

Dance in/au Canada Danse



Wayne Eagling
Twyla Tharp
The Male Image
Dance Theatres

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Editorial

Susan Cohen

Editor / Rédactrice

Our issue this time spans a broad range of topics and miles with articles from Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, from across the border in New York, and across the ocean in England. Penelope Doob makes a welcome return to these pages with an intriguing exploration of the male image at the spring season of the National Ballet, a company dominated by the enduring images of two guest artists, Erik Bruhn and Rudolf Nureyev. Or are they enduring? In another piece Doob converses with Wayne Eagling, one of the several Canadian-born stars of the Royal Ballet. The discussion reveals his thoughtfulness and dance intelligence in preparing roles. Here in Canada we have found certain spaces taking on importance as dance centres, encouraging innovative use of theatrical sites. Elizabeth Zimmer in Vancouver relates the history of the Vancouver East Cultural Centre and freelance writer Sue Swan looks at Toronto's Fifteen Dance Laboratorium. From New York, critic Nancy Goldner talks to the provocative Twyla Tharp, choreographer of the moment with her works for American Ballet Theatre and her own company. In Review this issue, William Littler looks at the big artistic gamble taken in March by Les Grands Ballets Canadiens — a whole evening of new ballets paying homage to the late Pierre Mercure, the composer who was the catalyst of Quebec culture during the turbulent sixties when the arts in that province found their voice. Littler is the dance critic of the *Toronto Star* and was first president of the North American Dance Critics Association. And finally, in our Letters from the Field section, the Brinson controversy continues with reaction from the community. Our last issue on Peter Brinson's recommendations to the Canada Council regarding the state of professional dance training here generated a lot of comment. Meetings were held in a couple of provinces to discuss the issue and the Dance in Canada Organization has taken up the cudgels as well in letters and representations to Council. We'll report on further developments as they come up in this important matter. ●

La Revue couvre, ce mois-ci, de vastes sujets et de longues distances. En effet, des articles nous viennent de Vancouver, Toronto, Montréal, de l'autre côté de la frontière, de New-York et d'outre mer, d'Angleterre. C'est avec joie que nous retrouvons Penelope Doob qui explore, d'une façon intrigante, l'image mâle que le Ballet National nous présente dans sa saison printannière. Cette compagnie est dominée par l'image persistante de deux artistes invités, Erik Bruhn et Rudolf Nureyev. Mais eux persistent-ils vraiment? Dans un second article, Madelle Doob converse avec Wayne Eagling, une des nombreuses étoiles canadiennes de naissance du Ballet Royal. La discussion nous dévoile sa délicatesse et son intelligence de la danse dans la préparation des rôles. Chez nous, au Canada, certains endroits ont gagné de l'importance à titre de centres de danse en encourageant un usage innovateur de sites théâtraux. De Vancouver, Elizabeth Zimmer nous raconte l'histoire du Centre Culturel de Vancouver-Est, et de Toronto, l'écrivain pigiste Sue Swan passe le Fifteen en revue. De New-York, Nancy Goldner, critique, s'entretient avec la difficile et fascinante Twyla Tharp, chorégraphe dont le nom a fait les manchettes cette année grâce au travail qu'elle a accompli pour sa propre compagnie et pour l'American Ballet Theatre. Dans ce numéro de la Revue, William Littler jette un coup d'oeil sur la grand défi artistique qu'ont relevé, en mars dernier, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens — une soirée entière consacrée à des nouveautés, en hommage à Pierre Mercure, un des catalyseurs de la culture québécoise au cours des tumultueuses années soixante alors que le monde des arts du Québec commençait à se faire entendre. Pour terminer, dans notre section "Lettres ouvertes", la controverse continue toujours au sujet du rapport Brinson. Notre dernier numéro sur les recommandations que Peter Brinson a soumises au Conseil des Arts du Canada sur la situation de la formation professionnelle de la danse au Canada a suscité de vifs commentaires et donné lieu à de chauds arguments. Des réunions ont eu lieu dans certaines provinces en vue de discuter toute la question, et Danse au Canada s'est également mis en campagne par une correspondance assidue et des représentations auprès du Conseil des Arts. Nous vous tiendrons au courant de tout développement dans cette importante affaire. ●

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Photo by Anthony Crickmay of Wayne Eagling, Canadian-born star of the Royal Ballet, in Romeo and Juliet.

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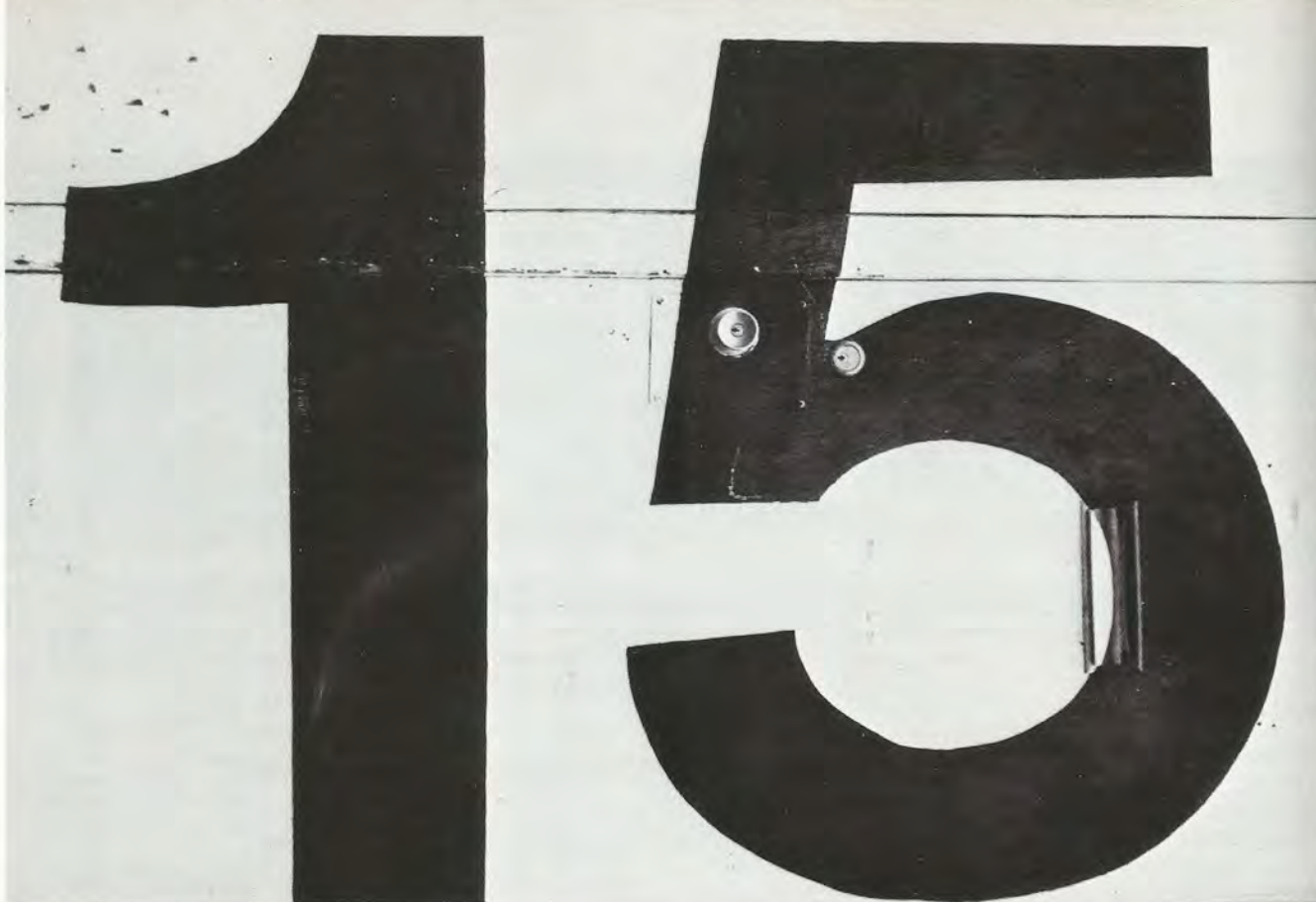
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Brass Foundry to Dance Lab

Susan Swan

Inside a Toronto warehouse that was once a brass foundry, and then an outlet for washing machine parts, Lawrence and Miriam Adams run Fifteen Dance Laboratorium, a performance space for choreographers who share their boredom with traditional modes of dance. The boredom became a mutiny directed at both contemporary and classical schools who are hooked into repeating old formulas without expanding dance as an art form.

The Lab has sponsored a cross-section of creative dance since it opened in October 1974. The range includes new troupes like the Rinmon Experimental Dance Group, young established choreographers such as Chalmers Award winner Judy Jarvis and Anna Blewchamp, former Ballet Rambert and Martha Graham School student, and then lesser known, but unconventional and exciting choreographers, like Lily Eng and Peter Dudar of Missing Associates and Margaret Dragu.

Visiting the Lab means first finding it on a confusing downtown sidestreet, then getting past a pair of barking German shepherds and entering finally into an innocuous room partly filled by the wood frame of an airplane Lawrence is building. Video equipment hides behind a scaffold while off to the right is a small chamber with 41 theatre seats.

It's the type of tomb-like space that puts the atmosphere

right back on the visitor's shoulders. Most journalists like myself rush over to the bulletin board to see what other journalists have said in the few scattered clippings; while other newcomers wander about uneasily at first, then if they wait long enough, discover themselves going through a natural dialectic: What's going on in here? Is this some kind of put down? Ah, nothing's going on in here . . . Wait, I'm going on in here. Yes, I'm here.

Meanwhile, Miriam and Lawrence Adams emerge slowly, like a subliminal presence that gets steadily more focused: he, shaggy-headed and articulate; she, a small quiet woman with definite opinions. Except for their neatly compacted bodies, they don't look like dancers, or caretakers, as they call themselves at the Lab.

The Adams' critique of dance officially began when Miriam and Lawrence left the National Ballet of Canada in 1970. They were married to each other and both were dancers, though Lawrence, 39, was more prominent in the company as a principal lead who played roles like the Prince in *Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*.

Born in St. Boniface, Manitoba, Lawrence performed with the National for 13 years as "a dyed-in-the-wool faithful" who came back each season on the premise that next year was going to be better. "Then it hit me," Lawrence says. "I knew that next year was going to be exactly the same, except maybe for a \$5 raise in pay."

Miriam, 32, from Toronto, danced with the National for

seven years until she left with Lawrence to teach ballet at the Lois Smith School of Dance in Toronto. "I just got fed up with the whole syndrome of dancers spending their lives taking classes until somebody says, do you want a job, kid?" Miriam says.

At the Lois Smith School, they found a group of dancers who wanted to choreograph and perform their own works. So in 1972 Lawrence and Miriam founded Fifteen Dancers. They did their first show in June that year at the Poor Alex. Next came *Colonel Sanders*, Lawrence's first performance with video at the Mississauga Library Theatre.

In 1974, Fifteen Dancers was reconstituted into Fifteen Dance Laboratorium and supported by a picture-framing business run by the Adams. Now it's financed by grants from the Ontario Arts Council and Canada Council which together provide it with a yearly budget of \$15,000. From this, Lawrence takes a caretaker salary.

The Adams perform their own works here at the Lab, but they don't want to found a new dance school and they don't give criticism to performers. Their job is providing free facilities and they pay small fees to dancers eager to take advantage of the Lab's interest in creativity.

"We don't like a lot of stuff that goes on in here," says Miriam Adams. "But we don't want to get involved as personalities and end up creating that old student-teacher dependency dancers have been brought up on."

The Adams are trying to avoid what Lawrence calls the 'yea-booh' syndrome. It (along with the hyper-disciplined dance training) has bred passive dancers who spend their lives learning to emulate somebody else.

"I'm not interested in burning down the National Ballet School," says Lawrence, who is critical of ballet companies spending millions of dollars recreating 'bad imitations' of works by Fokine and Massine. "But dance has been the least creative historically of all the arts. In the others, there is always energy put into expanding tradition. In dance, that same energy is put into discipline."

Members of traditional dance bastions like the National Ballet do not come to the Lab. Once, when Miriam did a parody of *Nutcracker*, a few National Ballet people appeared but had to be turned away at the door because the Lab's then 35 seats were already full.

But the Adams are recognized within Canada's young artistic communities which borrow from each other's art media and share a regular following of those who use art as a lifestyle.

Together with Terry McGlade, a Toronto video artist, the Adams established Visus Foundation, a company which uses video to document Canadian dance. In 1974, Miriam was the first runner-up for the Chalmers Award. As a member of the dance committee of the Toronto branch of International Women's Year, she took part as an organizer and performer at its Festival of Women and the Arts during May and June of 1975.



Last November, during a week-long display of live and video performances by eight dance artists, the Lab attempted to publicize its approach to dance. They coined 'dance artist' as a transition word — a bridge to changing public expectations and perceptions about dance. A dance artist, according to a Lab press release is "one who uses dance as an art medium". "We really should be known as artists," Lawrence says. "I'm not interested in dance. I'm interested in art. But my vehicle or medium is dance."

The week featured work by Susan Aaron, Peter Dudar and Lily Eng, Jill Bellos, Elizabeth Chitty and Margaret Dragu, plus a short piece by Miriam Adams called *Symphony in 75* and an audio book by Lawrence. In *Symphony*, Miriam walked in, dressed in tails, and swirled a baton at orchestras on 11 TV sets arranged in front of her.

Lawrence's book (which is still on display at the Lab) consists of pictures of a brick along with instructions on a tape cassette. It's an extension of several earlier performances which culminated in his last live show *A Day in the Life of a Brick* held at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa in 1974. While the lighting effects simulated night and day, Lawrence moved about an eight-foot high, sixteen-foot long styrofoam brick on the stage. Lawrence's brick — now in book form — sits on a shelf and can be taken down and played at random. "The only performance is the action of the person who is examining it," says Lawrence.

Their move toward conceptual and minimal art stems in part, at least, from a mutual frustration with "the ego tripping" behind many artistic performances. It came to a head for Lawrence while watching a recent production of *Red Emma*, a play by Toronto writer Carol Bolt. "The play was totally unimportant," Lawrence says. "What was really going down was DID YOU SEE ME, DID YOU SEE ME, DID YOU SEE ME?"

As an artist, Lawrence tries to separate his personality from his works: "Naturally, I can't separate me from the art object. But I can separate myself as a personality from the work."

For Miriam, the notion of performing has become personally distasteful. *Symphony in 75* will be her last live performance: "I felt ridiculous doing it, though I admit, whatever I do, I'll want somebody to see it."

Theoretically, anybody can perform at Fifteen Dance Lab. But the Adams have restricted poets and visual artists from using the space, because they tend to overshadow dance which needs more attention.

Meanwhile, despite their efforts to remain secondary figures behind Fifteen Dance Lab, a mystique is growing around Miriam and Lawrence Adams. Dancers come to the Lab, perform and want a reaction. When it doesn't come, they speculate. The Adams would be competent practitioners of the avant-garde in dance-oriented New York and their judgments count here in Canada with its small feuding dance factions and its slowly growing dance audiences.



The Little Church Around the Corner

Elizabeth Zimmer

From the Ivory Tower to the Great White Way to the Little Church Around The Corner: that's been the journey taken by Christopher Wootten, director of the Vancouver East Cultural Centre. The church, formerly Grandview United, stands at the junction of Victoria Drive and Venables, in Vancouver's East End.

Wootten is one of a triumvirate to emerge, in the mid-sixties, from the chairmanship of the University of British Columbia's Special Events Committee into professional arts management. His former colleagues, Murray Farr and David Y.H. Lui, are both members of Dance in Canada's board of directors and ardent promoters of international dance on the Canadian scene.

Wootten, on the other hand, is promoting, very specifically, home-grown professional arts on the Vancouver scene. A returned native, he did a stint with Murray Farr at New Arts, the company they formed to manage the Alwin Nikolais/Murray Louis dance juggernaut in New York, and worked as well in Boston, and with the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. He came back to Vancouver in 1970 "to have a more normal family life." After his heady experiences south of the border, he knew he wanted to work in the arts, but "I wasn't going to work for a mediocre artist."

A couple of sessions as an OFY project officer introduced him to most of the emerging performing groups in the area and gave him useful experience in the mysterious workings of the Ottawa bureaucracy. A friend and colleague at the Secretary of State's office, Darlene Marzari, came across the underused church, then occupied by a coalition of anti-poverty groups. Now an alderperson on Vancouver's City Council, she encouraged him in the project of turning it into a showplace.

A group of interested young entrepreneurial types took over the building, leasing it from the church, in January of 1973. After months of administrative wrangling about how to manage it, during which the whole enterprise almost

Chris Wootten. Photo: John Mahler.

collapsed, Wootten took control. Renovations began, and are still continuing; in October of 1973 the Centre opened with a "first": two solid weeks of performances by the Anna Wyman Dance Theatre, which gave the young company the baptism of a "long run."

Since that time, such groups as the Paula Ross Dancers, Mountain Dance Theatre, and local choreographers Jamie Zagoudakis, Savannah Walling and Karen Rimmer have used the three-sided arena stage area for dance presentations.

Wootten's hope is to devote at least one week in eight to dance. He observes that contemporary dance has been the slowest art form to develop regionally in North America. While music and theatre have decentralized to a great degree, the centre of professional dance activity is still clearly New York. He grudgingly allows as how Max Wyman's conjecture that Vancouver was the second dance city on the continent might be accurate, "but second in the sense that it's on the next planet!"

The VECC is now a non-profit society, operating on its own income (running about \$60,000 annually) and subsidies from the city and the province (which this year total \$76,000). The theatre holds about 250 viewers at dance concerts, in two tiers of newly upholstered old movie seats. More people can be accommodated at music and drama events, which take up less floor space.

The place is booked solid more than a year in advance, with concert series, plays, a grand Christmas craft fair, festivals of women in the arts, film showings, and theatre for children. It is in use nightly, all year long, with children's matinees on frequent afternoons. The charming lobby areas serve as gallery space for interesting work by local graphic artists and photographers.

Government subsidies make it possible to keep the

rentals affordable; Wootten thinks they are the lowest in the country. "We charge \$30 a night for groups which are not funded by the Canada Council, \$50 a night when they are, and take 20% of the gate, up to a maximum of \$100; that will go to \$125 next year."

For that fee, theatre users get the services of the Centre's staff of six: Wootten, his co-director and publicist Wendy Newman, a technical director, a house manager, a custodian and a secretary. They get cashiers, and the advantages of a well-organized publicity effort: ten thousand copies of an attractive program poster are mailed out monthly, as well as a 12-page release to all local media, listing and backgrounding everything coming up. A recent survey indicated that patrons attend Centre events on an average of five or six times a year.

The Centre's facilities include 40 lights, a 10-dimmer board with 2-scene preset, a complete sound system and house intercom, and a Marley stage floor. There's casual, self-service coffee in the living-room-like lobby, a beer and wine bar, attractive large round wooden tables and chairs. The restrooms are full of plants, a fine old staircase winds up to the balcony; pervading all is a sense of good will and enthusiasm for contemporary creative arts.

"In this business," says Wootten, "the fun is booking." He's bringing in the Tarragon Theatre production of *Hosanna* from Toronto. But all you company managers across the country whose fingers are inching toward your telephones, itching to play in this congenial environment, take heed: "We're working almost exclusively with local artists, based on what we feel is best for the local performing community. We're trying to clear more space for local dance. Until there's more performing space in the city, we can't go looking to out-of-town groups. We have a responsibility to our own performers first, who can't afford the rents of the larger theatres, or the costs of union labour."

One of the Centre's difficulties in booking dance events is that it programs nearly a year in advance, and most local dance companies are so shakily funded they find it impossible to plan that far ahead. Another problem is the unusual open stage area, which eliminates the proscenium and the distancing possible with a conventional stage. Although Paula Ross has been choreographing specifically for the space for some time, with increasing effectiveness, Anna Wyman, who prefers the formality of a proscenium stage, has moved to the larger Queen Elizabeth complex in downtown Vancouver.

The Centre is located near the geographic centre of the Lower Mainland metropolis, in a multi-cultural district which includes many Chinese, Italians and Portuguese. It is fairly handy to public transit, and its audience comes from all areas of the city. While the neighbourhood people do not patronize the Centre heavily, their children do, packing the house for school performances which cost 25¢ a seat. The kids walk to the Centre from six local schools. They seem to prefer the dance events over all the other offerings; "they get off on the sexual aspects of it," says Wootten with a grin.

When Wootten returned to Vancouver in 1970, there was virtually nothing happening except the large, established arts organizations like the Symphony. "The performing arts were just starting to cook then. In the last five or six years the city has come alive."

Providing a well-run base for a number of the younger performing groups, an intimate environment for chamber music, experimental theatre, new dance and nostalgic cinema, is satisfying Christopher Wootten's desire to work for himself, in the arts, and in the city he loves. He likes it here and he helps make Vancouver a brighter, more provocative place to live.

Paula Ross Dancers. Using space effectively.





Wayne Eagling

A Dancer Prepares

Penelope B. R. Doob

One of the most sparkling of the Royal Ballet's many brilliant dancers is a 25-year-old Canadian, Wayne Eagling, promoted last year to principal dancer. Virtually unknown in Canada, Eagling is a favourite with London ballet regulars thanks to his splendid technique, his superb line, and his sensitivity to style. Graced with centred precision in allegro, *ballon*, infectious *joie de vivre*, and remarkable musicality, Eagling has impressed choreographers as well. Kenneth Macmillan, artistic director of the Royal Ballet, made *Triad* (1972) for Eagling, Anthony Dowell and Antoinette Sibley; since then, Macmillan has created roles for him in *Elite Syncopations* (1974), *The Four Seasons* and *Rituals* (both 1975). Hans Van Manen gave Eagling and Dowell a challenging pas de deux in *Four Schumann Pieces* (1975), a minor masterpiece, and in 1973 Jerome Robbins and George Balanchine chose Eagling for the Royal premieres of *Requiem Canticles* and *The Four Temperaments* (Eagling danced "Phlegmatic").

Many of these roles have exploited Eagling's technique, but what is most exciting about his recent career is his exploding artistry. He adjusts easily to the varied demands of abstract ballet (Balanchine's *Agon* and *Serenade*, Ashton's *Monotones 1*, Macmillan's *Concerto*) and comedy (*Elite Syncopations*, parts of Robbins' *Dances at a Gathering*), but surely the greatest test of artistry lies in dramatic roles like Siegfried or Macmillan's Romeo. Here Eagling excels. As this interview shows he understands that the best acting comes from fusing careful forethought with spontaneity and he has a flair for discovering those special touches that highlight action and character, that make every role curiously and distinctively his own.

It was chiefly on the subject of acting that I interviewed him in August, 1975, two days after he had danced an intoxicating Romeo (his fourth). His unpretentious good humour was refreshing, and as we talked I began to see a crucial aspect of his artistry: he is a modest perfectionist, singularly generous with praise of other dancers but astonishingly diffident about his own achievements. Eagling attributes much of his dramatic ability to the coaching of Michael Somes, the example of Dowell, David Wall, Lynn Seymour, and Donald Macleary (all of whom he admires intensely), and a familiarity with the work of other companies; he says much less about his own obvious passion to act well, the love of dance that drives him to learn as much as he can from the perceptive analysis of other dancers and of the role itself.

He is similarly reluctant to acknowledge his technical strengths; since his crisp entrechats are facilitated by "my sway-backed legs (slightly hyperextended knees)," they're not worth much praise, and his ideal physique for ballet (he is slim, almost bonelessly flexible and perfectly proportioned) is dismissed casually: "I have a very easy body for ballet; I'm really too loose for a man, I can afford not to be so elastic." He values most what he finds most difficult, a multiple pirouette, and laments that "I can't do a million." Yet when pressed, he admits that before a recent ankle injury he could do ten turns "almost automatically." That just isn't good enough for him.

What matters most both in acting and in technique isn't doing better than someone else but doing his best, coming as close as possible to his vision of the ideal. It's hardly surprising that a man with such high standards is improving almost daily, showing every sign of becoming one of the finest dancers in the world as he matures. As the following excerpts from our conversation about his Romeo show, Eagling is an intelligent and reflective dancer profoundly committed to his art.

PD. Your Romeo was breathtaking, and one of the most amazing things about it was that, unlike many young dancers, you didn't seem to have based your interpretation on anyone else's, although there was a general family resemblance to Dowell's.

WE. I may have been influenced by him. It's hard to say what's modelled and what isn't, because I've seen it done so many times by so many different people.

PD. How do you go about finding your own interpretation?

WE. I find it very difficult to prethink a character. Of course, I always know more or less what I want to come across, but what I feel I'm giving isn't always what people pick up, and I'm very bad in rehearsals.

PD. Does having an audience really pull you up?

WE. Not for anything they do, but simply because they're *there!* I dance only for that, really. I can only act when there's an audience. Maybe it's because I'm terribly shy.

PD. That's interesting, because I felt that beneath the gracious or even boisterous surface, your Siegfried and Romeo were very shy, characters who'd learned to wear the appropriate personas in public but who were slightly uneasy with the roles they had to play. Your Siegfried was much friendlier than any I've ever seen, and the friendliness was almost entirely convincing until suddenly everyone left and you did that terrifying adage with a desperate loneliness.

WE. Yes, I *felt* very lonely at that point! It's so hard to make that adage look easy.

PD. But that slight difficulty was very moving; it gave Siegfried a kind of split personality, a sense of someone very shy who puts on masks to be able to function with other people, but in the rare moments when there's no one around, there are no masks, no roles to play, and what can he do then? There was a similar split in Romeo, between the starry-eyed kid adoring Rosaline and the gangster who hangs around with Benvolio and Mercutio.

WE. Yes, but it's very difficult to convey something like that. A lot has to do with experience, which is the hardest thing to get in the Royal, with so many wonderful dancers around.

PD. Yet you make everything, even being in the corps, good acting experience. You're always doing something, either focussing on the principals or inventing delicious bits of business.

WE. When you're a villager in something like *La Fille Mal Gardée*, keeping your enthusiasm going is harder than doing a technically demanding role. If we're all dancing around madly and then everyone rushes to the side and collapses in a heap, it's just awful. I try to stay interested in things when I'm in the corps these days! It's hard to be a corps dancer, but it's also hard making the transition to being star of the show, because you're so conditioned to stand in line, to blend in in a nice little pattern. Suddenly to be there, in the middle of the stage — you feel terribly alone.

PD. But it must be easier for you to act in the middle of the stage precisely *because* you're acting all the time in the corps. Incidentally, how do you know what role to play when you're simply a villager?

WE. You *make* a role, you get into the spirit of it. I try to do everything as if it were just me walking down the street — I try to make it all absolutely natural. That may not be such a good idea when it comes to principal roles; Derek Rencher tells me to make every role different, and not just

different from each other, different from *me*. He says, "Don't do *Swan Lake* like Wayne Eagling, do *Swan Lake* like Siegfried!" I find that very hard. But it's satisfying to feel more confident about my acting, which is a novel experience. Oddly enough, doing Siegfried helped — it's the first time I've done classical mime, and that's much more difficult than anything in *Romeo*. Making yourself say something like "She is Swan Queen" — you feel such an idiot. But you have to believe it, and as soon as you get through the initial difficulty, everything else seems easy. For instance, doing Romeo this time, I didn't feel I had to rush around; before, I ran up and down stairs, I never stopped moving. I can stand still now and not feel silly. Very little feels silly after "She is Swan Queen!"

PD. Can we go through some of the things in your Romeo that seemed particularly yours, to see how you arrived at them? First, your Romeo was painfully vulnerable, standing plucking away at the mandolin in mute frustration, hoping desperately that somehow Rosaline would notice. But he's also a cocky kid who eggs on Mercutio and Benvolio. Both faces are real, and the result is a subtle portrait of a confused adolescent.

WE. I try to play Romeo very young, and I try to be very natural. I think about being 14 or 16, though I know it was different in Shakespeare's time. But since people who dance Romeo are much older, the problem is to bring the role back down, to show a very young boy who suddenly grows up. That's how I do the first scene, very young; I feel Romeo's lost at that point, totally out of his depth throughout the first act. For instance, I come into the ballroom and there's Rosaline, a mature lady! All I can do is say "hello" and then there's nothing else to be said. I try to make Romeo — well, not embarrassed exactly, but certainly not aware of what life is all about. Rudolf (Nureyev) does it completely differently: in his first scene

Collier and Eagling in tomb scene. Photo: Anthony Crickmay.



he's mature, he plays around with the whores, he's obviously very experienced sexually. But my Romeo isn't that confident. It's a difficult scene: you come on, then the three fellows are all mucking around together, that's very young, and then all of a sudden there's the whole challenging you, and what can you do but brazen it out?

PD. I liked that — you looked a little shocked at first, but you recovered quickly; you shook your head at her, wagged your finger mischievously, and then ran over to her and grabbed her. It was quite macho, but also very engaging! Was that your invention?

WE. Oh yes, that's mine! I could never have done that last year, I'd have felt that nobody else had done it and so I couldn't do it. It was very natural; I hadn't planned it, but as I was dancing she ran away, and I thought, "All right for you!"

PD. And then, in the fight in that scene —

WE. (laughing) When I dropped my sword?

PD. No — that was original! Later, when the bodies have all been piled up, you're totally unconcerned that anyone has died. Does Romeo really not give a damn, or is it a matter of pride — all those Capulets are watching, so you're not going to show a trace of weakness, of emotion?

WE. At that point I have absolutely no feelings at all for anyone who's died. Everything to do with that fight is routine — something that happens every day. That's the way life is. What really upsets me is having to hand in my sword after the fight.

PD. You did that very well; there was a quick change from outright defiance of the prince — "Who the hell does he think he is?" — to realizing how you could be one up on the Capulets by being the first to obey.

WE. Usually Romeo and Tybalt walk in together, stand there glaring at each other, and lay their swords down at the same time. I thought that was one bit I'd do differently. I'd spend all my time arguing with my father, asking why I had to give up my sword, and then I'd just walk in very fast, throw it down, and get out.

PD. The contrast between your Romeo before and after meeting Juliet is remarkable — you change from sometime punk, sometime kid with a crush, to a young man in love, and I think the transformation is related to your handling of the moment when you first see her in the ballroom scene. Don't you delay noticing Juliet much longer than anyone else?

WE. Yes. Most Romeos notice her as soon as she starts her dance, but I thought I'd be totally absorbed in Rosaline, that I should turn around only when she turns, and only then should I see Juliet.

PD. When other Romeos see Juliet, they're totally and inexorably in love right away. But your falling in love is more gradual — you seem to think, "Now there's an interesting girl," and then suddenly she turns around in the dance, there's eye contact, and that's when you fall in love.

WE. Yes. That meeting with Juliet is something else I try to think about. If you see someone for the first time, even at 14 or 16, you're not about to fall in love immediately. It has to take just a little bit more time than that. And I always find Juliet's reaction — her just standing there — a little strange. If I were playing Juliet and I turned around and saw Romeo staring at me, in a daze, I'd back away.

PD. Just after you meet Juliet, you cross from stage right to stage left, as she's still dancing with Paris. You look at her, then you turn away as if you can't bear the sight of her because the emotion is so intense, and then you cross,



and finally you turn back and look for her, very tentatively, very frightened. You can joke with the whores, you can adore Rosaline, but you can hardly look at Juliet. Is that new?

WE. Yes. When I did it first, I just backed away, looking at her all the time.

PD. Your balcony scene was the sexiest I've ever seen.

WE. That was the best part of the ballet Saturday. And I didn't think at all about how to dance it — it just happened. It was the only part of the performance I was really pleased with.

PD. Lesley Collier was alternately intense and skittish, caught between love, coquettishness, and a real terror of the consequences, while you seemed drunk with desire. At the end, you were dripping with sweat and looked utterly exhausted; you kissed Juliet's hand tenderly, let her go, and then almost collapsed, totally spent. And finally, just a shade late, you raced off to raise your hand towards her in the final tableau. It was electrifying.

WE. I enjoyed it intensely. It's what makes dancing worthwhile.

PD. After that, your Romeo is a man gentled by love, who loves all the world because he loves Juliet. Is that how you see it?

WE. Yes, right up until Mercutio fights Tybalt.

Collier and Eagling in balcony scene of Romeo and Juliet. Photo: Anthony Crickmay.

PD. In the first scene of the second act, one of the whores covers your eyes — the "guess who" ploy; you shrug her off and walk downstage, totally enrapt. You give yourself a little hug, and then you laugh as if at a secret joke. That's your invention?

WE. Yes. I wanted it to seem as if I was remembering Juliet, how nice it was. You see, that's another case of having the confidence to do something new, of feeling natural doing it. It's what I would do if I were walking down the road, remembering something like that.

PD. When you push your friends away later, you push them exactly as you did the whores — a gentle "Sorry" — this isn't the way I'm going to live any more."

WE. That's probably basically the same with other dancers. When the whore comes up and puts her hands over your eyes, you think it's Juliet, and when it's not, you want to be alone. She keeps pestering you, and you're still so happy in your own thoughts that you push her away almost without thinking about it. Later on, when your friends come up to you, you're still in your own little dream, and when they want to talk to you, you say, "Go away!" It's exactly the same as with the whores. And when the whore comes back again, you get a tiny bit annoyed. But then you realize that you're annoyed because you've

become introverted, so you think, "Oh well!" and you call her over and give her a little kiss. And then you can't hold your joy in any more, and you rush to your friends and tell them you're terribly happy, and then you think, "Oh my God — now I've got to run around this bloody great stage!"

PD. That solo is wonderful — pure effervescence! But later in that scene there's a real problem: the nurse comes in and you and your friends tease her about which of you is Romeo, so it's a long time before you get your hands on the letter she's brought from Juliet. I think it's totally out of character for an ecstatically happy Romeo to tease anyone connected with Juliet or to wait a second before reading her letter. Does that bother you?

WE. Well, I've grown up seeing the letter scene as part of the ballet; I'm so used to it that it doesn't really bother me. But now that I think about it, it is out of character. If her nurse arrives with a letter, the first thing I'm going to do is



Eagling and Dowell in Four Schumann Pieces. Photo: Anthony Crickmay.

run over and grab it. As soon as you see the letter, it's the letter and away you go — or it should be!

PD. In the third scene, when Tybalt tries to provoke you to fight, he jabs his sword at your breast. Only after a long, poignant pause do you finally and very gently push the blade away. It's as though you were saying, "You're Juliet's brother — do what you like with me."

WE. I wanted that part to seem as if I was saying, "Look, we can be friends." I don't know how well it came across.

PD. And another thing: your Romeo shows real anger when Mercutio taunts Tybalt in the fight. Tybalt falls and Mercutio vaults over him, and you lash out, as if you were saying, "You idiot!" Is that new with you?

WE. It is. I was speaking with Ray Roberts, the actor who plays my father, and then I got hold of the play and had a

read, and I found out that at that point the Prince has said, "Any more fighting and that's it." So you don't want anything at all to happen to spoil your love for Juliet, you don't want anyone banished for anything, you don't want any more animosity, so you have to stop Mercutio immediately. And there's that terrible moment when you have Mercutio on one side and Tybalt on the other. You're stuck in the middle and you have to persuade both of them not to fight for different reasons. It's rather a hopeless situation.

PD. That reminds me of another good part. It's when Tybalt discovers you in the ballroom scene and denounces you to Capulet. You respond by reassuring Juliet, pleading with Capulet, and hurling invective at Tybalt; you switch from one posture to another very quickly and dramatically.

WE. That scene works because I'm so very sure in my own mind what my responses are there, what I want each person to do. I don't have to think about how to do it technically to get it across to the audience, how to show the changes in attitude when I look at Juliet or Capulet or Tybalt; it just happens, it's what I'd do in that sort of situation.

PD. You sound almost like a method actor at times; you really throw yourself into your parts!

WE. That's what generally happens; in all my parts, I do what feels natural and right for me. But the problem is how to get it across. I know exactly what I want to project, but doing it is a different matter, and very difficult. I'm relieved that I seem to be doing it better than I used to do! I get very upset if people come up to me and say, "Well, you danced all right, but you weren't really *doing* anything up there!" when after all I've been up there pouring my heart out!

PD. Acting has to be very big to carry in Covent Garden.

WE. But you can learn how to do it, and I've learned from watching what other people do — not only dancers like Anthony (Dowell) and David (Wall), I also go to the theatre as much as possible. It's the only way to learn.

PD. There's one last thing I'd like to ask about your Romeo. After Mercutio has been killed, after Tybalt has challenged you, you spend a very long time flexing your sword, deciding whether to fight or not.

WE. Oh, yes, lots of time. I think I may have done a little too much sword-flexing; by the time I'd flexed it for the fourth time, I realized it might be rather overdone.

PD. I liked it; I thought you built up almost unbearable tension there.

WE. Of course, the music builds up very slowly there, getting much quicker just before the fight. I feel Romeo's in a great rage: he must fight Tybalt, he must avenge Mercutio's death, but he doesn't want to because of the consequences.

PD. Flexing your sword underlines the confusion and the agony of the decision. Naturally we all know that Romeo will have to kill Tybalt, but that gesture of indecision allows us to hope that just this once Romeo won't fight and the story will have a happy ending.

WE. It would be nice if you could change that part of the ballet occasionally.

PD. But we're so seldom made to believe that the plot could change; when you flex your sword, we have time to think, "Please, God, just this once let it be all right!" That gesture lets us see into Romeo's mind; we know he hasn't quite decided this time.

WE. Keep that one in, then? Right!



Twyla Tharp. Witty and Outrageous.

Profile: Twyla Tharp

Nancy Goldner

Of all the young American choreographers, Twyla Tharp is the only one to have truly caught the public's imagination. Whatever one thinks of her work is, in a sense, beside the point; people who are interested in the performing arts want to see Tharp. She is someone you can readily take sides over, and her name is "in the air." It means that, like the movies and unlike Balanchine and Graham, one can see Tharp on Friday night with the assurance that on Saturday night one will have plenty to talk about with strangers. This is not to denigrate her, but to suggest a measure of her currency.

Much of Tharp's popularity is connected with a dance tone that might also be detected in the following interview. Her dances are uniquely contemporary in that they are witty, outrageous, thoughtful, wilful, proud, and yet a little

on the defensive. That last point is hard to pin down; I think it has to do with the fact that her dances and dancers rarely move with a point of view that is not contradicted or shrugged off a second later. The prevailing irony of Tharp's work makes one want to watch it all with a grain of salt. That quality is tantalizing, although ultimately it might shut some off from her work.

Tharp's interest in virtuosity is the most straightforward aspect of her work and the one that brings her right into the mainstream of the ballet tradition. Most often working out of the gestures, traditional steps and phrases of social dances and vaudeville entertainers, she dissects and intensifies those motions so that they seem vaguely recognizable baroque monuments of their prototypes. Little shimmies and shakes become miniscule. The whole

notion of balance and off-balance becomes a precarious experience with Tharp. Whereas most dancers at times create an illusion of relaxation or casualness, Tharp experiments with real dead weight. A favourite device is setting off contradictory modes of energy in one body simultaneously. While the torso is slumped into the pelvis, the feet are stomping or tapping at a furious speed, while one arm is executing a proper *port de bras*, while the other arm is hanging limp except for the middle finger which is twitching. All of this creates a razzle-dazzle, humorous tone, but at the bottom of it is sheer dance virtuosity.

Tharp is also interested in recreating literally in dance the structure of polyphonic music — one reason for her use of Mozart and Haydn. Her dancers bounce off each other in canons and fugues. It is more difficult to see these relationships than to hear them — perhaps because no other choreographer has asked us to see them — but whether or not one is aware of the underlying structure, the effect of danced-out polyphony is buoyantly dense and full of intriguing echoes. The contrapuntal texture of Tharp's dances is probably what gives them the resilience they have, while the madcap, non-sequitur sequence of steps gives them an improvisational feel. Still, I think that when people say of Tharp and her dancers that they're making it up as they go along, they are essentially expressing the surprise of seeing familiar things in new time zones and new landscapes.

Tharp became known to a wide public in 1971 when *Eight Jelly Rolls* to Jelly Roll Morton rags was danced at the Delacorte Theatre as part of a free summer dance festival in New York's Central Park. *Deuce Coupe*, the Beach Boys ballet she made for the Joffrey ballet company in 1973, seemed to clinch her fame. At the time of my interview with Tharp she was choreographing a Haydn symphony for American Ballet Theatre and a new dance for her own company. The Haydn, which ended up with the title of *Push Comes to Shove*, was premiered in New York January 9. The piece for her own company was first seen on March 25, at the beginning of the Tharp company's 10-day season at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Has your attitude toward audiences changed over the years?

You've seen my ballets. It's self-explanatory. The older pieces were aggressive and unpleasant in the way much avant-garde art is. Say it was defensive. It's a case of people being uncertain and embarrassed by what they're doing. It changed with *The Fugue* (1970). *The Fugue* represented five years of learning my craft. I use all that technique and craft now but I don't make a point of it. I'm no longer self-conscious. My pieces take a softer view toward the audience.

Then how do you explain that speech you make in The Bix Pieces, where you tell the audience how the dance came to be made?

That got people upset in England. The English are basically arrogant people and they didn't want to be talked to. Actually, I used the text as a theatre form, and I'm interested in it as I'm interested in lecture-demonstrations. I like the softness of that situation. People are relaxed. And they can see the dances well.

What kind of audiences do you like?

Very sophisticated or very unsophisticated. The Delacorte Theatre has a valuable point of view for me. I mean, I like the idea of some lady coming off the street. An unsophisticated audience has no preconceptions.



Do you ever feel that people laugh too much during your ballets?

I don't care how people respond, though my ballets are *not* about Red Skelton. I think humour is very important, too over-looked. Buster Keaton is one of the most profound performers I've ever seen. If you mean the Joffrey audience . . . they get hysterical because they're accustomed to seeing broad dancing.

Do you think the inclusion of music makes your ballets more accessible, gives an audience another door into your work?

I don't know. What do you mean by accessible? In a sense, all music is the same to me. I grew up with it. Music can be used as a set, like decor. But there are also good ideas in music. In the Haydn ballet, for example, I'm having a problem right now with the ending, which is 12 seconds, because Haydn understood the insignificance of endings. An ending is only the aftermath of everything that went before. So Haydn made his ending ridiculous. And it's important to me to include Haydn's thinking in my thinking when I end the ballet.

How did you come to choreograph?

When I came to New York in 1961 I saw everything that was done but little that I wanted to return to. There is nothing more demoralizing to me than to see a shitty piece of choreography. When I see something I like it makes me feel like going to work. First I joined Paul Taylor because



Joffrey Ballet in Sharp's Deuce Coupe II.

He was a wonderful dancer. I had seen his last season with Graham and his own *Junction*. I was enamoured by the way he moved, and by the contradiction of his size, speed, and fluidity. But I grew uncomfortable working in his choreography. Performers don't, can't disguise themselves. It became clear to everyone. If performers aren't sympathetic, it shows. Push came to shove. I was asked to leave. The alternatives were that I could join Cunningham — I hadn't been asked, but I think I could have joined — or do my own choreography. I didn't join Cunningham because I couldn't understand the counterpoint in his work. At that time he had a wonderful company because it was filled with excellent dancers who were also intensely individualistic — like Steve Paxton, Barbara Lloyd, Viola Farber, Carolyn Brown. I modelled my own company on that one. The most important thing about a company is to be able to see each dancer individually. But with Cunningham's I saw people in isolated spheres. I was to be dancing with other people, but I would not know *how*. So I began to choreograph. I was gifted with a facile body . . . also, I could close my eyes at night and see patterns and shapes.

Did you ever think of becoming a ballet dancer and not going to college? (Sharp has an art history degree from Barnard College in New York.)

No. I don't know *what* my mother thought she was doing, sending me to all those lessons. I continued

lessons only as a matter of habit. In New York I was only upping the quality of my training. Other things I had done tended to make me nervous but dancing lessons never had that pressure because I had no professional aspirations.

In a rehearsal of the new Haydn ballet, you said that a fugue for three ladies in the corner of the stage was your favourite part but that the audience won't see it. Don't you care?

People might see it after a few viewings. Maybe only one or two will see it. The crass people will see only the dross, and that's okay. I think if George (Balanchine) saw my ballet he would see it, because I think he's interested in that sort of thing.

Does Balanchine's use of music interest you?

Actually, I'm more interested in Tudor's musicality. Balanchine is mainly interested in melodic line. A canon is about the most complicated he gets. Still, though, when I do my fugues I think of him.

Why don't you put that little fugue for three in the centre of the stage?

The dance is very delicate; it wants to be secluded. Also, at that point the music is very broad. I put in a big ensemble dance as a filler to the filigree. And besides, I think the three girls would feel lonely by themselves in the corner of the stage. But their dance must be in the corner. There's a mystique about areas of the stage for me. I'm sorry, but it *is* a mystique and it's there for me all the time. Areas of the stage have specific meanings similar to dramatic structure. And I think of choreography as telling a kind of story.

How did you pick Haydn for the ABT ballet?

My first idea was along an entirely different line and was puritanical. Well, I knew better than that. I listened to a lot of Mozart, about 70 records, but you see, Haydn is a better composer. Then I thought, I used him before. So what? Maybe I'll do one Haydn a year. If you distract yourself with novelty you never have to grow up. Umm, I think I'm lecturing to myself now.

What music are you thinking about for your own company?

The new piece has started in silence and I don't know what will happen.

Will you pursue your retrospective of American music?

Don't know. Art Tatum is the only one who interests me now. He's the last of the great piano virtuosos. Monk comes from another line, not pianistic. I mean, where can you go from Fats Waller? (Sharp used him for her most recent jazz piece, *Sue's Leg*.) There's a point where all the spaces on the canvas are completely filled up. There's a point where you go beyond the baroque.

Where do you study dance now?

You've hit a sore point. Haven't taken a class for a year or done a barre in three months. A class is no longer an educational process for me. I don't think of myself as a student anymore. Yet I have to dance with my own company pretty soon. . . . Sometimes I think I should just run four miles a day.

Have you ever thought about teaching choreography?

Being taught something you love is a pain in the ass.



Bruhn, the Apollonian. Photo: Andrew Oxenham.

When August Bournonville left Paris for his native Copenhagen in 1829, it may well have been with some disgust at the growing ascendancy of the ballerina and the consequent degeneration of the male dancer's role. Since ballet began, men had dominated the art with their brilliant *batterie*, their elevation, and their pirouettes. Women who made it in dance were often famous largely for their skill at "male" steps: Camargo dazzled audiences with her *entrechats quatre* until outshone by La Barbarina's *entrechats huit*. But with the rise of the Romantic Ballet, the ethereal lightness of the ballerina on pointe replaced the virtuosity of the school of Vestris, one of Bournonville's teachers and perhaps the greatest male dancer of his day.

At Copenhagen's Royal Theatre, Bournonville preserved and strengthened the tradition of male supremacy as ballet master, choreographer, and dancer, transmitting the secrets of masculine dancing to St. Petersburg through his pupil Christian Johannson. But in the rest of Europe, the male dancer was on the decline, and leading male roles were often taken by women in pants.

The noted critic and soon-to-be librettist of *Giselle*, Théophile Gautier, praised Theresa Elssler's *La Volière* for "the good taste she has displayed in not giving *pas* in her choreographic work to male dancers," thereby permitting audiences the pleasure of her own "intelligent legs" instead of a man's "calves of a parish beadle." Everywhere the adulation of ballerinas in ever-shorter skirts and barer bodices betrayed a similar prurient fascination with female flesh as well as feminine virtuosity, if not virtue. Many nineteenth-century ballets could be seen as catering to Victorian masturbatory fantasies, their delicious heroines decorously glossed by the patina of unattainability.

From then on, men were on the defensive in ballet. Diaghilev's company and the legendary Nijinsky served as reminders that there was considerable room for men in dance, but only in the last 20 years has the male dancer reasserted his central role, capturing audience enthusiasm in the process. Many factors have come together to create new concern with the male image in dance: the athletic bravura of the Bolshoi men in their Western tours; the burgeoning numbers of well-trained and talented young men eager for new roles and audience acclaim; the novel and sometimes extreme celebration of the dancing male in Béjart's *Ballets du Vingtième Siècle*, the Dutch National Ballet, and Nederlands Dans Theater.

Most important, perhaps, was the emergence of two contrasting male superstars, the Apollonian Erik Bruhn with his elegant style and aesthetic insistence on intelligent, well-motivated acting, and the Dionysian Rudolf Nureyev, famed more for his startling virtuosity and animal exuberance than for his remarkable artistry. These two versions of the male image have dominated ballet in general and the National Ballet of Canada in particular, a company having no clear male image of its own and hence relying on close associations with Bruhn and Nureyev to bring in the crowds, and inspire its own dancers.

The historical context more than justifies recent concern with the male image in dance. But the forms that concern has taken are not always so easily justifiable. As men have regained prominence in dance, the old rumours have been revived, perhaps by the disgruntled, paunchy business man whose wife drags him off to see Nureyev or Baryshnikov when he'd much rather watch *Hockey Night in Canada*: "Moon after him all you want, dear, but I'll take a Real Man over these faggots any day."

Meditations on The National Ballet

The nature of the attack coloured the defense. The hastiest glance through comments by Igor Yousekevitch, Bruce Marks and Edward Villella in *The Male Image (Dance Perspectives 40, 1969)* reveals a determination to prove that male dancers are Real Men by pre-empting qualities like controlled power, simplicity, energy, and concern with clear dramatic motivation, as characteristic of the male; the female dancer need only be beautiful and technically competent. Attention to line is uncomfortably defined as effeminate, so men should stick to difficult jumps and beats, shunning the more languid (and therefore "feminine") grace of adagio movement. Statements like these wrong both sexes in ballet, turning women into dolls with elegance but no conscious artistry, and men into virile and intelligent athletes with a constricted range of possible movements.

Hoping that such defensiveness was a thing of the past and that dancers long exposed to the influence of Bruhn and Nureyev might have more enlightening things to say about the male image, I spoke with members of the National Ballet — Frank Augustyn, Ann Ditchburn, James Kudelka, Gary Norman, Tomas Schramek, Veronica Tennant — and with Rudi Van Dantzig, artistic director of

the Dutch National Ballet, here to mount his *Monument for a Dead Boy*.

One of the foremost architects of the new male image in contemporary ballet, Van Dantzig finds part of the importance of male and female images in dance to lie in the basic connection between sexuality and dance: "The sexual instinct is one of the drives of dance, I think. Birds — when they mate, they dance, no? When they court. And animals too. So dancing is a very sexual thing."

If so, strong sexuality might well be part of the dancer's appeal for the audience, as Tennant believes: "It's something people react to instinctively. Masculinity and femininity come out on stage much more than one is aware of, and often dancers with a high degree of masculinity or femininity are the dancers that do extremely well. The male dancers who've really succeeded have portrayed a certain virility, whatever their private lives are like. They have a marvelous strength that makes one say, 'Yes, that's masculinity.' It's hard to say what masculinity really is, but the male dancers that people flock in droves to see on stage give off that aura. Nureyev is like that — he has tremendous sex appeal."

True enough; yet Nureyev is worshipped by the general public not only for his sex appeal but also for his flamboyant technical feats. The equation by audience or dancer of masculinity with athleticism and tricks is dangerous, as Norman warns: "A dancer with a flashy technique can be led into doing those tricks so much that they'll forget the other side of dance. I've seen that happen quite often."

For National dancers, Bruhn's influence is important in making them fully aware that virtuosity must always be the servant of artistry, especially in story ballets. Schramek,



Nureyev, the *Dionysian*. Photo: The Toronto Star.

The Male Image Spring Season

by R. Doob

the company's best Franz in Bruhn's *Coppélia*, doesn't believe in "steps without feeling behind them. Dancing is our way of speaking, and we should speak all the time. That's not easy with show-off variations; I'm uncomfortable with them. In the first-act variation in *Coppélia*, there's a definite purpose, impressing Swanilda, so I can speak. In the second act, it's different. One can do the steps, but it can mean nothing, it can be so dry, and I don't feel that's what dancing's all about."

It's lucky, then, that National dancers aren't worried about working to seem masculine for masculinity's sake. Augustyn dismisses such defensiveness with some contempt: "I don't have to strip on stage to prove I'm male. Male dancers can be secure in what they are now, they don't have to prove anything. I'll do just what the role demands by way of masculinity or femininity."

Recognition that the male image contains varying proportions of the conventionally male and conventionally female is important. Nijinsky, still considered the epitome of excellence, was famed for his sensational technique — very "masculine" elevation, for instance; yet contemporaries found him a peculiarly

"feminine" dancer in some respects — his grace, his sensitivity, his supple *port de bras*. Perhaps the precise blend of masculine and feminine in a dancer's projected sexuality matters less than the impact of strong sexuality *per se*, whether it's chiefly male, chiefly female, or completely androgynous — highly charged with both masculine and feminine potentiality. Probably Kudelka, a very promising choreographer, was thinking on similar lines when he said, "For an Albrecht or a Siegfried, you want a very sexual dancer — a very masculine person who's also very feminine. A prince should have that quality because it's so very attractive."

There is, then, no single male image in dance or among dancers, and there's no set masculine model to which a developing dancer must conform. "Ballet isn't only sexuality. Masculinity, femininity. If you prefer a hardcore dancer like Nureyev, a very heavy dancer, very much into the floor — but he gets off it as well! — you can have that preference. Or you might like Anthony Dowell — he's a lighter type of dancer, technically brilliant. But which is more masculine or feminine? It's up to you."

For Nureyev and Dowell, mentioned above by Augustyn, read Nureyev and Bruhn, the guest artists most intimately connected with the National Ballet in recent years; both ultimately tracing their artistic ancestry to Vestris and Bournonville, but vastly different in stage presence. Their legacy to the National Ballet is an insistence on strong male dancing, but they themselves exemplify various means to that end. From Nureyev, the dancers have learned what Schramek calls "the level of energy you need to have on stage to be exciting to the audience"; from Bruhn, the passion for thoughtful and convincing acting. It's to the credit of the National dancers that they can absorb these lessons while insisting that



Augustyn and Rothwell in van Dantzig's *Monument*. Photo: Andrew Oxenham.

they themselves must develop their own styles rather than becoming Neo-Nureyevs or baby Bruhns.

If there are no pre-ordained male images for a dancer to emulate, is there any difference between male and female on stage? I think there is, in that we still have men — male bodies — physically present, embodying slightly different qualities and employing a somewhat different movement vocabulary than most women in most ballets. Men usually have a bulkier musculature than women, they seem heavier, more into the floor. When men have spectacular elevation, it's impressive partly because one senses the great effort needed to displace a more massive body. And if a major grace of classical ballet is the lightness it conveys, that effect is achieved differently by men and women, as Augustyn noted: "It's all a question of creating the illusion of being above the ground, and women can do that by going on pointe, but men can only do it by jumping." It's still men who generally do steps of *grande batterie*, who perform double tours.

In fact, if there weren't a difference between the sexes in classical ballet, drag companies like the Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo, recently in Toronto, wouldn't be funny. It was mildly amusing when a man would parody conventional male style by an elaborate preparation, a very tottery single pirouette, and a flourished finish, but the hilarious bits involved clumpy bodies, swathed in

ethereal tulle, straining gravely to float through *bourrées* or earth-bound arabesques.

For better or worse, choreographers generally have definite ideas about the distinction between male and female balletic style. In Van Dantzig's works, "The woman's style is more detailed, more fluid, with many changes of colour of movement. A greater range of dynamics, more shades. The man, even though he should still have shades, has a much broader scope of movement. I'd have effort and energy show more for the man." Delicacy for the woman, strength for the man; traditional sex-linked characteristics in dance at least since the sixteenth century, when Sir Thomas Elyot allegorized a dancing couple by making the woman represent the deficiency of any quality, the man its excess, and the couple together the Golden Mean. And such contrasts of qualities may be comparatively inescapable so long as men tend to wear soft slippers and women pointe shoes.

Yet there are other possibilities as well; if dancers can be androgynous, relatively speaking, so can dance. Much contemporary ballet, influenced by modern dance with its marked overlapping of male and female movement, uses similar steps for men and women — Van Manen's *Grosse Fuge*, for instance, or Jiri Kylian's recent ballets. And playing against traditional conceptions of male and female style can help a choreographer invent new steps and effects.

The National Ballet's impressive young choreographer Ann Ditchburn often needs to create conventional images of masculinity and femininity in ballets examining relationships (*Kisses*, for example). But at the same time, she can be more adventurous: "I love to have men do sensitive things, and that's harder for them than doing energetic things. And sometimes I may want to make a woman look masculine. When you're trying to establish a relationship, or when you have a woman dance more like a man, you develop new choreographic ideas. Any new angle like that inspires me to create different and unusual kinds of movement." Youskevitch and Villella might disapprove, but I'd agree that choreographic crossings of sexual boundaries can engender absorbing ballets and more versatile dancers.

Yet despite the encouraging presence of budding Canadian choreographers like Ditchburn, Kudelka, and Constantin Patsalas, who stretch their fellow dancers' minds and bodies by offering new roles and movements, at least in choreographic workshops, the ballets in the National's repertory are usually nineteenth-century classics, so dearly loved by the audience. The classics, of course, are necessary and invaluable from a dancer's point of view; they demand and exploit brilliant technique and challenge dramatic capabilities. A dancer can grow in them; he can learn to make sense of a character's emotions and motivations and to project them effectively.

But, the great classics — *Giselle*, *La Sylphide*, *Swan Lake*, and so on and on — tend to challenge the ballerina far more than they do the *premier danseur*; where is there a male mad scene comparable to *Giselle's*, until you get to De Valois' *Rake's Progress*? And even in the Bruhn and Nureyev productions of *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty*, where the man's role is expanded almost beyond recognition, dramatic as opposed to choreographic demands on the prince are slight. Two potentially strong roles for men — a rethought Von Rothbart, a *Carabosse* as chilling and dominating as Alexander Grant's in the Royal Ballet *Sleeping Beauty* — are turned over to women who, in the Toronto season this year, couldn't do much at all with them.

Bruhn and Nureyev may have earned their reputations

in classic roles, but they became exceptional artists in modern dramatic parts. Not surprisingly, the men of the National feel they need more than the classics if they're to approach the achievement of their two great mentors in a company traditionally dominated by its women. Hence, perhaps, the dancers' unanimous enthusiasm for Van Dantzig's *Monument*, a ballet that excited and extended its two casts, thereby more than justifying its acquisition by the company whatever one might think of its merits as ballet.

In general, the Toronto season did little to foster male dancers' artistic growth by challenging their dramatic intelligence. Many male roles fell into pitifully few (and rather dated) conventional stereotypes: the earnest young lover, be he prince (Siegfried, Florimund) or peasant (*La Sylphide*'s James and Gurn, Batricio in *Don Juan*, Franz in *Coppélia* — despite his unusually high spirits); the decadent roué (Don Juan and his servant Catalinon, the Grand Duke in *Offenbach in the Underworld*); the mad scientist (Dr. Coppélius); the evil witch *en travesti* (Madge in *La Sylphide*). There were also the virtuoso roles, providing for splendid dancing but denying extensive dramatic possibilities — Bluebird, the Neapolitan dancer, the men's parts in *Offenbach* (where there's too little dancing to permit a fully developed character to emerge) and in *Kettentanz* (a delight as the National does it, but relying too heavily on the traditional bounding, energetic male and delicate, graceful female styles). On paper, if not always in performance, that's an awfully limited list.

The contemporary ballets new to the National repertory proved more fertile. *Monument for a Dead Boy* is a powerfully theatrical ballet, heavy on content and somewhat monotonous in movement (it's based choreographically and conceptually on alternations between attraction and repulsion, extension and contraction, reaching towards and recoiling from). The male (and female) roles are familiar from contemporary film and theatre, media Van Dantzig finds very influential in his work. There's the young man in anguish at his inability to form a stable relationship with either sex, fascinated and repelled by those he meets, yearning for his lost innocence; the monstrous father, domineering and puritanical yet also a grotesque victim to his wife's taunting sexuality; the impassive Older Boy who may or may not be the young man's intermittently indifferent and protective lover; the sadistic beach boys who torment the young man with beatings or rapes, whichever you prefer (the ballet is open throughout to alternate interpretations). Many people think *Monument* is a ballet "about" homosexuality, a fashionable subject that's certainly relevant to the male image, but I disagree, as do the dancers. The ballet has much more to do with indecision and insecurity, the need for love and the horror of discovering that what one loves is in some way frightening and repulsive. If there are homosexual episodes — and it's an open question — they're simply one aspect of adolescent sexuality, not the main point of the work. As for the male roles, they demand (and get) strong dramatic presence rather than virtuosity from the two casts: Augustyn and Kudelka as the young man in crisis, Hazaros Surmeyan and Charles Kirby as the authoritarian and boorish father, Clinton Rothwell and Luc Amyôt as the Older Boy, David Allen and David Roxander as the puzzled personification of the young man's childhood. Needless to say, you don't find roles like these in the classics, and the company could do with more works that analyze the conflicts and emotions of contemporary men, that furnish more varied male images for dancers to interpret.

Ann Ditchburn's *Kisses*, given only two performances,

was a more lighthearted exploration of stereotypes as stereotypes; in the male roles, Schramek was able to embody and simultaneously comment on four contemporary images of man ingeniously choreographed in appropriately varied styles. First, he's a punk kid in love with his cap-pistol, twirling and aiming it with transparent self-absorption while warding off the ingratiating advances of a feather-boa'd siren. Schramek mugs his way through this section with twelve-ish intensity, improvising a consummately comic look of humiliated astonishment when the would-be vamp manages to kiss him. The exaggeratedly macho movements of the boy in transit to his frontier-inspired ideal of manhood give way in the next section to the sinuous contractions and ardently off-balance yearnings of a young Romeo. Next Schramek becomes a cool young man on the make, seductive in his alternately angular and swivel-hipped movements, who forces a brutal rape-kiss and wanders off satisfied and indifferent, having added another notch to his belt. In the last section, Schramek gets in some fine dancing — sudden manic leaps, discothèque shimmys, acrobatic lifts — as a man turned on by his own athleticism more than by his partner. Stereotypes, yes, but important in that they exemplify cultural male images adopted by most young men at one point or another, and Schramek presents them with droll tongue-in-cheek wit and a strong sense of style. Ditchburn demands versatile dance-acting, and she gets it. Few other ballets in the repertory ask as

Schramek in *Kisses*.



much; I hope Ditchburn's projected *Mad Shadows* will be as challenging as *Kisses*.

The classics (and I admit to loving most of them as a spectator) are a different story. Even in their more male-oriented National versions, they don't have inherently strong dramatic roles for men, and it takes a great artist — a Bruhn, for instance — to make something out of them. This year, the National had such an artist, Gary Norman, dancing his first-ever Siegfried and his already acclaimed Florimund at Saturday matinées. I'd wondered whether even he could do much with the roles: Bruhn's Siegfried, mother-fixated or not (Norman thinks not, Augustyn thinks so), is somehow even more confusing and thankless a role than in the more traditional productions I prefer, and Nureyev's Florimund is still the story-book prince.

But Norman was intoxicating. Intense, thoughtful, profoundly secure on stage (an illusion, he assures me), even — dare I say it? — *charismatic*, he gave the most moving performances of those unpromising princes I've ever seen. When he dances, *Swan Lake* really is about Siegfried, and *Sleeping Beauty* about Florimund. What delicious and audacious art, to transform those time-honoured vehicles for the ballerina into examinations of a young man's maturation through love!

I've written elsewhere of the individual touches Norman creates — some spontaneously, some through careful forethought — to make those roles his own: the way he projects his compelling conviction that the fiancées at the ball in *Swan Lake* are really swans, that he's still at the lake searching for Odette among them; the poignant despair that motivates those *chainé* turns linking the ballroom and lakeside scenes, culminating in an agonizingly urgent gaze at the hand that pledged his love to Odile, a gaze reminding us that the ballet is really about truth in love and the misery of losing it; the impassioned phrasing that makes that often sketchy long solo before the Vision Scene in *Beauty* a mirror of Florimund's mental hesitations, changes of mood, and longings. Through such inspired dance-acting, Norman redeems those impossible princes from their rather banal beauty and makes them vital, introspective human beings whom we

Gary Norman. A vital introspective prince.



care about desperately. His Siegfried moved from playboy boredom with known court delights to unimaginable loneliness to a consuming and destructive love for the ideal that blinds him to reality — a truly tragic hero. And his Florimund was wonderfully different, an underdog prince mature in his unhappiness, a man whose lack of expectations and sense of personal unworthiness are the very qualities that convince us he deserves the princess. How awful for the National that Norman is leaving the company! He'd have done much to spark the male image in the classics, and in a straight dramatic role (Romeo?) he'd be sensational in his marvellously controlled intensity and intelligence.

Norman's may have been the kind of performance Bruhn and Nureyev were looking for when they revised *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty* for the company, but I've not seen anyone else triumph as Norman did, so I feel the credit must go to the dancer rather than to the choreographers. There was some stunning dancing from other casts, but little that was dramatically powerful. Guest artist Peter Martins is physically a *danseur noble* incarnate (as Norman is not); but although his usual strength, elegance, and control were there, he gave a curiously polite and uninvolved Siegfried, interested in the spectacles before him but somehow not quite believing in them. And Frank Augustyn glowed with boyish charm at some moments but was almost Don Juanish at others — arrogant, even bored. Is this a case of the Nureyev image imposing itself? If so, I trust that Augustyn, intelligent and perceptive as he is, will find his own style before long. Princes may be hell to dance, but even they can come alive, as Norman showed.

La Sylphide, a Bournonville ballet with strong male roles but surprisingly little dancing, can become almost an exercise in sexual politics, pitting the passionate James against two versions of supernatural women; he's enticed by the beauty only to be destroyed by the beast. The various castings of the ballet this season offered contrasting male images of the peasant lover, the romantic dreamer and the forthright young man, and these images weren't linked to James and Gurn respectively, as one might expect.

Guest artist Fernando Bujones was a gentle, erotic soul, more titillated by his pursuit of the elusive Sylphide than eager for hasty consummation. His James was paired illuminatingly with Schramek's Gurn, a Scots Hilarion, dour and forceful, sure to get Effie since he wants her so much. The "moral" in this casting is that the more determined man will get the girl. In the other cast, Augustyn's James was violently moody, a passionate youth intent on physical possession of his enchantress, while Kudelka's Gurn was softly vulnerable, more overwhelmingly in love with the mortal Effie than James could possibly be with the Sylphide.

It's not surprising that Patsalas' Madge, a dirty old lady on a power trip, would choose to help this docile Gurn rather than Augustyn's imperiously demanding James. When she forces James to kneel to her to get the magical scarf, she embodies the triumph of a despised ancient crone over the village sex-object she craves, and later her lascivious caresses of the unconscious James' hair betray the lecherous motive that guides her. The moral of *this* version is that only devotion to Woman can render a man safe from evil female powers; the strong, hotblooded James must be put in his place, while the worshipful Gurn is already the avowed servant of women. The ballet thus permits intriguing variations on its male images, as these performances showed. And still more interesting was the androgynous sexuality of Bujones, to pick up a theme touched on earlier: while Augustyn was quintessentially

male in the role, Bujones fused strong masculine qualities (his startling elevation and *batterie*, possibly too amply virile for Bournonville style) with strong feminine ones — supremely elegant hands and arms, a sweetly dazed expression, a generalized sensuality as opposed to Augustyn's more masculine sexiness. Two very sexy dancers, but remarkably different (though equally valid) ways of expressing sexuality.

La Sylphide has strong and varied male images built in to it, thanks to Bournonville and Bruhn, but historically *Coppélia* was a different matter. Originally Franz was a pants-part for a woman, so neither the music nor the character was particularly masculine in conception. Modern producers like Bruhn have to beef the role up a lot to suit it to the men who normally dance it now, yet there remain problems in the libretto. Possibly a woman could get away with killing butterflies, flirting somewhat indiscriminately with Coppélia and the Csardas Girl, and provoking attacks on Dr. Coppélius, but when men do those things today, they're likely to look fairly nasty or, at best, thoughtless.

The National's Franzes — Schramek, Augustyn, and Norman — have to give a lot of thought to creating a viable male image here, and it's to their credit that they all succeeded in different ways. Norman played up all the callousness inherent in the roles, and the result was an unlikeable but fascinating Franz, a village Lothario whose marriage to Swanilda might last a week or so. Augustyn's Franz was so enthusiastically in love with Swanilda and so proud of his love that the questionable actions in the part can be easily overlooked; boisterously good-humoured boys will be boys, and can get away with murder. Schramek's Franz was still more engaging. A young kid who pretends to nonchalant independence and who teases Swanilda continually (as she does him) to prove he's his own man, this Franz wins us utterly every time the

love he tries so hard to conceal breaks through to the surface. When Schramek and Tennant dance *Coppélia*, their crescendoing skirmishes can't completely hide their deep love, and when they finally admit their lasting affection and are married, we realize that they've grown up during the ballet. There's not much of a male image to start with in this ballet, but the dancers did so well at inventing convincing ones that I'd like to see them get their teeth into intrinsically strong material.

What they need are the roles — not only the classics, but also newer ballets that would bring a greater variety of male images into the repertory. Roles for older dancers, to counteract ballet's counterproductive preoccupation with male (and female) images of youth; roles to test the company's comic and dramatic talents; roles that deal sensitively with the problems of contemporary sexuality (since sexuality is a natural and suitable subject for dance to explore). When the very notion of sexual roles, of male and female images and realities, is undergoing urgent re-evaluation, that concern should be part of ballet as well.

And that brings me to a final plea. Van Dantzig, proponent of the male in dance, now thinks, "Maybe we've done too much for the male image. When I see the repertoire of Toer Van Schayk, Hans Van Manen, and myself, I have the feeling we should think more about the female dancers, because so many of our ballets were created mostly for the men." Canada's National Ballet hasn't begun to pay enough attention to the men, and I hope that Alexander Grant will remedy that lack. But ballerinas don't live by *Giselle* alone, and it's time ballets were made to explore the full range of the National's superb constellation of women. Here as elsewhere, history cautions us to avoid past mistakes: unbalanced attention to either sex is crippling in dance as in life.

Bujones' androgynous sexuality. Photo: Barry W. Gray.





Review
Les Grands Ballets'
Homage to Pierre Mercure

William Littler

"Pierre was a man of great intensity and of profound impatience. He was very demanding of himself and of others. These were qualities that shaped the first important television programs of Radio-Canada. It was in rising to his challenge that Les Grands Ballets Canadiens was born. Thank you Pierre."

Ludmilla Chiriaeff

Thank you Pierre. Those three words summed it up, really, expressing what *Hommage à Pierre Mercure* was all about: the wish of a group of dance artists to acknowledge their debt to a musician who enabled them to dance. And if this seems reminiscent of the New York City Ballet's Stravinsky Festival of a few years back, there is a reason. What took place in Montreal's Salle Wilfrid Pelletier on March 19 owed its inspirational seed to what took place in the New York State Theatre in 1972.

In both instances a major ballet company had decided, at great professional risk, to honour a seminal influence on its development, not by the conventional exhibition of photographs but by mounting new works. The scale of celebration was different. The Stravinsky Festival embraced more works by more choreographers. But measured against its resources, what Les Grands Ballets Canadiens attempted — a program of five ballets, all new productions and four of them premieres — has to be numbered among the most daring dance enterprises in recent Canadian history.

Chiriaeff's Artère.

Pierre Mercure's impact on Les Grands Ballets Canadiens differed considerably from Stravinsky's on the New York City Ballet, of course. Though both men were composers, the Russian-American far more than his Canadian colleague influenced the dance through the notes he wrote. In Mercure's case, the man mattered more than the musician.

The man happened to be the first producer of music broadcasts for the CBC French television network and through such programs as *l'Heure du Concert* he provided the exposure and experience necessary to transform Ludmilla Chiriaeff's fledgling company, Les Ballets Chiriaeff, into Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

That the man was also a musician is nevertheless critical to understanding both the nature of his influence and the source of his personal tragedy. As Ludmilla Chiriaeff's commemorative words suggest, Mercure had a way of making things happen, of bringing the right people together and exciting them to do their best.

The film that introduced *Hommage à Pierre Mercure* recalled some of these people. There was Brian Macdonald, who did his first ballet for Mercure, Jean Gascon, who acted for him, Louis Quilico, who sang for him. And as snippet after snippet of black and white videotape alternated with names of artists and dates of

productions, one could appreciate what a remarkable catalyst this native Montrealer had been.

What the *Evocation*, as it was called, did not show was the tension all this catalytic activity produced within the agent. Every time he opened a creative door for others, he closed one for himself. A passionate modernist, he is said to have felt creative initiative slipping away.

And so, in January of 1966, on the verge of completing a television production of R. Murray Schafer's opera *Loving*, he slipped away himself, flew to France, headed south on the Paris-Lyon autoroute and died when his Renault 16 crashed between Auxerre and Avallon. He was 39.

In dying this way, with his creative potential only partially realized, Mercure became a figure of mythic importance to the arts in French Canada. At least three of the works in Les Grands Ballets' *Hommage* have now added to this mythic role.

Artère, Ludmilla Chiriaeff's first original work in a decade, might almost be called a spiritual biography of the composer, using a poem by his close friend and collaborator, Gabriel Charpentier, as its aural spine.

The poem seems to evoke Mercure's thoughts during that last mad dash against time on the road between Auxerre and Avallon. The towns themselves are mentioned, together with images suggesting the urgency of the voyage to freedom.

But *Artère* attempts more than a straightforward dance to a poem. It involves two figures, baritone Roland Richard, who half-sings, half-chants the words as he moves around the stage, and dancer Vincent Warren, who moves around with him, as the embodiment of his words.

It is as if the creative artist were looking back on his younger self in a series of flashbacks, his words conjuring up images in movement. If only Madame Chiriaeff had been more successful in making her formal ballet vocabulary bear the expressive burden of Charpentier's sensually charged verses!

Brian Macdonald encountered a similar problem in *Cantate pour une Joie*, though in this case he has Mercure's music to offer some rhythmic support and his own freer approach to ballet vocabulary to enhance an idiomatic response.

While less specifically biographical than *Artère*, *Cantate pour une Joie* also has about it the quality of a spiritual journey, with a central character (Alexandre Bélin), a combination Death and Father figure (John Stanzel), a temptress (Jerilyn Doucette) and an athletic male corps marshalled to vivify Charpentier's verbal imagery.

Mercure might have applauded Macdonald's attempt to make a ballet of his score. Bringing together the arts was one of his joys. The cantata itself is a musical synthesis reminiscent at various times of composers as diverse as Stravinsky, Honegger and Orff.

By the night of the premiere, though, the many elements — including Louis Archambault's white, columnar sculptures, Jean Perreault's ambulatory declamation of Charpentier's texts and the singing of soprano Sylvia Saurette and the choir — had yet to come together into a cohesive entity. Perhaps unwittingly, Macdonald wound up mirroring Mercure's own frustration in bringing balance to his life.

The quest for freedom, another of the liturgical strains in Mercure's life, is the one Fernand Nault picked up in the appropriately titled *Liberté tempérée*, set to the

composer's *Divertissement*. In his alternation of tight and loose groupings Nault resorts to explicit imagery to comment upon the restraints imposed on freedom of action. Luckily, the score he uses almost anticipates dancing.

Lignes et Pointes, one of Mercure's last and most experimental scores, doesn't seem to anticipate dancing, however. Its electronically coloured textures sound almost too complex. And yet, Brydon Paige and Brian Macdonald used the score as a vehicle for two alternating pas de deux (Sonia Vartanian with David La Hay and Maniya Barredo with Mannie Rowe). They wanted, evidently, to make their *Hommage* representative of Mercure's growth as a composer.

It's a pity, for their sake, that Mercure wasn't really so oriented toward dance rhythm as Stravinsky, in spite of his work in televising ballet. Herein probably lies one of the reasons why the *Hommage* was more successful as a commemorative event than as pure dance.

As dance, it suffered as much from the limited choreographic potential of Mercure's (and Charpentier's) music as from the evident haste involved in its preparation. The presence on the program of Balanchine's *Concerto Barocco*, set to Bach's danceable *D minor Double Concerto*, made this all the more apparent.

As a commemoration of Mercure's importance, on the other hand, and of the collective personality of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens (dancers, founders and students all participated in a final choreographic parade), *Hommage à Pierre Mercure* lived up to its mandate. A page of history was indeed examined while another was being written.

Lignes et pointes to music by Pierre Mercure.





Noticeboard

Sheri Cook in the Royal Winnipeg's Rite of Spring.

Spring Seasons

•••• A burst of spring activity by local companies added to Vancouver's growing reputation as a major dance centre. On May 7 and 8, the **Paula Ross Dancers** presented two new works by her, *Reflections of a Day* and an untitled piece, at the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse. The program was repeated twice in Victoria •••• The Queen Elizabeth Playhouse will also host the **Mountain Dance Theatre** and the **Pacific Ballet Theatre** in mid-May •••• **Prism Dance Theatre** gave new pieces by Larry McKinnon and Karen Rimmer in its April performances at the North Vancouver Centennial Theatre. Savannah Walling was guest artist. Co-artistic director Gisa Cole left in mid-May for six weeks of study in New York on a Canada Council grant •••• After their coast-to-coast Canadian tour, **Tournesol** (Ernst and Carol Eder) will perform from June 23 to 26 at the Woodward Auditorium in Vancouver. The Eders also will participate in the Surrey Arts Festival in June •••• Between its appearances in New York in early June and the performances scheduled for London, England in mid-July, **The Anna Wyman Dance Theatre** will be premiering a new work at the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse Theatre to a John Mills-Cockrell score (commissioned through the aid of the Canada Council) and a neon set by Michael Hayden, a Canadian artist known for his kinetic sculptures •••• In addition to the activity of the professional companies on the West Coast, the University of British Columbia's **Contemporary Dance Club** presented two evening concerts of modern dance works in early April (7 and 8).

•••• After completing an ambitious touring program of concerts, lecture-demonstrations and workshops, the **Alberta Contemporary Dancers** wind up their most successful season ever in May. The company is beginning to find its feet financially as well with memberships and donations increasing rapidly this year •••• The **Alberta Ballet Company** faced economic collapse early this spring but was saved by an offer from the Banff Centre to act as artists-in-residence in return for free room and board, rehearsal and performing facilities. This gave the company time to mount a fund-raising campaign and repay a loan guaranteed by the Alberta Ministry of Culture. During its Banff residency, the company toured southern Alberta, and since then has appeared in Edmonton, Calgary, a number of communities in northern Alberta and in B.C.

•••• The **Royal Winnipeg Ballet** made its final Winnipeg

appearance of the season at the end of April, showing off new repertoire additions: *Paquita* and *Family Scenes* (by Oscar Araiz, whose version of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, was premiered by the company earlier this year). Three days at Ottawa's National Arts Centre brought its year to a close.

•••• Toronto dance has been livelier of late. A new company has emerged, the **Pavlychenko Dance Company** which gave its premiere performances April 17 and 18. The 12-member company performed eight original works all based on founder Nadia Pavlychenko's technique designed to use energy in a new way and to break away from Western dance traditions •••• **Rinmon** performed four original works by company members Margaret Atkinson, Melodie Bengler and Sally Lyons-Geddes at the Fifteen Dance Lab (March 26 - 28). From May 16 to 18 at the 5, 6, 7 Gallery, Rinmon presents *Pauses*, a human sculpture piece also by Melodie Bengler. Then the company heads for the West Coast for two weeks of performances in Vancouver, Victoria and Nanaimo •••• **Dancemakers**, now in its second year, presented several new works by young Canadian choreographers — Anna Blewchamp, No'mi Doovdivani and Richard Bowen — during their spring season at the Hart House Theatre, April 28 to May 1. The founding members of the company have returned and two new dancers have been added to the roster, Richard Bowen (formerly with the National Ballet) and Patricia Miner (ex-member of the Toronto Dance Theatre) •••• Young choreographers who tried out some ideas at the National Ballet's annual **Choreographic Workshop**, held at St. Paul's Centre (April 9 to 14), included John Aubrey, Ann Ditchburn, James Kudelka and Constantin Patsalas, all company members. Long-range plans for the **National Ballet** include New York performances with guest artist Nureyev (July 20 to August 8), Ontario Place appearances (August 16 to 21), and an Eastern tour starting in September •••• Travel is also on the boards for the **Toronto Regional Ballet**. On May 13 they attend the Northeast Regional Ballet Festival in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania •••• In its final program for this season, presented at the MacMillan Theatre April 27 to May 1, the **Toronto Dance Theatre** premiered two new works: Peter Randazzo's *Nighthawks*, and David Earle's *Quartet* •••• **Fifteen Dance Laboratorium** in May hosts a wide variety of performances featuring Johanna Householder, Louise Garfield, Caroloyn Schaffer, and Nikki Cole.

•••• **Les Grands Ballets Canadiens** was recently in Toronto to

present two programs completely unknown to the audiences there. When it returns to Montreal, the company will be learning a new piece by Laverne Meyer, who, until recently, was director of England's Northern Dance Theatre. Since leaving that position, he has been guest teaching and choreographing for, among others, the Royal Shakespeare Company.

• • • • On the East Coast, the **Halifax Dance Co-op** played host in March to the Tournesol Dance Company and to Missing Associates. The Co-op continues to generate interest in dance through its "Outreach Workshops," master classes and the "Chance to Dance" summer program of classes and workshops.

The Community Confers

• • • • Plans are well underway for the **4th annual Dance in Canada Conference**. Halifax, the major centre of dance activity in the Atlantic region, is hosting Conference '76 at the Dalhousie Arts Centre. Activities include classes, workshops and seminars as well as performances by a number of Canada's professional companies. The four-day conference (August 6-10) will begin in true Gaelic fashion with a giant ceilidh and promises to be exciting and productive for all involved. For information, phone (902) 422-1749; or write the Dance in Canada '76 office at P.O. Box 2372, Halifax, N.S. • • • • **Fifteen Dance Laboratories** will be holding a conference (June 7-12) to "acquaint the general public with new dance and to stimulate communications among dance artists." The conference, called "dance adventures new Canadian extravaganza" (D.A.N.C.E., for short) will include workshops, forums, television talk shows, performances and environmental events. Different theatre and studio spaces will be used to remove the museum atmosphere that often haunts such gatherings. For information, phone (416) 869-1589 • • • • Other meetings Canada has seen included a three-day Dance Conference '76 organized by, among others, the **Ontario CAHPER Dance Committee** at the University of Waterloo. It attracted 200 dance enthusiasts (March 5-7). Then a big two-day seminar (May 1 and 2) at B.C.'s Burnaby Lake Pavilion discussed management, press, and business problems in dance. That seminar was called **An Introduction to Dancers to the Professional World of Dance**.

Dance at the Olympics

• • • • COJO, code-name for the **Arts and Culture Committee of the '76 Olympics**, has planned dance performances in and around Montreal in July. No less than 18 companies will participate in the month-long program designed to show the variety and quality of Canadian dance companies to the Olympic visitors expected from around the world. Everyone from the National Ballet to modern soloists like Katherine Brown will be performing.

How to Spend Your Lunch Hour

• • • • Throughout March and April, Montrealers were treated to a series of **noon-hour concerts** at Place des Arts, called **Les Midis de la Place**. Nine lecture-demonstrations surveyed the four centuries of theatrical dancing. Members of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens were in the first of these programs which traced the development of classical ballet from the reign of Louis XIV to the time of Serge de Diaghilev and danced again in the final concert which was devoted to contemporary ballet. Other members of the dance, theatre and even sports communities involved in this innovative, wide-ranging series included: Montreal mime artist, Elie Oren; the Groupe d'expression corporelle Michel Conte; champion ballroom dancers Frank and Vicky Regan; the folk dance troupe Kinokisos; the modern dance company Le Groupe Nouvelle-Aire; the jazz-oriented group, Les Ballets Jazz; and, in the most unusual of these lunch-hour dance concerts, five champion Canadian gymnasts.

100,000 Reasons to Dance

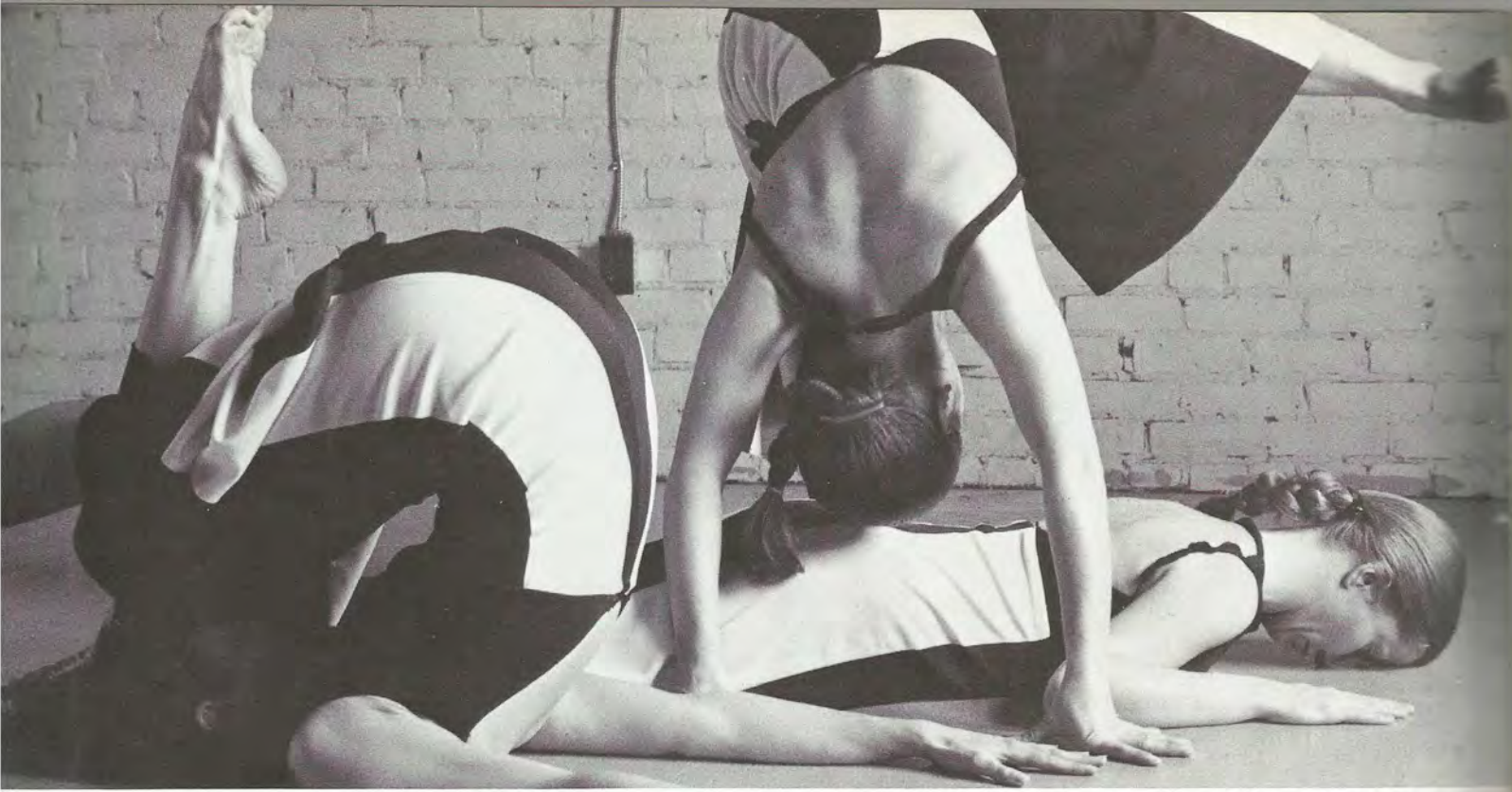
• • • • 100 of Quebec's best known artists — poets, actors, sculptors, film makers, singers and authors — have joined to support **Les Grands Ballets Canadiens** in a **unique fund-raising effort**. Each has contributed a short text in his own handwriting. They have all been collected in a numbered, signed edition of 100,000 copies. Yves Dupré who organized this project says: "All sectors of our artistic community have come together to support ballet. I don't think you would find this anywhere else in the world."

Royal Entertainment

• • • • From April 20 to 24, the **Vancouver Ballet Society** co-operated with the National Ballet of Canada to present *Ballet*



Top right, Tournesol. Right, Alberta Ballet Company in Phallos Fable.



Alberta Contemporary Dance Theatre.

Rinmon in Walkabout. Photo: Bruce Kirkland.

Spectrum, dance performances which demonstrate the evolution of ballet from the age of Louis XIV to the present. Winthrop Corey and Mary Jago were featured in these concerts while Charles Kirby provided the narration.

Students Perform

• • • • York University's Spring Dance Concert, (April 8 to 10) included choreography by students Julie Lichtblau and Jane Beach; by faculty members Sandra Neels and Daniel Grossman; and by guest teachers Helen McGehee and Donald Hewitt. One piece, Lichtblau's *Criehaven*, was performed to an original score by York student, Billie Winant • • • • An Evening of Ballet, the National Ballet School's annual spring concert was held May 13 to 15 this year. An original work by teacher and former National dancer, Glen Gilmour, was included in the program. The students also performed Balanchine's *Concerto Barocco*.

Need a Job?

• • • • Le Groupe de la Place Royale will begin holding auditions May 17 for male and female dancers with backgrounds in both modern dance and ballet. For information, phone Peter Boneham or Jean-Pierre Perrault at (514) 861-5821 • • • • The Marie Marchowsky New Dance Company needs male dancers, 16 or over, with training in modern (but not necessarily Graham) technique. To audition, phone (416) 924-6013, or write Ms. Marchowsky at 619 Huron Street, Toronto • • • • There are also openings for male and female dancers with experience in classical and contemporary dance in the Anna Wyman Dance Theatre. Phone (604) 926-8181; or send your resumé to the General Manager, Anna Wyman Dance Theatre, 656 15th Street, West Vancouver.

Council Extends Grant-Giving

• • • • The Canada Council has extended the range of its grant-giving to schools: The Barrett School of Dancing in Newfoundland received \$350 towards the cost of a dance workshop directed by a National Ballet School teacher; the professional students' programs of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens received \$10,000 each. Another new departure for Council was giving Fifteen Dance Laboratorium a project cost grant of \$3,000 to enable young choreographers to present their work. Two more companies received first grants: Entre-Six was awarded \$10,000 for new ballets presented in May, and the Paula Ross Dancers \$7,500 for a piece premiered in March. Grants of \$15,000 for new choreography went to Le Théâtre de Danse Contemporaine and Le Groupe Nouvelle-Aire and the Alberta Ballet Company was awarded \$20,000 to continue its school lecture-demonstration program.



Letters from the Field

To the Editor:

It was with much surprise and some consternation that I learned in your last edition of *Dance Canada* of a statement made by the Canada Council claiming that I had approved Mr. Brinson's report and that I did so even before it had been presented to the Canada Council's members.

When I was a member of the Council's consultation committee, Mrs. Michaud submitted to the Dance sub-committee one copy of the Brinson Report which was shared among Mrs. Anna Wyman, Mr. Richard Rutherford and myself. As I was expecting a complete text of the document to be given to each of us sometime later for in-depth study, I did not immediately object to the partial report that I had at my disposal.

However, sometime later when I still had not been given a copy of the complete report, I protested to Mrs. Michaud in a letter in which I outlined my disagreement with certain points on the document that had been given to me to read.

Mrs. Michaud informed me that it was too late to object.

Not only had I not approved the Brinson Report before it had been submitted to the Canada Council, but I don't approve this quick manner of finding solutions to serious problems which involve the future of dance in Canada and even the future of Canadian culture.

Fernand Nault
School Director
Les Grands Ballets Canadiens
Montreal

To the Editor:

I was most impressed with the last issue of *Dance in Canada* and wish to congratulate you for your fine work.

If I may, I would like to correct an important error in Michael Crabb's article on page 3 of your last issue:

"Having decided that there were problems with the Department of Cultural Affairs, Ludmilla Chiriaeff decided to work through the Ministry of Education. In principle she gained recognition for dance as one of the varied options Quebec high school students are entitled to select to complete the requisite number of credits for their diploma.

Through this avenue she has found a way to bring her teaching into one Montreal school this year and has hopes of seeing the arrangement extended to other high schools and even into CEGEPs."

Since I am in disagreement with some who want the National Ballet School to have a monopoly on the teaching of ballet in Canada, it is evident that I would not want to make the same mistake in Quebec. Rather than the "cultural imperialism" that Michael Crabb mentions, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens is always trying to involve others

in the achievement of mutual aims. Many Quebec companies will testify to this.

For us, to wish that ballet courses were offered by all school boards (or even several) would be both unrealistic and self-defeating. There would be in Quebec neither enough qualified teachers nor enough outlets for graduates. This is why, despite requests from other school boards, we have refused to develop this program beyond the Ecole secondaire Pierre Laporte. It is true that we have the obligation and the duty to proceed with the course (when the students graduate from high school) at one CEGEP, because academic and professional education requires its development be a natural progression of the student's educational pattern.

One other correction: I do not have "problems" with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. I have tried for a long time to find a method to accelerate the development of professional dancers, and since traditionally such development takes place through a residential school associated with a ballet company, it was with the assistance of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs that I sought to find a solution. But the many problems of language, cost, distance, and religion, among others, made it an impossible goal to achieve within the necessary time span. And, one day, came the opportunity to include professional ballet instruction in a totally different framework, and this through the channel of the Ministry of Education. Such an opportunity I could not refuse.

Ludmilla Chiriaeff
Founder and Director
Les Grands Ballets Canadiens
Montreal

To the Editor:

If the Canada Council desires to manufacture uniform dancers and training instructors, this is definitely not a blessing! It is, rather, a costly way of bringing the current development of dance in this country to a standstill. As wonderfully knowledgeable as Mr. Brinson's report may sound, it hardly relates to the pedagogical thinking of this continent at this time. Unfortunately, the report does not consider Canada's or any other country's aesthetic concerns or development in the dance. It is typical of centralization plans to be preoccupied with the financial and institutional rather than with the more delicate issues of the discipline.

As much as we respect the National Ballet School in Toronto, no school in Canada is prepared to be the absolute centre of diffusion of the dance for Canadians. It is universally acknowledged that the National Ballet School, now in its third decade, is an excellent satellite to the United Kingdom's classical schools, which as such, we do admire. It is a valuable and appropriate training for those who desire it, but ought not to be considered as the Canadian school.

As long as the three companies, their affiliated schools and other schools in Canada remain true to their original purpose of developing autonomous principles of dance, training dancers in their own tradition and searching for proper expression of their

innate sense of dance, we have something to be proud of.

The challenge we face in this age of radical development in the dance from modernism and jazz and the quest in Canada to discover our authentic expression and the desired stylistic reflections would only be smothered by the institution of a national school at this time.

There is no reason for North America to follow the mistakes or successes of the European systems. The problem is to allow the source of creativity to flow. We need only look to our neighbours in the United States. New York is a mecca for the dance. Aesthetic identity has been achieved for different individuals and different companies without any super-structure of regimentation. It has been achieved by the sensitivity of creative geniuses. This is the problem for the dance in Canada or anywhere. So what is this centralization about?

Seda Zaré, Director
The Montreal Professional Dance Centre

To the Editor:

Congratulations for presenting a well-rounded picture of the different points of view on where Canada Council, the National Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Grant Strate and other respected members of the national dance community stand on dance for Canadians.

Congratulations to Canada Council for leaving itself open to criticism. In my mind, growth only emerges from debate and confrontation of all factions, placing agreements and disagreements in open view.

As a dancer and choreographer, I am not as Mr. Haskell says in the Brinson Report "only interesting as a branch of the theatre." I am a visual artist working in visual poetry with performing as a by-product. Important yes, but none the less a by-product of my work.

Canada is a young country; our artists and artistry will grow naturally. To try and become established by making the training of our children too uniform is against my principles. The training of good teachers is a problem — not only for ballet. The money good teachers make is ludicrous, but then good teachers are easy to take advantage of because their reward is more than money and success. We all have a lot of soul searching to do and must spend years developing dance and dance artists to the best of our ability, reaffirming the right to choreograph for ourselves.

Let us not make strong, hard rules for the creative ones of the future. Our children are strong but not all the same. Bringing European standards of dance (ballet) to this country gift-wrapped as the only vehicle for creative choreographic expression is a mistake.

We have time: the Brinson Report should be filed under "Opinion" in the archives and be read aloud 75 years from now.

Paula Ross
Director, Paula Ross Dancers
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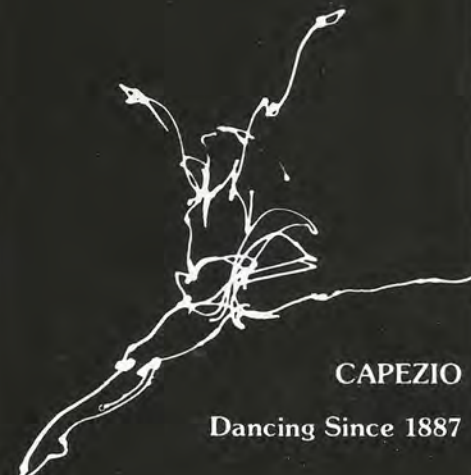
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