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Subscription & Advertising enquiries:
subscriptions@danceinternational.org
advertising@danceinternational.org

DANCE INTERNATIONAL
Scotiabank Dance Centre
677 Davie Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 2G6
Tel: (604) 681-1525 • Fax: (604) 681-7732
info@danceinternational.org
www.danceinternational.org

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memory's limitations: how much do you remember, and in how much detail, of what happened onstage the morning after a show? There are definitely challenges to the critical act!

As usual, our review section carries a range of voices. Like all magazines, *Dance International* does have something called "house style," but within that, each writer has their own interests and approaches. **For every critic, there is the need to be engaging, to write something people will actually want to read. And I think you will enjoy the reviews we bring you this issue from Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia.** The subject matter of the works under discussion is wide, including a ballet based on the beloved First World War poem, *In Flanders' Field*, written by a Canadian soldier, and another inspired by three Virginia Woolf novels.

Also in this issue, we say goodbye to our London correspondent, Kathrine Sorley Walker, who shared her thoughts on dance in these pages for almost three decades, passed away not long after filing last quarter's report. Kathrine was a delight to work with, always on time and on form, and all of us at *Dance International* are saddened to lose her. Sarah Woodcock, who wrote the obituary on her friend and colleague, gives Kathrine a fine send-off.

Kaija Pepper
editor@danceinternational.org

Tiffany Tregarthen in David Raymond and Tregarthen's *Vessel*
Wendy D Photography



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Dance International



DIMagazine



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Karen Kain

10 YEARS AT THE HELM
OF THE NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA

by Michael Crabb





On July 1, Karen Kain marked her 10th anniversary as artistic director of the National Ballet of Canada, the longest-serving in that role besides founding director Celia Franca.

Kain joined the National Ballet as a corps member in 1969 and was promoted to principal rank two years later. In October 1997, at age 46 and after 28 years with the Toronto-based company, Kain gave her official farewell performance. She continued to dance elsewhere until the following fall when then artistic director James Kudelka invited her to become a company artistic associate. Her role was loosely defined — one of her major achievements was a triumphant revival of Rudolf Nureyev's production of *The Sleeping Beauty* — but, as part of the senior management team, Kain was able to acquire valuable understanding of the company's inner workings.

For many observers, she was the obvious heir apparent, but when Kudelka unexpectedly announced his resignation on May 18, 2005, Kain, then 54, insists she had not expected to get the job. However, rather than launch a conventional international search for Kudelka's replacement, the board of directors opted for a fast-track process and polled a variety of leading figures in the dance world, all of whom suggested that Kain was the obvious and appropriate candidate. Her appointment was officially announced on June 23, 2005, effective one week later.

It was a baptism of fire because the National Ballet was facing a major operating shortfall and among Kain's first and most unpleasant tasks was to find ways to rejig the 2005-2006 season in order to save money. The company was also facing the uncertainty of how its move from the 3,200-seat Hummingbird (now Sony) Centre in September 2006 into the newly opened 2,100-seat Four Seasons Centre opera house would affect company finances.

The National Ballet successfully surmounted these challenges as Kain pursued her artistic mission. By general agreement her directorship has revitalized the company. It dances better than ever in a repertoire that has been enriched and broadened with a diversity of new works, some acquired from outside, but many specifically commissioned by Kain. She has presented two all-new, all-Canadian triple bills and garnered huge international interest — and touring opportunities — with A-list choreographer Alexei Ratmansky's new staging of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. Similarly, the company's co-production with Britain's Royal Ballet of Christopher Wheeldon's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, a deal that gives the National Ballet several years of exclusive North American touring rights, has proved a major success. This November, in another co-production arrangement with the Royal Ballet, the company will dance the North American premiere of Wheeldon's Shakespearean adaptation, *The Winter's Tale*.

Dance International columnist Michael Crabb spoke with Karen Kain about her first decade as artistic director and plans for the future.

Left: Jillian Vanstone and Dylan Tedaldi in Christopher Wheeldon's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Above: The National Ballet of Canada in Crystal Pite's *Emergence*

Photos: Bruce Zinger



Michael Crabb: As you reflect on your work so far, what gives you the most satisfaction?

Karen Kain: When I started in 2005, I set three major goals: to raise the level of dancing, diversify the repertoire and get the National Ballet touring internationally again. It's been a team effort, of course, and I believe we've gone a long way toward achieving these goals and will continue to make progress in these areas.

I'm particularly proud of all the new work we've presented, which makes the company more interesting for our home audiences and to foreign presenters. We've returned to Los Angeles and London after many years, as well as New York and Washington, D.C.

MC: Why has international touring been such a priority for you?

KK: Canadian artists of all kinds want, quite naturally, to be part of a larger world. A ballet dancer's career is relatively short and although it's great to have loyal audiences in Canada, dancers want to be seen in the world's major dance centres. I know that from my own career. I was incredibly fortunate to start out during the "Ballet Boom" and at a major turning point for the National Ballet when Celia Franca made the difficult and as I now see incredibly selfless decision to produce Rudolf Nureyev's *The Sleeping Beauty* in 1972. She wanted to take the National Ballet to the next level, but it meant, because of the sheer force of his charisma, effectively turning the company over to Rudolf. We young dancers thought it was fantastic and very exciting, going on those Sol Hurok-produced tours with Rudolf to the Met in New York and across North America, but it must have been hard for Celia.

It's a different world now and I don't think any company can hitch its wagon to a particular superstar, and there are no more Huroks. Touring has become very difficult and expensive. I knew I couldn't replicate the experience we had 40 years ago, but, still, despite the challenges, I felt we had to explore what was possible. We'd been almost totally left out for too long. Now, we're part of the conversation in the ballet world again.

MC: I imagine the repertoire you've added has played a major part in this?

KK: Yes, exclusive repertoire is crucial. International audiences don't want to see the National Ballet dancing what everyone else does. But people also have to know that the dancing itself is at a high level, which is why I'm such a stickler for standards.

MC: So far, Ratmansky's *Romeo and Juliet* and Wheeldon's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* have been very successful calling cards for your company. Was that part of your strategy early on?

KK: By the time I started in this job, Alexei was already making a

name for himself as a choreographer and was director of the Bolshoi. I'd never met him during his years dancing with the Royal Winnipeg, but I watched what I could of his choreography on DVD and felt it was important to start a relationship with him, which was easier after he quit Moscow and made American Ballet Theatre in New York his base.

As for Chris Wheeldon, his reputation was spreading quickly and even before he launched Morphoses/The Wheeldon Company in 2006, I wanted him to work with the National Ballet. I thought if he saw us dancing his work I might be able to get him to make something for us. So, we presented his *Polyphonia* in 2008 and he was delighted. You've probably heard the story and I'm paraphrasing, but he told me no company had danced it better, which presumably included New York City Ballet where he created it. Later, when I approached Chris about a new work he told me about his plans for *Alice* at the Royal Ballet and said why not talk to Monica Mason, who was then director. That's how our co-production relationship started.

MC: Clearly, Wheeldon was happy with the result because soon you'll be dancing *The Winter's Tale*.

KK: With all his connections, he could have offered *Alice* to anybody, but he's told me that what he loves about the National Ballet is the way it has all of that North American athleticism, but at the same time has the ability to portray characters in the British tradition, which is something that's been passed down in the company from Celia's day. He just didn't believe any other North American company had these attributes, which were exactly what *Alice* needed.

MC: I imagine commissioning new work can be a bit stressful because you can't be sure how it will turn out.

KK: Tell me about it! It's very stressful. You can never be sure. And you have those awful moments when you're looking at something you've commissioned in the studio and it seems like a disaster and wonder how it's ever going to work onstage. And, conversely, there can be something that looks pretty fantastic in the studio and then for some reason never quite translates to the stage. But if you worried too much about the uncertainty you'd never do new work. So, I just try to be brave, but, if possible, not foolish.

MC: I guess one could say you'd been shadowing James Kudelka for almost seven years before you succeeded him as artistic director, so I assume you felt well prepared when it happened.

KK: I don't think I was prepared at all. For one thing, whatever other people might have been saying, I had no idea I was going to get this position. It's true I'd learned a lot working under James and sitting in meetings, learning about planning and how to balance the costs and what makes what possible. But when the mantle actually rests on your shoulders and the buck stops at your desk, it's entirely different. It's not theory any more but the real thing — and it can be incredibly stressful. Every choice and decision you make has repercussions and they can be wonderful or terrible, and you just don't know at the time.

MC: From talking with other artistic directors over the years I gather that letting dancers go can be really tough.

KK: I'd agree with that, particularly being someone who truly hates the thought of hurting someone's feelings. And I didn't arrive in the job as an outsider. I knew so many people who'd been my friends and colleagues, some for many years. I'd shared dressing rooms with and socialized with them. Then, suddenly, I'm the boss. Even so, I knew a

lot of hard choices had to be made and I've come to terms with it. I've always tried to be honest, but I think I've become more direct. I try to let dancers know sooner rather than later if I don't see it working out. But I also tell them they have the opportunity to change my mind, and some have. But it's still the thing you're most likely to lose sleep over.

MC: What about the pleasant things?

KK: I'm a big fretter. Anyone who knows me will tell you that. So when something you were a bit unsure of works out just as you'd hoped, it feels amazing. The other thing that gives me great satisfaction is watching the progress of our dancers, seeing the young ones blossom. When I see the talent that's coming up and what it means for the future of the National Ballet, it makes me very happy.

MC: A feature story about you in a local lifestyle magazine last March referred, I thought a little unflatteringly, to your "naked ambition." How did you feel about that?

KK: I'm not going to comment on that article. We're always very grateful when the company gets written about. But I will say this. I have tremendous ambition for the National Ballet of Canada. I believe every director of the company has had that, Celia the most, and she started with the least and built it up. I've been around the National Ballet now for 46 years and I care about the company very, very deeply; so, yes, I am ambitious and will keep pushing for better dancing, more and more exciting repertoire and more touring.

MC: Karen Kain, thank you very much. ▼



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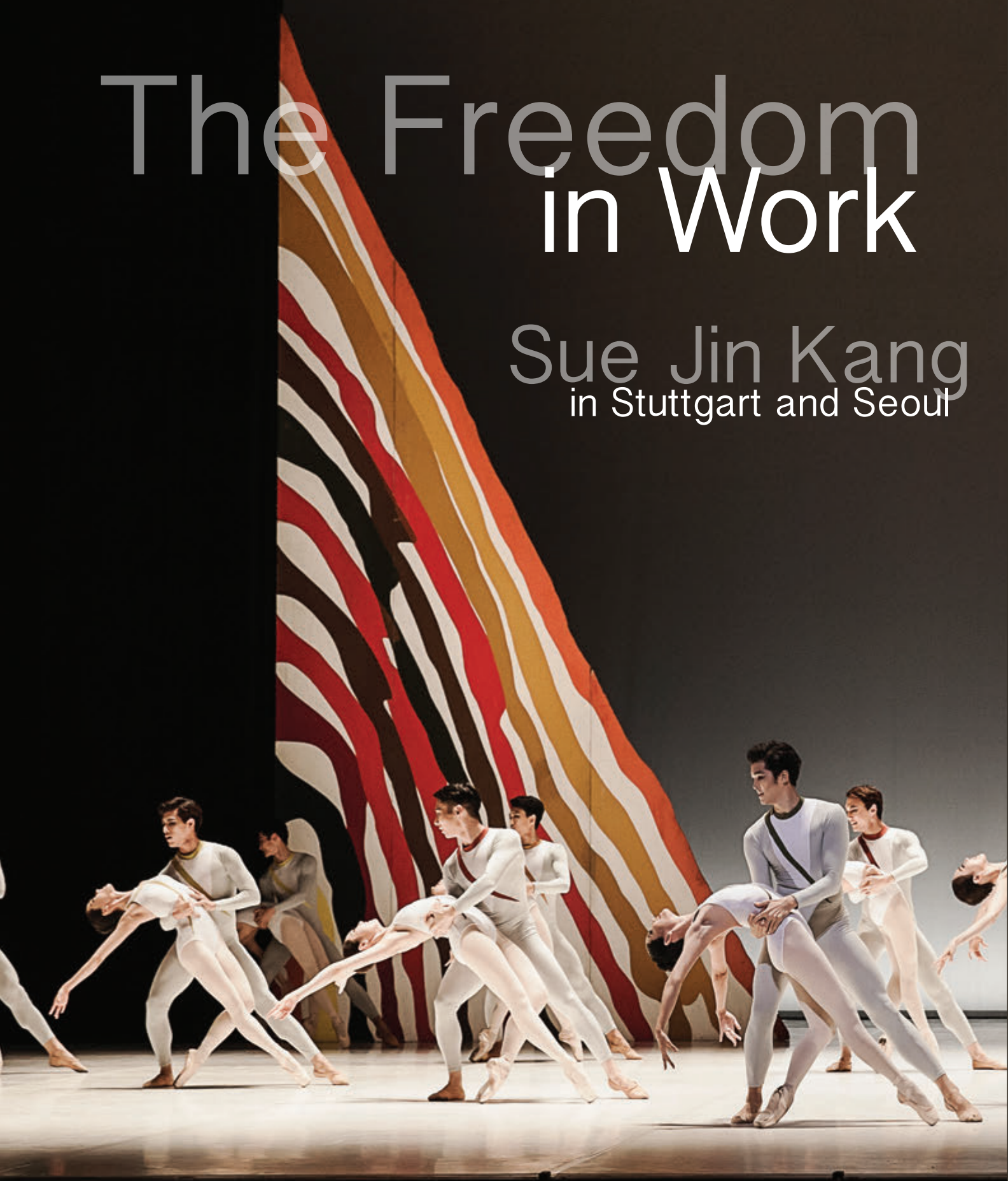
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Above: Frank Augustyn and Karen Kain in the Bluebird Pas de Deux from *The Sleeping Beauty* (1975)
 Photo: Anthony Crickmay

The Freedom in Work

Sue Jin Kang
in Stuttgart and Seoul



by Gary Smith

When asked about dancers she admires, Kang refuses to name names. “I admire every dancer,” she says. “I love my colleagues in Stuttgart and now my dancers in Korea. Even the youngest baby in the company. I admire them all. Dancing is such hard work.”



When Sue Jin Kang walks into the dance studio at Stuttgart Ballet there is a ripple of attention. The younger dancers stretch further, reach harder and find that special place within that allows them to be more than they already are. The more experienced principal stars of the company allow their eyes to waft over this elegant creature swathed in lavender.

These are the final, precious years of Kang’s career as a dancer. At 47, she has continued beyond the place most ballerinas find a comfort zone. Slim and elegant, Kang has the strength of a panther and the fragility of a butterfly. Watch her at the barre — you see intense concentration. From the moment she enters the studio to warm up for class, Kang’s love of ballet takes over, the struggle for physical perfection hidden behind those deep, dark eyes. The way she approaches class offers insight into the power of her dance. Every move is finished to the fingertips. There is nothing false.

Later, when we sit down together in the Stuttgart Ballet canteen, Kang says, “I am extremely lucky to have danced so long. Usually, when you come to the point where you’ve learned all that’s needed to be a great artist, the body is already giving out. And, yes, there is more freedom in my dance now because my mind is freer. I am happier than when I was younger because now I know what is important. It’s not about kicking my legs higher or doing lots of pirouettes.”

Kang, who was born in Seoul, Korea, in 1967, talks about her entry into the world of dance with barely disguised wonder. “When I started to go to ballet school, I simply loved to move to beautiful music.” She joined Stuttgart Ballet in 1986, and was made prima ballerina assoluta in 1997. Five people, she says, influenced her career, and she pays them tribute.

“My teacher Marika Besobrasova, at the Monte Carlo Dance School, started shaping me. She danced with Mikhail Fokine’s company.” Then there’s her husband, Tunc Sökmen, a former ballet master at Stuttgart Ballet, who is now her manager. “Tunc, a dancer with Stuttgart Ballet when I joined, helped me to enter the professional life of a dancer. He showed me how to work.”

Stuttgart Ballet’s artistic director Reid Anderson and former artistic director Marcia Haydée have been huge influences. “I was privileged to work with them both as my directors. They have been my role models and mentors, Marcia especially as a dancer and Reid who has helped me so much to enter this new role of leadership.” She also mentions Georgette Tsinguirides, John Cranko’s choreologist and the keeper of his legacy, who taught Kang his ballets.

Kang has danced most of the major roles associated with Stuttgart. Her Tatiana in John Cranko’s *Onegin* is a deeply etched portrait of a woman tormented by what might have been. When she renounces her lover, Onegin, in the ballet’s final scene, she not only tears his missive of love in tatters, she rips her heart open with grief. In John Neumeier’s *Die Kame-liendame* (*Lady of the Camellias*), when she lies back on the chaise longue, life ebbing from her fragile body, there is such regret, such sorrow, it breaks your heart. When she dances the dark heart of Kenneth MacMillan’s *Song of the Earth*, you understand what happens when a brilliant ballerina collides with a visceral dance role.

Asked about favourite roles, Kang says, “I love the ballets that tell a story, such as *Onegin*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Die Kameliendame*. I love to dive in and be



the character. I love being so in the role it's like being in another world. This is total involvement of mind, body and soul. I suppose this is what gives such tremendous satisfaction. You must give everything you have. To achieve this you must not 'act,' but 'be.' If you just act it's superficial."

Kang believes her long and exciting career is a result of hard work and having taken things day by day. "Even now I approach my work the same way. You must love what you do and then you can work hard and still enjoy it. Hard work is the prerequisite. You must do the maximum every day, then you have no regrets. Tomorrow it could all be over. This, in a way, is a kind of discipline."

In 2016, Sue Jin Kang will give her farewell performances in Stuttgart. She accepted the directorship of the Korean National Ballet, a company of 65 dancers (80 if you include trainees and associates), in 2014, and since then has been dividing her time between Seoul and Stuttgart.

About her new role, she says candidly: "I never wanted to be an artistic director. I was asked. It was a tremendous honour, and I decided to take the challenge." Now that she is committed to the change, she looks forward to it. "I notice when I am working with young dancers that every one of them is different, each has a different body, a different mentality. This is fascinating. And to be able to give to others is rewarding. I can pass on my knowledge, encourage them and, yes, challenge them."

The Korean National Ballet has an extensive repertoire that includes everything from Rudolf Nureyev's *The Sleeping Beauty* to Mats Ek's *Carmen*, to works by Balanchine and Grigorovich. With her many ballet connections, Kang will also have access to new and notable works.

"Most important to me is to make the company strong from the inside. To ensure teamwork among dancers and staff. To strengthen each individual. They all make the company. When we are all going together in one direction we can be successful."

Kang is philosophical about returning to Korea after so many years in Germany. "I don't dwell on comings and goings. For me, the work is everything. Going home or leaving Stuttgart, these are things that happen on the way to work and dance. The work doesn't change."

As an artistic director, Kang strives to avoid a dictatorial approach. "Discipline has to come from within, not from outside. Young dancers' responsibility is first to themselves and then to the public."

To all young dancers, Kang advises, "If you choose this profession you have to realize that from nothing comes nothing. Enjoy the work. That is the basis. It is beautiful in and of itself. It always comes back to working hard." Yet, "there can be freedom within this," Kang explains. "Freedom comes from the love of what you are doing."

Kang notes that the world of ballet has changed since she first began dancing.

"There is much more diversity in the repertoires. This is harder because you have to digest a lot. Today, in a first-class international company, you must be able to dance everything. You have to be open, flexible in mind and body."



Classical training remains the base. “If a dancer is intelligent,” she says, “this diversity can make him or her stronger. But, of course, it is double the work.” She stresses that contemporary dancing doesn’t mean forgetting classical training. “When you have been dancing a lot of contemporary work, though, it is hard to come back to classical pieces, which is why you have to always keep that side of things on a high level. That’s why there is such need for a rigorous daily class.”

A great dance actress, Kang will work to motivate the company she now heads to find depths of emotion and drama in ballet. “I’m not just interested in steps. Having worked with John Neumeier, Marcia Haydée and Georgette Tsinguirides, this is in my DNA, in my blood. Now I have the opportunity to pass it on. It takes time to learn that what counts isn’t the steps, but the feeling, the expression, the release of the soul into the performance. The steps must come as naturally as breathing. Then you can transcend them and be the character.”

When asked about dancers she admires, Kang refuses to name names. “I admire every dancer,” she says. “I love my colleagues in Stuttgart and now my dancers in Korea. Even the youngest baby in the company. I admire them all. Dancing is such hard work.” ▼



Above: Filip Barankiewicz and Sue Jin Kang of Stuttgart Ballet in John Cranko’s *Taming of the Shrew*
Photo: Bernd Weissbrod

Below: Sue Jin Kang of Stuttgart Ballet in Kenneth MacMillan’s *Requiem*
Photo: Ulrich Beuttenmüller

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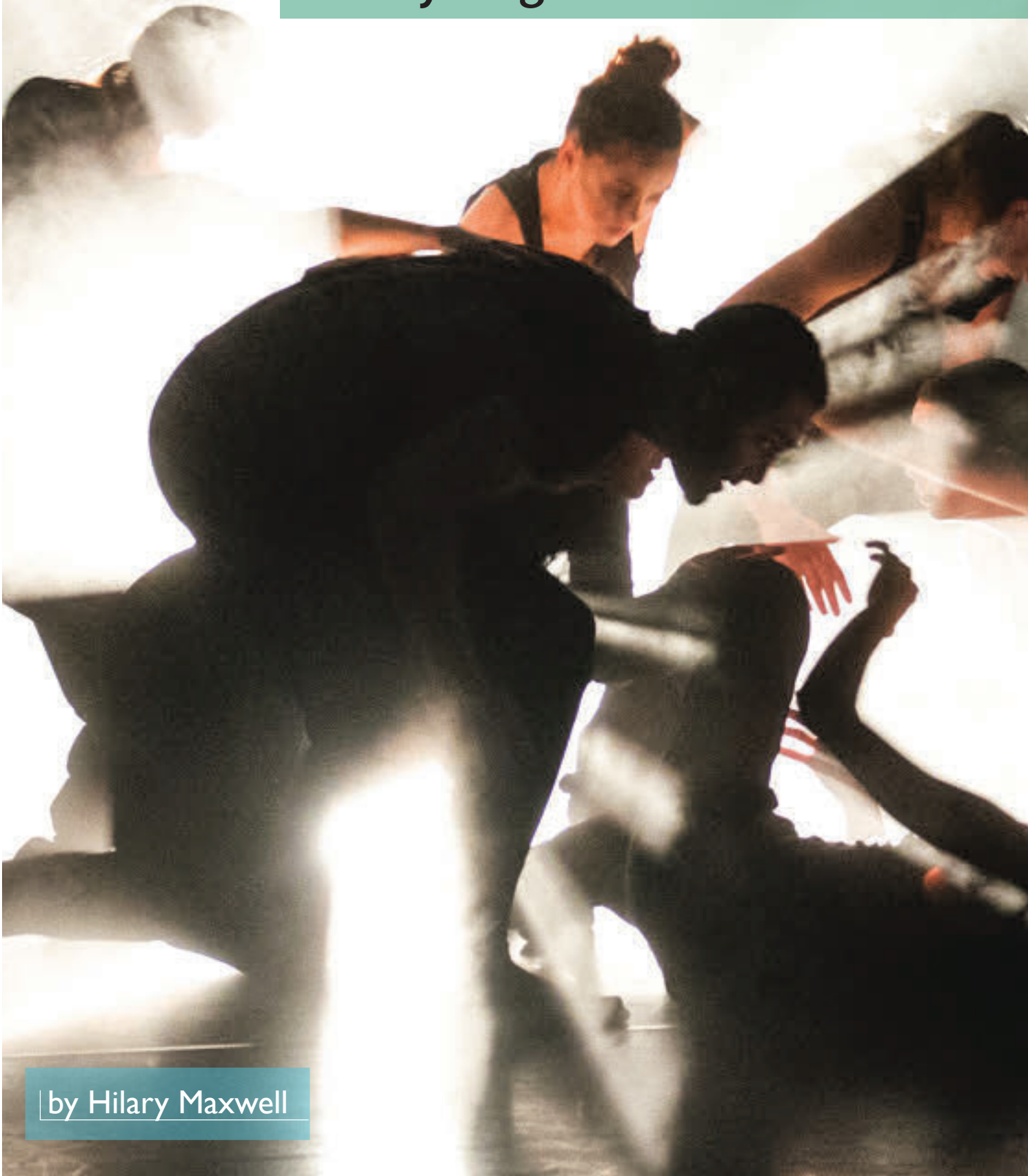
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interpreting inner space

Tiffany Tregarthen **in technicolour**



by Hilary Maxwell



For Tiffany Tregarthen, multitasking is not a problem. Between dancing on world stages with Crystal Pite's Kidd Pivot, co-directing her own company Out Innerspace Dance Theatre, and running a training program for emerging artists, the tenacious 34-year-old is thriving in the pace set by her many roles.

When Tregarthen joined the acclaimed Kidd Pivot company in December 2013, it was a pinnacle moment for the Vancouver dancer. "I felt something shoot through my entire body," she says. "It was a crazy physical experience. My body went technicolour and my whole temperature changed." Tregarthen was brought on board for *The Tempest Replica's* 2014 international tour, taking on the role of Ariel, originally performed by longtime Kidd Pivot dancer Sandra Marín Garcia. In Pite's contemporary adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Ariel is a complex role featuring signature gestural work such as fluttering hand movements, highly nuanced solo material and intricate duet work.

To fully understand and interpret any role, Tregarthen first tests the edges of how the movement can be done — practising the material in different scales, with different levels of effort and different tempos. She relates learning the role of Ariel — or any hearty piece of choreography — to an interview. "I will ask the material a million questions — it's like getting to know someone," she explains.

Tregarthen only had five days to get to know Ariel, working intensively alongside Pite and Marín Garcia before diving into an eight-city tour in Canada and the United States. She gives credit to Pite for paving her way into the work with a lot of "information and generosity," and for creating an environment where risks can be taken and where failures are as exciting as successes. According to Tregarthen, getting started went smoothly. Then, "I worked my buns off," she says, "but isn't that what you want to do as a dancer — work hard, sweat, be productive and creative?"

She has since been involved with Kidd Pivot in the creation and production of *Polaris*, set to the music of Thomas Adès and commissioned by Sadler's Wells. Tregarthen participated in the research and development of the material as one of the dance captains, working with students from three training programs in Vancouver, including her own, Modus Operandi. Then, for the London premiere in fall 2014, she was one of six Kidd Pivot dancers who performed in the large-scale piece featuring 75 musicians and a cast of 64 dancers, bolstered by a substantial contingent of students from the London School of Contemporary Dancers. As well, she recently performed in Pite's newest dance-theatre work, *Betroffenheit*, a collaboration with Vancouver theatre artist Jonathon Young, which premiered in July as part of the arts and culture program of the Toronto 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games. [See a work-in-process review of *Betroffenheit* on page 61.]

Tregarthen's artistic relationship with Pite crosses over into her own choreographic process with Out Innerspace Dance Theatre. Pite is the project mentor for the company's new ensemble work, choreographed by Tregarthen with her Out Innerspace co-director (and life partner) David Raymond. In Tregarthen and Raymond's choreographies, there is an emphasis on characterization and incorporating multiple elements such as video projection, text, distinct lighting design and soundscapes to create very specific environments. Pite is known for richly layered theatrical productions, making her an ideal mentor in terms of style. But for any young company, Pite is a deep well of inspiration.



Above: David Raymond and Tiffany Tregarthen in their work *Me So You So Me*
Wendy D Photography



Above: Tiffany Tregarthen (second from right) and company in Crystal Pite and Jonathon Young's *Betroffenheit*
Wendy D Photography



Left: David Raymond and Tiffany Tregarthen in Wen Wei Wang's *Under the Skin*
Photo: Steven Lemay

To fully understand and interpret any role, Tregarthen first tests the edges of how the movement can be done — practising the material in different scales, with different levels of effort and different tempos.

“Crystal enters rehearsal with this parade of all the people she’s ever worked with, you can just feel a crowd of influence behind her,” says Tregarthen. Pite watches the choreographers work, posing questions and offering feedback by sharing lessons she’s learned from her own artistic experiences. “Having Crystal as a mentor means you get to relive those moments when she learned particular lessons. We get the generosity of her expertise but also her history, and we learn what’s motivating the feedback.”

The new, still untitled Out Innerspace work (set to premiere in January 2016 in Victoria, British Columbia) features seven dancers, including Tregarthen and Raymond, who bring to life a cinematic world that exposes the strife between three communities. The performers in each are defined by their unique movement language and costumes, including head-to-toe striped onesies, ski masks, dark clothing and exaggerated contour-face painting, to both conceal and reveal their true character. They are transformed into what Tregarthen refers to as “players in a world conflict, fighting for power over their own domain — the territory of the theatre — both physically and psychologically.” Also present in the theatre space, like an eighth member of the cast, is a PT Zoom surveillance camera, monitoring offstage activity and projecting the images back into the performance arena.

The choreography, some of which was shown recently in process, is a mix of set material and improvisational structures, supported by a musical score of live, distorted vocals amplified through a vintage

microphone and by the suspenseful sounds of Bernard Herrmann’s overture for Alfred Hitchcock’s film *North by Northwest*. In one group section, the ensemble is a mass organism of tangled limbs that builds, unravels and builds again while travelling to different parts of the stage. Never quite separating, the group morphs shape through improvised sequences of interlocking bodies that create dynamic tableaux depicting events from the past, present and future. The work illustrates Out Innerspace’s signature combination of whimsy and skill.

Out Innerspace recently gained success with its quirky, manga-styled duet *Me So You So Me*, co-created and performed by Tregarthen and Raymond, which went on its second national tour this past year. Martha Schabas in the *Globe and Mail* praises the standout duet, noting that “despite its radical range of movement and narrative technique, nothing ever feels superfluous. Every wild diversion is productively part of the whole.” Tregarthen has also made work for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal as one of the winners of the National Young Choreographer Competition in 2008, and for schools such as Ghent Conservatory and Dansstudio Arabesque in Antwerp.

From a young age, Tregarthen was serious about dance both as a performer and creator. “I was continuously looking for possibilities and answers for how I could do more,” she says. Originally from a small town in northern British Columbia, Tregarthen’s early dance training began in jazz, and then expanded to include other forms, with a strong focus in ballet.

At 16, Tregarthen left home to train more intensively in Vancouver, where she was introduced to the world of creative dance, improvisation and moving outside the parameters of studio dance vernacular. She remembers working in the studio with one of her teachers and experimenting with movement invention. “I spent a lot of time just off her shoulder watching her improvise. I would catch the movement

in my body, show it back to her and she would shape it.” Little did Tregarthen know she was developing her skills as an interpreter, which she describes as a process of “picking up on the value system of the choreographer, where you have to open up every pore in your being to try and absorb as much as you can about somebody’s spirit and way of moving.”

Tregarthen’s professional career took flight in New York City, where she moved in 1999, working with artists such as Wes Veldink, and performing and touring with Mia Michaels’ R.A.W. After missing Michaels’ audition, the intrepid 18-year-old sought out the *So You Think You Can Dance* choreographer in Seattle, took her classes and commissioned a solo. “I didn’t actually need a solo, I just wanted to work with her,” she says. Michaels soon asked the bold young woman to join her company. A few years later, Tregarthen was invited for an eight-month residency in Seoul, South Korea, to work with Poz Dance Theatre, performing and choreographing for the contemporary jazz company while also guest instructing at Hansung University.

Following her stint in Seoul, she returned to Vancouver, where she met Raymond, who comes from a tap, urban and popular dance background, with a similar hunger to broaden his creative scope. “The way he talked about dance and expressed his ideas in his body was exciting,” she says. The two shared a lot of the same questions about dance making and how to push the conventions of dance presentation. “As contrasting as our skillsets and tastes were,” says Tregarthen, “the questions we were asking were really identical.”

The duo’s collaborative partnership began in 2004, when Raymond asked Tregarthen to be one of four dancers in a series of solo studies

he was creating for a cultural event in Vancouver. Their artistic relationship crystalized during a two-year research and creation residency at Antwerp Internationale Dansstage in Belgium from 2005 to 2007. The residency was an opportunity for Tregarthen and Raymond to establish their own movement language and dance practice. They would go into the studio working independently on opposite sides of the room, asking themselves questions like: When I go in the studio by myself, what is my process? What is my preparation? How do I keep my momentum going? How do I build on what I have learned? What do I do when inspiration strikes?

Developing their own working method was essential preparation for building a dialogue and process as collaborators. Through their individual and collective research, the seed of Out Innerspace Dance Theatre was formed. Now heading into its ninth season, the company has built success on Tregarthen and Raymond’s continued curiosity and endless questioning. Out Innerspace is home their creative pursuits as well as their pre-professional dance-training program Modus Operandi, which has evolved into a multi-year curriculum dedicated to research and creation in dance, and dance on film.

“I feel like everything I’m doing is fuelling and directing how I go about each aspect in my career,” says Tregarthen. The possibility and discovery she finds from dancing in Pite’s work feeds her choreographic process with Out Innerspace. Inspired by these creative experiences, she immediately wants to share what she’s learned with her students, and witness them make their own breakthroughs. With this intertwined collection of activities, Tregarthen reaps the rewards of a dance career that thrives in the space between balance and risk-taking. ▼

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Telling The Winter's Tale Design Highlights

by Karen Barr



When Christopher Wheeldon began imagining his full-length ballet, *The Winter's Tale*, based on Shakespeare's play, he turned again to Irish-born, London-based designer Bob Crowley. The two men had worked together in 2011 on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which, like *The Winter's Tale*, was a co-production between England's Royal Ballet and the National Ballet of Canada, who present it this November. Shortly after *The Winter's Tale* premiered in London at Covent Garden in 2014, Crowley talked about his design process for sets and costumes with Karen Barr.

Bob Crowley says he always creates the sets first, whether it is for his work in dance, theatre, opera or film. "I need a backdrop in which to envision my costumes," he explains. Preliminaries start at least six to nine months before the premiere. Once sketches are approved, white card models are made. These are essentially a 3D blueprint that projects what the design will look like spatially and structurally, intended to help everyone involved in the production, from choreographer to sound and lighting designers.

Crowley's models are very detailed: "If we are going to have a bowl of fruit on the set, we white card that right down to the small fruits." The use of white cards is a cost-effective way to work out any changes that need to occur before stage pieces are built. For example, they might discover that a prop is too large and needs to be scaled down in size.

The Winter's Tale is set in two locations: Sicilia and Bohemia. For Sicilia, where the story begins, Crowley designed grand archways and stairways — imposing to look at but lightweight enough to be easily moved for scene changes. To allow space for the large cast, sets had to be minimal. Sicilia has a dark and gloomy setting, grey with storm clouds, like the jealous brooding thoughts of King Leontes as he imagines an affair between his wife Hermione and his childhood friend, King Polixenes of Bohemia.

Bohemia, in contrast to Sicilia, is, says Crowley, "a riot of colour, verdant and alive." Sets employ bold primary colours and exotic printed fabrics. Centre stage is a green life-sized wishing tree, hung with thousands of wishes, which is a communal gathering place. It's here that young Perdita, abandoned by her father Leontes as a baby, and rescued and raised by a shepherd, prepares to marry King Polixenes' son, Florizel, who is masquerading as a shepherd.

All the sets for the Royal Ballet are built by the technical production team of scenic artists, carpenters, draughtsmen and metal workers based in Thurrock, Essex. The costumes —



Above: Edward Watson as Polixenes, Zenaida Yanowsky as Paulina and dancers of the Royal Ballet in *The Winter's Tale*

Right: Sarah Lamb as Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*

Photos: © ROH/Johan Persson



more than 350 were made or adapted for *The Winter's Tale* — were built and hand-dyed by the costume department at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden.

Typically, Crowley begins his costume design with colour sketches. Then he creates a prototype of each one in an inexpensive white fabric. During rehearsals, the dancers wear the prototype, and both the designer and the choreographer observe how the costume moves. Initially, Crowley imagined the costumes for *The Winter's Tale* in Elizabethan style, but when this proved too confining for the choreography, the style was used just for accent instead.

Leontes wears a white-frilled Elizabethan collar, with a flared puff at the shoulders of his dark green wool tunic. The main style of this tunic, however, is Renaissance (think *Romeo and Juliet*), and hooks and bars run up the centre, perhaps alluding to the uptight nature of the king. The lower part of the costume has masses of pleats that move throughout the dance. Leontes, with his tortured jealousy, is one of the designer's favourite characters. "He's infuriating, and impetuous, and fascinating!"

Paulina, a noblewoman, is an advocate and friend to the queen. Many of the women in Shakespeare are strong, but Crowley considers Paulina one of the playwright's finest. "She has such stoicism and is emphatically constant, with such clarity." The designer put her in a calming blue dress for the final scene, in which Paulina's depth of loyalty is realized. Crowley chose a matte, pale Wedgwood blue, the colour of the sky. Made from silk jersey crepe, the simple style is in keeping with the honesty of the character.

At the beginning of the ballet, Paulina's husband, Antigonus, a courtier, takes the child Perdita and abandons her in the forest of Bohemia, following orders from King Leontes. Fearful for the child, he does not see the danger for himself, and is

attacked and killed by a bear, as suggested in Shakespeare's famous stage direction "Exit, pursued by a bear." The audience does not see the killing in either the play or the ballet, which is witnessed by the shepherd's son. Crowley did not design a bear costume, which would have been seen as comedy by a modern audience. Instead, he brought in artist Basil Twist, who designed a large swath of silk in dark shadows and white that becomes the symbol of a murderous animal.

In the play, baby Perdita is found with a small chest of golden coins. But the ballet needed something that would visually tie Perdita to her real, royal parents, and so Crowley and Wheeldon devised an emerald necklace, a gift from Leontes to Hermione in happier days, that is found with her and later given to Perdita on her wedding day. The faux emerald necklace had to be large enough for the audience in the back of the theatre to see, but not too large to overpower the dancer in the role of the teenage Perdita.

How does Crowley think Shakespeare would react to this ballet? "I don't know!" he exclaims with a laugh. "I'm not sure he would approve of us taking away his words!" ▼



The musicians will be barefoot, too, “so they can feel where they are. I want them to play from underneath, not looking down from above. It’s a full body that’s making music.”

A Body Filled with Music

Mark Morris at the Banff Centre

by Kaija Pepper

Mark Morris bursts into the rehearsal room at the Banff Centre in Alberta, where he is in residence in the music department, charging the atmosphere with energy and possibility. He’s here to coach artists from the Strings and Winds Program Master Class for a recital featuring Hummel, Boccherini and Haydn.

Mark Morris, the renowned American choreographer? Who came to creative prominence in the 1980s and now works out of his own Mark Morris Dance Center, a key cultural resource in New York? Yes, and watching him at work, his sideline in music coaching and conducting makes perfect sense. Over the hour, Morris draws out subtle rhythmic distinctions and interpretive colour in the Boccherini Guitar Quintet in D Major, especially in what he calls the “weirder, slurrer” parts of the score. “You might have to muss up your hair a little!” he says to the musicians. It works: the tidy rendition of the opening that I heard prior to his arrival becomes more vibrant and interesting.

The next evening, Morris spoke onstage with John Rockwell, a former *New York Times* music critic. (Look for the podcast at Banff Centre Talks: Mark Morris at banffcentre.ca this fall.) Morris burst in here, too, his Bermuda shorts dressed up for the occasion with a scarf draped elegantly over his shoulders and a sparkling bracelet on his wrist.

Rockwell asked Morris if it’s tiresome being constantly referred to as a highly musical choreographer. “I accept it as a compliment, having seen a lot of other people’s work,” Morris said in his deadpan way, many of his replies being perfectly timed punch lines. He knows the term is a criticism in some circles, “as if I’m just showing what’s in the music.” Laughing, Morris called himself a “choreo-musical entity.”

Amazingly in these financially strapped times, the Mark Morris Dance Group always performs to live music, and has its own music ensemble (though only the director, Colin Fowler, is on

staff). A sign of the group’s popularity is that at a recent audition for a possible supplemental dancer position, 400 hopefuls showed up.

Known for his outspokenness, Morris didn’t disappoint, stating that he won’t “waste a thrilling, detailed score on a ballet company” because they don’t have “the musical depth” of his own group. Ballet dancers are not “dumb” he said in reference to their musical sophistication, just “ignorant.” He loves ballet technique, and uses pointe for ballet company commissions, though prefers lower lines and “less gynecological partnering than is popular these days.”

Asked by an audience member to name favourite choreographers, Morris called Alexei Ratmansky, who is also very musical, “kinda fabulous.”

When Rockwell wondered how being a dancer and choreographer has affected his work in music, Morris assured him that he is “less histrionic in performance.” He was also less histrionic when we met up in a café the next day, though still intense.

Speaking about the upcoming show, Morris said that everybody will stand who can (obvious exceptions are pianists and cellists). “That’s Baroque practice, musicians used to stand and play a lot more than they do now.” The musicians will be barefoot, too, “so they can feel where they are. I want them to play from underneath, not looking down from above. It’s a full body that’s making music.”

For the Boccherini, Morris plays the castanets: real ones, not the “crap, fake” orchestral kind that he compares to “cheap dentures that clatter.” His brisk, no-nonsense voice lightened a little as he anticipated joining the group as a musician during the final Fandango section.

Morris is no newcomer to castanets: he began learning Spanish dance as a child, giving it up because he didn’t like where either the form or gay rights were at when he worked in Franco’s Spain as a young man (he was just coming out then, according to Joan Acocella’s biography on Morris). “Now there’s this fabulous renaissance, in the last 20, 30 years,” including the “genius” Israel Galván. The 59-year-old Morris himself recently danced “a little Sevillana, a *pièce d’occasion*,” for a fundraiser.

At the July 17 concert, Morris entered the Rolston Recital Hall stage barefoot, his burly frame dressed down in black. Among the three groups of musicians who performed that night, everyone who could did indeed stand, and everyone was barefoot, except for the string quartet and guitarist who played the Boccherini; the violist joked with me later that Morris gave them a special dispensation to wear shoes. The performance was charged, dynamic and detailed, with Morris whipping up a fiery rhythmic storm with his castanets. Judging from the excited reception, it turned the audience into believers in the Mark Morris “choreo-musical” phenomenon.

The elderly couple behind me had begun the evening as doubters. “He’s a dancer, the program says. Why’d they bring *him* in?” the husband asked. After the Boccherini, his assessment of Morris changed. “Well, he sure is multi-talented!” “Yes!” his wife fervently agreed. ▼

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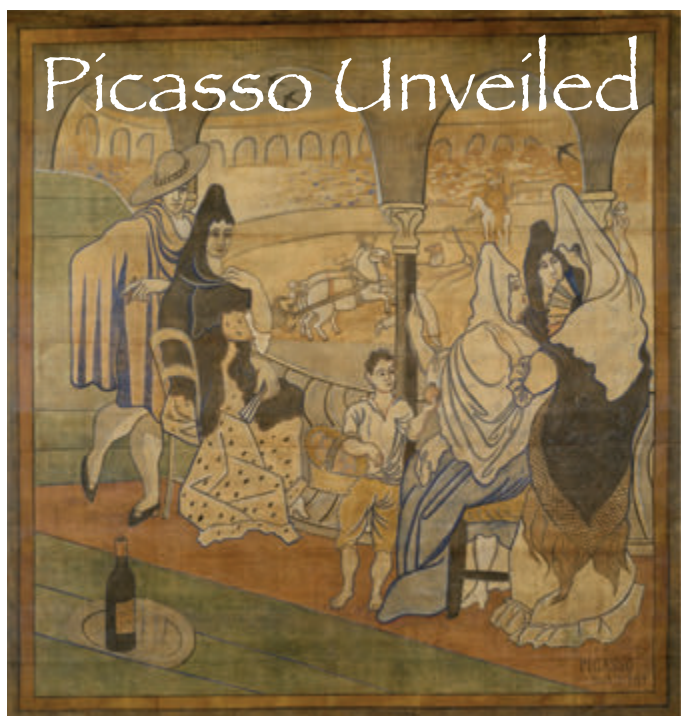
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Rambert and Ladysmith Black Mambazo



Che Milani, Robert James Bridger, Julia Davies, Sharia Johnson and Jack Thomson with Ladysmith Black Mambazo
Photo: Tristram Kenton

INALA, meaning “abundance of goodwill” in Zulu, features South African choral legends Ladysmith Black Mambazo and choreography by Rambert’s artistic director Mark Baldwin in a reworked production that toured the U.K. in summer 2015. British composer Ella Spira, who conceived the piece with former first artist of England’s Royal Ballet Pietra Mello-Pittman, says: “The group had never annotated its music before, so writing the score for *INALA* was in itself a challenge, but the passion and culture of Ladysmith soars through and brings the narrative of the ballet to life.” Among the company of 18 dancers and singers was the winner of the contemporary category of BBC Two’s Young Dancer 2015 competition, 17-year-old Jacob O’Connell.



New-York Historical Society unveiled the recently acquired and conserved painted theatre curtain by Pablo Picasso for the ballet *Le Tricorne* (1919), now on long-term view in its permanent collection. For the last 55 years, the curtain had been displayed like a tapestry at the Four Seasons Restaurant in the Seagram Building in New York. Through summer 2016, a complementary exhibition includes two rediscovered tapestries, one from the time of Louis XIV and one from the 1939 World Fair.

Picasso was commissioned to design and paint the stage curtain for the two-act ballet *Le Tricorne* (*The Three-Cornered Hat*) by impresario Serge Diaghilev for the Ballets Russes. Choreographed by Léonide Massine who was also the principal male dancer, with music by Manuel de Falla, *Le Tricorne* was based on a Spanish romantic novella and featured flamenco and folkloric dances.

Picasso created the curtain, shown during the overture, in London over a three-week period in 1919 with Diaghilev’s scene painter Vladimir Polunin and his wife Elizabeth Violet Hart. Working with paintbrushes affixed to broom handles and toothbrushes, Picasso and the couple stood in slippers on the canvas as they painted.

Photo: Rosalie O'Connor



MISTY COPELAND, who was promoted to principal dancer at American Ballet Theatre in June, is the first African-American woman to reach the 75-year-old company's top rank. Copeland is pictured above in *Romeo and Juliet*.

A white porcelain self-portrait of Anna Pavlova (1881-1931) was sold at Matthew Barton's Decorative Works of Art auction in London in June. The figure is depicted performing the *Dragonfly* solo, choreographed in 1915 by Pavlova, and is initialled "AP" in the maquette. Pavlova was taught the art of sculpture by Hugo Lederer, a member of the Berlin Akademie der Künste, where he gave master classes in the 1920s. An example of this model is preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Anna Pavlova, Sculptor



Self-portrait by Anna Pavlova
Courtesy of Matthew Barton Ltd.

Ilter Ibrahimof and Fall for Dance North

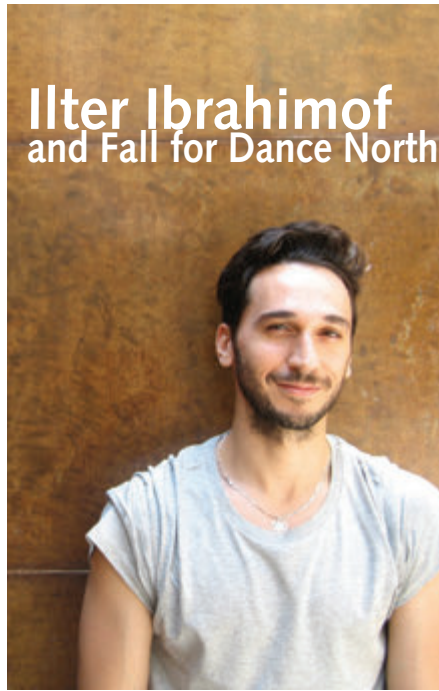


Photo: Sibel Kohen

Dance fans should thank Spanish choreographer Nacho Duato for indirectly bringing Fall for Dance North to Toronto this fall. "Seeing Nacho's *Multiplicity, Forms of Silence and Emptiness* in 2002 and being around him completely changed my life," says Ilter Ibrahimof, artistic director of the new festival.

As a fledgling 20-year-old employee of the now-defunct World Arts management agency, Ibrahimof took care of the 2002 North American tour of Duato's *Compania Nacional de Danza*. The experience convinced Turkish-born Ibrahimof to go into the arts booking business. Two years later, he opened his own New York-based agency, Sunny Artist Management, and cheekily persuaded Duato to let him handle his U.S. and Canadian tours. In 2008, he moved to Montreal where he managed U.S. tours for *Les Grands Ballets Canadiens*. This year, he's moving to Toronto to be closely involved with Fall for Dance North.

Thanks to a winning personality, extraordinary patience, thick skin and sheer luck, Ibrahimof over the past decade added major clients to his Sunny Artist Management stable — Wendy Whelan, Shantala Shivalingappa and Ballet BC among others. Many of his clients have been invited to perform at New York's Fall for Dance, the long-running annual series at New York City Center that has become tremendously popular partly because it

charges only \$10 a ticket. Fall for Dance North tickets will be offered at the same low price.

"I saw the impact of that \$10 ticket — what a different audience it brings," says Ibrahimof, who has served as one of Fall for Dance's curators. "Many people come who don't really know much about dance, and they see a variety of work of the highest calibre."

To bring the same variety of dance to Toronto audiences, Ibrahimof met with Mark Hammond, Sony Centre's interim CEO, and proposed a local Fall for Dance series. Hammond agreed and Fall for Dance North was born.

Nowadays, Ibrahimof does more than simply book tours for his artists — he actively adds his creative input to their projects. He gives them advice on the kind of choreography that will best promote them on tour and helps put together the program of works. For example, with Whelan's touring show, *Restless Creature*, he and Whelan had lively discussions about which choreographers to bring into the project.

"You have to be sensitive about going from being an agent to a presenter or producer," cautions Ibrahimof. "Twenty years ago, agents were boxed in one category; today, it's easier to wear different hats. I hope that people are more comfortable with arts managers who want to be presenters and curators, too. You can do it if you're sensitive about conflicts of interest and professional relationships."

—VICTOR SWOBODA

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Fall for Dance North

Among those scheduled to appear in two programs at Toronto's Sony Centre are Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Nriyagram from India, DanceBrazil, Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company, the National Ballet of Canada and soloist Peggy Baker and Sarah Neufeld of Arcade Fire in a festival commission premiere.



Left: Leanne Cope (centre) in Christopher Wheeldon's *An American in Paris*, with Shannon Rugani on the left
Photo: Angela Sterling

Below: Robert Fairchild, Brandon Uranowitz and Max von Essen and the company of *An American in Paris*, with Garen Scribner seated on chair on right
Photo: Matthew Murphy



An American in Paris on Broadway

Shannon Rugani and
Garen Scribner
from the ensemble

by Toba Singer

Christopher Wheeldon's Tony Award-winning stage version of the 1951 film musical, *An American in Paris*, opened in New York in April 2015, starring Robert Fairchild from New York City Ballet in the Gene Kelly role and Leanne Cope from London's Royal Ballet in the Leslie Caron role. The remake project started long before, back in 1988; some of the delay was due to the need to update the plot, a retrospective post-Second World War story, in order to attract younger audiences. The casting process itself took two years, and the very last one to be cast — in 2014 — was Shannon Rugani, from South Lake Tahoe, California. She was there at the urging of her friend, Garen Scribner, from Arlington, Virginia. Both left the ballet stage — at the time, she was with San Francisco Ballet and he was with Nederlands Dans Theater — to be on Broadway.

"I actually joined the cast because of Garen," says Rugani. "He was auditioning, and asked me to run lines with him. Right in the middle of doing that, Garen asked, 'Why don't *you* audition? They're looking for ballerinas who can sing.'"

When Wheeldon called Rugani with the offer to join the Broadway cast, the casting

agent urged her to take it, adding, "This is going to be special." Helgi Tomasson, San Francisco Ballet's artistic director, was also supportive. "Helgi was very kind, and gave me a leave of absence for six months [the length of the contract], plus the Paris debut in November 2014, five months before the Broadway opening."

As for Scribner, since he was five years old, he says he has wanted to do three things: dance in a classical ballet company, dance in a contemporary company and — the last to fall into place — perform on Broadway. "About five years ago," he explains, "I started working with voice coaches Joan Leders and Marian Wells, and then with Brad Haak, the show's musical director. While I was still a soloist with San Francisco Ballet, I visited my brother, a Broadway stage manager, to ask his advice. I found an agent and, through him, put out feelers, while at the same time talking to Nederlands Dans Theater. The artistic director at NDT, Paul Lightfoot, was interested in hiring me. In the meantime, I sent video to the *An American in Paris* team, and then they flew me to New York to audition. The audition lasted an hour and a half! I sang and read sides [the sections in a script in which the auditioning actor's scenes take place] with a scene partner."

Scribner was offered a contract for an ensemble member role in the show at the

same time as NDT's invitation to join the company arrived. "I left San Francisco, and had a year with NDT in The Hague. I moved to Brooklyn in the summer of 2014, and found a whole new world."

Once on Broadway, both craved company class. "The dancers tried doing class in the [Palace Theatre] basement, but the floor isn't sprung for jumping," says Rugani. "And the ceilings are too low," Scribner adds.

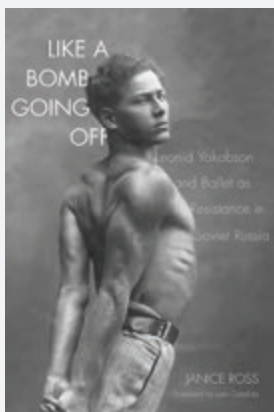
Rugani says, "We explained to management here that if they want us to perform at the top of our game, and to ensure that we keep the facility we arrived with for our future careers, we would need their help, so they agreed to subsidize our classes. I go to STEPS, or else to Broadway Dance Center to take Willie Burmann's class. It's great! There are plenty of Broadway dancers there, and you hear about other jobs from them."

"I'm living in Brooklyn," says Scribner, "so I take advantage of being close to the Mark Morris Dance Center, and take class there every morning."

Does Scribner miss Europe?

"I loved dancing with NDT, and mostly liked The Hague. I look forward to dancing there again, but for now I can't wait for August, when I will dance the lead role that I am now understudying — Jerry Mulligan! You've got to come back to see me!" ▼

QUOTABLE



Excerpt from *Like a Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia*

By Janice Ross, Yale University Press, yalebooks.com

The Golden Age, choreographed by Vladimir Chesnakov, Vasili Vainonen and Leonid Yakobson

“Shostakovich’s score effectively made audible the dramatic pulse of the ballet, by employing dance melodies to tell social tales in tandem with the libretto’s narrative themes. Many of the predictable scenes of political, racial, and class conflict in *The Golden Age* were filtered through the medium of movement itself — especially the vocabularies of sports and popular dances of the 1920s. These were augmented with milling crowds at the industrial exhibition, police, detectives, young people dancing the tango and foxtrot, athletes posturing, and even a Josephine Baker-styled Diva character dancing an erotic adagio. Shostakovich made the libretto danceable and he gave the choreographers a dramatic and sonic floor on which to visualize these complex movement battles. Shostakovich’s only immediate experience with movement prior to composing for *The Golden Age* was his well-documented personal passion for soccer, which he dubbed ‘the ballet of the masses.’ Shostakovich was a passionate fan of the two home teams of Leningrad, the Dinamo and Zenit; in fact, one of the Dinamo stars, Pyotr Dementyev, was known affectionately as ‘the Ballerina,’ presumably because of his grace in play. ”

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Maya Plisetskaya

1925-2015

Maya Plisetskaya's passing from a heart attack at the age of 89 on May 2, 2015, was covered by all the major news agencies. Social media exploded with tributes, recollections of meetings and sightings, videos — both famous and obscure — and countless photographs. A woman of enormous talent, courage, strength and beauty, Plisetskaya not only survived the political powers that haunted her, but also triumphed over them in her career and in her life.

Born in 1925 to a family that included actors, dancers, ballet teachers and theatre designers, Plisetskaya lost her parents in the Stalinist purges of the 1930s (her father was killed and her mother sent to a labour camp). Young Maya would have been labeled a daughter of traitors and sent to a children's home were it not for her aunt, a famous ballet dancer and teacher, Sulamith Messerer, who adopted her niece, allowing her to remain in Moscow and continue to study at the Bolshoi Ballet School. Immediately after her graduation in 1943, Plisetskaya joined the Bolshoi Ballet and did not officially retire until 1990.

Plisetskaya was courageous both on and off the stage. She spoke her mind directly to the highest officials of the Soviet Union at a time when leading artists had to demonstrate their faithfulness to the regime by

officially joining the Communist Party, and she was an outspoken and highly visible Jewish woman in an openly anti-Semitic society.

She was decidedly modern even in classical ballet. Her range of roles was exceptionally wide and covered all classical ballets in the Bolshoi's repertoire, but Plisetskaya also supported new choreographers and ballets. Her best roles were those of an outsider, a seducer, a character driven by passion rather than morals and rules: reckless Carmen, exuberant Kitri in *Don Quixote*, erotic Mistress of the Copper Mountain in *The Stone Flower*, loving Zarema in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, a lonely dying swan.

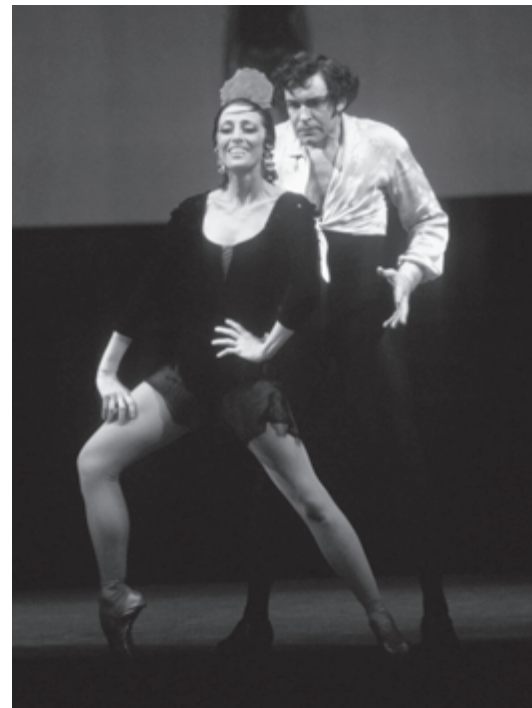
The Dying Swan became Plisetskaya's defining role. She went beyond merely adorning classical steps with bird-like arm movements, as was ballet tradition. Plisetskaya's arms rippled and bent at angles unseen before, and her whole body responded to the transformation and followed the arms' lead. As she metamorphosed into a bird, lonely, proud, dying, the swan became a metaphor for the dancer's spirit and character. Plisetskaya danced her *Dying Swan* throughout her long career; her last performances took place when she was in her 70s. Audiences always demanded an encore, or several, and she inevitably indulged, often dancing and "dying" on top of heaps of flowers thrown to her feet.

At the beginning of her career, the Bolshoi troupe was dominated by stars like Marina Semyonova and Galina Ulanova, the Leningrad-trained divas of Agrippina Vaganova's new method. Plisetskaya, who met the famous teacher only once, went on to regret the limitations of her own training, though, in the documentary *Plisetskaya Dances* (1964), she says: "As Vaganova used to say, it's better to be worse but unique." And indeed, unique she was. It is a common misconception that Plisetskaya was the embodiment of the Bolshoi style. Plisetskaya's long neck and arms, her phenomenal jump, attack and vivaciousness, along with the power of her artistic delivery so boldly unencumbered by the lifeless residue of archaic stylistic requirements, revitalized ballet at large and became the new aesthetic of the Bolshoi.

In the relative political thaw of the 1960s, Plisetskaya enjoyed more freedom, both to travel and to choose her own roles and friends. She developed personal friendships with Maurice Béjart and Roland Petit, was welcomed at

Kennedy's White House, partied with Shirley MacLaine and became a muse of Pierre Cardin. She was unafraid to meet with and befriend the famous Soviet ballet defectors Rudolf Nureyev, Natalia Makarova and Mikhail Baryshnikov, an act so brazen it seemed to have paralyzed the bullying Soviet Union into inaction when it came to punishment. She was hungry for the new and for the modern. In 1967, Alberto Alonso created *Carmen* for her at the Bolshoi. In 1973, Petit revived for her a duet from *La Rose Malade* to the music of Gustav Mahler, then a relatively unknown composer in the U.S.S.R. In 1975, she famously took over a male role in Béjart's *Bolero* — all this without speaking a single foreign language.

Plisetskaya is survived by her husband of nearly 57 years, prominent composer Rodion Shchedrin. He wrote ballets for her (*The Little Humpbacked Horse*, *Carmen*, *Anna Karenina*, *The Seagull* and *The Lady with the Lapdog*) and she promoted him tirelessly. When, in 2001, Plisetskaya published her rather scandalous memoir, *I, Maya Plisetskaya*, the book was as much about Shchedrin as it was about herself. In it, Plisetskaya is as open and brave as she was in life. Many accused her of gossiping and exaggerating the hardships (such as her claim that Soviet artists were reduced to eating dog food while on tours abroad due to lack of money), but the book is as fascinating and passionate as its author.



In later years, Plisetskaya and Shchedrin made their home outside Russia, mainly in Spain and Germany. However, she maintained close connections with Moscow, where she was treated with utmost respect, organizing ballet competitions and festivals, and otherwise enjoying her status as a living legend.

Tatyana Kuznetsova of Russia's *Kommer-sant* newspaper wrote after Plisetskaya's sudden death that "it seemed she would live as long as she wanted to. Because she'd always lived her life the way she wanted: she influenced people, circumstances and even the government order."

— REGINA ZARHINA

Kathrine Sorley Walker



1920-2015

Kathrine Sorley Walker, who was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, on March 5, 1920, passed away in April at the age of 95. She had written for *Dance International* since 1987, and filed her last report shortly before she died; it appeared in the magazine's Summer 2015 issue.

As a baby, Sorley Walker was taken to India where her father worked for Reuters news agency. After he died a year later, she and her mother returned to Aberdeen. From an early age, her mother took her to the local theatre, and by the time they moved to London when she was about seven, Sorley Walker was already a seasoned theatregoer. She read English at

King's College, London, and studied in France at Besançon University.

In London, Sorley Walker became captivated by ballet — the Vic-Wells Ballet (including their 1939 *The Sleeping Princess*), Ballet Rambert and de Basil's Ballets Russes. She especially admired performers and ballets where dance and theatre blended; her first biography in 1957 was of the supreme dancer-actor, Robert Helpmann, who she admired for his ability to infuse dance with meaning.

Post-war London saw an influx of dance companies that widened Sorley Walker's horizons, and she became a knowledgeable observer of Spanish and Indian dance. She admitted, shamefacedly, that Martha Graham's London debut reduced her to giggles, but later was a great admirer of the Graham-based London Contemporary Dance Theatre. Other enthusiasms included Fred Astaire, whom she regarded as a genius (not a word she used lightly) and tap dancers like Will Gaines and Honi Coles.

She volunteered for the London Archives of the Dance (now assimilated into the Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre and Performance Collections), began contributing to *The Dancing Times*, published her first book, *Brief for Ballet*, in 1947, and from 1951 to 1961 contributed articles to *Playgoer*.

Working under Michael Huxley on *Geographical* magazine from 1951 to 1956, Sorley Walker developed into a formidable editor. When, years later, she amassed 15 handwritten pages of mistakes in a dance dictionary (without consulting a single reference work), she was as dismayed by the sloppy editing as by the inaccuracies.

From 1967 to 1986, she worked for the Helga Greene Literary Agency while writing books on ballet, mime, choreography, Saladin (the first Sultan of Egypt and Syria) and Joan of Arc. After Greene retired, Sorley Walker continued to oversee Raymond Chandler's literary estate and, with Dorothy Gardiner, edited a volume of his letters and writings, *Raymond Chandler Speaking*. Between 1949 and 2008, she wrote six poetry books, though, with typical modesty, in her *Who's Who* entry she described them as "verse."

Sorley Walker enjoyed researching lesser-known subjects, including two early dancer-designers, William Chappell and Hedley Briggs, and the Tonbridge Boys' Ballet, a small group made up of mainly

working class boys performing in the 1930s. She was ruthless in pursuit of the fact, though even she had to admit defeat when compiling a list of married dancers in de Basil's Ballets Russes after being told yet again, "Yes, they were married. [pause] Well, as good as." Only hard facts were acceptable.

She started reviewing for the *Daily Telegraph* in 1969, under the auspices of A.V. Coton (whose criticisms she edited as *Writings on Dance* in 1975), and succeeded Fernau Hall as principal dance critic in 1988. Her writing was clear, concise, illuminating, unsentimental and never indulgent; she saw criticism as a record of performance as much as personal opinion. Sorley Walker parted company with the newspaper in 1993 when it was suggested she do interviews and promotional pieces as well; how, she asked, could she be an objective critic if she talked to the dancers beforehand or received promotional hospitality from the companies?

In 1982, I collaborated with Sorley Walker on *The Royal Ballet: A Picture History*. With very limited wordage, her concision and unerring choice of what to include (which did not preclude the occasional quirk or neglected favourite) was invaluable. In a real labour of professionalism and love, she also proofed my endless statistics in the Royal Ballet 50th anniversary history, which we read aloud to one another as she had been taught by Huxley on *Geographical*.

Her major works, *De Basil's Ballets Russes* (1982) and *Ninette de Valois: Idealist without Illusions* (1987), are infused with enthusiasm for her subjects and her understanding that events must be evaluated by the standards of their time, not those of a later generation. Writing de Valois' biography was a particular pleasure; subject and author enjoyed each other's company, sharing as they did Celtic roots and a belief in the theatrical potential of dance. Both wrote poetry, too.

Somehow Sorley Walker found time for other interests, including art exhibitions and travel. Though she professed not to like musicals, she saw most of the important ones in London and New York.

De Valois shall have the last word, commenting on an unidentified author: "She can write, which is such a relief — and when she feels like it — with a bite that has no bitterness." "She" could so easily be Kathrine.

— SARAH WOODCOCK



DO YOU CALL IT
FLAMENCO?
 CONTROL
 VERSIAL
 ISRAEL
 GALVÁN



director Pedro Romero titles all his shows. “The idea behind the name was mainly that I’ve lost a lot of weight.” *Flaco* in Spanish means skinny, and Galván can certainly be considered a *flaco* man now that his typically thicker frame has seemingly dwindled overnight to slightly smaller than *svelte*, most likely a result of his busy touring schedule with a handful of different shows. “But,” Galván is quick to add, “the title also refers to flamenco and the fact that just because you change certain things doesn’t mean it’s no longer flamenco.”

Romero’s wordplay seems almost the perfect analogy for Galván’s body of work. Galván has deconstructed traditional flamenco and put it back together again with his own tweaks and additions. Only artists with the greatest depth of knowledge can successfully disassemble the art form they’ve spent years mastering to put it back together in an original form.

Much as the Spanish painters of the 20th century had to master the techniques of realism before they could become the patriarchs of surrealism, Galván had to master traditional flamenco before breaking the mould and becoming an international sensation. Although preserving flamenco’s rhythmic timing and clean, percussive footwork, Galván has replaced the typically rounded arm positioning, soft hand movements and elegant body placement with dramatic lines created by bent knees and elbows and razor-straight arms. He has even created signature moves, including grandly holding his head back and rapping his fingernails against his front teeth or placing his open palm, fingers spread, on top of his head, resembling a rooster’s crest or the large decorative combs female flamenco dancers sometimes wear.

Galván and his sister Pastora Galván — a lauded contemporary flamenco dancer in her own right — were the children of flamenco dancers, groomed to follow in their parents’ footsteps. In his early teens, Israel was already hailed as a young flamenco sensation, dancing on national television accompanied by legendary musicians.

Many have speculated it was the pressure from his father to be flawless that led Israel Galván to break with the style of dance perfected by his father and later his sister, but he tells a different story. At the age of 21, Galván joined the *Compañía Andaluza de Danza*, directed by the visionary Mario Maya, which opened up a whole new world where greater emphasis was placed on

It’s late February when my train pulls into Jerez de la Frontera. The small city sits just 15 kilometres from Spain’s southern Atlantic coast and is famous for being the birthplace of flamenco and sherry, two traditions Jerez’s inhabitants take very seriously. Outside the beautifully tiled municipal train station, I catch a taxi and my driver is quick to detect I am there for the Jerez Festival, a renowned celebration of Spanish dance, particularly flamenco. I tell him I cover the festival yearly as a member of the press, a statement he responds to with a query: “Do you call what they perform in that theatre flamenco?”

I am about to begin a discussion I’ve had before. “Yes, why shouldn’t it be?” He quickly says he is Gypsy and cousins with Antonio El Pipa, one of Jerez’s most internationally successful flamenco dancers. Flamenco, he explains, has a certain form, a certain structure, that cannot be broken; if it is, it can no longer be flamenco.

In what seems a deep desire to preserve and exalt an important part of their culture, many Gypsies maintain a traditional and narrow view of flamenco music and dance, often rejecting innovation. I tell him I agree, flamenco’s framework must be respected, but how an artist chooses to build upon that frame is up to their discretion. One may not like the result, but that doesn’t mean it’s not flamenco.

“Does this look like flamenco to you?” my driver asks as he pulls one hand from the steering wheel, jutting it forcefully to the side, elbow bent and hand pointed outward, all fingers aligned, resembling a cobra waiting to strike.

I laugh, knowing exactly to whom he is referring. Those straight lines and severe angles are a trademark of Israel Galván. Galván, son of legendary flamenco dancer José Galván, has long been the subject of ardent debate within Spain’s flamenco community. From purists who find his work an aberration to young flamenco dancers who hail him as a genius to many audience members who just don’t know what to think, Israel Galván has long remained an enigma.

“I’m due to interview him in a couple of days here at the festival,” I tell my expressive driver. “I’ll be sure to ask whether he considers what he dances flamenco.”

Galván was at the 2015 Jerez Festival to present his latest production, *Flacomen*. During our interview, which took place at the Tryp Hotel on Jerez’s historic, tree-lined Alameda Cristina, Galván explains that his longtime creative partner and artistic

technique rather than the flamenco pageantry that seems so typically Spanish to foreign audiences. “When I saw Mario Maya for the first time, I thought he was very strange. I saw his positioning and gestures, and thought, ‘What is this?’ Then I realized that flamenco has its roots and its foundation, but the strongest and most important source of inspiration is yourself.”

His work with Maya paid off — Galván still has one of the cleanest techniques and spot-on rhythms — and after winning a slew of awards, he was offered the opportunity to perform at the Seville Flamenco Biennial in 1998. It was then, Galván admits, the pressure became too much. “I thought, ‘I’ll dance, but it’s going to be what I want.’ That’s when everything changed.”

It was also when he met Romero, a multi-faceted artist, arts and literature critic, and flamenco expert, who helped him mount *¡Mira! / Los zapatos rojos (Look! / The Red Shoes)* for the Biennial. “I thought it was going to be so beautiful because I was wearing these iconic red shoes. But when it ended, things exploded and there were critiques in all the Seville newspapers. One critic thought I was a genius and another thought I was a madman. But it didn’t matter. From then on, I danced the way I felt.” It wasn’t easy and Galván admits: “I went through a period of time in which I didn’t really know what I was doing. I was basically just sketching ideas, tossing them out and starting over again.”

As Galván’s mother is Gypsy, I ask if he’s ever felt pressure to dance a certain way to placate his family or so as not to disappoint the community as a whole. He admits that conversations with family about flamenco or his latest work are often prefaced with the phrase, “Before, when you danced well ...” He adds with a laugh, “It seems like I just keep dancing worse and worse!” If the community does not approve of a certain style of dance, Galván explains, the dancer is either automatically classed as “not a true flamenco dancer or not a true Gypsy.”

Galván has never taken his Gypsy background for granted. *Lo Real* (2013), the first show in which he choreographed for flamenco dancers other than himself (the phenomenal Belén Maya and Isabel Bayón) addressed the extermination of the Gypsies under the Nazi regime, when the Roma people were targeted for ethnic cleansing. Although the Roma are ethnically and culturally different from Spanish Gypsies, who are known as the Calé people, their shared origin and common hardships inspired Galván. “I am so proud to have contributed this small grain of sand to Gypsy historical memory,” he says.

As we talk it becomes clear that Galván is an artist comfortable in his own skin and his own mind. When all is said and done, I don’t feel like I have to keep my promise to the taxi driver. Galván has answered the big question on the minds of many without even being asked. Although he mentions the genius of dance-theatre icon Pina Bausch, he spends much more time expounding the virtues of Carmen Amaya and El Farruco, analyzing what it was that made them great flamenco dancers. It’s clear that Galván still eats, breathes, sleeps and dances flamenco.

“There was a long period of time when people didn’t think of me as anything,” he says. “I wasn’t seen as a flamenco dancer; I wasn’t even seen as a dancer.” Israel Galván learned how to detach from expectations and no longer feels pressure to conform. “I accept that I have a certain notoriety, but when people finally come to see one of my shows they say, ‘Well, that wasn’t so strange.’ That happens to me a lot.” ▼

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Thrills and Spills

at Youth America Grand Prix



by Kaija Pepper

Ballet technique is like a beautiful wild beast: a thing of great mystery and fascination, with its own ferocious integrity, and sense of right and wrong. You have to be able to control it, as you do a beast, or it may devour you.

At Youth America Grand Prix, the young dancers tackled with devotion ballet's spinning, leaping and balancing feats of derring-do. Ballet involves the body in high athletic mode, but — just to make it more complicated and more humanly resonant — equal attention must be paid to the subtler qualities of line and shape, and of musicality, too. Then, most mysterious of all, these things must be tossed off as if they were mere natural attributes, not just of the steps, but also of the dancer; the individual at the centre of all this athletic beauty must shine through, must somehow be present, in the dance, on the stage, for the audience.

Sometimes, at the YAGP New York finals I observed last April, the dancers would peek out shyly from behind their technique, so that it led them; it was the ones who kept it firmly leashed, under their control, who made the dance alive

and vibrant, and about something more than tricky steps. A few stumbled or fell onstage, reminding us of the dangers inherent in pushing the body to its limit and of the elusive nature of perfection. A few lost their nerve after the misstep, closing off, even if just a little, but others remained open to the audience, so we stayed with them and it was all part of the thrill of live performance.

YAGP demands a lot of art and athletics all rolled together, and I was full of respect for every one of the dancers who made it to New York. During five days of competition at the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts in Greenwich Village, brave young women and men put their dance on display for the panel of much older, more experienced and well-connected judges. The competition's last evening at Lincoln Center's Koch Theater, where the final round took place, added five tiers of audience members seated in plush red seats, bringing a much grander sense of occasion.

During every performance, athleticism was highly rated by the audience, which included many YAGP participants and their family members; whenever beautiful

Above: Lang Ma
Third place, Senior Men's category

Below: Antonio Casalinho
Top Six Pre-Competitive Men's
category and Hope Award

Photos: Siggul / VAM

feet powered through grueling jumps (the men) or when they spun or hopped spectacularly on pointe (the women), there was much applause and cheering. And why not? Such prowess is hard-won and easy to spot. Yet it was refreshing when the dancer brought an inner world to the steps and was really there for the music, both hard things to pull off in such competitive circumstances. The judges do work to discern both artistic and technical qualities, with score sheets devised to ensure attention is paid to both sides.

It was refreshing when the dancer brought an inner world to the steps and was really there for the music, both hard things to pull off in such competitive circumstances.

However uniquely expressive, these young artists are not lone wolves. A professional dancer is not made by practising or dancing alone in a room; becoming a dancer is a very social affair, as is the act of theatrical dance itself. Their work at the competition, and also before and after, involves an extended family of parents, teachers and coaches: a whole community of support.

Some participants had both Mom and Dad in tow, but overall there were more mothers than fathers. One mother from Arizona, whose only background in dance was social, sat quietly working at her computer in the lobby at the Skirball Center while her 11-year-old daughter — who had taken part in the Pre-Competitive category for 9-11 year olds for the first time — was inside watching round after round of juniors (12-14) and seniors (15-19) do variations from *Giselle*, *La Esmeralda*, *Raymonda*, *The Pharaoh's Daughter*, *The Flames of Paris*, *Don Quixote*, *Le Corsaire*, *Swan Lake* and other key classical ballets.

Another mom chatted a little distractingly while waiting to hear her 16-year-old daughter's number announced, at which point she dashed inside to watch. "I'm my daughter's harshest critic," she confessed afterward, before admitting: "Going away to school has been the best thing for her."

Two moms from Japan said their own enthusiasm had been stoked while watching *First Position*, the popular 2011 film

directed by Bess Kargman, following several YAGP hopefuls for the 2010 New York finals. The documentary is full of the excitement of high-stakes competition, and helped put YAGP on the map worldwide. One of those featured — then 14-year-old Michaela DePrince, who left with a scholarship — is now a budding star at Dutch National Ballet and recently had her biography published. It's called *Taking Flight: From War Orphan to Star Ballerina*, and MGM has bought the film rights.

There have been many tales of success since YAGP was founded in 1999 by a trio of Russians: ex-Bolshoi ballerina Larissa Saveliev and her husband Gennadi Saveliev, who until 2012 was an American Ballet Theatre soloist (they remain co-artistic directors), and Sergey Gordeev, then running a public relations firm, now YAGP's director of external affairs.

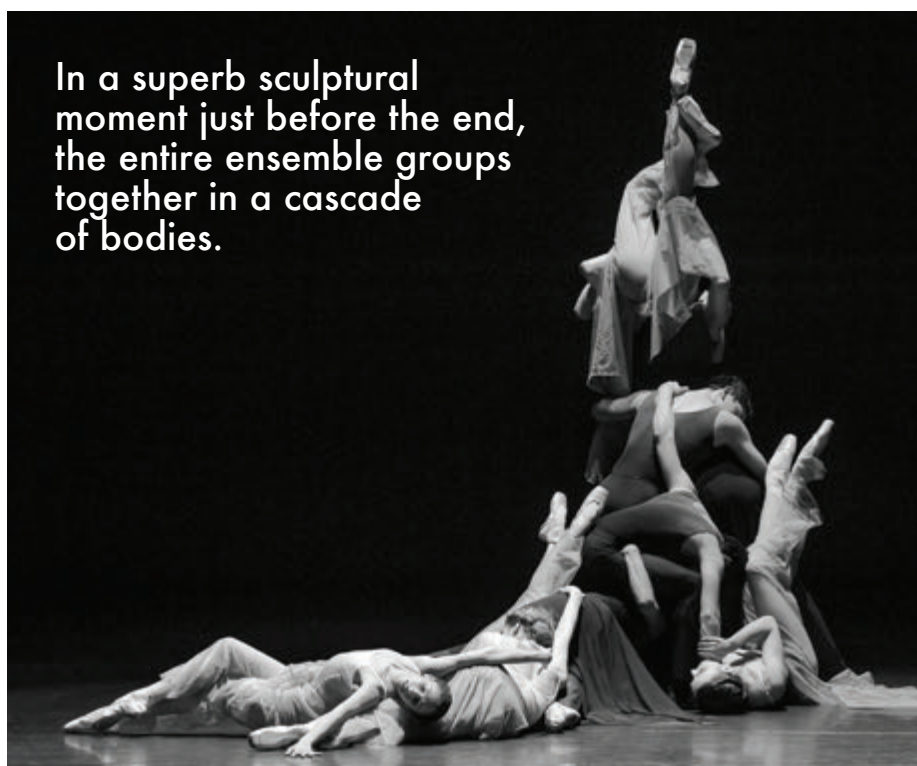
Gordeev is a passionate spokesperson for YAGP's higher values. "It's all about education!" he asserts. The New York event is certainly filled with learning opportunities. First, there's just the fact of being in New York, an iconic American city filled with adventure. One young man I spoke with had spent the morning watching American Ballet Theatre take class, thanks to his teacher's connections.

Then there are the master classes in ballet at Manhattan Movement and Arts

Center, led by directors from top schools worldwide. As well, a contemporary class by notable Dutch choreographer Didy Veldman was held at a small corner studio at the Ailey School, its two glass walls presenting a magnificent cityscape view. At the start, Veldman announced her background in Cunningham, Graham, Limón and Release, asking the dancers to take off their ballet shoes, which helped them explore a more grounded way of moving.

There was also a day of scholarship classes at the Manhattan Center, where directors from around the world watched the dancers in an intimate studio setting, offering scholarships to the lucky ones who caught their eye. To date, more than \$3 million in scholarships have been awarded; this year, scholarships were offered by the likes of Paris Opera Ballet School, Palucca School Dresden, England's Royal Ballet School, Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet School and many others.

Coaches and teachers, who are not allowed to watch, hung out in the common areas. In the studio, the dancers, numbers pinned on their chest, went through the exposing rigour of a class. Larissa Saveliev was busy acting as a kind of talent broker between students and heads of schools who sat in a long row, writing notes. She knows what the students are looking for, and she knows what the schools can



In a superb sculptural moment just before the end, the entire ensemble groups together in a cascade of bodies.



offer, doing her best to put good matches in touch with each other. For Mikhail Tchoupakov (a faculty member at University of North Carolina School of the Arts), who led the scholarship classes I watched, there was some challenge in efficient communication: not everyone speaks English.

That diversity gives young people a chance to interact with fellow dancers from around the globe (another educational plus). The 11-year-old from Arizona made a friend from Australia, doubtless just one of many budding friendships. At the Awards Ceremony, this global reach was celebrated as dancers, organized by country, paraded forward in groups, with one dancer waving a flag. The Brazilian, Japanese and, of course, United States home teams, were huge. Canada had about 17 participants onstage, Korea about 12, and several countries had just one representative, including the Dominican Republic, New Zealand, Sweden, Romania and Ukraine.

YAGP always culminates in two gala evenings at the Koch Theater. The first, Stars of Today Meet the Stars of Tomorrow, began with Antonio Casalinho, the 11-year-old Portuguese who placed among the top six in the men's pre-competitive category. The small, dark-haired boy was followed by an array of equally keen, talented YAGP finalists. It's true that most

of the classical roles are emotionally not in the range of even the older participants; a playful solo from *Harlequinade* that is on the approved repertoire list is a rare example of really youthful energy in a classical ballet. That's the reality of the form, which is designed not for children but for young adults at the peak of their physical powers (which is not to say that age-appropriate classical variations couldn't be devised).

The Grand Défilé ending the evening's first half was an impressive display of group solidarity involving more than 250 participants from 30 countries, whittled down from the 7,000 hopefuls who had travelled to semi-finals in Paris, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Osaka and 15 cities across the United States.

The Stars of Today second part was an array of mature talent. Take Semyon Chudin and Evgenia Obraztsova from the Bolshoi Ballet in a pas de deux from *The Pharaoh's Daughter* (by Petipa, reconstructed by Pierre Lacotte): she in her royal blue tutu, he in a gold Egyptian-styled skirt with bare midriff, both working graciously within their powerful techniques in a magnificent, but not overt, display. Melissa Hamilton and Eric Underwood from England's Royal Ballet danced a pas de deux from Wayne McGregor's *Qualia*, bringing a completely different, contemporary style of feline grace and sultry, muscular acrobatics. Xander Parish, a British dancer with the Mariinsky Ballet, exuded cheeky wit in a humorous solo, *Ballet 101*, by Eric Gauthier.

The closing gala has, in the past, been part of a series called Legends in Dance, featuring Natalia Makarova in 2012 and Vladimir Vasiliev in 2010. This year, explained Gordeev, "We're trying something new. We gave David Hallberg a night."

Hallberg is an American dancer, a principal with American Ballet Theatre who also dances with the Bolshoi; sidelined by injury, this was a perfect time to act as curator. And also as matchmaker: for the show, titled *Legacy*, he commissioned a piece from Sweden's Pontus Lidberg for American Ballet Theatre Studio Company, the group with whom he got his start. *Untitled* was a lovely, sweeping ballet, with the women in pointe shoes, involving the use of several prop fans. In a superb sculptural moment just before the end, the entire ensemble groups together in a cascade of bodies.

The five companies presented were all ones Hallberg has danced with himself. The return of Bolshoi dancers Chudin and

Obraztsova in *The Pharaoh's Daughter* was a treat. So was the pairing of Chudin and the Mariinsky Ballet's Yekaterina Kondaurava, who together brought Russian warmth to Balanchine's glittering *Diamonds* pas de deux.

In Lar Lubovitch's *Scriabin Dances*, Russian Veronika Part, now with American Ballet Theatre, danced a powerful Isadora-like solo to tumbling piano. Tokyo Ballet sizzled in Maurice Béjart's South Asian-styled *Bhakti III*. Only Australian Ballet seemed a little out of step for such a festive occasion, presenting Amber Scott and Rudy Hawkes in Stephen Baynes' somber relationship ballet, *Unspoken Dialogues*.

The evening closed with the Mariinsky in top contemporary form in Anton Pimourov's *Choreographic Game 3x3* to a piano concerto by Johann Peter Pixis. This playful piece for six dancers, including Kondaurava, was created in 2013 for the Mariinsky's young choreographers' project. A fitting finale for the 2015 Youth America Grand Prix, *Choreographic Game* was filled with exuberant movement that was skillfully, indeed masterfully, performed. ▼

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Photo: Lars F. Menzel

Mediawatch



LE CORSAIRE
English National Ballet
100 minutes
www.opusarte.com

Le Corsaire has a mixed reputation in the ballet world, thanks to its famously silly plot (complete with shipwrecks, pirates, slave girls, kidnappings and drug-induced visions), its blandly pretty patchwork of a score and its considerable length. This version, the first full-evening production commissioned by Tamara Rojo since she took the reins at English National Ballet, is a pleasant surprise. Excellently staged by Anna-Marie Holmes in 2013 and compressed to an action-packed hour and a half, the production is almost non-stop bravura dancing and boasts an A-list cast. Alina Cojocaru gives a stellar performance as Medora, displaying wonderful musicality, detail and charm, along with the requisite immaculate technique. Vadim Muntagirov as Conrad has many opportunities to show off his beautiful jumps, even if he is slightly upstaged by Yonah Acosta, who has great fun as his treacherous henchman Birbanto. What is in the end a desperately old-fashioned premise is rescued by the superb performances of the whole company, framed by gorgeous designs by Hollywood designer Bob Ringwood.

— HEATHER BRAY



THE WINTER'S TALE
The Royal Ballet
119 minutes, plus extras
www.opusarte.com

Often regarded as one of Shakespeare's problem plays, *The Winter's Tale* may seem at first sight a puzzling choice for Christopher Wheeldon's second full-length narrative ballet, following his popular *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In fact, this is apparently the first time any choreographer has tackled the play. The ballet reunites *Alice's* creative team, whose talents are central to its overall success. Joby Talbot's score is highly effective in navigating the intertwined strands of tragedy and pastoral romance, while Bob Crowley's ravishing designs are a triumph, with the dark, threatening austerity of Leontes' court counterbalanced by the glowing warmth and colour of Bohemia, which has a stunning Tree of Life centrepiece. The dancing and acting are uniformly excellent, and Wheeldon's fluent choreography and sense of theatre are strongly reminiscent of the great English tradition of balletic drama. The standouts in a strong cast are Edward Watson's tortured Leontes, Lauren Cuthbertson's dignified Hermione and Zenaida Yanowsky's affecting Paulina. This DVD also includes insightful interviews with the creators and cast on the making of the ballet (in 2014) and its relationship to the text and music.

— HEATHER BRAY



THE CHOREOGRAPHER MATS EK
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What do we need to know before we look at a dance? The question springs to mind as the makers of dance, particularly in its more arcane expressions, increasingly attempt, often at the urging of funding bodies, to make their work more accessible. Thus we have elaborate program notes, artists' statements, and pre- and post-performance talks, all of varying degrees of helpfulness.

Some will argue that dance speaks for itself and needs no prefatory explanation. This, of course, is nonsense. Every dance form has its particular conventions. An at least passing acquaintance with these is extremely useful. Just think how silly a lot of theatrical dance must appear to the totally uninitiated, although dance can often look silly even when one does have some notion of what's supposed to be going on. It only takes a slight modulation of the conventions to reveal how fragile they are — as Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo has been profitably demonstrating for more than 40 years.

At the heart of the discussion about what audiences need to know is the assumption that a dance will necessarily have meaning. Audiences, so the reasoning goes, want to know what a dance is "about." The notion that a dance does not need to mean anything to claim artistic validity is nowadays highly suspect, although no less a choreographer than George Balanchine vehemently supported it. One shivers in horror at the thought of how a program-note writer of today might attempt to explain the "meaning" of a dance as poetically enigmatic as *Serenade*.

This current urge for dance to have meaning, to be relevant, could be just another example of its practitioners' fear that in comparison with other artists they are not taken seriously enough. Dance, possibly because it is so vigorously pursued as a popular social and recreational activity, has often struggled in its theatrical forms to win respectability as "high art."

Composers and visual artists, in contrast, clearly do not feel an equivalent obligation to imbue their work with readily discernible meaning. This does not imply that their art has no meaning. If that were the case why would we bother with it? That meaning, however, is often elusive and very personal. It cannot be adequately explained or communicated in any other terms but its own. We feel

it but we cannot say it. For this reason, the best critical writing does not attempt to explain or to define a work's meaning so much as to evoke, through a different medium, the experience of viewing it — which likely explains why so much critical writing falls short.

Asking what a dance is about is also different from asking what it may or may not mean. Narrative dance, which so often is sourced from literature, is a good example. If you've just returned from a performance of *Swan Lake*, it's possible to recount the bare outlines of the story — the "about" part — but an interlocutor who has never seen it would likely be unimpressed. If you did go further and share your personal sense of its meaning, you'd eventually find yourself lost for words. Ultimately, it has to be experienced.

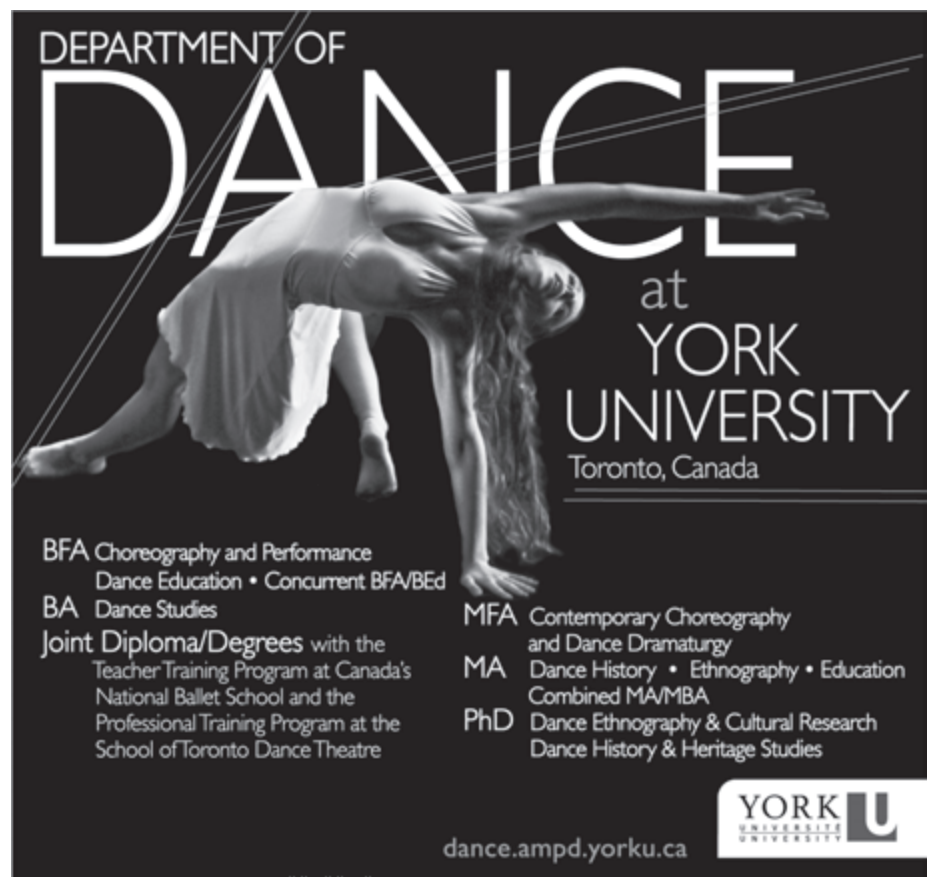
It is admirable for dance artists to push at the boundaries of what their art form can communicate, but sometimes their ambition goes beyond what dance can reasonably be expected to achieve. Different art forms engage their public in particular ways and are suited to different intentions. Music has enormous emotional potential, but is hopeless at narrative unless in support of sung text, at which point it is redefined as choral music or, when theatricalized, as opera.

Dance, which like the music that often accompanies it is not particularly good at communicating subtle narrative, finds various ways around the problem. Multimedia and inter-disciplinary endeavours do so by activating a number of different forms simultaneously to carry some of the narrative burden.

In the worst cases, explanatory notes can be little more than an apologia for a work that's so opaque you find yourself going back afterwards and re-reading them with exasperated incredulity. Notes can also be detrimental because they may direct and limit a viewer's personal, imaginative response.

Even sharing information about a choreographer's inspiration has its drawbacks, particularly if it is some obscure philosophical tract that few have ever heard of and even fewer have actually read. In many cases, the less an audience knows about what went on in a choreographer's mind while making a dance, the better.

Ultimately, people will form their own impression of a dance, one that is specific to each viewer and will often evolve through repeated viewing. Choreographers can write as many notes as they want, but if dance cannot deliver on its own terms it's all wasted ink. ▼



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INSIDE ED

Practical Academia

by Rebecca Karpus

The 21st-century university is no isolated ivory tower, and internship programs that get students out into the professional world are increasingly popular. Embodying this style of practical academia is University of Michigan's 21st Century Artists Internship program, which offers fine arts students the chance to work extensively and intimately with a professional performing arts company during the course of their studies.

Jim Leija, the University Musical Society's director of education and community engagement, says the internship aims to offer emerging artists the opportunity to develop artistically while gaining experience in practical areas within the arts such as administration, public relations and audience engagement. The program is specifically designed for undergraduate-level students, who Leija feels are still developing their artistic and theoretical philosophy and, therefore, are eager to soak up new information and influences.

The scope of the internship is broad, beginning with a five-week period over the summer where the students work with a dance company at their headquarters; in the program's first year, 2014, the two interns went to New York to the Trisha Brown Dance Company and Kyle Abraham/Abraham. In.Motion. In the fall, the students work back on campus in Ann Arbor as ambassador for their company. The program concludes with the companies performing as part of the University Musical Society's season.

To learn what goes into creating and maintaining a dance company, each intern engages in an array of activities. These range from watching rehearsals and interviewing the dancers, to blogging and giving talks to classes at the

university during and in preparation for their company's performances and master classes at the university.

The internship provides "real-world application in an academic frame," says Leija, "intellectualizing and communicating" what students learn in the studio. For example, Trisha Brown company intern Hillary Kooistra (a third-year student in the School of Music, Theatre and Dance's BFA dance program when her internship began) felt the company's rehearsal process enriched her ongoing research on the genealogy of dance, as they were rehearsing a variety of Brown's work created between 1979 to 2011. Kooistra's in-studio experience watching Brown's choreography being passed down through time appears just as valuable as a university dance history course, revealing the interrelationship between hands-on and academic learning. Closely observing a seasoned company's remount process also undoubtedly strengthens a young dancer's choreographic toolkit and rehearsal-directorship skills.

Rare for an arts internship, the dancers are each given a generous stipend to go toward the costs of the five-week period away from home. This was \$4,000 US the first year, increased to \$5,000 for 2015 when one internship for Hubbard Street Dance Chicago was offered. Since it is common for students and even graduates to take on internships for free, it is refreshing to see this level of funding.

This internship program strives to implement an engaged learning opportunity, acknowledging that sitting behind a desk can be effectively balanced with working in the field. Lending the students a deeper understanding of creative, practical and scholarly skills, the internship extends into the sharing of knowledge back on campus, including organizing workshops and pre-show talks. Disseminating their newly discovered ideas, the interns come "full circle" and finish their course credit. ▼

Rebecca Karpus, in Simon Fraser University's Comparative Media Arts master's program, wrote "Practical Academia" while on a practicum with Dance International magazine.

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by Kaija Pepper

Ballet BC closed its season in May with two premieres inspired by the iconic *Rite of Spring* — *Rite* by artistic director Emily Molnar and *Consagración* by Spanish choreographer Gustavo Ramírez Sansano.

In *Rite*, for 18 dancers, Molnar evoked a few well-known poses (including pigeon toes) from Nijinsky's choreography for the landmark original, which today carry much cultural meaning. For anyone with even a little knowledge of dance history, the stylized poses evoke the work and its infamous 1913 premiere that exploded into an art-world riot of boos and catcalls. Those echoes of the past — familiar from archival photos or the Millicent Hodson/Kenneth Archer reconstruction — brought depth to this *Rite* in the mere shape of an open, unballetic hand. Molnar's use of powerful shoulders and weighted lower bodies grew organically from the few "quoted" poses.

Her collaborators chose not to make historical cultural references, or at least no obvious ones, though the staging was impressive on its own terms. Designer Omer Arbel created a stark white space, a spray of white branches hanging from the flies and a (barely used) white extension at the front of the stage, while costume designer Kate Burrows put the dancers in sleek black bodysuits and black socks. There was also an ornate, face-concealing head-dress on a figure called A Shadow that

somewhat eccentrically evoked a creature from outer space. The score by musician Jeremy Schmidt added a loud, sometimes cacophonous, urban energy.

Dancer Emily Chessa — a small force of nature in her second season with Ballet BC — cut through to the heart of the piece with her precise, creamy spins and caramel melts to the ground. Even her tetchy jerks and jitters (these were part of the choreography, too) carried an innate sense of proportion and line that helped keep the work on the formal scale necessary for the large Queen Elizabeth Theatre where Ballet BC has its home season.

It was lovely, after intermission, to hear the evocative opening chords of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* at the start of Sansano's *Consagración* (translated as devotion or consecration in my Spanish dictionary). Yet this rite, like Molnar's, had its own mysterious reason for being. The seven men and seven women, dressed alike (by Burrows) in cream-coloured shifts and socks, are given a series of duets, same-sex and male-female, that seem to be child-like explorations of their partner.

The 605 Collective's *The Sensationalists*, at the intimate Vancouver East Cultural Centre the following week, was presented on an altogether smaller, more informal scale, involving audience participation. Most of us milled about onstage with the dancers (605 co-founders Lisa Gelley and Josh Martin, plus Laura Avery, Walter

Kubanek, Lexi Vajda and Jane Osborne), while others watched from balcony seats. Those of us participating learned a small, flowing movement sequence; were part of a sculptural group tableau that held a dancer in place high up against the back wall; and were shuffled around in various circle and line formations. Everything was so gently directed by the professional performers (with a theatre director, Maiko Bae Yamamoto, part of the creation team) that the movement seemed to form spontaneously. Two friends who chose the balcony view both told me they enjoyed the way large group scenarios magically formed.

Near the end, the dancers stood downstage facing the audience and the house lights went up, revealing the empty orchestra seats and those in the balcony filled with people. Until then, I'd forgotten we were part of a spectacle, and had been happily, unselfconsciously, roaming about. Crouching down for a minute, resting against the back wall (others also sat at various times throughout; 50 minutes is a long time to stand), I pondered the scene, enjoying this rare view from the other side of the fourth wall.

For the 15-minute finale, we were directed to our seats, and the dancers took their turn in the limelight without us, in the same easy flow of movement established earlier. My sources in the balcony — and me, too — found this part an anticlimax: too predictable, perhaps.

Involving a little participation, in an even smaller setting, Simon Fraser University MFA student Emmalena Fredriksson positioned dance and dancers as art objects at the Audain Gallery. In the pristine white space, a changing roster of dancers presented solos or duets in their own little corner or room, over about five hours each day from May 21 to 23. Spectators came and went, chatting and browsing, as they do in a gallery. As with *The Sensationalists*, the dancers were friendly, without the distant, formal persona of being "on" in performance, a convention that can seem pretentious up close. With a large picture window opening out onto a busy downtown street, *Dance Work / Work Dance* gave passersby an intriguing glimpse of dance as visual art. ▼

The last few months of the season blurred with activity as local dance companies pulled out all the stops in their final shows. Winnipeg's Gearshifting Performance Works, founded in 2000 by artistic director Jolene Bailie, presented *Myriad Beings* at the Gas Station Arts Centre in April. The triple bill included two group works inspired by the company's recent tour to Xi'an and Beijing, China, and was held in conjunction with visual artist Wanda Koop's exhibition *Transformation of Canadian Landscape Art: Inside and Outside of Being*.

After several recent forays into surrealism, Bailie's latest creations suggest she has returned to her choreographic roots. Both abstract works — *Inner Being* and *Altered Aspects* — feature razor-sharp angular movement, purity of line and a clearly honed artistic vision. However, the more pedestrian quartet *Being Outer*, including a cameo appearance of a maniacally laughing Bailie, proved overly cryptic, with dancers offering such bon mots as "Has anyone seen my sock?"

Gearshifting presented *Bill Evans, 75!*, at the same theatre the following month. The mixed bill celebrated the 75th birthday of the Seattle, Washington-based Evans, who enthralled with several of his signature tap solos and in a contemporary dance duet, *See You Around*, partnered with Bailie.

Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers wrapped up its golden anniversary season with the premiere of artistic director Brent Lott's *For the Turnstiles*. The full-length show presented in May at the Gas Station Arts Centre featured the seven-member

company, as well as a live four-piece band. Lott's production re-imagines Canadian pop icon Neil Young's 1974 seminal album *On the Beach*, with eight duets, quartets and a final septet organized in two parts as Side A and Side B. Local visual artist jaymez's grainy black-and-white videos, projected onto wheeled screens evoking sailing, added to the show's deliciously grungy gestalt, as did Tony Chestnut's costume design of faded jeans and white T-shirts.

In one of the show's most effective solos, *Rope Burn Blues*, Ali Robson gamely navigates her way through bulky battle ropes shaken from side to side like waving sheaves of wheat. Another solo, *Vampire Alberta Blues*, featured Natasha Torres-Garner's percussive shockwave movement as she frantically tries to free herself from ropes tangled about her neck. Lott's choreography is at its best during these more intimate solos; the larger ensembles often felt underdeveloped.

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet capped its 75th season with the company premiere of John Alayne's *The Faerie Queen*. Inspired by Purcell's opera of the same name, as well as Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Montreal-based choreographer's "fantasy in dance" (choreographed for Ballet BC in 2000 during Alayne's reign as director) featured a chamber company of 14 who executed the intricate choreography with detailed precision.

Soloist Sophia Lee as mischievous wood sprite Puck commanded the narrative ballet, and principal Liang Xing likewise created a majestic Oberon. His final pas de deux with second soloist Sarah Davey's

Titania showed off his exquisite lines as well as pliant partnering skills.

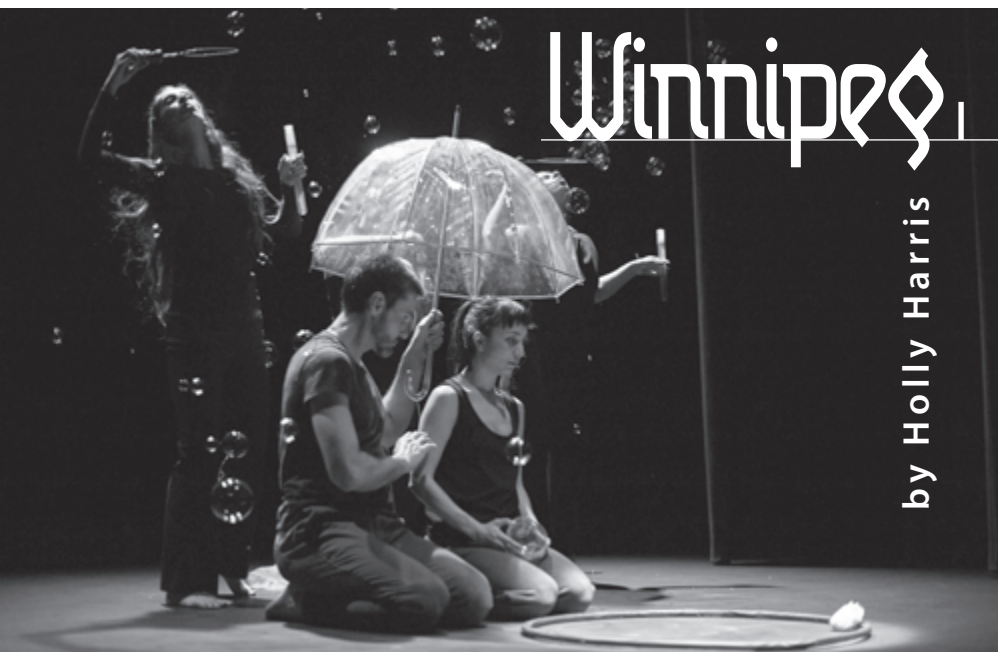
Finally, Peter Quanz's Q Dance performed its sole show of the season May 10-12, featuring a baker's dozen dancers culled (mostly) from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. The company moved to the more spacious Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre after selling out its run last year held at the Gas Station Arts Centre.

Also for the first time, five-year-old Q Dance featured a guest choreographer. American artist Gabrielle Lamb's premiere of *Weft* featured seven dancers clad in Anne Armit's white jumpsuits and white or red socks in a kaleidoscopic series of gestural solos, duets, trios and quartets morphing into the larger ensemble. One of the work's most poetic images is when Yosuke Mino pulls a long red ribbon across the stage before streaming it through his fingers, his sense of wonder palpable.

Another treat was seeing guest artists Rebecca King (soloist, Finnish National Ballet) and Amar Ramasar (principal, New York City Ballet) perform Quanz's *Blushing*, which they had premiered at the Youth America Grand Prix's California gala in 2014. Both high-calibre artists held nothing back during the short duet set to Lana Del Rey's *Young and Beautiful*, their joyful performance grounded by an unflinching trust. The pair performed on opening night only before leaving to present the work's European premiere in Germany.

The remount of *Untitled* (2013), in which a bleak society both supports and destroys its individual members, was followed by the closer, *Pop, Bubble, Fizz!* Here, pristine ballerinas holding flutes of champagne grow increasingly tipsy as they cartwheel across the stage or bat at their own painted, art deco-styled tutus designed by Armit. The men, dressed in jewel-toned bodysuits, similarly ham around, fashioning their springy, disc-like hats into ducktails and bonnets that left the audience in stitches.

Through its burgeoning success, Q Dance now faces a paradox. By choosing larger and more comfortable venues, what the company gains in slicker production values and an ability to accommodate a growing audience it loses in the intimacy that has been one of its hallmarks. Fortunately, the company is also defined by an ability to reinvent itself and pull out new surprises from its tickle trunk each year. ▼



Winnipeg

by Holly Harris



Toronto

by Michael Crabb

Hammond, with his long-time affection for BJM and admiration for the artistic transformation it has undergone during Robitaille's 16-year leadership — still the same popular sizzle but with added choreographic substance — decided to take the risk. He would probably have preferred to have a smaller venue at his disposal than the 3,200-seat Sony Centre — it was less than half sold — but artistically the gamble was worth it; and to draw more than a thousand people to a contemporary dance show is no mean achievement. With positive word of mouth and excellent press coverage, it should be much easier for Hammond to attract a bigger audience the next time he brings the troupe to town.

In terms of drawing an audience it helps, of course, if the attraction has special appeal to a particular market segment. This has been key to the success of local impresario Svetlana Dvoretzkaia. Her high-quality offerings of music, theatre and dance often feature artists from her Russian homeland, and Dvoretzkaia is very good at activating her expatriate community. Thus, for example, there was much Russian to be heard around a very well populated Sony Centre when St. Petersburg's Eifman Ballet paid its second visit to Toronto with the namesake choreographer's *Anna Karenina*.

The Russian-Canadians' brand loyalty, however, seems blinkered. While they'll come out for Eifman, the Mariinsky or Bolshoi, or even for one of those grandiosely titled but artistically dubious touring troupes such as the Russian National Ballet Theatre that toured locally this past spring, they're not a major constituent of our own National Ballet of Canada's audience. It's probably the lingering prejudice that if it's not Russian, it can't really be ballet. Mind you, the National Ballet has three genuine Russian-born leading dancers, former Bolshoi star Svetlana Lunkina, recently hired principal Jurgita Dronina and newly promoted principal Elena Lobsanova — though it should be noted that the latter is Canadian-raised and trained.

If the Russian audience had deigned in significant numbers to attend the National Ballet of Canada's June 12 performance

of *The Sleeping Beauty*, they'd have witnessed Lunkina's dazzling debut in Rudolf Nureyev's idiosyncratic but effective staging of the 125-year-old Petipa classic. Lunkina is every inch a Bolshoi ballerina, blessed with natural authority, poetically expressive arms and the intelligence to give Princess Aurora's passage from teenage innocence to confident young adulthood genuine dramatic heft. And the way she uses her eyes!

Her partner for the occasion was then corps member, now first soloist Francesco Gabriele Frola, making his own debut as Prince Florimund. Frola had already charmed audiences in November 2014 in his debut as Lescaut in Kenneth MacMillan's *Manon*. Shortly after, he made another impressive debut in the title role of John Neumeier's *Nijinsky*. Portraying the prince in a 19th-century classic is, however, a very different challenge, yet one that the boyish-looking Frola surmounted with great success. His partnering was secure and attentive. His solos — and Nureyev, who of course fashioned *The Sleeping Beauty* to give himself due prominence, assigns the prince more of them than most versions — were danced with tremendous verve. More than that, Frola projected an aura of princely entitlement that verged, not by any means unsuitably, on arrogance.

It was a very different interpretation from that of Harrison James, another corps member who, like Frola, has leaptfrogged second soloist to attain first soloist rank in the current season. Originally, James was only down to understudy Prince Florimund, but, as the National Ballet scrambled to adjust to a spate of injuries he found himself not only called into action, but cast to partner veteran ballerina Greta Hodgkinson in the coveted opening night spot.

James' characteristic style places a priority on stylistic purity and elegance. There's nothing showy or affected about his dancing. If anything it has the modest, understated quality that once characterized the house style at Covent Garden. While it may not generate the same visceral excitement as Frola's more extroverted approach, it pays off in dramatic nuance and natural expressiveness. James' dancing has that rare quality of authenticity.

Under normal circumstances, neither Frola nor James would have been dancing such a significant principal role at this stage in their careers, but both proved more than equal to the challenge. ▼

After almost a decade's absence, Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal made a triumphant return to Toronto in late May, earning itself an enthusiastic standing ovation and very positive media coverage. Artistic director Louis Robitaille was understandably delighted. So, too, was Mark Hammond, director of programming of the cavernous Sony Centre where the company performed for just one night. The reason for the long absence was, as Robitaille explained, quite simple: the company, also known by the acronym BJM, only performs where someone is willing to present it. "Frankly," says Robitaille, "it's much easier to tour in Europe where presenters have money than here in Canada. It's unfortunate, but a reality."

BJM, founded in 1972, was already making an international name for itself before its first visit to Toronto seven years later. Hammond, then in his early days as an arts manager, was the local part of the presenting team that made it happen. The company became a regular visitor through the 1980s, but, although often featured in Harbourfront Centre's corporate-sponsored dance series during the 1990s, appearances became less frequent and when its regular venue, the Premiere (now Fleck) Dance Theatre, effectively became a pay-to-play stage, BJM's visits ceased. It then became a waiting game to see if any other Toronto presenter would step up to the plate.

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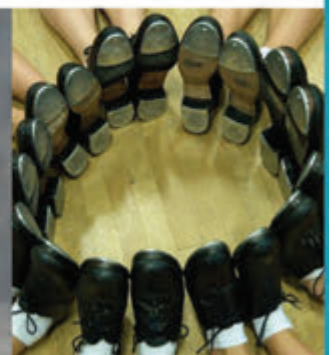
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Montreal

by Linde Howe-Beck

Boris Eifman's blitzkrieg ballet, *Anna Karenina*, is a triumph on many levels. Hugely melodramatic and riveting, it keeps spectators on the edges of their seats as they witness the self-destruction of the heroine created by Russian author Leo Tolstoy more than 100 years ago. In fact, though spectators may feel viscerally assaulted by the driving dynamics that roil to the climax, Eifman's *Anna* is so impressive it deserves to be seen as a 21st-century ballet classic.

Russia's Eifman Ballet was founded in 1977. Those were Soviet times and difficult for Eifman, who even then insisted on marching to his own beat. Like his heroine Anna, he followed his passion, breaking ballet and contemporary dance rules despite obstacles. Unlike her, he achieved his desire, establishing the choreographic independence that has resulted in today's 60-member company with its own state-supported centre in St. Petersburg.

Eifman is a master storyteller, describing human agony with unforgettable gesture and imagery. *Anna Karenina* is well-dressed and magnificently performed by a host of young actor-dancers boasting exquisite line, wide open chests, arms that seem twice as long as normal and backs that challenge the flexibility of contortionists. Picture this: a prima ballerina on pointe in a wide plié arches backward until her hair touches the floor. After this, the numerous 180-degree extensions looked ordinary.

This complex work is a pure and purposeful spectacle with all elements ideally serving the drama. *Anna's* lighting was stark sometimes, and abrupt changes abounded; music was a sumptuous Tchaikovsky collage.

Discarding her husband and child, Anna (Maria Abashova) succumbed to all-consuming lust, drugs and debauchery as exemplified in a sensation-filled fire and brimstone scene in which seemingly dismembered arms and legs waved like an ominous underwater forest. The ending was powerful: driven to suicide as if to a battlefield, Anna ends her life surrounded by a sea of glowering, uniformed soldiers.



After presenting *Anna Karenina* on its subscription series in April, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal closed its 2014-2015 series a month later, also at Place des Arts, with a world premiere by German choreographer Stephan Thoss. A mere 90 minutes in length, *Death and the Maiden* played as a full-evening ballet. Despite its brevity, every second was charged with explosive layers of subtle — and not-so-subtle — suggestion, impossible to decipher in one viewing.

Having given two previous works to Les Grands, Thoss has taken the pulse of the Montreal public and company well and knows they appreciate his introspective brand of darkness and depth. His *Death and the Maiden* is a good ballet that takes no prisoners. It is an excellent addition to Les Grands' repertoire.

Most obviously, the ballet is about the dualities that are part of human existence, like life and death. On the surface, ferocity seems more apparent than calm. Predatory figures cavort frenetically in a black-on-black environment peppered with props that reveal ever-expanding details of the characters' interior landscapes — huge tables, doorways or frames to peer through, walk through

or be pursued by, mirror-lined suitcases for the Maiden's journey through Life (her travels manipulated by the presence of Death). Movements are raw, angular, acrobatic, often ugly.

The Maiden's gestures are only slightly less so. The pastiche of mainly contemporary music that echoes the throb and angle of the movement changes abruptly in the final moments when the same gestures are set to Franz Schubert's Romantic score from which the ballet took its name. The Schubert arrives like a cleansing breath, sweeping much of the tension away, and we realize how much more difficult the contemporary music made watching such gut-knotting angst.

Elsewhere, we had ballet in a boxing ring. *Rocco*, a clever fusion of boxing rituals and contemporary ballet, was shown at the Agora de la danse earlier in the quarter by the Dutch company ICKamsterdam. Conceived by co-artistic directors Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten, *Rocco* involved four male dancers, a boxing ring, a shaft of light standing in for a referee, a whole lot of arch ballet moves and considerably fewer from boxing.

The piece began with two black-clad, Mickey Mouse-masked figures leaping down the aisles to the ring where two wimpy-looking boxers pawed the floor within the ropes, fingers fluttering behind their backs — a reference to fluffy tutus? — as bells rang three-minute rounds. After an interval dominated by a curvaceous cigarette/candy vendor in female drag, the Mickeys climbed into the ring and removed their masks to reveal executioner-style hoods, which they also discarded. Finally, bare-chested, the men exchanged jabs and even landed a few serious-looking right hooks.

Rocco begged to be believed, but despite its virtuosity — the dancers were convincing ballet technicians — it left me bewildered. Multiple attempts to comprehend the Mickey and swan references, among others, failed. Despite winning Amsterdam's 2012 Golden Swan award for most impressive dance production, the *Rocco* I saw was merely a curiosity. ▼

Not until the seventh program of the San Francisco Ballet subscription season did we see a new work that got people talking and even arguing — a rare phenomenon for this company. The agent of all this fuss was reliably unpredictable resident choreographer Yuri Possokhov, who, on April 10, introduced his *Swimmer* to the War Memorial Opera House. The second and final premiere of the season, this was a multimedia wallow, adapted from John Cheever's 11-page story, *The Swimmer* (the movie version starred Burt Lancaster).

That allegorical tale about a man who swims home in a series of suburban pools only to confront his own failure as a human being at first does not seem likely choreographic material. And Possokhov set himself an even more difficult task when he laced the ballet with his own impressions of the American popular culture he absorbed while growing up in the Soviet Union, and then steeped it all in an audio-visual bath.

Possokhov's collaborators included scenic designer Alexander V. Nichols, costume designer Mark Zappone, lighting designer David Finn and, above all, video designer Kate Duhamel. They recreated that series of pools in a welter of theatrical legerdemain. Possokhov follows the unnamed protagonist (Taras Domitro at the opening; Joseph Walsh at later performances) as he departs on his journey to self-knowledge. Before that, the choreographer traces the man's career through its cozy domestic period, a Hollywood adventure with a pair of women in red sequins, a pool party, three more women and a group of boarding school lads (intended, the program says, to reference J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*). Somewhere in there, we get a tribute to Edward Hopper's painting *Nighthawks*.

Swimmer is only 41 minutes in length, but, if one resists all the multimedia trappings, it's a long way to the denouement. Much of the piece requires the aid of program notes. Without them, I would not have identified a lolling duet for Maria Kochetkova and Tiit Helimets as an homage to Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. A squad of formally dressed Hollywood swains is awfully clunky. And there's a mass ensemble performing what resembles the frug or pony or some other ancient American pop dance.

Whatever *Swimmer* may be it is not a bore, and you keep watching, in thrall to Possokhov's ambitiousness. Some of the piece hits home: the protagonist enjoys breakfast with a cartoon cutout family. Possokhov holds your attention, even if you're not up on your cultural allusions; although it was popular in the Soviet Union, does anyone still read Jack London's *Martin Eden* in the United States?

Although the younger crowd was thrilled by the visual spectacle, I felt all those trappings ultimately robbed the work of its emotional centre, especially in the final swim sequence, where the splendid Domitro twists in emotional anguish and dives into the abyss. And old records by gravel-voiced Tom Waits are a more suitable musical accompaniment than Shinji Eshima's commissioned score, which seemed to burst with a Hollywood climax every three minutes.

Meanwhile, across the bay at the Paramount Theatre, Oakland Ballet threw itself a 50th anniversary party on May 23, assembling an array of tributes to celebrate a company that, in its heyday (1976-2000) was a major player on the international ballet scene thanks to founding artistic director Ronn Guidi's passion for reconstructing the great American dance classics and the best creations of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, including the first American production of Nijinska's *Les Noces*.

The current artistic director, Graham Lustig, staged a snappy show, yet the excerpts from the classic material sat uneasily on the shoulders of the current dancers. But Lustig had a brainstorm: he commissioned six short ballets from choreographers whom Guidi championed early in their careers and have since gone on to relative fame and fortune. What a



Ironically, *Swimmer* played on a program that also included that most austere of black-and-white masterpieces, Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments*.

The season concluded with a revival of Helgi Tomasson's *Romeo and Juliet* that fielded no less than six pairs of lovers. Two debutants stood out: Mathilde Froustey lent her first Juliet a sparkling technique that did not preclude vulnerability, and Carlo Di Lanno, this year's Erik Bruhn Prize winner, offered a debut Romeo steeped in courtliness and adolescent fire.

treat to catch premieres from Val Caniparoli, Amy Seiwert, Michael Lowe, Betsy Erickson and Robert Moses, as well as revivals from Alonzo King and Carlos Carvajal. Lustig contributed his own group effort.

This all added up to quite a hunk of birthday cake. Seiwert and Caniparoli were typically playful, while King, Moses and Erickson were romantic after a fashion. On more congenial artistic grounds here, the young dancers' energy suggested there may be a future for the company. ▼

American Ballet Theatre's now-annual season at the Metropolitan Opera House was programmed with repertory celebrating the company's 75th anniversary. The Met has become the venue most readily associated with the company, but, as the late Clive Barnes notes in *American Masters — American Ballet Theatre: A History*, the recent documentary by Ric Burns, the troupe designated by the U.S. Congress as America's National Ballet Company still has no permanent home theatre of its own.

As a performance venue, the vastness of the Met makes presenting some of the ballets that have become historically connected to what was initially called Ballet Theatre something of a challenge. In particular, the chamber-scaled works of Antony Tudor, a founding choreographer of ABT, are best showcased in more intimate surroundings. Undaunted, ABT presented Tudor's 1942 *Pillar of Fire* and his 1936 *Jardin aux Lilas* as part of its opening week this season. Both had moments of being lost on the Met's stage. In the case of *Pillar of Fire*, the settings by Robert Perdziola, which date from 2003 and are loosely based on Jo Mielziner's original scheme, look overly spread out and in pieces rather than appearing as a coherent surround.

In this sometimes awkward setting, however, Tudor's telling in spare but real ballet terms of a delicate narrative (inspired by a two-character poem with Biblical story echoes) had some fine interpretations from dancers, mating their performing acumen confidently to the ballet's accompaniment, Arnold Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*. Familiar from the time of the 2003 revival were Gillian Murphy and Marcelo Gomes as Hagar and the Young Man from the House Opposite; both were as resonant as in their initial outings. Making debuts in the same roles, Devon Teuscher and Cory Stearns took Tudor's dramatic and physical challenges and rendered them personally and strongly.

Rodeo, Agnes de Mille's 1942 cowboys and cowgirl narrative with its suggestions of open plains and skies (wonderfully revealed by Oliver Smith's evocative settings), which ABT acquired in 1950, spread out more comfortably on the Met's stage. In the key role of the unapologetic

cowgirl, Misty Copeland proved vivid and expressive as she tackled the role's feisty body language and comedic timing. Of the two casts I saw, the only misfire was that of James Whiteside, who performed the personable character of the Champion Roper like some goofy, disjointed Ichabod Crane.

To honour a classic work closely connected to ABT since its initial 1940 performances, the season offered Michel Fokine's 1909 *Les Sylphides*. Though in the parts made for its three featured women there were some impressive appearances (Hee Seo and Isabella Boylston especially), the central, lone male role proved a puzzle to the men. Fine-toned Joseph Gorak did best, but the choreographic details that make up this staging, for which no one in particular is credited in the program, have awkward oddities I don't recall seeing before in my nearly 50 years of watching the work; these prove more finicky than artfully effective.

The run sagged badly when ABT aimed to reclaim the investment, both financial and historical, that it made in 1997 when Lar Lubovitch created the troupe's first full-evening fully commissioned ballet, *Othello*. The hollow and often foolish looking display of dancing and gesturing over three strung-out acts gave its casts a workout,

but little more. Though George Tsypin's spare, glass-block-like set pieces have some visual impact, Elliot B. Goldenthal's bombastic, movie-music score is mostly tiresome.

Far more happily, there were some impressive performances of the company's reliable production of *Giselle*, staged by ABT artistic director Kevin McKenzie. Additionally, the ballet showcased the farewell performances of both Paloma Herrera, whose loving rendering of the title role I did get to see, and Xiomara Reyes, whose gala evening I was unable to attend.

Elsewhere, hoping to recapture the stirring showing of her recent ABT debut as *Giselle*, Natalia Osipova turned in an unforgettable portrayal, only to find herself injured onstage near the end of the final scene. Though she bravely managed to finish the performance, the rest of her appearances here this season were cancelled.

Mid-way through a run that continues as I file this copy, ABT unveiled the local premiere, following its world premiere in Costa Mesa, California, last March, of *The Sleeping Beauty*, the fourth in the company's history. Having seen every so-called full-length work that ABT has given since its landmark four-act *Swan Lake* in 1967, it's safe to say that this effort, overseen by ABT artist in residence Alexei Ratmansky, is the finest to date.

Ratmansky has taken the daring step of stating in the credits "choreography by Marius Petipa," eschewing the usual "after-Petipa" modification. The three-act-plus-prologue production has mostly handsome, often impressive settings and generally effective costuming by Richard Hudson, who's looked primarily to Léon Bakst's scheme for the lavish 1921 Ballets Russes restaging of the Tchaikovsky masterpiece in London, where it was called *The Sleeping Princess*.

Space does not permit a detailed assessment of the production's inspired and fresh choreographic elements or of the numerous fine appearances by ABT's dancers in this key ballet-féerie from imperial Russia. Suffice it to say that, at 75, the company has an important staging of a key classic ballet, one that may well sustain ABT's repertory for years to come. ▼



NEW YORK I
by Robert Greskovic

Marcelo Gomes and Gillian Murphy of American Ballet Theatre in Antony Tudor's *Pillar of Fire*
Photo: Marty Sohl



by Justine Bayod Espoz

Málaga

Anyone who's anyone in the flamenco scene in Málaga, Spain, knows Paco Roji. In 2003, Roji embarked on an ambitious journey to create an urban cultural space dedicated entirely to flamenco and dance. He called it Flamenka, and within its walls Roji organized flamenco-themed shows and art exhibitions, and stocked a small store with flamenco clothing, shoes, jewelry, music, books and instruments. Between 2011 and 2013, Roji also researched and co-authored three books about a handful of the most iconic flamenco artists from Málaga, his hometown.

The first book, *Al compás de la vida*, is about dancer José Losada Santiago — known by the stage name Carrete — as told in his own words through a series of selected vignettes collected in interviews conducted by Roji and journalist Francis Marmol. The next, *La Repompa de Málaga* — a biography of singer Enriqueta Reyes Porras, whose tragic death at the age of 21 in 1959 cut short a promising career — garnered Roji and partners Ramón Soler Díaz and Paco Fernández the 2012 Flamenco Hoy Prize. The publication of Roji's most recent book in 2013 (a second

collaboration with Díaz), *La Cañeta de Málaga / José Salazar / La Pirula* — about the three flamenco singers in the title — came little more than a year after the economic crisis in Spain forced him to close Flamenka.

Fighting disillusionment, Roji remained confident in his mission to chronicle and present flamenco in Málaga. He regularly leads flamenco presentations at local schools, participates in documentary film projects, produces performances in a diverse array of locations — from restaurants to theatres — and takes groups on a flamenco tour of Málaga. His latest project has been to curate the archival photography

exhibition *Málaga al baile (Málaga Dancing)*, commissioned by the 2015 Málaga Flamenco Biennial. The exhibition opened last March at the provincial government building, moving in May to the Pepa Flores Professional Conservatory of Dance.

Roji spent years scouring public archives for historical material, scanning all the photographs he could find. He also knocked on the doors of many local families who had artists in their lineage. His efforts have produced a valuable personal archive that served as the exhibition's primary source.

The exhibition's varied mix of performance, studio and candid photos give an excellent idea of flamenco's duality: a traditional art form that can be spontaneously performed in a patio or on the street amongst friends — even in a bathing suit standing in the surf at a beach in Torremolinos, as in one photo from the 1960s — and as a professional art form that reaches its maximum potential on a stage.

Although movement is implied in many of the photos, it is only in a select few that we see action. This is likely due to the timeframe covered by the exhibition — 1830 to 1960, which suggests two significant restrictions. First, the photo quality

and ability to cleanly catch dancers in motion is nothing like what we would expect from contemporary dance photography. Second, none of Málaga's dancers who've become world famous throughout the 21st century — people like Rocío Molina or La Lupi — appear. *Málaga al baile* is not about searching through the faces to see who you recognize, but about discovering dancers you don't know but who left their mark all the same.

The exhibition opens with postcards of Pepita Durán, the first flamenco dancer from Málaga for whom Roji has found any historical evidence. Born in 1830, Durán lived during the proto-flamenco period. It is between the mid- to late-19th century that flamenco begins to develop into its own genre of Spanish dance, and as we can see in Durán's postcards and some of the photographs of her contemporaries, neither the costumes nor the movement and positioning were quite what we've ultimately come to consider flamenco.

Two beautiful studio shots introduce Trinidad Huertas, La Cuenca. By the 1880s, she was famous for two things: dancing dressed as a man and being the first to dance soleares, a style of flamenco with the rhythmic footwork that is now emblematic of all flamenco dance.

One posed photo from the 1940s is particularly striking. We see aspects of costuming that have become commonplace — the polka dot print fabrics, the vest and Cordovan hat — and the subject of the photo, a boy no older than nine or 10, is smoking a cigarette. The photo's caption reveals that this precocious young man is Pepito Vargas, a Málaga legend, who passed away on March 1, 2015, the morning after celebrating his 76th birthday — just six days before the exhibition opened. Vargas danced with the great Carmen Amaya and passed on his knowledge to his nephew, the phenomenal young dancer Adrian Santana, but before all that, he performed in his teens as a member of the neighbourhood group Los Vargas, which included La Repompa and Carrete, among others.

Málaga al baile is a lovingly crafted exhibition that reminds viewers of how Málaga and its people have changed, and also about what remains the same and merits preservation. ▼

MODENA & PARMA



by Silvia Poletti

On the Emiliaway, Modena is only 50 kilometres away from Parma. Both are lovely cities, where glorious monuments adorn downtown with precious masterpieces. They both have wonderful theatres famous all over the world for their artistic tradition set primarily on melodrama. Teatro Comunale Luciano Pavarotti in Modena was named after the late opera star; Teatro Regio in Parma is considered Giuseppe Verdi's home. But dance is loved as well, and both theatres present some of the most interesting ballet seasons in Italy. Recently, in the space of a few days, two of the greatest ballerinas of their generation performed there.

For 50-year-old Sylvie Guillem, the performance in Modena marked the beginning of the end: she premiered *Life in Progress*, the first step of the farewell season she is doing around the world. Alessandra Ferri, on the other hand, celebrated her comeback at the age of 52 with *Trio Concert Dance* in Parma. Both performances were overwhelming, though for different reasons.

Life in Progress was the perfect expression of Guillem's approach to dance, so often cerebral, but not detached; rather, Guillem's dance throbs with the intense activity of her mind, expressed by the nervous, tense muscles, carved to be functional, not prettily exposed. It is this incredibly strong and thin muscular knot that reveals the emotional inquietude of a dancer in search of integrity as an artist and a woman.

The two creations by her collaborators Russell Maliphant (*Here and After*) and Akram Khan (*Techné*) in different ways featured Guillem's incredible accomplishment in controlling tensions, dynamics and fluidity of movements. The fusion of different techniques from several cultures and disciplines that characterize Maliphant's style — from tai chi to kendo — was a perfect blend of the fluent movements shaped by Guillem and her partner Emanuela Montanari from La Scala, exalting the harmonious beauty of human beings in motion.

Khan's solo drove Guillem through erratic, mercurial dynamics in a strange dialogue between the dancer and a self-propelled spotlight illuminating the circular space in which she moved. Guillem seems to be trying to win a battle against the witty light machine with her imperative and pleading gestures. But the choreographer's message as described in the program (the difficulty of connection in the virtual era) appeared, above all, a pretext for creating an energetic and fierce piece for Guillem.

In *Bye*, created for Guillem by Mats Ek in 2011, tenderness, amazement, fear and curiosity emerged. At the beginning, Guillem's eyes — filmed live, and projected on a screen in close-up — are full of curiosity and worry. Guillem came in and out, escaped and took shelter, through a door that expelled and subsequently swallowed her. In a simple yellow skirt and boots, Guillem presents not a glamorous ballerina, but a woman who shows her inner feelings through her arched back or through rolling on

the ground, or by childish gestures of hands wandering on her nose. Ek creeps into the intimate folds and gives us a portrait of Guillem without pretence. The touching final moment, when she walks away from us through a crowd of common people, slipping back into ordinary life, is full of poetry.

On her part, Alessandra Ferri has been, above all, a breathtaking dance-actress deeply involved in dramas created by celebrated choreographers. After seven sabbatical years, Ferri has decided to test new artistic paths, "for the passion of dancing who I, as an artist and a woman, am now." Last year, her performance as Léa in Martha Clarke's *Cheri* proved how her artistry is still at the highest level.

In *Trio Concert Dance*, created with pianist Bruce Levingston and with American Ballet Theatre star Herman Cornejo, with whom Ferri has established a truly alchemic partnership, the ballerina danced alone or with Cornejo in new work from international choreographers set to piano music. The show is conceived with a large range of styles in order to celebrate the famous Balanchine phrase, "to see the music, to hear the dance," although at the end the most important factor seemed to be the emotions dancers were able to convey on the wave of the music.

The dancing was sombre, refined, essential, but always with feelings on the edge. In Maliphant's *Entwine*, to Philip Glass' *Metamorphosis II*, the music's unique legatos become the visualisation of a lingering, sensual relationship between the dancers; in Demis Volpi's *Flair*, Ferri moves her flexible and sinuous body on pointe in a large range of dynamics, leaning on Cornejo's chest. The sensual, smooth moods culminated in the famous excerpt from Angelin Preljocaj's *Le Parc*, set to Mozart. The amorous abandon of two lovers consumed by passion is developed through caresses and whirling twists until the ballerina takes flight, as they kiss on the mouth while Cornejo spins her round.

Alessandra Ferri's future projects with Wayne McGregor, Lar Lubovitch and John Neumeier promise that she is going to stir our emotions with her work for a long time to come. Let's hope Sylvie Guillem, too, will find her way to come back to the stage one day. ▼



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The *Balletboys*, a documentary produced by Norwegian filmmaker Kenneth Elvebakk, has had a fantastic reception in many countries, and received the prize for best reportage at Montreal's International Festival of Films on Art. It is the story of three Norwegian boys — Syvert Lorenz Garcia, Lukas Bjørneboe Brændsrød and Torgeir Lund — who have chosen ballet instead of traditional boys' sports. That three young dancers are being exposed this way is quite exceptional if one looks back at dance in Norwegian history.

Art and culture, including theatrical dance, entered society much later than they did for our neighbours, the Swedes and Danes, who have around 250 years of continuous tradition with both ballet and opera. In Stockholm, the first opera house was built in 1782 and in Copenhagen 1748; the houses that are still in use were erected in 1898 and 1874. In contrast, the first house built for ballet and opera in Norway opened in 2008. Also, Norway was under Danish lordship for 350 years, and after that we spent nearly 100 years under Sweden's control. Norway only became a sovereign state in 1905. We had no kings and no courts, and the population had sufficient struggles to just survive as peasants. This is something we can see reflected in our architecture: there are

no castles, no impressive buildings or housing, no grand ministries. Any occupation within the arts was looked upon with superstition. In Denmark, if a boy was accepted at the Royal Danish Ballet School, it was considered impressive; in Norway, it was the contrary. So when a film about three brave youngsters is shown in cinemas all over the country, and sold by now to 16 other countries, we can feel proud about the development of ballet here.

Far north of the Arctic Circle in the city of Hammerfest, Solveig Leinan-Hermo has been running her company Stellaris DanceTheatre for 35 years. That is impressive in itself, but if the south of Norway has never been too concerned about dance and ballet, life in dance has been even tougher up there. The Germans burned down that area of Norway before they surrendered at the end of the Second World War. The living has been tough, and fishing and reindeer herding have been the main sources of income. In this kind of environment, dance became exotic.

Against all odds, Leinan-Hermo has been able to build a company and cooperate with artists from the whole Barents region (Russia, Sweden, Finland and Norway), as well as Latvia. The company's anniversary year has been busy, including tours around Norway and to Sweden, Finland, Russia and New Zealand.

Nature has always been a strong source of inspiration for Leinan-Hermo, which I believe comes naturally since it is all around her. But, in one of her latest works, *Whispers — by the Pearly Gates*, she looks at Alzheimer's disease. In another work, *Ocean Antics*, a playful family show, the topic is the balance of life in the sea as a resource for humans and the sea life itself. One can only congratulate both the company and its director, who has had the stamina to keep going for so many years.

In May, the Norwegian National Ballet premiered a new full-length version of *Carmen*. Britain's Liam Scarlett got the assignment, his first three-act choreography. He had incredibly good help from Martin Yates, who is responsible for the excellent musical arrangement of George Bizet's score. Yates also conducted the performance, and the connection between stage and pit was of the highest quality. The scenography and costume design by Jon Bausor was also a strong asset.

Of course, the work's success had a lot to do with the way Scarlett approached the task. He follows the story of *Carmen* quite closely. A deep red, lacey front curtain indicated that the audience could expect a dramatic and tragic experience. When the curtain was raised, the main focus went to Melissa Hough as *Carmen*, sitting with her shoulders bare, a deck of cards in her hands. She looked gorgeous and dangerous, exuding a strong sensuality.

In the second scene, the walls were turned around and we were inside the big halls of a factory. Kaloyan Boyadjiev, as Don José, had short, sharp movements in the beginning, which showed him being a correct soldier. *Carmen* and the women factory workers were given choreography with a low centre of gravity, effectively conveying their rough, working-class status. When the pas de deux start coming, the movement is in a more traditional classical ballet style.

Aarne Kristian Ruutu, as Escamillo, did the very best out of his provocative material, which featured his hips and abdomen; Scarlett chose to go a little over the top with the choreography for both him and the Toreadors.

All in all, Scarlett has created a lot of great dancing and many strong pas de deux — and definitely succeeded in telling this story through dance. ▼

The last premiere of the Royal Danish Ballet spring season, *Take Four*, was a varied evening of three new works billed with Liam Scarlett's *Viscera* from 2012. The ballet suited the dancers, who gave their utmost in Scarlett's dynamic flow, set to the breathless, rhythmic sounds of Lowell Liebermann's *Piano Concerto No. 1*. J'aime Crandall was precise and sophisticated as the solo lady. In the second movement, which Scarlett calls a "perfect eye-of-the-storm," Alexandra Lo Sardo and Ulrik Birkkjær met in a pas de deux with a sensitivity that made them living sculptures, giving eyes and ears a soothing break before the final crescendo.

Schubert Pas de Deux is Danish Adam Lüders' first work for the big stage. His neoclassical movement style owes much to his 20 years as a principal and highly esteemed partner with New York City Ballet. This lyrical duet revealed Lüders' eye for refined details and was performed with excellent musicality by a sweet Holly Jean Dorger and Jonathan Chmelensky as her elegant partner.

Sebastian Kloborg is a child of the Royal Danish Ballet with a two seasons' detour to Gauthier Dance in Stuttgart. With only two months' notice, he created *Strangers* for 12 dancers. The piece opened with music from a scratched record, followed later by excerpts from J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* sung in Arabic, underscoring a nostalgic and yearning mood. As the central character, Lo Sardo, in spite of her persistently devoted approach, never got the attention of Benjamin Buza's statue of a man, who during the whole piece never moved an inch.

The final work of the evening was Alessandro Sousa Pereira's powerful *Krash* (2014), in which the music by Turkman Souljah, with its incessant, pounding rhythms, drove the black costumed group forward. Pereira, with his background as dancer and choreographer with the modern Danish Dance Theatre, demanded a grounded technique from the classically trained dancers. Ida Praetorius, the only female dancer, blended in with her eight male colleagues and each one was given solo passages that granted them a movement profile. Lighting designer John Hall offered pillars of light that made the muscular physicality of the naked upper bodies glow, especially in the expressive solos for Sebastian Haynes and Tobias Praetorius.

Dancers who were not cast in *Take Four* appeared two weeks earlier in *Feberhavnen* (*The Feverharbour*). Esther Lee Wilkinson and Tim Matiakis, the two innovative directors of Corpus, the company associated with the Royal Danish Ballet, once again made an untraditional choice and invited the artist duo SIGNA, alias Signa and Arthur Köstler, to take on their first-ever collaboration with dancers. The narrative is about a post-apocalyptic, fever-ridden Copenhagen, where only the healing powers of dancers as bearers of the lost culture can help the population survive.

A backstage studio at the old Royal Theatre was transformed into an arena with 12 small compartments filled with old furniture, lace curtains and odd trinkets, contributing to a decaying, decadent

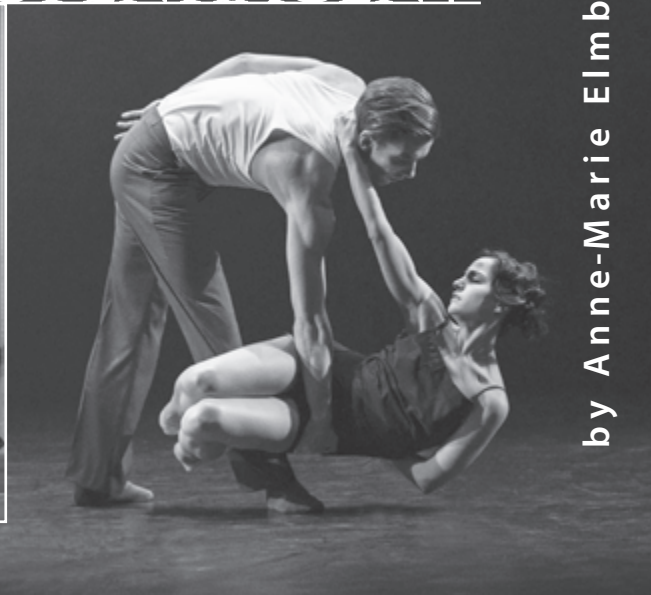
There were consequences for the winners and losers of the competitions, partly decided by the audience. Winners and their guests would be served champagne, while losers would have to face challenges, such as dancing blindfolded or improvising a solo in the nude. At times, the treatment of the dancers crossed ethical boundaries for this spectator, though it was revealed at a later artists' talk that every participant had stated their limits before being part of the performance. Apparently, *Feberhavnen* was a groundbreaking and exciting experience for many of them.

On June 15, Danish Ballets Russes ballerina and choreographer Nini Theilade celebrated her 100th birthday. As a young girl, Theilade toured Europe and

COPENHAGEN I



Nini Theilade teaching at Oure Dance Academy
Photo: Courtesy of Oure Sport & Performing Arts



by Anne-Marie Elmbj

atmosphere. During the four-hour performance, I got a chance to visit three compartments; each one was inhabited by one or two dancers and a servant, and received three or four audience members at a time. We learned the life story of the individual characters and became interactive supporters, when the ruler and his queen, seconded by Morten Eggert's master of ceremonies, ordered challenging competitions for the already exhausted dancers. They had to perform scenes from well-known ballets, but with new emotions chosen by the figure of their deceased ballet master, hovering above them, while a dark witch personifying the fever chased them.

the United States with her own solo programs. She appeared in works by Max Reinhardt, including the role of first fairy in his Hollywood film *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As a ballerina with the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, she was cast in leading roles in creations by Léonide Massine. In 1979, she founded Académie de Ballet Nini Theilade in Lyon, which is still flourishing. During the later decades and until two years ago, Theilade taught at the Oure school on the Danish island of Funen, where a grand celebration and seminar with ballet historians and choreographers was attended by several hundred admirers. ▼



by Laura Cappelle

As international festivals go, St. Petersburg's Dance Open is fast turning into a critic's dream. Not only does it bring together a diverse roster of top ballet companies — Dutch National Ballet, the Vienna State Ballet and the Bolshoi Ballet last April — but unlike many risk-averse impresarios, its director, Vasily Medvedev, selects recent programs and creations almost exclusively. Very nearly derailed by the difficult economic situation in Russia, the 2015 edition of the festival went ahead with cuts (there was no awards ceremony after the final gala) yet it still showed each company at its most vibrant, with seven works created in the past five years, big and small.

While Dutch National Ballet's Back to Bach program featured less Bach than expected, the Vienna State Ballet fulfilled expectations in its first appearance in St. Petersburg. Manuel Legris initially spent considerable resources on new productions of the classics when he took over the Austrian company in 2010, but he has since shown growing interest in promoting choreographers not yet prominent on the world stage. Happily, two of the three works on Vienna State Ballet's mixed bill presented at St. Petersburg's newly refurbished Tovstonogov Bolshoi Drama Theater were by

women, who are still woefully underrepresented in classical choreography.

Helen Pickett's *Eventide*, created in 2008 for Boston Ballet, shows a major talent who is too rarely seen outside the United States. Her command of space and speed, nurtured in her career as a dancer with William Forsythe, is evident throughout. She weaves soloists and corps together like alluring, exotic creatures; the choreography, full of wit and sensuality, builds to a rousing finale and brings out a whimsical side to Philip Glass.

Patrick de Bana's dreary *Windspiele*, entirely deaf to its Tchaikovsky score, followed. As a palate cleanser, the Vienna State Ballet came back after an intermission with the zany *Contra Clockwise Witness*, created by Natalia Horecna, a former dancer with Hamburg Ballet and Nederlands Dans Theater. She has choreographed for both companies and made her Vienna debut in 2013 with *Contra*, a concoction at once puzzling and original, more reminiscent of the Ballets Suédois' 1920s experiments than anything seen in ballet today. It reads like a humorous meditation on life and death, filled to the brim with random characters (A Man, who hangs himself, His Soul, Angels of Death, a Gin Man, Principles...). The highly theatrical choreography needs editing, but Horecna

doesn't lack for ideas — and will be one to watch if she can tighten them onstage.

The Bolshoi Ballet also paid a rare visit to St. Petersburg with Jean-Christophe Maillot's *Taming of the Shrew*, created last July. The opening night at Dance Open was unfortunately marred by issues with the recording of the Shostakovich score, which skipped ahead to the next scene twice in Act I, forcing the dancers to improvise. Unfazed, Ekaterina Krysanova and Vladislav Lantratov, who had just won Golden Masks, Russia's theatre awards, for the roles of Katherina and Petruchio, repeated their career-defining portrayals; this *Shrew* shows a new, modern side of the Bolshoi while channeling the dancers' strengths, and will be shown in cinemas worldwide on January 24, 2016.

Over on Theatre Square, where a subway station is being built at last to serve the Mariinsky Theatre and neighbouring arts institutions, the venerable Mariinsky Ballet seemed a long way removed from Dance Open's creative buzz. None of the premieres tentatively announced at the start of the 2014-2015 season, including Christopher Wheeldon's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and a revival of Soviet classic *The Bronze Horseman*, choreographed by Rostislav Zakharov in 1949, ultimately came to pass; *Alice* was said to be postponed until 2016. It was the second season in three years without any addition to the repertoire, which, for a company still relying heavily on Soviet-era productions, is cause for concern.

The existing repertoire was well-served last April, however. At a children's matinee of *The Firebird*, prefaced by a lively introduction to the story and historical importance of the ballet, principal Daria Pavlenko dominated the stage. Pavlenko has been publicly shunted by the current management for her involvement with the dancers' union and critical stance on working conditions at the Mariinsky, and as a result is rarely seen in major roles or on tour. It is the Mariinsky's loss. With her strikingly expressive eyes and innate sense of style, Pavlenko remains one of the company's finest actresses. She was solidly partnered by Ivan Oskorbin, a young corps member who showed potential in his debut.



The Legend of Love was also back on the historical Mariinsky stage. While rarely seen in the West, it is arguably one of Yuri Grigorovitch's strongest works, despite his customary heavy-handedness and reliance on overwrought lifts. The dramatic potential of the libretto and Simon Virsaladze's unique designs, streamlined yet exotic, mean an outstanding cast can make lemonade out of lemons, not unlike in *Spartacus*.

And the Mariinsky's top dancers are eager to make *Legend of Love* their own. The role of Queen Mekhmene Banu, who sacrifices her beauty to save her sister, Shyrin, and loses the man she loves to her, could have been created for the commanding Viktoria Tereshkina, and she dances as if it were. Tereshkina has reached the elusive balance dancers strive for: her steely technique gives her the space to immerse herself in the tragedy, and she is experimenting with striking nuances of her own. Vladimir Shklyarov has also made strides as an actor and gave a fully engaged performance as Ferkhad, while Ekaterina Osmolkina contributed a pristine Shyrin.

erina Osmolkina contributed a pristine Shyrin.

Over at the Mikhailovsky Ballet, Mikhail Messerer's 2013 recreation of *The Flames of Paris* has lost none of its lively charm. Ivan Vasiliev was up to his usual airborne tricks; Angelina Vorontsova continues to grow in

confidence and projection as Jeanne, while Victor Lebedev, one of the finest danseurs nobles in St. Petersburg, shone as Antoine Mistral. Messerer next presents a new production of *Le Corsaire* in September, and it should be a good vehicle for the strong roster of men he has assembled. ▼

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Above left: Davide Dato and ensemble of Vienna State Ballet in Helen Pickett's *Eventide*

Above right: Vienna State Ballet's Alice Firenze in Patrick de Bana's *Windspiele*

Several firsts — and one notable last — have given Sydney's dance year so far particular piquancy. The premieres of William Forsythe's *Quintett* (Sydney Dance Company) and Frederick Ashton's *Symphonic Variations* (Australian Ballet) were important events, as was the announcement that Madeleine Eastoe would retire from the Australian Ballet after an 18-year career with the company, the last nine as a principal artist.

Quintett is a jewel of the contemporary repertoire that has been given to few companies. Sydney Dance Company's performances in March were outstanding. I saw both casts, excitingly different from one another, but at one with a work that vibrates with life and with qualities that imply continuance: endurance, resilience, consolation. Relationships between the three men and two women are in constant flux, as is the movement language. Crawling, falling, flailing, distorting, watching, leaving and arriving are all part of the physical mix, but *Quintett* also repeatedly returns to the beautiful formalities and certainties of ballet. Order is also imposed gently but rigorously by the score, Gavin Bryars' *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*, in which the looped voice of an old man singing phrases of a hymn could conceivably play until the stars turn cold.

In her final Sydney appearances in April and May, Eastoe looked more luminous than ever in *Giselle* and as Titania in Ashton's *The Dream*. Only 36, she is leaving at the crest of her career, but she has a young child, and the Australian Ballet tours extensively. Eastoe's *Giselle* was a gentle,

open-hearted girl with the bloom and fragrance of an easily bruised rose. Every thought and feeling were exposed without reservation, her inner world made visible as if her skin were transparent. Kevin Jackson was her Albrecht in a deeply felt and superbly danced portrayal. The height and precise beauty of his seemingly endless entrechats six in Act II had the audience gasping.

Jackson was also Oberon to Eastoe's dewy Titania, combining muscular presence with a poetic soul. In that cast, Chengwu Guo was a gravity-defying, ultra-charming Puck, and another cast was blessed with Brett Chynoweth's delightful Puck, meddling impishly and unrepentantly. *The Dream* couldn't have looked prettier in David Walker's gossamer designs as fairies and mortals fell in and out of love in a whirlwind 50 minutes; it was a fine closer to April's all-Ashton program that featured *Symphonic Variations*, considered the choreographer's defining work. The plotless paean to beauty, peace, simplicity and classical harmony was made in 1946 and embraced by a British public deeply scarred by the Second World War.

Symphonic Variations is intricately structured and overflows with lustrous, evocative imagery. In a particularly lovely repeated gesture, the women curve an arm protectively around a partner's head; several times after all have skimmed across and around the stage — women and men in separate groups of three — the six dancers join hands in an echo of bucolic folk dancing. In the pared-back white costumes, and in some groupings, there are intimations

of Balanchine's *Apollo*, but the quality of movement is all Ashton's own. The bodies of the dancers are like willows — graceful, infinitely flexible, turning this way and that, tranquil yet resilient.

While occasionally there was evidence of strain, the first cast made one understand why the work is so loved. Soloist Robyn Hendricks glowed from within, corps member Cristiano Martino was composed and imposing — and shortly afterward promoted to coryphée — and the buoyancy and crystalline shapes in the air of soloist Chynoweth linger in the memory. Principals Amber Scott and Ako Kondo and coryphée Christopher Rodgers-Wilson completed the handsome sextet.

Monotones II, inspired by 1960s moon exploration and the way people might move in its tenuous atmosphere, opened the Ashton program. The sole woman — refined soloist Natasha Kusen in the first cast — could be some kind of remote goddess attended by two male acolytes. Certainly the three appeared suitably alien, clad entirely in second-skin white bodysuits and caps. It's a look that takes quite a lot of personal glamour to carry off, and Brett Simon and Jared Wright could have exuded a touch more of that. Still, *Monotones II* stood up much, much better than you might expect as its three living, moving sculptures serenely moved through the ethereal orchestral version of Erik Satie's *Trois Gymnopédies*.

Perth's West Australian Ballet had its own first in May with a polished account of an all-Balanchine program, Embraceable You. It was a great pleasure to see demisoloist Polly Hilton lead *Concerto Barocco* with such poise and style. In *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux*, Florence Leroux-Coléno whipped through the bravura choreography with beautifully clean technique and strong musicality. Guest artist Oscar Valdes, although young, had winning stage presence along with the qualities bestowed by Cuban training — powerful jumps, brilliant turns, mighty elevation, immaculately stretched feet and sleek lines. *Who Cares?* was dispatched by the whole company with charm and effervescence. An extra treat was a version of *Tarantella* for two couples, choreographed in homage to Balanchine by the company's reigning ballerina Jayne Smeulders. It was a feast of speed and exuberance featuring crackling multiple grand pirouettes from Andre Santos and a sparky performance from apprentice Carina Roberts. ▼

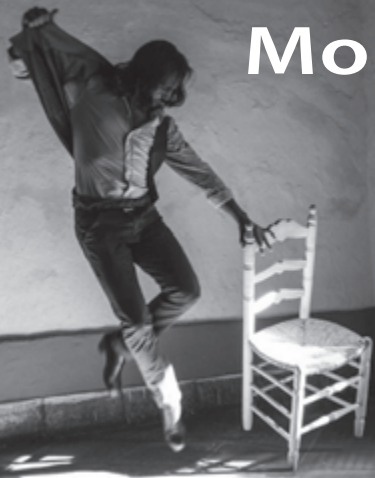


Sydney & Perth

by Deborah Jones

The Australian Ballet's Madeleine Eastoe and Joseph Chapman in Frederick Ashton's *The Dream*
Photo: Daniel Boud

Montpellier Dance Festival



Festival Roundup

The 35th Montpellier Dance Festival changed gears this summer with well-oiled efficiency. Presenting choreographers from 13 countries, festival director Jean-Paul Montanari offered a representative sampling of international contemporary dance.

Flamenco star Farruquito cruised the fast lane at Le Corum, one of several beautifully equipped festival venues, in *Pinacendá*. His brilliantly nuanced and varied zapateado merited the bursts of applause that he not only encouraged, but basked in. More touching was his generous interplay with individual singers and musicians, some of whom traded dance steps in an endearing sequence recalling flamenco's essence as a social dance. A talented teacher, Farruquito gave one of the free public classes that festival performers offered around town. Under a heat-wave noonday sun, about 100 of us learned a short routine, utterly charmed by Farruquito's easy manner and humour.

In contrast, VA Wölff's *Chor(e)ographiel Journalismus* moved at a virtual standstill. For many minutes, dancers remained motionless as one sang a Schoenberg aria almost inaudibly, then another moved in super-slow motion to Bach. Another intoned a long monologue in English about aesthetics, prompting a spectator in the elegant Opéra Comique theatre to shout, "On ne comprend rien! Parlez français!" Obligated to catch another show, I left early, though reportedly the choreography ended in nude action. For its first 80 minutes, however, this show was like watching paint dry.

Apart from Brian Eno's song *Golden Hours* and some brief musical interludes, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Golden Hours (As You Like It)* was a two-hour dance version of Shakespeare's comedy in silence. Occasionally, a tramway bell reached the spectacular outdoor 550-seat amphitheatre of the Théâtre de l'Agora, a former convent and prison magically transformed into a dance complex. For this work, De Keersmaeker intrepidly created a narrative vocabulary of gestures that, like Shakespeare's text, suggested human interactions in all their subtlety. This alone must be considered a major achievement, a contemporary invention comparable to the ancient narrative dance vocabularies of kathak or Chinese opera. Admittedly, despite explanatory surtitles, following Shakespeare's cast of characters was a challenge. By Act III, audience members began decamping. Nonetheless, a masterpiece.

Maguy Marin's *BiT* began with dancers linked together in a medieval dance of death to Charlie Aubry's obsessively repetitive soundscape played at ear-splitting volume. Seven steeply inclined ramps symbolically distinguished an above-ground world of communal joy and playful hijinks from an underworld that regularly raised its disturbing head. Some spectators left, unable to stomach simulated scenes of group sex, ritualized gang rape and male exhibitionism. Uncomfortable to watch, yes, but ugliness has inspired artistic representations as far back as the ancient Greek tragedians who made watching difficult scenes palatable by heavily stylizing them. In the end, dancers plunged one by one

off the top of the ramp into blackness, suggesting that life is ultimately pointless.

Christian Rizzo's (*c'est l'oeil que tu protèges qui sera perforé*) saw life as a journey of increasingly meaningful stages. Turkish dancer Kerem Gelebek confronted life's basic elements — earth, air, light, literacy — on a dimly lit stage. He ably interpreted a role requiring sustained control of generally languid movements, injecting gravity into a work whose several stages seemed arbitrarily, rather than organically, linked. Consequently, when Gelebek finally faded quietly into blackness, the impact was less marked. In January, Rizzo was named artistic director of the Montpellier Centre National de Danse.

Another existentialist voyage was the duet by Benoît Lachambre and Fabrice Ramalingom, *Hyperterrestres*, which premiered in Montreal a month earlier. The duo evolved from amoeba-like organisms into butting-head animal adversaries until achieving a symbiosis illustrated by exploratory kisses and ultimately by a nude joint frolic. Despite their space suits and other odd harnesses, the duo's message was pretty old school: love conquers all.

More art installation than dance, *Co-cooning* by Colombia-born, Argentine-based Luis Garay invited the audience onstage to inspect a flamboyant set strewn with driftwood and discarded computer/electronic gear presented either as oddly shaped sculptures or just junk. A trashed car was in one corner. Performers held poses apparently representing modern character types — a geeky tap dancer with computer keyboards tied to his feet, S&M devotees strapped to punishing wooden crosses, a manic obsessive twirling incessantly. "You can observe for 10 minutes or 50 — up to you," said Garay at a news conference earlier in the day. Since no spectator wandered about the stage in the same way, each registered a different show. Call it an I-show for our ego-obsessed times. Some traditionalists simply stayed in their seats, apparently expecting someone to dance.

Notable performances I missed included Batsheva dancing Ohad Naharin's latest and a duet, *Torobaka*, by Akram Khan and Israel Galván.

Big names, great theatres and a busy post-show nightlife of outdoor cafés made this picturesque French Riviera town's festival a fan's delight.

— VICTOR SWOBODA

The Royal Ballet



Wayne McGregor / Woolf Works

Woolf Works was a surprise. A three-act story ballet inspired by classic literature — nothing in that description would lead you to think of Wayne McGregor as its choreographer. He has worked mostly without narrative, often drawing on ideas from science: atomic behaviour, neurological systems, physiology. A certain geekiness of attitude is echoed in his style, which tends toward hypermobility and hyperactivity, with a degree of control-freakery. He'll have his dancers flash past with limbs splayed as the spine wriggles and a hip juts, while a cricked neck or a crooked finger is set just so. Add to this a penchant for video, lighting effects and bold stage designs, and you get works that thrive on physical stimulus and abstract ideas, sustained through a single act; you don't get overt characters and stories. Indeed, McGregor's only explicitly narrative work — *Raven Girl*, from 2013 — was a fine-looking piece that failed to connect with its story.

Yet here was the Royal Ballet, where McGregor has been resident choreographer since 2006, commissioning a full-evening ballet from him, based on quintessentially literary novels by Virginia Woolf. And the big surprise? That it worked so well. *Woolf Works*, which premiered at London's Royal Opera House in May, has extended McGregor's range, and though not without flaws, it is also a ballet of subtle sentiment and considerable poetic beauty.

Though based on novels (*Mrs Dalloway*, *Orlando* and *The Waves*, one for each act), its approach is poetic rather than novelistic; mood, composition and imagery speak louder than story and sequence. The opening act, *I Now, I Then*, comes closest to a kind of drama, but it is the framing, not the details of action and consequence, that stirs up the imagination. The act begins with words projected onto a scrim, behind which appears the figure of veteran dancer Alessandra Ferri as the text dissolves into a snow of abstract shapes swirling over her body — the first of many poetic images.

Ferri, now 52, plays Clarissa Dalloway with lyrical gravitas (each bend and gesture suggests a personal history contained within it), with Francesca Hayward as her younger, fresher self. Gary Avis is her attentive husband, Federico Bonelli and Yasmine Naghdi are former lovers, and Edward Watson is marvellous as a shell-shocked soldier, his articulate body expressing all that his character cannot: a broken psyche, a self that cannot support itself. Yet the characters are almost not the main point. Black-and-white film footage of London streets locate the action in history, in memory, while Max Richter's score mixes music with the noise of traffic and the tolling of bells, and huge wooden squares rotate onstage like giant tilting window frames. Here lies the heart of this episode: the framing and enfold-ing of times and perspectives, the dancers circling each other so that we sense them not only as bodies and characters, but as fugitive temporal clusters of dreams and memories.

Act 2, *Becomings*, is more familiar McGregor territory, crammed with detail and big on effect: laser lights strafing the audience, billows of smoke, unisex costumes of gold ruffs, cut-off bodices, knickers and knickerbockers. It can be relentless and sometimes merely flashy, yet you sense its arc, its sweep. The music is a phased collage of overlapping fragments, and the dance passes by as a rush of disjointed solos, couples and groups emerging from and falling back into the darkness, like so many torn pages flung into the wind. Against which one remarkable duet stands out: a slow, contortionist coupling of snakelike suppleness and steely strength that sits at front-centre stage, as if suspended in time.

The final act, *Tuesday*, is the most purely poetic. There are glimmers of story — a voiceover of Woolf's suicide letter, remembered scenes of children at play — but, again, the act is underpinned by one overwhelming image: the older woman and the sea. Ferri is the woman — in motion, exquisitely composed, but disquieted by emotional undercurrents — and the sea appears behind her, first as a vast projection of slate-grey ocean, then as a corps de ballet of living bodies that evoke the tug of tides, the surge and splash and submersion of waves as Ferri surrenders herself to them, her body drowned by theirs. The video of the ocean, initially a still image, has slowly but inexorably accelerated throughout the act until now, as Ferri expires, the sea's heaving flanks seem finally to be breathing normally.

Poetry, again. A compositional arc. Overt human emotion. Lyric beauty. Not typical McGregor qualities, but here they all are. I imagine that dramaturg Uzma Hameed, a theatre director and Woolf specialist with a dance background, influenced the poetry and composition, and Ferri — too old for McGregor's more characteristic physical virtuosity, but a very compelling dancer with her own body of experience — helped bring out the beauty and emotion. The piece can teeter toward cliché, and Richter's music sometimes slaps on the sentiment too thickly (after the first few big, swelling crescendos, you start feeling more manipulated than moved); nevertheless, *Woolf Works* stands as a very fine achievement, and a wonderful surprise.

— SANJOY ROY

Festival Roundup

Montreal's ninth Festival TransAmériques (FTA) ran May 21 to June 4 and was the first under new artistic director Martin Faucher. The lineup, presented in spaces across the city, was as eclectic and polished as ever. Some of the works were more provocative than others, but I was happy that many displayed the kind of engagement with ideas and society that makes for exhilarating theatre.

Brooklyn-based Miguel Gutierrez presented his duet, *Age & Beauty Part 1: Mid-career Artist/Suicide Note Or &:-),* a queer take on growing older and keeping the faith as an artist. Gutierrez begins with an off-the-cuff introduction referencing

limbs and eventually pulling his pants down around his ankles; he slammed his body repeatedly into the floor ... hard. The aesthetic might be nightclub gay, but there was also a punk vibe at work here.

The huskier Gutierrez, by contrast, never seemed to lose his aplomb. Wearing a women's fuchsia bathing suit, he wielded a microphone and sang, embodying some kind of rock star fantasy. Though the subject matter and precision of the choreography are serious, this show never failed to entertain. Even as Gutierrez was shouting at us repeatedly to "Get out. The show's over — get out!" and we sheepishly rose and shuffled away from this brightly lit party, we were still having a good time.

Another, more ponderous, take on duet dynamics, Daniel Léveillé's *Solitudes Duo*, was not nearly as much fun. A sequel to

the work and its quiet humour and deliberate pacing.

Stéphane Gladyszewski's gorgeous *Phos* felt more like a showcase than a show, with no discernible emotional or narrative arcs, but much to offer in the way of beauty and inventiveness. The audience filed into a darkened space in the Place des Arts basement studio of resident company O Vertigo and gathered around two performers (Martin Bélanger and Lucie Vigneault) who were working what appeared to be a mound of clay. They stroked it and shaped it, wetting the material with handfuls of water, carving out channels with their fingers. Eventually, projected colour and movement brought the mound to life as a tiny animated topography of rivers and mountains. We were then seated.

What followed was a series of ephemeral vignettes in which the performers put lighting effects, projections and other image technologies to delicate and magical use. In one sequence, Vigneault carried a large cloth and leapt around in the pitch dark, a strobe revealing her limbs and drapery for brief frozen seconds at a time. It occurs to me these ocular glimpses are reminiscent of early photographs and moving images of Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan in full flight and wonder if it's accidental.

Technology also informs the duet *Hyperterrestres*, created and performed by Montreal's Benoît Lachambre and Montpellier-based Fabrice Ramalingom to a soundscape by Hahn Rowe (an acclaimed New York-based composer and musician who often works with Meg Stuart), performed live.

Post-human (and perhaps also pre-human) communication seems to be the driving idea behind this slow-moving work, which began with the massive stage of Usine C obscured by a large draped scrim. Vague shapes made by an abstracted naked body coalesced and dissolved behind as the light (and the scrim) slowly rose to reveal ... two sofas. When Lachambre and Ramalingom finally took the stage in jeans and hoodies, it was as lumbering creatures muttering guttural noises. They rolled around, wandered and eventually interacted with each other, while Hahn manned a sound station to the side of the stage, lounging quietly for the most part, fingers twiddling knobs and buttons (though he did rise to play a guitar solo). It all unfurled at a snail's pace.

Festival TransAmériques



queer theorist José Muñoz and quoting William Blake: "my heart is full of futurity." Everything that follows is tightly choreographed and performed. Gutierrez danced, mesmerizingly, with collaborator Mickey Mahar, a much younger performer who nonetheless had no trouble holding up his half of the stage. The pair took synchronized movement to an extreme and intoxicating place, utilizing the lexicons of voguing, lip sync, burlesque, ballet and social dance, supported by extremely loud, beat-laden electronic dance music.

Their respective solos were fierce in completely different ways. The boyish and deadpan Mahar grew increasingly erratic and manic, flailing his skinny bone-white

Solitudes Solo (which is still being performed), the work distilled some of the main concerns of the Montreal choreographer's long career. When married with the performers' complete lack of affect, Léveillé's limited and slowed-down vocabulary of athletic lifts, martial arts poses and simulated sex allowed, indeed forced, the audience to examine each of the six duets closely. And this revealed the technical proficiency of the cast to be uneven. Although they all had compelling features of one kind or another, I found it distracting to watch performers I was not confident could hold the pose or demonstrate the requisite control. Once I let go of that expectation, I discovered more respect for

dance

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About two thirds of the way in, Lachambre broke character entirely to address the audience, with lights up. He tried to explain what's really behind the work — ideas about sensory experience, transmission and the space within movement — until Hahn abruptly took the mike from him and the “fiction” began again.

I'm really not sure how I feel about this piece, even now, weeks later. At the time, I found *Hyperterrestres* silly and pretentious (how is that even possible?), in need of a dramaturg and way too long. And yet, by the end, the commitment of the performers and the severe musicality won me over on some level, and I wanted to turn around and slap the guy booing behind me.

One of the bravest works at the festival was Arkadi Zaides' *Archive*. The Russian-born Israeli uses video documentation from the archive B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, as both a starting point for creation and as a crucial onstage element to drive his dance. The archive hands cameras to residents of the region and asks them simply to record. As expected, many of the clips document abuses — Israeli settlers setting fire to Palestinian olive groves, stone-throwing, occupying forces making arrests — but they are not overly violent in the way we've come to expect from media imagery from the region. These events are more quietly brutal.

Zaides dissects and mimics the physicality of the people in the videos, in real time. It's not so much choreography as an absorption and an embodiment that we have been invited to watch. At times, the work felt clinical, a scientific experiment in the mechanics of pushing and shoving or using a slingshot. But this lack of conventional choreographic intent is also a source of *Archive's* power.

I remain haunted by the images and sounds of two teenaged Jewish boys, clearly inebriated following Purim celebrations, hurling abuse at Palestinian homes as their parents or other adults physically hold them back and carry them off. Partly, it's because Zaides' looping of the clips has burned them into my brain, but also because, over the course of the performance, I learned how to look very closely at the physicality onscreen and Zaides' reconstruction of it. Adding to the torment, Zaides (coached by sound art and voice dramaturg Tom Tlalim) also re-interpreted sound bites, which also echo weeks later.

Alain Platel's Ballet C de la B, an FTA favourite, also manipulated documentary materials but, in the creation of the full-length *Tauberbach*, in a more traditionally theatrical way. The work used the formal setting and grand scale of the Monument-National to great effect, with the stage covered in cast-off clothes, knee-deep in some spots. It replicated the real-life Brazilian garbage dump in which a schizophrenic woman named Estamira made her living, a true story that was made into a documentary film by Marcos Prado.

Dutch actor Elsie de Brauw commanded the stage as Estamira, picking through garments and layering them on, declaiming her rage and her acceptance in response to an offstage voice of God, and dancing occasionally with the company's all-star performers. I could have watched this actor trying to make order out of that chaos forever.

But, in fact, each performer in this production got an opportunity to shine. Ross McCormack's tour-de-force solo started with the dancer making the sound of a fly into one of the hanging microphones and turned into an extended riff on ways to die. His movement accelerated and decelerated as if manipulated by fast forward and rewind buttons playing an action film. Over the course of 90 minutes, there were many examples of this quality — an extended erotic duet between Lisi Estaras and Romeu Runa, comic turns by nearly everyone and, chillingly, moments of quiet choral singing that contrasted one of the major sound elements in the production: a recording of Bach cantatas sung by a choir of deaf people, which is taken from artist Artur Zmijewski's video project *Tauber Bach* (deaf Bach).

If I have a criticism of this ambitious work, it's in the sometimes not quite seamless amalgamation of the disparate elements provided by the other artists. On the level of production, I suspect the resulting cacophonous effect and rough edges may be intentional. But the mix felt slightly random to me, a selection of cool projects coming from many different directions and sources. Still, the faith Platel places in his own choices and in the choices of the *Tauberbach* company members is persuasive, and the feeling of having been part of a powerful and uplifting communal experience is one that will stay with me for a long time.

— KATHLEEN SMITH

Ratmansky, Egami and Hu, Preljocaj, Liang, Mazilier / Mixed Bill

Hong Kong Ballet's last offering of the 2014-2015 season was a three-part mixed program presented at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre as part of the annual French May arts festival. The main attractions were San Francisco Ballet's Chinese star Yuan Yuan Tan and a star couple from Paris Opera Ballet, Alice Renavand and Florian Magnenet. Also much publicised was the ballet *Le Carnaval des Animaux* by Alexei Ratmansky, arguably the most sought-after classical ballet choreographer in the world at present.

Ratmansky originally created this work, titled after the music by Saint-Saëns to which it is set, for San Francisco Ballet a decade ago. It's not one of his most famous works, and, two months earlier, Hong Kong audiences had seen Ratmansky's more exciting *Flames of Paris* danced by the Bolshoi Ballet at the Hong Kong Arts Festival. But *Le Carnaval des Animaux* proved to be a well-crafted ballet that suited Hong Kong Ballet's strengths.

Ratmansky's choreography is a delight throughout, providing a full scope for classical dancing. Among the more memorable sections is a vivacious number for two horses. There is also a boisterous solo for a cockerel, as well as a corps of male dancers representing zebras. And just before the joyous finale, there is a solo for a swan, backed up by a corps de ballet, which is set to the section of the score, *Le Cygne*, so familiar to ballet audiences from *The Dying Swan*.

Lucas Jerkander was cute as the tame and not at all fearful lion. Liu Miaomiao was delightful as the ballerina with a pink tutu – which bore no resemblance to her role as an elephant! Jonathan Spigner, with his high-spirited dancing, stood out as one of the horses.

Another premiere was also set to music by a French composer — Ravel. *Bolero* was a new work jointly choreographed by Hong Kong Ballet dancers Yuh Egami and Ricky Hu, who have both created outstanding works for the company previously. Unlike Béjart's famous version of *Bolero*, there is a new

storyline. Egami and Hu's *Bolero* is set in an asylum where a girl, who keeps seeing hallucinations in the form of black devilish figures, is being treated. A doctor and two male security guards join the small cast. The choreography does not sit too badly at all with Ravel's music, and the décor, which is very functional, changes shape quickly. Liu won the audience's sympathy as the mentally troubled girl who collapses in the end.

Bolero was preceded by two short duets featuring two pairs of overseas ballet stars. For all the publicity and expense involved in flying them over, it was a great pity that both pas de deux were so short. Despite that reservation, they were outstandingly performed.

Kong Ballet every spring. It is a mournful duet with a lot of contortionist movement for Tan, who was strongly partnered by Liang himself. It certainly showed off Tan's unique qualities — hyper-flexible limbs and a pliable body — remarkably well.

Several months ago, Hong Kong Ballet appointed another guest principal — Jurgita Dronina, formerly a principal with Dutch National Ballet and a recent addition to the National Ballet of Canada. In this program, she was featured in the opening piece — the Grand Pas Classique from *Paquita*. Joseph Mazilier's ballet was staged for the company by previous artistic director John Meehan back in 2007.



In keeping with the evening's French theme, the first was from Angelin Preljocaj's *Le Parc*, starring Paris Opera Ballet's Renavand and Magnenet. *Le Parc*, one of the better known ballets premiered by the Paris company in the 1990s, is blissful; the part toward the end where the couple kisses while he is swinging her around his neck is pretty spectacular and unforgettable.

The second duet, *Letting Go*, was created for this occasion by Taiwanese choreographer Edwaard Liang, currently the director of BalletMet in the United States, for Tan, who appears with Hong

Unlike the other pieces in the program, this very demanding classical showcase just didn't present the company at its best. It had some noticeable rough edges and could have done with more polishing. The dancers in the solos were uneven in standard, and the corps de ballet lacked uniformity. Fortunately, the ballet was redeemed by the dazzling technical bravura of Dronina as the lead ballerina. Her dancing was sharp and scintillating, and Wei Wei was on his best form as her partner.

— KEVIN NG

Hofesh Shechter / deGeneration

Hofesh Shechter captures our urban angst with immediacy and assault — he punches first and asks questions later. Hardened by the conflicts in Israel, groomed by the Batsheva Dance Company and scuffed by the grit of London, where he is now based, Shechter's own experiences have clearly influenced his choreographic style.

In 2014, Shechter Junior, an apprentice complement to the main Hofesh Shechter Company, was formed with eight young, international dancers. Its world debut in May was in a mixed bill titled *deGeneration* at the Théâtre des Abbesses in Paris, when they presented *Fragments* (2003) and *Cult* (2004) — Shechter's earliest works, which met with mainstream acclaim — and the premiere of *Disappearing Act*. In an hour-long evening sans entr'acte, the dancers served up Shechter's edgy choreography with full-fledged attack and still looked like they had more to give.

All three pieces showed traits of Shechter's style — stark lighting, dancers detonating pent-up frustrations in thrashing exactitude, and piercing, hypnotic rhythms composed by Shechter himself; he studied music alongside dance, and often creates music in tandem with the choreography. Dancers' hunched backs, clenched fists and savage gait spoke of violent undertones simmering beneath their angst, while their patterns of isolation and grouping evoked the cadence of our urban environment. Dressed in casual pants, skirts and jackets, they resembled the common

characters in our cities and drew Shechter's world forebodingly close to reality.

Cult began in darkness except for a single spotlight on dancer Carl Crochet standing centre stage, pulsing hesitantly as if finding his groove. An omnipotent-sounding voice stated, "In the beginning, there was darkness," then layers of rhythms dominated the sound space. The use of darkness and overbearing sound blurred the boundary between stage and house, enveloping the audience into the dancers' world. Three women in red cocktail dresses, each framed by a spotlight, moved fluidly, echoed by three men in casual jackets and pants who moved in rocky, jerky motions. The clan of six transitioned nimbly from punchy phrases to stillness, seeming locked in physical struggle.

Crochet delivered a feisty performance in his solo vignettes and carried a powerful narrative of his own. The voiceover repeated the phrases "something to fight for," "something to live for" and "something to die for," which became overly literal compared to what the dancers expressed. Rather than add colour to the piece, the voiceover interrupted one's personal interpretations of the performance.

Dancers Kenny Wing Tao Ho and Ayelet Nadav were impressive in the duet, *Fragments*. Ho and Nadav's characters are defined by their volatile relationship — they conflict with, and complement, each other in equal measure; Ho, fiery and explosive, and Nadav, whose fluidity tames Ho. The music shifted abruptly between Shechter's pulsating rhythms that accompany Ho, and a recording of Eric Idle's chirpy song, *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life* for Nadav. Lighting, designed by Shechter,

cleverly enforced their disconnect and framed each in isolation.

Finally, *Disappearing Act* brought out the full company and continued the conversation of the first two works. With similar vocabulary, *Disappearing Act* depicted the group versus the individual. Men dressed in sport jackets and pants, and women in jersey tops and plaid skirts, suggested urban characters. Throughout, dancers repeated a ritualistic gesture of forming a triangle with their hands above their head while lowering themselves in a hunched-back second position plié. Other gestures were re-iterations of those already seen. The dancers' identity as a clan was expressed in the unison of their movements, though scarce interaction amongst them suggested a superficial belonging. Lighting, designed by Shechter and Lawrie McLennan, played an interactive role with the dancers. They bunched up to columns of spotlights shining from the wings and directed their movement toward them. Spotlights from above abruptly illuminated dancers, then disappeared; the effect was visually suspenseful and created vignettes of groupings of dancers.

More than 10 years separate *Disappearing Act* from *Cult* and *Fragments*, yet all three paint with similar colours and strokes. Meanwhile, London is ramping up for the first-ever *Hofest*, a month-long presentation starting mid-September of Shechter's works across various venues in London, including the Royal Opera House, where he will co-direct his first opera — Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice*. Audiences will have more chances to contemplate Shechter's artistic evolution.

— PIA LO



Royal Ballet of Flanders



Amarante, Brabants, Jooss, Kylián / Mixed Bill

On May 3, 1915, Canadian soldier John McCrae wrote *In Flanders Fields*, without a doubt the best-known First World War poem, poignantly evoking the waste of conflict. Inspired by McCrae's poetry, Brazilian choreographer Ricardo Amarante, a soloist with the Royal Ballet Flanders, created a ballet for the Belgian company set to a commissioned score by Japanese composer Sayo Kosugi. Amarante's *In Flanders Fields* premiered in Ghent on May 9, almost on the 100th anniversary of the poem. Part of a mixed bill themed around war, it ranks as one of the finest creations for Flanders I have seen in a very long time.

As Belgium's only classical ballet company, Royal Ballet Flanders is living in troubled times — fallout from the disputed fusion of the opera and ballet troupes completed at the beginning of 2014. When Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui takes over in September, the ballet will have been without an artistic director for more than a year. That the company is still doing so well is nothing short of miraculous.

Despite the success of Amarante's piece, the evening was something of an awkward mix, and not necessarily because of its heavy subject. Besides Amarante's ballet, there were revivals from Jirí Kylián,

Jeanne Brabants and Kurt Jooss. It made for a long and ineffectively paced evening.

Kylián's 1981 *Forgotten Land*, which the company first performed in 2010, is a weighty curtain-raiser. The theatrics haven't aged too well, but the dancers' energy and characterization, even overruling the choreographer's impersonal approach, were undeniable.

After the first interval came the short duet *Dialog* (*Dialogue*) from Brabants, the grand old lady of Belgian ballet, founder of this company and its ballet school, among others. She died in January 2014 at the age of 93. *Dialog* was an inconvenient choice for this evening, even if Brabants intriguingly evokes the quarrel and ensuing reunion of an older couple (lovingly revived by dancers Joëlle Auspert and Yevgeniy Kolesnik) and uses a great score from Ralph Vaughan Williams. Tagging it as a belated homage to Brabants (to whom the evening was dedicated), though, was a sad reminder of how her choreographic legacy of some 300 works has been totally neglected.

The success of the new *In Flanders Fields* was largely due to the close collaboration between choreographer and composer. Amarante and Kosugi, both young artists with a different background, managed to connect with their subject in a respectful, but also poetic and deeply moving way. In some 30 minutes they tell the story of a group of young people, 12 couples, who are torn apart by war. Interestingly, the

depiction of the war itself only takes up the latter part of the ballet. Inspired by McCrae's "We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow / Loved, and were loved," Amarante prefers to show us how these couples lived before the war. Eventually, when caught up in the conflict, the poet (Wim Vanlessen) lives long enough to see all his friends die, before he is killed, too. A particularly fine theatrical idea was to associate the women who come to mourn their fallen men with the poppies immortalized by McCrae. By a brilliant stage effect their dresses change from black to scarlet red, symbols of eternal love for those who are resting in Flanders Fields.

Seamlessly switching from ensemble to duets and solos (including a remarkable elegy for the poet accompanied by a solo cello), Amarante may not invent new steps or combinations at every corner, but he handles the neoclassical idiom with such intelligence, musicality and fluency that his ballet gains an irresistible dramatic sweep and emotional depth. It's an almost cinematographic approach for which Kosugi's tailor-made score for a large orchestra proves a tremendous asset. Their understanding of the proportions of dance theatre is unmistakable and quite rare nowadays. The simple period costumes by Ria Van Looveren avoid the usual uniform and helmet trappings. Some of the blackouts between scenes should be shortened, but there is no doubt this is a superb creation. Brilliantly danced by the whole group, *In Flanders Fields* deservedly received a long standing ovation.

Placed at the end of the evening, Kurt Jooss' *The Green Table* (1932) was something of an anticlimax. While its explicit antiwar message may be timeless, its choreographic language and mise-en-scène definitely are not. Staged with the original costume and light designs from Hein Heckroth and Hermann Markard, and rehearsed by Jeanette Vondersaar, it looked a dated curiosity. There was no way to miss Sebastien Tassin's muscular Death, but the gesturing of the Gentlemen in Black came off rather soft and coy. We had to wait for the sculptural groups of the Refugees to feel something of the impact of *Ausdruckstanz* (the German expressionist dance movement of the time). Memories indeed, but, unlike *In Flanders Fields*, hardly involving.

— MARC HAEGEMAN

BalletMet Columbus



Liang, Nixon, Kudelka, Robbins / American Masters

In his first full season as artistic director of Ohio's BalletMet Columbus, Edwaard Liang orchestrated a landmark collaboration with Opera Columbus and the Columbus Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in the wildly successful production *Twisted*, and treated audiences to 11 world premieres from choreographers such as Val Caniparoli, Ma Cong and Gustavo Ramirez Sansano. In the process, he transformed the 26-member troupe from a good contemporary ballet company into a great one.

That evolution was apparent this past May at Columbus' Ohio Theatre, where Liang assembled a stylistically diverse and engaging program entitled *American Masters* to close the company's 37th season. The bill featured world premieres by Liang himself, who was born in Taiwan but raised in California, and Canadians James Kudelka and David Nixon, along with the company premiere of the Jerome Robbins masterwork *Fancy Free*. The "American" in the program's title refers not only to Robbins, but also to the American composers featured — Michael Torke, Aaron Copland, Caroline Shaw and Leonard Bernstein.

The program opened with a bang with Liang's *The Art of War*, set to a driving score by Torke. In a nod to Jirí Kylián's *Petite Mort*, two dancers pulled a large billowy sheet of fabric from the front of the stage to the rear, obscuring the entrance of BalletMet's dozen dancers. The magical reveal delighted the audience who let out a collective gasp.

A star-field backdrop twinkled as the dancers moved through Liang's crisp

contemporary choreography. A shirtless Adam Still, with a bodybuilder physique, set an aggressive tone, powering through a solo dense with bravura jumps and turns.

Local audiences have had a heavy dose of Liang's ballets since his arrival in 2013, including his popular *Wunderland*, but *The Art of War* proved his finest yet. Liang cast the ballet with many of the company's best dancers and as a group they shone in his sharp and sophisticated choreography, said to be inspired by the art of calligraphy. It was the ballet's pas de deux, however, that really impressed.

The first, danced by Adrienne Benz and Gabriel Gaffney Smith, was an exquisite procession of lifts. The most stunning featured a move where he pulled her by her feet between his legs into a tabletop position behind him at his waist. A second pas de deux was danced by Caitlin Valentine-Ellis and David Ward, who ripped through precision turns and lifts that balanced grace with movement attack.

Thinking of You by Nixon (a former BalletMet artistic director and current director of England's Northern Ballet) was a loving tribute to retiring dancer Jimmy Orrante. The popular Orrante spent 19 years with BalletMet as a leading dancer and more recently as its de facto resident choreographer. For much of the neoclassical ballet, set to Copland's *Symphony No. 3*, Orrante played the role of onlooker. He sat on the stage floor watching his fellow dancers, was held aloft by them in an iron-cross lift, and stood staring contemplatively down into his open palm as if seeing something there, perhaps images from his dance career.

At the end, he stared into his palm again, then, as he moved offstage, swept his arm away as if discarding something he no longer needed. When Orrante did

dance, he was smooth and commanding, as in a breezy pas de deux with Emily Gotschall. Also of note were the adroit performances of fellow retiring dancers Courtney Muscroft and Jackson Prescott Sarver in a buoyant pas de deux.

The program's second half opened with Kudelka's *Real Life*. Like a Picasso cubist painting among Monets and Rembrandts, *Real Life* was an aesthetic jolt. Danced to Shaw's 2013 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Partita for 8 Voices*, Kudelka's choreography had the feel of a mechanized square dance. The eight dancers in unitards deftly promenaded through a tricky series of alternating handshake holds, snaking around one another in delicious patterns. The dancing not only fit Shaw's layered avant-garde vocal music perfectly, but gave one the sense of glimpsing how the universe works in dance form. Like his *The Man in Black*, created for BalletMet in 2010, Kudelka developed a unique movement language based on familiar movement that he took to new and ingenious places.

Rounding out *American Masters* was the Columbus premiere of Robbins' *Fancy Free* (1944). Set to an iconic Bernstein score, the classic Broadway-esque tale of three sailors on shore leave trying to impress three local dames is the perfect marriage of 1940s' era chauvinistic humour with masterfully crafted choreography. Each of the two seven-member casts I saw brought their own personalities to the roles, especially the trio of sailors. The cast of Smith, Still and Ward had a jaunty skillfulness, while Martin Roosaare, Michael Sayre and Sarver displayed clever acting skills that gave their characters added depth. *Fancy Free*, like the rest of the program, was sheer delight.

— STEVE SUCATO

Work in process

Crystal Pite and Jonathon Young / *Betroffenheit*

The individual at the centre of *Betroffenheit* is at the mercy of his own tortured and torturing mind. His psyche, ripped apart by trauma, takes the distinct forms of five dancers who tease, cavort and bully. This highly theatrical conceit comes from the collaboration of two accomplished Vancouverites: Crystal Pite, artistic director of Kidd Pivot and winner of the 2015 Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance, and Jonathon Young, artistic director of Electric Company Theatre.

The work, directed and choreographed by Pite and written by Young, was presented in process on July 16 at the Banff Centre's Eric Harvie Theatre (where it has had three development residencies with full access to the stage).

Working high up in Alberta's Rocky Mountains has its challenges. "After three weeks here, I've just acclimatized now!" dancer Jermaine Spivey told me a couple of days before the Banff show. Given the rigorous onstage workout he gets from the choreography, it's a good thing he had time to get used to the altitude: over the two-hour evening, with one intermission, he needs all the breath he can get.

We had lunch in a corner table at the Banff Centre's dining room, overlooking mountaintops and clouds, along with Young, who plays the traumatized man. His is the only voice heard onstage, both live and recorded (when it becomes the voice of the dancers). Young, a very physical actor who knows how to express story and character through his body in a deep way, also dances alongside the five Kidd Pivot company members.

Young explained that his character was first at the scene of an unspecified accident, arriving too late to save the victims. The theatrical situation is abstracted from a real-life trauma — the death of Young's daughter in a fire — something he clearly struggles to come to terms with but doesn't want to exploit. "This isn't memoir," he stated.

Indeed it isn't. *Betroffenheit* (a German word meaning shock or bewilderment) is half-nightmare, half-cartoon, a disturbing portrayal of a mind in crisis. There are some fantastically entertaining tap dancers (led by David Raymond) and a salsa couple (Bryan Arias and Cindy Salgado), who are also part of the ensemble that alternately saves and endangers the man.

Tiffany Tregarthen's white-faced chorus girl is a weirdly delightful concoction in a child's coned-shaped party hat, and glittering bra and panties. In a duet with Young, she won't let go, her long arms and legs twisting like pretzels in her determination to keep hold of him, her insistent partnering taking them onto the ground as she rides this flustered, barely coping man like a rollercoaster.

Young holds his own with the top-notch dancers, even when partnered by the virtuosic Spivey. Moving with flow and precision, sharp one moment, putty the next, Spivey fulfills Pite's famously tumultuous choreography, his body erupting in scenes of pain and anger. He's worked with Pite since 2008 and, Spivey said, he remembers the days when she was still dancing, memories that continue to inspire his understanding of her choreography. In *Betroffenheit*, he's certainly nailed it, and is transcendent in the closing solo. Amid the turmoil and imbalance of what seems endless physical crisis control, Spivey spins smoothly around — and that he is in control, that he isn't struggling, comes as a moment of grace. He does it again — going round

and round like the world has suddenly changed its gravitational pull — and I'm guessing many in the audience wanted, like me, to see him stay there, spinning, even as the curtain falls heavily down.

This is a difficult piece, both technically in the many special staging effects and also in the subject matter, which dwells on struggle and failure, and the way that memory can become a prison, and its own unforgiving, unreasonable jailer. There were likely tweaks before the July 23 premiere in Toronto on the cultural roster of the Pan Am Games, so I'll refrain from summing up my experience of the in-process *Betroffenheit*, except to say I was kind of shattered. The day after the official unveiling, Martha Schabas described the work as "rare and staggering" in the *Globe and Mail*, noting: "I can't remember the last time I heard so much audience-sobbing at a curtain call."

To end, here's another moment of grace, a sweet, dreamy scenario when Young is held aloft by the ensemble, who have become his puppet-masters. He gives himself over to their manipulations as they raise one of his legs and both his arms, letting them take his body into the hopeful shape of his layman's arabesque, into its openness and freedom.

— KAIJA PEPPER

Betroffenheit tours in Canada and the United States, and to London, England, starting in February 2016 at Ottawa's National Arts Centre. Check out tour dates at kiddpivot.org.



Banff Centre Creation Residency

MERCE CUNNINGHAM in the Archives



Second Hand; The Work.

The Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts recently acquired the archive of avant-garde American choreographer Merce Cunningham. The internationally famous visionary, who performed with his company for more than seven decades, died in 2009. The library has catalogued 424 boxes of the Merce Cunningham Archive's paper materials, including 22 boxes of Cunningham's choreographic notes and hard drives with several of his drawings. The drawings, in ink and coloured pencil on paper, were used for fundraisers, note cards and screensavers. Also from the Cunningham Archive, 556 videos have been preserved and catalogued, and are available at the library in Lincoln Center.

The Jerome Robbins Dance Division builds on its national and international reputation by collecting, preserving and making accessible materials of all forms of dance. The Dance Division is committed to providing free access to its unequalled collections, including nearly 25,000 moving image records. Digitized videos with rights holders' permissions are available through the library's new streaming service at digitalcollections.nypl.org.

— JAN SCHMIDT, CURATOR
JEROME ROBBINS DANCE DIVISION, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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