. It can easily be read as a semi-abstracted retelling of Judas' betrayal of Jesus, but Limón later wrote that his intent was a broader consideration of treachery. It was a valid concern in the era of American McCarthyism and Stalinist purges in which erroneous denunciations and forced confessions were commonplace.

The original eight-member, all-male cast featured Limón in the title role and Lucas Hoving as the Leader. As Helen Priest Rogers' 1955 film records, the choreography for the supporting chorus is strenuous and emphatically conceived for masculine physicality. It also, if one cleaves to the work's Biblical associations, depicts events concerning a group of men. Mary and the Magdalene are nowhere in sight. The student performances in Gainesville featured six women and two men. Neither of the latter occupied a lead role.

If the proportional imbalance of female to male students at the University of Florida is typical of post-secondary dance programs, one might speculate that the gender distribution in this production of *The Traitor* owed as much to practicality, and the value of coming to grips with such an iconic piece of American modern dance, as the desire to make a feminist statement.

Practical realities may also have played a part in the National Ballet of Canada's decision to cast first soloist Chelsy Meiss as the Mad Hatter in the company's recent revival of Christopher Wheeldon's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. She became the first woman to dance a role that requires its interpreter to be an accomplished tap dancer.

The original Mad Hatter in the 2011 Royal Ballet premiere was Australian-born Steven McRae, a man with extensive tap training; a *Guardian* newspaper headline once dubbed him "a modern-day Fred Astaire." McRae remains a hard act to follow.

Meiss, also Australian and, at 32, close in age to McRae, was an avid tapper into her late teens. The National Ballet knew

this and, without any nudges from Meiss and presumably after consulting Wheeldon, decided to give her a shot at the role. Meiss made a convincing and well-received March 9 debut.

Although Lewis Carroll conceived of his Hatter as a male, the character in Wheeldon's ballet is essentially sexless, with no serious partnering work. So, no big deal to cast a woman with the required tapping chops. In the opening scene, where the dancer who will later transform into Wonderland's Hatter portrays a magician at a garden party, Meiss wore the same wig and pasted-on moustache as her male role-sharers. Her Mad Hatter costume was similarly unchanged. The kind of audiences that go to see a confection like Wheeldon's family-friendly blockbuster probably didn't even notice the gender switch. Again, no great feminist breakthrough here, but at least a healthy precedent. Apparently there's a woman at the Australian Ballet, like Meiss a skilled tapper, now eager to dance the role in that company's production.

There's a long history of cross-dressing in ballet. In the Romantic era, as the

Then, of course, there are the male ballerinas of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. In a spirit of fair play, it might be nice if they hired a few women to dance the prince roles.

fetishization of the ballerina, especially in France, almost sidelined male dancers, female corps dancers climbed into men's breeches to portray a variety of stock male roles. In 1870, Eugénie Fiocre was cast as the male lead, Franz, in the Paris Opera Ballet production of *Coppélia*, a gender choice that continued in Paris well into the 20th century.

It has been more common for men to dress as women. Although it is nowadays performed by both genders, in 1890 the great Italian dancer and pedagogue Enrico Cecchetti originated the role of Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty*.

When Erik Bruhn first staged his production of Bournonville's *La Sylphide* for the National Ballet of Canada in 1964, he cast then artistic director Celia Franca as the sinister old witch, Madge. In his post-ballet prince years, Bruhn often danced the role himself.

The choice to cast men, en travesti, in female character roles bears comparison with the British tradition in which men dress as women to play the bossy but ultimately warm-hearted "pantomime dame." Classic examples may be found in two popular Ashton ballets: *Cinderella* (the Ugly Sisters) and *La fille mal gardée* (Widow Simone). Taking his cue from the master, British-born, Royal Ballet-trained Wheeldon includes a travesty role, the Duchess, in his Carroll adaptation.

In 1980, while still a National Ballet dancer, James Kudelka created a gender-neutral lunatic impresario in his one-act ballet *Playhouse*. Originally danced by Victoria Bertram, it was also performed by men. Travesty ran amok in Kudelka's 2005 adaptation of French farceur Eugène Labiche's *An Italian Straw Hat* with then soloist Jean-Sébastien Colau on his toes as a fur-wrapped baroness,

and Bertram doing triple duty as a butler, country gentleman and police chief.

Then, of course, there are the male ballerinas of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. In a spirit of fair play, it might be nice if they hired a few women to dance the prince roles.

Still, the push toward gender equality

in the dance world should not so much be about who dances what or about the gender-specific costumes they may or may not be required to wear. The issue is more about the representation of women onstage in an industry still predominantly controlled by male choreographers, directors and managers. <sup>DI</sup>



**BALLET BLOCH CANADA**  
Artistic Director: Tracy-Lea Bloch

**Classical Ballet and Contemporary Dance**  
Professional Training and Performance School

**ANNUAL PROGRAMS**

- Aspirant (18yrs+)
- Advanced (15yrs+)
- Intermediate (10yrs+)
- Junior (7yrs+)
- Pre-Ballet (3yrs+)

**2019 SUMMER INTENSIVE**

**19-30 August (audition required)**

- Aspirant (18yrs+)
- Advanced (15yrs+)
- Intermediate (10yrs+)

**PERFORMANCES**

- Alice in Wonderland (14-15 June 2019)
- The Nutcracker (December 2019)

**REGISTRATION**  
info@balletbloch.com

**www.balletbloch.com**

  /BalletBlochCanada info@balletbloch.com  
3rd Floor - 106 West 1st Street, North Vancouver BC



## FLAMENCO IN THE SACROMONTE CAVES

In the tradition of the zambra

BY JUSTINE BAYOD ESPOZ

With more than 800,000 tourists traversing its historic streets each year, Granada is one of the most visited cities in Spain. Its Moorish past and gorgeous mountainous landscape make it one of Andalusia's most beautiful cities, but it is also known as a hub of flamenco activity. Across from the city's awe-inspiring Alhambra sits another site of historical importance, the Sacromonte or Holy Mountain.

Peppered with a handful of tablaos and dance academies, the Sacromonte has become the heart of Granada's flamenco scene. Any night of the year, you'll see buses depositing tourists at the mouths of the mountain's caves to see flamenco shows starring predominantly local musicians and dancers. It is in these caves that generations of flamenco artists from Granada have trained and worked, and where the art form evolved.

The Sacromonte caves became home to Granada's gypsy population around 1499, when the Catholic kings prohibited them from practising their traditional nomadism, requiring they settle in a fixed location. Aside from serving as dwellings, these caves became the place

where residents performed in zambras, celebrations at which the folkloric music and dances of the area — many of which developed from the traditions of Spanish Muslims or moriscos — were first performed for personal enjoyment. Later, in the 19th century, travellers visiting Spain were willing to pay for the privilege of seeing Spanish gypsies perform Spanish folklore.

Flamenco begins to develop around the turn of the 20th century, differently in each of Andalusia's eight provinces. The style developed in the Sacromonte was heavily influenced by the tradition of the zambras and its connection to tourism, marking a difference in tone from the school of flamenco dance that predominated in Seville, which was influenced by academic study and the ideals of classical femininity. The Seville school was stylized and technical with a focus on elegance and coquettishness, while the dance of the Sacromonte was more audacious, temperamental and less technically rigorous.

"The flamenco exclusive to the Sacromonte was dictated by the concept of an hour-long show for a heterogenous audience of tourists. The dance from its

inception is based entirely on how to transmit emotion and engage a foreign or unfamiliar audience," says flamenco guitarist and musicologist Juan Miguel Giménez Miranda.

When describing the kind of flamenco you'll see performed at the Sacromonte, locals often use the adjective *salvaje* (wild). It's a flamenco that retains a sort of savagery in the power and fury of the footwork, spot-on rhythm in the feet and palmas, and clean, emphatic finales. Bold energy and sheer will are in greater esteem than a seamless technique.

"Nowadays in the Sacromonte, you have a lot of people from Madrid or Seville dancing. What was once unique about the Sacromonte's flamenco is no longer there, but it hasn't been lost, it's just been improved upon," says Giménez Miranda.

The romantic fable of a flamenco performed solely by gypsies by the fireside of their cave dwellings in the Sacromonte is still told, more than likely in order to endow flamenco with a greater mystique. However, the real story is more complex and shaped, in no small part, by necessity, industry and ingenuity. *DI*

Summer 2019

VAB Summer Intensive  
July 22-Aug 9  
3 week, full day intensive.  
By audition only.  
Ages 12+  
SOLD OUT IN 2018 - Register Early!

2019/2020  
Season

Professional  
Training Program  
For the student who wishes to  
pursue a career in dance, an  
intensive full year program  
combining dance training and  
secondary academics.  
By audition only.  
Ages 12+

Bridge  
Post-Secondary  
Program  
Designated full time, 30-40 hrs/  
week program for high school  
graduates.  
By audition only.

International Students  
Welcome.  
Homestay available.

[victoriaacademyofballet.ca](http://victoriaacademyofballet.ca)

Photo: David Cooper



Saia Kurwata and  
Luke Wilton,  
Bridge Program  
Alumni



VICTORIA  
ACADEMY  
of BALLET



Winner of the  
YAGP Seattle  
Outstanding  
School of the  
Year Award  
2016  
2017  
2018  
2019

Bleiddyn del Villar Bellis  
Artistic Director  
Fellow & Examiner CC-CIB  
Enrico Cecchetti Final Diploma



**dance**  
INTERNATIONAL

AT HOME WITH  
LOUISE LECAVALIER

GUILLAUME CÔTÉ  
& ROBERT LEPAGE  
Collaborate

DANCE ON FILM  
The Evolving Story

Introducing  
FOUR NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

PLUS PREMIERES IN VANCOUVER,  
NEW YORK, LONDON AND OSLO

**READ US ONLINE**  
[danceinternational.org](http://danceinternational.org)

SUMMER 2019 | \$7.95

# GENÉE INTERNATIONAL BALLET COMPETITION 2019 TORONTO

**SEMI-FINALS**

26 & 27 August

Canada's National Ballet School

**FINAL**

29 August

Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts

Photo: Keith Sin @ hiro graphics

Royal Academy of Dance® is a charity registered in England and Wales No. 312826

*Passion, pride, prestige*

**THE GENÉE  
RETURNS TO  
CANADA**

Book now to see who  
takes home the medals  
Tickets from \$50

[www.royalacademyofdance.org/  
genee2019](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org/genee2019)

@RADheadquarters #Genee2019

/GeneeInternationalBalletCompetition

/royalacademyofdance

Presented by

ROYAL ACADEMY OF  
**DANCE**

# DIRECTORY

## ALBERTA BALLET SCHOOL

Led by Artistic Principal Ashley McNeil, Alberta Ballet School is the official dance school of Alberta Ballet, providing students with exclusive mentoring, academic education and performance opportunities.

### Professional Division

- Full-time dance and on-site academic training for students in grades 7-12 (Residence available)
- Pre-Professional Division programming for grades 5-6
- Dedicated contemporary dance stream for grades 10-12
- Summer Intensive
- Financial assistance and scholarships available

### Post-Secondary Programs

- Professional Graduate Program: A two-year, full-time program for post-secondary students seeking additional training prior to company auditions, including the Alberta Ballet Trainee Program
- Teacher Training Program

### Open Division

- Intensive and recreational programming for ages 3-adult
- Summer School programming

www.albertaballetschool.com | registration@albertaballet.com

## ARTS UMBRELLA

Artistic Director: Artemis Gordon, L.I.S.T.D. (C.S.B.)

artumbrella.com/dance

dance@artumbrella.com

604.681.5268

1418 Cartwright St., Granville Island, Vancouver, BC, Canada

Arts Umbrella Dance is a rigorous ballet-based program designed for dancers ages 6-22. At the leading edge of arts education, AUD works with an incredible faculty of dance artists—instructors in ballet, jazz, and contemporary dance at the fore of their fields. At higher levels, dancers also perform world-class choreography and rehearse with local and international guest artists. Our graduates go on to dance with some of the most prestigious companies around the world, and are known for their professionalism and integrity.

### Audition Programs

- Professional Training Program (Grade 8–12)\*
- Afternoon Professional Training Program (Grade 8–12)
- Post-Secondary Program
- Post-Secondary Dance Diploma Program with Vancouver Community College
- International Summer Dance Intensive (Grade 8–post-secondary)

\*Dancers train during the day. To complete their high school courses, students must either be homeschooled or have their high school provide a half-day academic program for them.

## BALLET BLOCH CANADA

Artistic Director: Tracy-Lea Bloch (L.I.S.T.D. & Gyrotonic®)

### Classical Ballet & Contemporary Dance

Professional Training & Performance School

- Pre-Ballet (3yrs+)
- Junior Ballet Division (7yrs+)
- Intermediate Professional Program (10yrs+)
- Advanced Professional Program (15yrs+)
- Aspirant Training Program (18yrs+)
- Half-Day training for high school students
- ISTD IMPERIAL Classical Ballet Examinations
- Provincial and International Competitions
- Contemporary Division Performances
- Youth Ballet Company Productions
- Summer Intensive 2019 (19-30 August)

### Dancer Health: Injury Prevention & Performance Training

- Gyrotonic® Expansion System
- Yoga & Pilates Training
- Physiotherapy, Chiropractic & RMT Treatment
- Clinical Counselling

### Ballet Bloch Youth Company Performances

- Alice in Wonderland (14-15 June 2019)
- The Nutcracker (13-14 Dec 2019)

3rd Floor - 106 West 1st Street, North Vancouver, BC  
www.balletbloch.com | info@balletbloch.com

## CAMERON DANCE ACADEMY

BEAUTIFUL HI-TECH STUDIO at 20215 62 Ave. Langley

Royal Academy of Dance Approved Venue (RAV)

Principals Deborah Cameron A.R.A.D. Lifetime member R.T.S. D.I.P. Kelly Bennis RAD R.T.S.

*"Teaching a love of dance that lasts a Lifetime" through inspiration, encouragement and knowledgeable training by dedicated staff; mentoring students to achieve success professionally or simply for recreational enjoyment.*

Our dancers have proudly achieved Professional careers

Offering Hot water heated floors, 3 large studios with permanent Marley floors, home work room, beautiful amenities

### Programs

- Specializing in Royal Academy of Dance Ballet - All Syllabi
- **Twinkle Stars®** Children's program 2 yrs. up
- Contemporary/Modern, Jazz, Musical Theatre, Tap, Acro, Hip-Hop Lyrical and Master Class Workshops
- **Professional Performances** Coaching, Examinations, Competitions
- **Summer:** Children Theme Camps — Drop-in — Intensives (Aug)

www.camerondanceacademy.com

Email: camerondanceacademy@yahoo.ca | Phone: 778.366.1177

## CANADA'S NATIONAL BALLET SCHOOL

Mavis Staines, C.M., DHuM, Artistic Director & CEO

400 Jarvis St., Toronto, ON M4Y 2G6

T: 416.964.3780

registrar@nbs-enb.ca | www.nbs-enb.ca

Established in 1959, **Canada's National Ballet School** is a world leader in the training of professional ballet dancers and teachers. Dedicated to excellence, NBS staff are an international group of talented instructors who adhere to the highest standards in training and development of the students' abilities. NBS believes that Canadians of all ages and abilities should have access to high-quality dance programs. Through its community initiative Sharing Dance, people can engage artistically, reaping the health and social benefits that dance provides.

### Professional Ballet Program:

- Full-time dance training, academic education and residential care for students in Grades 6 through 12
- Full-time dance training for post-secondary students

### Teacher Training Program:

- Recognized as a hallmark of excellence
  - Prepares students for a successful dance teaching career
  - Various programs available: one year certificate, three year diploma, two year diploma or one year certificate for professional dancers, five year joint diploma/degree with either Simon Fraser University or York University
  - 100% of graduates employed upon completion of the program
  - Opportunity to obtain Registered Teacher Status with the RAD; Associate teaching qualification with ISTD and/or Cecchetti Society
- \*NBS graduates are always in demand and can be found as dancers, choreographers, artistic directors and teachers in over 80 dance companies and schools around the globe.

### Additional Programs:

- Associates Program: after school and weekend classes for children ages six to 17 years
- Adult ballet
- Professional Development for practising teachers
- Annual Teachers' Ideas Exchange opportunity in July

Visit [www.nbs-enb.ca](http://www.nbs-enb.ca) for more details

Classified ads and  
Directory information:  
[advertising@danceinternational.org](mailto:advertising@danceinternational.org)

## CANADA'S ROYAL WINNIPEG BALLET SCHOOL

Stéphane Léonard, School Director

The RWB School has prepared thousands of dancers and dance teachers for meaningful employment in the profession. Alumni have gone on to exciting careers in all facets of the dance industry and currently make up 76% of the RWB Company and over half of the RWB School's artistic faculty.

Full time Professional Division Programs:

- Ballet Academic (Ages 10+)
  - Aspirant (Post-Secondary) Recognized by the University of Winnipeg
  - Teacher Training (Post-Secondary) Recognized by the University of Winnipeg
- Summer Programs:
- Summer Session (Phase II of Auditions for full time programs)
  - Dance Intensive (No Auditions required. Ages 9-18)
  - Teachers' Summer Workshop (Professional Development)

380 Graham Avenue, Winnipeg MB R3C 4K2

E: [school@rwb.org](mailto:school@rwb.org) | P: 204.957.3467 | W: [rwb.org/school](http://rwb.org/school)

## CAULFIELD SCHOOL OF DANCE

Cori Caulfield, leads an expert faculty.

Ballet and Commercial Half Day\* (including instruction 1:30 to 4pm Monday to Friday) programs.

Standard and Professional\* Training Divisions:

Ballet: R.A.D. Exam Preparation to Solo Seal, Progressing Ballet Technique, etc. - Modern/Contemporary - Jazz/Lyrical - Tap - Hip Hop Acrobatics - Musical Theatre - Voice - Acting  
Choreography and Pedagogy

**Provincial Titles:** all Dance and Voice categories; **International**

**Titles:** Prix du Lausanne, Y.A.G.P., W.B.A.C., V.I.B.E., etc.

**Alumni:** San Francisco Ballet Company, Josh Beamish's MOVE: the company; TV (including "So You Think You Can Dance" U.S. All-Star Alex Wong), Miami City Ballet, Broadway; Ballet BC; Cirque du Soleil, etc.

**Summer:** Drop-in Classes in Ballet (3 levels) and Jazz; INTENSIVE WEEKS; etc.

Many performing opportunities.

\* By audition and interview only. Half-day training optional.

2610 St Johns Street, Port Moody, B.C. V3H 2B6

Phone: 604 469 9366 | email: [admin@caulfield.bc.ca](mailto:admin@caulfield.bc.ca)

## CENTRAL DANCE ACADEMY

Artistic Director | Tyra Sergeant, R. T. S.

*Celebrating 43 years of Excellence in Dance*

### Professional Training from Pre-School to Adult

- Specializing in the Royal Academy of Dance syllabus
- Ballet, Pointe & Repertoire, Modern, Contemporary, Lyrical, Jazz, HipHop, ACRO and Conditioning
- Examinations, Competitions, Performances & Summer Training
- Home of B.C Provincial Representatives since 1987

#631-7789 134th Street, Surrey, BC V3W 9E9 | 604.594.2132

[info@centraldanceacademy.ca](mailto:info@centraldanceacademy.ca) | [www.centraldanceacademy.ca](http://www.centraldanceacademy.ca)

## DANCE CO

Marlowe Windsor, Director

Founded in 1992, Dance Co provides a wide range of levels and disciplines at both of their Vancouver locations to fit the needs of every dancer from beginner to advanced. Classes are available year-round and are taught by an experienced and dedicated faculty. Dance Co's locations offer 14 professional studios with sprung hardwood and marley flooring as well as stunning uniforms & costumes created by the studio's sewing department.

- Jazz, Ballet, Tap, Lyrical, Contemporary, Musical Theatre, Hip-Hop, Breakdance & Acro
- Recreational, Demi-Competitive, Competitive & Company level options
- Professional Half-Day & Graduate Training Programs
- Spring break & summer camps, advanced workshops & danceLab summer intensive held annually with international guest faculty & choreographers

**Arbutus:** 154-4189 Yew Street, Vancouver BC V6L 0B4

**Fraser:** 5780 Fraser Street, Vancouver BC V5W 2Z5

604.736.3394 | [info@danceco.com](mailto:info@danceco.com) | [danceco.com](http://danceco.com)

## ENPOINTE ENTERPRISES

Dance equipment is our business. We have been supplying ballet schools and dance studios across North America for over eighteen years! EnPointe is a leading manufacturer and distributor of professional dance equipment including:

### Ballet Barres

Wall mount barres with brackets – open for ballet or closed brackets for fitness. We have freestanding or portable barres with carrying cases. We also manufacture floor mount brackets. All barres are available in different lengths, colors and options.

### Dance Flooring

EnPointe is a distributor of the complete flooring line from StageStep. Contact us for all your flooring needs.

### Glassless Mirrors

Perfect reflection, extremely lightweight and no glass! You will be astounded by the high-quality reflection our glassless mirrors provide, allowing you, your students and dancers to perfectly see every move. We offer both wall mount and portable glassless mirrors.

We'd love to hear from you – contact us and follow us through our social media channels!

www.en-pointe.com | 1-866-491-9019 | info@en-pointe.com  
twitter.com/danceproducts | facebook.com/danceproducts  
instagram.com/danceproducts | pinterest.com/danceproducts

## GOH BALLET ACADEMY CANADA

### - Locations in VANCOUVER & TORONTO

Director: Chan Hon Goh

+1 604.872.4014 | Admin@GohBallet.com

Achieve Excellence and Train with Confidence. With over 40 years of expertise in nurturing the development of dancers while raising cultural awareness in our communities through performance, Goh Ballet is synonymous with excellence.

- Junior School
- Senior Professional School
- Goh Ballet Youth Company Canada

From early years programs through to dedicated professional programs, students are prepared for flourishing careers. Integrated programs and performances at every level, students access an innovative variety of choreographic styles and repertoire. Well-rounded curriculum and progressive methods in Vaganova, & R.A.D. syllabi taught by internationally renowned faculty and guest instructors. **Visit GohBallet.com**

## HARBOUR DANCE CENTRE (DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER)

Vancouver's Premier Dance Facility for over 35 years. Drop In Classes, Progressive Workshops Intensive Training Programs in different styles of dance. Teens and Adults, all levels Ages 16+ Beginners Welcome! (see website for classes for Ages 14 and up)

### INTENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAM (Ages 17 +)

Director: Moe Brody

Program runs from September to June each year.

25 hours per week, individual mentoring.

Intensive Dance Training, including Circus, Singing and Acting Performance experience and technical training from highly Professional, talented and caring team to take you to the next Level. See website for audition details.

Training programs specifically for Hip Hop and Street Styles also run September to June

### ANNUAL SUMMER INTENSIVE:

Adult Summer Intensive (Ages 14-Adult)

Junior Summer Intensive (Ages 10-16)

Ballet, Contemporary, Hip Hop, Broadway, Tap, Jazz Tech & more.

Register on line at www.harbourdance.com

5 studios with sprung floors in a Beautiful Heritage Building

Rentals available for rehearsals

Private Functions (Group classes, Stagettes, Corporate

Events etc)

Over 120 classes per week to Drop into.

Directors: Pamela Rosa, Moe Brody, Sabine Clifford

927 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC V6Z 1L3 | 604.684.9542

www.harbourdance.com | info@harbourdance.com

## JOY OF MOVEMENT STUDIO-SUSIE GREEN WORKSHOPS

**SUSIE GREEN** is an internationally sought after dance artist, choreographer and educator-JOM's workshops offer choreography, teaching, mentorship and professional dance development and performance development for **ALL AGES - ALL LEVELS - ALL DISCIPLINES**

### SUSIE GREEN

\*A two time Recipient of **The Global Arts Awards (in 2002 & 2011)** "for outstanding contributions to global arts performance and arts education internationally"

\*Recipient of the **CANADA 125 MEDAL** awarded for "significant contributions to fellow citizens, to their community and to Canada."

Susie choreographs and tours with young artists globally & has represented Canada at **4 World Fair Expos** and at the **United Nations Conference in Beijing, China as Canadian Youth Ambassadors. The young artists dance a progressive platform of peace, youth issues, the environment and human rights issues.**

### ARTIST IN RESIDENCIES

Using all dance disciplines, Susie teaches both directed and creative movement, through exciting ensemble work and dance literacy. Her choreography is inspired and driven by a global platform of youth issues (bullying/teen suicide) cooperative peaceful solutions, human rights and the environment. Susie demystifies teaching movement in the school environment through her collaborative process.

**AVAILABILITY** - Venue friendly, dance studios, artist havens, elementary & secondary schools, universities- locally and internationally. Susie is profiled in Artstarts in Schools - checkout this link - <http://artstarts.com/artist-profile/susie-green>

### COMPETITION-CONCERT-CHOREOGRAPHY

Susie has choreographed and taught master workshops for over 1.75 million young artists in schools in 14 countries. Susie's projects are a special combination of her life work in choreography and her knowledge of movement patterns, and learning styles in children. Private and group lessons Susie choreographs and teaches at Dance Studios around the globe. **AWARD WINNING** dance pieces for local, national and international petitions and concerts.

### YOGA FOR KIDS

### ORFF MUSIC & MOVEMENT FOR KIDS

Susie is a Master Teacher for Carl Orff Canada (COC) and American Orff Schulwerk Association (AOSA) certifying Levels 1,2 & 3.

Susie Green (604) 836-6768 | TEXT/CELL: (604) 836-6768  
email: [visionsco@aol.com](mailto:visionsco@aol.com)

## L.A. RUSSIAN SCHOOL OF BALLET

Ballet - Vaganova, Cecchetti, Character

Pre-School to Adults

Small Classes

Quality Programmes

Performances, Festivals

Summer school in July

Director: Lucienne Ancykowski

Coquitlam | Phone: 604.931.3196

## L'ÉCOLE DE DANSE DE QUÉBEC

Professional training in contemporary dance

Admission by audition

L'École de danse de Québec (LEDQ) has established itself as a leader in teaching dance. Firmly rooted in Quebec city's artistic community, LEDQ distinguished itself by its respect for and trust in its dancers and by its dynamic synergy with the professional milieu.

**Programme Danse-interprétation (3 years):** Full-time Diploma of Collegial Studies in partnership with the Cégep de Sainte-Foy and accredited by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications and the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur.

**Contemporary Dance Program (AEC – 3 years):** Attestation d'études collégiales program - includes specific dance courses only. An alternative for international students.

**Programme professionnel de mise à niveau (1 year):**

Offered to candidates preparing for professional dance training in order to audition for the DEC or AEC program.

418.649.4715 | [info@ledq.qc.ca](mailto:info@ledq.qc.ca) | [www.ledq.qc.ca](http://www.ledq.qc.ca)

## L'ÉCOLE SUPÉRIEURE DE BALLET DU QUÉBEC

Anik Bissonnette, O.C., C.Q., Artistic Director

Only francophone institution in North America to provide a professional ballet program, school partner of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

- Professional ballet training and academic programs for students from Grade 7 to third-year junior college. Graduates receive a college diploma in classical dance and performance, which also leads to university. The professional division also includes a teacher's training program and a development program for musicians who want to accompany ballet classes.
- L'École supérieure has received the Outstanding School Award from the Youth America Grand Prix.
- L'École supérieure also offers a Recreational Division for children and adults.

4816, rue Rivard, Montréal, QC H2J 2N6 T. 514 849-4929  
[www.esbq.ca](http://www.esbq.ca) | [info@esbq.ca](mailto:info@esbq.ca)

## PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM OF THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPORARY DANCERS

Co-directors: Odette Heyn, C.M. and Faye Thomson, C.M.

- Professional post-secondary contemporary dance performance programme
- Nationally renowned faculty and guest choreographers and teachers
- Graduates performing professionally across Canada and internationally
- Affiliation with the University of Winnipeg: BA (Hons) in Dance available
- For more information

website: [www.schoolofcontemporarydancers.ca](http://www.schoolofcontemporarydancers.ca)

address: suite 104-211 Bannatyne Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 3P2  
telephone: 204.452.1239

e-mail: [info@schoolofcontemporarydancers.ca](mailto:info@schoolofcontemporarydancers.ca)

- The School gratefully acknowledges the support of:  
The Government of Canada - Canadian Heritage  
The Manitoba Arts Council, The Winnipeg Arts Council

## QUINTE BALLET SCHOOL OF CANADA

Artistic Director, Catherine Taylor

Belleville, Ontario | 613.962.9274

**REGISTER ONLINE** [www.quinteballetschool.com](http://www.quinteballetschool.com)

Celebrating over 45 years, Quinte Ballet School offers a full-time professional training program from September to June. Curriculum grounded in classical ballet technique within an inspiring, challenging and supportive environment.

Ballet, Pointe, Boy's Work, Repertoire, Modern, Jazz, Hip Hop,

Conditioning, Flamenco. Performance opportunities; workshops.

Academic partnership for Grades 6 through 12 with Hastings & Prince Edward District School Board.

QBSC Homestay Families network available.

**Summer Dance Intensive** June 30 – July 20, 2019 /

June 28 – July 18, 2020

Professional Training Program by audition; Open Program available

Residence or Day student option

**Recreation Division** Two terms from September to June

Versatile dance instruction for all ages (3+). Year-end performance.

**Dancing with Parkinson's Program** Certified Instructor.

Sep 2019 to Apr 2020. Thursdays at 11am.

## RICHMOND ACADEMY OF DANCE CELEBRATING 33 YEARS

Producing Canada's Most Exciting Young Professionals

New Program - Graduate Dance Collective

- Home to BC Provincial Winners in Ballet, Stage, Musical Theatre and Voice since 1989
- Students have earned RAD Solo Seal, London Genée Awards and been Prix de Lausanne finalists
- Graduates dancing with world-renowned companies including National Ballet of Canada, Batsheva Dance Co., Cirque du Soleil, Alberta Ballet, Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal and many others
- Complete General and internationally-recognized Professional Divisions from Junior to Senior levels; year-round training and Specialized Summer Intensives
- Programs offered in ballet, jazz, tap, hip hop, musical theatre, lyrical, modern, contemporary, acting
- Vocal studio
- Pilates Studio, experiential anatomy and body conditioning
- Vaganova Technique, with all RAD Examinations offered
- Professional Half-Day & Evening programs ages 11-graduate
- Year-round performance opportunities
- 10,000 sq. ft. of architecturally designed professional facilities
- Train with fully registered and highly qualified teachers whose performance careers span the world's leading companies

7860 River Road, Richmond, BC V6X 1X7 | Phone: 604.278.7816

web: [www.richmondacademyofdance.com](http://www.richmondacademyofdance.com)

email: [dance@richmondacademyofdance.com](mailto:dance@richmondacademyofdance.com)

## DIRECTORY

### THE SCHOOL OF DANCE

Artistic Director: Merrilee Hodgins A.R.A.D.  
Director of Ballet Studies: Mary Ross, Fellow and Examiner, CSC-CICB  
Director of Contemporary Dance Studies: Sylvie Desrosiers BAV, C.Ed  
200 Crichton Street, Ottawa, ON K1M 1W2 Canada  
613.238.7838 | [admin@theschoolofdance.ca](mailto:admin@theschoolofdance.ca)  
[www.theschoolofdance.ca](http://www.theschoolofdance.ca)

- Celebrating 40 years of excellence in arts education in Ottawa, Canada
- Eight-year **Professional Ballet Studies** (ages 8-16)
- Three-year post-secondary **Contemporary Dance Diploma Programme**, approved as a vocational training program under the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005
- Performance opportunities in **National Theatres**
- **Cecchetti Ballet Exam** preparation
- Nationally renowned faculty
- Prominent Canadian guest choreographers and teachers
- Classes for children, teens, adults and seniors
- Ballet and Contemporary **Summer Intensives**
- **DragonFly®**, for learners with Down syndrome
- Connecting with Dance, designed for **people with Parkinson's**

Admission to professional programmes by assessment and audition.  
Visit [www.theschoolofdance.ca](http://www.theschoolofdance.ca)

### THE SCHOOL OF TORONTO DANCE THEATRE

Artistic Director: **Patricia Fraser**

The School is passionately committed to training and education in the art of dance. Spend your day dancing with us!

#### Contemporary/Modern Summer Intensives

- Contemporary and Graham techniques, repertory/new creation
- Ages 12 and older

#### Professional Training Program

- Three year, full-time, post-secondary program
- Conservatory-style education with concentration on studio work
- Expert faculty, celebrated guest artists, extensive performing experience
- Joint program with York University can lead to B.F.A. in dance

Final Audition (for September 2019): July 13th, 2019

Auditions (for September 2020): February & July 2020

80 Winchester Street, Toronto ON M4X 1B2

416.967.6887 ext. 22 | [info@schooloftdt.org](mailto:info@schooloftdt.org) | [www.schooloftdt.org](http://www.schooloftdt.org)

### VANCOUVER BALLET SOCIETY

Operating out of Scotiabank Dance Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Society, which turned 70 in 2016, offers an annual Spring Seminar Week Intensive, taught by internationally known dance artists/teachers, to students aged 11-18, selected by audition. Scholarships are awarded at the end of the seminar.

The not-for-profit Society also offers 3-6 Master Classes annually with dance artists from visiting companies and maintains an archives and library open to the public.

[vbs@telus.net](mailto:vbs@telus.net) | [www.vancouverballetsociety.ca](http://www.vancouverballetsociety.ca) | 604.681.1525

### VICTORIA ACADEMY OF BALLET

**Bleiddyn Bellis CC-CICB, Enrico Cecc Final Diploma**

#### PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM

Intensive dance training program committed to helping students reach their fullest personal potential.

- Students are nurtured in an encouraging atmosphere with a dedication to excellence.
- Ballet, Pointe, Repertoire, Pas de Deux, Contemporary, Jazz
- Summer Intensive
- Personal attention and guidance

#### BRIDGE PROGRAM (Post-Secondary)

A 3 year, PTIB designated, post-graduate Diploma program preparing dancers to pursue a career in professional dance. Students are encouraged to explore different aspects of professional dance life through the extensive program curriculum in a professional atmosphere.

- Ballet, Pointe, Repertoire, Pas de Deux, Contemporary, Jazz
  - Guest Teachers, Choreographers
  - Anatomy, Ballet History, Choreography, Career Exploration, Nutrition
- Students are connected to avenues in the dance industry through individual advising and collaboration with knowledgeable and experienced VAB faculty and guest choreographers. Graduates are fully prepared for the next step on their career paths.

[www.victoriaacademyofballet.ca](http://www.victoriaacademyofballet.ca) | 250.590.6752

[admin@victoriaacademyofballet.ca](mailto:admin@victoriaacademyofballet.ca)



# INSIDE ED

Gaga People

BY GDALIT NEUMAN

As I float through a Gaga/people class one wintery Saturday morning, I am transported to a place of play and possibility.

Gaga, the movement language developed by Ohad Naharin, house choreographer and former artistic director of Israel's Batsheva Dance Company, is the system of choice for Batsheva dancers, and is practised around the globe by dancers eager to improve their movement quality and challenge their creative potential. Gaga has also become popular among non-dancers, attracting a following worldwide. Specialized Gaga/people (as opposed to Gaga/dancers) classes were designed with them in mind.

From my experience taking classes in Tel Aviv at the Batsheva studios, and in New York and Toronto, Gaga/people classes vary with regards to content and pace. Teachers seem to have some liberty as to the ebb and flow of their classes, which incorporate a standard vocabulary, unique to Gaga. A typical Gaga class includes work on the ground and standing, as well as moving around the space.

Unlike most other dance classes, one never stops moving. Participants, who come from all walks of life and are typically a mix of ages, are encouraged to keep their eyes open throughout in order to take it all in. Though seeing is important, there is no codified aesthetic in Gaga/people, so mirrors are not used. Instead, it is about sensing qualities and textures, as opposed to re-creating a desired shape.

Participants face the middle of the room and take cues from the instructor, who is positioned in the centre, providing verbal as well as visual information through a specialized style of guided improvisation. Vivid and exacting imagery encourages deep movement exploration to take place.

There is a natural arc to the structure of the class. Waves of crescendos and diminuendos with regards to energy and intensity are balanced by what are known as floating transitions, which slow things down, often amplifying lingering

sensations from past movements in the process. To me, this feels like being washed over by a rush of energy, which leaves my nerve endings on overdrive. A sense of calm immediately follows, contributing to the feeling of weightlessness, as the name "floating" implies.

"Gaga/people is about tapping into your sensations," says Alvin Collantes, who teaches in Toronto. "We listen to how the skin moves, how the bones move, how the flesh moves. It's tuning into these layers and how each one can have its own story or life; how the skin can be pulled or stretched, the thickness of the flesh, the softness, or how the bones can move separately and slide into your skin. The relationship of all these layers and how they interact with each other can produce many sensations."

According to Collantes, "Dancers are attracted because they love the idea of sharing the space with non-dancers. It eliminates ambition, which in turn helps them discover more. And the non-dancers, I think they realize there are many things they can learn from class, whether it be igniting their passion to move or smiling or laughing or discovering how to not take things so seriously."

For massage therapy student and long-time Gaga/people participant Ellyssa Marie, the classes provide a place to safely explore "the depths of whatever you're feeling, whether it's insecurity, sadness, heartbreak or fulfillment. You come out exuding this clearer state of things. Afterward you're in a more receptive state."

Drama teacher and Gaga newcomer Aaron appreciates the way the classes "give you the opportunity to embody whatever you're experiencing, feeling or imagining in the moment. It allows the mutual synthesis of all those things, and then you surprise yourself. [You feel] very present."

That feeling of being present is not to be taken for granted, especially living in a fast-paced city. My tendency is to retreat and indulge by closing my eyes at introspective intervals, but the joy of Gaga is sharing the experience with others. *DI*

Gdalit Neuman has taught at Canada's National Ballet School and York University's department of dance.



# GLOBAL REPORTS



BY KAIJA PEPPER

**T**he biggest news this quarter was the world premiere of Crystal Pite's *Revisor*, a co-creation with Jonathon Young from Electric Company Theatre. All four performances at the Vancouver Playhouse, in February, sold out months in advance, an unheard of success in the local dance world.

Pite and Young have become a force for dance-theatre. Like their award-winning *Betroffenheit*, a vaudeville-styled extravaganza about traumatic stress, *Revisor* tackles a hard theme — the corruption of power — this time through farce.

The opening section is a magnificent showcase for the eight dancers, who power through a whirl of full-body syncing to recorded dialogue. This goes far beyond the challenges of lip-syncing — though there is that, too, when it seems as if the dancers are actually speaking. *Revisor* pushes the close relationship of dance and text to its limit in a comical tale of epic proportions.

Presented by Pite's Vancouver-based company, Kidd Pivot, the work had its avant-premiere a week earlier in Banff [this issue's cover story] and set off to tour across Canada following the Vancouver shows.

*Fragile Forms*, by local choreographers Delia Brett and Daelik of MACHiNE-NOiSY, had its own quieter power. Presented as part of PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, this site-specific work explored how bodies in motion

impact our experience of a place: the Anvil Centre in nearby New Westminster.

For about an hour, two small groups of audience members followed their leader up and down stairs, into small recesses and medium-sized rooms, onstage and, finally, to the impressive 60-foot-high atrium lobby of the four-year-old Anvil Centre.

The detail of what we were led to observe was phenomenal, including reflections of the dancers in ground-floor windows that seemed to put them in the middle of traffic, an effect that would have taken a whole lot of designing and money to put onstage. That's the beauty of site-specific work — the artists have the real world as their toolbox. Inspired by Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa's work, *Fragile Forms* had a residency in Finland, with two dancers from Helsinki among the ensemble of 11.

Wen Wei Wang, Ballet Edmonton's new artistic director, continues to present work through his Vancouver-based contemporary group, Wen Wei Dance. *Ying Yun*, at Scotiabank Dance Centre, was titled with the name of his mother, to whose passing the piece is dedicated. Also, according to the program notes, "Ying could mean hero, Yun indicates clouds."

The abstract work is framed by Sammy Chien's beautiful video design, which turned the backdrop into a visual art canvas, ranging from glowing electronic lines to a swirling eclipse of deep dark colours. Linda Chow costumed the five young

women dancers all in white — shorts, prettily detailed tops and socks, perhaps evoking the clouds of the title.

The first section, in particular, was a lovely presentation of Wang's by now well-known vocabulary, with its deep lunges and bold physicality. The dancers take bendy, stretched poses, pushing out their hips and chests. Their bodies squirm into shapes, but not casually; every moment is carefully choreographed.

Also at the end of February, Ballet BC premiered a piece by emerging Israeli choreographer Adi Salant, bookended by remounts of two masterworks: Jorma Elo's *1st Flash* (2003) and Crystal Pite's *Solo Echo* (2012), both originally performed by Nederlands Dans Theater.

Ballet BC has danced Elo's humorous, quirky and musically astute *1st Flash* several times since giving the work its Canadian premiere in 2013. Set to two movements from Jean Sibelius' sublime *Violin Concerto in D minor*, *1st Flash* has the formality and sophistication needed to fill the Queen Elizabeth Theatre's large stage and reach the upper distances of the auditorium.

The six dancers performed as if each move — both the details and the larger effect — was a matter of life and death. Elo approaches the mighty flow of orchestral sound from Sibelius, his fellow Finn, by grounding the dance in its own flow, working with the music and even illustrating it — but not slavishly, and not always.

This was a hard act to follow, and Salant is apparently new to the choreographic game. Formerly co-artistic director at Batsheva with the renowned choreographer Ohad Naharin, she also teaches Gaga (the movement form he originated) and was a dancer with the company.

Salant's *WHICH/ONE*, performed by 11 Ballet BC dancers and five of the company's emerging artists, showed Naharin's influence in the extremes of luscious, fulsome body expression. There were also times when the performers focused on familiar modern dance gestural vocabulary, wildly shaking their hands or compulsively touching their heads. Though dramatically thin, *WHICH/ONE* did successfully rally the large cast to action.

Pite's *Solo Echo* closed the evening with an intensely tender evocation of individuality and togetherness, two states of being that she is a master of depicting in motion. <sup>11</sup>



BY HOLLY HARRIS

Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers, in collaboration with the professional program of the School of Contemporary Dancers, paid homage to its late founder with Verge: Remembering Rachel Browne — A Celebration. The three-show run in January at the Rachel Browne Theatre featured seven signature works choreographed by Browne between 1985-2001, performed by 20 local emerging dance artists and a quartet of established guest performers (Odette Heyn, Paula Blair, Kathleen Hiley and Robyn Thomson Kacki), directed by Browne's longtime friend and fellow choreographer Stephanie Ballard.

Highlights included Browne classics: *Toward Light* (1995) and *KJ4* (1994), as well as a decadent, Kurt Weill-infused solo, *Freddy* (1991), and a bluesy solo, *Old Times Now* (1987). The 70-minute production also featured a five-minute solo choreographed by Browne and originally included in former WCD artistic director Tedd Robinson's 1985 full-length *Camping Out*. Finally, her joyous

ensemble work *Willow Island* (1997), inspired by the choreographer's beloved family cottage located just south of Gimli, Manitoba, featured eight dancers sweeping across the stage set to an ebullient score by the Penguin Café.

Sadly, the lion's share of performers, currently in their 20s, never had a chance to collaborate with or even meet Browne. Thus, the quartet of senior guest artists provided a critical backbone of generational continuity, grounded in their own history with Browne, who founded WCD in 1964.

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet presented a dark Valentine to its loyal balletomanes with its latest production of Rudi van Dantzig's *Romeo and Juliet*, based on Shakespeare's archetypal tale of the star-crossed lovers last staged locally in 2014.

The February production of van Dantzig's classic, given its world premiere by the Dutch National Ballet in 1967, has retained its lustre over the years, fuelled by briskly paced choreography with Earl Stafford leading the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra through Prokofiev's wholly contemporary score. Sumptuous costumes and a multi-dimensional tiered set evoking 1400s Verona designed by Toer Van Schayk created an effective canvas for the warring Montagues and Capulets.

Many Juliets have come and gone since prima ballerina Evelyn Hart first performed the title role during the company's 1981 Canadian premiere. Second soloist Elizabeth Lamont is the latest to tackle the role, morphing before our eyes from gleeful girl leaping into her Nurse's lap to a passionate woman deeply in love with her Romeo, her prismatic acting skills underpinned by quicksilver pointe work and a graceful port de bras.

Principal dancer Dmitri Dovgoselets' Romeo first appears as a lonely dreamer, who leaps and bounds with his naturally regal bearing. Dovgoselets' nuanced portrayal mined the emotional sub-stratum of his character, from macho hothead who spars — and slays — Juliet's swaggering cousin Tybalt during the climactic Act II fight scene, to tender lover during his wedding night with Juliet.

Broadway veterans and longtime best friends, Winnipeg-born Catherine Wreford Ledlow and Harrow, Ontario-born Craig Ramsay (now based in Los

Angeles), made their company debut as Lady and Lord Capulet 22 years after first training at the RWB School during the 1990s. Wreford Ledlow made her Broadway debut at age 21 in *42nd Street*; two years later, Ramsay began his Broadway career, appearing in *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, and has since become a Bravo TV reality star/fitness trainer for shows *Thintervention* and *Newlyweds: The First Year*. The fact that Wreford Ledlow, despite her publicly acknowledged terminal brain cancer, was able to fully command the stage brought many to tears opening night, her performance an inspiring testament to her own spirit as well as the life-affirming power of dance.

Finally, NAfro Dance Productions closed its season in March at the Gas Station Arts Centre with the world premiere of *The Image*, choreographed by founding artistic director Casimiro Nhussi.

The 70-minute show unfolded (mostly) as a series of inter-connected solos performed by the six-member ensemble, accompanied by a live onstage drumming band that included Nhussi. Six guest community breakdancers also appeared periodically throughout more as funky palate cleansers than fully integrated into the show's ethos. NAfro typically presents loud 'n' proud affairs; this more intimate production provided a closer look at Nhussi's creative vision — in this case, an exploration of image in today's society — underscored by virtually no set and few props, thus putting the emphasis squarely on dance itself.

Standout solos included Paula Blair's *Spoken Thoughts*, where she wildly flailed her arms and abruptly shifted directions, or Hélène Le Moullec Mancini's more lyrical *Indecisive*, including a wonderfully imagistic trompe d'oeil where she suddenly peered through the metal frame of a rolling clothes rack like a prison cell.

However, Nhussi saves the most potent message for last, with Robyn Thomson Kacki's *Selfie* crafted with laser-like focus. At first seemingly an innocuous take on society's obsession with self-portraits, Thomson Kacki's increasingly frantic posing and contorting of her body in front of her own camera phone injected a darker undertow into the entire work, shuddering as a cautionary tale about the cult of narcissism. *DI*

Robyn Thomson Kacki in Rachel Browne's *Freddy*  
Photo: Leif Norman

How does dance, arguably the most ephemeral of art forms, handle its past? Should choreographic works be preserved and, if so, to what purpose? Is such an undertaking even possible given that dance, unlike a painting, poem or other self-recording art form, only truly exists in the moment of performance?

What language is appropriate to describe the process of exhuming a previously performed dance work: remount, reconstruction, revival? Is the result, like its original, a living thing or merely an artifact?

Such questions have clearly concerned Christopher House, Toronto Dance Theatre's artistic director and principal choreographer, for the past quarter century. House has always been eager to challenge himself even when the new territory he's exploring is rooted in the past.

With support from the Metcalf Foundation, TDT is in the final phase of a Reimagining Repertoire Project. Its aim is to consider different ways of utilizing the past, specifically in relation to House's own choreography. House's concern is not merely to revise, but to give agency to a new generation of dancers and to realign earlier work to reflect his evolving artistic practice. The most recent instance is *Persefony Songs*, mined from House's 2001 work *Persephone's Lunch*.

There are similarities. James Robertson's set of suspended wooden grates is echoed in Steve Lucas and Simon Rositer's redesign, but without Robertson's accompanying suspended bottles. There is still a long low table bearing pomegranates as well as a quantity of sheepskins — faux, one hopes. Underlying both works is Homer's *The Odyssey*, not so much its narrative as images and ideas triggered by incidents from the ancient Greek saga. The links were more pronounced in *Persephone's Lunch* and included recorded voiceover comments by House. It was also unabashedly theatrical and had an almost whimsical, playful atmosphere.

*Persefony Songs* is more inward-focused, less performative. Phil Strong's score is replaced by live music from Bernice, the Toronto-based, Robin

Dann-led ensemble best known for its unique "cracked" version of pop music but here venturing into the realm of early music. A few choreographic elements are retained, but the work is mostly rethought. In a program note, House describes the process of revisiting his 2001 work as an "archaeological dig" from which he selected images that piqued his interest, "repurposing them as the seeds and scaffolding for a new work."

At much the same time, the National Ballet of Canada presented Balanchine's *Apollo* in what would conventionally be called a revival; but a revival of precisely what?

When the company acquired *Apollo* in 1999, the early Balanchine masterwork was already more than 70 years old. It had undergone a variety of changes since its 1928 Paris premiere, from its title — it was initially named for its score,

Stravinsky's *Apollon musagète*, to its costuming and scenery, which went from full-on pseudo-Greek to today's austere monochromatic simplicity.

Balanchine loved tinkering with his choreography, although in the case of *Apollo* it was already so distilled and musically entwined that the original left scant room for improvement. But, then, astonishingly and with no rational explanation, Balanchine in 1979 chopped *Apollo's* birth-scene prologue and concluding apotheosis from his New York City Ballet production. In theory, all other companies that danced *Apollo* were expected to follow suit. In practice, it didn't work out that way. Balanchine died in 1983 and the trustees of his choreographic legacy more or less agreed that their licensed répétiteurs could stage the version of *Apollo* they were most familiar with. So, nowadays, depending on who has set it, you can see *Apollo*

BY MICHAEL CRABB



with its original beginning and end intact or excised.

Former NYCB dancer Ib Andersen staged the National Ballet's version in 1999 and chose to restore Balanchine's cuts, although he still excluded the re-entry of Leto, Apollo's mother, and her two handmaidens, who in more traditional versions witness the god's ascent of Mount Parnassus. The company's latest revival, credited to staff members Christopher Stowell and Lindsay Fischer, follows this blueprint.

This is not repertoire reimagined in the way House conceives it, but it is a reminder that even in the classical ballet world, where audiences cherish tradition as much if not more than innovation, historic works evolve. It's no accident that *Apollo* retains a freshness that misguided attempts to reconstruct "authentic" versions of ballet's classics sorely lack.

Peggy Baker has her own particular relationship with repertoire. She allows new interpreters of work she originally made for her own body to find space for

personal expression. Now, as she increasingly choreographs for other bodies, Baker deploys her accumulated store of choreographic structures, images and procedures to build new work.

Her most recent, *who we are in the dark*, is, like House's *Persefony Songs*, symbiotically connected with live music, in Baker's case by Arcade Fire members Sarah Neufeld, violin, and Jeremy Gara, percussion.

With a seven-dancer cast, atmospheric lighting by Marc Parent and evocative abstract projections by Jeremy Mimmagh, it's Baker's biggest, most ambitious work to date. Following its February premiere in Toronto, it embarked on a six-city Canadian tour.

The work unfolds episodically without linear narrative but, through the interactions of the dancers, it is rich in implied human drama. There is an overall sense of other-worldliness. The dance occurs beyond space and time, as if in a dream that shifts from reverie to almost nightmare. The sounds emitted by the

dancers, coached by "vocalographer" Fides Krucker, have the evanescence of whispers. Meaning, if one must seek it, remains elusive.


And what about a dancer trying to find a personal choreographic voice who has been immersed in such an iconic institution as Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater?

Jamar Roberts has long been hailed as one of the New York-based company's finest men, but it came as a refreshing surprise, during the only Canadian stop in the company's 50th anniversary tour, to discover that he's now emerging as a distinctive and promising choreographer.

At first glance, *Members Don't Get Weary*, Roberts' first work for the main company, looks as if it's going to subscribe to a typical Ailey uplift trope; heavily burdened Black people finding redemption through faith and their own resilience. While Roberts does not reject what are, after all, valid themes, his 25-minute work explores them with choreographic ingenuity and considerable emotional nuance.

Roberts named his dance after the 1968 Max Roach album *Members, Don't Get Weary*, its title song derived from an old spiritual. For music, however, Roberts turns to another American jazz great, John Coltrane, and two bluesy tracks. The shorter of these, *Dear Lord*, has the male and female 10-member cast costumed by Roberts in loose pants or skirts in shades of blue. They all wear wide-brimmed straw hats. This section is choreographically spare. Every move counts. Narrative elements are hinted at, never belaboured. There are images of toil, of physical and emotional exhaustion, of hope and despair.

The longer second part, to Coltrane's *Olé*, continues these ideas but more abstractly. The choreography becomes swifter, denser, geometrically more complex but never indecipherable. While the first section hints at historic oppression, the second, while feeling more contemporary, suggests that not much has changed. Struggle remains a constant and redemption is elusive. *DI*



**Ballet**  
**BOLDNESS**  
**STRENGTH**  
**ENERGY**  
**GRACE**

200 Crichton Street  
Ottawa, ON K1M 1W2  
T 613-238-7838  
F 613-238-7839  
www.theschoolofdance.ca

*Khema Stein by Gilles Vézina.*

The School of Dance



BY VICTOR SWOBODA

**K**rzysztof Pastor of Polish National Ballet likes to put classic ballets into modern settings. For his three-act *Swan Lake* at Place des Arts, he adapted the true story of Russian Tsar Nicholas II and his love for both his longtime mistress, ballerina Mathilde Kschessinska, and his eventual wife, Alexandra (“Alix”). Unfortunately, the love triangle drama unspooled too many conflicting emotional strings, strangling *Swan Lake’s* essential passion.

The storyline, which only introduced Nicholas after 30 minutes of pleasant but unmemorable ensemble pieces, bumped along with a sub-plot in which Nicholas’ father, Tsar Alexander, played the Rothbart role. It was a potentially interesting psychological twist that went undeveloped. Initially opposed to Nicholas’ desire to marry Alix, Alexander inexplicably blessed the union on his deathbed, a bit of sentimental claptrap without the slightest preamble.

Dramatically a mess, the production’s saving graces included an excellent corps de ballet showing exquisite port de bras in Ivanov’s traditional “white” choreography. They landed jumps with impressive unison making hardly a sound. Japanese-born Yuka Ebihara (who once trained at Vancouver’s Goh Ballet Academy) easily threw off double turns in executing the 32 fouettés in the Black Swan pas de deux. Corps member Anna Czeszejko made a touching Alix, with limpid arms and a fetching innocence. As Nicholas, Vladimir Yaroshenko, the embodiment of a handsome prince, ably partnered the two in separate delicate duets.

Pastor’s ensemble divertissements were conventionally postcard pretty whereas his

all-female Act III sextet was memorable for a sequence of arms curling and intertwining like serpents. But, at the ballet’s end, why throw out Tchaikovsky’s heart-rending crescendo finale? Instead, Pastor inserted a forgettable “grand” orchestral flourish to accompany a coronation scene — a cold, impersonal end for a passionate ballet.

In far more modest terms, local troupe Ballet Ouest, now in its 35th year, staged *Ella*, artistic director Claude Caron’s take on *Cinderella*, at Centre Pierre-Péladeau. Formerly a dancer with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Caron thoroughly knows the classical idiom, but his graceful ensemble figures were too reliant on predictable pirouettes and arabesques to generate excitement. As in his earlier *Nutcracker*, Caron relied heavily on large-screen video projections for décor. Splendid images, although when soloists went offstage and morphed into video projections, the charm of live performance faded.

*Farruquito*, at Place des Arts with 10 dancers, singers and musicians, was the most enjoyable flamenco show I’ve ever seen, and that includes Seville-born Farruquito’s own highly entertaining 2015 *Pinacendá*. At 36, the famous dancer is at the point where every movement is a source of fascination. His body lines showed an organic connection starting from his centre and extending to the tips of his hands and legs. Whether seen in huge silhouette on a white backdrop during the opening Soleá, or atop a table in front of a blood-red screen in the exuberant Sevillanas finale, Farruquito wove infinite combinations of steps and gestures, repeatedly creating tension that he resolved as he

transitioned from staccato zapateado to slow sweeps of the arms and delicate fingers.

A lyrical duet with Gema Moneo served to put his intense solos into greater dramatic relief. Striking canes on the floor, he and male dancers Barullo and Polito made a powerful percussive trio, which, like Polito’s machine-gun solo on top of a small box, emphasized the theatrical showmanship underlying the production.

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker’s 2005 quartet *A Love Supreme* used John Coltrane’s jazz music as accompaniment. At Place des Arts’ small Cinquième Salle, four male Rosas dancers performed a revised 2017 version. The result was the closest dance equivalent of jazz music’s essence that I know. Like jazz musicians jamming, the dancers walked and posed in largely improvised patterns, feeling the others’ presence, in synch yet completely independent. Watching this ordered chaos was fascinating, even when the quartet moved in silence. Two solos served as counterpoint, especially the first in which a dancer stood motionless, then unhurriedly strolled, throwing long stares at the audience. De Keersmaeker showed an innate understanding of how abstract elements create both tension and free-flowing harmony — dance as jazz.

Montreal dance continues to widen its parameters, both aesthetically and architecturally. After staging shows outside the Montreal core, Le Monastère – Cabaret de Cirque has moved into a new downtown home, St. Jax Church. The high-vaulted wooden ceiling made a spectacular frame for aerial artists like Guillaume Paquin and Nicole Faubert, who performed a passionate duet on straps, molding their bodies into positions not possible on a traditional stage. The view from below added a perspective not seen in dance at eye level. Earlier, David Ayotte shot up and down the Chinese pole with a rhythm tense with drama. Le Monastère’s shows are sure to become one of Montreal’s hottest tickets.

Montreal’s best burlesque performer, Lady Josephine, produced the city’s first burlesque-circus show at Bain Mathieu, a converted indoor public swimming pool. Ballerina-turned-trapeze-artist-contortionist Priscilla Dellazizzo was one of five female performers who promoted empowerment, not eroticism, which is characteristic of contemporary burlesque. <sup>DI</sup>

The last few months have brimmed with premieres from local artists, including the first solo work from long-time Kate Wallich collaborator Lavinia Vago, whose trademark stoicism and elasticity shone in a durationally held lunge exploring control and limits in *NOESIS X*. Cherdonna Shinatra (alter ego of Jody Kuehner) also employs duration in *Ditch*, her three-month, daily performance installation at the Frye Art Museum. Shinatra's clown character and her chorus of backup dancers are eager to please, hamming it up to the audience, but as they parade exuberance ad nauseam, Shinatra slowly falls to pieces.

February saw the return of Tint Dance Festival, founded just last year by Arlene Martin and Sue Ann Huang. In a city flush with festivals for new and emerging work, Tint has set itself apart with its mission to create space for choreographers and dancers of colour. While artists of colour often lead the local scene in innovation, they are still underrepresented onstage and in leadership positions in Seattle.

Works exploring political themes aren't uncommon here, but immigration is a particularly hot topic at the moment. Performed only a week apart at Cornish Playhouse, companies Whim W'him and the Three Yells provided an opportunity to

Wevers' storytelling reflects his classical background (he's a former principal at Pacific Northwest Ballet), using gesture to communicate emotion and the human drama of separating two reaching bodies. This literal approach makes its subject matter instantly clear and easy to connect with.

Veronica Lee-Baik, director of the Three Yells, takes a more cerebral and ambitious approach with her evening-length work, *A Crack in the Noise*.

At the start, a volunteer rises from the audience to sit on a stool on the stage's thrust. Her face twitches with concealed emotion as a dancer with an electronic clipper methodically shaves the woman's long dark hair. All of the dancers have shaved heads, too, and the transformation from average audience member to shaved uniformity says *This could be you — that which distinguishes us is fragile*. It's a poignant beginning that gives way to a stunning set design by Tristan Roberson, where the entire stage is flooded with a few inches of water, reflecting the 11 dancers.

Though the dancers have a uniform look, duets throughout the work imbue idiosyncratic and specific intent. From dropped lunges and carving limbs to quick, agile hand motions, to aggressive and then tender partnering, the qualitative shifts describe not generic humans, but individual lives full of complexity.

The individualism of the duets is offset by group sections — in one, a slow progression of repeated shapes gradually advances the group across the stage. One dancer on her journey across the pool is in synch with one crossing on an upstage raised walkway. Why is one person on dry land, while the other must balance precariously in the water? The disparity drives home that many of us witnessing are the lucky ones, with, for now, our feet on dry land.

While the abstraction of *A Crack in the Noise* makes it less obviously about refugees than *Trail of Souls*, the imagery is haunting and complex, and in terms of political art, does more to implicate its audience. While both raise awareness, Whim W'him asks us to sympathize with the plight of another; the Three Yells reminds us of the activist poet Emma Lazarus' quote, "Until we are all free, we are none of us free." <sup>01</sup>

## Seattle

BY KAITLIN MCCARTHY



Three years of presenting shorter works finally culminated in evening-length premieres for both Petra Zanki and Ella Mahler. Zanki's *Pleasant Place* tackled existential questions through a bittersweet dance theatre work, while Mahler's *Here*, stayed abstract and design-forward, a rhythmic duet of unison that kept cycling back on itself — a dance of purgatory.

Velocity Dance Center has announced its new executive director, Catherine Nueva España. With her extensive background working with non-profits and a master's of arts in dance studies from Trinity Laban Conservatoire in London, Nueva España is a promising choice to lead Velocity forward.

reflect on two takes on the refugee crisis.

*Trail of Souls*, a 20-minute work premiering as part of Whim W'him's mixed bill 3x3, takes a more classical approach to the topic, with the kaleidoscopic sensibilities director and choreographer Olivier Wevers is known for. The seven company members are in constant motion, swirling into tableaux of reaching across a border line of shoes on the floor. Torn apart by invisible forces, the group disperses and reassembles, clutching one another again and again in a flurried cascade of bodies peppered with anguished gestures. Cameron Birts was divine to watch, his emotion barely contained by his grounded strength as he tossed his spine back into a deep arch, arms grasping to clasp only air.

The Three Yells in Veronica Lee-Baik's *A Crack in the Noise*  
Photo: Jim Coleman



New York

BY ROBERT GRESKOVIC

**B**y the time New York City Ballet's winter season closed in early March, the troupe was no longer in its interregnum, having been under the direction of a four-person interim artistic team since January 2018, when Peter Martins, the company's director since 1983, retired amid misconduct accusations (that were eventually uncorroborated). That's when NYCB and its affiliate academy, the School of American Ballet, announced what it called its "next generation of artistic leadership."

Jonathan Stafford, a retired NYCB principal dancer and a teacher at School of American Ballet, was named artistic director of both the company and the school. Former principal Wendy Whelan was named associate artistic director of NYCB. Justin Peck, who was part of the interim team (alongside Stafford, Rebecca Krohn and Craig Hall), and who was appointed resident choreographer under Martins, is now retired from his position as NYCB soloist and has added the role of artistic advisor to his duties.

The shared responsibilities have been spelled out for Stafford as supervising "all areas of the company's artistic operations," and for Whelan as focusing "on conceiving, planning, and programming NYCB's annual performance season; commissioning new work from choreographers, composers, and other artistic collaborators."

The thrust of Martins' regime could still be felt throughout the recent winter season even if his physical presence as head of NYCB ended a year ago. This included four weeks of mixed bills framing a two-week block of performances of Martins' two-act staging, "after Marius Petipa," of *The Sleeping Beauty*. The mixed bills were headed under such titles as Stravinsky and Balanchine, Tchaikovsky and Balanchine, and All Robbins.

Where newer works were programmed — Balanchine died in 1983, Robbins in 1998 — they were billed as New Combinations, which Martins borrowed from a statement that Balanchine once made: "There are no new steps, only new combinations."

This season's new ballet was by Peck. The 33-minute *Principia* has a cast of 15 women and nine men and is set to commissioned music by Sufjan Stevens, a familiar Peck collaborator. Its successive segments, each accompanied by Stevens' travelogue-like score, are distinguished by the kinds of fresh invention, particularly for groupings and clusters of dancers, which have become a hallmark and strong suit of Peck's. A recurring configuration of hive-like arrangements are tapped open by a passing dancer to reveal a central dancer in its midst. Tiler Peck (no relation to Justin) and Taylor Stanley stood apart from the engaging activity, though not quite to the degree of impact that the ensemble moments command. As a semi-prominent female trio, Emily Kikta, Miriam Miller and Mira Nadon made their presence a sweet sidelight of Peck's dancemaking.

Reid Bartelme and Harriet Jung costumed the 24 dancers in delicately updated versions of NYCB's familiar, typically black-and-white, practice-wear look. Their scheme for the simple leotard-and-tights combination involves

layers of blue greys with a touch of sheer pink for the women's cut-off tights.

Elsewhere, in standard NYCB repertoire, Stanley made an impressive debut in the title role of the 1928 Stravinsky/Balanchine *Apollo*, rendering the modernist Greek god with finesse, precision and individuality. In *Serenade*, Lauren Lovette made fleet and vivid work of the central of three ballerinas leading the Tchaikovsky ballet's windswept, moonlit world. A revival of *Orpheus* brought back the 1948 Stravinsky/Balanchine tableau-like ballet after something of a hiatus with more dutiful effort than theatrical edge.

Martins' often breathlessly paced *Sleeping Beauty* (1991), which crudely breaks off for its single intermission amid the narrative's vision scene, featured notable role debuts. Lovette and Indiana Woodward created affecting moments of dance drama as Aurora. As Lovette's Prince Désiré, Joseph Gordon turned in fine dancing and an elegant characterization.

In the *Liebeslieder Walzer* half of the All Balanchine double bill, debuts in the Brahms-accompanied showcase of aristocratic love by Unity Phelan, Stanley and Gordon showed the fresh dancers distinguishing themselves and their roles.

All the dancers involved in a revival of William Forsythe's witty and virtuosic *Herman Schmerman* (1992), to boisterous taped music by Thom Willems and not seen here in more than two decades, were making debuts; almost all shone happily, especially those in the opening pas de cinq.

It's unclear how much of the programming for 2019-2020 (not yet announced at the time of writing) will still reflect the previous director's vision for NYCB: long-term planning is a fact of life for large institutions. Sooner or later, however, the programming and commissioning aspects with which Whelan has now been tasked will be in place.

When reflecting on taking over the reins of NYCB for an essay introducing a 1984 picture book called *Portrait of Mr. B*, Martins stated advice Balanchine gave him: "Declare war. Don't accept anything you don't believe in."

The next few years will show NYCB audiences what Stafford and Whelan believe in for the continuance of the artistic enterprise Balanchine founded and christened New York City Ballet back in 1948.

Through to mid-June, the Museum of Modern Art has an exhibition entitled *Lincoln Kirstein's Modern*, which it describes as celebrating "the 'live eye' of Lincoln Kirstein and his influence at MoMA and beyond."

As New Yorkers in particular well know, Kirstein co-founded, with George Balanchine, what became two leading cultural institutions in the United States: the School of American Ballet in 1934 and New York City Ballet in 1948.

Harvard-educated Kirstein (1907-1996) once proclaimed, "I have a live eye," referring to his avidity for

both the plastic and performing visual arts. Lively indeed is the array of nearly 300 works displayed at MoMA. Most are two-dimensional, some are three-dimensional, with historic films rounding out the selections. One black-and-white silent film captures a working rehearsal for the world premiere of *The Four Temperaments* by Balanchine with Ballet Society, which Kirstein also co-founded, in 1946. Much of MoMA's display documents Kirstein's abiding interest in the formal art of classical ballet. The "modern" part of the show's title should not be construed as referring to America's modern dance movement, which Kirstein mostly pooh-poohed.

Dance, photography, realism and classicism are among the headers captioning the show, indicating the often enigmatic Kirstein's polymath interests. <sup>DI</sup>



An Image from *Lincoln Kirstein's Modern*  
Pavel Tchelitchev (American, born Russia, 1898–1957). *Nervous System*.  
Designs for the ballet *The Cave of Sleep*. 1941. Gouache and watercolour on paper,  
13 1/4 × 11 in. (33.7 × 27.9 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.  
Gift of the artist





BY ANNE-MARIE ELMBY

On March 9, Gregory Dean presented his new *Cinderella* at the Old Stage of the Royal Danish Theatre. Born and educated in England, Dean's professional journey passed through Ballet Vorpommern in Germany and Scottish Ballet before he joined the Royal Danish Ballet in 2008, where he is now a principal dancer and emerging choreographer.

In 2015, Dean choreographed the Neapolitan and Hungarian dances in Nikolaj Hübbe and Silja Schandorff's *Swan Lake* and, in 2017, he made choreography, costumes and scenography for the atmospheric ballet *The Forgotten Children*, which overflowed with exciting roles for the Royal Danish Ballet School students.

When talking about his newest work, Dean has stated that he wanted to create a true fairy-tale ballet and as inspiration chose Charles Perrault's version of the tale from 1697, where goodness conquers all and Cinderella forgives her tormentors.

Dean's choreographic vocabulary for the ballet is primarily classical with some witty, exaggerated moves for the stepsisters, as when Kizzy Matiakis' temperamental stepsister ripped the glittering "glass" shoe apart trying to make it fit. Wilma Giglio, the second, identically dressed stepsister, revealed a hitherto unseen gift for comedy as the two doubled up as partners in crime, teasing and exploiting the patient Cinderella.

Ida Praetorius portrayed Cinderella with natural sweetness, radiating harmony and grace in her dance. Ji Min Hong's Good

Fairy transported Cinderella into nature, where fairies representing the four seasons danced individual solos and got her ready for the ball. As the prince, Alexander Bozinoff had exquisite ballon in his jumps and expressed fine emotion in his adagio solos.

In the second cast, Matiakis successfully switched to the role of Cinderella, expressing quiet wonder at her good fortune in meeting Jonathan Chmelensky's aristocratic prince. With his flawless technique, he became her perfect partner in their grand love pas de deux. Praetorius, as the stepsister, clearly enjoyed her pranks, flirting with and clinging to her dance partners at the ball, and J'aime Crandall, the second stepsister, could, for the first time, let herself go in a comical role onstage.

As a salute to August Bournonville, Dean introduced a dance lesson for the stepsisters, where the teacher, overwhelmed by the presumptuous girls, tried to teach them combinations from *La Conservatoire*. Somehow, Dean made the choreography match Sergei Prokofiev's music, just as he skilfully made his narrative flow fit the score's sudden changes in rhythm and character.

Jon Morrell's beautiful costumes were inspired by the Victorian period. At the ball, the ladies swirled in pastel shades of taffeta and tulle, while the stepsisters had fun in pink flounced dresses. Their statuesque mother appeared first in black, later in a deep purple bustle dress, while the fairies wore classical, glittering tutus.

Cinderella's ball attire was a dream tutu in white and gold, a contrast to her former

soiled blue dress. At the end, in a cloud of feathery white tulle, she kept waltzing with her prince as the curtain went down, obviously to live happily ever after.

Three of Danish choreographer Lene Boel's works were performed in January with great success at Festival Suresnes Cités Danse in Paris under the title Forces of the North, offering examples of her oeuvre over the last decade. The following month, a Copenhagen audience got a chance to see the show, which featured 18 international, virtuoso performers.

In *Super Human* (2018), Boel was inspired by science fiction movies and trans-humanism that seeks to optimize human capacities through technology and science. The dancers honoured the title, pushing the limits of what seemed physically possible, while Jesper Kongshaug's lighting design turned them into oversized silhouettes against a changing neon-coloured background.

Driven by Rex Casswell's electronic soundscape, bodies spiralled at lightning speed, jumped in explosive outbursts or moved in zombie-like slow motion.

In Boel's *Ritual for the Inuit* (2010), two male dancers in anoraks placed us in the frozen world of the Arctic accompanied by a soundscape of Inuit songs, animal sounds and crackling ice. Their hip-hop style blended into narrative passages that took elements from Inuit culture and myth, as well as illustrating the challenges when nature rules.

Finally, for *Viking Runes* (2015), Boel drew on the myths of Nordic gods and the *Hunger Games* movies with their stories of life and death. Eight dancers performed with strong individual artistry in a mixture of urban dance, modern dance and new circus, their warrior attitude expressed through hip-hop tricks and gymnastic agility. A male dancer performed a stunning Cyr wheel act, the wheel being a symbol of the eternal circle of life, and three impetuous Valkyries flew across the space. In his music, Casswell incorporated the Viking wind instrument, the lure, and natural sounds.

Since the foundation of her company, Next Zone, in 1997, Boel has developed an artistic identity that persistently challenges and expands the corporeal movement vocabulary. Her next show will be a double bill of a solo and a duet with elements from butoh and African dance. *DI*

# London



BY SANJOY ROY

**T**he London International Mime Festival is of tangential yet special interest for dancegoers. Now in its fourth decade, it encompasses a vast range of hybrid performance styles with one common factor: the body is the primary medium.

Gandini Juggling Project graced the festival in 2017 with *Smashed*, a riotous tribute to Pina Bausch using juggling (yes, really). This year's *Spring* at Sadler's Wells Theatre, a collaboration with choreographer Alexander Whitley, could not have been more different, but it was every bit as delightful. A remarkably seamless fusion of dance with juggling, and dancers with jugglers, *Spring* was built on movement — balls, rings and batons as well as bodies — and on sound, light and space.

Gabriel Prokofiev's freewheeling score gusted through the piece like a breeze, and Guy Hoare's chromatic lighting glinted and shimmered like dappled sunlight. The choreography tugged at the carefulness required by the jugglers, making them tilt and roll even as they kept their objects in flight. And it constantly echoed and offset dextrous skill with reckless swerves, playing fast and loose with counting systems and pass-it-on games. An all-round joy.

The Bausch company itself followed soon after, at the end of February, at the same venue, with a mould-breaking season: the first two full-length works

commissioned by the company since Bausch's death in 2009. If Bausch was known for her particular hybrid of dance and theatre, the new works were hybrids with a different slant.

Greek choreographer Dimitris Papaioanou has a background in visual art, and it showed. *Since she* began with an homage to Bausch: a pile of foam slabs as a monumental set, before which formed a parade of performers. Women were in gowns, men in suits, yet, unlike with Bausch, we saw them as images, not characters. We didn't get to know who these people were.

Still, the joining of mechanical means and dreamlike effect — set variously to silence, to distant sounds, to music ranging from J.S. Bach and Sergei Prokofiev to Tom Waits — was often intriguing enough in itself. A woman was held by her hair as her neck nestled in the crotch of a naked man, so that she looked like a severed Medusa head, eyes still blinking. A woman in a ram's mask had her inky dress smeared to reveal luxurious gold beneath. Another man cast about the stage, cowbells between his legs, poles extending his arms into giraffe-length forelimbs. A woman held a stiff plank for a skirt, beneath which rippled a multitude of legs; she looked part mermaid, part lobster.

The surreal images kept coming, but to what end? *Since she* was as strange and as matter-of-fact as a child's game of make

believe, as suggestive and arcane as tarot. What it lacked was a sense of pacing — a trajectory, a dynamic — and while its imagery and material were finely crafted, time and character were sketchy.

*Bon Voyage, Bob*, by Norwegian choreographer and director Alan Lucien Øyen, had a much more cinematic sense of montage. One scene laid out after another within rotating film-set scenography, cued by an emotive but unobtrusive soundtrack to form cameos from human lives. Or, rather, deaths — for the theme of the piece was death and dying, in its many but always final forms.

The piece kicked off with a story about a woman whose brother has died abroad (the source material all came from the performers themselves), and moved through the tragic, the farcical, the fantastic, the melodramatic, the traumatic and, of course, the commonplace. A suicide became a scene of film noir glamour, artfully arranged and rearranged as if by stage technicians attending to a starlet. A dying moment became a quiet bond between a mother and daughter, the rest of the family excluded in another room. A winged angel appeared, a dark horse shadowed a domestic dispute, and one man was dragged away trailing chalk marks on the floor, like the dwindling cardiogram of his life.

*Bon Voyage, Bob* was stuffed with inventive staging and moving images, but overreached its own means as it approached its end; it began to sermonize. Cut by 30 minutes (it was more than three hours long) and this would be a powerful and pointed work.

On the subject of genre-crossing works, it's worth mentioning a visit by National Dance Company Wales to the new and much improved Linbury Theatre at the Royal Opera House, with a program that included two startlingly hybrid pieces.

*Tundra* by Spanish choreographer Marcos Morau managed the improbable feat of joining a retro-Ballets Russes look (folkloric costumes and chants, the plaited limbs of Nijinska's *Les Noces*) with a robotic, 1950s sci-fi feel.

*Afterimage* by Brazilian Fernando Melo mixed projection and reflection both literally (mirrors, video) and psychologically to create resonant if not yet fully realized psychodrama in which ghosts and bodies haunted, hunted and inhabited each other. I'll be watching out for more. *oi*

Ukrainian-born dancer Sergei Polunin was back in the news, not long after his Milan show late last year, with sexist and homophobic social media posts as well as praise for Russian president Vladimir Putin. These rants compelled the Paris Opera Ballet to cancel his invitation to dance the role of Siegfried in their *Swan Lake*.

What a terrible waste of talent! Polunin has been, and could still be, one of the greatest dancers of this generation. Not only because of his precise technique, but also due to his soft and airy jumps, and the innate musicality of his legato. There is some special glow in his dancing that reveals an intimate melancholy — a lyricism of gesture and attitude that is really touching. But are these qualities enough to overcome his personal controversy?

There had been such buzz when he danced for one night only at the Teatro Arcimboldi in Milan. Writers from all over Italy had requested media tickets, eager to see Polunin in *Sacré*, a full-length solo created for him by budding Japanese choreographer Yuka Oishi, a former soloist with Hamburg Ballet.

Yet the commissioned pieces that Polunin dances in such shows are widely thought to lack true theatrical and choreographic value, which a dancer of his calibre deserves. It's good that he supports emerging choreographers, such as Oishi, but the risk is that the result will be immature and pedestrian, as was the case with *Sacré*. In this reinterpretation of Vaslav Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*, Polunin seemed torn between evoking Nijinsky's greatest roles and his well-known "madness," alternating physical contortions to suggest pathos, with explosions of beauty intended to recall Nijinsky's great artistry. But there was no dramatic tension in the choreographic frame, which simply surrenders to the powerful Stravinsky music. Considering Polunin's continual acts of controversy, it perhaps no longer matters.

The Teatro alla Scala's ballet season recently premiered the anticipated creation for the company by French choreographer Angelin Preljocaj. It is rare that La Scala dancers have the chance to work with a renowned artist for a project set specifically on their skills. Preljocaj himself does not often accept invitations from companies, preferring to work with his

own Ballet Preljocaj, though he has previously made exceptions for Paris Opera Ballet and New York City Ballet. Therefore, his creation, *Winterreise*, titled after Franz Schubert's cycle of songs to which it is set, was really one of the most important presentations not only for La Scala, but for the entire dance season.

Schubert's *Winterreise* is a masterpiece of the Romantic period, based upon the German poet Wilhelm Müller's cycle of lyrics that describes a spiritual landscape, desolate and sorrowful — a heartbroken lover, travelling into a winter land, recalls his hopes and fallen illusions, and evokes the spring of his life and the coming peace of death. An intimate confession in 24 songs, Schubert finds the perfect blend

Preljocaj does not maintain a linear expressive choice, but rather jumps from two main strategies. The first is to evoke the poetic images of nature through gestures and movement. For example, he has the dancers move the small fans they are holding to evoke the wind moving during the song, *The Weathercock*, then has them twirling in long black gowns to describe the dark waters quoted in another song, *The Flood of Water*.

His second strategy is more literal, as during *The Post*, where a young man recalls waiting for a love letter that never arrived, and Preljocaj has the dancers move a large white piece of paper to evoke the letter's journey.

BY SILVIA POLETTI



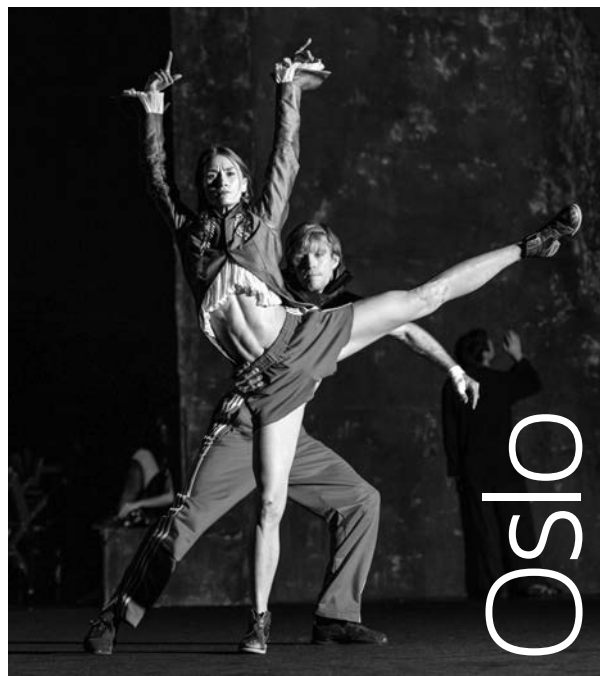
in the dialogue between the voice (here the baritone Thomas Tatzl) and the piano (played by James Vaughn).

Preljocaj's one-hour-and-20-minute ballet maintains this intimate atmosphere. Featuring a cast of 13 dancers, it is set in a gloomy scene with grey flakes raining down.

Preljocaj's typical style oscillates from a sharp formalism with precise dry movements to sensual abandon. Watching his works, the emotional side always seems a little restrained. This is not matched well with the music, whose every trembling note, every whisper of the voice, every image, evokes something elusive and secret.

The dancers had clean and steely energy, along with a dynamic flow of gestures, showing deep understanding of the movement. But the dance lacked empathy and a connection with the expressivity behind the music.

Overall, however, this was a good start for the next contemporary challenge in the company's schedule: the full evening *Wolf Works* by Wayne McGregor, with Alessandra Ferri back onstage at the theatre where she was once a pupil and then a prima ballerina assoluta from 1992 to 2007. <sup>01</sup>



BY FREDRIK RÜTTER

The second part is set to heavy metal, but the choreography remains the same. The same, but also not: suddenly one wonders, did that dancer do the same thing in the first part, or was there a slight difference? In this way, Naharin keeps the audience on their toes — it is strange to realize how different the experience is according to the music accompanying the movement.

The dancers are strong with a lot of energy; they know their Gaga dancing when it is required of them. Aside from enjoying the force and tempo of the dancing, though, there is not much of a story; *Venezuela* is much more about feelings and creating “vibrations” in the theatre.

The Norwegian National Ballet did invite the audience to enjoy stories during an evening that was also a musical feast featuring Igor Stravinsky’s *Firebird* and *Rite of Spring*.

*The Firebird* opened, in a version created in 2013 by Liam Scarlett, a British choreographer working close to the origins of classical ballet. The set and costumes by Jon Bausor are colourful and imaginative, with an enormous tree whose top crown nearly covers the whole space, and with the bottom of the tree protecting what looks like an egg. On the left side there is a part of a painting with a hole in the canvas through which the Firebird (Melissa Hough) and then, later, Prince Ivan (Yoel Carreño) enter. Their long pas de deux, with intricate lifts, was very well danced. Hough was strong as the Firebird, her dancing was unblemished and she was in full control. Carreño, however, seemed to lack the necessary spark in his dancing, giving the impression of being a little bit exhausted.

Erik Murzagaliyev as Koschei, in fantastic costumes and makeup, did not land an equally fantastic performance, never managing to match the boldness of what he was wearing. If boredom set in midway through the piece, Hough beautifully saved the end with her strong solo.

Norwegian National Ballet’s artistic director Ingrid Lorentzen invited Norwegian choreographer Ina Christel Johannessen, who has 35 years of choreographic experience, to take on a new *Rite of Spring*. In Johannessen’s version, instead of a virgin sacrifice, the Earth itself is the offering, and the stage looked like the site of an explosion, with car wrecks, collapsed house walls and heaps of chairs.

The ballet starts with men swinging heavy whips, making an incredibly loud sound. Their costumes and the way they are moving around seem to suggest some kind of ancient ritual, but whether they are shamans, shepherds or terrorists is hard to say. Other dancers lie flat on the floor, having great difficulties as they try to get up, with some force seemingly holding them down. When they manage to stand on two feet, what appears to be complete unorganized chaos begins, but to make that work the action has to be organized.

The program states that the movement material was created in collaboration with the dancers, which might be the reason that an overall artistic arc to the production was missing. Johannessen’s desire to put the focus on the great climate problems the world is facing was clear, but will this version of *The Rite of Spring* have any influence on those questions?

Also at the Oslo Opera House, modern company Carte Blanche toured to the second and smaller stage in March with *Know Hows*, which had premiered at their home in Bergen some weeks before. Two Norwegian choreographers are listed as the originators: Kristin Ryg Helgebostad and Ingeleiv Berstad, who have worked with the company before.

Helgebostad and Berstad put many strange personalities onstage who at the start have nothing to do with each other, but eventually they move into some kind of a ceremony before falling into what might be described as an uncontrolled apocalyptic party. As the work continued, it headed more and more in the direction of what I saw as some religious congregation, with outsiders thrown out. It would be no surprise, however, if others in the audience had a totally different experience and interpretation of *Know Hows*, since the piece was so open-ended and the choreographers did not give any guidance to help us out. *DI*

With snow heavily falling, it was nice to enter the Bærum Cultural Centre to see Batsheva Dance Company. Situated 20 minutes by train outside the centre of Oslo, Bærum works seriously to promote dance, both local and international, and the stage was built with dance in mind.

Batsheva has been here before, so the company knows the space, and the audience knows Batsheva. Despite the snow, five or six people outside the theatre took part in a political protest against Batsheva, who receive funding from the State of Israel and perform in areas which some claim are occupied. The demonstrators, however, created no problems inside for the Scandinavian premiere of the latest work by Ohad Naharin, *Venezuela*, which has had great response wherever it has been performed.

The piece opens with four couples standing on the edge of the stage with their backs to the audience. Gregorian chant starts to fill the auditorium and the dancers move slowly away. Halfway to the back, a couple hits a pose while the others continue. The couple start something that looks like a jive, and the others join in. This opening is certainly not Gaga-based, making for a strong contrast to what one normally gets from Naharin. Later on, there are also touches of tango, which may have to do with the title, *Venezuela*, although the whole first section is set to Gregorian chant.

While most of Australia's dance scene lay dormant, Perth Festival took centre stage early in 2019 with an ambitious line-up of local and international works. It was the country's largest and most diverse festival programming for dance in recent years, outdoing east coast counterparts in Sydney and Melbourne.

A festival headliner was *Sunset*, a new immersive dance-theatre work created by U.K. director and choreographer Maxine Doyle, best known for her co-direction of Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*. Over the past three years, Doyle has collaborated with Perth-based choreographic centre STRUT Dance to share her methodology with local independent dancers and ultimately stage *Sunset* as an original site-specific work for Australian audiences.

The site was Sunset Heritage Precinct on the banks of Perth's Swan River, a sprawling collection of abandoned buildings originally built in 1904 as a care facility for elderly men and later used as a general hospital. The site oozes with character, and Doyle's production dramatically reimaged the facility's colourful history.

After being led through a warren of dimly lit rooms, the audience was free to roam through the main hall, encountering the performers at close range. We saw a nurse serving tea, a shaggy haired man in a drunken stupor and a youthful figure darting about covered in gold glitter. These peculiar characters — part historical, part mythological — formed the substance of the work.

Through a series of danced and spoken vignettes, we met the people who may have lived or worked at the men's home. They performed ordinary acts of daily life — celebrating a birthday or reading a poem — before abruptly transitioning to an altered state of being, punctuated by dramatic or ecstatic movement. This oscillation spoke of restlessness, a kind of existential limbo that a place like *Sunset* so readily provoked.

The ensemble cast comprised a dozen local dancers and actors who each embodied their character with conviction, developing an idiosyncratic and mesmerizing movement vocabulary. Doyle's skill in bringing together performance, design, lighting and sound to activate the dormant building was impressive and compelling.



BY RHYS RYAN

Dimitris Papaioannou's *The Great Tamer* visited Perth Festival as part of its current international tour. The Greek director, who trained as a painter and whose credits include the 2004 Athens Olympic Ceremonies, offered an inner excavation for meaning through a collage of unadorned choreography, poignant symbolism and brilliant design.

In a literal sense, the stage itself was an excavation site. Dozens of black plywood sheets formed a sloped embankment, many of which were tossed aside or ripped up to uncover a world below. The performers (or sometimes just their naked limbs) frequently entered and exited the space through the floor in sequences reminiscent of a grotesque birthing.

Above ground, the bodies played out a series of peculiar vignettes that seemed to disassemble and reconstruct the body limb by limb. These choreographic illustrations were at once macabre and beautiful. To counter the bleak tableaux, humour was littered throughout the work in typical Greek style. There were also moments of extraordinary intimacy, throwing up questions about our shared humanity and the violence we let pervade it.

The ensemble cast was exceptionally talented and understood the work's dramatic

subtleties. Through breathtaking visual design and ingenious choreography, *The Great Tamer* shattered then reconfigured one's idea of unspoken storytelling.

West Australian Ballet's annual contemporary season, *In-Synch: Ballet at the Quarry*, was a mixed program of four short works. Finnish choreographer Johanna Nuutinen's *X-It* explored the paranoia of being under constant surveillance through surging and frenetic choreography. The dancers interacted with digital versions of themselves on a large screen, moving in unison, rebelling against their avatars or disappearing "into" the screen. It was a slick affair and well danced, but a dated and uninspiring score, and a few too many compositional ideas held the work back.

The evening's highlight, *Reincarnation*, was an eccentric new work about rebirth and transformation by Australian Dance Theatre artistic director Garry Stewart. Angularity and rhythm shaped the choreography, which saw trios and quartets emerge and dissolve into longer passages of crisp ensemble unison.

Guest dancers from local contemporary outfit Co3 Australia were in their comfort zone with Stewart's signature high-octane and aggressive choreography, and the classically trained dancers integrated fairly seamlessly. *Reincarnation*, however, lacked colour and shade and, without much thematic or choreographic variation, it felt a little long.

The rest of the program featured a mostly improvised and underwhelming in-house work, *In-Synch*, plus a very dated remount of the 1996 slapstick ballet *The Sofa* by Israeli choreographer Itzik Galili. Although West Australian Ballet's contemporary technique was commendable, the program as a whole lacked sophistication and failed to impress.

The rest of Perth Festival featured two notable international collaborations: *Kwongkan* by Australia's Ochre Contemporary Dance Company and India's Daksha Sheth Dance Company, and *One Infinity* choreographed by Gideon Obarzanek in collaboration with Dancenorth Australia and Beijing Dance Theater. Radical reinterpretations of story ballets were a festival theme, with audiences given the opportunity to see *Giselle* by Dada Masilo (South Africa) and *Swan Lake* by Michael Keegan-Dolan's new company Teac Damsa (Ireland). D1

# Reviews



## Malpaso

Barton, Delgado, Tayeh, Naharin /  
Mixed Bill

The Havana-based Malpaso Dance Company gave an evocative performance of four distinct pieces at the National Arts Centre on January 19. This spectacular Ottawa debut of Cuba's first independent dance company, established in 2012, stood out in its equal showcasing of male and female choreographers.

The first piece, *Indomitable Waltz* (2016) by Alberta-born Aszure Barton, was set in motion when a male dancer rotated his shoulder with force and beauty. Body isolations punctuated Malpaso's signature vernacular, which fuses Afro-Cuban rhythms, Cuban ballet culture and vibrant modern dance.

As eight dancers sculpted trios, duets and solos, their intricacy conveyed Barton's vision, which she has described as being about the complexity of the soul. Her sumptuous waltzes explore this idea through multi-faceted choreographic moments that jumble up the company's dance vocabulary. This meshing of styles is Barton's choreographic trademark. Dunia Acosta performed a *rond de jambe en l'air* with a bent knee and a flexed foot; the angular joints of the Afro-Cuban repertoire were swiftly reshaped back into ballet with an arabesque. Solo dancers were lifted by pairs in a dual set of triads in a whirl of contemporary dance and ballet. Esteban Aguilar, apart from the others, stepped rhythmically in place to call forth salsa and its roots in the 19-century mix of Cuban music and dance known as son.

The jaggedness of the choreography is accentuated by six disconnected scores, from the crispness of Balanescu Quartet's *Waltz* to the frenzy of a string quartet by Michael Nyman. Musical and choreographic disharmonies, both pitfalls of the piece, were smoothed over by the dancers' fluidity and athletic splendour. Their masterful transitions between assorted musical themes and dance traditions pieced this scattered work into a luscious blend.

In *Ocaso* (2013) by Osnel Delgado, who co-founded Malpaso, Delgado and Beatriz García performed a provocative and touching duet that conveys the ebb and flow of intimacy in relationships through an amalgam of

modern dance and ballet.

The give-and-take in romantic partnering is captured through the use of space. Each dancer alternated between rolls and moves on the floor, standing figures and leaps. Multiple architectural levels combined with the pair's artistry to turn shifting emotions into palpable sensations.

Delgado's outstanding deep and controlled pliés in second position and his grand jetés, executed with strength and lightness, embodied this personal interchange. García excelled in her interplay of expressive roles. As if a marionette controlled by her male partner, she broke free, took the lead by grabbing and supporting him, and captured the limelight in solo jetés and spins.

The thunderous timbre of Autechre's *Parallel Suns*, the urgency of Kronos Quartet's *White Man Sleeps* and the haunting serenity of Max Richter's *Sunlight* accompanied their fluctuating relations. Ocaso's brilliance lies in the clarity of the correspondence between movement and message even though its drive to enact a singular theme is too repetitious.

New York City choreographer Sonya Tayeh describes her work, which bridges the worlds of television, music, theatre and concert dance, as combat jazz. *Face the Torrent* (2017) vibrates with street dance and compelling theatrical effects. Menacing whispers, fears and enigmas inhabit this dark universe.

Eight dancers began in a line and moved slowly forward to the pulsating dance beats and electronic

sharpness of *Seed/Stem/Calyx*, by Colette Anderson with New York band the Bengsons. Each step, heavy with intensity, hit the audience like a wave. The imposing Abel Rojo stood apart from the line to suddenly crumble, as if in the presence of an invisible enemy that loomed above. Through the reactions of the other dancers, that enemy became real; they looked up with pain, dodged to avoid being hit and crouched in panic.

The dancers form relationships that forebode potential violence. In one instance, three male dancers pulled and pushed Acosta, suggesting assault. Instead, one of the men was gently lifted high above by the group. At the end, the dancers clustered. Holding their heads at varied angles, they looked to the sky in terror.

With their suggestive miming and outstanding technique, the dancers held our attention with a choreography that suspends viewers in raw emotions without the need for narrative explanation.

The evening's final piece, *Tabula Rasa* (1986) by Ohad Naharin, the former artistic director of Israel's Batsheva Dance Company, is choreographed to Arvo Pärt's composition of the same title. Both choreography and music balance energy with quietness.

The work exploded with breathtaking physicality as the nine dancers threw themselves into powerful grand jetés, ran with vitality across the stage and reached out with abandon toward the audience. As this initial fervour evaporated, the

breathing of the still audience was reflected in the dancers' hypnotic placidity. Standing in a line upstage, they stepped in synchronicity exceedingly slowly to the right. This pursuit of the stillness of breath within a subtle motion was poignant, but the minimal choreography weakened the passage. The dancers, however, interpreted this shift from exuberance to calm with magnificent allure.

Where the choreography falls short in each piece, the virtuosity of the dancers took over. Each artist could be a soloist or principal, but they all came together as one ensemble to create a sensational performance.

— SHEENAGH PIETROBRUNO

## Vancouver International Dance Festival

Almost half of the presentations at the 2019 Vancouver International Dance Festival were created by Indigenous artists, and almost all of these were by women choreographers. From a lively jig to a bold nude solo, a wide range of Indigenous perspectives was shared through both traditional and contemporary dance forms.

One of the festival's featured presentations, at the Vancouver Playhouse (other performances were at smaller venues around the city), was *Varhung – Heart to Heart*,

from Taiwan's Tjimur Dance Theatre — the first contemporary dance company dedicated to the Indigenous Paiwan culture of Taiwan. At times calm and measured, and at other times full of warrior bravado, five dancers expressed a range of emotions seemingly without artifice. Influenced by ancient Paiwan dances and songs, Baru Madiljin's choreography explores his cultural heritage while using contemporary movement. Another highlight was the group's stirring chants and a vocal solo by one of



V'ni Dansi's Louis Riel Métis Dancers' Madelaine McCallum (front), with Yvonne Chartrand, Evan Ducharme, Anne Maia Sorensen and Luis Canton (back) in Chartrand's *Red River Dance*  
Photo: Chris Randle

the male dancers; though I couldn't understand the Paiwan words, meaning was clearly expressed through the dancers' dramatic movements.

*Varbung* began with flexed feet and bent knees, the dancers grounded and calm. Interlacing their arms with one another, they danced in a straight line and weaved intricate patterns. The work evolved into more vigorous movement, including a pulsating section accompanied by bass-heavy music and evocative chants. Seamlessly, the group moved into frenzied laughter while clapping and chanting, their enthusiasm infectious. After it seemed as though they had expelled all their energy and passion, giving their all to the audience, they lay curled up on the floor as long dried grasses landed on top of them, a powerful image that signalled a connection to the land.

Métis cultural traditions were featured in V'ni Dansi's *Red River Dance*. Based in Vancouver, V'ni Dansi is dedicated to the preservation and innovation of traditional and contemporary Métis dance, stories and culture. Artistic director and choreographer Yvonne Chartrand's traditional jig for four dancers wove intricate patterns around the stage, reminiscent of a line dance, with the women's colourful full skirts bouncing along with the vibrant stepping. The sounds of fast footwork amplified the exuberant fiddle music.

A contemporary take on Métis identity was presented by Cree Métis artist Jeanette Kotowich [profiled in this issue on page 28]. Her solo, *Eloise*, is a character-driven work that references Louis Riel, exploring the connection between her body and

the landscape of Saskatchewan. In fabulous high heels, a sequined dress and fur scarf, and with a feather in her hair, Kotowich catwalked onto the stage, strutting and posing. "If Louis Riel could see me now. This jig's for you, Lou," she said.

As part of a thorough land acknowledgement running throughout the piece, Kotowich honoured the four directions by placing her scarf, shoes, feather and dress down on the stage. There was a humorous element to the work, too, as she thanked her arms for always being by her side, her legs for supporting her, her hands because she could always count on them and her hips that never lie.

In *Gidaashi*, Olivia C. Davies was joined by spoken word artist Melissa Frost. Davies seemed possessed by an unseen force as she made desperate guttural sounds. The two women discuss their matriarchal lineage — Davies is of Anishinaabe, French-Canadian and Welsh heritage; Frost is from the Wolf clan/Ch'ichyaa of the Vuntut Gwichin First Nation in Old Crow, Yukon. *Gidaashi* means "she is removed by the wind," and they talked about displacement and the power of the wind to carry prayers. At the end, they gave the audience an opportunity to make a wish in a large ceremonial bowl passed around. Some of the content about their connection to the land, lineage and the power of the wind was compelling, but the overall narrative, and Frost's role, was unclear.

*Gathering Light* by Vancouver-based Raven Spirit Dance is an intense inward-looking work for four dancers, and the choreography by artistic director Michelle Olson, from the Tr'ondëk

Hwëch'in First Nation, highlights the strength and power of women.

After spending a great deal of time close to the floor in slow, repetitive sequences, the dancers transitioned into a melodic series of fluid, expansive movement. There were many moments evoking pain and suffering; at times, it seemed as though they were bearing a heavy, unshakeable burden.

The most striking image was an imaginary thread the dancers carefully took turns stitching through their bodies, connecting them all. Full of melancholy and intense introspection, there were few moments when the performers engaged with the audience. But, when they did, it was a powerful invitation to share their burden. The woman beside me was so moved she was brought to tears, I'm sure due to the dancers' ability to so intensely embody their emotions and to share that freely with us.

Another piece that triggered tears from a fellow audience member was *Serpentine*, choreographed by Montreal-based Daina Ashbee (of Dutch, Cree and Métis descent) and performed by Mexican dance artist Areli Moran. The piece was billed as a summary of three of Ashbee's previous works: *Unrelated*, *When the ice melts, will we drink the water?* and *Pour*.

Moran, completely nude, began in a tight child's pose, her arms tucked neatly under her. On the shiny, oil-slicked stage, she very slowly, almost imperceptibly, straightened out her legs and arms, rolled over through a back bend, and crawled in a serpentine pattern from one end of the long narrow stage to the other.

The painfully slow movement and starkly lit, oily stage was reminiscent of *Pour*, and the violent moments at the end of the crawling sequence evoked the thrashing bodies of *Unrelated*. As Moran's skin hit the stage and her breathing became increasingly laboured, it was difficult to watch — and it didn't get any easier. She caught her breath, then stood and walked back to the other end of the stage to start again. After three rounds of this same slow sequence, the piece ended.

The only change among the three rounds was the lighting and sound. Jean-François Blouin's solemn organ and the low lighting set a different tone than the silence and brightly lit stage of the first and third rounds. Each repetition allowed us to reflect on the slow winding journey to reach the end of the stage and the harsh abusive moments that awaited her once she arrived. The sequence began to feel meditative and inevitable; her fate inescapable.

The female body as a site of suffering, abuse and inter-generational trauma and knowledge came up often during these works — no surprise given matriarchal Indigenous traditions and the prominence of female Indigenous choreographers. As well, their explorations of identity led to a deeply rooted connection between bodies and the land they are from.

— TESSA PERKINS DENEALTY





## Ballet West

Guzmán, Sklute, Fonte / Mixed Bill

What a difference a day — or a dancer — makes. On the first night of Ballet West's two-night stand in Victoria, B.C., last February, a smattering of audience members rose to their feet. On the second night, however, with exactly the same program, in the same order, but with different leads, most everyone was up and cheering.

On the Friday opening night, the Salt Lake City-based company looked pretty but danced messily in Spanish choreographer África Guzmán's *Sweet and Bitter*. A longtime principal with the Compañía Nacional de Danza under Nacho Duato, it is clear that Guzmán has absorbed Duato's preoccupations with fluid, sweeping classical lines mixed with the occasional bit of less-polite contemporary movement.

In Guzmán's case, that

movement included a repeated lift where a dancer places her hands on her partner's hips, legs spread wide around him in a flying second-position plié (but with pointed feet) as he spins. It's a memorable invention and was about the only spot of brightness in the piece when performed by lead dancer Emily Adams and partner Rex Tilton.

On Saturday, though, the blazing presence of Beckanne Sisk, partnered by Chase O'Connell (incidentally, her husband), not only took that lift close to incendiary, it also seemed to ignite the rest of the company into a far better, more precise and energetic performance.

While nothing will make *Sweet and Bitter* a great piece of dance — too much sweet in its swirling predictability

and no bitter at all, with attractive but unadventurous music by Ezio Bosso and nondescript white costumes by David Heuvel — Sisk's energy, attack and charisma meant the Saturday show started on a high that carried it through two duets from *Swan Lake*, by Adam Sklute, the company's artistic director, after Marius Petipa, and a return to more contemporary fare in Nicolo Fonte's *Fox on the Doorstep*.

The danger of providing excerpts from a story ballet is that they sit exposed, with no context (unless the audience is very familiar with the narrative) to give them emotion or meaning. Done as they were here, in tutus and tights but without any kind of set to indicate place and mood, they were exposed even more and wholly dependent on the skill of the dancers to convey anything beyond mere technique. And while the technique was acceptable (it could and should have been much better — is no one challenging these dancers to improve?), their ability to reach beyond the steps was, with one notable exception, negligible.

On Saturday, the White Swan pas de deux, danced by Arolyn Williams and Rex Tilton, was both delicate and lively, and there was a clear relationship between ballerina and cavalier. The notable exception, however, was Sisk, Friday's Black Swan, who gave a master class on how to be an actor-dancer: face, body and mind equally engaged and committed. Her Siegfried, however, was a less than scintillating partner. O'Connell seemed disengaged; he did the minimum and no more, both in partnering Sisk and in delivering what should have been a showstopper solo.

The last piece, Fonte's *Fox on the Doorstep*, finally gave the men of Ballet West a little more to do. While Guzmán's *Sweet*

and *Bitter* looks like a contemporary ballet — no pointe shoes, the odd flexed foot — the men are there largely to showcase the women in traditional couplings. *Fox on the Doorstep*, however, while it does have the women on pointe, releases the men and women to dance beside each other and in various formations that do not speak of classical ballet or romantic love at all, and feels much more up to date.

Dedicated to the choreographer's father, *Fox on the Doorstep* is an abstract meditation on love and death, danced to excerpts of music by Ólafur Arnalds, Harry Escot and Jóhan Jóhannsson. Their haunting, melancholic sounds, combined with a single dramatic spotlight suspended over the stage (its glare sometimes benign, sometimes accusatory) and the occasional ominous sound of a ticking clock, seemed to embolden the 12 figures onstage. They danced Fonte's mix of alternating sharp and relaxed movement with energy and intent on both nights, which helped to overcome the work's biggest drawback: its costumes. Designed by Heuvel, the men were hampered by ugly black vests that hovered between bondage wear and shoulder holsters, and the women by grey tops with a black band that cut them off at the neck and a fluttering bottom that obscured their lines.

*Fox on the Doorstep* ended with O'Connell alone, wearing (thankfully) just a simple pair of shorts. As snow fell around him, he let one arm slowly drop to the side and then the other. It's a well-worn image — man alone in the wilderness, accepting his fate — but effective nonetheless in tapping the emotions we all feel about losing those we love.

— ROBIN J. MILLER



# Skånes Dansteater and Korea National Contemporary Dance Company

Fernando Melo, Hyerim Jang, Sungsoo Ahn / Mixed Bill

A program of cultural exchanges is in progress to celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations between Sweden and South Korea. In Malmö, this resulted in a collaboration between Korea National Contemporary Dance Company and Skånes Dansteater, with exhilarating results. In a world increasingly torn apart by difference, this unity and celebration of other cultures is welcome.

Korea Connection was

presented at Skånes Dansteater's audience-friendly premises in the trendy docklands area. Two of the choreographers on the triple bill undertook "blind dates": Sweden-based Brazilian choreographer Fernando Melo visited the Korean company in Seoul, and Korean choreographer Hyerim Jang journeyed to Malmö. *Immixture*, by Sungsoo Ahn, choreographing on the Korean company, which he directs, completed the bill.

In *The Longest Distance Between Two Points*, Melo follows a theme of separating, dividing and seeing things from a different perspective. It's an idea he has exploited to excellent effect in earlier works. In *Middle of Nowhere* for Norrdans (2014), a screen divides the playing area into two, and in the recent *Afterimage* for the National Dance Company Wales, he uses Pepper's ghost illusion, a magic sleight of hand involving mirrors.

In the present work for six Korean dancers, he used the physical barrier of planks of wood to explore our need for human contact. They proved versatile dance partners, hiding, supporting or even enclosing when one dancer is imprisoned in a four-square cell. Another time, it provided the means for a couple to play hide and seek.

Melo used the dexterity of the casually dressed dancers skilfully, whether it was manipulating the planks in a variety of choreographic devices or in their perfectly timed movements in canon. The stage was bare but for a pile of stacked wood, with austere, minimal lighting that brought a sense of detachment. By contrast, the one tender relationship that developed became a precious

focal point in a work of high male energy.

Jang's heartfelt *Burnt Offering* burrowed deep into the human psyche to express loss and collective struggle. Between phrases of powerful ensemble dance, she wove in personal testimonials as each dancer spoke the name of a lost loved one, then detached from the group to walk downstage and place a miner's hard hat on the ground like a ritual offering.

Working with composer Youngjoo Lee, Jang takes a departure point from the rhythms of Seungmu, one of Korea's most famous traditional dances, usually performed by Buddhist monks. The ritual essence found a different dynamic when it met the thrust of Western energy. The pulse was a driving force; it was pounded out by the feet, bolstered by swinging arms and, at times, by the group progressing in rocking motion on their knees. It became the workers' rallying cry.

The group was dressed in muted blue shirts, shorts and socks. They wore traditional miners' hard hats with their headlamps cutting through the darkness as an adjunct to the dramatic lighting by Tobias Hagström-Ståhl. Jang's choreographic language was rich in meaning, extremely physical and skilfully structured. Part religious ritual, part contemporary protest, it was a riveting work that was given a performance of high intensity and commitment by the Skånes' dancers.

The opening, all-Korean work, *Immixture*, began on a note of authenticity as a dancer, clothed in the traditional costume of crisp white linen, danced with cultural purity, specific in every

delicate gesture and footfall. She was superseded by a contemporary dancer, who was soon joined by several more. Even in modern guise, these dancers never lost the plasticity and pliability in their arms, and glimpses of tradition returned in extended sleeves that became scarf-like appendages adding to the flow of the gestures.

Ahn's choreography has the fluidity and release we recognize as part of Western vocabulary, but is distinctive in the beauty of line, shape and form, both unusual and appealing. In the West, contemporary choreographers seldom admire beauty

for its own sake, but Korean women in society and in dance still face pressure to conform to ideals of feminine grace and beauty. However, over a decade of visits to Seoul International Dance Competition, I have noticed a greater acceptance of diversity in body shape and in accepting expressive movement over aesthetics, resulting in a vibrant and diverse contemporary dance scene.

The sole man in *Immixture*, Ilyoung Seo, was a mood changer, a K-pop icon with blond hair, tattoos and trendy headphones. He launched into a fiery display

of street dance before stepping aside to let the quartet of women return to centre stage to a remix of classical music. The variety of styles, a not unhappy blend, made the work worthy of its title, but it seemed to have little to do with the "sorrowful requiem" of the program notes.

Creating something genuinely new is every artist's dream, and bringing together dancers from cities 8,000 kilometres apart gave both companies a creative spur, provoking an exceptional evening of dance.

— MAGGIE FOYER



Korea National Contemporary Dance Company's Jeong Seoyung in Sungsoo Ahn's *Immixture*  
Photo: Aiden Hwang

# In Studio and Onstage

## David Dawson's *Requiem* for Dutch National Ballet



40 singers plus four soloists, making this a major musical event as well. It will be the pair's third collaboration; the first was in 2005 with *Reverence* for the Mariinsky Ballet and then, five years later, came *The Third Light* for Royal Ballet of Flanders' 40th anniversary.

"We wanted to work together again for quite awhile and it has taken more than two years for this project to finally get going," Dawson tells me. Originally planned to celebrate the centenary of the end of the First World War in November 2018, the postponement of *Requiem* to 2019 altered the original concept. He explains how it has evolved, becoming more universal, about life and faith. What he calls "the big questions" — about ecological, humanitarian and spiritual matters — concern Dawson a great deal and are definitely an intrinsic part of his work.

Although Bryars and Dawson had threshed out the structure of the 10-part *Requiem* well in advance, the choreographer was receiving the music piece by piece as rehearsals were about to commence, which required him to work in what he wryly describes as "show business mode — creating in my hotel room the night before and annoying the hell out of the other guests!" He was ecstatic, though, at what he heard — a computerized transcription of chorus and orchestra — and says it unleashed an outpouring of creative energy.

On a cold November day in Amsterdam, chill mists are rising from the busy canal in front of the Waterlooplein, a large square dominated by the huge structure that houses the Dutch National Opera and Ballet. Inside, the corridors are light, bright and humming with activity. When I lose my way, the

ever-polite Dutch accompany me to where I need to be, the office of the ballet company's artistic associate David Dawson.

The internationally acclaimed choreographer has been ensconced here for an intense five weeks creating *Requiem*, his most recent work for the Dutch troupe.

He looks lithe and fit, though initially seems rather tense. But that's understandable: he has only two more days of rehearsals before departing, returning in January to add the final brushstrokes before the premiere. Gavin Bryars has written the score, which, in addition to the orchestra, includes a chorus of about

Left: Dutch National Ballet's Constantine Allen, Jared Wright, Sem Sjouke and Daniel Montero Real in David Dawson's *Requiem*  
Photos: Hans Gerritsen

Right: David Dawson in rehearsal  
Photo: Alain Honorez

Typically, Dawson begins work by visualizing pictures of the music, then slotting them together in jigsaw fashion to create, as he puts it, “a journey for the eye.” He described how, as a work unfolds, he attempts at times to overwhelm his audience, at others to draw back from them, playing with the dynamics. It was instinctive craftsmanship, as clear to him “as the colours of nature.”

As the interview continues, Dawson relaxes; a smile lights up his face and, as he talks, the dancer in him is in constant motion, feet stretching, legs unfolding and hands tracing forms.

British-born Dawson was 16 when, after starting to dance locally, he was accepted into the Royal Ballet Upper School, graduating three years later. It was here that the teachers, the atmosphere, the discipline and the tradition cemented his love for classical ballet. Winning a Prix de Lausanne led to a contract with Birmingham Royal Ballet. Three years later, he joined English National Ballet, dancing principal roles.

Then Europe beckoned, specifically the Dutch National Ballet, where artistic director Wayne Eagling supported his choreographic ambitions. Dawson’s breakthrough came in 2000 when he created *A Million Kisses to My Skin* for the company’s main stage. Coming at a time when he had just closed the curtain on his classical dancing career, the exuberance of the piece’s movement reflects those rare moments of pure joy he himself had experienced while onstage. It also

heralded the beginning of his signature style, a re-invention and enrichment of the classical idiom.

The period 2000 to 2002 proved a defining one, dancing with Frankfurt Ballet under the inspirational leadership of William Forsythe.

“Bill believed in encouraging everyone to be a creative artist,” Dawson says. “But when you are given the opportunity to do so, it can be both liberating and terrifying. The ballet world is so much about being told what to do, so you question yourself: ‘Can I go there?’”

He obviously could, because his next ballet, *The Grey Area* for Dutch National Ballet, has been called a modern-day classic. It’s a haunting, mysterious work, one that won him the Prix Benois de la Danse in 2003.

Since then, after periods as resident choreographer with Dresden Semperoper Ballet and Royal Ballet of Flanders, Dawson’s dance trajectory has turned full circle and returned him to Holland, to a company and dancers with whom he feels totally at ease.

Later that day, a large part of the 20-member cast gathers in one of the huge studios for final rehearsals. As they run the ballet’s finale, *In Paradisum*, what is immediately apparent is the architectural quality, both physical and spatial, to Dawson’s work. As the music swells, the dancers dissolve into myriad formations, the constant ebb and flow forming a moving ocean across the floor. Women are swept into sitting shoulder lifts, or fling their arms wide as they are carried in soaring



diagonals across the floor. Bodies are constantly off-kilter, in a “state of falling, supported only by the space around them,” as Dawson explains. The movement impulse seems to arise from deep within each individual dancer, and then extends out and way beyond the physical norm. Just as life, according to the choreographer, is in constant flux, so is his movement, each step seamlessly evolving into the next.

Three months later, *Requiem* premiered on February 9 in Dutch National Ballet’s Muziek Theater, where I viewed it the following week. As befitting the theme of its intense, grieving music, it proved to be not easily accessible, but, despite losing momentum halfway before picking up again toward the finale, it is a work that stirs inner depths.

Eno Henze designed an enormous backdrop composed of what appeared to be wood cinders, through which lights flickered and

moved. A large dark mirror on one side created an illusion of a non-ending vacuum.

Out of the wings emerged 19 unearthly beings dressed in Yumiko Takeshima’s bodysuits of burnished copper, steel and silver. Their limbs like wings, their gaze lifted and searching the space beyond the footlights, they appeared to fly, sweeping the stage in unceasing motion. At the apex was a trinity of dancers (Sasha Mukhamedov, James Stout and the extraordinary young Joey Massarelli) toward whom all gravitated. Their triumphant exit, with Mukhamedov lifted high, long limbs extended backward, was the powerful final image.

It was David Dawson’s response to his belief that “dance is the language of angels.” And in this deeply felt, superbly danced work, he reflected humankind’s constant search for a higher self.

— JUDITH DELMÉ



# THE PORTRAIT BALLETS 2007–2018

Jean Grand-Maître with Joni Mitchell,  
Elton John and Bernie Taupin,  
Sarah McLachlan, k.d. lang, Gordon  
Lightfoot and the Tragically Hip

After my collaboration with Joni Mitchell, *The Fiddle and the Drum*, projects with other great singer-songwriters opened up for me as a choreographer, as well as for my design team, at Alberta Ballet.

Our series of six ballets are portraits of the music, not the life, of the artist, whose songs are about relevant themes, including environmental neglect and war (Mitchell), human relationships today (McLachlan), addiction and repression (John/Taupin), gay love on the Prairies (lang), a tribute to Canada for our sesquicentennial that also addressed racism (Lightfoot) and the fight against contemporary fascism (the Tragically Hip).

With each, I had to find an original way to develop state-of-the-art aesthetics fusing narrative, lyrics, set design, video projection and choreography. Whether creating to Shostakovich or Gord Downie, as a choreographer I am enriched by abandoning myself to the music's ethos, much like a director would to a script.

The choreographic vernacular transformed with each songwriter. For instance, contemporary, proud and grounded in order to inhabit the languid immensity of k.d. lang's voice, moulded by Prairie landscapes, or darker and highly theatrical to capture Elton John's surrealistic psyche. Each singer made this journey exhilarating in their own way.

— JEAN GRAND-MAÎTRE, CHOREOGRAPHER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, ALBERTA BALLET

*Before joining Alberta Ballet in 2002, Jean Grand-Maître worked internationally as a choreographer. He has also staged multidisciplinary dance and theatre creations for film, theatre festivals, circus performers, opera, musicals, television specials and large-scale outdoor events.*

Photos (from top):  
*The Fiddle and the Drum*, music by Joni Mitchell  
*Love Lies Bleeding*, music by Elton John and Bernie Taupin  
*Fumbling Towards Ecstasy*, music by Sarah McLachlan  
*Balletlujah*, music by k.d. lang  
*Our Canada*, music by Gordon Lightfoot  
*All of Us*, music by the Tragically Hip

All choreography by Jean Grand-Maître

Top photo: Charles Hope; all others: Paul McGrath

GALLERYSPACE



Chan Hon Goh *Director*

COMING TO TORONTO SUMMER 2019  
*Goh Ballet Bayview*



## TRAIN WITH CONFIDENCE

Under the directorship of **Chan Hon Goh**, former **Principal Dancer with the National Ballet of Canada**, **Goh Ballet** is synonymous with excellence, training talent and fostering the presentation of classical ballet.

Artistically powerful, compelling and meaningful, **Goh Ballet Bayview** will add rich layers of experiences through dedicated dance programs and workshops for all ages.

### REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

[GOHBALLET.COM/BAYVIEW](http://GOHBALLET.COM/BAYVIEW)

#### **Goh Ballet Bayview**

2901 Bayview Avenue  
North York, ON  
M2K 1E6  
Info@GohBallet.com

#### **Goh Ballet Main**

2345 Main Street  
Vancouver, BC  
V5T 3C9  
Reception@GohBallet.com

# Dance



## THE RICHMOND ACADEMY OF DANCE

Recognized for training young Canadians whose graduates are now Canada's newest exciting professionals!



### 2019-2020 TRAINING PROGRAMS

**Graduate Dance Collective** - Ballet and Contemporary for dancers 18+ to prepare dancers for a career in the performing arts; by audition.

**Half-Day Program** - specialized curriculum in Ballet, Contemporary, Pilates, Pointe and Variations; by audition.

**Professional Evening Program** - for the serious and talented dancer in all dance disciplines.

**Intermediate Elite Program** - for aspiring young dancers in all genres; by audition.

**Musical Theatre Program** - Voice, Acting and Dance producing triple-threat professionals.

**Children's Division** - carefully structured programs in our core disciplines in a fun and nurturing environment.

**Facilities** - Pilates Studio, Acting/Vocal Studio, 4 architecturally-designed Dance Studios, change-room, lunch room, warm-up space and on-site parking.

### 2019 SUMMER PROGRAMMING

**BALLET & CONTEMPORARY INTENSIVE EXTRAORDINAIRE AUG 6-23, 2019**  
Intermediate elite and senior professional programs for the serious pre-professional dancer aged 12+ taught by guest artists **KARISSA BARRY** - rehearsal director Ballet Edmonton, **NICOLE CARON**-former principal dancer for 16 years with Alberta Ballet & **SUSAN TOUMINE**- master teacher/choreographer.

**MUSICAL THEATRE INTENSIVE, AUG 6-23, 2019**  
Serious training with special guest artists alongside resident faculty in acting, voice and dance for stage provide you with the true essence of a triple threat. Including special Guests!

**TAP BOOTCAMP, JULY 2-6, 2019**  
Get ready to sweat, groove and fine-tune in classes emphasizing technique, combos and working with tempo changes.

**SUMMER DANCE CAMP, JULY 2-6, 2019**  
Outstanding children's programs in ballet, musical theatre, voice and hip hop for young dancers aged 3-12.



Susan Toumine



Nicole Caron



Karissa Barry

2009/2010/2013/2016 Pacific West Award for Dance Studio with Most Positive Attitude, Peer Encouragement & Intercultural Respect  
2009/2012/2015 Richmond Arts Award for Arts Education Finalist  
2013 Richmond Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Award Finalist  
2013 Ethel Tibbits Women of Distinction in the Arts Award

*award-winning*

