

THE POLITICS OF DANCING:

A HISTORY OF WINNIPEG'S CONTEMPORARY DANCERS

BY

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CHAPTER 1: RACHEL BROWNE--SHE HAD THIS STRANGE STRENGTH

"The existence of the Contemporary Dancers is a testament to the willpower of Rachel Browne."--Toronto dance critic Michael Crabb.

When you visit The Contemporary Dancers large studios in Winnipeg's creaking, century-old Augustine United Church, you know you're in a dance studio. No organization but a dance company can create an effect so directly opposite to ~~that which~~ <sup>the cleanest</sup> ~~image~~ most organizations want to project.

Money? Efficiency? Style? Orderliness? No way. This organization spends no bucks on Po Mo chairs, Thirties light fixtures, thick rugs, framed prints, upholstered reception desks, and air conditioning. Because this organization has ~~no need to impress~~ <sup>bucks to spend on those things</sup> ~~things~~ <sup>Dance is enough.</sup> This is a dance company. And that says it all.

The studios are like all dance studios. Grubby. Transient. Spacious but chaotic. Equipment--speakers, amps, camcorders, video monitors, VCRs--appear to be just passing through.



Not even a stab at looking prosperous. Not much money here. No pretensions either. Instead of fancy furniture and high-priced ventilation, there's a heavy sense of concentration, the presence of energy in the process of being expended. The air is stuffy. The place smells strange, sweaty, reflecting the dancers' dictum--exertion far, far above comfort.

The glass in the studio doors is studded by the sticky fingers of spectators who watch works in progress. The room inside is empty, except for some mirrors, a smooth vinyl floor, and some blow-ups of Stephanie Ballard's Prairie Song on the walls. Chairs where dancers pause to catch their breath are old and worn. Ashtray stands overflowing with long butts stubbed out in haste by dancers in rehearsal make you wonder if dancers aren't inclined to be neurotic.

The dusty window of a small blue office in the far corner of the studio looks west to the rooves and shops of Osborne Village. Baleful daylight exposes the haste and clutter of a room. crammed with old office furniture, clothes, a TV. By the door is a shelf that holds lines of small yellowing boxes containing the company's audio tapes. Empty styrofoam cups with traces of coffee in them are scattered about. At one time, the office also contained a playpen which acted as a parking lot for the company's five babies.

This was Rachel's office but has become Tedd Robinson's office. Rachel and I met regularly here. Now Rachel has a small yellow office that is equally cluttered; the clutter seems to follow Rachel wherever she goes.

There is something sparrow-like about Rachel Browne. Her features are very delicate, her mouth drawn. Her throat and neck are thin and well articulated, as are the muscles in her small, sinewy, 54-year-old body. Her hair is short, grey, and attractively curly. Her hands are fine and expressive. The veins in them protrude.

Rachel rattles off words like a Philadelphia-made machine-gun. She often seems pressured and nervous, <sup>very much so</sup> and ~~comes off~~ as erratic. She doesn't sit still long; She fusses over seemingly unimportant things, like if the front door is locked, or whether she can hear the phone in the main office. However, these are valid considerations, if you understand that everyone else has left, and she is responsible for closing the <sup>door.</sup> ~~store.~~



In the eyes of outsiders, Rachel's obsession with dance gives her an otherworldliness. When they first meet her, people are often struck by her frailty, her soft-spokenness, her ethereality, her vulnerability. In addition, Rachel is an extremely nice person--considerate, genuine, sensitive, generous, good-natured. You think you could knock her over with a feather. But, surprise you can't.

She has what Stephanie Ballard calls "this strange strength." That's right--she's tough. She is a stubborn, persistent and tenacious woman. She has given the Contemporary Dancers 25 years of her life. She had what it took--the energy, drive, courage, vision--to found the first modern dance company in Canada, and to carry it through the first 18 years of its life. No matter how you look at it, that's a formidable achievement.

Rachel is one of Canada's major modern dance pioneers. And much of the work she has done is the work a pioneer must do--"missionary" work--familiarizing unsophisticated audiences with modern dance. "The purpose of my existence," she says, "has been to bring dance to people who have seen little or no dance, to win people over to the side of dance and magic. My motives have always been humanistic. The challenge of trying to reach people is THE challenge of the artist."

Rachel is responsible for carrying modern dance forward in Canada. She imported American choreographers, and introduced their work to Canadians. As modern dance developed in Canada, so did the availability of Canadian dancers and choreographers. Rachel scoured New York annually for dancers, but with the influx of the first wave of York University graduates in the early Seventies, and the wave of cultural nationalism that swept Canada at the same time, Rachel opened the company's doors to Canadian choreographers Karen Rimmer Jamieson, Linda Rabin and Judith Marcuse, to set original works on the company.

Rachel also fostered the work of talented people within the company with the implementation of annual choreographic workshops, Dance Discovery, in 1975. Dancers who wished to create their own works were encouraged to choreograph. From those workshops evolved choreographers Tedd Robinson, Stephanie Ballard, Ruth Cansfield, Gaile Petursson-Hiley and Conrad Alexandrowicz.

Says former husband Don Browne, "Ray (her real name) has something to say to the world, and the capacity to express it. She had to make personal sacrifices to dance. She had the capacity to prioritize so that her acts of artistic creation were foremost all the time."



Rachel was single-mindedly dedicated to dance. She left other aspects of the company to other people. "Ray was ambitious to express herself," says Don, "but not ambitious to be in control of her dance company. She allowed business managers to run the company. She didn't take the time to become knowledgeable about bookkeeping, for example." He feels this might have been a factor in her losing control of the company.

"She always hoped for the best, and that the goodwill of people would come out. She has this kind of euphoric hopefulness that things will go well, that the goodwill in the world will prevail."

"She's a marvellous person," says Paul Walsh, honorary chairman of the board. "She's a real national resource living locally."

#### RACHEL'S CHOREOGRAPHY

The story of how Rachel came to Canada and founded the Contemporary Dancers is documented in future chapters. Let's take this opportunity to talk here about her choreography.

The themes of Rachel's dances--aging, the passage of time, the transition between generations, the fragility of nature, the madness of nuclear war, expressions of inner turmoil and emotion--are very often solemn, serious reflections of Rachel's concern about the human condition.

Rachel's work is sometimes considered too depressing. The solemnity of Rachel's work has not gone unnoticed by the critics. "Another gloom and doom piece from Rachel," commented Toronto critic Michael Crabb, in a review of a Contemporary Dancers performance. "A solo for a bereft soul. It's inconceivable that a dance of Rachel's could communicate joy. It's very difficult for her to have a happy face. She always projects a tragic mien."



Rachel's dances have been a way for her to work out her feelings. Her dances are often deeply personal. To find inspiration for her dances, she looks deep inside herself. "In the studio, I move around, moving about what I am feeling, my personal struggles and losses, uncertain beginnings, things I've felt deeply, and I evolve a structure from my improvisations," she says. "Moving, sitting, thinking, reading poems, deciding what kinds of words to use...I also take many ideas from the dancers' movements."

Rachel uses the work of the world's finest writers, poets and musicians to inspire her, and in her dances. Artist she had become familiar with in New York and Philadelphia she introduced to the provincial backwater of Winnipeg. Many of her works are feminist, and she has worked in the work of many women artists--the words of writers Adrienne Rich, Denise Levertov, Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, and Dorothy Livesay, the jazz piano of Mary Lou Williams, the New York blue of Laura Nyro, the gospel and folk of Odetta, the blues of Almeta Speaks, the electronic sounds of Ann Southam and Diana MacIntosh--into her dances. She has also used poems by W.H. Auden, and Pablo Neruda, and the music of Bach, Bartok, and Brahms.

Rachel feels her best dances were made not to meet the company's repertory needs, but because she wanted to make them. At first, she churned them out, thinking much more of the company's needs than of her own. As the company grew, she made fewer dances. But she always made the dances she wanted to make. And she obviously felt that, regardless of what anybody thought, she had the right to make a dance, and to perform it publicly.

In her dances, she is indebted to the classicism of Doris Humphrey and to the technique of Martha Graham. Rachel's style is very Grahamesque," says Vancouver dance critic Max Wyman. "Like Graham, she's never very funny. Rachel is directly from the school of dance pioneers Erick Hawkins and Doris Humphrey. She was one of the first revolutionaries in Canada."

Grant Strate, former resident choreographer for the National Ballet, founder of the School of Dance at York University, and Director of the Centre for the Arts at Simon Fraser University, says, "Rachel comes out of a different era, the era of heroic



statements, like those of Martha Graham. She is not trendy. Rachel is very concerned with messages, with man's pain and searching. She wants to make a personal statement--personal in a very stylistic way. She took a very strong position. She is committed to the betterment of mankind. Like Trish Beattie of the Toronto Dance Theatre, and others in dance, she has been active in the peace movement, and tries to ennoble man. Her work is not decadent. And in that way, the repertoire has been somewhat naive. But, better it should be naive than decadent."

"The Contemporary Dancers had no style of movement" says Strate. "The movement base is Rachel's own ballet background, and the Limon philosophy, which was also concerned with big human issues. His view of the world is closer to Rachel's than Graham. There is no Cunningham influence in her work, no abstract dance. Her dance is more accessible than post-modernism, which doesn't relate to any human experience."

Fred Matthews, a New York choreographer now working in Indianapolis, agrees with Strate. "Rachel was inclined towards humanistic choreographers. She was not interested in abstract dance."

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Although the critics have not always praised the company's performances, many of them have reacted positively to Rachel's work.

Reviewing the company's first Toronto performance at York's Burton Auditorium in February, 1974, John Fraser, dance critic for the Globe and Mail said, "Miss Browne's solo (All My Trials, in Mighty World) was quite affecting. She alone managed to approximate the power of Odetta's strong sounds as she suggested, by effectively spare movement, the power of humility and forbearance during a time of suffering."



The Globe's Lawrence O'Toole, dance critic in 1976, too, liked Rachel. "The Company's look is found, I think, in Rachel Browne's *The Woman I Am*, in which the dancing--all clean and flowing lines--seems to come from some calm centre."

O'Toole said of Rachel's *Interiors*, performed at Toronto Workshop Productions in 1977, "*Interiors*...has the simplicity I'm talking about. It's too long and almost cancels out the effect it first achieves, but it gets to you in ways more sophisticated dances don't. The direct intelligence of feeling behind it keeps you watching. The woman's unsure, quivering steps...aren't specific signals, yet they leave you with some kind of feeling, and Rachel Browne's occasional tendency to move like a shadow reinforces the feeling of cramped memory."

In a review of the company's 1977 performance at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Deborah Jowitt, Village Voice dance critic, said of *The Woman I Am*, "Browne is a quiet dancer, not virtuosic, a bit stiff, but I liked watching her. Some of the ideas bring to mind certain dance dramas of the fifties, in that movement often is chosen for its gestural appropriateness; Browne quivers a foot,

a hand, lightly and stiffly against the air, as if she were creating the feeling, if not the literal shape, of brushing dust from a polished surface. The dance seems unnaturally prolonged and weighted, through, and the sweetly repetitive music emphasizes this."

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In June 1987, Rachel Browne, 52, presented her first evening entirely of her own dances, *An Evening With Rachel Browne*. It was a gruelling task for her because not only had she never before presented an entire evening of her work, but she was unscheduled, and in order to rehearse with the dancers, she had to grab them when they were free.

In June 1989, Rachel presented *Rachel Browne: A Retrospective*, to celebrate the Contemporary Dancers' 25th anniversary. Both these evenings gave the opportunity to examine Rachel's work, and to see how it fits into the overall picture.



CBC Radio's Jacqui Good pointed out in 1987 that Rachel's work was simplicity itself--in sharp contrast to the theatrically complex work of Tedd Robinson and Robert Desrosiers, with all its props and trappings. She speculated that Rachel's work was originally a reaction to the overblown romanticism of ballet, when emotion and movement were more important than all the trappings.

She says that watching the dancers is like sitting on a beach watching the waves lapping against the shore. "The dancers' movements are pure and simple--often even oriental in spirit. The words I keep wanting to use to describe these dances are "human", "humane". Because humanity is Rachel Browne's subject. She rejoices in it, and gently marks its passing. It's hard if "Nobody knows you/When you're down and out", but Rachel Browne seems to say, "Life goes on, and it's stil worth living. I for one, am glad that Rachel Browne is still making human dances."

In June, 1989, Rachel revived some of her earlier works. This evening revealed the progress Rachel has made in her work.

The earliest piece was Songs and Dances, to music by Odetta, the piece presented by Contemporary Dancers at their 1964 debut. This work was intentionally performed in the spirit of the times. Odette Heyn-Penner, in a simple flared skirt of modest length, leapt in a series of what girls of the era used to call "stag jumps" across the stage. Executing such leaps was the height of glamor. Heyn-Penner's expression was rapt and joyous. The dance was extremely simple, driven mainly by the music, which is still very powerful. The Nenad Lhotka solo, to Water Boy, danced by the sinuous Randy Joynt, every straining muscle glowing with sweat, was wonderfully impressive. Randy's performance was outstanding.

The other works were Solitude, In A Dark Time The Eye Begins to See, Tres Bailes Enigmaticos, Sunset Sentences and Old Times Now. The first three were not as strong as the last two.

The choreography of the first three revealed the principal weakness of Rachel's choreography, which is its scatteredness and



In this case, the independent working of the moving parts on stage works to Rachel's advantage, as it is very close to the way children play on the floor under their mother's feet. Sunset Sentences also revealed another of Rachel's strengths, which is her uncanny ability to bring out the femininity and sensitivity of her woman dancers. The beauty of the dancers in this piece--Faye Thompson, Gaile Petursson Hiley, Odette Heyn-Penner, AnneBruce Falconer, Julia Barrick-Taffe--was drawn out, and allowed to unfold and blossom in all its fragility on stage. The pink costumes added to the sense of love and affection among women, and it was obvious the dancers had had a sense of commitment to this piece. It was a wonderful dance, uniquely Rachel Browne in its themes of feminism and family.

AnneBruce Falconer is a new young dancer, recently come up from the company's apprentice program. A gorgeous dancer with a strong sensual body and thick glossy blunt-cut red hair ~~and~~, she appeared alone under the spotlight in a red dress. The piece is a solo, to Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out, and other selections. Falconer's stark, minimal movements, expressed in her full-bodied strength, were just great. Because this was a solo, it work well, and Falconer's performance was outstanding.

One thing that has changed since Rachel began choreographing in 1964 is the strength, technical ability, and power of the dancers, who are nothing short of wonderful.

In a way, Rachel must feel vindicated, because, like many sixties idealists, time has proven her right. A woman who knew about Adrienne Rich before Adrienne Rich became a feminist, whose beliefs have remained unchanged for 30 years, she must feel that she has been right all along. She has never wavered in her beliefs, and is basically saying the same things now in her dances that she's always said.

In Rachel's dances, her themes, her messages, are foremost. And they are messages concerning human beings. She's always been a humanist. Her principal thrust has been as a believer in people and relationships, and the strength of the human spirit to overcome and survive. It's a timeless belief system, one that will never go out of fashion. Whether or not her choreography dazzles the critics, Rachel will be remembered as that sort of person.



## THE EARLY YEARS I

Rachel's roots extend back to Russia, to the great immigrant waves that poured across from Europe to the eastern seaboard of the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Rachel's father, Israel Minkoff, was a widower living in Russia, with his two daughters and one son. He was a Bolshevik and was involved in the Russian revolution., He was arrested, but, instead of going to jail, or being sent to Siberia, his wealthy parents bribed the officials and sent him to the New World in 1915.

Eva Greenberg, Rachel's mother, also a Bolshevik, comes from a small village in the Ukraine near Gorky. After the Russian revolution in 1917, she trained and worked as a nurse, and was able to support herself. She came to the United States in 1928 with her mother to join members of her family living in Philadelphia. She was living a decent life on her own in Russia, says Rachel, "if she had not come because of her mother, I think she would have chosen to stay in the Soviet Union. She says that again and again to me as she talks about the old days."

Israel Minkoff and Eva Greenberg met, and were married in 1931. Israel <sup>made an effort at</sup> ~~ostensibly~~ <sup>selling</sup> sold insurance, but Eva, who worked in the garment industry, was the breadwinner. They lived in one of the most poverty-stricken neighborhoods in the United States--Philadelphia's Strawberry Mansions. They had one child, Ray (Rachel's real name) Minkoff, November 6, 1934. Because Israel was much older than Eva and already had a family, Rachel had two half-sisters and one half-brother who were her mother's age, and later, nephews her own age.

Israel was an intellectual, and an avid reader of political journals, especially journals from the Soviet Union. "He kept up ~~with everything,~~" says Rachel, "with every news event that he could. He had a short wave radio that used to tune in to various countries. And he always walked around with literally bundles of newspapers and magazines and journals sticking out of his pockets, and spent a good part of his time reading." Although he might have been active in left wing politics, by the time Rachel came along, Israel Minkoff was an old man, ill with a number of ailments, and not actively involved in causes.

An only child, Rachel was, from the beginning, a striver and a perfectionist. She discovered very early the value of hard work.



In nursery school in Philadelphia, her teacher remarked on Rachel's musical talent. And like most little girls, she was starry-eyed about dancing. When a dancer came to the school, she was spellbound.

"She danced on her toes, with socks over her shoes," says Rachel. "When she came towards me, she appeared to be spinning on the tips of her toes. I was fascinated by that, and decided then and there that I would ask my mother if I could study dancing."

In September, 1940, Mrs. Minkoff enrolled Rachel, then 6, in the local dancing school--Mimi and Eva's Dancing School--where Rachel studied for several years. "It was not good training technically, but it was taught with love for the art of dance," she says. "I had a chance to perform, and to do exercises to interesting music, and it started my love of dance."

At Mimi and Eva's, she studied tap, ballet, and elocution. When Rachel was 14, in 1948, Mimi died. A new teacher from New York came. She opened up new vistas to Rachel, and gave her a glimpse of the path she would take to become a dancer.

In September, 1948, she left Eva, and enrolled in the Littlefield Ballet Studio, where the work was more technically demanding. She became aware of how challenging dance was, and how much intelligence, talent and commitment it took. This new knowledge made her want to dance that much more and she decided to become a dancer.

Rachel was an over-achiever. In school, she belonged to all the political organizations, and played the French horn in the school orchestra. "I wasn't pushed," she says, "but I always took on too much. I liked boys and parties, like any normal kids, but I was not part of the in-crowd at school. Instead, I belonged to the peace club, which was not something you did in high school. I was thought a bit weird." She attended Girls' School in Philadelphia, a school with a high academic reputation.

Rachel was compulsive about dance. The very zeal which was so essential in her drive to success has got her into amusing scrapes all her life.



"I used to hang on to anything in the way of a barre," she says. "One night I was hanging on to my parents' bed, because the bedroom had an open hallway next to it. They were fast asleep in the bed. I was hanging on to the bedpost, doing my exercises, and the springs collapsed and the bed fell down. There was quite a commotion."

Rachel also went to the studio at odd hours to practice. A cleaning lady usually let her in. When the cleaning lady wasn't there, she would climb through a window, and once a policeman came by and thought she was breaking in.

Rachel became obsessed with dance, until it was the only thing in life she wanted to do. But in order to become a dancer, she had to go to New York.

At the invitation of the Philadelphia Ballet Society, Anthony Tudor, a prominent New York dancer and choreographer, came to Philadelphia in 1950, to set a version of Les Sylphides for them, to be performed with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. Rachel auditioned, got in, and worked with Tudor.

Tudor recommended two New York teachers--Edward Cayton, an older man who taught for Alvin Ailey's American Ballet Theatre, and Benjamin Harkarvy, a young man just coming up.

Rachel's parents were aghast at her decision to become a dancer. Their 17-year-old daughter, a dancer, alone in New York? But once the idea had sunk in, they pitched in to help her fulfil her dream. Her father placed an ad in the New York Times and found her a part-time typing job in New York. He arranged for her to share a friend's room in the apartment of a teacher at 116th and Lexington Avenue. So before she had set foot in New York, she had a job and a place to live.

The day after she graduated from high school, she left for New York. She was 17. It was 1951.

She tried both Cayton and Harkarvy. Although she thought Cayton was excellent, it was Harkarvy who caught her imagination.



Benjamin Harkarvy was an unlikely candidate for dance. "He was 25, bald, very big and heavy, and was extremely knowledgeable about music and dance. He was a student of Madam Platova--a Russian emigre teacher who taught anatomy and body placement. Harkarvy took Platova's theories much further. "His all-round understanding and love of dance were what attracted <sup>ed</sup> me," Rachel says. <sup>ll</sup> His teaching was magnificent. It was wonderful to hear how he would speak about movement, how he analyzed the work of the other choreographers. Suddenly, I discovered I had to learn the most difficult movement on an ABC basis."

Harkarvy's ideas were compelling, and his reputation spread ~~until he was attracting~~ outstanding dancers like Melissa Hayden and Allegra Kent from Balanchine's New York City Ballet--and almost the entire Martha Graham company <sup>flocked.</sup>--to his classes.

Harkarvy took note of Rachel's dedication and lack of money, and arranged a scholarship for her.

~~In spite of the hardships,~~ Rachel's love of dance drew her on.

"Although I didn't have the ideal dancer's body--I wasn't loose jointed enough--I was always a good jumper and turner, and I had good feet. So those things helped me to absorb the technique."

Rachel also studied with the late Robert Joffrey, who later founded the Joffrey Ballet Company. When he started to teach in Greenwich Village in the early fifties, he was unable to afford an accompanist, so he used two wooden sticks to beat out the time for the exercises.

To learn the older Russian ballet technique, Rachel took classes at the School of American Ballet (which was associated with Balanchine's New York City Ballet) where Russian teachers of the old school, like Felia Dubrovskaya and Madame Perioslovak, taught.

*former member of  
the Russian  
Imperial Ballet.*

Rachel auditioned for work in companies, and for summer stock. Rachel danced in the summer stock production of Oklahoma! and joined Actors' Equity in 1953.



In New York, Rachel also took classes at The New School for Socialist Research in the evening, and studied Marxism. "My reading in the social sciences is certainly not extensive," she says, "but I did try to read simple tracts to convince myself that these were my beliefs." There she met Don Browne, who was also studying there. A recent university graduate, he managed a Kresge's store. He offered to buy Rachel dinner at the Automat, and watched in amazement as Rachel, who was living on peanut butter sandwiches, wolfed down the Automat food.

They were married in 1953. Rachel was 18; Don was 28.

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It is a dry sunny noon in the summer [redacted] Don had told me he would be wearing a peace button. I met Rachel's former husband at the Double Greeting Snack House, a tiny Chinese hole in the wall shaded by a tree. It is one of those restaurants that looks like a kitchen. The walls are knotty pine, the chairs are chrome; the tables <sup>tops are</sup> ~~have~~ red arborite ~~surfaces~~. surfaces.

1988  
a social worker  
at the  
Mount Carmel  
Clinic

A crumpled, greying man is leaning on his elbows at one of the tables. He is wearing a navy blue blazer and a wine-colored shirt without a tie. There is a small black and white peace button on the lapel of his blazer. I ask if he's Don Browne. He says yes. ~~I notice~~ his glasses magnify his eyes. He reminds me of Gale Gordon in Our Miss Brooks.

*at the kind worn by people who have had cataract operations.*

Don Browne is a social worker at Winnipeg's Mount Carmel Clinic, where the director is Anne Ross, wife of CP leader Bill Ross. Don is a kind of unordained preacher. He is founder of Winnipeg's Age and Opportunity Centres, long-time CP member, peace worker, and a former longshoreman on the New York waterfront--*the Karl Malden of Winnipeg.* a man straight out of Kazan's On the Waterfront, ~~Doctorow's Loon Lake--or Winnipeg's North End.~~

Don's voice is gravelly and tough; like Rachel, he has a Philadelphia accent. He ~~is open and~~ talks freely about his relationship with Rachel, taking care to keep the thread of the narrative on an even keel. I am struck by his concern, warmth, tolerance, and generosity. He and I study the plastic-bound menu. The specialty of the Double Greeting is congee, a kind of rice porridge, ~~not a French holiday.~~ We each select a bowl of congee, and he starts to talk.



Don too grew up in Strawberry Mansions. There was a 10-year difference between him and Rachel. They attended the same school but at different times. Don joined the army in 1942 when Ray was still in junior high.

"I joined the army the day before the war ended--I was taken in on August 13, 1945; the war ended August 14," says Don. "I was part of the occupation of Germany, and spent 2 1/2 years in service. I arrived back in the States after everyone had forgotten about the war. I was guaranteed \$75 a month as a veteran and took a degree in arts at Penn State."

He intended to go to law school. But he had to work moving furniture three days a week, and spend the other three days in law school. He found he didn't have enough time to study. So he became a trainee at Kresge and Co, which took him to Brooklyn, N.Y.

~~Don explains Rachel's name is really Ray. "At least, I know her~~  
~~by that,"~~ he says. He had been working for Kresge's for three  
*which he says is Rachel's real name.*  
or four months when he met Ray. They discovered they had grown  
up in the same neighborhood. "She was a single child; I had  
nine brothers and sisters. She went to a camp for  
underprivileged children, where one of my older sisters was the

camp director. There were things common to both of us." He and Rachel shared their political interests--they were both socialists; they were both active in the peace movement. "That was one of the attractions we had at the beginning," he said.

"There was no reasonable expectation we would meet," says Don. "I was working and had an income; she was a struggling student. I would ask her to have dinner with me so she would get enough to eat.

"I would go home to Philadelphia every couple of weeks, and call her parents to relieve their anxiety about their 17-year-old away from home for the first time. We went to Philadelphia together to meet her parents, and the relationship started.

"Her parents were very interesting. Easy talkers. Her father was an aggressive person. I went over a couple of times and introduced myself. He accepted me. He was one of my most unforgettable characters. He had poor eyesight, and was physically frail. He was always on the stool.



"Ray and I became serious about each other and planned marriage. My versatility permitted me<sup>e</sup> to get involved in her dance career. I went to classes, and became knowledgeable about ballet."

It was the time of Senator Joseph McCarthy, the Hollywood Ten, the House Unamerican Activities Committee, blacklisting, the Fifth Amendment. "The trade union movement and the left were dissipated," says Don.

"Ray is a creative person," says Don, "and wanted to express these concerns in her dance. We started The New Century Dancers, an amateur dance program, which included people of all colors and shapes. We had the use of a settlement house on the Lower East Side. It was a very creative time." He had learned stagecraft at Penn State, when he was the lighting supervisor of a theatre group. "It doesn't take much brains to get into these things." he says.

The New Century Dancers made dances co-operatively. "We considered ourselves major left-wing dance types," said Rachel. "At first we tried to set up certain criteria for the kind of people who would join this group, only people who had a socialist point of view, and who wanted to make dances about positive, good things. It was very childish and pretentious. We had set out to be an interracial group, to reflect things that were happening around us, anti-war things."

Although Don was doing well as a Kresge's trainee, he got fed up with the merchandising field. "One day the superintendent from the district came around. I had been hiring black and Puerto Rican kids to work part time. The superintendent called me on the carpet for this. My sense of fairness came to the fore and I stood my ground. These were neighborhood people who needed the work. I was transferred to head office in Des Moines, Iowa. So I resigned."

He went to work in a metal plating place, then as a shipping clerk at Carl Fisher, a music store in the Carnegie hall area. He left Carl Fisher to go to the waterfront as a longshoreman,



from '52 to '58. I enjoyed it. I am of small stature, but I was strong, healthy. I wanted to help improve the working conditions. We married in 1953. Ray would have me go to the dance studios, I would be greasy and dirty, and she would point me out, and say, 'There's my husband.'

The couple's first apartment was at 99 Suffolk Street, on New York's East Side. It was a 'cold water' flat, meaning that it had no hot water, and no heat. It was also a 'railroad' apartment, whose rooms were all lined up like boxcars, with no partitions between them. The bathtub was attached to the kitchen sink. The toilet was in the hallway, and was shared by many families. "And the roaches!" cries Rachel now. But they were young, and the hair shirt accommodations didn't bother them.

In 1954, when Rachel was 20, Harkarvy heard of an opening for a dancer in the Dance Drama Company, known informally as the Ryder-Frankel company, run by Mark Ryder and Emily Frankel. This company did both modern dance and ballet. It was a group of eight--four women, four men. Harkarvy felt that Rachel would make out well in a company that did both modern and ballet. She auditioned and was accepted.

This was her first exposure to modern dance. "Here I was, suddenly exposed to this rough, raw, strange movement. I adapted quite well to it. I had no modern technique--sometimes I just danced out of instinct--but it sparked my interest." Frankel and Ryder did the choreography, and Todd Bolander set his dance, *The Stillpoint*, on the New York Dance Drama Company. Rachel joined the Ryder-Frankel company, and began to tour with them.

Don continued to work on the waterfront. "I was part of Local 1814 of the International Longshoreman's Association (ILA)," says Don. "Tony Anastasia, a mafia gangster, was president. The Anastasia brothers ran the union--their name was synonymous with racketeering. Some of us got into the union to to stop the corruption. Racketeering was so widespread, something had to be done. So the New York Waterfront Commission was set up to correct social ills.

"The waterfront was ideal. There were no regular hours. Sometimes you worked 15 hours, sometimes 100. It had the highest rate of pay in the United States for unskilled labour--\$3.50 an hour. Dinner hours, you got double time; night shift, time and a half. You had so much time away from work. When there was work, someone would call you up.



"There were 10,000 Italians, 1,000 blacks and myself. My demeanor and carriage was much different from the others. They were curious about me, they were suspicious of new guys--they could be government agents trying to see who the stoolies were. The Italians were in the country illegally, paying 25 cents an hour back to the union. They were afraid to speak up about working conditions. The Anastasias were known to put people in the harbor with cement shoes.

"As proof of our efforts, by the time I left, Local 1814 had a complete health clinic, available to all members of the union and their families. This was the first time in the States this had been done."

"I really enjoyed being a longshoreman. I went to railroad stations, and shipping yards, I had experience and knowhow. But I was married to a young ballet dancer who was away a good part of the year on university circuits, whereas I was home-based."

## THE EARLY YEARS II

Rachel was with the Ryder-Frankel company for about three years. She didn't see much of Don, as she was on the road for most of the year. "I was looking for a situation where I could perform, and yet not be away touring all the time," says Rachel. Harkarvy had been asked to be the artistic director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and asked Rachel to come to Winnipeg as one of the principal dancers.

"I was, of course, flabbergasted," says Rachel, "because I had never heard of Winnipeg. I thought Winnipeg was somewhere in Europe, in Switzerland or Sweden. I don't have to tell you I was thrilled out of my mind. Because in Winnipeg, not only could I work with my favorite teacher and continue to grow, but I could work in the ballet idiom and I could work on pointe onstage, performing classical ballet, because the Royal Winnipeg had a mixed repertoire of classical and modern ballet. So I jumped at the opportunity. Rachel came up to Winnipeg alone in 1956 to join the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.



"I thought I'd try it out for a year," says Rachel, "and head back to New York, because that's where the action was. I tried it for one year, and loved it. So I stayed the second, third, fourth and fifth years.

Harkarvy left Winnipeg to form the Netherlands Dance Theatre. Arnold Spohr was appointed director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in 1958. Rachel remained in Winnipeg with Spohr and the RWB.

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Don remained on the New York waterfront. In May 1958, he suffered a severe head injury, with concussion, while at work ~~on the waterfront.~~ "The suspicion was that somebody came up and hit me from behind," he says. "I had a long convalescence and recovery.

"After his head injury, he packed up and came to Winnipeg to join Rachel. "If Ray had not come here, I would have stayed there on the waterfront. We would have continued having a marriage when we saw each other only occasionally."

Don had been up to Winnipeg a couple of times. He had no job. The Canadian Immigration welcomed him with open arms, and he was immediately granted landed immigrant status.

"I talked myself into an untrained social work job at the City of Winnipeg Welfare Department. Cliff Patrick asked me to do a research survey on the Salvation Army, to find out who the transient single men staying in their hostels were. I interviewed 100 men, and found they were bush workers--men who helped build our Northern areas. They were less and less in demand for manual labor, were housed in hostels, and creating a nuisance. I lived with the Sally Ann, I slept there, had breakfast there.

The survey was used all over North America. As a result of this survey, Don got a \$2,000 grant, which enabled him to take his Masters of Social work at the University of Manitoba. He graduated in 1961.

"The City of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Foundation for Age and Opportunity were starting a program for elderly people. They needed someone to supervise it. Cliff Patrick wanted to bring in a progressionist to help. I started the Notre Dame Senior Citizens Day Centre, and was director till 1968.



"It was fortunate I fell into this job. It was an innovative program for elderly people that became a necessity. The program developed. In 1964, I presented a brief to the Senate. I applied for citizenship at the same time. I said in my brief, Here's one of your newest citizens talking about your oldest citizens. The brief was written up in Hansard, and is part of the history of our country," he adds, <sup>Proudly,</sup> ~~modestly~~.

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Rachel loved the classical works. "Spohr had a much different style from Harkavy," says Rachel. "Harkavy was very intellectual, very analytical, very cool in many ways. Arnold was exactly the opposite--hot headed, with a short temper but a very warm heart. The warm heart was what many of us liked very much, along with his artistic taste and his passion for getting the best out of us."

The ballet toured with two pianists, and even in the city, it used only a very small orchestra. "Arnold used to stand in the orchestra pit and conduct the duo-pianists while gazing up on the stage to see how we were doing," says Rachel. "He would set the tempo, and when he got very excited, the tempo would suddenly increase. Or we would

catch sight of him grimacing if we had done something really ridiculous. It was quite hilarious."

"Ideally in a theatre, a performer can cross the stage behind the curtain, and get to the other side of the stage for an entrance. The theatre in Medicine Hat, had no crossovers, and we had to change all our exits and entrances for a dance choreographed by Arnold Spohr called Ballet Premiere, and of course it was important to him that we do it well. It was winter and there was one entrance where we had to go outside to get to the other side of the stage. It was quite devastating to our legs. In this one section a man took a large lunge and put out his hand to greet me, and I never came on stage. Arnold was in the orchestra, conducting the pianist, and I became very very upset. Devastated. Afterwards, we laughed about it. A long time afterwards."

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Rachel was with the RWB for five seasons. In 1960, now 26, she ~~like other dancers~~, was thinking about having children. But she had been told that she would not be able to become pregnant. In May 1961, she and Don adopted a child, their first daughter, Ruth, at nine months.

Rachel stopped dancing and stayed home with Ruth. But she missed dancing terribly. She practiced and took classes all the



time. The Brownes adopted a second daughter, Miriam, in September 1962. Rachel was at home with two children. The frustrations of motherhood made her want to dance more than ever.

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Nenad Lhotka, a Yugoslav born in Zagreb, and his wife Jill, had answered an ad in a London newspaper for dancers and a ballet master to work with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. They came to Winnipeg, and were hired. Lhotka had thought he was to be artistic director, which was what the term ballet master meant to him. But ballet master was a more subordinate position, like that of rehearsal director, and the politics within the ballet caused Lhotka to leave after one year.

When Harkarvy came in 1956, bringing several dancers with him, among them Rachel Browne, he made contact with Nenad and Jill, and they and Rachel met at social gatherings.

Nenad and Jill Lhotka established the Lhotka Ballet Studio on St. Mary's Avenue in the fall of 1956. Soon they needed more space. In 1959, they moved to a dilapidated building on the corner of Donald and Graham, the site now occupied by the

Winnipeg Centennial Library. The building was known as the Aragon Building, as it formerly housed the Aragon Ballroom. Other enterprises had space in the Aragon Building--Pollock's School of Beauty, and Bell's Drugstore.

The abandoned ballroom was filled with pictures and signs advertising steamed hot dogs. It was equipped with mirrored balls, the kind that shed sparks of light on the dance floor when they rotate, and housed a community of pigeons. All of which created a wistful atmosphere of faded romance and lost dreams perfectly in tune with the theatrical illusions of dance.

~~By 1963, however, Rachel's personal life was in turmoil.~~ <sup>But</sup> After having been told she could not bear a child of her own, Rachel found herself pregnant. She was delighted, and gave birth to Annette a year in 1963.

That year, she approached Nenad Lhotka and asked if she could work as a teacher. The Lhotkas did most of the teaching themselves. Nevertheless, their school did not make much money. So Nenad was reluctant to hire her as a full time teacher. But he did hire her to teach a few classes of older students because of her knowledge of modern dance.



The Lhotka Ballet Studio took up the second and fourth floors. The Aragon Ballroom was located on the third floor. Rachel began to work with several students of Lhotka's studio, and Lhotka gave her some rehearsal space in the building.

Bell's Drugstore, on the main floor, had a cafeteria where bran muffins were sold. Rachel and her crew frequently snacked on the muffins. Crumbs from the bran muffins drove the caretaker ~~into a fury~~ <sup>to distraction</sup> because they attracted cockroaches. "The cockroaches were detrimental to enrollment in the school," says Nenad.

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"The compulsion to dance and express herself became an obsession," says Don. "Raising children doesn't involve that kind of expression. Ray was taking lessons, and keeping her body in shape. Her interest in modern dance took hold. She's a highly energetic and creative person."

"I was supportive of the idea. I was a bit of a househusband to begin with. I knew how to raise children from taking care of my nieces and nephews. But Rachel was spending so much time at the dance studio--from 8 in the morning till 10 or 11 at night.

Israel Minkoff died in 1963. Eva Minkoff came to Winnipeg. ~~"She was able to get her social security from the States, and under the Canadian Old Age Security Act, which says that residents of 10 years can get old age security without being citizens"~~ says Don. "We had the assistance of Ray's mother being here. But I was starting a new career, I needed some time, some support. Ray didn't have the capacity to share that part of my life. So our differences began."

Ray told Don that it wasn't the quantity of the time she spent with him, but the quality. But he didn't buy that. "That didn't help the estrangement. We had three children. I have always been an active person, I only need four or five hours sleep. I was keeping the house together. Her mother was the babysitter for all the children.

By the summer of 1965, the Brownes were separated. ~~"Mrs. Minkoff was very, very upset with Ray at our split-up,"~~ says Don.



What were the reasons for the breakup? "Ray has a compulsion to use dance as an expression of her creativity," says Don. "To be a dancer of the quality she wanted, her whole body had to be in shape. She couldn't make the compromise between expressing her creativity and handling her marriage and family, so there was an imbalance.

"Ray had the drive to dance that took her to New York. That's what a creative person has to do." ~~But she had the ability to~~  
*She could* block out her personal life and her family while at the dance studio. And she put her choreography before everything else. "That's what was needed to get anywhere in North America in this field," Don admits. ~~"But~~ she's a warm, friendly caring generous person. We had no hostility.

Don shifts slightly in his chair, but there is no change in his voice. "I wasn't accepting continuing the family situation" he says. "She could have survived in the marriage if I had accepted. Mrs. Minkoff was approaching her 65th year. We were demanding all her time. It was a contest of who was available to look after the kids. Ray had built up this shield so that the problems with me and her mother didn't penetrate at all. It was an unhappy experience, because it could have worked out a lot better. Because there was no compromising, we agreed to separate.

"We had a trial separation to see if there was room for adjustment. I took the two oldest girls; Ray took Annette. I became a single parent with two children. I had the ability to do it. It appeared strange for a man to do it. Men weren't doing it. But I had a great time.

"Ray lived alone with Annette. I chose not to do any parenting of Annette at all. Many people were critical of that choice. My rationale said that I had four responsibilities--a job, with a whole new program; my children, Ruth and Miriam, my interest in the world, and myself, Don Browne, the person. All four had to be secured. To have been the visiting father was beyond my capacity. I was stubborn. I held onto my decision. If Annette had needs, Ray the mother had to work with it. Through common sense, and lack of fault-finding, the thing worked itself out."

Soon there were three senior citizens' day care centres in the city--The Notre Dame Day Centre, the Selkirk Avenue Day Centre, and Lion's Manor. When the funders wanted to merge the three into one, Don disagreed. "This was something I could not win," he says. He left.



He became the first male social worker in the pre-school program for the Society for Crippled Children and Adults. "They welcomed a man, because the terrible problems of crippled children are human problems, not just women's problems," he says.

In 1965 and 1970 Don had cataract operations. The 1970 operation went wrong. His left eye hemorrhaged, and doctors thought it would have to be removed. But with good care, in three months he regained the vision in his left eye. Now he has 20-20 vision with the cataract glasses that magnify his eyes. "The damn eye cured itself!" he says in amazement.

*cataract in 1970*  
At the time of his ~~eye~~ operation, he came in contact with the Mount Carmel Clinic, a generic health care clinic, which assists people with mental health, blindness, education, bankruptcy, child care and legal problems. He became a member of the board, and changed the structure of the clinic. When he had recuperated, he was hired as a social worker by the Manitoba government, and was seconded to the Mount Carmel Clinic in October 1970. He's been there ever since. "No two days are alike," he says. "I'm very happy and satisfied."

"People are surprised I'm not burnt out," he says. "I've never woken up saying, Oh, do I have to go to work? It comes from being an active person in the community. 85 per cent of people's problems are socially induced."

Don has never lost interest in the law. He has been on the board of Osborne House, on the Legal Services Committee, and with Legal Aid Manitoba for many years. "The field has changed, but the interest is the same," he says.

He also became an international track and field official, in response to Ruth's interest in track.

He has always been active in the peace movement. He was one of the founders of the Manitoba Peace Council, an executive on the Winnipeg Co-ordinating Committee on Disarmament. He's been labour peace representative on the Winnipeg Labour Council, and chief marshal at the annual June Winnipeg Peace March, the second largest in Canada. ~~He was also involved in the Telebridge hook-up between the Ukraine and Winnipeg.~~



Although he now has only casual contact with Ray, he sees Mrs. Minkoff once a week. "She is one of the grand old ladies of our time. Now she has poor eyesight, is 88, most of her acquaintances have died. She asked me what I was going to do in the year 2,000. I said I was going to be as physically active, mentally alert as I am now, and I would visit every country in the world and as a Christian, would help them celebrate the millenium. It's the beginning of the sixth millenium. I teased her, asked her if she wanted to accompany me. She laughs when I mention it to her. She spent her life as a reader, enjoyed the outdoors. She used to sit at the park at Mountain and Main watching the people pass by. Now she can't go unaccompanied, which is the main reason why I visit her.

Don met Ben Sokoloff a professor of English at the University of Manitoba, and discovered that they had both attended the same high school in Philadelphia--Ben was a year ahead of Don. "I noticed this similarity in Ben and myself. A few years later, Ben met Ray and married her."

*He has lived with a teacher for*  
 Don too has made his own life. ~~"One of my daughters a couple of~~ *the past*  
~~years ago mentioned someone was having a 25th anniversary. She~~ *five years*  
~~said, "You know, dad, you can't say that" I said, I can say~~  
~~I've had three happy love affairs, one for 10 years, and the~~  
~~other for five years with a schoolteacher. We have a very good~~  
~~living arrangement now.~~ *He was live*  
*"he says to father"*

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*Don*  
 In 1965, at 31, Rachel was on her own financially. She taught  
 at the Lhotka Ballet Studio, at the theatre department at the  
 University of Winnipeg, and in the theatre and broadcasting  
 department of Tec Voc High School. She also did dance therapy  
 for patients at the Psychiatric Institute at the Health  
 Sciences Centre, and at the Kinsmen School for the Mentally  
 Handicapped.

Now Rachel had a place to work in the Aragon Building, where  
 she could stay as late as she wanted to. She began to rehearse  
 with a group of dance students at the Lhotka Studio. To try out  
 her ideas on a Winnipeg audience, she wanted to put on a  
 concert, using the Lhotkas, and her students, and herself.



*omit top 87*

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In February, 1964, a group consisting of Rachel Browne, Nenad and Jill Lhotka, and students Jennifer Ingram, Cheryl Belkin and Janice Narvey, performed Songs and Dances, a dance choreographed by Rachel Browne, to music by American folk artist Odetta, in Tache Hall (the Residence Auditorium or 'Res Aud') at the University of Manitoba, as part of a concert produced under the auspices of the Special Events Department. The concert was organized by Danny Finkleman, now a CBC broadcaster.

The dance troupe, which called themselves The Contemporary Dancers, shared the evening with the Marta Hidy trio--violinist Marta Hidy, cellist Clara Benjamin, and pianist Chester Duncan--"a world class trio," says Victor Cowie, a University of Manitoba English professor, who, with his wife Gerrie, was in the audience that night.

*belonged to*

Gerrie was among those who in 1961 ~~founded~~ *belonged to* a Voice of Women (VOW) study group in Winnipeg. The women in VOW were those who had been married in the Fifties when the Feminine Mystique--the myth that held that housewife and mother was the consummate role for a woman--prevailed. But these intelligent, concerned young women had more on their minds than motherhood and apple pie. They wanted to get involved.

"We tried to educate ourselves about the world," says Gerrie.  
"We brought in women speakers, we gave papers, we tried to understand different countries and learn about their religions. We had vigils and petitions."

Rachel too belonged to VOW. She held a meeting at the Aragon Ballroom, where she was working with her dancers. Gerrie had admired Rachel's dancing at RWB performances. She was interested in dance herself. So, after the birth of her third child in 1963, Gerrie took adult dance classes from Rachel at the Lhotka studio.

"It was a fresh performance," said Vic. "Everyone was charmed by it. It was very lyrical, free flowing. People liked that. The women wore yellow dresses with swirling skirts. Nenad was the only male dancer. He was stripped naked to the waist, and swung a mimed hammer, as if breaking rocks, to Water Boy. You were closer to the performers than usual. You could see the sweat breaking out on Nenad."

Gerrie was impressed by the concert, and she began to get involved with the Contemporary Dancers.



arrived 10 P.M. 87.

### THE CLIMATE OF THE TIMES

In 1961, Victor Cowie was a lecturer in English at the University of Manitoba. A stooped, sensitive, poetic-looking young man with an aquiline nose, a charming, one-sided smile and a humourous, gentle presence, Vic mesmerized his students with his readings of Keats and Shakespeare. He was also a good enough actor to win parts in professional stage productions, and through the years, popped up frequently on the MTC stage.

Today, Vic is in his mid-fifties, the U of M's favorite professor of Shakespeare, and a kind of Winnipeg cult figure. He is very low-key, and is known more for his teaching ability and inherent actor's gift for language than for any outright striving. You get the feeling that, with him, action is too direct, achievement a little too deliberate. <sup>Reflection</sup>~~Contemplation~~ and conversation suit him more.

In 1988, Vic and Gerrie still live in the same house in Riverview, an obscure residential backwater. Their tan stucco house has the <sup>ascetic</sup>~~dry hoary~~ look of an English etching. The paint looks almost original. <sup>? what wood?</sup>

Chapter 5

Inside, the atmosphere is ascetic and academic. It is the home of people whose affinities are for thought, books, and words. There are a few bright suburban touches tacked on as necessary afterthoughts, but there is an overall lack of concern for effect. In the living room, a stereo straddled by two mammoth speakers proves the Cowies are music lovers. The dining room suite is traditional and dark, the lace tablecloth cluttered with china, silver, flowers and, in a baby seat, the Cowies' two-month-old granddaughter. Her mom <sup>is</sup> ~~and dad~~ are over for a visit.

stet.

short blond hair, glasses, and a mellow voice,

We withdraw to the screened-in back porch for coffee. All the chairs look uncomfortable. I fall miles into one, then, on second thought, move to another. Vic settles into the couch; Gerry serves Jamaican Rum coffee. Vic's face is ruddy, his hair greying, the smile in his oblong face still charming. He pulls on one Medallion cigarette after another. His latest coup is appearing as the evil Hudson Bay Company factor in the second in the NFB Daughters of the Country series.

a warm  
strong  
woman  
with

He flips through his well-organized scrapbooks, bringing out old MTC programs, and reading snippets of reviews. Memory compounds memory; we get quite carried away.



*cultivating  
in a broad \*\*\*\*\*  
liberalizing movement*

Ideas and events exploded around the world on the cusp of the Fifties. They reverberated everywhere--in Paris, London, Rome, New York, San Francisco, Toronto, Montreal, and ultimately, in Winnipeg,

*where the climate change made the  
birth of the contemporary Quebec possible*

There was a need to find release from the repression of the Fifties. Reality was about to erupt through the blandness and sentimentality that covered everything. People wanted to get down to the nitty gritty.

In Europe, the post-war years gave birth to existentialism. As expounded by French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and Algerian novelist Albert Camus, it expressed the search for authenticity.

It was a belief born of the times. Existentialism proposed that the individual is isolated in an absurd universe. It held that existence precedes essence, and that an individual is defined by his or her choices and actions. Existentialism supported the right of the individual to be critical, to refuse to comply, to protest, to say no, to rebel.

Writers like Franz Kafka, Martin Buber, Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, and Colin Wilson were revived or embraced as existentialists. Artists like the sculptor Giacometti expressed existentialist tenets in visual terms.

Out of existentialism sprang the Theatre of the Absurd. Its primary exponents were Eugene Ionesco (*Rhinoceros*) and Samuel Beckett (*Waiting for Godot*).

The Nouvelle Vague (New Wave) emerged in Paris cinema. Alan Resnais made *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *Last Year at Marienbad*. Truffaut made *Jules et Jim*. Godard made *Breathless*, with Jean Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo. Filmmakers experimented with "cinema verite", France's documentary realism, in films like *Cleo de 5 a 7*. In Italy, Fellini made *La Dolce Vita*, with Marcello Mastroianni, and Antonioni made *L'Aventura*, with Monica Vitti. Sweden's Ingmar Bergman made *The Virgin Spring*, *Wild Strawberries*, *Winter Light*, *The Eclipse*, *The Seventh Seal*, *The Hour of the Wolf*, and others.

The movement was manifest in England in the work of the Angry Young Men--John Osborne, Alan Sillitoe, and Kingsley Amis. These writers stood against The Establishment, and "anti-establishment" became a popular catchphrase. Osborne wrote the play, *Look Back in Anger*--an example of "kitchen sink" drama. Novelist Allan Sillitoe wrote *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, both of which were made into gritty black and white films. Amis wrote *Lucky Jim*, which satirized academic life.



Oxford students Dudley Moore and Jonathan Miller appeared at the Edinburgh Festival in an anti-establishment revue called *Beyond the Fringe*, which had an extended run in London's West End, and sent both on to international fame. Peter Sellers and Harry Secombe made *The Goon Shows* on radio, and experimented with celluloid in *The Running, Jumping, and Standing Still Film*.

Other British films of the time include *Room at the Top* with Laurence Harvey and Simone Signoret; *This Sporting Life*, with Richard Harris; *The L-Shaped room*, with Leslie Caron as an unwed mother; and *The Entertainer*, starring Sir Laurence Olivier. The censorship trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* became a cause celebre.

In London, bluesman Long John Baldry and The Rolling Stones played at The Marquee Club in Soho. A new group from Liverpool called The Beatles came out with *She Loves You*, and *I Want To Hold Your Hand*. Male students in London art schools grew their hair, put on jeans, winklepickers and black leather, and abandoned visual art for the 'Blue Beat'.

In America, two suicides--the sullen James Dean and the sultry Marilyn Monroe--were the ikons of the age. From San Francisco came the Beats, whose song was sung by poets Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* became the bible for a new generation desperate to live. William Burroughs' nihilist junkie classic, *The Naked Lunch*, made its appearance. Bongo drums, poetry readings, espresso coffee, shades, and grass came out of the closet. It became okay to think.

In the mode of Henry James, Europe was the Mecca for young Americans in Madras in search of experience. Drawn by the soft-porn Tropics books of American expatriate Henry Miller, which sang the praises of 'free love' and libertinism in Paris, and carrying well-worn copies of *On the Road* in their knapsacks, North American students travelled between youth hostels by thumb, Vespa or Lambretta across a Europe yet unspoiled by the oncoming tourist hordes. These students smuggled Miller's soft, white-covered paper books, published by Maurice Girodias at Olympia Press, back to North America in trunks and knapsacks, striking another blow against censorship.



At the same time, people were becoming aware of the dangers of the atomic bomb. The Soviets, the French, the English and the Americans tested nuclear weapons above the ground. Bertrand Russell organized protest marches under the banner of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) (whose logo was the white semaphore signal for peace on a round black button) from the Aldermaston missile site in England to London. These marches helped to make people aware of the dangers of above-ground nuclear testing. People were learning of the buildup of radioactive materials in the air, and were finding it intolerable. Still, the word 'pollution' was unknown.

John F. Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon in the 1960 American election to become president of the United States, ending the Eisenhower years. The Americans brought advisors into Viet Nam under Kennedy in 1962.

The Cuban missile crisis brought the world to a standstill in the fall of 1962. The Soviets had put missiles in Cuba aimed at Florida. A soviet convoy was coming with more missiles, and an American warship was going to attack the convoy. It looked as if the Soviets were not going to back down, but Breshznev ultimately did so.

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"You could see the backs of women in American movies," says Vic, "Profanity was beginnning to emerge in films. People could say "Damn", and "Go to hell".

American movies did not yet reflect the British invasion. 1961 saw Psycho, Splendor in the Grass, Can Can, and The Misfits, Gable's last film. Lawrence of Arabia, West Side Story, Breakfast at Tiffany's, One-Eyed Jacks; and The Hustler were made in 1962; Cleopatra in 1963; Dr. Strangelove, The Sundowners and Elmer Gantry in 1964. Zorba the Greek, with Alan Bates and Anthony Quinn, expressed the need of the uptight Anglo to shed his Puritan straitjacket, and dance, sing, live.

Influential books included Norman Mailers' Advertisements for Myself, in which he wrote the landmark piece, The White Negro; James Baldwin's The Fire Next Time, and David Reisman's The Lonely Crowd, which defined the difference between the Outer-directed (square) individual and the Inner-directed (hip) individual. Time Magazine wrote about people who called themselves 'hippies', a word derived from 'hypo', from 'hypodermic', as in needle--people who 'dug' jazz, wore long hair, and spoke in the black vernacular, starting every sentence with 'Like', and ending it with 'man'.



American civil rights workers were murdered trying to get blacks to the polls. University students joined C.O.R.E.

*The Congress  
of Racial  
Equality*

Political protest surfaced in the songs of The Weavers and their Pete Seeger, whose We Shall Overcome became the anthem of the civil rights movement. Minneapolis' ambitious Robert Zimmerman went to Greenwich Village in New York, and to the Newport Folk Festival, sang with Joan Baez, recorded Blowin' in the Wind, and gave the movement its voice. Something was simmering and ready to explode. When the Beatles gave the Beat poets a distinctive image, it did.

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In Canada, John Diefenbaker was elected in a landslide in 1958. He was the Canadian Prime Minister at the time of the Cuban missile crisis.

While Toronto chafed under its reputation as Toronto the Good, Montreal delighted in its free, romantic image as the San Francisco of the North. There was movement between Montreal and New York, and so things happened earlier in Montreal than they did in Toronto. There were coffee houses on Stanley Street, and restaurants like the Pam Pam, and the Carman, run by Hungarian immigrants, where Leonard Cohen and his ladies rendezvoused.

The Voice of Women formed in Toronto in 1961. It was a group of housewives and mothers concerned about the effects of nuclear testing; not a women's liberation group. The VOW collected baby teeth for testing for traces of Strontium 90.

In Manitoba, the Liberal farmers' government of D.L. Campbell was defeated by Duff Roblin in 1959. Roblin came in with a new agenda, and a new kind of government.

The Winnipeg Blue Bombers won the Grey Cup in 1958 and 1959. Kenny Ploen was quarterback, and Bud Grant was coach.

Winnipeg's first Ukrainian mayor, Steve Juba, was elected in 1956, defeating the favored George Sharpe. Juba's win set the city on its heels. "Nobody thought a Ukrainian could beat a Wasp." *"Saint Vic."*

Winnipeg was desperate for cocktail bars, which had made their debut at the end of the Fifties. Juba campaigned on a platform of more liberal liquor laws. A Juba election billboard showed a hand holding a cocktail glass, with the word WHEN????? beside it. Once in office, Juba changed the laws. Women could finally go into drinking establishments; restaurants could serve wine with meals. The drinking age held at 21.



Vic remembers being at a student party at the home of Orde Morton, the son of the late Winnipeg historian W.L. Morton, on the November 1960 night Kennedy was elected. Cowie and Irving Layton withdrew to a back room of the house to listen to the election results on the radio. Layton was ardently pulling for Kennedy to beat Nixon.

Cowie remembers the Cuban missile crisis as the first real excitement on the University of Manitoba campus. "In the fall of 1962, I was lecturing on King Lear on a Friday afternoon," he says, "and two students came up to me after class and said, 'We may not see you again--ever.' There was a run on the banks. People were expecting nuclear war at any time."

A new stadium and arena were built, and Rae and Jerry's restaurant opened nearby. But the number one restaurant in Winnipeg was Pierre's on Portage Avenue. Other good restaurants were in hotels--the St. Regis, the Royal Alec and the Fort Garry.

The only fast food restaurants in Winnipeg were the Salisbury Houses and the A & W on Pembina Highway. Mamma Trossi's, an Italian restaurant on Pembina Highway, was the only ethnic restaurant in town. Trossi's got in trouble for allowing people to bring in their own wine. But this was the norm; [at parties at Jack's Place on the corner of University Crescent and Pembina Highway, people brought in mickeys of booze in brown paper bags, ordered a glass of mix, lowered the glass below table level, and gave it a shot from the bag. Jack's Place had a cylindrical dome on top, which was later painted black when Jack's became a folk club called The Fifth Dimension, which brought in acts like Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee.

A coffee house on Carlton Street opposite the Winnipeg Free Pres called the Java Shop was a centre for Winnipeg beat poets and artists, and people who liked to drink coffee and play chess. Women in long black sweaters, long black tights and long black hair hung out there. Men wore shades, black turtle neck sweaters and berets, and used cigarette holders. There was jazz by Brubeck, Thelonious Monk, the Modern Jazz Quartet, and Miles Davis. Another nightspot was the Stage Door, on Fort Street, a late night jazz club featuring guitarist Lenny Breau.



People were dying for culture. Winnipeg was ahead of Edmonton and Calgary in population, and had more to offer culturally than either of those two cities. Still, there was no Centennial Concert Hall, no Manitoba Theatre Centre. In 1962, a Calgary woman was quoted as saying, "Oh, we often go into Winnipeg for a few days. We try to time it so we see the theatre or a symphony concert or the ballet. We go up to the Gallery. Last year we saw the Van Gogh exhibition. You're lucky to live there. It's just like New York."

The Richardson family owned the land at the corner of Portage and Main. On this land was a filling station and the Dominion Theatre. A second theatre, Theatre 77, was located 77 paces from Main Street--where the Westin Hotel now stands. Another theatre, the Beacon, stood on the site of the Centennial Concert Hall.

The amateur Winnipeg Little Theatre merged with Theatre 77 to become the Manitoba Theatre Centre, the first regional theatre in North America. The first home of the Manitobe Theatre Centre was the Dominion Theatre, which the Richardsons permitted John Hirsch to use.

Winnipeg was alive with theatre people--Donnelly Henry--later Donnelly Rhodes--son of Tribune theatre critic Ann Henry, Eoin Sprott, Desmond Scott, Perry Rosemond, George Waight and Gordon Pinsent. Chris Dafoe was theatre critic of the Winnipeg Free Press.

Productions included Moliere's *The Lady's In Love With Learning*, and Ionesco's *The Lesson*. Gordon Pinsent appeared as one of Willy Loman's sons in a landmark 1956 production of *Death of a Salesman*. "That production made him an accomplished actor," said Cowie. "Everyone felt sorry for him, until that production."

Donnelly Henry made his stage debut in *Bonfire of 1962*, a satirical revue after *My Fur Lady* and *Spring Thaw*. Others involved in this show were music director Neil Harris, choreographer James Clouser, James Blendick and Eric Donkin, both of whom went to Stratford. The design assistant was artist Louis Bako. Georges LaFleche, brother to Giselle MacKenzie, was the featured tenor in the show.

Arnold Spohr became artistic director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in 1958. Robert Johnston was ballet manager, and Brian MacDonald was resident choreographer.



The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Victor Feldbrill, performed in the Civic Auditorium, now the Public Archives Building.

The Auditorium also housed the museum, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery, of which Dr. Ferdinand Eckhardt was curator. In 1961, the Winnipeg Art Gallery held a major exhibition of the works of Van Gogh. Also, The Gees, Winnipeg impresarios, brought in concert performers in their Celebrity Concert series--which everyone attended.

There was no connection with the States when television arrived in Winnipeg in 1954. Among the shows available on CBWT, the CBC channel, were Red River Jamboree, Don Messer's Jubilee, Juliette, and Hockey Night In Canada. The news was at 10 p.m.; Earl Cameron was the CBC national anchor. Sunday night's lineup was Ed Sullivan at 7, Bonanza at 8, Close-Up, a precursor to This Hour Has Seven Days, at 9. Ed Russenholt was the local weatherman.

Radio featured Bob Goulet, Max Ferguson, the BBC News, and The Archers. By 1960, soap operas like The Road to Happiness, and Ma Perkins had gone off the air. Tom Hendry, an associate of the Manitoba Theatre Centre, was in the cast of The Jackson Family, a 10-minute radio show that came on at 12:30 after the farm broadcast. Each show contained some moral that could be applied to life on a farm. The cast were able to make a living by being on The Jackson Family.

Leonard David Stone, later the manager of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, ran an art cinema called Pace, which showed films like And Quiet Flows the Don, a film of Mikhail Sholokov's novel, and Bergman's The Magician. The Valour Cinema, now the site of Advance Electronics, ran as an art cinema from 1948 to 1960, showing British and European films.

Long hair did not come to Winnipeg until 1967. That year, Vic made a movie called And No Birds Sing, from Keats' La Belle Dame Sans Merci.

He had to decide whether or not the hero should have long hair. He decided the hero should be an average student with short hair, who looked down at people with long hair.



Not until 1968, did hippiedom move into the middle class in Winnipeg and change the way people looked. Before that, there was a dress code at university--~~boys~~ had to wear jackets and ties, and girls had to wear skirts. If a girl was seen in slacks, the Dean of Women could send her home. 1968 was the year that kids began to wear blue jeans to university.

These were the forces <sup>that shaped</sup> of the times which we now take for granted.  
~~The cultural revolution was not a political or economic one but made many new forms developed, and the establishment of a modern dance company in Canada was possible.~~

## THE EARLY YEARS III

The roots of 20th century modern dance grow in American soil. The pulse of modern dance has always reverberated from New York City.

In 1964, there was no modern dance tradition in Canada at all. Woman still wore brassieres to dance; people didn't "understand" bare feet, said Toronto Dance Theatre founder Trish Beattie. In 1964, Beattie was in New York, dancing with Graham. Outside of Rachel Browne's group of amateurs, the only company performing modern dance in 1964 in Canada was Ottawa's La Groupe de La Place Royale. The Toronto Dance Theatre did not really get going until 1968. Even London did not get modern dance until 1970, when the Ballet Rambert made the switch.

There was a ready-made dance audience in Winnipeg because of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. People attended concerts of both ballet and experimental dance. "Dance was very popular here," says Rachel. "I didn't feel stifled at all."

There were no male modern dancers in Canada, and they are still scarce. "We looked to the ballet as a source of male dancers," says Rachel. "The ballet's male dancers and Nenad Lhotka could always be relied upon to perform, and Arnold Spohr acted as advisor."



Knowing little about modern dance techniques, Rachel took the first of many annual trips to New York in the summer of 1964; she paid for the first trips herself.

"I went first to the very renowned Martha Graham Studio and worked there for several summers," she says. "I also studied with Merce Cunningham at the Jose Limon Studio, and observed his teaching. I studied with Ruth Currier--I'm still studying with her--she's one of the early Limon teachers. I continued to develop my modern dance technique in this manner. While I was in New York, I would go to concerts literally every night and just absorb and learn as much as I could. I also became familiar with modern choreographers in New York--people like James Waring, Richard Gain, Norman Walker, Sophie Maslow and Paul Sanasardo,"--choreographers whom she would later ask to set dances on the fledgling Winnipeg company.

The idea of a repertory company--one which performs works by a variety of choreographers--evolved naturally out of circumstances. Nenad Lhotka wanted to choreograph, Rachel was unable to do all the choreography herself, so why shouldn't Nenad create some dances?

She began to feel that having a repertoire that reflected a variety of dance styles by various choreographers was the best way of reaching unsophisticated audiences. Also, she knew she was not a Martha Graham--a genius who builds her company as a vehicle for her artistic vision, and who creates all the dances for them.

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Gerrie Cowie helped Rachel set up the first board of directors and began raising funds. "She was like a rock behind me," says Rachel. ~~Gerrie is a force to be reckoned with. It was just amazing.~~

*describe Gerrie with  
VIR.*

"It was very difficult," Gerrie admits. "Rachel always lived frugally. Dance is an all-consuming thing with her. She was a dynamo. She had a determination and drive that were quite exceptional. There were times when we were sure everything was about to go down the drain. When I look back on that period, all I can see is struggle."



Other people supported Rachel's efforts. Rachel's friend Marilyn Young, a dancer at the RWB, and wife of Grant Marshall, an interior designer, and professor at the School of Architecture, became involved. Irena Cohen, the wife of Sony's Albert Cohen, and Helen Steinkopf, wife of Winnipeg lawyer Maitland Steinkopf, also took classes from Rachel at the Lhotka studio, and were ardent supporters.

A board of five was formed. On it were Gerrie and Vic Cowie, Helen Steinkopf, Joan Sprunt, wife of Eddie Sprunt, a Free Press journalist, and Irena Cohen.

In the fall of 1965, a reporter named Katherine Thomas wrote in the Winnipeg Free Press that the Contemporary Dancers would introduce 'three new ballets', all of which were as yet unnamed. The company would premiere two--one choreographed by Nenad Lhotka, and the other by James Clouser, (a RWB dancer and choreographer) in Kenora on October 9, 1965. The third, conceived by Vic Cowie, and choreographed by Rachel Browne, would be seen later that fall.

"Mr. Lhotka's ballet," Ms. Thomas continued, "is set to a suite by Prokofiev called Visions Fugitives. It will be a group of different moods, Mr. Lhotka said, that 'express the inner conflicts between personalities.' Designed for five female dancers, Mr. Lhotka said he would employ whatever techniques--modern, jazz or balletic--that best expressed by he wished to say."

Visions Fugitives, says Nenad, "was about the superficiality of the establishment, whose concern about war was more fashionable than real." Four women in dark costumes represented the powers of darkness; one woman in a light costume represented joy. The set consisted of one stepladder. Len Cariou's voice boomed over the sound system: "Often I have nightmares in this world. I am threatened by self-destruction. Yet again and again the joy of life and creation prevails and moves me on. Today is one of the dark days when I deliberately destroyed the joy and I am afraid that I cannot revive it again."



The company now had eight dancers. Sets were designed by S. Ranjan Sen, a gold medallist from Fine Arts at the University of Manitoba, and by Grant Marshall.

On October 9, 1965, the Contemporary Dancers performed at the Lakewood High School Auditorium in Kenora. They performed Rachel's Appalachian Spring (likely derived from the Graham work of the same name) her Duet, her Turmoil, set to Bartok, the Odetta piece, Songs and Dances, Lhotka's Visions Fugitives, and Clouser's Sonata for Cello and Dancers. The company presented the same program at the University of Winnipeg in November, and at the U of M Festival of the Arts in the winter.

Both the RWB and the Contemporary Dancers reached out to the audience. But, in Gerrie's opinion, some of Rachel's work was just too introverted, her anti-war pieces too difficult. "Rachel has a very strong social conscience," says Gerrie. "But some of Rachel's dances were accessible only to Rachel."

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In 1965, John Hirsch was producing plays at Theatre 77, in the Dominion Theatre at Portage and Main. Across the street was a tiny 90-seat theatre, the Across the Street Theatre. With its thrust stage, the tiny theatre was perfect for the Contemporary Dancers, and Gerrie feels that some of the company's best work was performed there.

The Contemporary Dancers gave ~~was~~ the premiere performance of both Lhotka's Triangle, set to a Beethoven Sonata, and Rachel's The Colour of the Times, set to an original five-section piano score by Winnipeg composer Victor Davices, with poems by Raymond Souster, read by Vic Cowie. "It was very witty," says Gerrie, "and came off well in a small theatre."

In the Winnipeg Tribune, April 6, 1966, critic Michael Olver praised the beauty of the dancers, And assigned a sexual meaning to the work. "There was no question what Mrs. Browne and Mr. Lhotka were driving at--sex," he said. "Some of their pieces are purely sensual and erotic, with this quality enhanced, not reduced, by the excellence of the dancing."



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One of Rachel's most successful dances of this period, in Lhotka's estimation, was Anerca, about the Inuit struggle for survival. Anerca is one of the words for truth in Inikitung. The dance was based on ancient Inuit chants. Set designer Ted Korol draped sheets on sticks so that, under the lights, they looked like icebergs.

Michael Kostelnuk of the Winnipeg Free Press thought Anerca less successful than Vision Fugitives. He said Rachel's fascinating electronic soundtrack took attention away from what was happening onstage.

The seasons came and went, the amateur company performed. "A certain excitement was built up by these performances," says Gerrie. "We papered the house. Often we'd get very unusual dance fans, and wondered what they made of it all. But there was a kind of receptivity. Things kept coming up for the Contemporary Dancers."

In 1970, the Cowies went to England on sabbatical. That year, the London Contemporary Dance Theatre was founded, and Rudolf Nureyev went to London to see what was going on. "Seeing what was going on in England gave me a certain confidence that Rachel was on the right track," says Gerrie.

Rachel decided to go professional in the company's '70/'71 season. And she hired a manager--Bob Holloway.



## BOB HOLLOWAY: THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

"By economy and good management--by a sparing use of ready money, and by paying scarcely anybody, people can manage for a time, at least to make a great show with very little means."--Thackery, Vanity Fair, Ch. 2

Roughing it on a hog farm is not what you'd expect the former publicity director for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the former manager of the Contemporary Dancers to be doing. But movies, not hogs, were what originally attracted Bob and Carol Holloway to the country, and to acquire their farm, Elsinore, near Sperling, Manitoba.

They bought Elsinore in January 1975, but didn't live on it for several years. When he left the Contemporary Dancers in March 1975, Bob became the Executive Director of the University Centre. Then he bought the movie theatre in Carman, and he and Carol moved out to the farm.

Chap.  
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For several years, Bob and Carol ran the theatre. Their young son, Ivan, was born. But their rural Roxy met the VCR and closed down, and Bob and Carol, following <sup>Ed</sup> the example of their neighbors, and turned to raising hogs. So several hundred feet away across the bald prairie from their house lies a long yellow barn jammed with pigs. It is a windowless porcine death camp where the hogs spend their short lives in the dark pigging out on Holloway's feed.

The Holloway house is unsheltered from the prairie wind and sky. It is designed on an open plan, with a huge fireplace, is spacious and plainly furnished. Heavy reading, like Malamud's *The Fixer*, and other classic novels, fills the bookcase. Carol, an attractive, strong and athletic-looking woman, has her own house-painting business. She serves my daughter and I a meal of fresh lamb and vegetables picked from the <sup>garden</sup> ~~the~~ Ivan is a dark-haired boy with a stunning face and a quiet, sensitive nature.



Bob Holloway is a bright-eyed man in his early forties. His dark hair is thinning on top, and his beard is flecked with grey. He wears glasses, and his shirt sleeves are rolled up. He projects strength and energy, ~~and~~ <sup>is</sup> his sharp tongue seems to have lost some of its sting. The kids take some milk to a litter of kittens in the barn, and Bob and Carol and I sit around the dinner table under the lamplight, talking.

*is a hard arm, but he seems to have mellowed from the sharp-tongued hustler of yore*

Bob has lost none of his zest for public relations, ~~and as~~ he waxes more and more enthusiastic, a gleam appears in his eye, and his voice rises as his memory revives. He is aggressive and tough-minded, a city hustler, ~~slightly mellowed and~~ out of touch. He has left the arts, and speaks with candor.

*a bit old-fashioned but*

*But he does not care*

He likes the physical aspect of farm life, he says. His hands are large and roughened by work, and his rubber boots by the back door smell of pig.

After Holloway graduated from the University of Manitoba, he worked in public relations for public education, and for the Manitoba Dental Association. He was an acquaintance of Jim Cameron, the former RWB administrator. Cameron told him that the RWB needed a publicity director, and Holloway went to work for the RWB in 1968 under Sergei Sawchyn.

"Holloway learned at the feet of Sergei Sawchyn," said Paul Walsh<sup>e</sup>. "He was second in command there. Sergei was the magician at the ballet. He was the kind of guy who didn't see obstacles and therefore they disappeared. He got the ballet to Moscow, and he got the big tours, because he had imagination. He saw the big picture, he wasn't a small man. Well, Holloway learned there, and he looked like a good acquisition<sup>g</sup> for the Contemporary Dancers, and I think he was."

Holloway spent several years at the RWB, and got some good training there. He left the RWB to go into the public relations business for himself. He had an office in the Paris Building.

"I wanted to have the Contemporary Dancers as an account," he explains. "I wanted to have the opera, the ballet--I wanted to get involved in that way."



He phoned Rachel, and she invited him to a rehearsal. "When I first saw the Contemporary Dancers, they were stil an amateur group, just ragtag dancers working after hours." Rachel and her dance students were putting on a show at the Warehouse Theatre, newly acquired by the Manitoba Theatre Centre in 1970. "They put together a show. I saw it, and I was really impressed. I thought, she's really done fantastic things considering that this is only a very part-time operation. And I thought, if things were organized, and professionalized, and put on a fulltime basis, this could really take off."

Initially he took on the Contemporary Dancers as one of his accounts. But he got more involved, and became managing director, a position he held from 1970 to 1975.

Says Holloway, "Initially, the idea was to handle the company from the promotional standpoint. The company was an amateur company. The dancers were students. They were unpaid, there were no permanent facilities or any of the other trappings of a professional company. There were no assets, no studios, there was no office, no staff, no bookings, no money, no funding. The company was not even incorporated. There was a nucleus of people on the board of directors, but the board wasn't functioning on a consistent basis."

In 1970, there were only three modern dance companies in Canada--La Groupe de la Place Royale, The Toronto Dance Theatre, and the Contemporary Dancers. The Canada Council funded only professional companies, and Rachel felt the company would be more successful in getting grants if it went professional. "You had to have a board, in order to be incorporated, in order to get grants," says Holloway. If he set up the infrastructure, Rachel could run the artistic side of the company.

"I put together a coherent structure--wardrobe, promotion, administration," says Holloway. "I helped to organize the company. I got them incorporated, I sought out sources of funds. We tried to arrange a nucleus of dancers who would be permanently committed. Then we got our first block grant from the Canada Council in 1971/72, and small grants of \$2,000 or so from the municipal and provincial governments. We got attention in the media, so that the company would become known. We got directors who would look on being on the board as more than a casual undertaking."



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"After Bob Holloway arrived, the company really began to blossom," says Rachel. "It toured more extensively than ever, first throughout Canada, and then the United States. One of its first remote trips was to Inuvik, in the Northwest Territories, in 1970.

"We were the first western dance company to dance up in Inuvik," says Rachel. "While we were there, we invited the Delta Drum Dancers, an Inuit group which maintained the old dances, to our performances. They understood nothing about our dancing." They watched Anerca, Rachel's Inuit dance. "They were very polite--they said it was very nice--but they really didn't relate to it. We asked them to share some of their dances with us, so after the performance, we sat in the audience and they danced for us, and it was quite marvellous. The youngest member of the group was 60 years old. It was a revelation to see these dancers. I think probably if I'd seen them first, I would never have made my dance Anerca as I did."

Holloway organized a wardrobe department and contracted out the sewing of costumes. The dancers got paid, Rachel got paid. They decided to work on a seasonal basis, with three home series a year in October, January and April. A subscription series was started, and season tickets to the three annual series were sold.

The company performed in the 600-seat theatre at St. Mary's

Academy, a Catholic girls school, for the 1971/72 and 1972/73 seasons. The company's reputation grew and massive crowds came out and packed the theatre. After 1973, the company moved to the 1200-seat Playhouse Theatre on Market Street. "It was very very big for a modern dance company," says Rachel.



## BUSING AND TRUCKING

Holloway had had considerable experience with the RWB, and knew that touring was important. "There's no point in having a theatrical company that isn't seen," he says, "that sits around in its studios and practices its routines ad infinitum, and never gets out of there. What's the point? You've got to perform. You can only perform so much in your home city, because after you've done your three or four performances in the Playhouse Theatre, you've plumbed the depths of your demand. Modern dance is not something that has a mass appeal. The only way you're going to be seen, the key, is to tour, and that's what I set out to do."

Touring was also necessary because the company had to earn much of its revenue through the box office. Holloway organized the tour program. "He didn't just sit in the office and book by phone," says Rachel. "He did do a certain amount of work through letters, but he would get in his car and drive to Vancouver to book a tour."

The company had already toured schools in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, performing for children, and giving classes. And they had been to Expo and Inuvik. But they had never seen the likes of what Holloway had in store for them.

Holloway already had made many contacts in small towns during his stint with the RWB. He would contact impresarios like Clifford Menz or George Zuckerman, <sup>who</sup> ~~These men~~ had established concert circuits in a series of towns. They would offer the public a package for a season, then sell the package to an organizer. Canada's Jeunesse Musicales had a concert circuit across Canada.

"You can't make a profit by touring," says Rachel. "Of course, you would save money if you kept the dancers in the studio, since they are paid per diem. It's rare nowadays that a tour makes money. But we made money. There was less competition in terms of the number of companies travelling then. We cut down costs and managed to stay alive with touring. For a while we were the only modern dance company travelling in Canada and in the United States."



Holly Ann Savage, a professional dancer who had been with Les Fux Follets, a French Canadian Folk dance troupe, for three years, joined the Contemporary Dancers in the fall of 1970. She spent her first three months with the company learning all the dances. "Then Holloway got hustling," she recalls, "and got a pick-up tour for us to The Pas, Thompson and Flin Flon. We went out on the road to Northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan in a Volkswagen van pulling a trailer." Among the dancers Holly recalls Donna Richardson, Raymond Goulet, Colin Russell, Jennifer Ingram and Janice Dunlop. Other dancers were Richard Sugarman, Adele Hall, Michael Baldwin and Ron Holbrook. The stage manager was Rod Olafson. The dancers toured the whole season in the Volkswagen van, pulling the trailer behind <sup>id</sup> them.

"Adele Hall and myself did all the <sup>technic</sup> ~~tech~~ things," says Holly. "We had a linoleum dance floor and we helped Rod lay the floor. We ironed all the costumes. And we'd strike the sets, while the male dancers carried in the equipment."

For the 1971/72 season, Holloway purchased an old yellow school bus, had it painted blue, and had the words "Contemporary Dancers" painted on it in bold white letters. The back seats of the bus were taken out, to make room for the equipment and the

costumes, the sound system and the portable flooring. The bus carried eight dancers, including Rachel, a stage manager and a wardrobe person. The stage manager would drive and be paid a pittance more to do so, thus saving the dancers' strength for the performances.

"We could set up in a cow pasture," Holloway says with glee. "We weren't going to depend on what was available. We would present ourselves in the best possible light."

"On our way to our first performance in Brandon," says Nancy Paris, a dancer whom Rachel had auditioned and hired in New York, "suddenly the bus listed to one side, and we lost a tire. We were late for that performance. It's hard to travel for 16 hours and then give a performance the next day. It takes a tremendous toll, sitting in one position for 16 hours and then getting up to dance."

"It was pretty cold," agrees David Tucker, one of the dancers who occasionally drove the bus. "The bus wasn't made for long cross-country trips. But I always enjoyed touring. It was a morale booster, to get away from your regular routine in the studio, even though there were times when I was exhausted."



"That bus took us literally across the vastness of Canada and back again several times," says Rachel. "But with difficulty. Once driving through the Rockies, one side of the bus suddenly dropped down with a huge bang, and we saw one of the wheels rolling swiftly away down the steep road. The bus played this trick on us several times, until we had to give it up for something slightly more modern."

The summer sky is darkening outside; the lamp glows brighter. Bob leans forward on his shirtsleeved elbows. "We were touring more and more every year," he continues. "At one point we were touring 60 centres during the course of our season throughout Canada and the United States. And 135-140 performances a year. It was fantastic. Perople don't realize how fantastic that is, but it's fantastic. I mean, sure, a lot of those centre<sup>s</sup> were small centres, university towns, but it doesn't matter. The fact is, they were out there, and they were seen<sup>s</sup>, and we were earning money, and we were keeping alive. We weren't getting the grants, the big support, that they were getting later. We were largely supporting ourselves which is really fantastic for a modern dance company."

## THE MIDDLE YEARS: THOSE NEW YORK CHOREOGRAPHERS

The 72/73 season appears to have been a peak year in the early

years of the Contemporary Dancers. In addition to touring,

playing to sell-out houses at the Playhouse, Rachel used her

New York connections to hire <sup>say</sup> ~~five~~ top ~~New York~~ *American*

choreographers--Sophie Maslow, Norman Walker, Richard Gain, *Robert Moulton*

James Waring and Paul Sanasardo--to set dances for the company.

~~As~~ <sup>and choreographers</sup> there is no choreographer's union, ~~they~~ work for very little. In 1972, the going rate for a choreographer to set a piece on the company was \$250 to \$300, plus expenses. Says Rachel, "We tried to get them as cheaply as possible. We provided the bodies and the opportunity to work."

Robert Moulton is a Minneapolis choreographer who set a work on the company that season. He is a professor of dance and drama at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. He directs plays, and



operas, and choreographs shows at the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre.

He took a children's company up to Winnipeg to perform at a children's conference. He met John Hirsch at Rainbow Stage, and Kathleen Richardson and Arnold Spohr at the RWB. He choreographed *Guys and Dolls*, *The Music Man* and *South Pacific* at Rainbow Stage, and set three ballets--the first, *Grasslands*, in 1958--on the RWB. Rachel invited him to come up and set a dance on the *Contemporary Dancers*. The piece he set was *Rondo Ad Absurdum*, set to music by *Switched on Bach*.

Sophie Maslow, with the Graham company for 11 years, and creator of more than 60 works, had created a dance called *Country Music* in 1971, and set it on the *Contemporary Dancers* in 1972. "When the company began touring Quebec and the Maritimes, this dance became our most popular work," says Rachel. "It was a country hoedown piece," says Holly, "a French Cajun selection. We performed it in all centres in the French part of eastern Canada, when we were there in October, 1972."

Richard Gain came to choreograph I Never Saw Another Butterfly. Gain, also from New York, had danced with Graham, the American Ballet Theatre, the New York City Centre Joffrey Ballet Company, and the Cullberg Ballet Company. The work was inspired by a collection of drawings and poems done by children under 12 in a concentration camp in the Second World War.

James Waring set Happy Ending, performed to the Mozart piano sonata in D Minor, on the company. A colleague of Paul Taylor, Waring choreographed for companies throughout North America and Europe. He was one of the first choreographers to use electronic music. In 1973, he set Rune to A Green Star--~~the~~  
~~aforementioned Steamed Hot Dogs~~--a solo for Rachel, to music by Debussy. Rachel performed this dance at Judson Memorial Church in New York, in a tribute to James Waring after his untimely death in 1975.

The company was still in the Aragon building at Smith and Graham. When Waring was setting Rune to A Green Star, a solo for Rachel, they rehearsed in the back room of the Aragon Ballroom. Some of the posters still on the walls read Steamed Hot Dogs. This became the nickname for the solo and once inadvertently appeared on a printed program, much to Rachel's chagrin.



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The headlines in the Free Press were positive--"Contemporary Dancers Open Ninth Season in Style"--and Casimir Carter's review September 30, 1972, rang with praise. The Free Press showed its support by publishing individual profiles of all the members of the Contemporary Dancers in its weekend Leisure section.

In January 1973, Norman Walker, another New York choreographer, with his own company, and chairman of the Drama Department at Adelphi University, set his 1969 dance, Three Psalms, on the Contemporary Dancers.

The dance had three sections--a duet, a trio and a group. The duet part was to be danced in the nude--"More or less", said Walker. He described the duet as "purely erotic." Three Psalms received its Canadian premiere at the home shows January 12 and 13 at the Playhouse.

Paul <sup>✓</sup>Sanasardo came to set his work, <sup>✓</sup>Metlics the same week Walker was in town. Chicago-born Sanasardo was the artistic director of his own company, Modern Dance Artists, in New York City, and was also artistic director for the school of <sup>✓</sup>modern dance at the Saratoga Performing Arts Centre in New York.

The winter program consisted of Robert Moulton's Turn In, Turn Out, Turn On, Waring's Green Star, Danses Sacres et Profanes by James Clouser, Prisms by Shirley Ririe, and Walker's Three Psalms. Lured by rumors of nude dancing in Three Psalms, Winnipeggers flocked to the Playhouse January 12, 1973. The following notice appeared in the Free Press the day after the concert:

"Even the morality officers liked it, said the company publicity director, as the curtain went down on the Contemporary Dancers' latest show in the Playhouse Theatre Friday night. The ballet, Threee <sup>✓</sup>Pslams. by New York choreographer Norman Walker, received advance publicity describing an erotic scene danced in the nude.

"Not quite true, Bob Holloway explained Friday, as the dancers <sup>readers was</sup> *controlled* took their bows before a sellout audience. The performers <sup>were</sup> *nudify* wearing costumes--Elaine Loo a sheer, <sup>✓</sup>fresh-colored body

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stocking, and Aaron Braun a kind of cod-piece loincloth. The outfits were specified by the choreographer, Mr. Holloway said. The show will play again Saturday night."

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In the fall of 1972, the blue bus hit 33 Canadian centres. By October 25, Holloway claimed a surplus of \$10,000 in box office revenues. Revenues had increased over the last season by 25 per cent, and the number of performances increased by 50 per cent to 94.

In early 1973, The Contemporary Dancers received a \$3,500 grant from the city, then took off again in their blue bus. "Off to U.S., Maritimes and Ontario," chirped the press. That year, they gave 133 performances and 30 dance workshops, an output greater than that of any other dance company in Canada.

Before they returned to Winnipeg, the troupe was slated to perform March 6 at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

"We had a lot of trouble getting performances in the National Arts Centre," said Holloway. "Everybody else would come in, but when we wanted to come in, they would make excuses. Eastern

Canadian snobbishness, pure and simple. If people ever think that there isn't an eastern bias against the west, they're living in a dream world. As sure as God made little green apples, it's ingrained. And any kind of concessions they make to Westerners are very self-conscious, and very premeditated. We used to find this all the time.

"So the only thing you could do was to apply a little pressure. So I would get hold of Stanley Knowles, or Jim Richardson, and apply a little pressure, and the next thing you'd know we'd be in there. The National Arts Centre is a really good example because when the company went there, it was a smashing success. It got fantastic reviews. After that, we were there every year."

The Ottawa Journal's Laretta Thistle bubbled, "At least one member of the audience (me!) is going to be murmuring 'At last!' as she settles into her seat on Tuesday, March 6 to watch the Contemporary Dancers of Winnipeg. Why? Because it is the most aggressive little (10-dancer) group in Canada, always setting new records for travel, turning up in Buctouche, N.B. or the Yukon or Knoxville, Tennessee, or on the shores of Hudson Bay."



The further east the company went, the closer to the big time--and, ergo, big time criticism--they came. Two critics were in attendance at the NAC--Ms. Thistle and the Toronto Star's William Littler.

Littler said, "Indeed, it was difficult to detect the stamp of any consistent modern dance technique in the dancers' movements. The versatility which is a company policy might more accurately be labelled eclecticism. They do a little of this and a little of that, without giving the impression of operating from an agreed upon theory of ballet movement."

He commented that I Never Saw Another Butterfly "does at least offer the Contemporary Dancers a serious leaven for their repertoire, to balance the trivial likes of Robert Moulton's Turn in, Turn out, Turn On (or Bach is Beautiful) which sophomorically satirizes dance styles to the tunes of Switched on Bach."

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At the end of their tour, the Contemporary Dancers had performed in 53 cities and had logged 25,000 miles. The tours were not without incident. The driveshaft of the bus fell off on the

freeway to Brockville. And its back wheel fell off on Corydon Avenue back in Winnipeg. The bus the press had once described as a "custom-converted combination touring vehicle and equipment van" was laid to rest.

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The Contemporary Dancers' final shows were held March 9 and 10, 1973, at the Playhouse. The program featured Paul Sanasardo's *Metallics*, set to music by Henry Cowell and Henk Badings. Said the press, "Reputed to be Sanasardo's finest creation, the work is a trio piece that deals with the theme of a woman's loneliness and disturbing realizations about love."

Also on the program were Rachel's *Blues and Highs*, to music by Laura Nyro, and her *Where the Shining Trumpet Blows*, set to Mahler's *The Youth's Magic Horn*.

The dancers next flew in a Beechcraft aircraft from Churchill to Whitehorse, and back to Fort St. John and Kamloops. Some 400 people had turned up at the F.H. Collins School gym in Whitehorse to see them perform.



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## THE SCHOOL

The Contemporary Dancers school was established for several reasons. One, instead of getting dancers from outside from ~~other companies~~ <sup>elsewhere</sup>, the company could develop its own dancers. Two, the classes would bring in some revenue. Three, the school would perform a service for the community by providing classes in modern dance.

The school's first teacher, David Lathan, who taught movement to MTC actors, left after one year. The RWB's Jean McKenzie recommended Faye Thompson, then 22. She had studied with the RWB from the ages of six to 17, graduated from university with a B.A. in philosophy in 1972, and was teaching in the Contemporary Dancers' apprenticeship program.

In 1972/73, Faye Thompson taught children's classes, and ballet classes at the company's evening school, and taught at the summer school. In August, 1973, she was appointed principal of the school.

The school started out with 14 students, and now has from 300 to 400 students. The most talented students are chosen for the professional program, and receive intensive training to prepare  
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them for a career in modern dance. The professional program developed into a second company which performed in schools.

Faye worked by herself for two years. But later, company members and apprentices joined her in teaching. The school taught ballet, jazz, and creative dance for children, and gave workshops during the year on injury prevention and improvisation. "The school did become a source of revenue and of dancers," says Rachel. "It's a way of developing talent for the company, and of keeping the company alive."

*modern dance*

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#### THE APPRENTICE PROGRAM

The apprentice program trained aspiring young professionals at the company school. The 12 apprentices received free tuition. In addition to understudying performers, they formed a second company which toured Winnipeg schools, performing children's works choreographed for them.

In 71/72. Rachel ran the apprentice program. Then Marian Sarach, a dance teacher and choreographer from New York, was brought to Winnipeg to be Rachel's assistant, and ran the program for two years (72/73 and 73/74). She also created humorous dances for the company.

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In August, 1973, Globe and Mail dance critic John Fraser announced the Contemporary Dancers would make their first Toronto appearance February 7, 1974, in York University's Burton Auditorium, as part of the York University Performing Arts Series.

On September 23, 1973, it was announced that the Canada Council had awarded Rachel Browne a senior arts grant. Also, in September, Robert Moulton returned to Winnipeg to set Rituals, on the company.

On October 11, the season at the Playhouse opened with Rachel's Mighty World, a set of eight new dances to songs by Odetta; Kinetic II, a spare duet to music by Rodriguez (by whom?); Walker's Three Psalms, and Moulton's True Believer, a dance based on a book by Eric Hoffer, performed in silence.

In 1974, the company once again toured from coast to coast, and equalled its 1972 record of 104 performances in 53 cities, over 20,000 miles.

At this time, the company moved to new premises, to the fourth floor of a city-owned building at 160 Princess Street, where the Prairie Theatre Exchange had its offices. The company rented the fourth floor from the theatre company for a nominal sum, and hired a group of apprentice carpenters to renovate the space. "They were expert carpenters," says Holloway. "They installed mirrors and did over several studios. And we got all this for next to nothing!"

In January, 1974, the company saluted the Winnipeg Centennial with a program at the Playhouse consisting of Rachel's Variations, Moulton's Rituals, Gain's I Never Saw Another Butterfly, and a new duet by Richard Gain called Fellow Voyageur.

This last dance portrayed Prometheus being attacked by vultures while chained to a rock. "Gain's version departs from the original by showing Prometheus struggling with his inner nature, and finding success in his acceptance of conquest," wrote Casimir Carter in Dancemagazine.



Prometheus was danced by Bill Hollahan, and the vulture by Nancy Paris, for whom the work was a favorite. "Bill made a spectacular entrance on two long cloths that hung down from the top of the stage," she says. "He would climb up and two girls would lower him down. As soon as he got close enough, I would jump on him."

#### TORONTO DEBUT

On January 28, 1974, the group left on tour. On February 9, they made their Toronto debut, and received their first exposure to the Toronto critics.

The reviews were disappointing for the company. John Fraser of the Globe struck the proverbial note of cautious optimism.

"If smiles made the world go round, the Contemporary Dancers would have it spinning like crazy. It is surely the smilingest company there ever was, and after a

while it becomes infectious. That's why the Toronto debut of the Contemporary Dancers Thursday night at the Burton Auditorium was a happy occasion, even if it was not a particularly brilliant one.

"There was nothing that I saw in the program Thursday night that was either original in conception or particularly well danced. What this company does have, though, is an utter lack of pretension, and it presented most of the pieces with fetching innocence. It is these qualities which redeemed the evening.

He praised Rachel's Songs and Dances, then concluded, "The Contemporary Dancers certainly have potential, and if the company is still some way off from reaching polished distinctiveness, it is nonetheless heading in the right direction."

Susan Cohen wrote in the Toronto Star:

"The feeling intensifies of a company which has come far from its lonely western beginnings but one whose march to maturity and sophistication is falling rapidly behind other Canadian colleagues in modern dance."



Toronto and National Arts Centre appearances became part of each season.

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By 1975, Holloway had been with the company fove five years. He had put the Contemporary Dancers on its feet as a professional company. He had worked very hard to get the company on a firm financial footing. He had booked the company on extensive tours, and kept them working and touring so that their reputation spread across North America.

He feels he accomplished a lot. "You could look at any department,--wardrobe, promotion, production, whatever--we were first class. We had a request from New York for our publicity kit--they said it was the best they'd ever seen! Talk about excellence!"

## THE FALL OF BOB HOLLOWAY

Holloway was a persistent, driving and visionary manager. He stopped at nothing to make things happen. When grants were not forthcoming, he would write David Orlikow or Mary Liz Bayer or Ed Schreyer, and complain. He contacted Stanley Knowles and James Richardson about the National Arts Centre. He had ideas.

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He feels he accomplished a lot. "You could look at any department--wardrobe, promotion, production, whatever--we were first class. We had a request from New York for our publicity kit. They said it was the best they'd ever seen! Talk about excellence!"

But Holloway was burning out. "The demands on the manager of a performing arts company are almost intolerable," says Rosalie Goldstein, *former Board member*. "Dance has the highest rate of burnout of any art. You're asked to do a gargantuan job for peanuts. It's a killer. It wastes human beings." In addition, some members of the board feared he would alienate funding bodies with his difficult personality..

Chapter 9.



~~"Nobody trusted Holloway," said one source. "He alienated everybody, corporate sponsors, everybody, with his abrasive, grating personality."~~

As the demands on Holloway increased, so did his grip on the company. He wanted complete control, including control of the grant money. To get it, he had locks put on the files, and kept the key in his possession.

"There's no question that I locked the files," says Holloway. "We had our studios there, we had our office there, there were night classes going on. The files had locks on them, and I got the girls to lock them. No question about it. Also the office door. I never handled things the way arts groups often do handle them, in a very casual, relaxed manner. They believe in letting everyone wander in, wander out, and my experience is that that leads to no end of troubles."

*He continues, repeating himself in self-defense.*

"Because you have confidential communications back and forth about personnel. Payroll records. Nobody makes a lot of money at a dance company, God knows, but nevertheless, there were differentials in pay. If everyone wants to tell what their salary is, that's fine, but, as the manager, I'm not going to allow it to be apread around. Would you want your file looked at by everyone passing through? Nobody would when you come down to it. I know that those kinds of things are often red herrings, you know, he's so secretive, he's paranoid, or whatever, like that. I believe in being in control."

~~What happened was positively Machiavellian.~~ Rachel and the company were away in Florida when the Good Friday Revolution erupted. The application to the Canada Council was on Holloway's desk, inside his locked office. Rosalie <sup>Goldstein</sup> arranged with the bailiff to serve Holloway with a letter. She and Naomi <sup>Permut.</sup> broke the door to Holloway's office down, seized the files, and took everything away. When Holloway came the next day, all the files, and the grant application, were gone.

Holloway tells his side of the story:



"Rachel had hit her level when the company was an amateur company. She never improved and didn't appear to have the [REDACTED] And that was the thing that really surprised me. I thought she would really move ahead. But I was wrong. I misassessed [REDACTED] h. And so, after a couple of years, it began to come to me that the next step for that company would have to be a new artistic director."

Holloway broached the subject with board president Rosalie Weidman. "She just about had a fit on the spot. Because she had come in for no reason other than to support Rachel Browne. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and come hell or high water, [REDACTED] she was going to do that. And I only broached that subject, but that was enough. The rest of her career was spent organizing a plot to throw me out."

"My disappointment was that she was able to lead the rest of the board so easily, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] or even speak to [REDACTED] You know, I got a knock on the door in the middle of the night. A messenger sent me a letter saying you're fired."

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"One of the ironies of that whole thing is that in the preceding five or six months, I had decided to leave the company. I had been with them for five years. It had been really intense, really hectic. I had really burned myself right out. I had worked really hard, you know.

"It was the end of the season, (March 1975) and I was on the verge of going and talking to them, and saying, look, I'm going to be moving on, I'd like to help you get somebody else, and make a good transition, because I've worked so hard. And here, out of the clear blue, I get this knock on the door. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. I can't get over it to this day. But that's Rosalie's style. So it was just Saturday night excitement. What shall we do, let's fire the manager.

"I was totally burned out after those five years. It was enjoyable and stimulating, and I don't regret it, but I don't see how anyone could keep it up for any longer and be effective. Not under those circumstances, not where we were forming a new company and getting started. I mean, the stress was incredible. We were short of money all the time. It's a young man's job. I have burnt out after five years, and would have had to have moved along regardless of what had happened."





Walsh's version of the Holloway firing is a little different.

"Rosalie Goldstein fired Holloway thinking that Rachel, in her heart of hearts, wanted that done, even though Rachel was of two minds about him. ~~This was at the point when the company was moving into professional status.~~

When asked if Holloway had alienated fundraisers, Walsh said no. Was Rosalie justified in firing him? "Well," says Walsh,

~~"You have to understand the level of the company at the time he was involved. They were just getting started."~~

~~"Think what happened was that it was in Rachel's nature to always be in a tension relationship with the business end of the Contemporary Dancers. And I think that the person or people who fired him didn't make a proper judgement as to exactly what Rachel did want, and what the limitations on what Holloway could accomplish were. It was very very hard in those days. It was never very easy, but it was much harder in those days to raise money. It was the kind of company that danced at the Art Gallery and you named a place and got 10 people around, and they would performed. That wasn't really as spiffy as the ballet, eh? So it really seemed to be a junior kind of effort."~~



"Holloway wasn't the easiest person to get along with, but I think his firing was something that really wasn't discussed a lot before it happened, and may have been done in the heat of the moment."

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Holloway left the Contemporary Dancers and became the Executive Director of the University Centre at the University of Manitoba for a year. "It was more management, quite far from what I'd been doing, and boring by comparison. ~~It really wasn't very stimulating at all. Even the most minor decisions had to go through multi committees. It was relatively prestigious, but not particularly challenging.~~ I didn't have much fun with it. I guess I wanted to move on."

Now Bob and Carol are thinking of moving on again--to the BC. interior. "I don't believe in staying in the same place all the time," says Bob. "We've had a great time out here, but we need a change. Life gets boring otherwise."

The sky is dark and studded with stars. Carol stands, arms folded over her apron, under the light by the back door, as Bob and Ivan go out to rummage in the garden, picking up about 10 English cucumbers to take home. Molly and I say goodbye, and turn our headlights west down the gravel road. ~~The cucumbers turn out to be too bitter to eat.~~



## TWO FORMIDABLE FIASCOS

~~"It is more than a crime. It is a blunder."~~ Joseph Fouche.

## THE PAUL HORN DEBACLE

In 1986, Rosalie Goldstein (formerly Weidman) succeeded Mitch Podolak as artistic director of the Winnipeg Folk Festival.

~~1987, Rosalie and the Festival in the black for the first time~~

~~The 1988 festival was the most~~  
*Successful in the history of the event; drawing a broader*  
*younger, less traditional audience.*

Rosalie is a formidable ~~and enigmatic~~ figure. She is ~~both~~  
 progressive, populist, and aggressive. Now over 50, she is a  
 stocky woman who wears dark-rimmed glasses. Her ~~short~~ red hair  
 is marked with a startling white streak. She looks like a tough  
 customer, and is renowned for her outspokenness.

~~Effective, a hard worker, and gets things done.~~

*She does.*

Rosalie came to Winnipeg where her husband lived from Niagara Falls, in 1960. Rosalie was a freelance pharmacist. She was one of the women who took classes from Rachel at the Lhotka Ballet Studio.

Having grown up in a small town, with limited access to culture, Rosalie was attracted to Winnipeg's artistic community. In 1967, after she had borne the last of her three children, she approached the board of the amateur company. In 1970, she joined the board, and began to play an increasingly important role in the affairs of the company.

When Holloway left in March of 1975, Rosalie suggested Naomi Permut, a board member, become interim manager until an official replacement for Holloway could be found. Naomi remained in the position till September. Rosalie was the working board president; she was in the office every day, and worked very hard.

After Holloway was fired, Rosalie invited Paul Walsh back on the board.

"We all decided, in that year," says Walsh, "that we had to do something spectacular to get going. We were still seen as pretty second-rate in terms of the Big Six in town. Our subscription base was small, we danced at the Playhouse. There was a lot of talk that we should dance at the Theatre Centre, that we should try and work our season around their open dates, and it was piggish and hoggish of them to not let anybody else into their facility. But even if it had to be at the Playhouse, we were going to do something spectacular."

*So the board approached Paul Horn to do a collaboration*  
Paul Horn was a major jazz musician with a background of study *with the*  
at Oberlin College, and jazz poll victories from Downbeat, *company*



Metronome and Playboy. He was an L.A. studio musician who had moved his family north to Victoria. In 1973, he did an 18-week series of half-hour variety shows featuring his Vancouver quintet which was the first show to go network out of Vancouver on CTV.

Naomi Permut's cousin, Jerry Libin, was the Calgary promoter whose company, Sounds of the World, managed Horn and the Irish Rovers.

The plan was to do two shows with Paul Horn in Winnipeg, and then tour western cities. "The idea was to link the two together, and one audience would supplement the other," says Walsh. "If we tied in with Paul Horn, we would get rave reviews right across Canada, we'd be a major company because we'd draw real numbers. It was costed out that it would lose some money at home because of all the startup costs. But if we could get 60 per cent houses across Canada, we would break even.

It looked like a good thing, and the decision to go ahead was almost unanimous. However, Rachel, thinking it would be too expensive to tour, voted against the motion. But Walsh pushed it through, and the tour was on.

In a letter dated May 29, 1975 to Naomi Permut, Joanne Morrow, Grants Co-ordinator for the Canada Council Touring Office, said, "I was delighted to hear about the Paul Horn possibility. Most exciting."

Horn sent tapes of his work to Rachel, who set a dance to his music and a suite of poems by Dorothy Livesay and Miriam Mandel, entitled The Woman I Am, in celebration of International Women's Year. The work was a half hour in length.

The Paul Horn tour was set for November 1975 and would hit Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria and Edmonton. Paul Horn would receive \$2,000 per show plus 60 per cent of the net box office receipts. Contemporary Dancers would receive \$1,500, Jerry Libin \$500. All transportation, including six air fares and excess baggage, all hotel accommodation--two single rooms and two double rooms at a first class hotel in each city--would be paid by Contemporary Dancers. One half the total guarantee or \$6,000 would be paid before the tour. Half of the fee would be paid on the signing of the contract, and the balance following the final concert in Winnipeg October 25, 1975. Thus the Paul Horn Quintet would receive all its money off the top, whether or not the tour made any money at the box office. Paul Walsh signed the contract.



Meanwhile, the Personnel Committee found a replacement for Naomi Permut. David Williams, a former board member, was appointed Administrative Director effective September 11, 1975. Naomi rejoined the board.

Williams, an Englishman, had worked for nine years as accountant/office manager for a Winnipeg realtor. He had written many radio and television scripts for educational broadcasts, and taught Scottish and English Country dancing across North America. He was an official dance adjudicator for the Manitoba Provincial Music and Arts Festival Association. He was <sup>also</sup> a gay activist, and an alcoholic. ~~He tried hard, but was ineffectual. His personal problems did not help.~~

In a letter dated September 4, Williams wrote Monique Michaud, enclosing a copy of the 1975/76 budget. He pointed out that many items in the budget related to the Paul Horn tour. "We feel," he said, "that this tour is one of the most dynamic and viable projects that Contemporary Dancers has undertaken...This tour of

western Canada will not only be of great value in introducing dance to a large number of new friends, it will also undoubtedly increase the prestige and fame of Contemporary Dancers. We feel that the project is really worthwhile!

The program consisted of the Paul Horn Quintet "in concert", an intermission, and then the Contemporary Dancers performing TDT's David Earle's Baroque Suite, and then Rachel's The Woman I Am.

Said Paul Walsh, "In Winnipeg, it was a hoot, it was terrific. It got a full house. Contemporary Dancers had never danced to a full house. We had 1400 in the Playhouse two nights running, and lost money." Records show that, as expected, the home show lost \$6,577.74.

"The plan was to take it across Canada to get 60 per cent houses," says Walsh, "and we'd make it back, break even, and come back and be stars. Oh, boy, did we not do that!"

"We thought for sure at least in Vancouver we would do well, because Paul Horn was from Vancouver, and he would provide the audience in Vancouver. Well, he didn't care. He just got paid, as it turned out. The man was a big disappointment. I don't speak from first-hand knowledge, but apparently he wasn't helpful.  
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The tour lost \$40,000. "The Contemporary Dancers limped back," said Walsh, "and from a little company that used to cry when it was one or two thousand or one or two thousand under, we were suddenly \$30,000 in debt. Then we knew we were major leaguers. We were in the big time now. We had a big deficit."

The Paul Horn debacle appears to be the point at which the Contemporary Dancers' started down <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ slippery slope.

#### THE CAMDEN FESTIVAL FIASCO

*Another mix up occurred later.*

Tom Scurfield was managing the company in 1981. He was doing a good job. He realized it was important for the company to make its mark. He booked an appearance of the company at the prestigious Camden Festival in London. He got \$20,000 from External Affairs to pay for the performance, and put the tour together.

Rachel and Associate Artistic Director Stephanie Ballard had their hearts set on going to England. But the board cancelled the Camden Festival tour on January 15, 1982. The money had been spent on something else.

"It was the board's decision not to go to Europe," says Stephhnie. "Rachel and I stuck by that decision, but it was time to go to Europe. We were so ready! It was our taking off year. To this day, I really feel that the company missed out by not going when it was ready.

"Reneging on the contracts caused all sorts of problems. We were locked out, we were not going to be invited to go anywhere or be supported by External Affairs ever again. We would not be able to get out of the country except by private sponsorship. I remember saying to the board, 'This decision will be detrimental.' Rachel and I should have both resigned. I still feel strongly about it. I sure as hell know now, but I had no clout at that time. Losing that tour to Europe...at least you would have found out how you were seen."



January 21, 1981, the Winnipeg Free Press quoted Canada Council Dance Officer Monique Michaud as saying the Contemporary Dancers would have been the first company to perform at the prestigious annual Camden Festival in England. She was concerned that the company's late cancellation might cause the festival organizers to consider other Canadian dance organizations unreliable. "They may not hire Canadian dance groups again," she said. She was upset the company did not announce the cancellation until it was too late. "A late cancellation creates organization and publicity problems for the festival," she said.

Ev Polish said the absence of the \$20,000 was not discovered until December 31, 1981, and that the funds would be returned when they were available. External Affairs eventually forgave this debt, but the company did not receive their funding for a number of years. ^

## THE LONG ARM OF MONIQUE MICHAUD

The Canada Council was founded in 1957. Up until 1971, dance was attached to the Theatre Section. The head of theatre was Jean Roberts. She was the first to get an officer. Her assistant theatre officer was Monique Aupy, a painter, who first changed her name back to the hyphenated Michaud-Aupy, and then reverted to her maiden name, Monique Michaud.

The Council's Advisory Arts Panel was formed from people from different disciplines across the country, primarily in theatre. The theatre artists on the Arts Panel felt that dance wasn't getting a fair shake, and that there needed to be a dance section, or at least a panel concerned first with dance matters.

When Jean Roberts left, she recommended there be a dance section. So Monique Aupy left the theatre section and started the dance section. She became the first Dance Officer of the Canada Council, a position she held from 1971 until she resigned in the spring of 1988.

"I wondered," said Mme. Michaud, when she became Dance Officer, "whether it was a promotion because I used to have a secretary. I lost my secretary. I was alone."



"What was transferred to me," she continued, "were the actual grants given to dance. No slush funds, no reserve, no nothing. So basically, the first year, all I had to do was repeat the same grants."

In 1971, the Dance Section was concerned with the two major ballet companies--The National and the RWB--and the three modern dance companies--La Groupe de la Place Royale, the Toronto Dance Theatre, and the Contemporary Dancers.

Mme. Michaud describes the climate of dance at that time. "When we first had a jury," she says, "I decided to invite Ludmilla Chinarieff (founder in 1957 of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens) Celia Franca (of the National, founded in 1951) and Arnold Spohr (of the RWB, founded in 1939). I went to my boss, Peter Dwyer, at the time, and I told him, and he said, You mean to tell me that you're going to put them in the same room?

"Before there was a dance section, towards the end of Council meetings, the Chairman would say, 'I suppose we have to talk about tutus now.' So that was the climate. So from that perspective, dance has come a long way," said Mme. Michaud.

"As far as modern dance was concerned, they hadn't noticed that it had happened yet. There were some modern dancers applying at the first audition. We give a class before auditioning dancers, and I invited Trish Beattie to give a class. She gave her class, and she stepped out, and when I went to thank her, she said, 'Don't stay with me, get back in there, you know they don't understand bare feet!'"

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The Contemporary Dancers first applied for a Canada Council grant in 1967.

Steven Kanee, whose father Sol is an avid supporter of the RWB, and who himself worked at the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, helped the Cowies and Holloway prepare the company's first Canada Council applications.

The application was very formal. It noted that the company had given 20 performances since formed in October 1964. It described some of the problems of running an amateur dance troupe. Lecture-demonstrations had to be cut because dancers who had been university students now had full-time jobs and could only dance on the weekends. The company needed one male dancer, and although Norbert Vesak from Vancouver was interested, there was no way of raising the funds for his expenses.



The application described three proposed new works--two by Rachel, one based on Der Knaben Wunderhorn, a Mahler song cycle--cost \$400, and Conversation II, to a commissioned score by Neil Harris--costing \$700, and a dance by Lhotka--cost \$450.

The company would perform in 10 Manitoba centres. Tour budget--\$2,330.

The Board also requested a salary for Rachel for the 67/68 season. The application reveals that Rachel's salary at the Lhotka Studio was \$29 a week; her salary as movement instructor at TEc Voc was \$15 more. "On these wages, and with what little outside teaching her work with the company allows, Miss Browne is solely responsible for the support of an infant daughter, and her elderly mother, as well as herself.

From 1964 to 1967, Rachel neither received nor requested payment from the Contemporary Dancers. Now, however, the application stressed that she could no longer continue as director unless she could earn a living at it. *add money.*

In 1970, when the Contemporary Dancers decided to go professional, they applied for and received, their first Canada Council grant, \$6,000. "We had quite a chore convincg the Canada Council that it should support a second dance company in a city the size of Winnipeg," says Rachel. "But we were persistent and we finally did get the money."

They hired six dancers for a six-month season, paid them \$60 a week, and set up a full touring schedule. And there they were, running a professional company.

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Mme. Michaud's first contact with the Contemporary Dancers was when she saw a video they had done while she was still in the Theatre Section. "What was attractive about it was its sense of humor. A sense of humor wasn't widespread in the dance community. Maybe they were just very smart, and decided to send their video with humor to the Council to get a grant. It did work! They did get one!."

Generally speaking, Mme. Michaud sees the directors of the companies funded by the Council at least once a year. But she can't recall meeting Rachel at one of these meetings.



How did Rachel strike her? "That's a difficult question," says Mme. Michaud. "She struck me like most directors of those days struck me--as believing firmly that, somehow or other, their art form just didn't add up at the Council, that it was largely misunderstood. And that was translated into grants, which weren't of course, ever enough. I don't remember having difficult times with Rachel."

But she does recall Bob Holloway, although she seems to have mistaken him for a board chairman. "The chairman of her board was quite a belligerent fellow. We had lots of fun with him. It was great fun. I think his recollection would be fine as well, but we had meetings where somehow or other nobody showed up except him. Even though everybody was to show up."

The way Mme. Michaud distributes funds to the dance community has come under fire from many quarters. In a Globe and Mail article by Matthew Fraser, May 25, 1985, Quebec Minister of Culture Clement Richard stated: "The Canada Council has been discriminating against Quebec dance companies for 20 years, because the Dance Officer there, Monique Michaud, doesn't like dance in Quebec."

In the article, Mme. Michaud retorted: "I resent that. My name is not Scottish or Irish, and I resent always being accused of discriminating against my own people."

But Rosalie Goldstein, ~~director of the populist Winnipeg Folk Festival~~, also disagrees of the way Mme Michaud wields her power. She points out that Mme. Michaud is thought to dislike regional dance in general. "Have you noticed there are no dance companies in Saskatchewan or Alberta, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia or New Brunswick?"

Mme. Michaud is accused of misunderstanding the Contemporary Dancers. She denies this. "I don't have money, I'm not the Medicis with money in my drawer. There are rules, regulations, eligibility criteria--all kinds of things which enter into the equation when one decides on a grant. And this all goes to Council well documented. And it's always from a perspective that's much larger than the way the company thinks it is



perceived by the Council. It's much, much larger than that. And sometimes it is misunderstood. But other times, I just feel they don't want to understand. It doesn't serve the purpose."

Mme Michaud continues, "The Contemporary Dancers had decided it would be a repertory company. That was unusual. La Groupe was a straight creation company, TDT was a straight creation company. Not long after that, Wyman came in with straight creation as well. So in that sense, it was different. And it wanted to be treated differently for that reason. Now, that we couldn't do.

"Our criteria don't change. We understand a company being involved in creation and the risks it takes. We understand a company not wanting to (be a creation company). For whatever reason--it could be their public in their own city--it's preferable to be a repertory company. Maybe the director is not prolific enough to feed the company with new works on a regular basis. It's fine. But it can't be the sole purpose for which the Council will all of a sudden give it more money. Because the other one can make an equal case and say, We're a creation company, how come we don't get as much?

Grant Strate says, "Monique is a centralist. She's an elitist and a centralist. I think we're all elite, in that we believe in excellence. But it's defined in different ways according to our own particular tastes. I think her mission in life was to centralize the main influence on dance, the National Ballet, and particularly the National Ballet School. She certainly has served them exceptionally well.

"She has done some valuable things. She's enhanced the image of dance, she's managed to get the budgets for dance totally raised. But she's also done it in a very autocratic way. And I think there's been a certain paternalism in the way it's been done. Which I don't personally admire.

"And I think that the people who have been served well has been served very well. But the question still remains, has it served the dance community well, has it served the nation well? I guess history only will tell us that.



Mme. Michaud denies that the Contemporary Dancers were punished for having adopted the repertory model of classical ballet. "Absolutely not," she says. "We assess companies through peer judgements. We send people to see the performances, we ask them to tell us about the dancers in the company, about the works, whoever does them, how good they are. We ask them to tell us all kinds of other values, production values, these kinds of things. Generally to be our eyes, look around, see how it fares. Nothing in there discriminates against a repertory company. In those days, the Council did not insist on creation. But generally speaking, the model of the modern company is creator-led."

For a time the Canada Council used working professionals to assess companies. But people were recognized in halls as Council assessors. An assessor would perform in a foreign city where a company had been assessed--"and they'd all come together and chew tomatoes. I mean, it's really pretty nasty," says Mme. Michaud.

So that was not acceptable. The Canada Council couldn't put the assessors in that situation. So now the assessors are anonymous. "Mind you, " says Mme. Michaud, "there's big games being played, and people try to recognize the assessors. Sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't."

The difficulty with having anonymous assessors is that a jury could be picked which is predisposed to be unsympathetic toward a certain kind of repertoire.

But when told that people feel Mme. Michaud is not fond of the Contemporary Dancers, she said, "That's unfortunate. It really is unfortunate. Because there's none of that. I have a job here, and I have to do it. And I have to do it honestly. I would want that, myself, as a person. But believe me, there are checks and balances in place as well. And I couldn't get away with it! So it's weird that people would think that. But people have to think something. They have to rationalize what's happening to them. There needs to be some reason other than they're not doing too well onstage. I'm that person."

In the earlier years, did the Contemporary Dancers not have the kind of repertoire, the kind of direction, of which she approved?

"Of course, I'm like everybody else. I like some companies better than others. That has nothing to do with my job here. I shouldn't and I can't. And if it was all what I liked probably you wouldn't see exactly the same scene at CC."



Mme. Michaud points out that the Canada Council can put pressure on a company to improve artistically, whereas it can't really interfere too much on the management side. The administrative assessment is done at the Canada Council. "It's not like the artistic part of it. There we can comment. There we have the wherewithal to say what we have to say. And yes, we write and we say if we're critical, and we do."

But she points out that, although Contemporary Dancers had severe management problems, they were not particular only to that company. Most companies have difficulty on the administrative side, she said. But she added, "We are not involved in the daily carrying out of the administrative affairs of the company. We're not in a good position to know. But we get audited financial statements, we get requests, we get mid-year reporting and we get final reporting. And in that sense, we can pretty well assess the management of the company. If we're submitted a request, which is totally dreaming, has nothing to do with reality, that company doesn't do itself a service because there's no way we can believe this. We have a record of the company, we know how much money they can get in the private sector. And we know, if they do their best, what they could possibly get. So, all of a sudden, if there's a big hike there, we'll look at it with a grain of salt. Is that what you say in English?"

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Bob Holloway explains, "One of the interesting dynamics at those early stages was that you really had to push really hard. And sometimes you really had to get people wound up. Because they'll just say no, very sweetly, and nicely, and let you go off. And they have no grounds for it. It's your money that they're spending. You're a taxpayer, just like everybody else. And if you're not aggressive, then you lose out, that's all. But at the same time, you can make a lot of enemies. I did personally with Canada Council."

"They weren't giving the kind of grants we felt they should have been. They were giving little Mickey Mouse grants. The first good grant the company got happened after I left. It takes a long time for those applications to come through, and I think it must have been eventually in response to the efforts I put in. But I couldn't be sure of that. But the first really good grant happened after I left. So when I was there, we never had decent grants, grants that we could work with.

"I think Monique Michaud was turned off with me personally. Sometimes you just have clashes of temperament. I knew her very well. But she also knew that I wouldn't hesitate to apply pressure. And one thing that bureaucrats don't like is when you start involving politicians. I mean, it really sends them up the wall. And that really upset her



In October, 1970, Jean Roberts' left the Canada Council and Monique Aupy took over.

"I had the feeling that Jean Roberts really knew where it was at," said Holloway. "There are some people you can sense who really understand. I only worked with her a couple of times, I think it was when I was with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, but then she left, and Monique Aupy took her place for the dance. She was a painter herself, an artiste manque. I never had great confidence that Monique Aupy knew very much about dance. I had the feeling that she was very much a turf fighter, and a kind of a bureaucrat. And just did things the way they would work out."

Holloway signed off every letter he wrote anyone with the phrase "Every good wish!" showbiz style. The files are full of his letters pleading with funding bodies to send the promised grant money ASAP, as the company was on the verge of imminent collapse. He pushed every available button with no letup.

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Part V of a brief to the Canada Council dated March 30, 1971, outlines the company's problems, and the solutions that were attempted. It shows the scrambling that went on in these early years.

When the company started operating professionally, records that could be used as a basis for projections were lacking. No engagements had been booked. The company was not incorporated, and had no board of directors. There were no debts, but there were no reserves. No theatre rental arrangements had been made, and there were no administrative facilities. There was no publicity material. This resulted in an imprecise budget.

And that meant they should have asked for more money than they did. But it was unlikely that federal and provincial funding would have been forthcoming anyway, as the <sup>in</sup>combed funds received represented only 55 per cent of box office revenues. Thus, the company had a deficit.



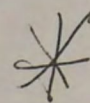
Rachel and Holloway used every means at their disposal to keep expenses down. Rachel did not go on salary until mid-September, and then received the Equity minimum for a corps dancer. Holloway worked full-time for six months without pay. They paid dancers only \$60 to \$75 a week, with a \$50-per-week expense allowance. Choreographers stayed with company members, and were paid \$200 to \$250. Costuming was done free by a board member. The company travelled in a leased Volkswagen van, pulling a trailer packed with equipment. Lighting equipment was rented, not bought.

They also left no stone unturned in raising funds. They asked for money from official cultural development bodies in every region they toured. They approached provincial departments of education, and asked the City of Winnipeg and Metro for grants. They asked seven school divisions for subsidies. They sold souvenir programs, posters, photos and program advertising. They accosted businesses and private citizens. They tried for as many

bookings as they could get, and for the best fee. They pushed ticket sales, and offered the company to television. As a result, box office revenues were 75 per cent higher than predicted, but these revenues fell short of operating costs.

It seemed that deficits could not be avoided. But they knew that neither the Canada Council nor the Manitoba Arts Council tolerated deficits, and had asked for a deficit elimination program. As long as the company made artistic progress, financial support would be forthcoming, they were told. But artistic progress depended on money. To get money, they incurred a deficit. And incurring a deficit jeopardized getting more money, which jeopardized artistic progress.





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The Canada Council Touring Office was established in 1973 to help subsidize the touring of companies. But by this time, the Contemporary Dancers had already visited hundreds of centres, and, unlike many eastern companies, had come to depend heavily on touring for their survival.

Holloway feels that it might have been his interaction with the Canada Council Touring Bureau that gave people the impression he was alienating fundraising bodies.

*He did not appear to know how to handle the bureaucratic director of the National Touring Office.*

Holloway wrote John Cipton, in April, 1973 requesting that the Touring Office absorb losses in a tour of 19 larger Canadian cities. He also expressed the company's willingness to tour Newfoundland and Labrador, its plans to tour east and west in '73 and '74, and suggested a tour of the North, which would require a \$20,000 subsidy.

~~\_\_\_\_\_ in the event~~

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

~~\_\_\_\_\_ would help~~

~~It was referred to External Affairs~~

Cripton replied June 27, 1973, that he doubted the Touring Bureau would underwrite all the losses in a tour of major cities.

Holloway wrote July 4, "Alas, the clouds have not lifted, and we continue to be in a very tight situation. Frankly, I'm a little baffled." He couldn't raise any money. "I don't wish to sound melodramatic," he said, "but our existence at this moment seems a very fragile thing, and I am beginning to take a realistic look at some stark possibilities in the future."

He explained that the company needed to appear in bigger cities to build a following. The second year, it might accept the losses itself. If the Touring Bureau would provide funds—even just for six cities—the company could start this process in the 1973/74 season.

He detailed the Northern tour, for which he projected a deficit of \$15,300, none of which the company could absorb.



Cripton wrote again August 7 that the Touring Office could not subsidize appearances in major centres without local participation. And he said that 1973/74 would not be the best time for a dance company to tour the North, but that the Council would consider making some kind of contribution.

Holloway replied August 10: "I must say, I am a little baffled by your letter...We already have a number of dates tied down across Canada, but because of the great distances involved, our tour of these centres will be uneconomical. Instead of asking for an outright subsidy...we have instead requested assistance in presenting ourselves in en route cities.

He pointed out that a recent position paper put out by the Canada Council made no mention of community support. "In a sense, the argument is a little peculiar. If the local sponsor can raise our fee, then I supposed we have what you call community support. That would apparently make us eligible for a subsidy which we would then not need. If the local sponsor can't come up with the money, then we perforce don't have community support and would not be eligible for a subsidy."

Regarding the Northern tour, he said, "I don't know of any reason why the coming season should be any better or worse for touring the north than last season was, or next season would be. Perhaps you will wish to credit me with some expertise in this area. Generally speaking the demand for attractions such as ours in the north is strong and steady, but they lack adequate facilities and funds."

He concluded, "But, after all is said and done, we are quite prepared to forego our plans of a northern tour if that is your wish. Touring under such circumstances is exhausting, difficult and costly--even taking into account strong subsidization. Certainly, if such a national body as the Touring Bureau does not wish to encourage development in this direction, we are not going to swim against the current."

Again in September, Holloway wrote Crompton about applying for touring money. "I can foresee no useful purpose in re-applying for something which we have already been turned down," he wrote. "On the other hand, perhaps you don't understand the situation. Of course, I don't want to trouble you with my idiosyncratic self doubts and delusions, but if you would like to send me a friendly enlightening letter, I shall peruse its contents with assiduous attention in the hopes of becoming a better person thereby."



Cripton sent another cryptic reply. In exasperation, Holloway tore off a letter October 10 that was never sent, in which although he claims that he doesn't want their correspondence to "degenerate into a vitriolic word-flinging match," he replies with vigor and vitriol.

The letter points out that although Cripton had said that 1973-74 would not be a good time for a dance company to tour the far north, the Touring Office gave Les Feux Follets a grant of \$40,000 to tour the north in '73-'74. And that the Touring Office had recently given out grants totalling \$200,000 to attractions based in eastern Canada, many of which, unlike the Contemporary Dancers, did not depend on touring for their survival.

Holloway, aware of the danger of alienating the hand that fed, subsequently sent a more controlled and reasoned letter.

~~"A DRAM HORSE NEEDS AS MUCH SUSTENANCE AS A RACEHORSE"~~

*The Bureaucratic Mennet*

PRESSURE

*The interaction between the company & the CC is interesting to analyse.*

~~As~~ Canada Council Dance Officer ~~does not operate from a~~  
~~position of weakness.~~ Mme Michaud felt she had every right to  
 apply pressure. When she sent a letter to a company suggesting  
 funding might be cut, that meant, improve!

"You have to improve," said Mme. Michaud. "You have to improve  
 everything, or else there are other candidates who perform just  
 as well, who are also short of funds. We can't ~~see~~ <sup>leave</sup> them  
 waiting. much longer. You get into a process with a company.  
 The process we went through with Contemporary Dancers took a  
 long while. And that's not unusual. We do that with other  
 companies. But it has to resolve itself somewhere along the  
 line. Otherwise, we just can't hold on."

Strate agrees the Canada Council puts pressure on companies to  
 improve--but to improve in their way.



For example, Mme. Michaud wrote Holloway Feb. 18, 1974; she enclosed a cheque for the \$6,000 final instalment of the company's operating grant. The company had requested \$60,000; it received \$20,000.

~~The rest of the letter is in French.~~ Mme Michaud said the Canada Council "wishes to make the following observations which we expect you will bring to the attention of your company's artistic director and board.

The cost ratio of performances to revenues of small companies is often very high. Michaud writes, "Since your operating budget is very high compared to your operating revenue...it is clear that you must rely more heavily on grants and donations than more established companies." She pointed out that most of the grants and donations the company had counted on from Du Maurer, Lip and the Province, did not come through, and that the company would still finish the year with a \$24,000 deficit.

As well, the program had been cut to 32 performances in a 31-week season. She wonders what the revenues are from the

"newly formed junior company" "Would it not have been preferable to seek the employ the main company, rather than form a new one?", she asks ~~pointedly~~.

She says that the above is enough reason for her to withhold the last instalment of the grant. However, she does not take that step, as, she says, "We are quite aware that this would put you in a very difficult financial situation."

She repeats Council's concern about a deficit that will not be eliminated. She warns, "This could jeopardize your chances of a grant next year, or of an increase." and stresses the importance of informing Council of the company's plans.

*Goldstein*  
Rosalie ~~Weidman~~, board president, defended the company *replied: to her letter she* in a style of letter typified by its long recitation *will* of company *AS.* achievements, ~~a type of letter sent frequently to funding~~ *9* ~~bodies.~~

*But insisted*  
~~These elaborate defenses evade Council's point--~~ we can't fund you unless you tell us precisely how you're going to erase your deficit.



*one of its points makes sense.*

Rosalie ~~does have a point.~~ She says, "We have found that no matter how reasonable and modest our requests to grant-giving agencies have been, we have invariably been awarded only a portion of the amount requested. This makes it difficult to make long range projections of revenues from these sources. This has always been the case; Council has always awarded the company less than it has requested.

*But these are bureaucratic tactics. She had her own priorities + a certain amount of pluck + Franco could drive her shut."*

And she explains that the company's small number of performances were due to unforeseen circumstances. As well, she points out that the Contemporary Dancers were the only professional dance company in Canada which did not receive a touring subsidy from the National Touring Office. For a company so dependent on touring, this <sup>was,</sup> is indeed a humiliation.

She concludes, "It is certainly disheartening to us to think that a combination of adverse circumstances over which we had virtually not control should be the occasion to threaten the continuation of our enterprise.

Hollway fired off letters to Winnipeg MPs David Orlikow and James Richardson March 22, enclosing copies of Michaud's and Weidman's letters.

But neither Orlikow nor Richardson was able to help.

#### ASSESSORS

April 25, 1974, Michaud wrote Holloway, enclosing excerpts of reports from specialists who had seen the company in performance. Only one of these assessments was in the files. But, here, you get the idea of why Council is concerned..

The report is anonymous:

The assessor says that the dancers are fresh and exuberant, but not yet strong enough in their technique.

"What I found is the company's greatest drawback, and my biggest reservation, is Rachel Browne's choice of choreography. Her choice of styles is very eclectic, but not very interesting. For



example, (Moulton's) "Turn-In" is choreographically and imaginatively too slight for its protracted 20-minute length. It is full of abrupt, quickie movements and undeveloped monotonously regular patterns. 'Danses sacres et profanes' by James Clouser is balletic in style and quite out of place in the repertoire. "A Rune for a Green Star" is also uninteresting. Unlike the Toronto Dance Theatre, whose most successful works have come from the deliberate policy of developing original choreography by the artistic directors, Rachel Browne's most successful pieces come from outside the company."

"All in all, none of the dancers have the same power and force as do individuals in the Toronto Dance Theatre. Nor does there seem to be as much of an ideological approach to the modern dance idiom, making the style of the programme rather confused.

"However, the dancers are calm, capable and carry off the mixtures of styles with aplomb. My reservations are with the choice of choreography. I cannot feel that 'Turn-In' " A Rune for a Green Star', and 'Danses Sacres et Profanes' were really worth the time, attention or energy spent on them.

"The Winnipeg Contemporary Dancers were a disappointment. Three of the new girls are lovely young dancers, and were a joy to watch. However, the repertoire remains a serious weakness, and now even more than last year. Miss Browne's dance "Night World" was old-fashioned. A weak point in her choreography is her way of handling movement in relationship to music, and it seems to reflect in her choice of most of her guest choreographers. In the short time the new company has been together, they show a sense of unity are are well trained, and, as last year, the girls are on a higher level than the boys. It seems the main problem which remains, is the choice of repertoire."

*- insert  
Rachel's  
assessment*

Michaud comments, "If I were a dance company, and I were getting letters from the Canada Council over a little while which kept saying that the reports on the artistic side of the operation aren't very good, the artistic director is the person responsible. And on that person's work--not Rachel's own choreography necessarily, but her choice, as well, of choreographers, in the overall menu that the company will present. It's really her work, and it's a comment on that."

*Excerpts  
Rachel above are*



Insert CD p. 176:

These comments are taken from assessments made between March 1980 and July 1982. Note how each positive comment is balanced with a negative one.

Some of the feelings of the various assessors were:

1. That the programming had a welcome variety and was well paced, but that it did not have a lot of substance.
2. That there was an attractive look to the evening, but that there was no revolutionary innovative choreography.
3. That it was enjoyable yet not exciting.
4. that the overall look was very professional and smooth with only a few rough edges.
5. That the work was accessible and entertaining, there was nothing offensive, yet nothing controversial.
6. That the aims of the work were serious; there was flashes of inspiration, but a lack of true excitement.
7. That the company seems too careful in trying to be all things to many people, so it becomes less than a single individual entity to anyone. This comes across in the programming as conservatism.
8. That the company needs livelier, more daring work. It was felt to be competent, not passionate.

Insert CD p. 176 B

"The dancers were felt to be appealing, vital and warm. They showed clarity and enjoyment of what they were doing. Technique, though sometimes limited, was clear. There was no unity of style. The dancers' training often seemed to be inappropriate to the demands made on them. Their bodies did not move fully enough, especially through the torso, to fulfil the "modern" range of movement. One question asked was --"How can a company expect to explore a broad range of movement and place an emphasis on training its dancers in ballet?"

"Technically, the lighting and sound were felt to be good and often imaginative. Costumes were well designed and executed. The publicity was effective."

The following are some comments about individual pieces:

1.CONSTRUCTION COMPANY--Stephanie Ballard: "This work was not half as funny as it was meant to be. The fun seemed put on, not personal to the dancers, therefore it did not come across."



Insert p. 176 CD C

2.TWO ECSTATIC THEMES--Doris Humphrey: "Was weighty and meaningful. Ms. Browne gives it the sense of an artist speaking to us through her work."

3.HAIKU--Rachel Browne: "Was austere, simple and economical...Its shape was undefined and th use of voice by the dancers was ineffective... Ms Browne didn't make enough demands on herself."

4. FLYING COLOURS-- : "Was performed with gay and colourful abandone..Was pretty and energetic. Was vacuous and ran out of ideas too soon. Repetitious."

5. KEUTER--Cliff Keuter: "Powerful. Shows thge company's seriousness and commitment."

6. SPY--Lynn Taylor: "Eloquent. A powerful emotional workout."

7. "Tedd Robinson's work was courageous and theatrical."

"Ms. Browne was complimented on the way she was developing her company from within, as well (as) from without, by using works choreographed by company members as well as works choreographed by people from the outside."

EEND INSERT

"Now, the artistic director accepts it, or doesn't accept it, is in a position to effect some changes, or is not. And it behooves the company to decide what they'll do with that. When we get to the point that we're saying that there might not be any funding next year, we mean it."

Holloway replied that the reports "are very damaging to us." He indicated that the company would take some action.

In her August 27, 1975 letter to Rachel and Rosalie regarding Janice Fontaine's plan to retire the company's accumulated deficit, Michaud repeated, "Your company is in a most difficult financial circumstance, and no doubt creditors are at your door all the time. Frankly, we are concerned, at this point, about the survival of the company. This being said, it is our greatest wish that the board be successful in its fund-raising efforts."

With this letter, Mme. Michaud enclosed an assessment by Stuart Hodes which is missing. She goes on to say that there was another assessor whose report was lost in the mail! "We got his comments on the telephone, but they are not complete enough to

*I called  
Hodes  
who was  
unable to  
provide a copy  
of the assessment.*



send them along. This assessor is our 'problem'. He had not kept a copy and we do not think he will get down to writing another report. We have now asked so many times that we have given up. It was a favourable recommendation, and we are sorry that we will not be able to oblige this time."

This is the only known favourable report the company received. There is no trace of it.

#### COMMUNICATIONS FUND

Michaud sent Holloway a letter June 10, saying "We have received your claims for Rachel Browne's trip to New York, and I note with some surprise that it is for a 25-day stay in that city. We had hoped that the Communications Fund would be at least partially used in Canada for better communications between Canadian artists, rather than totally expended on trips to the United States.

Did this indicate the fact that a lot of what was in the repertoire was by American choreographers? Was there a built-in sense that this was an American company?

Michaud says, "I never thought of it--and I don't think Council ever thought of it--as an American company. There are very

specific rules governing the Communications fund. And it's basically for top artistic managerial personnel to meet with their colleagues. It is not to go and shop for choreography. That's included in the cost of running a company. And that's what those letters said. But it is not an indication that you can't go to New York. I mean, Rachel can go to New York if she wants to shop for works, that's fine. It has to be part and parcel of the cost of running a company. So it wouldn't be fair to say that.

But she does say that "there is a certain feeling at the Council that if you're going to import choreography than it better be super good."

Was there, then a feeling that the rep was not as strong as it should have been? "There was a period in the history of that company when it felt that ways " says Michaud. "Yes, through its assessments, that's what came out."



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Rosalie wrote Andre Fortier, Canada Council director, inviting him to the December 17, 1974 performance of the Contemporary Dancers at the National Arts Centre. She says, "We have been surprised and disappointed to find that some members of the Council apparently harbour the belief that Contemporary Dancers has stagnated artistically over the past four years; this is so at variance with reality that I can only surmise it is the product of a communications breakdown. We have noted the disparity in operational grants by Council to Contemporary Dancers vis-avis the three other modern companies."

Mr. Fortier was away from Ottawa, but Tim Porteous accepted the invitation, and replied:

"I can assure you that Contemporary Dancers has never been penalized because it is active rather than passive, although I would have to admit that the reports we have received from our professional assessors over the past few years have not been as favorable to your company as they have been to some

other modern dance companies. I understand that Contemporary Dancers also received an indirect benefit during the period referred to in the document, through Council support of Rachel Browne."

#### FINANCES

December 10, the Council financial advisor, J. Aung Thin, wrote Holloway, about the 1974/75 budget. He pointed out that the accumulated deficit at the end of 1973/74 of \$30,845 was much too large in terms of the scale of annual operations. And the revised budget discloses that a further deficit of at least \$9,000 will have accumulated to \$40,000 approximately. "Our opinion is that if no positive steps are taken to reduce this deficit before the end of this year, your organization will be placed in jeopardy."

December 16, Holloway wrote Thin, saying he agreed the operation will be placed in jeopardy. "This is true not only because Canada Council's support may be withdrawn, but it is true in simple terms of basic solvency, even if Canada Council's support is maintained at its present level. After all, a drowning man may continue to drown in the face of strong exhortations to the contrary."



Holloway says one more time, "the fact is that even in a very good year, we are barely able to break even. I think that if you would analyze our entire operation, you would find that the salaries we pay are at the minimum level, we spend the bare minimum on production and creative artists, we function with tight efficiency, and husband our resources with absolute frugality, we try to derive the maximum revenues through box office, we realize an 80 per cent profit on the operation of our official school, we are probabvly more active in exploring additional sources of revenue than any otherarts organization of our size in Canad, and we maintain constant vigilance in monitoring our financial affairs. But, with all this, even in a good year under normal circumstances, we are barely able to break even. When other factors come into play, such as rampant inflation, or if our touring falls off, then financial crisis is certain.

The Canada Council, like all funding bodies, does not want to fund a loser. It wants to be identified with a winner. ~~But in spite of all Holloway's protestations, no realistic deficit reduction plan was forthcoming.~~ The Contemporary Dancers needed the money badly. ~~Instead of trying to present themselves to the Canada Council as a worthy band of strugglers, why didn't they simply balance the budget? That way they might have assured their all-important funding, and ultimately made faster progress. Financially, they just weren't hard-nosed enough.~~

Yet Council's mandate is to support struggling artistic organizations. ~~Would it have mattered if they'd balanced the budget? Was Council playing games?~~

*How much did CS have to jump?*

Pressure can squeeze the very best out of an individual or group. Might Council have been justified in applying pressure, in order to force Contemporary Dancers to get their act together?



The Toronto Dance Theatre at that time was presenting very Grahamesque works--heavy, labored, mythic works. TDT was very serious; its dancers were ~~very~~ strong; their technique was excellent. They concentrated on their artistic development. ~~And~~ they got the funding.

*Michael approved  
John was what they  
were doing but  
lost value then  
TDT?*

The Contemporary Dancers, on the other hand, were deeply involved in missionary work, and in survival. ~~They needed the money more~~  
~~to spread the word of dance.~~  
~~They imported American choreographers,~~  
~~the best out of them. Rather deliberately chose~~  
~~to select something for everyone, it worked in~~  
~~an ideal way, but ultimately, it impressed no one.~~

*What then were  
dancers did not  
appear to  
appeal to  
Michael's  
et, first  
sensibility.*

Holloway continued in his letter to Michaud, " In Chicago, (Michaud) stated that she thought the minimum grant from Canada Council to a modern dance company should be at least \$60,000. I believe this only recognizes the obvious. Yet this

year, our total operational grant was only \$25,000, the lowest operational grant that was awarded to a modern dance company this season. In justification of this situation, we were told that our artistic progress was less than that of the other companies, a contention with which we violently disagree; but even if it were true, <sup>1</sup>a dram horse needs as much sustenance as a race horse."

His deficit reduction plan was to " 1) go to the premier of the province and ask to be bailed out, 2) endeavour to carry out the strongest fund campaign in our existence." They'd know in two months if this was enough. Then, as usual, he asked for the next installment to be sent out promptly on January 1.



## CANADIAN NATIONALISM

During the early seventies, the cultural nationalist movement centred in Toronto affected all the arts. However, ~~at that time, the movement's impact weakened the further west you went.~~

*should put in here about funding of York.*

*the supplies were slow to spread westward*

~~Canadian dance scene on in Winnipeg.~~  
York University had become the centre of the avant-garde in Canadian dance, Rachel E. ~~was an American, and~~

~~believing New York to be centre of modern dance, continued to go~~  
~~every year to New York to audition and hire dancers.~~

*But always based went to New York every year to hire dancers to keep up with developments there. He yearly Melanage*

The Canada Council had a Canadian (nationalist) vision. *turns*  
According to Paul Walsh, this was due to the Francophone influence on Council. And so the Canada Council wanted Contemporary Dancers to hire more Canadian performers.

Walsh remembers a meeting with Monique Michaud at Oliver's Restaurant. "At that time our funding was around the hundred thousand dollar mark. There were threats to cut us back from operating to projects grants. This would have made it very, very tough to run the company.

"I said to her, Monique, what do we have to do to be in the good graces of the Canada Council? And her answer was two-fold--do something very exciting, and do something very Canadian. And Canadian meant Canadian choreographers, Canadian dancers.

Walsh continues, "Monique wanted us to get all our dancers from York University. Or from Canada. ~~But York was the main source.~~ We used to say to Rachel, 'Canadian, Canadian, that's what they want.' And she would say, 'Look, you know, we are a repertory company and I just want the best dancers.'

"And so there was the classic conflict, right? The best versus Canadian, and how you compromised between the two ~~goals.~~"

"We always thought we'd have a lot of muscle because we were the only contemporary dance company between Toronto and Vancouver. But Toronto and Vancouver were both using a lot of Canadian talent. We had probably the least. We had a lot of American dancers."

*left hand.*



The Canada Council warned the company to change this, ~~and the~~  
~~company responded~~. June 24, 1974, Canada Council head Tim  
Porteous wrote Rosalie Goldstein saying, "During Mme Aupy's  
visit in March, and from subsequent correspondence, you were  
made aware of some of the Council's reservations regarding the  
Contemporary Dancers, and we met with pleasure your intention  
of increasing the Canadian content of your repertoire next  
season."

*the company responded.*

By 1977, Rachel had included a number of works by Canadian  
choreographers in the company's repertoire. These included  
Re-Entry (1977) and Sadhana Dhoti (1979)--A Ritual, by  
Vancouver's Judith Marcuse, and Sankes and Ladders ( ) by  
Karen Rimmer Jamieson. But she still made the annual  
pilgrimage to New York.

*Wend  
Munich  
also for.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## INEQUITIES

On April 21, 1977, David William wrote Monique Michaud, enclosing the operating budget for the 77/78 season, based on an operating grant of \$100,000 for the season, an increase of \$34,000.

Williams pointed out, "it becomes even more evident when we compare our Company with other modern dance companies of similar size in Canada that there is a considerable disparity in grants (excluding touring grants) which are given by the Canada Council. Figures for the 1975/76 season of these companies are as follows:

Anna Wyman Dance Theatre--\$100,000;

Groupe de la Place Royale--\$90,000

plus \$3,500 for equipment;

Toronto Dance Theatre--\$100,000;

Contemporary Dancers--\$60,000.



David Williams asked "Why aren't we on par?" ~~Shortly after~~  
~~that, in fact, in~~ the following year, Contemporary Dancers ~~did~~  
~~get~~ <sup>art</sup> a \$100,000 grant, with certain conditions being met. ~~But~~ <sup>This was</sup>  
~~there was~~ <sup>is</sup> a substantial leap. Was ~~that~~ <sup>is</sup> a recognition that  
Monique had to somehow put CD on par with other companies? What  
was her reasoning back then?

Michaud said, "I hate companies who do that. For sure,  
discrimination had nothing to do with it. Some people come to  
tell me why they deserve more money. And other people only talk  
about what everyone else is getting. I can assure you that ~~that~~ <sup>discrimination</sup>  
had nothing to do with it. It doesn't work like that, and it  
shouldn't work like that. The Dance Section still has fewer  
clients than other sections. This art form is more expensive,  
and therefore our grants are much larger.

We still deal with companies on a Council-company basis. Our  
decisions are never taken because so-and-so is crying out for  
some injustice to be redressed. Unless our reports on the  
company

indicate we should do that, or there were problems financially or administratively that were corrected, which would warrant an increase. There wouldn't be any other reason."

Blackmail doesn't work?

"No. And my white hair are a testimony to that."



## THE NECESSARY KENNETH LIPITZ

By 1975, the school and professional program were still unable to feed the company with dancers. There were few Canadian male modern dancers, so Rachel would rent a studio in New York, like Morelli's and audition for male dancers there. Getting them across the border into Canada was often problematic, but this was the practice.

One of Rachel's New York discoveries was Kenneth Lipitz, who joined the company in 1975,

Lipitz was born and raised in New York. He danced with the Pennsylvania Ballet Company, the Harkness, and was a soloist with the San Francisco Ballet, the National Ballet of Washington, D.C., and the National Ballet of Canada. His interest in modern dance led him to join the modern dance company at Brockport State University at Brockport, N.Y. He had been with the Brockport company for about six months, when it collapsed, due to a recession in the United States, and accompanying funding cuts to the arts. He then directed a small modern dance company in Cleveland at the Fairmont Centre for the Creative and Performing Arts.

Lipitz was living with a 21-year-old dancer, Shelley Ziebel. Ken and Shelley wanted to be hired together. At first this was impossible, but in the spring of 1975, Rachel was able to offer both Lipitz and Ziebel positions with the company, at a salary of \$150.00 a week each.

June 4, Lipitz wrote Rachel accepting her offer.

*in 1988*

~~Today~~, Lipitz, 43, is married to Shelley Ziebel. They have one daughter, Isidora, aged 3, named not after Isadora Duncan, but after her great grandfather, and they are entertaining the thought of having another child. Lipitz is full-time visiting artist in dance at Mount Holyoke College, and Artistic Director of the New England Dance Conservatory. Shelley directs the school of the Conservatory.

I caught him at home cooking dinner for Isidora, while Shelley was teaching at the Conservatory. He was making broccoli and eggplant with garlic, buttoning Isidora's pajamas, and running from the refrigerator to the stove.



Kenneth Lipitz was important to the Contemporary Dancers. He was 31, a strong, attractive male dancer in his prime, with a ballet background. He was ambitious to make his mark. He is an example of the working artist, single-mindedly involved in his work, oblivious to almost everything else.

Marian Sarach, former associate artistic director, left The Contemporary Dancers in 1974. Lipitz was first hired as a dancer and assistant to the artistic director. Eventually, he became associate artistic director.

Perhaps it was the timing, but Lipitz says that working with Contemporary Dancers was the most intense professional experience he's ever had. "First of all, for my own reasons--and they were complicated, I suppose, having to do with how old I was, my experience as a dancer, certain kinds of frustration I'd had, certain kinds of success eluding me..."

What kind of success? "Well, popular success. You know, I'd been in big ballet companies, and been one of 85 dancers. I'd been a soloist in the National Ballet of Canada, and never once did I ever feel like I'd really communicated with an audience. I did my little solos in this and that ballet, but people never came to see ME. People never remembered what I did.

9982 lcontem4

He wanted to stand out. "Some people are satisfied with that kind of life. I just wasn't. I felt very frustrated. I felt very cheated. And so, having discovered modern dance and the fact that modern dance companies were small, and that each performer is an important component of the performance, I said, 'Well, here I am...'

"It was a kind of renewal. I was an Assistant Director, and I had a chance to make a real impact, to have real input into what repertory was picked, and how it was directed. Rachel gave me a lot of latitude. She placed most of the repertoire in my hands, for rehearsal and direction. She had her own choreographic projects that she was doing, and she worked very hard on those.

"I was the one who was in the studio with the dancers. Not that she didn't direct the company. She did, indeed! But I had a lot of meaningful input into what the performances looked like. And I learned a lot of lessons. I was extremely manipulative in terms of the dancers. I had my own <sup>4</sup>visions about what the company should look like, what the pieces meant, how they should be performed.



"In the end, I found the dancers really weren't super crazy about me, because I oftentimes forced them to do things that they did not want to do.

"I did not choreograph any of the pieces. They were simply in my care. I worked with the choreographers as they set the pieces on the dancers. We could only afford to have a choreographer for 10 to 15 days, so they would leave, and I would rehearse the pieces with the dancers. Rachel wasn't involved in staging them, so although she was still in charge, the person who actually did the work on many of those dances was me! I was very pleased that it happened that way, because that was my chance.

"It's difficult to hold onto the integrity of a work once the choreographer has left," he says. "The art form is individual to each artist, and it's not transmitted with the score. The choreographer can't really dictate the performance. He imparts the steps, but the artistic director provides a unique interpretation. The director of a repertory company has to be sensitive to every nuance of the choreographer's art. There is no score to work from."

Lipitz was concerned above all else with aesthetic questions. He was a political and financial naif. He remained unaware of the company's financial position. "I was the studio person. I was in the studio, I did not deal with deficits, I did not deal with personnel management, or anything administrative except setting rehearsal schedules and getting the show on. Rachel and her administrative staff, and her board, dealt with that. I attended board meetings, but I never took any of that very seriously. Much to my dismay, when I took over a company later, I realized I had made a mistake by overlooking the administrative side.

What did he think of Rachel? "I loved her and hated her. We had a wonderful intense relationship. We worked with each other, for each other, used each other, loved each other, hated each other, fought like cats and dogs, and danced together, and got a lot from each other. I never worked more closely with anyone except Shelley.

"We had enormous differences, and enormous similarities. We had our Jewish issues, and our ethnic issues. We were a very very good match. She was not stupid. I was not dishonest with her. I



never tried to take over the company. I never tried to do anything to her. I only tried to develop as a person. And so she and I got along extremely well. Whereas I think that other people, before me and after me, may have been more interested in their development at her expense. I really wasn't after her job. I'm not the kind of person to do another person wrong. Especially someone whom I love very much."

Although Rachel and Lipitz agreed politically, he was no activist. "She loved the world," he says. "She was for a safe, fair, honest world, one that took care of the people that lived in it."

How was Rachel received in the company during those five years? "She was the boss! In those days, we didn't have tremendous controversies over Rachel. In those five years, this was a dancing company, a performing company, a touring company. We had no issues. The only issue we had was that Rachel wanted us to work too goddamn much. She always wanted us to work six, seven days a week, like she did.

"Nobody questioned her dedication, or her integrity, or her values, or anything. I think the biggest problem people had with her was personal, not professional. No one

had issues about her taste in pieces, or her capabilities as a director. We were too busy dancing! We worked! We were successful! And that distracts you from big political intrigues."

"Rachel was very perfectionist, very persnickety. 'Raise your arm a little. No, lower your arm a little. No. Raise your arm a little.' Until you want to die! Because she didn't really know what she wanted when something wasn't working. She was insecure. So that sometimes you lost the dancing. You started to say, 'All I'm doing is placing my body. I'm not dancing.'

"But if you got past that with her...I loved dancing with her. She and I had a real rapport. We were able to get inside one another in a very personal way. I know that she loved me. So when she choreographed, and when I danced for her, that was a part of it. Sometimes I'd like it, sometimes I wouldn't. I never thought at the time she was a world class choreographer, and I don't think she thought that either. But that doesn't mean she didn't do some very nice pieces."



Lipitz continues, "I worked my head off! I worked a lot! And I loved every minute of it. And I was rather successful. I got good reviews, and people liked me. I made a lot of progress as an artist in that company, and I feel like I contributed a lot to the company. But I also feel that the company contributed a lot to me, in terms of rearing me as a director, and maturing me as a performing artist, and building my case in modern dance."

Lipitz performed in most of the company's major works of the period, notably in Cliff Keuter's *Plaisir d'Amour* (76) with Shelley Ziebel; in Keuter's *The Murder of George Keuter* (76), in *A Gift to be Simple* (76) by Norbert Vesak, in David Earle's *Baroque Suite* (76), in *The Woman I Am* (76), in Rodney Griffin's *Rialto* (77), and with Rachel in her 1977 duet, *Interiors*, in *Spy* (77) and *Diary* (78) by Lynn Taylor Corbett..

In *A Gift To Be Simple*, a Shaker piece ~~a la Doris Humphrey~~, Lipitz danced the part of the Elder, who spoke in tongues. "Solo Speaking in Tongues was often very disconcerting in terms of audience reaction," says Lipitz, "in that the gibberish I spoke was sometimes thought to be hysterically funny, and people would laugh like mad. They'd go absolutely insane. It was like a situation comedy."

"I had this task, I had to shock them so badly that they couldn't laugh at what I was doing. As I honed the solo, I got to the point where I was so caustic, and so shocking and so raw, that the audiences didn't laugh. When I got to the point where I knew they were going to laugh, I had to turn it around, right away, to convince them either through pathos, looking at me, and feeling for me as a helpless crazy person, or fear because I was so threatening that it just circumvented the laughter.

Lipitz describes the first Winnipeg performance. "People laughed! I was absolutely crushed! I didn't know what happened. I was really upset. I didn't expect it. No one in the studio laughed when we rehearsed it. People were sort of transfixed by this mad person. But the distance between the stage and the auditorium separated me much more from the people than I realized, so I wasn't as potent, and didn't realize it. Also there was timing to be worked on so that I caught the people in a way that would not provoke laughter. "

Rosalie Wolosky of the Winnipeg Tribune covered a Contemporary Dancers performance of A Gift to be Simple in Flin Flon. She said:



"Kenneth Lipitz had the difficult task of interpreting through dance the religious experience of speaking in tongues. The choreography called on him to mold himself into an endless array of uncanny positions, all very tortuous in appearance, and to accompany each move with grunts and groans approximating speaking in tongues. His grunt had barely started, when a couple of girls in the audience began to giggle. The harder he tried, the more the giggling spread, and within no time, the audience was in an uproar. He left the stage defeated, blaming himself for the lack of communication with the audience.

"But fellow dancer Richard Guimond assured him that no one was really to blame. It was simply a matter of perception. 'When they all started to laugh, I began to see it as very funny,' he later confessed."

Lipitz played the murderer in *The Murder of George Keuter*. He says, "This piece was about how we are socialized into violent behavior. We went through a long series of dramatic vignettes where we changed characters constantly between humans and animals and birds and things like that--all involved in violent confrontational episodes. And this kind of violent interaction builds, in what I thought was a very poetic piece, to the point

where one man kills two other men and goes bananas. I was only given one word to express my agony and pain after killing these two people, and the word was "Well." I would just yell it at the top of my lungs, standing on the stage facing the audience with a flashlight, flashing it into the audience's faces and screaming at them, "Well! Well! Well! Well! Well!...and I would go on and on.

"We did that piece on tour, and by the time we got to Winnipeg, the Winnipeg audience became just as violent as I did. They started yelling! And I was really scared, because no one had ever yelled back at me.

"I was yelling at them, 'Well, well, well!' And they started yelling, 'Well, why not?' I was just amazed, and I got a little scared because I said, you know, people can shoot a dancer, you know. They can kill you! Who knows what they've got out there! Whose got a gun on them. And I got scared. But it was a very rewarding experience. I was very pleased that happened. It sounded like they were really into it.



When Ken and Shelley joined the company, several dancers joined with them. "It was an extremely vital group of people. Really working at their best," he says. "They were all at their top form. Probably dancing better than they ever did before or ever would afterwards. And having a very meaningful interaction, artistically and personally for each of them."

But at a certain point, according to Lipitz, dancers began to leave the company. "Dancers are funny," he says. "They need to complain. And they have a tough time staying in one place for a long, long time. I think it was time for people to leave at a certain point. And the issues were easy enough to come by. You sort of looked around and said, "Well, what am I going to complain about?" I guess people became jealous of one another. It just started to fall apart at a certain point. I don't know exactly what it was, whether it was just that the magic of the moment was over or what.

"I think that if the company had gone on to more international stuff, if the progress had continued to be consistent from where we were going, and where we were headed...It started to repeat itself. It was around my fourth year <sup>(1979)</sup> in the company. We had this enormous success the first year. I said to Rachel, "We're really

going somewhere. This is the beginning of something wonderful." And I was convinced of that. And four years later, we had gone and gone and gone. The company had gotten poor reviews in the past, so I suppose she was worried about its future, or its finances. Most of her company were new dancers. All except one or two of the old dancers had gone.

"Stephanie Ballard was there when I got there, but she left the year that I got there. I got the feeling that I got a little bit in Stephanie's way. I didn't have much interaction with Stephanie. I was there only a couple of months when she came down with a multitude of injuries. We danced together in one piece, *The Woman I Am*. Personally, I found Stephanie a little too political for me. We were just two different kinds of animal. I just work. That's all I do. I go in and I work. I think Stephanie is more involved on a social level with work than I am.

Did Lipitz feel he was on the cutting edge of modern dance?

"Oh, no! I don't care about the cutting edge of dance. That's propaganda. I think the cutting edge of dance is baloney.



"Cutting edge means just that it's the newest thing. I believe that, in theatre, it's the moment, not the style, that counts. We were a traditional theatrical company. We did pieces that affected people in a variety of ways. We used our bodies and emotion. We gave our energy and our souls to our work. We were concentrated. We had an ensemble. We had an intensity about the work. And that's what is important. Whether we were doing New Wave this, or all that other stuff--Next Wave, New Wave...I abhor the whole idea. I like seeing bodies in motion dancing their heads off. And I like to see real excellent dramatic pieces. And if a piece works for me, I don't give a damn about the style. I really don't. So I don't think we were on the cutting edge."

*Need to say something from Rachel maybe.  
about his role in the company  
& what he contributed  
He stayed with the company until 1991.  
When he returned to Boston.*