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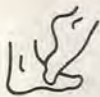
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Robert Todd

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COVER: BC Choreographer, Judith Marcuse

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Editorial

This issue is chiefly about Vancouver where the Dance in Canada Association will hold its sixth annual conference this August. As our western contributors explain, Vancouver has an important history of dance and also occupies a vital place in the contemporary Canadian dance scene.

Although in the past various attempts to establish dance companies in Vancouver have failed, the city has produced an impressive quantity of fine performers, several of whom have achieved fame outside Canada. Today, with its assortment of modern troupes and with renewed efforts to establish a substantial ballet company, Vancouver may well be poised on the brink of major new developments.

In addition to our survey of dance in Vancouver, you will find a particularly valuable, perhaps controversial, article on body placement in Rhonda Ryman's continuing series on the training of dancers.

There are reviews covering as wide a gamut of notable events or publications as space will allow and many new contributors make their appearance here. We hope you will enjoy what they have to say.

La plupart des articles dans ce numéro se consacrent à Vancouver où aura lieu au mois d'août la 6^{ème} conférence annuelle de l'Association de la Danse au Canada. Les collaborateurs de l'ouest nous font savoir que Vancouver peut bien se féliciter de son histoire importante dans le domaine de la danse et qu'il occupe une position de toute première importance dans la danse canadienne contemporaine.

Bien que y aient échoué dans le passé de nombreux efforts pour former des compagnies de danse, Vancouver a fourni bon nombre de danseurs talentueux dont plusieurs sont devenus bien célèbres à l'extérieur du Canada. Grâce à ses troupes modernes d'une grande variété et à ses nouvelles initiatives pour former un corps de ballet substantiel, Vancouver nous paraît présentement sur le point de prendre un essor considérable.

En plus d'une étude de la danse à Vancouver, nous régalaons nos lecteurs d'un article précieux – et qui pourrait peut-être provoquer une vive controverse – sur la posture, dans la série de Rhonda Ryman consacrée à l'entraînement des danseurs.

On trouvera également des appréciations d'autant d'événements et de publications importants que nous permettra l'espace disponible. Beaucoup de nouveaux collaborateurs font leur début dans ce numéro et nous espérons qu'ils réussiront à susciter votre vive intérêt.

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Robert Todd

No Mean Heritage:

DANCE IN VANCOUVER: EARLY DAYS



Panto Pacific Ballet 1949

'We stayed at little towns in Canada; at Vancouver among other places.' Anna Pavlova, *Pages of My Life* (1913).

'Most northern people make good dancers...you are almost as far north as we are.' Leonide Massine to a Vancouver reporter, January 1940.

Dance may be an art as old as man, but as a performing art in North America it is still very young. In the 19th century the continent's northeastern seaboard saw only a series of isolated highlights: Fanny Elssler's visit; the Italian ballerinas of *The Black Crook*; the famed Cavalazzi at the Met. Before the end of the century theatrical companies extended their tours as far as the growing city of Vancouver, but in any road show dancers were always the poor cousins, and remained so. Some great dancers may have made transcontinental tours but never enough to make a deep impact on North American theatrical life; Anna Pavlova, however memorable, was still but a fleeting apparition.

Until the 1930s the story of dance in Vancouver was typical of most cities in North America: touring companies infrequently passing through a town where dance was taught by a handful of 'academies' and the most familiar species of professional dancer was the vaudeville chorus girl.

By the mid-thirties new patterns began to emerge in Vancouver's dance culture. The Russian companies created a taste for ballet that coincided with the development of a more professional form of teaching. For the next thirty years dance was synonymous with ballet in a community far removed from the centres in which contemporary dance was burgeoning. But this concentration paid dividends. Thanks to a remarkable group of teachers, the city saw locally trained dancers performing with visiting ballet companies. Vancouver acquired a reputation as a cradle of dancers and changed from being the passive importer of dance to become an active exporter of dancers. Many cities were visited by touring dance companies but few were as effective as Vancouver in swelling the ranks of these guests.

Any account of the early touring that gave the city its first sight of great dancers will inevitably be episodic. La Loie Fuller came in 1896; Pavlova visited Vancouver on four occasions between 1910 and 1923; Adeline Genée danced at the Imperial Theatre in 1913; the Ballet Russe appeared first as a pirate company in 1911, and then early in 1917 as Diaghilev's original, if depleted, company headed by Nijinsky. Finally the city's most frequent visitors were the Denishawn companies who appeared mainly on the vaudeville circuits between 1914 and 1924. These visits occurred in a growing city with a heavy diet of imported entertainment. It is unlikely that if anyone had happened to observe all these performances he would have isolated such fleeting theatrical events and discerned any pattern in them. Compared with the dancers he could have seen in vaudeville, or in minstrel companies or operettas, the visiting performers would have been a revelation. But would he, for example, have distinguished ballet from Denishawn's theatrical dancing? This is unlikely when the overwhelming impression evoked by all these early visitors was one of a theatrical exoticism that was often more striking than the dance itself.

Loie Fuller had not danced at all, but merely swirled her skirts on the stage of the Vancouver Opera House in a panoply of lights to create her *Danse de Feu*. In 1910 Pavlova offered not only various *pas seuls* but a dance drama, *The Arabian Nights*, and had her greatest success with Mordkin in the Dionysian dancing of the *Bacchanale* the pseudo-Hellenism of which transported a contemporary reviewer to 'a world of unreality'. In 1911 Gertrude Hoffman, an American vaudeville *danseuse*, held centre stage in the major mime roles in pirated versions of Fokine's dance dramas *Cléopâtre* and *Schéhérazade*.

Russian ballet dancers who had defected from Diaghilev's company to join Hoffman, such as Lopokova and Volinine who were seen in *Les Sylphides*, were merely the supporting cast. Six years later Nijinsky's genius seems to have been somewhat lost in the appeal generated by the now forgotten Flore Revalles' exaggerated performance in *Cléopâtre*, and by the company's evocative athleticism in *Prince Igor*. The Denishawn companies were no exception to this pattern of theatrical effects. On their vaudeville tours to Vancouver their dancers punctuated animal acts and comic sketches with idealised versions of India, Egypt, Siam or Greece. *Radha* and *The Cobras* may now be categorised as classics of early modern dance but in their day formed part of the staple of theatrical entertainment.

A response to this exoticism pulsates through some of the newspaper reviews of Russian ballet, but they tended to substitute an account of the atmosphere created by the dancing and its theatrical effects for any analysis of the dancing itself.

In the early decades of this century there was some semblance of a dance culture in Vancouver. Dance academies taught social dancing and arranged stage dancing for the frequent amateur performances of musical comedies and operettas but they could provide only a rudimentary preparation for a professional career. That would have to be established by training elsewhere. Around 1917 Edna Malone from Nelson, British Columbia, left Vancouver to study at the Denishawn school in Los Angeles and later toured with Ruth St. Denis and Doris Humphrey. Another local dancer, Suzanne Sickelmore, went to England in the twenties where she studied with Pavlova and Espinosa before beginning a career of stage dancing in that country. And in the early thirties Beth Lockhart, later a Vancouver teacher and choreographer, fled a local dance academy to train with Ernest Belcher in Los Angeles and to join the first ballet company formed on the west coast of the United States. Trained dancers from Vancouver could of course find few openings until the modern era of touring dance companies began in the mid-thirties.

As Leland Windreich's article explains, a wide variety of companies were seen in Vancouver during the thirties, brought to the city by an impresario, Lily Laverock. The effect of this exposure, combined with the success of teachers such as June Roper, whose students were recruited into the visiting troupes, made Vancouver experience a sense of participation in the art of which it had earlier been merely the spectator.

The great era of theatrical touring and vaudeville was long past – both victims of the movies. Consequently, visiting dancers were now judged against a relatively impoverished background of live theatre and were appreciated for their dance qualities rather than as part of a fleeting theatrical event.

By the war years ballet had emerged in Vancouver as a popular form of dance provided by touring companies and as an art that could be taught locally with some success. The postwar years saw an expansion in the area of teaching and also performance though this stopped short of ever providing a local analogue to the companies that some Vancouver dancers were becoming equipped to join.

In 1946 the Vancouver Ballet Society was established to coordinate the efforts of local teachers and to sponsor cooperative performances – the 'Showcase' series where



Vancouver teachers meet Lynn Seymour after a gala in 1960.
Left to right: Mara McBirney, Grace MacDonald, Nicolai Svetlanoff, Lynn Seymour, Christopher Gable, Cardo Smalley (conductor) and Kay Armstrong.

the work of local studios was exhibited, and in which full length productions of *Coppélia* and *La Fille Mal Gardée* were eventually mounted in the mid-sixties. As early as 1948, a group of twelve local dancers had been gathered by two Vancouver teachers, Beth Lockhart and Mara McBirney, to perform as the Panto-Pacific Ballet at the second Canadian Dance Festival in Toronto. Up to the early sixties there were regular performing opportunities for local dancers in the annual musical comedies of the Theatre Under the Stars in Stanley Park, as well as in productions at the Vancouver International Festival.

The teachers whose studios provided dancers for these ventures were organised into a Vancouver branch of the Canadian Dance Teachers Association in 1951. Higher standards were encouraged among their students by the annual Vancouver Dance Festival, and their teaching was reinforced by workshops with visiting teachers arranged by the Ballet Society, and by the occasional master classes given by ballet masters or leading dancers from visiting companies. This organisational activity reflected a dance community blessed by an unusually talented group of teachers.

From their studios flowed dancers to companies in Canada and abroad. The National Ballet of Canada's first ballerina, Lois Smith, received her early training in Vancouver, and there has always been a close relationship between the city's studios and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Ballet performances seen in the fifties present an interesting contrast to those offered in the thirties or earlier. Companies increasingly performed what came to be known misleadingly as 'the classics', the 19th century story ballets that had been revived most notably by the Sadler's Wells Company which popularised them on its early North American tours. The Russian companies of the late thirties had begun to introduce these works. Now Ballet Theatre, the Americanised Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo of the fifties, and the National Ballet of Canada continued the process. They succeeded in establishing that taste for virtuosity in a romantic setting and within a narrative framework that makes the classics, or their modern descendants, still the most commercially viable form of dance in Vancouver as elsewhere.

By 1960 Vancouver was in a position to review its

progress. 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if someday we could make it worthwhile for our fine dancers to stay at home?' asked a writer in the Ballet Society's *Newsletter*. 'If we could collect the Vancouver dancers who are performing in other parts of the world and bring them back here,' the writer continued, 'we could have a fine company of our own.'

Possibly so; yet the formation of a company was not quite as logical a step for Vancouver as the writer assumed. Even with local financial support and the talent from Vancouver's fine dance studios, it would require the major variable of artistic direction to fuse the elements into a viable whole.

The supposed failure to take the logical step forward should not be construed as an indictment of the community's standing as a centre of ballet. Though a young city, Vancouver had from its early days, welcomed dancers to its theatres and had come to participate in the growth of dance on indigenous soil. By the early sixties that could surely count as no mean heritage.

Among the many who have helped in the preparation of this article, special thanks are due to staff at the Vancouver City Archives and in the arts division of the Vancouver Public Library. Diana Farris, President of the Vancouver Ballet Society, kindly allowed the writer to consult the society's archives.

The editor of Vandance (the Vancouver Ballet Society magazine) has permitted reproduction here of certain material by Robert Todd, (see Vandance Jan., Oct., Dec. 1977).

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Leland Windreich

Depression and War but a Golden Age for Dance in Vancouver

Frontiers

Why has the West produced magnificent dancers, superb teachers, history-making rebel choreographers, but no security whatsoever for the professional performer?

The shores of the Pacific have long been a haven for harmless eccentrics and a breeding ground for innovators and iconoclasts in the dance arts. Isadora attributed her personal strivings to the coastal environment. 'My life and my art are born of the sea', she proclaimed, but she had to turn East to make a living. Recognition came to her only in cultures rooted in a distant past. She changed the course of dance history but was never welcome at home. Frontiers, ironically, are conventional places where art may please but should never disturb: the West is not charitable to the restless. Ruth St. Denis flourished on the Coast because she threatened no one and could fit neatly into the mosaic of respectable crazies. But Ted Shawn and his male dancers had to go East in order to be taken seriously; so did Martha Graham, with her unique personal destiny.

Pavlova did well at the frontier, threatening no one but parents. She swept through like a virus, infecting thousands of little girls with the mad compulsion to get up on the tips of their toes. In Los Angeles two who succumbed made desperate compromises with their backgrounds. Agnes de Mille was granted two lessons a week with Theodore Kosloff but had to do her daily barre in her mother's posh Hollywood bathroom. She, too, would have to go on to Europe to gain her identity in the dance, and half a century later Canada would be the beneficiary of five of her splendid ballets in the repertory of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

June Roper defied the fire and brimstone of a Texas Baptist upbringing and sashayed off to learn the Cecchetti method from the fastidious Ernest Belcher. To pay for her classes she collected dimes from neighborhood children in exchange for dancing lessons. When she got bigger she did stunts for the movie people at \$25 an hour. She made her



Ian Gibson

impromptu debut at 11 – at a furniture store opening in Los Angeles. There were no ballet companies to employ her, so she incorporated ballet technique into adagio dancing and found a partner. Within a few years she was the toast of the European casinos and revues.

Vancouver is a western city in heart and fact and has received most of its cultural nourishment longitudinally. The dance artists who made their way into the Vancouver theatres in the 1920s were brought in from circuits covering the western United States, and often they were applauded on the Coast long before Toronto and Montreal knew of their existence. But the development of a passionate interest in the dance awaited the interaction of the proper catalysts. In 1935 June Roper arrived for a short visit with her sister. The Depression was at its height and there was little to distract her from the rest she required after a nervous collapse caused by stress and overwork on the London stage.

Schools

As early as 1928 Dorothy Wilson's Russian Ballet School of Dancing was functioning in Victoria. Little Ian Gibson was brought in to Miss Wilson for correction of his pigeon-toes and would become her most celebrated pupil. In 1936 teen-aged Bobby Lindgren watched his sisters rehearse with Ian in a local production of *Coppélia*. 'I can do that' was the name of the game, and Lindgren decided to add ballet training to his laurels as a prize-winning drama student.

Dorothy Wilson was able to go only so far with two such prodigies, who were ultimately shipped off to Vancouver for the career-training that would take them into the major ballet companies of the day.

Yvonne Firkins and Vivien Ramsey, two Vancouver socialites impoverished during the Depression, had decided in 1935 that the time was ripe for a school of the theatre arts in British Columbia. They had read about June Roper in the foreign papers and knew a good thing when they saw it right on their doorstep. She became for a short period the first and last of a faculty that never materialized. A year later June Roper's BC School of Dancing was established independently in studios on Seymour Street. Then things began to happen.

Entrepreneurship

Not, by any means, without the help of Lily J. Laverock. Edinburgh-born but spiritually committed to Vancouver, Lily had graduated with the highest of honors from McGill in philosophy and was wooed by the major North American universities for her academic services. She decided that her God-given function lay in the cultivation of her favorite city. Working in two rooms of the old Vancouver Hotel, she established International Celebrities in 1921 and latched onto the musical artists booked for trans-continental American tours. Lily's offices received all the major musical journals of the world, and there she selected the cultural menu that would be consumed over the next two decades. Money was a rather bothersome issue in her mission: often she made a buck and lost two, and she frequently had to call upon the resources of established patrons to bail her out. She shared her infrequent profits as largesse to the aged hookers and beggars on Granville, and her pristine hotel meals with the cats in Vancouver's downtown back alleys.

In arranging bookings, it was never a case of which attractions would bring a killing but what Vancouver audiences really needed for their edification. In these terms she brought in such contrasting offerings as Maurice Ravel

and a Belgian military band. Pavlova had made sporadic appearances locally but there was no steady diet of theatrical dancing until Lily began to book the esoteric attractions of the day: Harald Kreutzberg, Martha Graham, the Ballets Jooss, Argentinita, Catherine Littlefield's Philadelphia Ballet, Lincoln Kirstein's Ballet Caravan, Uday Shan-Kar, the Mordkin Ballet, and Katherine Dunham—all decidedly heavy fare for a frontier community. But the bonanza became her most expensive undertaking when she brought the Ballet Russe of Colonel de Basil to the Vancouver Theatre in January 1935, and a community of instant balletomanes was formed.

Massine's *Les Présages* to Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony became the model for every piece of choreography created locally for several years, and June Roper's ballet classes became crammed with aspiring Terpsichores who now had tangible role-models in the persons of de Basil's 'baby ballerinas'. With great financial risk, Lily booked the company again in 1936, and they gave midnight performances at the Orpheum Theatre after the films let out. Audiences lined up in the snow on Granville Street to see their favorites again, and the Vancouver *Province* held contests for writers of the best essay of 100 words or less on their favorite ballet dancer.

Results

The de Basil Ballet Russe made its last visit in 1938, and June Roper offered up two of her prize pupils for audition. Patricia Meyers and Rosemary Deveson, with three years of intensive training had acquired the endurance and superb technique that only a great engineer of the dance arts can impart. Beyond mechanics, the girls had been given as varied a performing programme as their teacher could find or create in the community, and they had been lovingly encouraged to develop their personal styles. The two 15-year-olds were accepted into the company and went off to spread the propaganda of the Ballet Russe to three receptive continents under the preposterous names of Alexandra Denisova and Natasha Sobinova. Shortly a 14-year-old Nanaimo girl named Jean Hunt would become the fair-haired girl in local recitals and would join her friends in Australia in 1940 as the Ballet Russe's Kira Bounina.

Each year Vancouver's loss would be the Ballet Russe's gain, and June Roper's reputation as a starmaker became so well established that she would wire Leonide Massine or David Lichine as soon as a pupil was ready for a career. In 1939 Lily Laverock brought in Massine's new Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and young Ian Gibson's prodigious leaps won him a contract with the company. The following year Audree Thomas joined them for a brilliant career under the name of Anna Istomina. In subsequent years Duncan Noble and Robert Lindgren would catch the attention of Russian visitors and accept invitations to join Ballet Theatre.

Other pupils from the BC School of Dancing found their ways into careers in diverse places. Margaret Banks went from June Roper's ballet classes to the Sadler's Wells Ballet, Joy Darwin to the Ballets Jooss, Stephanie Antle to the corps at Radio City Music Hall, Yvonne de Carlo to Hollywood and a career in films. Rosemary Sankey, Dorothy Scott, Kay Armstrong and Margo St. Clair went on to Broadway musicals, and the team of Peggy Pool and Bill Corey gained laurels in the night club circuit. Canada

had no promise of livelihoods for any of them, and over sixty young Westerners turned elsewhere to practise the craft they had mastered in a community which would never have the resources to offer them employment.

War

With Europe and the Pacific area cut off from the touring circuits, scores of musical artists were trapped in this continent. The West became the terminus for troop departures to the South Pacific, and the coastal cities experienced frantic population explosions as war industries were established. Artists and audiences needed each other as never before, and the ballet companies fared particularly well, playing to packed houses to last-ditch audiences anticipating numbered days. By 1941 June Roper had retired, and her imaginative recitals and 'Stars of Tomorrow' revues came to a halt. Lily Laverock decided to expend her energies on more patriotic endeavours and bowed out of the concert business for the duration.

Two visiting companies dominated the scene for the war years: Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Ballet Theatre. The former, originally a Franco-Russian enterprise, began to recruit American and Canadian soloists as the war thinned the ranks and its principals defected to the latter, an American venture booked during the war years by impresario Sol Hurok as 'the greatest in Russian ballet'. No one could demand ethnic authenticity from either. Dancers such as Massine, Markova and Toumanova appeared with both factions which, in time, shared a common core repertory. Vancouver dancers who left with the Ballet Russe made triumphant homecomings with Ballet Theatre—and vice versa.

Continuity in the training of dancers was not interrupted by the war: Dorothy Wilson settled in Vancouver to head the BC School of Dancing and was joined by Princess Sylvia Arfa, daughter of the Persian ambassador to the Romanoff court and a Cecchetti pupil. In 1941 Rosemary Deveson returned and opened her own studios in the penthouse of the Georgia Hotel where she would launch the careers of Lois Smith, Doreen Oswald and Maria Lewis.

Aftermath

The theatre arts suffered with the return to normalcy. The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo visited Vancouver irregularly over the years, losing a bit more of its lustre with each appearance. Ballet Theatre reverted to its original artistic philosophy and paid for its sincerity by losing the audience that had patronized it for its artificial Russian trappings. The conservatism of the frontier was affirmed, and it was not until the early 1950s, when Sol Hurok brought the Sadler's Wells Ballet on tour, that Vancouver again played host to a major force.

Of the eight pupils from June Roper's school who danced with the Ballet Russe companies, all eventually established residence in the United States. Ian Gibson's meteoric career as the Canadian Nijinsky is now history. Trained for survival, five of the dancers went from ballet to other media: films, Broadway musicals, television, and nightclub dancing. Today six are still active in teaching in American schools.

Robert Lindgren is Dean of Dance at the North Carolina School of the Arts at Winston-Salem. His career

took him from Ballet Theatre to the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, where he danced the entire repertory for seven years and came under the spell and influence of George Balanchine. He later became a soloist of the New York City Ballet. Duncan Noble danced in both companies and enjoyed a long professional association with the modern dancer Valerie Bettis. He is currently Assistant Dean at North Carolina and adjudicator for the National Association of Regional Ballets, touring the West each year to select choreography for the Pacific Regional Dance Festival.

Kira Bounina became Jean Hunt again when she joined Ballet Theatre and expanded her scope in ballets by David Lichine, Michel Fokine, Antony Tudor and Agnes de Mille. In recent years she has come out of retirement to teach in San Francisco where she lives.

Alexandra Denisova assumed many of the major ballerina roles in the de Basil Ballet Russe before she was 18 and during the war years she was instrumental in the foundation of ballet in Cuba. A brilliant career in film work followed. She currently teaches dancing in Hollywood under the name of Patricia Denise.

Margaret Banks went from the Sadler's Wells Ballet to Ballet Theatre and became a favourite of Anton Dolin, assuming many of Irina Baronova's roles. Banks was among a small contingent of dancers sent by Hurok to Brazil in 1946 to recycle the sagging forces of the de Basil Ballet Russe for its last American tour. She followed in June Roper's footsteps when she partnered Tommy Wonder in a nightclub act for several years but would enjoy her greatest professional success as choreographer's assistant to Jerome Robbins in the film of *West Side Story*. She now has her own school in Reno, Nevada.

Audree Thomas rose rapidly to ballerina rank in the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and later starred in Massine's Ballet Russe Highlights company. In 1947 and 1948 she became prima ballerina at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, dancing the complete classic repertory. Today she teaches in White Plains, New York.

The Depression and war years produced, in a period of national anxiety, a veritable golden age for the dance in Vancouver. In retrospect it seems a glorious and spectacular flash in the pan. Enough fine pupils were produced to form a professional dance company in Vancouver, and an audience had been nurtured to take pride in such a project. Today nearly 40 years later we wonder why such an undertaking has not yet come to pass.

Winnipeg School of Contemporary Dance

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MODERN — BALLET — REPERTOIRE

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Elizabeth Zimmer

How Not To See the Wood For the Trees:

Recent Dance Developments in Vancouver

An Annotated Chronology 1963-1978



Prism Dance Theatre - *Illuminations*

To succeed and to survive, in a Western city or anywhere else, a dance company requires four major ingredients: energy, talent, money and love. No Vancouver group has, so far, managed to come up with just the right combination of all four.

Several efforts have been made to sustain a high calibre ballet company in Canada's third largest city; most of these have failed. One chamber ballet, Pacific Ballet Theatre, has, in its three-year history, outlived all previous attempts; it survives by using mostly homegrown talent still living off the largesse of parents.

Shoots sent out into the city as long ago as 1965 have taken hold. Paula Ross, a Vancouver native, had just then returned to town and was interviewed by jazz critic Bob Smith. 'I'm a jazz dancer - my steps are strong, you know, kind of down home, like good blues. I'm convinced that the jam session technique that has been so helpful to musicians can be used by dancers.'

Paula Ross had been dancing most of her life, professionally, since the age of 15. She had appeared on the Perry Como Show in New York, and worked theatres and nightclubs in Vancouver and Vegas. Back home, she was one of the original members of the Pacific Dance Theatre, which also spawned Gisa Cole and others still active in the community. The Paula Ross Dancers have been a more or less continuous, shoestring operation for more than a decade, and presently seem stable and productive, with a very dedicated core group of dancers and a devoted following.

Anna Wyman emigrated to Vancouver just over a decade ago, and has, following a pattern not uncommon among immigrants, succeeded where local attempts had previously failed. After an early and spectacular flash in the pan, she hit a difficult dry spell from which she seems to be emerging a changed choreographer. Her group, now in its sixth year of professional operation, survived the awkwardness of becoming too complex too quickly.

Mountain Dance Theatre is slowly starving and needs major transfusions of cash. Prism Dance Theatre, heir to a tradition of exoticism and stylized virtuosity handed down from Norbert Vesak, is holding its own. Terminal City Dance, an experimental co-operative now in its third season, spends an inordinate amount of energy simply surviving, and has suffered the loss of a couple of members, making the load on each artist's shoulders even heavier than before.

Other small groups give regular performances of uneven quality. Funds from local and provincial sources are not keeping pace with inflation; some grants have dried up. Around the edges of the 'company establishment', several independent choreographers are working steadily, showing their work privately or in the repertory of other groups.

Before 1965, dance in Vancouver was the project of associations, workshops and individuals, rather than of companies. The Vancouver Ballet Society staged annual showcases in which ballet and contemporary dance shared the spotlight. It also sponsored special events, such as a 1963 evening of ballet in which Lynn Seymour, (born Springbett and a native of Vancouver), returned from the Royal Ballet to entertain summer audiences at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

The Ballet Society Workshops were choreographed by local teachers, such as Mara McBirney, Kay Armstrong, Joy Camden and Heather McCallum. Guest dancers from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet appeared alongside local students. In 1963, Dorothy Hunter, an early experimenter, presented a dance based on paintings by the Group of Seven; she is also credited with doing 'whale dances' long before they became fashionable. Other contemporary pioneers included the Hanova sisters, two Czech women who had been raised in India, and who brought to Vancouver their particular brand of body awareness, integrating yoga with dance training. Anna Wyman took their classes when she first arrived here.

Also on the 1963 workshop programme was *Tapestries*, an early work by Norbert Vesak. Gisa Cole was a Cygnet in the version of Act II of *Swan Lake* presented that year. Soon after she spent a season studying in Winnipeg, returning to Vancouver, occasionally as Gisa Kolchin, to work with Pacific Dance Theatre.

Linda Rubin, another Vancouver dance pioneer, was at that time a student at the Vancouver School of Art where she experimented with multi-media projects; she also directed the Nirkoda Israeli Folk Dance Troupe, of which David Weller and Carolyn Shaffer were members. An occasional colleague of Vesak's early years, Rubin later followed in his footsteps to study at Jacob's Pillow in Massachusetts.

Out in Burnaby, amid the bulldozers and cement mixers, Iris Garland arrived from the South to set up a dance programme at the brand-new Simon Fraser University. In 1965 she sponsored a visit here by Erick Hawkins, and the following year brought Merce Cunningham. She remembers that in 1959, Hanya Holm worked briefly in Vancouver.

In 1967, after years of freelancing, Norbert Vesak opened his own studio in West Vancouver. Out at UBC, Helen Goodwin was bringing in distinguished visitors, including Jean Erdman. Murray Farr, then a UBC student, was getting his first taste of dance booking and

management, a career that was to take him to New York.

During the sixties, young Vancouver dancers could not afford to be choosy; Gisa Cole and Linda Rubin danced in a 1968 Playhouse Theatre production of *Anything Goes*. Indeed, there are folks still on the scene who say that the sixties were a golden age of dance, by which they mean musical comedy and other performing opportunities. Grace MacDonald was training show dancers and cheerleaders for the BC Lions. Her alumni are presently the mainstays of CBC variety programmes here, and do nightclub work occasionally. Several of them are in touring companies of *A Chorus Line* now crisscrossing the continent.

In 1969, Paula Ross's group included David Dressler, now head of Victoria's Dancenergy Studio, Jerri Stribbel of Space Dancers, Linda Raino, and Don McLeod. After years on the roster of ballet companies in Toronto and Montreal, Maria Lewis returned to Vancouver and began looking for a place to teach. Yvonne Rainer performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Savannah Walling fresh from the Folklore Department at Stanford University, arrived in town and went to work in the library at Simon Fraser.

That year, which saw men walking on the moon and half a million people gathered at Woodstock, also witnessed the launching of Western Dance Theatre. 1970 brought the first visit of Cunningham dancer Albert Reid to teach in Vancouver, and Phyliss Lamhut began a long association with the dance department of Simon Fraser. David Lui began his career as an impresario. The Society of Vancouver's Ballet Horizons was founded.

As the dance programme at SFU continued to expand and diversify, the situation at UBC remained stationary. To this day, all dance at the university is sponsored through the student union, the recreation department or the fine arts department.

By early 1971, Western Dance Theatre was in a shambles; Vesak moved south and east. Anna Wyman took possession of his studio. Members of his group opened Synergy at Robson and Granville streets; they offered traditional dance techniques as well as yoga, t'ai chi and improvisation. Linda Rubin, back from several years of training and performing in New York and New England, became the business manager of the studio. People began to study with more than one teacher and to think more broadly about their dance involvement.

Anna Wyman had done some teaching at Simon Fraser, and was busy in West Vancouver, quietly shaping her group of students into a performing ensemble which made its professional premiere in 1972. Becoming the first BC company to receive Canada Council funding, winning a choreography competition at Cologne with a piece called *Here at the Eye of the Hurricane*, The Anna Wyman Dance Theatre was catapulted to prominence. Tours of the province and of Canada followed in 1974 and 1975.

Wyman's practice has been to have only her own work in the company's repertoire, with a resultant slow growth and slackening of performance opportunities. Several young members of the original company left the group, others have been hobbled by injury, and a constant turnover of administrative personnel cannot have helped in the struggle to build new audiences and touring circuits.

In 1975 a grant from the Secretary of State for International Woman's Year enabled Wyman to choreograph *Klee Wyck: A Ballet For Emily*. The work, inspired by the

paintings of Emily Carr, was a departure for Wyman who, that March, told a Toronto dance writer, 'about the only thing I rigidly avoid touching is nature. To me nature does not involve the dance. It is something to be enjoyed for its own sake, something to relax in, and I would never try to translate it into other terms.'

In taking *Klee Wyck*, Wyman was cornered into translating Emily Carr's translations of nature and native lore, and the dance, while full of stunning visual effects, lacks the integrity of structure which typifies the choreographer's best work. In 1976 she was seduced by technology into making dances which were ultimately overshadowed by their special effects, some of which malfunctioned in performance. In the past year, she has added several new, lighter works to the repertory, including her first recognizable love duet, *Two People*, and *Tremolo*, a work utilizing elastic tapes, to the music of Keith Jarrett.

A four-day season of work from the repertory, held at the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse last fall, drew pitifully small houses. Unique among local companies in having nearly adequate financial support, a hardworking paid professional staff and a director with great talent and years of professional experience, the Anna Wyman Dance Theatre has lacked only one thing: a warm place in the bosom of its community.

When the lease of the first Synergy studio expired in 1973, the faculty went their separate ways, Linda Rubin taking the name, and the philosophy, first to the Western Front Lodge and ultimately to her own attractive facility on Main Street, where she concentrates on body work and improvisation. She attracts many participants from the larger education, social work and medical communities, as well as more traditional dance students. Her methods seem to attract more male students to her classes. She has been responsible for visits to Vancouver by many experimental movement proponents, including Deborah Hay, and contact improvisation developers Steve Paxton and Nancy Stark Smith.

From time to time, Synergy has had performing groups as part of its programme. One such crew presented a 'Nude Sculpture Line' at the Western Front in 1975. In recent years Rubin has restricted her work to teaching and the 'helping arts', developing movement therapy programmes at UBC and directing workshops. Former Synergy dancers have struck out independently, and are largely responsible for the wave of local interest in contact improvisation; several are teaching at the Western Front under the sponsorship of Vancouver Community College.

Another partner in the original Synergy studio, Jamie Zagoudakis, had been choreographing musicals and teaching. In 1973 he rented studio space and opened the Contemporary Jazz Dance Centre, offering classes in his particularly appealing blend of dance styles. A student of Matt Mattox and Maurice Béjart, and a former teacher of Spanish dance, Zagoudakis presently teaches skaters, school and community groups, and somehow finds time to direct, with Gisa Cole, Prism Dance Theatre. The group had its origins in the 1973-74 season on a LIP grant and has grown progressively smaller and tighter each year. It presently consists of Zagoudakis, Cole and four female dancers, with occasional contributions from guest choreographers, such as Albert Reid, as well as guest artists. Prism, which has now gathered support from the city, province and Canada Council, works extensively in

Lower Mainland schools and has toured Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast. Its repertoire is an eclectic blend similar to that of Norbert Vesak. Though critical reaction is frequently lukewarm, audiences flock to their performances. Cole and Zagoudakis both take frequent trips East to recharge their batteries, but they have decided to stay in Vancouver. 'This is a place to grow without the pressure of a large company over us', says Cole, who has been dancing in Vancouver since she was three. An active participant in the workshop and early company experiments, she joined Les Feux Follets in Montreal but returned to Vancouver after a short stay to marry and raise a family. A skilled teacher of contemporary technique, she is developing choreographic experience, making studies which sometimes attempt, too literally, to represent a theme or a piece of music. Her most successful work to date has been the 1977 trio, *Encounter*, to music by Poulenc. She and Zagoudakis carry on the tradition of theatricality and exoticism brought by the early touring groups, and later by their own mentor Norbert Vesak.

Members of the Contemporary Jazz Dance Theatre in its early years, Terry Hunter and Savannah Walling, broke away in 1975 to form a group with Karen Rimmer which subsequently became Terminal City Dance. Initially experienced in mime and theatre, Walling's allegiances seemed to shift slightly with the arrival of Phyllis Lamhut at Simon Fraser in the early seventies. Several Vancouver dancers followed Lamhut to New York for a year of studies in technique and composition. Back in Vancouver, Walling studied at Synergy, with Anna Wyman and with Paula Ross, and is now, along with Rimmer, a part-time member of the SFU dance faculty. A third major production *Tales from the Terminal City*, has just completed a BC tour and a home season in Vancouver.

Another group strongly influenced by Phyllis Lamhut was Burnaby Mountain Dance Company, now called Mountain Dance Theatre. Most of its original membership studied with Lamhut at Simon Fraser in the summer of 1973, and she convinced them of the importance of staying in Vancouver and doing something, rather than flocking to New York. For a while they traded on the tenuous student status of some members to get access to rehearsal space, but eventually moved to the Burnaby Arts Centre where they have become a kind of resident company to the suburban community of 200,000.

Originally conceived as a co-operative, Mountain now has two artistic directors, Mauryne Allan and Fredi Long. Mauryne, another product of Mara McBirney, and Norbert Vesak, never wanted to be a ballet dancer, and felt quite at loose ends until she met Iris Garland at McBirney's studio. She danced in musical theatre and nightclubs, attended SFU briefly, lived in Australia for three years, and teamed up with Long and the others, including Zella Wolofsky, Barbara Bourget and Mona Sulzman, in the summer of '73. Long, a former Miss Idaho, had emigrated to Canada from California. She had danced as a child with Virginia Tanner in Salt Lake City.

The group got an OFY grant in the summer of 1974 which paid for a small tour. They worked every day, taught many classes, and existed from grant to grant with continually shifting personnel. Under pressure from their board of directors, they briefly tried, in 1976, to take on a flashy image, but have since done careful analysis of why they are dancing, and are staging experimental dance

events, chance pieces and children's concerts. Delicate, strong works in their repertoire include *In Paradisum*, a 'simultaneous solo' for several performers, and the beguiling *Concerto Grosso*, a great hit at the Dance in Canada Conference last summer.

Presently Mountain is in dire financial straits, living week to week on some provincial funding, fees from teaching, corporate contributions and a little cash from Vancouver Social Planning and the Burnaby Arts Council. They see themselves as taking dance to new audiences, bridging the gap between the suburbs and the more concentrated urban arts community. More than other local groups, Mountain seems to be suffering in the transition from LIP funds to 'independence'. When they were funded, and therefore 'free', people clamoured for their services, but selling themselves at a living wage is proving more difficult. They have recently completed a successful winter tour of Vancouver Island and the Kootenays, played a Vancouver season, and will appear at the Brackendale Gallery, 70 miles north of the city, in August. A severe injury has removed co-director Fredi Long, slowing preparation of the new Judith Marcuse work in their repertoire.

Meanwhile, after years of working with no subsidies, Paula Ross in 1974 got her first provincial funding. Her company, over the years, had seen dozens of dancers come and go, and while most of them speak highly of her, they all reached a point where they no longer felt they could donate their services. Ross works on material with strong emotional content. At its best, as in the newly revised version of *Coming Together*, it is taut, carefully visualized and strongly danced. The Ross group, always short of cash, manages to subsist on the devotion of its members and staff, and on the support of loyal studio audiences. Musical director Edward Arteaga composes original scores for Paula, and as a measure both of economy and grass-roots involvement, the company holds three-weekend seasons in its Kitsilano studio. Paula Ross won the 1977 Chalmers Award for her choreography. She has a mind, a style, and a method mysteriously her own. She endures.

Midway through 1978, Vancouver presents a phalanx of small companies, all but one existing on a patchwork of pittances and working in a contemporary mode. Vancouver now is not an outpost of experimentation, not a volatile creative centre, and not a training ground, as it was thirty years ago, for potential international stars. The Vancouver Art Gallery, which formerly provided a platform for experimental work in dance, is keeping a low, non-performance profile. Many skilled and imaginative dancers have left for Toronto or New York. Tournesol, always controversial, has shifted its base to Edmonton. David Lui, the impresario, is finding it difficult to keep coming up with new acts to feed the Vancouver audience's appetite for ballet spectacle. Modern companies are not such good box office. Their rare appearances are mostly the result of Iris Garland's efforts at SFU.

The cost of living here is prohibitively high. The distractions of sea and mountains take their toll. Sports figures, not artists, make headlines and capture the public imagination. The tradition of vaudeville turns and exoticism, which accompanied the first serious dance to Vancouver, is by no means dead.

Yet certain individuals, and their devoted followers,



Anna Wyman Dance Theatre - *Undercurrents*

plug on year after year: Maria Lewis, Paula Ross, Anna Wyman, Norman Leggatt, Morley Wiseman, Iris Garland and a legion of ballet teachers have devoted the bulk of their adult professional lives to this quixotic and often ungrateful town. A younger generation, including Cole and Zagoudakis, Rimmer and Walling, Long and Allan, and of course, Linda Rubin, have elected to stay in the city, despite poverty and an unsympathetic press. The stalwarts of the Vancouver Ballet Society give selflessly of their time and energy, sharing their largesse with contemporary artists of whom they may not entirely approve and whose work they may not always understand. It has been observed that on the West Coast, the prevailing social and professional attitude is 'every man for himself', with a resultant lack of co-operative spirit. This pattern may be affecting efforts to keep a large-scale performing ensemble afloat.

Perhaps the notorious 'dance boom' is quieting down. Perhaps we are in a holding pattern now, a time for reflection and hard work.

Rhonda Ryman

Training the Dancer IV

POSTURE IN DANCE: SENSE AND NONSENSE

'Pull up the thighs!' 'Tighten the buttocks!' 'Flatten the back!' 'Square your hips!' How often these and similar commands are repeated like catechisms of the dance class. A dancer's stance is unique. It sets him apart from the everyday person and even from most athletes. Yet there is a good deal of fuzziness in many dancers' minds concerning what exactly constitutes good body placement. Verbal commands like those quoted often serve to bind and restrict the body, rather than to free it for efficient, economical movement—the truest goal of good posture.

It is almost impossible to define a single ideal posture for the upright human body. The way a person stands is determined by many physical and psychological factors. Ethnic background often influences body type; weight and height affect proportion of bone, muscle and fat; and personality influences how each individual unconsciously chooses to present his particular body structure. There are, however, certain guidelines which can be applied to the human body in general. These may be derived by looking beneath the soft tissues of the body to its supporting structure, the building blocks of the body, its skeletal framework.

Mechanically speaking, good posture is achieved when the large body masses, the head, ribcage and pelvis, are vertically aligned as well as possible over the base of support, the feet. Continuing the analogy of building blocks, one can see that the more evenly they are stacked, the more stable is the structure. But as any one block is displaced, there is a greater tendency for the structure to topple, (see Diagram 1). Because the human body is asymmetrical in the sagittal plane (from front to back), it is impossible for its segments to be perfectly stacked. However, the closer these segments are to the line of gravity passing through the body's centre of mass, the less they will be displaced by the force of gravity, (see Diagram 2). This means that less muscle effort is required to counteract the downward pull of gravity when the body is vertically aligned: good posture is economical. In addition, since the large muscle groups are chiefly freed from their role in stabilizing the joints, they can more effectively spring into action to *move the bones*: good posture is efficient. This leads us to a functional definition of 'placement' in dance. *Placement means arranging the bones of the body in such a way that the muscles are freed to work efficiently and effectively to produce movement.*

If we accept this definition, we can see the danger of the commands stated at the beginning of this article. They all stress a voluntary tightening or rigid setting of particular muscle groups. The student who rigorously believes these and consciously sets his muscles as suggested may feel 'steady as a rock', but when he tries to move freely from

this stance, the entire system is disrupted. The body's equilibrium is altered as any body part becomes displaced, unless some other part shifts in an opposite direction to counterbalance it. Normally, the postural reflexes ensure that the appropriate chain of muscle actions restores balance. But the conscious 'setting' of muscles overrides these natural reflexes. Ironically, the student's response to the ensuing loss of balance is to tighten everything even more.

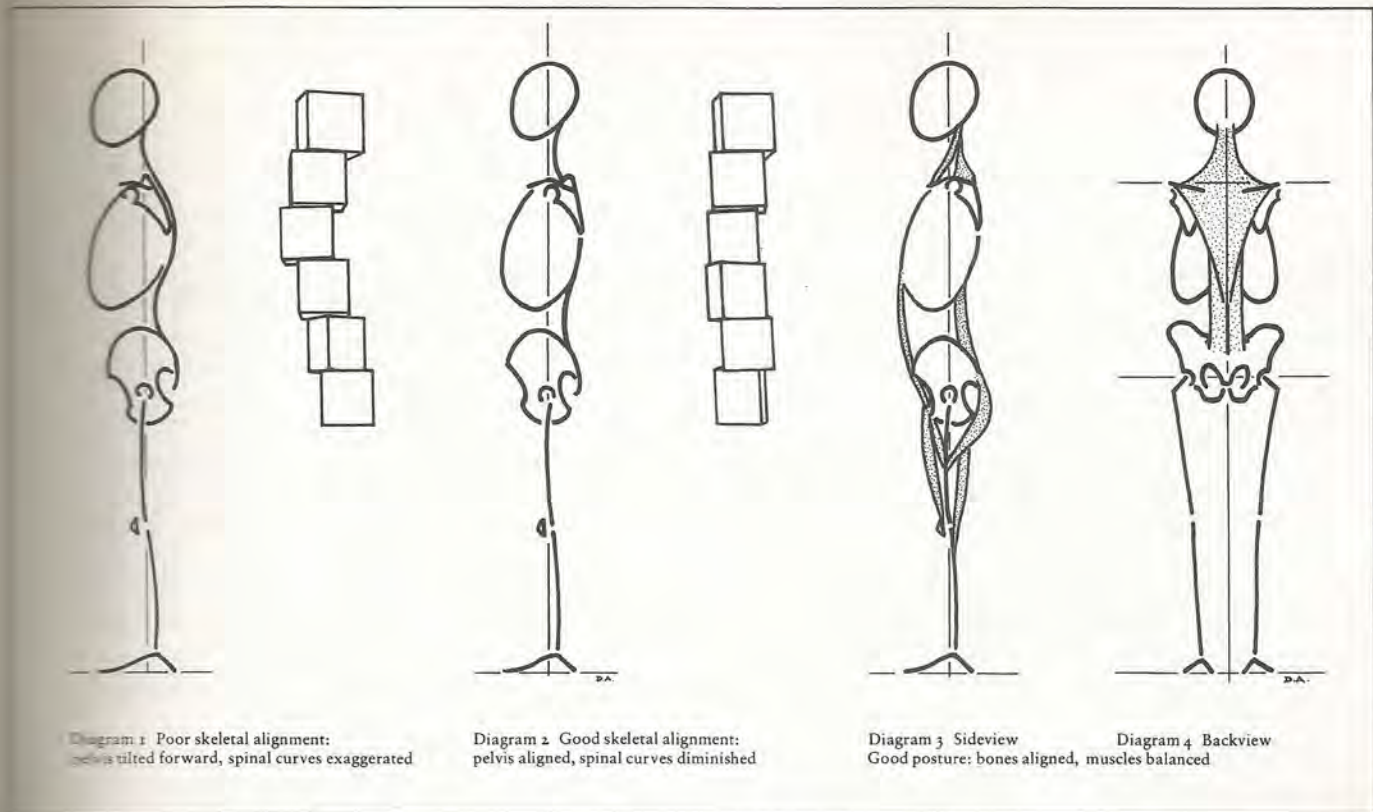
Postural Guidelines (see Diagrams 3 and 4)

If we take a skeletal approach to posture, the following criteria can be applied in describing the ideal dancer's stance:

1 The line of gravity of the body passes through its centre. Seen from the side it crosses just behind the ear, through the centre of the shoulder, through the middle of the pelvis and the centre of the hip joint, just behind the kneecap and slightly in front of the ankle bone. Seen from behind, the line of gravity bisects the body into left and right halves, passing through the long axis of the head, along the spine between the shoulder blades, along the sacrum (tail bone) between the hip crests, and on down between the knees and ankles. Seen from the front, the ankles, knee caps, hips, tops of the shoulders and eyes are level with each other and parallel to the ground.

Visual cues help orient the head vertically and provide a frame of reference for the organs of equilibrium which are located in the inner ear. Proprioceptive information received from sensory organs within the muscles, tendons, joints and skin (especially skin on the soles of the feet) are processed with reference to these visual and aural receptors, and allow us to align our body parts to maintain balance. Using the eyes to steady oneself is an important part of dance training. 'Spotting' is crucial to the maintenance of long balances on one leg and to the restoration of balance during and after turning movements. One need only try balancing with the eyes closed to understand the importance of visual cues. In fact, it may be beneficial to practise balancing 'blind', since it forces the dancer to concentrate on internal cues only and to become more sensitive to kinesthetic sensations.

2 The particular aesthetic preferences of most western theatrical dance forms dictate a tapered, elongated look. Certain body types inherently possess this look, but regardless of the structure, it is possible to lengthen functionally the body, giving an appearance of elongation. This is achieved when the dancer vertically aligns the pelvis and diminishes the natural s-curve of the spine so that the head is displaced higher. The characteristic shape of each individual's sacrum dictates the degree of forward tilt of



the pelvis, and indirectly the magnitude of the spinal curves which form to counterbalance the upper torso. The wedged shape of each vertebra and the thickness of each intervertebral disc determine the natural spinal curves. But these curves can be voluntarily increased (see Diagram 1) or diminished (see Diagram 2).

This practice is often referred to as 'pulling up'. But the dancer must learn to be very selective about exactly what he pulls up. The shoulders are often raised and thrust back, the chest is commonly heaved forward and up, and the buttocks are sometimes lifted and poked back producing a sway-backed stance. The notion of 'pulling up' more properly refers to the contraction of the abdominal and thigh muscles. The belly appears to be raised as the muscles contract. But as has been stressed, these muscles will automatically come into play as a bone is moved. Conversely, it is possible to tense a muscle statically, with absolutely no accompanying bone movement. So a dancer may tighten the stomach (abdominal muscles) without effecting the desired realignment of the pelvis. If however, he thinks of lifting the hip crests so that the pelvis is vertically aligned, the necessary abdominal involvement is called forth. Since muscle groups work cooperatively, as the abdominals shorten the lower back muscles lengthen reciprocally and allow the lumbar spine to elongate. Imagery may be successfully used to illicit this skeletal realignment, as will be discussed shortly.

In addition to giving the torso a longer line, elongating the spine serves to raise the centre of gravity of the body and make it more mobile. The long-legged, short-torsoed body of a classical ballerina has a naturally higher centre of gravity than the shorter legged, longer torsoed body of, for example, an early Graham modern dancer. But regardless of its proportions, the centre of gravity of a body when its torso is elongated is higher than when it is compressed in a

slumping posture. This increased mobility allows the body to be locomoted more freely, with relatively less muscular energy.

3 The positioning of the legs depends largely on pelvic alignment. Very often the muscles crossing the front of the hip joint (rectus femoris, iliopsoas) and the iliofemoral or Y-ligament which anchors the pelvis and femur (thigh bone) restrict the opening out or extension of the hip joint. The pelvic crests are tilted forward by the tight and sometimes bulky thigh muscles. This causes the stomach to hang out forward, in front of the line of gravity, and the hip and knee joints to be displaced backward, behind it. This misalignment often accentuates problems such as hyperextended knees and causes the weight to shift back onto the heels.

In normal posture, when stability is needed, it is quite desirable to shift one's weight onto the heels. But in a dancer's stance, mobility is more important, so it is imperative that the body weight be centred over the ball of each foot. By doing this, the dancer is freed to move in any direction with a minimal preparatory shift.

In addition to centering the weight in the sagittal plane, it must be evenly transmitted in relation to the left and right borders of each foot. It is not uncommon to wear down either the inner or the outer sole first, or to wear out one shoe before the other. This and similar signs could indicate a habitually uneven stance. To check yourself for the latter imbalance, stand squarely on two accurate bathroom scales. Each should register exactly half your weight.

4 The positioning of the shoulder girdle and arms is integrally related to that of the spine and head. Each arm hangs from one shoulder blade which in turn is linked to one collarbone. These connect in front with the breast bone at a very mobile joint. Finally the ribs extend around



Diagram 5 To realign the pelvis



Diagram 6 To realign the ribcage



Diagram 7 To integrate the pelvis and the ribcage

the chest cavity, attaching to each of twelve thoracic vertebrae. When the spine is well aligned, the ribcage sits directly over the pelvis and the shoulder girdle is suspended like a yoke atop the ribcage. The arms hang freely from the sides of the 'yoke', their weight pulling the shoulder girdle neither forward nor back.

If this balanced position is achieved, the various muscle groups joining the shoulder girdle to the head (sternocleidomastoid, trapezius), to the rib cage (subclavius, pectoralis minor, serratus anterior) and to the spine (trapezius, rhomboids, levator scapulae, latissimus dorsi) are likewise balanced, neither habitually stretched and weakened nor shortened and tensed. The shoulder blade will ideally lie flat along the ribs. The muscles surrounding the shoulder girdle function cooperatively to stabilize it and provide a firm base for movements of the arms. We have often heard dance teachers coax students to 'move the arms from the back'. In fact, all but the smallest arm movements involve rotation of the shoulder blades, so the muscles of the back must be involved. In order to give the appearance that the shoulders do not move, the collarbone remains quiet, firmly stabilized atop the ribs.

How to Improve Posture

It has been suggested that poor posture is related to muscular imbalances, pairs of muscles in which one group is overly tense and its antagonist is comparatively flaccid. This implies that the road to improvement lies in corrective exercises to strengthen weak muscles and stretch tight ones. But many noted authorities stress that it is poor habits of neuromuscular coordination, not weak muscles, that underlie many postural problems. In addition it must be noted that dance teachers deal with students of various ages and therefore at varying stages in their musculoskeletal development. It may be useless or even harmful to

urge a pot-bellied six-year-old to 'pull in his stomach', or a gangly 13-year-old to 'tighten her thighs'. In young children, the abdominal muscles are naturally longer and the internal organs are larger in relation to the size of the abdominal cavity. During puberty, rapid growth in the long bones of the limbs make muscle control difficult if not impossible. The adolescent female faces an entire postural re-education during these years: the distribution of her body mass is greatly altered as she develops breasts and buttocks.

Imagery, however, can be adapted to any age, body build or psychological disposition. Using guidelines suggested in the previous section, the teacher may construct and experiment with a series of images.

An excellent source is Lulu Sweigard's *Human Movement Potential* (1975). Take, for example, her imaginative prescription for elongating the spine and neck:

'Imagine your neck growing like an Alice-in-Wonderland neck to raise the head higher and higher.'

'Imagine that the head is a helium-filled balloon which, being lighter than air, rises.'

Try visualizing some of Sweigard's postural images in a standing position while someone reads them to you. Remember to concentrate solely on the mental picture without consciously using excess muscle tension.

Finally, good posture cannot be adopted for a few hours a day and then forgotten. Until it becomes second nature, good alignment must be practised as a part of everyday life — standing waiting for a bus, sitting writing a letter, walking to and from classes or work. The human body is in constant motion. The key to better posture lies in being aware of its subtle shifts and fluctuations, constantly readjusting to these changes.

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A Delicate Matter:

Dance in Education and Education in Dance

Dance education is a topic of discussion which only the brave dare mention. Should dance be in the public and secondary schools? Should any little old lady with the right-sounding name be allowed to stick up her sign and start crippling little defenceless children? Does it do any good to send professional dancers to perform in our schools? How do you count the worth of teacher's credentials? Do they even need to have them, and if so who should hand them out?

All these are important questions, but ones liable to get the innocent outsider embroiled in a violent argument that could well end in blows – a few swift pirouettes and a *très grand battement* to the chin.

Yet volatile or not, those with a concern for the future of dance feel strongly that something has to be done, first to improve the image of dance as a pursuit in our society and second, to see that where it is taught it is done so competently.

By a rather circuitous route, the Dance in Canada Association has got itself involved with these problems and the theme of dance education is likely to occupy an important place at the association's forthcoming conference this August. Not that a lot of talk will provide any guarantee of progress. The ground is delicate and most prefer to tread cautiously.

In fact, long before Dance in Canada was even a flicker in the eye of the Canada Council, another organization had taken steps to tackle the problem of dance education and of dance in education. The Canadian Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, known fondly as CAHPER, has existed since the 1920s and, in 1965, created a dance committee. Then in 1976, this CAHPER committee and the Dance in Canada Association finally bumped into one another and have been chatting away – not necessarily with any specific results – ever since.

The meeting of ways was fortunate because, by 1976, Dance in Canada had discovered the need to break its complex body into parts, each embracing a more distinct character. The current trend, set two years ago, is towards the activity of forums or special committees. There is an impressively titled 'Forum of Artistic and Managing Directors' and another, a 'National Dancers' Forum', was established at the association's Halifax conference in 1976. So far, the dance educators have not quite made human status; in the presumably significant nomenclature with which Dance in Canada's bureaucracy girds itself, the educators exist as a 'Liason Committee' with a rather vague and open-ended mandate to discuss everything and do nothing. But to be fair, there is a lot to talk about before anything can be done.

Of course committees, not even liason committees, can do much without a period of gestation and so through 1977 a number of meetings took place involving people from CAHPER, the Dance in Canada Association, the Canadian Dance Teachers' Association, and observers from the

Ontario Arts Council and the regional ballet movement. The discussions ranged over seemingly mundane but hotly disputed issues such as the form and structure of the Liason Committee as well as the big, philosophical questions which, one hopes will finally become the exclusive preoccupation of the committee.

The areas of disagreement suggest where most thought and analysis will be required. As Grant Strate pointed out, the subject of teachers' credentials is really not as important as educating the parents to enable them to detect bad teachers. Where professional performance in schools is concerned, interesting evidence from the state of New York suggests programmes of residency by professional dancers in public and secondary schools might be better than a string of brief shows.

As for the kind of place dance should have in the school curriculum, there will clearly be no end to argument. British and American schools have tended to treat dance with far greater seriousness than those in Canada where it is very unusual to find dance offered as a credit course. But then, there are many who would question whether it should ever become a credit. To answer them, it is pointed out that drama and music are thoroughly respectable disciplines. So why not dance? The answer – again from Grant Strate? Because dance has not presented itself seriously enough. It needs a better image or, to use the fashionable jargon, a higher public profile. That means documentation, a respectable body of material that can substantiate the enduring importance of dance and the rich contribution it has made to human civilization.

So, when all the 'dance people' congregate in Vancouver this summer to do and talk, watch and listen, the educators among them will discover some of their concerns already well defined and at the point where necessary action might be taken. In other instances, they will find that the discussion has only just uncovered how much more there is to be discussed.

Of course there are dangers that committees and meetings will lead nowhere except to mental exhaustion. On the other hand, something is happening in an area that has been too long neglected or in which separate bands of warriors have been labouring away, impotent in their puniness and unaware of the strength that comes with united effort. Perhaps at last we shall see our schools integrating dance into the regular curriculum. Maybe Madame Smithovashinska won't be able to put girls of five on point any more, not because there's a law to stop her, but because the little girl's parents know better. Let's hope it happens soon.

If you would like to know more about the detailed proceedings of the Liason Committee or about CAHPER we will gladly send you copies of papers which deal with both subjects at length. Just write to Dance in Canada magazine.

In Review

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens

Place des Arts
Montreal
March 1978

The theme of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens' marathon 20th anniversary retrospective was 'something old, something new, something borrowed...' Of the twelve ballets crammed into the first three weekends of March what stands out still is Brian Macdonald's new *Double Quartet*, Alicia Alonzo's florid, *fin-de-siècle* curtseys, Louis Robitaille's muscular control, Veronica Tennant's eyes and Ludmilla Chiriaeff's vaulting ambition.

Considering the vicissitudes of the past 20 years, and of last year in particular, the very fact that there was a 20th anniversary is a testament to the iron will of Madame Chiriaeff, the founder, who simply refuses to recognize *force majeure* and but for whom there would not even be a petit ballet, let alone Les Grands and its spores mushrooming all over the province.

But while survival is an art in itself, it is not Art, and as the season meandered through an anthology of hits from the past two decades, admiration for the troupe's stamina was tempered by irritation with management's failure to come to grips with two abiding weaknesses: lack of depth in the company and unsuitable repertoire.

Eleventh hour illness necessitated the replacement of Sonia Vartanian and Marina Eglevsky, two of the season's stars, setting off a chain reaction which demonstrated that the company of three dozen strong is skating on very thin ice.

Maniya Barredo, invited back from the Atlanta Ballet, agreed to dance Giselle in as monumental a piece of miscasting as I had ever seen, bringing to it precisely the same saucy soubrette brio which had made her Lise in *La Fille Mal Gardée* such a delight the previous weekend.

With Dolin's *Pas de Quatre* fast shrinking to a pas de deux, Louise Doré and Karen Brown leapt gallantly into the breach but were eclipsed by the soft, sneaky Grisi of Annette av Paul and the wickedly witty Taglioni of Veronica Tennant who simply acted everyone else off the stage.

The game of musical chairs claimed its final victim in Jerilyn Dana who was unexpectedly catapulted into the role of



La Fille Mal Gardée—at right, Ludmilla Chiriaeff

Myrtha. Like all the other forced substitutions, it was a finger in the dyke but not a performance.

Twin criticisms that continue to be levelled at the GBC's repertoire are that they cling tenaciously to mediocre choreographers and, conversely, that they undertake topnotch works which demand a degree of technique and, above all, style with which this company is not equipped.

A case in point is *L'Aujourd'hui de Demain* (Tomorrow Today) which Brydon Paige, an early GBC alumnus, whipped up for the students during a four-day visit from Alberta. It featured the company's 'Tomorrow': 22 pink-clad nymphets from the Pierre Laporte Dance Concentration Course and 17 adolescents from the Ecole Supérieure de Danse, all doing *glissades* like mad to the strains of souped-up Beethoven by André Gagnon. The effect was a cross between a Yuletide window-display at Eaton's and the May Day callisthenic extravaganzas so beloved by the Soviets. It had everything but taste, though it did serve to spotlight the

impressive potential of a melancholy 17-year-old, Peter Toth-Horgosi, a recent addition to the company.

The ubiquitous Fernand Nault was represented by *Try, Ready, Go*, a poor man's *Chorus Line*, which he had created for the Maryland Ballet two years ago and which, as one critic uncharitably put it, should have been left there.

There was also a revival of Nault's early one-act *Fille*, its humour bordering on the slapstick, its choreography of the relentlessly predictable battement-battement-battement-pirouette variety, in which Nault himself appeared *en travesti* as Widow Simone. Ashton need have no immediate worries.

Balanchine's absolute clarity leaves dancers more exposed than other, more 'visibly' difficult, styles. In *Concerto Barocco*, which opened the third weekend, Balanchine has welded his intricate tracery of movement so inextricably to Bach's serene, joyous *Concerto in D Minor for Two Violins* that the dance becomes music made manifest. Jerilyn Dana's spring-

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The components common to both casts were a corps de ballet figuratively and literally on their toes; an almost too-elegant first act pas de deux by Sylvie Kinal; Tom Lingwood's fairytale sets and a delightful cameo appearance by Anton Dolin, the old leprechaun himself, who had laboured long and hard along with John Gilpin, to re-set the ballet. Despite protestations that we were getting the 1932 Sergueyev version (in which Dolin had partnered Spessitseva) straight from the horse's mouth, this *Giselle* seemed both truncated and diluted and *Giselle*'s

fiorituri and risible excesses which one would have expected from Gloria Swanson impersonating Pavlova. And *Swan Lake* was only half the show. In response to an ecstatic house, Madame Alonzo sank to the floor and with her bouquet across her lap, her incredibly *plastique* arms rising swan-like from a mass of white tulle, performed an unending series of curtsies, bows, flutters and kisses, until there remained not a single cheer to be milked and was then led off by Esquivel who must be the most thoroughly upstaged man in all balletdom.

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It is set on three men: Vincent Warren, Dwight Shelton, Lorne Toumine and on Macdonald's wife, Annette av Paul. The short opening Schubert section is clean and classical to the tips of its toes; there are elegant daisychains, fluid lifts, solos, duets, all grace and ease. With the start of the Schafer score all this dissolves, like a bygone era, into stress and strain. The four dancers, linked, writhe like Laocoon in the coils of the sea serpent. There is a subtle isometric tension in all they do. The relationships are as convoluted as the movements. The message seems to be: can't live with you, can't live without you.

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In their eagerness to give us their all, the programme planners had consistently given us too much so that by the time Macdonald's second new ballet, *Fête Carignan*, rolled around, one's ability to absorb had been severely impaired. This is a lengthy frolic for 18 of Les Grands Ballets' younger dancers, set to the music of Quebec's well-loved fiddler, Jean Carignan, who accompanies it on stage, possibly for the last time because his hearing is reported to be failing rapidly. Not all of the eleven sections, ranging from reels through jigs, waltzes and the Highland Fling, are equally inventive and the overall impression is of an overabundance of detail. Generally it was fast-paced and effervescent – had to be, to keep up with Carignan – full of explosive youthful energy and appropriate theatrical touches. Perhaps in time when *Fête Carignan* is pared down and relocated on the programme, it will work better.

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needed extensions captured the letter if not the spirit of the piece but Sylvie Kinal occasionally went beyond technique to project languor, mischief and pure joy. *Concerto* was undone by the corps; they lacked sizing, attack, bearing, the quick and demanded by Mr B. and they were rarely together.

In keeping with the historical pageant theme of the season, former Grands Ballets dancers flocked back to help cover some of the bare patches. Lawrence Rhodes returned to dance *After Eden*, which John Nault had created for him in 1965, and to reach his wife's role to Maniya Barredo. Rhodes wore the part like a glove. Barredo was, as usual, tiny and perfect, adding an intensity and feline sinuousness new to her bag of tricks. The second cast was Alexandre Bélin and Jerilyn Dana. Dana's role is a lunar landscape, a leggy abstraction in glacial white; not your essential Bélin is more gymnastic than Rhodes: where Rhodes leaps, Bélin darts; he is master of foot but less dramatic.

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mad scene and death were simply thrown away.

Lucas Hoving's *Icarus* had been a real show-stopper when Guillermo Gonzalez was still with the company but as he could not be enticed back, the GBC borrowed Louis Robitaille from the Eddy Toussaint Company. At 20, Robitaille has an adolescent's torso atop legs that could have been hewn by Rodin. He gave a superbly controlled, very physical account of the title role in this strongly Hindu-flavoured work which nonetheless left me unmoved except for its final striking paraphrase of a Michelangelo Pietà.

Undoubtedly the grandest of the guest stars, for whom opening night gala audiences paid \$37.50 a head, was Alicia Alonzo, partnered by Jorge Esquivel, in an idiosyncratic *Pas de Deux* from Act II of *Swan Lake*, which verged on parody. Half the usual choreography was taken at half the accustomed speed with double the *fiorituri* and risible excesses which one would have expected from Gloria Swanson impersonating Pavlova. And *Swan Lake* was only half the show. In response to an ecstatic house, Madame Alonzo sank to the floor and with her bouquet across her lap, her incredibly *plastique* arms rising swan-like from a mass of white tulle, performed an unending series of curtses, bows, flutters and kisses, until there remained not a single cheer to be milked and was then led off by Esquivel who must be the most thoroughly upstaged man in all balletdom.

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Rite Of Spring - centre, Joost Pelt

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet

City Center

New York

28 March - 2 April 1978

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet's season at City Center in New York heralded the advent of a major ballet company and a major choreographer onto the New York dance scene. Under the auspices of Artistic Director, Arnold Spohr, all three programs of dance were dominated by the choreography of Oscar Araiz. While this offered the anticipated opportunity to see a range of Araiz's work, it did so at the expense of the company.

The dancers performed with infective enthusiasm and energy throughout the season. They moved competently through the difficult transition from ballet to modern dance in a single evening. The nature of their repertoire, however, did not exact from them their full potential. It was frustrating to watch good dancers in works that were not as provoking as the dancers themselves.

Araiz does not trust the dancer as an instrument capable of conveying the whole of his ideas. Costumes, scenery, and lengthy program-notes are used to ensure the clarity of the dance. The repetition of gestures and patterns confine the movement to a minimal level of complexity. These choreographic devices reduce his ballets to non-verbal drama. The focus is on the story of the dance rather than on the dancing.

Araiz is at his best in his shorter pieces such as *Adagietto* and *Family Scenes* when he strips the stage and concentrates on

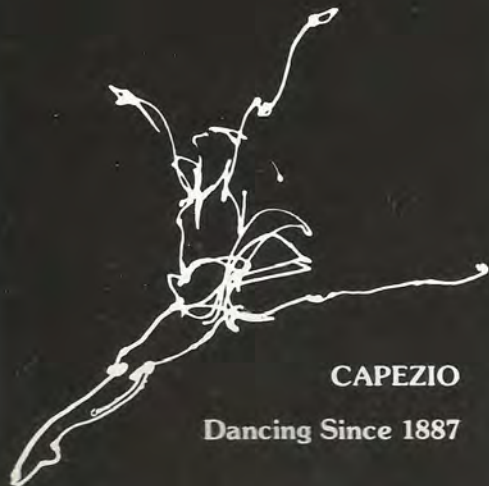
building one relationship. There are no distractions; the dancers are the sole agents of communication.

In *Adagietto*, a pas de deux, the dancers move as if in water. Joost Pelt's broad, weighty body serves as an anchor to Bonnie Wyckoff who buoys effortlessly around him. The space has a gravity independent of the dancers. In waves it pushes relentlessly down upon them, forcing them to the ground. Then recedes, leaving them free to move unresisted.

Wyckoff has a fine sense of line; a total awareness of the shapes the two compose together. Every articulation of her body is immediate. Her spine rotates, coils, and expands against the constraints of her limbs. Joost's solidity coupled with the flexible quality of Wyckoff's movement makes for a fascinating study in cohesive juxtaposition.

Family Scenes explores the literal relationships between people. The ballet opens with a family in the static, traditional pose for a photograph. The pose breaks apart to disclose the hidden antagonism within this familial structure. Sheri Cook as the wife and Bill Lark, her husband, engage in argument. Cook is an angular dancer. Her sharp, incisive gestures effectively define the formidable nature of her character. In response to her physical invectives, Lark collapses into despair. His body reverberates with humiliation. Lark projects from the gut; his movements are impossible to ignore. He is well suited to the dramatic in dance.

By virtue of segmenting *Family Scenes* into a series of vignettes, Araiz obviates the possibility of creating a single story-line. There is suggestion rather than insistence.



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In *The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore*, however, Araiz adheres to the linear plot of the madrigal fable as told in Gian Carlo Menotti's libretto. By allowing the libretto to dictate the movement, the dance becomes similar to mime. In isolated sequences, for example, when the neighbours gossip and chatter amongst themselves, the blend of gesture and song provides occasion for great humour — it works. But the consistent dependence on words to amplify the dance, diminishes the strength of both Menotti's score and the dancers.

Roger Shim, the Unicorn, is an elegant dancer more comfortable with ballet than modern dance. His exacting footwork and graceful leaps stand out against the background of mime. Evelyn Hart as the Virgin also introduces a classical element into the dance. Although the role of the Virgin is a confusing one, her clean line is a refreshing addition to the dance as a whole.

The title 'Royal' Winnipeg Ballet implies the classical ballet tradition which the company has. That tradition, as evinced from their performances in New York, has expanded to include modern dance. In Araiz's *Le Sacre du Printemps* even stylized jazz idioms are incorporated. By blending techniques, considerable succinctness is lost. It is necessary, at times, to untangle the visual knot of movements in order to grasp their intent. Frequently, the movements are blurry and seem out of place. The precise line of a classical arabesque swears with the general direction of a piece when done in the context of gyrating hips and abdominal contractions. This problem arises in *Le Sacre du Printemps*, a ritualistic dance that explores the sensual and physical aspects of birth, death, and human sacrifice.

Salvatore Aiello as He Who Is Born, worms his way through the thighs of Woman (Betsy Carson) in a simulated birth. At first, a truncated being without the use of either arms or legs, Aiello struggles across the stage by lifting his lower back to propel his chest forward. With his head secured to the floor for support, Aiello raises his legs into a shoulder-stand. Gradually he acquires tentative control of his limbs. He clenches his fists and kicks his feet in spastic liberation. The restraint exercised by Aiello in this battle between his will and stubborn, insensate body is arresting.

The costumes of bikini tops, baggy pants with strips of material wrapped around the thigh, and the women with their hair loosened contributes to the brute, animal effect of the dance. The removal of curtains to reveal the brick wall and lighting instruments backstage is distracting and out of date. The combination of costumes and scenery (or lack thereof) resurrects memories of the 60's when choreographers wanted to vivify the realistic quality of their works. The idea is now exhausted; *Le Sacre du Printemps* proves this conclusively.

Norbert Vesak and Brian Macdonald are the only other choreographers whose works were represented on the programs. Vesak's *What To Do Till The Messiah Comes* verges on the saccharine with the exception of the segment, 'Belong'. Aiello partners Marina Eglevsky in this evocative love duet. 'Belong' is a dance about trust. The dancers use their weight to pull each other off balance until the centre of gravity ceases to exist within either one of them, but in the combined dynamics of the two together.

Eglevsky radiates in Macdonald's *Pas d'Action*. She is at once both tasteful and outrageously funny. In *Pas d'Action*, Macdonald extracts segments from classical ballets infamous for their daring. The worst fears of the ballerina come alive. Eglevsky is extraordinary in her ability to dance poorly. She does it so well!

When the Royal Winnipeg Ballet next returns to New York, they should bring with them a more diverse repertoire that will make better use of the company. Their commitment to movement and animation makes one hope they will return soon.

SASHA CUNNINGHAM

The National Ballet of Canada

O'Keefe Centre
Toronto

February and March 1978

The crowds were bigger, more enthusiastic. Hometown pride flowed even when the critics panned; the auguries for the future seemed ablaze with green lights. The National Ballet of Canada completed its five-week spring season at Toronto's O'Keefe Centre with its reputation as solid as a rock. And what is its reputation? Why, as one of the best brought up classical companies on the continent, a troupe almost guaranteed to bring out the gentleman and lady in any crowd.

At the moment, the National is a little like a 17-year-old debutante who has been carefully schooled not to make the wrong move. Trouble is, now she's got to do some smart stepping out on her own if she's going to really grow up. And underlying all the satisfactions in the recent Toronto showcase, there were murmurs of discontent, speculation about just where the National could go in the next few years. With a style cloned from Britain's Royal Ballet, with a growing repertoire of the works of Sir Frederick Ashton, is the National to become the last outpost of Empire? And on a continent quite literally exploding with all kinds of dancers and ideas about dance itself, how is the National going to be rated not just among its peers but with audiences too?

The questions are clouded by the company itself. The National is a loveable



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David Allan in *La Fille Mal Gardée*

company: it's brave, persistent and at its best, it's insouciant in a way that's second to none. The season itself was rather a joblot: one new production, Ashton's *The Dream*, the usual raft of classics, a revival of last year's hit *La Fille Mal Gardée*, and one mixed program. The company danced right through them without faltering, displaying admirable stamina and every now and then some sparkling inspiration. One of this company's most endearing qualities is that it has no side. Sometimes, in fact, one wishes the dancers were a little more conscious of mystique. But then, the company wouldn't be Toronto's darling. The audience treats it as a kind of ball team. The corps is lustily cheered for teamwork, the principals given an audible pat on the back for a fish dive or other such dazzling arcana. Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn are demi-gods. Their very appearance sets off an ovation. But the others aren't ignored. Another plus: this company is homogeneous enough for cast changes to offer a real alternative in style and emphasis without a drastic diminution in quality.

This is particularly true with the second stringers. If the season proved anything, it is that the National is bringing along a clutch of dancers who will soon, one hopes, be tackling some of the first line roles. Linda Maybarduk is a most elegant dancer; she stepped out with billowing assurance as the major princess in *Swan Lake*. In the same ballet, Gloria Luoma's silkiness contrasted with Cynthia Lucas' clipped precision as they vied to top each other's pace in the Neapolitan dance, and

so did their partners, notably James Kudelka and David Roxander. Clinton Rothwell challenged Hazaros Surmeyan as the sinister Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*, and was a comical Mercutio besides. David Allan is making inroads on Roxander's special triumph as Alain in *La Fille Mal Gardée*.

As for the principal dancers, well, the Kain/Augustyn partnership cannot yet be matched. It works seamlessly; sometimes they almost appear too adept at covering each other's low points. In fact, only once during the season did they actually soar. That was in *Swan Lake* where quite magically they combined to generate a tremendous emotional charge as the doomed lovers. But generally, the partnership did not overshadow individual performers. Paradoxically, Kain is not the finest Odile/Odette. That honour must go to Vanessa Harwood. This dancer often seems too easily satisfied with making pretty patterns. In *Swan Lake* however, she projects an unfamiliar authority, a harshness that complements the steel of this deceptively fragile fairy tale. She invested those wing-beating shudders of the Swan Queen with a desolation that touched off all the romantic chords: the fatalism that lies behind the idea of enchantment, sexual and otherwise.

Veronica Tennant delivered an equally profound wallop as Juliet. At 31, Tennant is the old lady of the company, its ranking prima ballerina. Furthermore, she returned this season after a 14-month hiatus. Her performance as Juliet was not only a personal triumph but a useful reminder. *Romeo and Juliet* has been in the repertoire for some time, rightly so. It is singularly well suited to the company. I suppose that is because John Cranko's choreography emphasizes mime as does the National's own dramatic tradition which was of course established by Celia Franca, herself a *non-pareil* dramatic dancer. And one of the pleasures of the National remains Franca's infrequent appearances. When she does step on stage, she takes over. As the Queen Mother in *Swan Lake* she established with a minimum of gestures, but what gestures, huge enough to reach the tiniest corner of the vast O'Keefe, the emotional framework of the entire ballet.

Her lessons have been well learned. The National commands *Romeo and Juliet*. The opening ensemble at the Capulet Ball has the menace of the Teutonic Knights in Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*; it was one of the most dramatic moments on the Toronto stage all year. And in this atmosphere of martial terror, Tennant's strong and definite personality fuels a memorable Juliet. It is an axiom of theatre that the best Juliets are 40. The same, it seems, may go for baller. Of all the National's Juliets, Tennant was the only one to convey the role's range with conviction, from shy virginity to unassuageable grief. Tennant planted the seeds of destruction in Juliet

right away; the first simple steps were made into taps of impatience; in the balcony scene, she abandoned herself with a hint here and there of hopelessness; in the parting pas de deux, she made every movement signal despair.

Tennant's Romeo was Peter Schaufuss. He was hired away last year from the New York City Ballet. So far, he's something of an enigma. This season, he had trouble remembering the steps and occasionally he was a very dilatory partner, plunking down ballerinas as if they were shopping baskets. And there are a couple of mannerisms that irritate, notably a tendency to put his head down and run like a rabbit. But I think he is going to become a focus of excitement at the National. What he brings is not only Balanchine's discipline and a Danish technique that makes the other dancers often look careless, but an arresting stage presence. Personality seems at the moment too strong a word to describe Schaufuss' nebulous qualities, but he's noble with his shoulders and arms, and there seems a sense of tragedy weighing within him. He's like a bullfighter picking himself up to have another go at the bull after a particularly gruelling corrida. Frank Augustyn's well-shaped legs and self-confidence may now seem supreme, but Schaufuss brings to Siegfried and Romeo an ingredient that Augustyn seems to lack — a romantic imagination.

Will Schaufuss be dancing with Karen Kain? Right now, she needs to combat a heavy stage presence on the order of Nureyev. Schaufuss is different enough to perhaps provide a jolt. Augustyn, to whom she seems cemented for life, has the voltage of a coffee-grinder. He also coddles Kain. Once in a while it would do her good to find her partner gone when she's changed a sequence. Then perhaps emotion would be wrung from her. She is already formidable in her ability to make each step a personal signature, she can enchant with a single hop the way others do with 32 *fouettés*. But she is also giving the impression that just signing her autograph in the National's classics is not stretching the muscles she must use to grow. Was Margot Fonteyn like this? She was criticized when young for sacrificing emotion to an almost inhuman effortlessness. It wasn't until she got older — perhaps the dancing grew more difficult, perhaps she simply matured — that she made the emotional connections that differentiate a young, brilliant dancer from a great artist.

Another worry. Before the season began, Kain was featured in a trivial pop number on the André Gagnon show. It was maddening to see her coming in second to the memory of Cyd Charisse in a shallow concoction of leggy seduction.

Was it for the money — or just for the change? She's not getting much of the latter from the National. It's tempting to say the repertoire needed a spring clean rather than a spring airing. You had to move very

fast to catch the few mixed programs: The Dutch National Ballet's *Collective Symphony*, James Kudelka's *A Party*, John Neumeier's curiosity *Don Juan* (a talking ballet, no less) and the only new production of the season, Ashton's *The Dream*. There were high expectations for *The Dream*. Alas, they fell with a dull thud. It is a peculiarly English and literary ballet; Ashton almost inverts traditional Russian bravura; he creates ballet with a squirrel's persistence. This can be fascinating, as indeed can be his sense of humour. It can also appear bloodless. Shakespeare's *Dream* is haunted by sexual imagery. But Ashton's idea is an abstraction of sensuality. The choreography is as weightless as tumbleweed; passion floats through the air pulled this way and that by invisible currents. Transcendent dancing is required to make this ballet fly. The National's stars had a noble crack at it but none of them, not Kain, Tennant, Kudelka, Luc Amyôt, the tall and rather awkward young dancer now being pushed into the forefront, could pull it out of what became not a green forest but a bog.

Still, *The Dream* and the other short ballets were welcome. Some of the most familiar classics are creaking loudly. Both *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty* should be taken in immediately for a retreat. The sets were apparently conceived for 19th century melodrama. Nicholas Georgiadis' monstrosity for *The Sleeping Beauty* should be burned; it overwhelms every human and leaves, or so it appears, little space for actual dancing.

The choreography is troublesome too. Nureyev tailored Petipa to suit himself. The steps suit no other dancer. And then there is the muddle of the ballet itself. I defy anyone to sort out the fairies in the first act – and not just from the scenery. I did however distinguish Ann Ditchburn as the Lilac Fairy. She actually glided over the stage, appearing astonishingly to move six inches above it. But the wicked witch Carabosse was played pallidly by oldtimer Lois Smith. Victoria Bertram did better with the role but surely Alexander Grant played Carabosse for the Royal Ballet and corded the blood? How about the part going to a man now?

Another gripe: I'd like to see more fairy-tale characters in the final act. The National is full of young dancers dying to get a moment on stage. The variations offer such a splendid chance. As it was Thomas Schramek, who was disappointing in his major leading roles, was never better as Bluebird; he took the roof off the O'Keefe with a chain of leaps each one higher, bigger, longer than the last. And the pussycat combinations were all fun, but especially Daniel Capouch and Yolande Auger who strutted as if on steel claws. Of the Princess Auroras, only Kain rose above the stage clutter. She also tended to abandon characterization. For a minute there, I

thought she was planning to do the Rose Adagio in doubletime.

Swan Lake is popular however you do it, and Erik Bruhn has done plenty of damage to the Petipa/Ivanov original. Everyone wants this version dumped; it is a reminder of the times when a strong woman ran the company and gave two strong men, Bruhn and Nureyev, their way. Now the tables are turned. Kain, Tennant, Harwood and Potts are being made to dance great ballerina roles in the shadows of the men's egos. The fanciful Siegfried torn between carnal and ideal love must go, and along with him the Black Queen. Bring back Von Rotbart, that satan of sorcerers. Charles Kirby, superb as the King Florestan and never more ominously commanding than as Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, is on hand for the role.

Some say why not dump both ballets for a while? But the National is rooted in the story ballets. Moreover, they are great training pieces as well as being star vehicles. Still, one wonders whether they are fulfilling all the dancers. Take Nadia Potts. She's beautifully proportioned, a little faun on stage, a sweet Juliet, a mischievous Lise. But she never really came to life until she played the rejected Aminta in John Neumeier's *Don Juan*. What was it that loosened her up, made her warmer, the dancing fuller? Harwood too, despite her *Swan Lake*, often dances mechanically – as if she's untapped.

Ideally, one would now like to see the National becoming more adventurous, particularly in the area of other North American choreographers. The repertoire needs some mixing up to keep the dancers fresh. But two realities make it doubtful that this will happen – anyway soon. Alexander Grant quite understandably feels that the Royal Ballet's tradition is the one he is here to hand on. Next year, two new Ashton ballets will be added to the repertoire. Then too, the National, like everybody else, is hurting for money. Classics pull; adventure on the whole doesn't. But conservatism could damp the National's currently high spirits. The North American continent is alive with dance and all different ideas about dance, not to mention a variety of dancers from John Travolta bopping down a Brooklyn street, to Fred Astaire hurtling himself round and round in a jazz pirouette, to Alwin Nikolais' total abstraction of movement, sound and light. In Canada, unfortunately, we don't get to see enough of the current leaders among US companies. But at the National's gala, we did get a glimpse of Peter Martins and Suzanne Farrell of the New York City Ballet. And in Jerome Robbins' *Afternoon of a Faun*, they steamed up the stage with the kind of body language that makes scenery, music, story seem irrelevant. This was pure physicality, movement that made its own story, had its own dynamic. When the couple returned to assault *Tchaikovsky*



Linda Maybarduk in *The Dream*

Pas de Deux, they made it look as easy as falling off a log and fifty times as exciting. The National could do with that kind of versatility; it would make everyone look better.

Just now, of course, it's still riding the triumph of its silver jubilee and the emergence of Karen Kain superstar. If it doesn't look out however, the brightest dancers, including Kain, may move off – and out of boredom. That's happened before if a company simply repeats itself. The National's next few years are going to be perhaps the most critical in its history. It's stepping out to New York's Lincoln Center this summer and next year to Covent Garden all on its own. But these first flames of real international celebrity and success can be dangerous. Expectations are rising too. The National is no longer a local phenomenon, even a national hero. It's a competitor. The screws are on.

GINA MALLET

Nouvelles recherches en danse contemporaine à Montréal

Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal
11 February 1978

Pour la première fois, Montréal a eu l'occasion d'avoir un spectacle de danse où ne figurait aucune compagnie de danse. On pouvait s'attendre à de l'avant-garde — ce que beaucoup de personnes pensaient voir — mais ce n'était pas exactement ça.

C'était un pot-pourri où des artistes (danseurs, comédiens et musiciens) ont déployé leur approche à la danse avec honnêteté si ce n'est avec beaucoup d'innovation. Bien que l'auditorium du Musée fût plein à craquer il était évident que très peu de représentants du milieu professionnel de la danse à Montréal étaient venus applaudir les neuf chorégraphes-danseurs qui ont présenté leurs oeuvres.

La soirée a débuté avec une improvisation en contact menée par le groupe Catpoto dans le hall d'entrée. Les rythmes semblaient être d'une continuité ininterrompue où les fondus enchaînés et les principes fondamentaux de tension, contrepoids, flot et ralenti alternaient avec des piétinements de pieds qui précédaient leurs pauses. Bien que cette formule soit relativement nouvelle à Montréal elle est étroitement liée aux exercices de confiance (Touch-Trust Sensitivity) qui sont souvent exécutés en théâtre depuis les années soixante ici même. D'ailleurs, en regardant toute cette soirée de danse, j'ai été frappée par le déphasement qui existe en danse quand on compare cet art à la formule plus ouverte qu'est le théâtre expérimental à Montréal.

Le programme en neuf parties a mis sur les planches des danseurs-chercheurs qui ordinairement ne font pas de scène et par conséquent laissait supposer que l'on verrait de l'avant-garde. En gros, il y a eu peu d'innovation mais beaucoup de re-

cherches dans les arts connexes et en particulier le théâtre.

Caemos, qui était la contribution de Françoise Riopelle, ancienne pionnière de la danse moderne au Québec, était interprété par deux de ses élèves en théâtre de l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Utilisant une alternance de marches et de chutes, cette pièce était une étude d'états d'âmes exprimés dans un vocabulaire de communication non-verbale.

Vicky Tansey, par contre, apparaissait de temps à autre entre les numéros en guise de divertissement comique un peu comme le clown qui crée une transition entre les divers numéros de cirque. Elle était la seule qui s'est ouvertement adressée au public et elle a aussi utilisé l'espace entière de l'auditorium — chose que d'autres ont également fait.

Toujours dans la veine comique, Sari Hornstein a chorégraphié et interprété avec l'aide d'Illana Federman un numéro de vaudeville digne de Fred Astaire dont elle avoue être influencée. La contribution d'Illana, par contre, qui était aussi son baptême chorégraphique, a été sur une musique de Steve Reich. C'était une simple répétition de mouvements d'amplitude et de retrait. Dans les deux cas, les danses étaient de si court durée qu'aucun développement du thème n'était possible.

Puis est venue Diane Thibaudeau de la ville de Québec, qui a improvisé des mouvements au son de percussions et flutes également aléatoires. Cette idée — d'un lien étroit entre musicien et danseur — a été reprise par Barbara Scales dans son solo intitulé *Blues*.

Ensuite il y a eu Louise Gauvreau et un groupe de femmes habillées dans des robes de lin qui évoquaient des images ritualisée de vestales. Cette chorégraphie, montée avec des bribes de Béjart, de l'école expressionniste, du jazz et du rituel, m'est très difficile à catégoriser. Son point le plus intéressant — qui malheureusement n'a été qu'effleuré — était la texture du tissu des robes longues et du jeu de lumière sur le tissu.

Après l'entre'acte, Edouard Lock — seul

chorégraphe professionnel — a présenté un solo pour Danièle Tardif. C'était le seul numéro de la soirée qui adoptât une approche plus traditionnelle c.à.d. d'ignorer le public et de faire de la recherche de formes pures. Toujours fasciné par la sensualité et l'étude poussée de l'esthétique épurée, Lock faisait évoluer sa danseuse sur différentes plateformes et niveaux afin d'obtenir de nouveaux angles visuels. La recherche ici pourrait être expliquée comme étant une recherche d'optique de caméra. Le côté le plus prenant reste toutefois le silence si évident qui émanait une aura de calme le long de la chorégraphie.

Pour clôturer, Diane Carrière et son équipe ont présenté une série de camées qui promettaient de l'innovation dans leur ambiance de recherche mais qui a duré trop peu. Les thèmes abordés étaient des thèmes à grandes envergures: le théâtre — l'espace — le temps — la pesanteur — mais de nouveau ces thèmes n'étaient qu'effleurés.

On pourrait dire que cette soirée se caractérisait par la brièveté de chacune des chorégraphies. Il y a eu une multitude d'idées mais elles sont toutes restées au niveau d'une esquisse. Cependant, cette représentation a fait ressortir certains points. En premier lieu on peut constater qu'il y a une autre sorte de danseurs qui oeuvrent à Montréal dans leur coin solitaire. Ensuite, on peut voir que l'avant-garde en danse n'est pas très expérimentale. En fin, on peut ajouter que le public a besoin d'être exposé à d'autres formes d'événement en danse pour comprendre que la danse joue un rôle autre que celui de divertissement léger.

IRO TEMBECK

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Dancemakers

Hart House Theatre
Toronto
11-14 April 1978

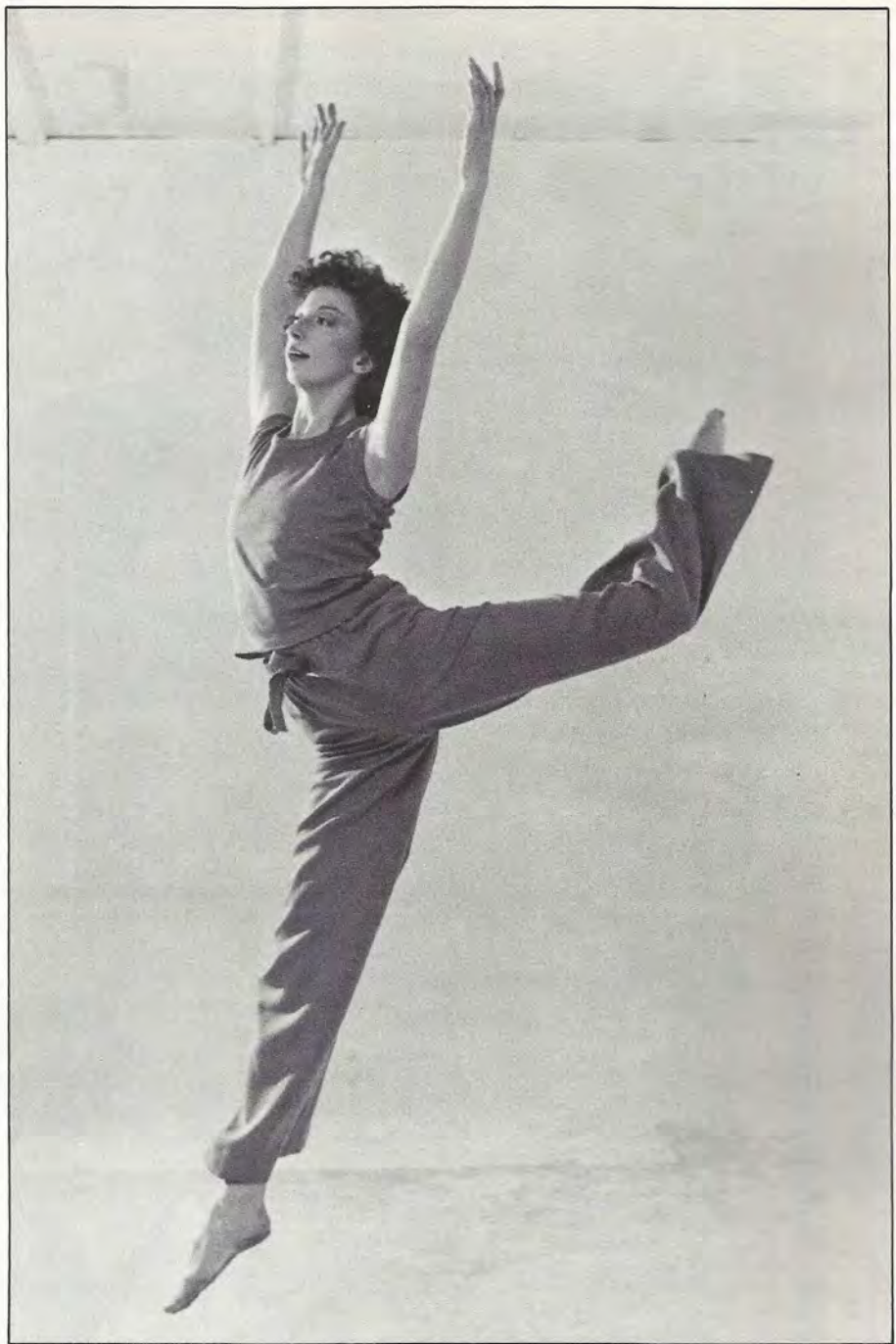
Dancemakers is a curious troupe. Since its debut in 1974, the company's character has been amorphous in personnel, administrative structure and artistic direction (or non-direction), which might be misinterpreted as weakness. Dances and dancers have come and gone, yet through it all, the troupe somehow achieves a cohesion and performing vitality which is both attractive and admirable. Dancemakers may do puzzling things now and then, but it is never dull.

This important residue of charm made Dancemakers recent Toronto season enjoyable even though the works presented did not add up to nearly as exciting an evening as we have come to expect.

The space itself was not sympathetic. A proscenium does little for the company, especially when it frames an oblong window onto the stage. It caused an unpleasant remoteness – a bit like watching a dance filmed in cinemascope.

The programme's four works, all very new to Toronto, were not equally interesting. Peggy Smith Baker's *Album* was a low-key opener, a rather cryptic series of abbreviated sketches which appeared to comment on various items in a family's past. The use of slides and voice from the 'Smith archives' did little to indicate what greater purpose this four-part dance had besides self-indulgent reminiscence.

Janice Hladki's *Fading Fast* used Peggy Smith Baker's extraordinary facility for movement with varying success but chose a title which, no doubt inadvertently, well described the impact of its conceptual ramblings. Ralph MacDonald's score of native/disco/calypso did indeed fade now and then and Baker did lots of coming and going – and some wonderfully screwy combinations – but the straining balances and clumping around in shallow troughs of water were mystifying elements in a curious dance maze.



Patricia Miner of Dancemakers

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Richer in texture and design was former Sharp dancer, Nina Wiener's *A Friend Is Better Than a Dime*. It used the whole company, dressed in nifty, colourful, pyjama-like costumes and jazz shoes that permitted heel turns. Blues and boogie provided the rhythmic impulse for movement that was often fast, complex and which made great use of the middle and upper body.

Anna Blewchamp's *Marathon* demanded a special concentration from the viewer before Steve Reich's subtly modulated minimalist piano score could create the hypnotic effect of suspended time against which Blewchamp's clear, economical movement assumes an almost surreal quality. The dance unfolds from the dynamically contained phrases of a spotlight single woman to embrace the whole company, dressed in modified practice clothes. They form fleeting unions, perform intricate contrapuntal ensembles and end, strikingly, balanced, arms outstretched. Dancemakers, especially its three distinctive women, performed everything with the direct simplicity of style which has become an enviable hallmark of the company.

MICHAEL CRABB



Lee Choreography Award

Mauryne Allan, founder of Mountain Dance Theatre in Burnaby, BC, was announced as the winner of the first Clifford

E. Lee Choreography Award on March 31. The award, worth \$2,500 and up to an equal amount in expenses, is administered and operated by the Banff Centre school of fine arts. Unlike the Chalmers Award, which is a straight cash grant, the Lee Award brings its recipient to Banff to set a new work on the summer school students for performance in the August festival.

Mauryne Allan's successful proposal is for a modern dance work using the 'Spring' section of Vivaldi's *The Seasons*. She has used music by Vivaldi in two earlier works. It will involve at least 10 dancers, more than Allan has had at her disposal in Burnaby.

Heinz Mannigel, ballet master of the Dutch National Ballet, will be teaching at Banff this summer and his experience is one of the many unusual features of the Lee Award that will be available to Mauryne Allan. She will have the Canadian Chamber Orchestra to play her Vivaldi.

Next year, the award is being increased by \$500 and the restriction on length, imposed in the terms of this year's competition has been abandoned.

As a point of interest, Mauryne Allan's judges were Brian Macdonald, Arnold Spohr and Peter Randazzo.

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Ballet Ys

St. Paul's Centre
Toronto

17-18 January 1978

George Balanchine once said: 'Mr Ashton and I may make bad ballets, but we never make incompetent ballets.' Unfortunately for the credibility of Ballet Ys, the same cannot be said for Gloria Grant and Gail Benn, the powers – as artistic director and ballet mistress, respectively – behind this small chamber ballet troupe. During the company's Toronto season in January, Grant and Benn each offered us a ballet that rivalled the other in incompetence, not to mention poverty of imagination and limited vision.

To be fair, Grant's idea to base a ballet on surrealist writer Fernando Arrabal's *Music on the Battlefield* was not without some originality and a sense of what is conceivable, but her realization of the idea was rendered in such a sophomoric way, unlike high school attempts to stage *The Bald Soprano* that crop up every year at the Simpson's Drama Festival competitions, that one began to wonder if the idea had been hers to begin with.

The story (so-to-speak) concerns a silly, middle bourgeois couple who surprise their soldier son in the middle of heavy battle with picnic basket, parasol, and victrola. What a piece of nonsense that requires a light, absurdist's touch, but Grant has staged it as though it were an old vaudeville routine. Even as dance-vaudeville though, she hasn't let the steps do any of the work of characterization; it's the father's paunch that declares him a father and not anything else dances. The classical dancing assumes the status it used to have in Broadway musicals of the 1940s like *Make Mine Manhattan* as a backup for the lead comic. Her *développés à la seconde* are nothing but tokens.

Although jazz dancing is more within Grant's range as a choreographer, the jazz and show dance elements seem even more incongruous, including one long section of jazz dancing at the end that celebrates, I think, the détente between soldier son and member of the enemy; it has more to do with *The Music Man* than with Arrabal. A repetitive score by one John Lang and a confusing sense of period merely confirms that impression.

Well, incompetent as Grant's *Picnic* was, it ranked like a *chef d'oeuvre* beside *All the World's Shame*, Gail Benn's ballet to the music of David Fanshawe, Janis Joplin, and André Gagnon. It's not a work that can warrant much critical comment. Suffice it to say that its attempt to mirror the evolution of female consciousness in three vignettes entitled 'Frustration', 'Abuse', and 'Shame' is not only a trivialization of what women have been discovering about their oppression over the last decade, but also, in its use of ballet ('Frustration'), jazz ('Abuse'), and

modern (quasi – 'Shame') dancing, a deliberate attempt to find the most banal and clichéd movement possible. What was especially disturbing about Benn's work, however, was its abuse of the talent it had in a dancer such as Marnie Cooke (who, poignantly enough, danced the section 'Abuse') or even in poor, genial Bob McCollum.

On Marnie Cooke's shoulders lay the burden of salvaging the whole evening, a burden no performer should have to assume. The only dance on the programme that gave her any help was Anna Blewchamp's introspective duet, *Fata Morgana*. This work claims to reflect 'the way in which preconceptions, expectations and illusions limit the development of human relationships' and there were things certainly – the blind palms, the surprising ebb and flow of energy and impetus, the tension like a killer's before he springs – that came close to what Blewchamp says she wants; but, too often, the introspection grew so private it made the dance totally inaccessible to the viewer.

David Hatch Walker's *Extasis* also benefited from Cooke's radiant presence in the principal role. A commanding, glamorous High Priestess of light, she reminded me at times – no credit to Walker – of Martha Graham's Hollywood Joan at the end of *Seraphic Dialogue* or at least of the Lady in White from *Diversion of Angels*. The ballet itself integrates classical and Graham dancing in a way that robs each of its distinctive power, but as an abstraction designed to portray the bliss of some pre-Lucifer state of existence, it was appropriately blissful, helped by a hypnotic oriental-sounding score by American-Armenian composer, Alan Hovhaness. And all the dancers – not just Cooke – looked especially appealing in Walker's white satin costumes.

The other work in Ballet Ys's season unfortunately didn't even have Cooke going for it. James Kudelka's *Sheet!* (with music by Virgil Thompson) proved once again that people are making far too much of his gifts as a choreographer just now. *Sheet!* is essentially a duet for a man (in red pyjama bottoms) and a woman (in the top, naturally, and clashing pink toe shoes) who express their domestic felicity by playing fancy-dancy games with a bedsheet (clashing blue); in one of these, the woman, holding the sheet above her head, is supported momentarily on point in plié while the man pulls taut on the sheet behind her, etc., etc. Sounds familiar? It was all so cute and self-conscious and *Fille-Mal-Gardée* my teeth started to ache and I wanted to take refuge under my seat. Kudelka should know better. The only thing these antics reveal in his favour is a basic familiarity with the vocabulary of classical ballet, a familiarity that neither Benn nor Grant seem to possess; but it's not enough to compensate for the wanton waste of intelligence *Sheet!* also reveals. Richard Sugar-

man and Kathleen Trick did as well as they could through their obvious embarrassment.

Toronto – no, Canada – needs a chamber ballet troupe to do the ballets, to reach the audiences the National Ballet cannot. With each performance, Ballet Ys is unfortunately proving that it's not that troupe and, as long as the artistic administration is headed by Grant and Benn, it never will be. More's the pity when there are good classical dancers about who would really thrive in a small troupe with a brave new repertoire, dancers who are not Giselle material; and choreographers – like Constantin Patsalas, for example – who need a forum where they won't be restricted by pressures to sell, by conservative boards, conservative audiences.

When you think of all the chances Ballet Ys has blown, it's hard to be charitable.

Well, we're looking to you now, Lois.

GRAHAM JACKSON

Contemporary Dancers

Leah Posluns Theatre

Toronto

9-12 March 1978

Converting literature into dance is a process fraught with perils, as many choreographers have learned to their cost. What works in one medium will not necessarily succeed in another. The idea, for example, of taking Anaïs Nin's *Spy In The House Of Love* and making it over into dance might seem foolhardy. Yet this is what Canadian-born singer Judith Lander and New York choreographer Lynne Taylor have managed to do with striking effect in *Spy*. It has already attracted critical praise abroad and has now become one of the most potent items in the intentionally diverse repertoire of Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers.

Like the novella, *Spy* examines the dangers of self-delusion and of the search for escape through fantasy. While denying her own identity in a series of torrid affairs with numerous lovers (all danced by Kenneth Lipitz), the central character Sabina (danced alternately by Shelley Ziebel and Rachel Browne) is lead finally to accept her own personality.

The movement is boldly drawn: dramatic, theatrical and direct. It works marvellously well with Judith Lander's words and music, performed on stage, live. Lander is impressive both to look at and to listen to. Her voice penetrates the soul with its ability to project every conceivable emotional state. It rasps, croons, soothes, bellows, whispers, soars, cries...It's an extraordinary instrument.

It says much for Judith Marcuse's choreographic talent that her *Re-Entry* could hold its own against a work as strong as *Spy*. Its springboard is a splendidly evocative collage of sounds made from a

Contemporary Dancers—*Spy*

tranquil base that is progressively bombarded by an assortment of everyday noise pollutants. Marcuse tells us her dance is about 'Private worlds and public worlds: small and large spaces. An exploration of the boundaries we cross daily.'

The programme note need not be taken too literally. As the six dancers break from the enormous pendant lassos which encircle them at the start of *Re-Entry*, they move into a world rich with visual images, of conflict, tension, despair, even of joy. Marcuse's own dancing is marked by a sense of vast energy contained within precise, immaculately executed and dynamically varied movements. It appears to rub off on her choreography with good results.

Two other works, recent additions to Contemporary Dancers' repertoire, did not fare so well against *Spy* and *Re-Entry*. Rachel Browne's *Just About Us* had much of the mournful yearning that characterizes Browne's choreography. Made for two dancers, an older and a younger woman, it was a dance dialogue in which the older woman appeared to be giving her young

friend heaps of worldly wisdom which the younger one did not seem wholly willing to accept.

Fred Mathews' *Lunaris*, ostensibly about the moon, turned out to be a battle between six dancers and the large aluminum-foil covered boomerangs which may well have represented lunar crescents. The dancers lost.

The abstract intentions of *Lunaris*, proclaimed in a puzzling programme note, were confused by the way Mathews deployed the three men and three women. It is hard to avoid a sense of human sexuality and communication, regardless of costuming, when men and women are carefully paired.

As a company, Contemporary Dancers were in fine form, embracing the problems of a stylistically diverse repertoire with sensitivity and care.

KEVIN SINGEN

Trackings

Young People's Theatre Centre
Toronto

18 April 1978

Grant Strate's *Trackings*, a dance in five parts for a cast of 35, was given its first performance in Toronto as a benefit for the Dance in Canada Association. The dancers were largely drawn from the York University dance department: students, graduates and faculty.

The choreography exhibited a strong interest in visual formations, a structural order apparent throughout the five parts. Its most innovative usage was in the first part, 'Territories' in which eighteen dancers each performed a short solo while the others crowded around and watched, sometimes executing a fragmented, brief sequence on the sidelines. A flocking and settling effect was created and a strong dynamic in the use of the space. At the end, all the dancers did their individual sequences simultaneously. I liked the device although the ending was flat in its predictability. Some of the dancers embroidered watching into a dramatic action with theatrical smiles and postures that were extraneous. Throughout *Trackings*, the spatial/visual interest in order was a focal point.

Strate has an eclectic vocabulary. Some of his movement is totally balletic not only in terms of steps but often in the use of the upper body and uplifted sense of presentation. But the vocabulary extends to a more 'modern' language — contractions, twists, turned-in stomps, touchings of the floor — which seemed idiosyncratic, not always because of the movements themselves but because of the way they were assembled into sequences, producing a peculiar sensation of smallness and redundancy. Most of the dances were too long and I reached that point when my interest gave way to that Will They Dance All Night Familiar Feeling.

The titles of the five parts: 'Territories', 'Circlings', 'Centres', 'Findings', and 'Chartings', suggested a journey, although this descriptive element was not a significant part of the whole work.

I wondered what the piece might have been without a student cast. I could be barking up the wrong tree, but I suspect that all those years of choreographing for students may have axed a few choreographic branches. Obviously, the technically limited student poses problems and challenges to a choreographer, but beyond that I caught a classroom feel to parts of the choreography — a 'combination in the centre: now we go across the floor' use of space.

It's impossible to consider individual performances. Suffice it to say, everyone worked hard. However, I will mention Norrey Drummond. There's a straightforward clarity in her bearing and movement that I really enjoyed.



Richard Rose designed the lighting capably and Michael Byron composed the score. Besides noticing that the tape did not carry the intimate wealth I've heard in his live music, I can't say much because I have a bad habit of ignoring the music while watching dance. Sometimes all that dancing keeps your ears looking too.

ELIZABETH CHITTY

Les Ballets Jazz

Roundabout Theatre

New York

February 1978

Back in the sixties, Twyla Tharp had already developed a slangy way with a classical technique—flinging a leg that we expected her to place, dropping into a step instead of perching on it; when she began to work to jazz music, her dance style, with its loose slipperiness and sudden biting wit, evoked the heyday of black vernacular jazz in the US. What she did was clearly high art, even radical art; it was ballet, it was jazz, and above all it was Tharp.

Les Ballets Jazz is building a style differently. The company is, of course, the property of two women, not one; and other choreographers have contributed to

the repertory. At this point, the ballet and the jazz look grafted together, eroding each others' strengths and exposing each others' weaknesses. Directors Eva von Gencsy and Genevieve Salbaing were reared in Europe in the ballet tradition. The jazz technique they've acquired is Broadway jazz (from Luigi, I'd guess, or Matt Mattox), which is itself a blend of modern dance and jazz—muscular, aggressive, frontally oriented. You learn not to slur on Broadway, to make your dancing loud and clear. Rhythms can be tricky, but not subtle; the audience must be given positions to rest their eyes on.

So whether the dancers in Les Ballets Jazz jerk a hip to one side or whether a woman achieves a supported attitude with the help of a partner, the dancing seems to be more about posing and gesturing than anything else. And little flicks of the hand or head break the line with an ornateness or a 'so there!' petulance. No wonder the dancers have trouble connecting things fluidly or shaping phrases; the dancing doesn't seem to come from a strong centre.

The most 'serious' dance piece on the program I saw, von Gencsy's *Up There ... Souls Dance Undressed Together*, suffered from this lack of a centre—on the part of the dancers and the choreographer. Whether dancers in this six-movement

ballet were embracing or sailing through the air or morosely writhing their hips and shoulders or flashing sharp, vibrant gestures at the audience, they couldn't quite make you feel the dance logic that informed sections with names like 'Mysteries', 'Sun Games', 'Fire'—what made them different from each other, what bound them together. So while the dance seemed attractive, easy on the eyes, it didn't—especially coming at the end of a very long program—draw you behind its surface.

One of the ingredients of the company style which audiences like better than I do is its possibility for cuteness. You get a small dose of this in the opening demonstration when one girl (and they definitely encourage you to think of them as 'boys' and 'girls', rather than men and women) pretends to arrive late, and the others stare at her, and she does a deft little pantomime of shrugs and apologetic looks, and the audience laughs. At one point, in Norbert Vesak's *Gershwin Song Book*, dancers cross the stage in stiff, cartoon walks, bristling with exaggerated pique or haughtiness; in another section, a couple has an argument (stalking around and making placating hand gestures or renunciatory arms-folding): she's mad at him, he wishes she weren't; suddenly for no apparent

reason, they reverse roles and bustle off still gesticulating.

Another of the elements inherent in the style is a clichéd sexiness. You know the kind: women rub their hips or thighs while staring at the audience, or lift their shoulders in a feline way, or follow a hip-twitch with a provocative stare. Richard Jones's *Salute to Duke* isn't even meant to be about sexuality; it's just a suite of dances to Ellington music. Nevertheless, the 'technique' is loaded with messages, and I find it as odd to see it used with purported neutrality as I do to see an ecstatic Graham contraction used simply as beat one of somebody's four-count phrase. Jones is an American and a black man; his piece *moved*, but it suffered from square rhythms and predictable groupings.

I thought that Nicole Vachon and Dennis Michaelson performed Lynn Taylor's *Diary* excellently; but this dance has always struck me as unremittingly melodramatic and self-pitying. Judith Lander, in her torchy, stream-of-nostalgia singing, can get away with a lot of sentiment that only seems corny when translated into dance terms. And the dancing itself is all strained, unhappy gestures or huge foldings and unfoldings of the body, whether it's danced to a monologue about a beloved vocal teacher or one about a troubled lover.

This all sounds very bad-tempered, so I'd better say that there's a certain charm, almost a naive charm about the dancing. The dancers—not all terribly skilled—don't dig into the movement, they attack it lightly, sweetly. They do display the movement to the audience, but without the hard, knowing verve of Broadway dancers. Their lack of weight is, of course, a liability, but it can also be an asset. The light touch, the easy attack is an aspect of jazz that Broadway, for the most part, chooses to ignore these days.

Vesak's *Gershwin Song Book* brought out this quality most adroitly. Dancing happily in bright party clothes to the light-fingered, supple music, the dancers projected an innocent sophistication. The women's heeled shoes pattered airily over the floor, their skirts swirled silkily around them. They came and went, paired off and separated, and when they weren't doing the cute acting-up, they danced with more fluidity than they displayed during the other dances.

So, ballet with a bit of a swing, jazz with a soft touch — I don't know what it all adds up to. Certainly not the 'freedom' or 'explosiveness' the press agents urge us to see, but on the other hand, not vulgarity or violence. That's something.

DEBORAH JOWITT

(Deborah Jowitt writes for the *Village Voice*. A collection of her reviews, *Dance Beat*, was published in 1977. See *Dance in Canada*, number 13.)



Lynn Seymour in *Mayerling*

The Royal Ballet

Royal Opera House
Covent Garden
London
February 1978

Mayerling is a place not far from Vienna. For many years it was a popular country retreat for the court of the Austro-Hungarian Emperor, Franz Joseph. Then, in the winter of 1889 two shots rent the peaceful atmosphere. Crown Prince Rudolf and Baroness Mary Vetsera, his mistress, lay dead — victims of their own demented passions. The tragedy of their suicide supplies the theme for Kenneth MacMillan's latest three-act work for the Royal Ballet, *Mayerling*.

I saw *Mayerling* shortly after its premiere at the end of February. It was the first night for the third cast. My assumption

was that good choreography would be evident whether performed by stars or just by good dancers. Stephen Jefferies performed Rudolf and Alfreda Thorogood Mary Vetsera. Both are fine dancers.

The huge plush curtain at Covent Garden, thick gold fringe gleaming, began to rise at the end of an overture of Liszt music arranged by John Lanchbery. It revealed a bleak and dark courtyard, sided by the grey shapes of dimly seen buildings. A priest stands to one side, his white shawl contrasting with the enveloping blackness. A coffin lies to the other side. Four pall-bearers, stooped by the weight of their unhappy burden, walk to an open grave and lower the coffin into the dank soil. The priest solemnly mimes the last rites and leaves. One mourner remains to lean in despair on the wheel of a coach; two more stand at the foot of the grave, black umbrellas sheltering their black figures, all

...into the night. The scene looks as if it were taken from some haunting surrealist movie.

The setting shifts and we are swept backward in time, back to Crown Prince Rudolf's wedding ball. It is an odd picture. Elegantly dressed aristocrats dance in interesting patterns to the strains of Wagner's *Soirées de Vienne*. To either side of the remarkably ungrand ballroom hang long beige curtains on thick rods, the invention of designer Nicholas Georgiadis. They look like the curtains used to partition off hospital beds and supplied the background scenery throughout the ballet. At the back of the stage, rising in pyramid form, are two sets of flimsy stainless-steel stairs. Five dummy hussars, halberds in hand, ascend either side and dance to their own peculiar rhythms whenever someone steps on the base. Already in this first scene Rudolf begins to display his demonic nature, admirably expressed in the twisting over-bound movements of his dance. Unhappy with a bride forced upon him he dances with other women. Unhappy with his physical impotence he listens in secret to the treacherous counsel of four sinister separatist Hungarians.

Two scenes later Rudolf is alone in his chamber with his wife. The royal coat-of-arms stands centre-back, surmounted by a large golden crown. An antique green desk sits obliquely to the right side. Rudolf terrorizes his young wife (danced with touching frailty by Louise Nunn), with a pistol. She tries desperately to win his affections in a devastatingly passionate pas de deux. The young wife relentlessly flings herself around Rudolf's neck and into his arms; Rudolf swings and tosses her about with cold indifference punctuated by cruel malice. For a few brief instants he shows sympathy; he knows that it is not his wife but his own tormented soul that drives him to madness.

Five scenes further on — it could be ten years later or ten days — Rudolf meets Mary Vetsera for the first time in his apartments. They make love in a surging pas de deux of passion, an exchange of explosive energies touched here and there by a moment of tenderness. However, both are driven by burning needs that can never be satisfied. The gun appears again, this time in Mary's hand.

Another four scenes later we are back where it all began. A woman's limp body is placed into a plain wooden coffin and the lid is put in place. A man leans on a coach wheel. Two dark figures stand in macabre silence beneath umbrellas.

The ending is an extremely personal, essentially private ballet, engulfing the spectator to the horrible depths of Rudolf's madness. He was the central focus around which all else revolved, appearing in every scene but one. The ballet seemed to emanate from his mind in scenes constructed from the intense, crystalline images of a

madman's memories. This power and clarity of image were absorbing. It would not have mattered if the scenes had been shuffled and presented in chance order; each was isolated by the completeness of the image it presented. The temporal relationship between each scene was unimportant; the ballet was timeless. It was fitting that it finished as it began.

JOHN CHAPMAN

Margie Gillis and Leslie Dillingham

Theatre of the Open Eye
New York
20-22 January 1978

Margie Gillis is a Canadian dancer presently in New York on a nine-month Canada Council grant. Leslie Dillingham has danced in Canada with Linda Rabin and Contemporary Dancers. The two women shared a program of solos on the weekend of what New Yorkers will long remember as 'the blizzard of '78'.

Gillis and Dillingham complement each other nicely. Both are fine dancers. Both approach choreography with characterization firmly in mind. Two of Dillingham's three solos were meditations on mythological characters. Two of Gillis' three works were visual interpretations of the verbal accompaniment. The program, in its entirety, amounted to little more than a gallery of character portraits. Perhaps that's enough. It depends on your aesthetic. It left me hungering for something more substantial, either intellectually or kinetically. Each of the works were competently made. Both women have craftsmanship. But they remain safe, undaring, firmly entrenched in a middle-of-the-road sensibility.

Gillis' *Clown* is a sweetly effusive homage to the immortal clown-mime and his bag of ingratiating tricks: pratfalls, dragging imaginary heavy objects, jousting with invisible walls, arguing with hands that have their own obstinate wills, throwing pouting temper tantrums over the whimsical reliability of a warm spotlight. Gillis is very animated and very good at what she does. *Mercy* is set to Canadian poet/songwriter Leonard Cohen's *Sisters of Mercy* and a song by Loggins & Messina about a free-flowing river. The spirituality and carnality of the first part of the dance is as intriguingly ambiguous as Cohen's seductive metaphysics. The second part matched the freedom proclaimed in the lyrics with the free flow of energy through Gillis' body, and a (deceptively) wanton, even joyfully reckless use of the space. The piece culminates in an exciting series of falls and plummets and abrupt changes of direction. *Glacier* is set to a poem by Jack Udashkin, which Gillis recites in a tremendously stylized, tremendously drama-

tic fashion while dancing. 'The stars fall single file from your eyes' has Gillis' splayed hands dropping earthward. 'I stumble from my dream' is accompanied by Gillis stumbling blindly and 'My mechanical limbs creak blindly in their grooves'...etcetera. Gillis dances this work bare-chested, and I'm not sure quite why.

Dillingham's *Pallas* begins with a woman standing in an overcoat and jeans, followed by a blackout, followed by Pallas Athena (it couldn't be Pallas, who died as a child) clad in gold lamé and helmet. Dillingham stands nine feet tall (atop a stool or box?) and never moves from one spot. It's a dance about shapes, tensions, and, primarily, about a forbidding presence. The costume exposes Dillingham nude in profile. In *Pan*, she partially takes on the characteristics of that figure, but may simply be possessed by him. She covers her genitals and buttocks with her hands, tries to make her legs stop dancing. The work ends with her turning endlessly in a light-speckled glade. 'Fearing Acceptance' is an excerpt from her evening-long dance-theatre work, *Hereafter*. She's dressed in voluminous, oversized shirt and pants of translucent material. She seems trapped by the costume and whips her hands and kicks her feet in an effort to free herself of it. It's a dance of frustration, impotence, imprisonment and attraction, punctuated by prettily windmilling arms, attractive one-legged turns and balances which I take to be representative of a recurring acceptance of whatever it is she's resisting.

The concert drew a respectable sized audience, despite the snow-clogged streets and sidewalks and the general inaccessibility of the East Side (the New York 'dance belt' is a West Side phenomenon), and I noticed several prominent dancers, teachers and choreographers in the audience.

ROBERT J. PIERCE

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Noticeboard

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In Canada mime artists have been working separately and independently, for the most part unaware of the work of their fellows throughout Canada. But this June an opportunity to influence and be influenced by other mime artists is being offered: The First Canadian Festival of Mime.

Two major projects will be carried out June 5 - 11 at Toronto Free Theatre. The first project is the National Conference of Mime Artists which will gather together all the professional mime artists in Canada to participate in discussion groups, seminars, mime and mime technique classes. Discussion topics include: regional reports on the state of mime in Canada, Funding a Mime Company, Developing an Audience for Mime, Uses of Mime in Schools. Classes will be held in mask-making, Decroux and Maizeau techniques, mime and dance, clown performing, the voice and the mime, and others. Festival directors Naomi Tyrrell, Barry Karp, Paul Harvey, Fred Louthard and Mark Breslin believe the Conference will have a synergistic effect on the participants that will be carried away to all parts of Canada.

The second project is the Canadian Mime Showcase, a week-long performance series presenting 24 mime companies from British Columbia to Nova Scotia. The Mime Showcase has a dual mission: to entertain as well as educate audiences in the art of mime; and to give the artists a chance to see each other's work and to study diverse styles of mime being performed throughout Canada.

The Canada Council announced early this year a clarification of its priorities for funding dance organizations. Classical and modern dance, as well as what might loosely be called 'experimental', will have priority over other forms, given the Council's severe budget restraints, rising operating costs for the companies the Council now supports, the current rate of inflation, and the ever-increasing number of promising young companies that do not at the moment receive Council support.

Competing for the scarce funds available to the growing number of dance companies



Paul Gaulin Mime Theatre—Travelling

are dance forms such as jazz, ice-dancing, folk (including Spanish and East Indian), tap and other forms, some of which may receive funding if budgetary restrictions are eased in the future. In 1976-77, the Council's grants to 24 dance companies and organizations falling within these guidelines totalled \$3.5 million.

The Canada Council has enlarged its Guest Teachers programme in dance to include payment for professional accompanists. The extended regulations provide grants to dance schools and organizations wishing to invite professional teachers and accompanists to work in their community and is directed mainly toward dance organizations beyond the large urban centres.

On July 22, BBC Television will film *The Royal Ballet from the Royal Opera House* for broadcast live in the United Kingdom and the USA. This is the first time in the history of the company that a complete performance will have been transmitted live to America and for this occasion a special programme will be given. It will consist of *The Firebird*, *Elite Syncopations* and a series of divertissements which include the first public performance of Sir Frederick Ashton's trio to music by Percy Grainger, *Tweedledum and Tweedledee*.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Vancouver Ballet Society received a \$3,000 grant from the Cultural Services Branch, Ministry of Recreation and Conservation to conduct a survey on the status

of ballet and contemporary dance in British Columbia. Richard Marcuse has been appointed to conduct the independent survey assisted by the Dance Advisory Committee of the BC Arts Board to determine specific areas of concern.

The survey will include an inventory of professional and semi-professional dancers, dance companies, choreographers and allied professions, audience potential, space and facilities, municipal, provincial and federal government participation and the future of dance in the province. The final report and recommendations are to be presented at the Dance in Canada Conference this summer. Mr. Marcuse, an experienced dance researcher, is currently working on two papers: *Politics of Dance*, and *The Career Cycle of the Professional Dancer*. He is also completing a book *The Professional Dancer: A Study in Culture and Counter Culture*.

The Vancouver Ballet Society's annual Spring Ballet Seminar was taught this year by David Moroni, principal of the professional school and associate director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. A total of 23 senior ballet students from communities throughout the province were awarded Vancouver Ballet Society scholarships in order to attend.

The Paula Ross Dancers performed to capacity audiences during a March season in their studio-theatre. The two week tour of Vancouver Island in April was also well received.

The sixth annual Dance in Canada Conference, to be held in Vancouver August 13-17, promises to be of interest to both dance professionals and the general public. It will encompass three basic areas: A Dancer's Stream, an Administrator's Stream and an Educator's Stream. Among the sessions in the Dancer's Stream are movement and contact improvisation, technique classes, video and dance, financial and physical survival, concepts of composition. Of interest to the general public will be seminars on looking at dance, on Alexander technique and one for parents of young dancers. The Administrator's Stream focuses on such areas as publicity and audience development, tour planning, fundraising, government policies and dance festivals. Topics included in the Educator's Stream are: children's dance, school programming, accreditation for schools, studio teaching methods and the presentation of academic papers.

Master classes, seminars and workshops will be held each day on the campus of the University of British Columbia. Evening performances by a wide range of Canadian

companies and solo artists will be at the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse and the Vancouver East Cultural Centre.

Details of scheduling, guest lecturers, seminar topics and registration information are available from conference headquarters. Write: Catherine Lee, Conference Co-ordinator, 572 Beatty Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 2L3 (604) 669-2800.

ALBERTA

The Alberta Contemporary Dance Theatre is in search of a new artistic director. Marian Sarach resigned late in February after a series of 'managerial problems', but the company has continued with its plans under the interim directorship of one of its dancers - Brian Hayes.

In March, company members presented their own choreography in an informal workshop from which items were selected for a concert at the Citadel Theatre April 26 - 29.

The company's new manager is Keith Hope who comes to them with a background in documentary film production and other artistic enterprises.

The Alberta Ballet Company in cooperation with Red Deer College, presented a series of 25 workshops, March 7-15. The series was of broad scope including workshops in theatre production,

theatre management, master classes in ballet, modern, jazz, folk and mime, and workshops dealing with gymnastics and dance therapy. A performance of the company's *Alice in Wonderland*, under the artistic direction of Brydon Paige, was presented midway through the series. With the co-operation of area schools, over 8,100 students were able to attend the company's workshops and performances.

MANITOBA

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet's final programme of the season featured three Winnipeg premieres, including the two of Oscar Araiz, *Festival* and *Women*, and George Balanchine's *Glinka Pas de Trois*. The fourth work on the programme was John Butler's *Sebastian*, last performed in Winnipeg in 1974.

Bonnie Wycoff will be on leave from the company to dance with the Joffrey Ballet during its next fall season. Salvatore Aiello choreographed the Manitoba Theatre Centre production of *Royal Hunt of the Sun* in April. Former RWB principal Terry Thomas, who left the company to run a dance school in Ames, Iowa, has now become Director of the Honolulu Ballet.

This past season the company has employed an unusual fundraising campaign for the professional programme of its school - 'Pass the Slipper'. David

Moroni makes an appeal from the stage while members of the RWB Women's Committee pass actual ballet slippers around the audience!

ONTARIO

The Choreographic Seminar, a project that has been in the planning stages for two years, will come to fruition this June. The seminar, to be held at York University, is modelled partially after those held by the Gulbenkian Foundation and seeks to provide a stimulating and non-competitive environment in which choreographers and composers can experiment and create. The director of the seminar is Robert Cohan (Artistic Director, London Contemporary Dance Theatre), musical directors are Adam Gatehouse (Ballet Rambert) and John Herbert McDowell (Paul Taylor Dance Company). The intensive month-long seminar will bring together six choreographers, six composers, eight musicians, twelve professional dancers and twelve student dancers from across Canada. All participants must live in residence at York and will work six days a week, 12 hours a day in the studios and facilities of the dance and music departments.

Ever since she retired from dancing in 1969 Lois Smith has wanted to form her



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Maritime Contemporary Dance Company — Landscape

...a ballet company. The benefit held April 11 at Toronto's Old Firehall restaurant brought her approximately \$7,000 closer to launching **The Dance Company of Ontario**. Smith intends to hire a company of eight — three boys and five girls — for the first season. A children's show is planned for November to be followed by a tour early in 1979. Choreographers **Anthony Tudor** and **Brian Macdonald** have shown interest and Smith's former partner **David Adams** will be ballet master.

Gnanjali, talented former student of **Meraka Thakkar**, gave her first New York performance of **Bharatha Natyam** at the **Ananda Yoga Vedanta Centre**, April 29. **Gnanjali** made her debut as a solo artist July 1977 in Toronto and has performed in various Canadian Cities since then.

QUEBEC

Contact Improvisation has long been a healthy part of the dance scene in Vancouver. Now it has found an equally receptive home in Montreal. **Catpoto** is a group of four Montreal women, **Gurney Bolster**, **Dena Davida**, **Carol Harwood** and **Evelyn Ginsburg**, who have been working together since October 1977 with contact improvisation and other dance/movement forms. They teach and perform in Montreal and Quebec City.

Last February **Catpoto** sponsored a performance/workshop by three members of **Mangrove**, the San Francisco-based men's dance collective. As well as the open performances and workshops, **Mangrove** gave two workshops for men only exploring the process of physical communication, flow and spontaneity that is Contact.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Maritime Contemporary Dance Company, founded as UNB Dance Theatre has

been performing regularly in the Maritimes since 1974. The group comprises 12 dancers and performs a variety of works choreographed by **Nenagh Leigh** and **Kathleen Driscoll**. March 17 and 18 they performed a programme including **Nenagh Leigh's The Royal Fireworks Suite**, at The Playhouse, Fredericton.

NOVA SCOTIA

The Halifax Dance Co-op has performed numerous noonhour performances this winter at Studio I, Dalhousie Arts Centre, the Nova Scotia Art Gallery and other Halifax art galleries. In February the company hosted a Contact Improvisation workshop and performance. They are currently presenting a series of lecture demonstrations for the Halifax school system, and are preparing for a performance June 2 at the Dunn Theatre, Dalhousie Arts Centre.

Sekai and Company was founded in Halifax in October 1977 shortly after **Sekai's** arrival from Holland. Originally working out of a youth centre known as **Odin's Eye**, the company has given several presentations of choreography by **Sekai** and in collaboration with artists of other disciplines. In May the company premiered **Horse Magick Horse**.

Members of the company are **Dianne Campbell**, **Sheilagh Hunt**, **Jacqueline de Mestral**, **Ella Pelrin**, **Bobbi Sellner**, **Junie West** and **Sekai** (formerly known as **Blaine Vany**).

Letter to the Editor

Dear Dance in Canada,
I read with consternation **Lauretta Thistle's** article 'Troubled Decades' in your Spring '78 issue. Having been a member of **Les Grands Ballets Canadiens** for most of those 'troubled' years (I'm in my seventeenth season) I feel compelled to correct some of Ms. Thistle's misconceptions.

To say that **Ludmilla Chiriaeff** is not interested in 'things Canadian' is a gross insult — and especially so when she has built this company with proportionately less help from the Canada Council than the other ballet companies have received. She has spent the last several years creating a school of which the Canadian products are appearing slowly but surely with only token proffers of help from the Canada Council.

Our company under her direction and since then has given many premieres of Canadian works — for instance the evening devoted to the memory of **Pierre Mercure** which included premieres by **MacDonald**, **Nault**, **Paige** and a rare creation by **Chiriaeff**.

How Canadian can you get? Only **Balanchine** broke the lineup with **Concerto Barocco** donated in gratitude for **Mercure's** work as a television producer. It was a true celebration of a Canadian Artist in which I was proud to take part as a new Canadian.

Fernand Nault is after all a Canadian and has been honored by the government for his contributions to the nation's culture. **Carmina Burana** and **Tommy** did a great work in opening the Canadian public's mind to the beauty of lyric theatre. I'm sure the majority of the **Tommy** audience had never seen ballet before and hopefully it continued to come to the theatre afterwards. If we were forced to dance **Tommy** for so long, economic necessity as well as public demand was responsible. It got us through some bad times. By the way, no one to my knowledge 'rebelled' against our trip to Paris with **Tommy** and **Ceremony**; on the contrary we were thrilled to return to that beautiful city. Only one member didn't come because he feared trans-oceanic flights. Our first trip to Europe was not a 'critical disaster'. **Catulli Carmina** won Premier Prix of the University of the Dance and contrary to Ms. Thistle's statement of predominance by **Nault** and **Chiriaeff**, our repertory on that tour was comprised of ballets by **Balanchine**, **Butler**, **Kuch**, **Paige** and **Nault** and nothing at all by **Madame Chiriaeff**.

As for our interpretation of our treasured **Balanchine** repertory, Mr. **Balanchine** sends his assistant, **Victoria**

Simon, to stage these works and we would not have been allowed to dance them if we hadn't met her very high standards. Ms. Thistle herself reviewing *Serenade* in the Ottawa Citizen (May 15, 1975) complimented our dancers for going beyond the steps and conveying the 'warmth' – and 'essential graciousness of Balanchine'.

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, like every company, has periodic changeover of dancers. I myself left for one season when I danced in Paris and Germany, but I came home because the grass was *not* greener and in effect the pasturage on Les Grands Ballets Canadiens' side of the fence was much healthier than the glamorous but badly organized European dance scene. I must point out that Mannie Rowe left the company because he had an offer from Atlanta to take direction of a small company and he had long wanted to change careers – Maniya Barredo, his wife, left to accompany him – as Ms. Thistle has noticed she has since returned as guest artist. Sonia Vartanian, Alexandre Bélin and David La Hay have all returned after having left the company for four or five months. I think they had the same experience I had in other pastures. I may also draw attention to the fact that while the so-called 'Palace Revolution' was taking place the company was dancing brilliantly to critical acclaim all over South America raising Canada's cultural image.

In effect the personal atmosphere in Les Grand Ballets Canadiens is more familial than I have found in any other company I have worked with either as a guest or member – which is why I am defending it.

Surely Canada not only has room for us but needs the three companies as much as our parliamentary system needs more than one party. I wonder what a comparison between the three would reveal as to the number of Canadian premieres?

I hope Les Grand Ballets Canadiens will still be around for a twenty-fifth anniversary despite such negative articles from a journal supposedly devoted to encouraging the dance in Canada.

Yours

Vincent Warren

Lauretta Thistle comments:

'Sorry about the mistake in the rep taken to Europe in 1969, but some of the British reviews were very acrid. As for Balanchine, the quality of the performance varies from year to year, depending on the personnel of the company. As for French-Canadian content, there's been a change in the political climate in Quebec, and Les GBC has trimmed its sails accordingly.'

Dance at a Glance

Dance-at-a-Glance is a new advertising feature in Dance in Canada Magazine. Its aim is to provide our national and international readership with a quick guide to resources in dance which are available throughout Canada. To arrange your listing in the Dance-at-a-Glance section, just write or phone:

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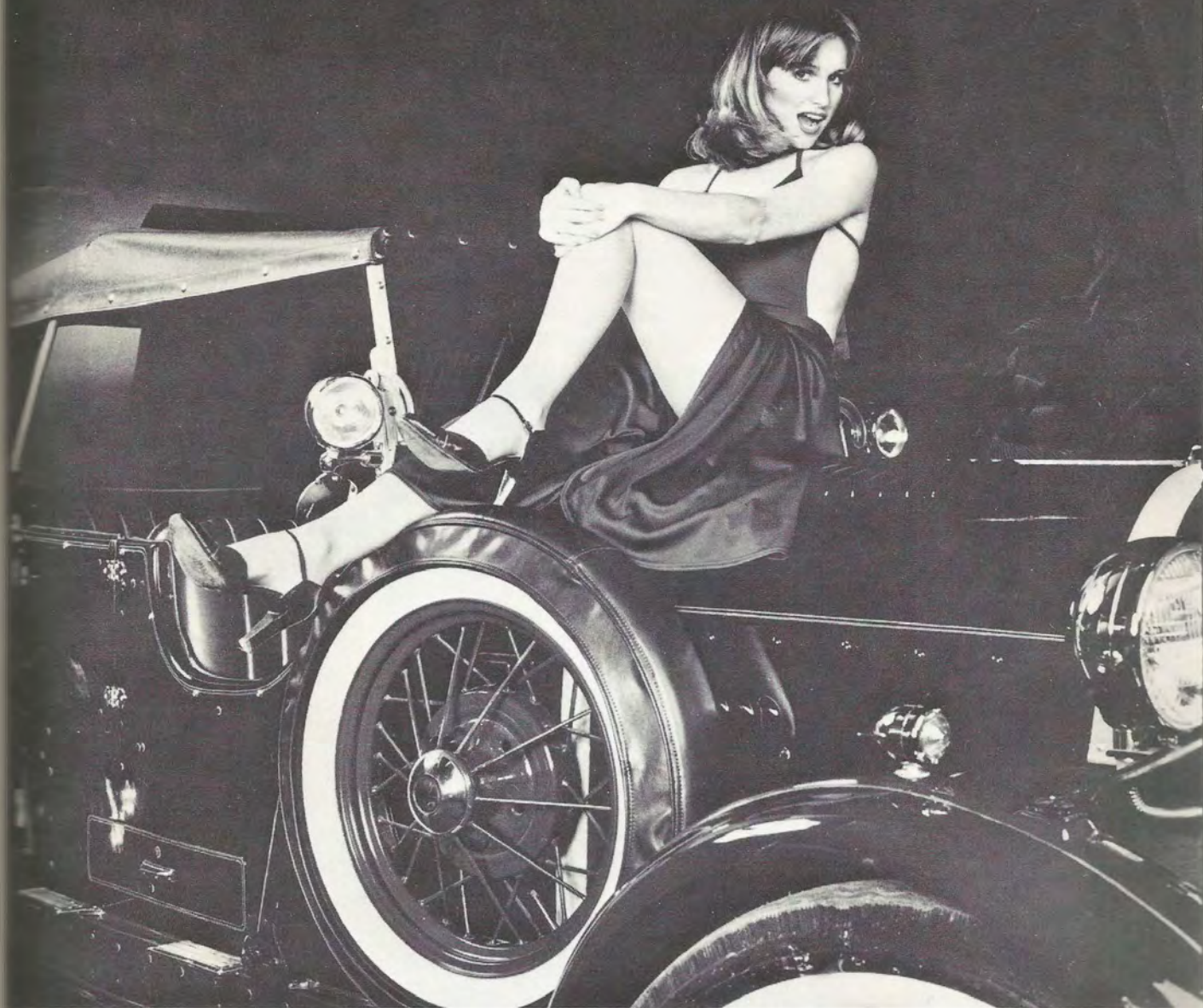
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Our mistake

Graham Jackson tells us he really does know the difference between ballet and Graham technique! In his review of Toronto Dance Theatre (issue No. 15) a passage from Mr. Jackson's comments on *Recital* was omitted. The full sentence should have read: 'Juxtaposed with his own favourite motifs – the abrupt, jack-in-the-box jumps, the flexed wrists and ankles, the gliding hop-run combinations – the ballet technique looks especially fey. But, at the same time, Randazzo's own technique (variations on Martha Graham's) looks especially eccentric, even slightly surrealistic.' Apologies to Graham Jackson... even to Peter Randazzo.

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