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Dance in Canada

ISSUE NUMBER 21
FALL 1979 AUTOMNE

COVER

Menaka Thakker makes traditional Indian obeisance to the gods before beginning to dance.

See: *The World of Indian Dance*.

CREDITS

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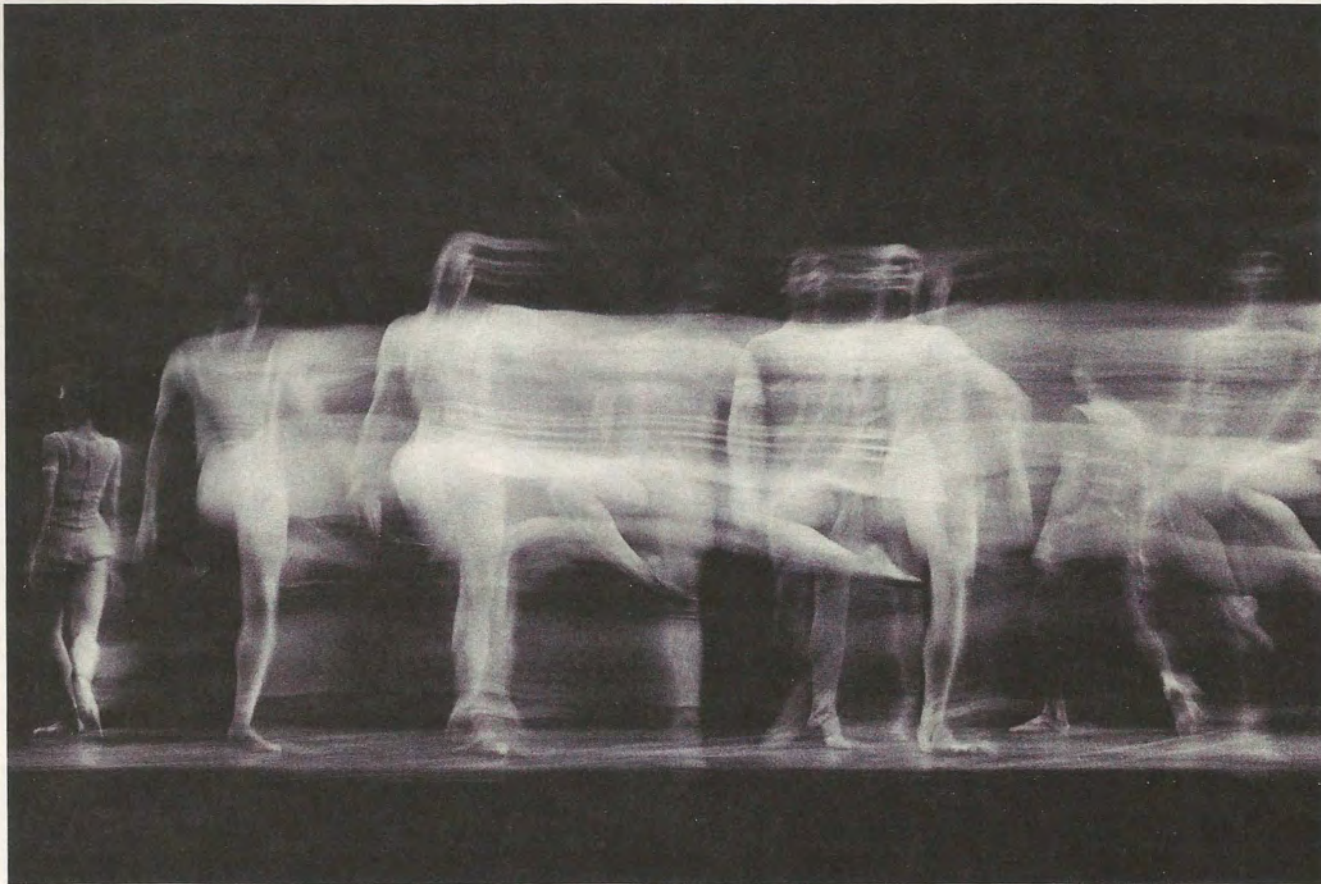
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Rosemary Jeanes

The World of Indian Dance:

1

A Living Tradition: Myth to Stone to Stage

On the seashore of endless worlds
children meet with shouts and dances

Rabindranath Tagore, 1913

You may wonder what attraction the dance of India could have for a Canadian audience or for a dancer such as myself fresh from a five-year stint with the National Ballet. My own interest was stirred by a short visit to India between ballet seasons in 1970. I stayed with a Canadian friend who was studying with the great lady of Indian dance, Balasaraswati. However, it was not until 1973 that my awakened curiosity could be further satisfied and that I was able to devote a year to learning one of the classical styles.

The beauty of Indian dance is easily apparent to even uninitiated audiences. Yet behind the intricate technique and expressive mime lies a 2,000-year tradition and a complex culture. In India, religion and myth are integral to the dance, shedding light on its origins and breathing life into its dramatic substance. In India one is struck by the way that dance is inextricably linked to the other arts. As in western dance, music is given visual form in movement but, in addition, the interpretation of poetic song comes to the fore in every performance. Beyond the limits of the stage, sculpture draws on and contributes to the dance tradition. The Indians possess a highly evolved system of aesthetics which is as concerned with the development of the spectator and his appreciation as it is with the dancer's artistry.

Looking more deeply into the dance of another country not only enhances one's enjoyment of it in performance, but also helps one approach one's own culture with fresh eyes and new understanding.

Śiva: Lord of Dance

The most representative and auspicious symbol of Indian dance is the god Śiva in his form, Naṭarāja, the Lord of the Dance. Legend tells that he performed his dance as the manifestation of primal rhythmic energy at the centre of the universe, in the golden hall of Chidambaram. In the South Indian town of that name, the temple dedicated to Naṭarāja stands to this day. This cosmic dance of Śiva inspired many interpretations in bronze statuary. The four-armed god is represented crushing the demon, Muylaka, with his foot, as he dances on a lotus pedestal from which springs a circle of fire, (see drawing). The symbolism is evocative and deeply significant to the Hindu mind. The drum in the upper right hand represents creation; the uplifted right hand stands for hope and the protection of all beings; destruction proceeds from the fire held in the extended left hand; the fourth hand points to the raised foot and symbolizes release from toil for the struggling spirit. Śiva Naṭarāja is a kind of patron saint for dancers. His image graces the stage in many classical dance performances, providing a model of the ultimate dance, the activity of god.

Mythic Origins and Sources

From the dance of the god we move to the human realm where dance is considered a gift from the gods, bestowed for the benefit of all people. A stage Bharata is credited with



Siva: Lord of the Dance

having written the most important source for Indian dance approximately 2,000 years ago, the *Nāṭya Śāstra*. The text begins with the story of the origin of drama. There was once an age when evil began to spread in the world and people found their happiness mixed with sorrow. So the gods asked Brahmā, the creator, to invent a diversion that would bring pleasure to the eyes and ears of all people. Brahmā went into a deep trance and meditated on the essence of the four *Vedas*, the Hindu scriptures. He drew words, gestures, music and sentiments respectively from each *Veda*, and fashioned a fifth on the drama, called *Nāṭya*, which would be conducive to duty, promote wealth and provide guidance. The sage Bharata and his sons became the guardians and propagators of the art.

Dance, in Indian culture, is integral to drama; the word *nāṭya* is derived from the Sanskrit verb *naṭ*, meaning 'dance'. All the movements of the dance are codified in the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, from the 108 basic units of movement called *karaṇas* and the different types of gait, to the intricate hand gestures and subtle eye movements. It was only in the latter half of the 19th century that a manuscript of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* came to life again. Since then it has had enormous impact on the rejuvenation of the dance and on dance scholarship.

The *Nāṭya Śāstra*, so detailed and comprehensive in its treatment of all aspects of movement technique, served as the model for later dance manuals. One of these, the *Abhinaya Darpaṇa*, or 'Mirror of Gesture', is used as a reference by the Bharata Natyam style. Along with technical aspects it includes some intriguing items such as the qualifications and disqualifications of a dancing girl. A dancer should be:

slender bodied, beautiful, young, with full round breasts, self-confident, witty, pleasing, knowing well when to begin (a dance) and when to stop, having large eyes, able to perform in accompaniment of vocal and instrumental music and to observe the proper time beats, having splendid dresses and possessing a happy countenance.

Undesirable qualities include:
white specks in the eyeballs, scanty hair, thick lips or

pendant breasts, and women who are either very fat or very thin, very tall or very short, who are hunch-backed or have no voice.

As we see, western ballet schools are not alone in their rigorous selection criteria!

Music and Sculpture

The interrelationship of all the arts is a basic premise of Indian aesthetics and must be explored if we are to understand the place of dance in Indian culture.

No Indian would consider dance possible without musical accompaniment, be it the folk instruments used for festivals or the structurally complex classical music. The latter provides both the rhythmic patterns and the song for the dancer to interpret. Also the way in which the notes are selected and ordered in an Indian scale or *rāga* can be compared to the arrangement of the parts of the body in a dance pose. Both music and dance can choose different elements for emphasis, and can combine them in various ways in order to produce a particular mood or *bhāva*.

It is the musical composition which determines the dance composition. The two distinct aspects of classical dance mirror the musical structure. On the one hand, *abhinaya* or mimetic dance recreates the mood of the literary piece, the poem which is set to music. On the other hand *nṛtta* or pure dance is abstract movement which is set to purely melodic patterns in a given metrical cycle. Movement and music combine to communicate emotions and to evoke a mood that can be shared by performer and spectators.

Indian dance is distinguished by its intricate and graceful poses. These are the basis of a two-way exchange between dance and sculpture. The dancer provided the model for a profusion of sculptural figures which ornament temple facades throughout India. In time these sculptures became the source from which dancers drew inspiration to reconstruct a fading tradition. These sources for dance are rich. In the south Indian temple of Chidambaram, sacred to the Lord of the Dance, the postures of sculpted dance figures have been correlated with the 108 *karaṇas*, the basic dance movements. Inscriptions from the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, engraved in the stone, have contributed to the study of these figures in relation to the text. Dance halls are part of the temple compound in the eastern state of Orissa. Literally hundreds of figures of dancers and musicians decorate the columns and transmit the special qualities of that style across the centuries.

While in India I visited the most famous and beautiful temples and spent many hours studying these dancers in stone. By absorbing the qualities of the historical forms I was able to translate a growing understanding into the daily class with my teacher. The experience was somewhat reminiscent of the time I spent with ballet books as a child, developing an eye for the balletic sense of line.

Sculptor and dancer held similar conceptions of the human body. The canons of Indian art laid down strict rules for measurement and proportions in the analysis of the human figure; principles concerning the relationship between different parts of the body in space were shared with dance.

The point of beginning is the vertical median from which various parts of the body can be deflected. All poses,



Love

Wonder

Anger

both dance and sculptural, are aiming for the perfect balance, which can be maintained if there is the minimal possible deviation from the centre of gravity. Thus symmetrically balanced and spatially contained poses reflect a certain inner tranquility and are found most commonly in representations of gods in meditation. In Bharata Natyam, the dancer always begins and ends a performance in a balanced pose of stillness called *samabhaṅga*. However if this ultimate balance was maintained there would, of course, be no dance. So deviations from the median, which introduce a dynamic element into the posture, are used to express human sentiments. When one knee is slightly bent, causing a shift of weight, the pose (*abhaṅga*) is thought to be delicately erotic. A greater degree of flexion is found in the triple bend pose (*tribhaṅga*). This posture, which creates an S-like pattern in the body, is characteristic of Odissi dance although it is found in other styles as well. More deflections (*atibhaṅga*) can produce acrobatic poses, which can be found in pure dance, but are also typical of demonic and heroic moods. An eminent Indian scholar, Kapila Vatsyayan, has suggested that these degrees of bend are fundamental to the analysis of dance poses to the extent that all human movement can be classified into the four *bhaṅgas*.

There is a legend of a certain King Vajra who wished to study icon-making and who learned that he must dedicate himself to the entire gamut of artistic endeavour before he could begin to understand the art he wished to master. His story echoes a passage from the canons of Indian art: *He who does not know properly the rules of painting cannot discern characteristics of images. Without a knowledge of the art of dancing, rules of painting are very difficult to understand, and dancing cannot be understood without a knowledge of music.*

Temple Dancers

So much of Indian dance is reflected in and harmonized with the other arts; all join together in the perpetuation of a tradition. However it would be a mistake to think that everything in dance was simply petrified in other mediums. The most vital link in the chain is the heritage kept alive by the dancers themselves.

The Devadasis, or temple dancers, are the ones to whom classical dance owes its continuity. In medieval India

young girls were dedicated to the temples to dance before the gods in their earthly abode, just as the *apsarās* or nymphs did in heaven. The rise of the actual caste of Devadasis is supposed to date from the 9th or 10th century when temple architecture was flourishing in South India. These temple dancers enjoyed a high social position; for they were the only women allowed to learn to read. They also underwent rigorous training in music and dance, beginning at the age of five and lasting for at least seven years. The Devadasis were associated with good luck and their presence was considered auspicious on occasions such as weddings and births. This was because a young girl's dedication to the temple was celebrated as a marriage with the deity. So she was deemed invulnerable to the undesirable and inauspicious condition of widowhood. The Devadasi's duties to her lord included fanning the idol with *chamaras* (fly whisks), carrying the sacred light called *kumbarti*, and dancing and singing before the god when he was carried in procession.

Inscriptions from the year 1004 AD tell us that 400 Devadasis were installed in the temple of Tanjore by the Chola king, Rajaraja. At the beginning of the last century 100 dancers were still attached to another great temple at Conjeeveram. However, from the 19th century onwards, the attitude towards temple dancers became ambivalent owing to their growing association with prostitution. Because of their declining reputation and since the British rulers of India did not regard dance as a proper part of education, temple dancing was forbidden. Fortunately the devotees of the art continued to practise it in the seclusion of their homes.

Some of the Devadasi's family stayed within the *dasi* caste and became musicians and dance masters called *nattuvanars*. It is they who preserved and passed on the oral tradition. In the first decades of the 20th century, those seeking to revive the dance turned to the *nattuvanars*. The masters' knowledge and the training they gave, inspired and formed a new generation of dancers who were instrumental in bringing the dance to the stage and in imbuing an ancient form with new life.

Technique and Performance

As we have seen in the case of music, Indian dance is composed of two aspects, pure dance or *nṛtta* and mimetic

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Fear

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dance or *abhinaya*. A classical dance performance always includes both of these, usually in alternating sequence.

Pure dance, *nr̥tta*, displays a sculptural quality with the emphasis placed on the pose. The dancer performs sequences of poses for the visual beauty these create in space, so that the movement becomes an embodiment of the music. Complex patterns sounded with the stamping feet provide the rhythmic dynamics of the dance. In this part of a performance the dancer demonstrates technical virtuosity and musicality.

There are two fundamental differences between Indian and balletic notions of movement. First of all, an Indian dancer always works in direct relation to the pull of gravity. Leaps are rare, and there is always the sense of relaxing into and having close contact with the earth. (At the beginning of every practice session and performance, a dancer bows and touches the earth – to beg forgiveness for stamping on her.) The other major difference is the way that the movement takes its form from the fundamental bone structure; visually there is no emphasis on muscles. The scholar, Kapila Vatsyayan, has characterized the contrasting ideals of ballet and Indian dance in a perceptive way:

The Western dancer is reaching out into space in order to arrest a moment of perfect movement: he strives for spacelessness at a point of time. The Indian dancer's preoccupation is not so much with space as with time, and the dancer is constantly trying to achieve the perfect pose which will convey a sense of timelessness.

The word *abhinaya* means, 'to lead (something) towards (the spectators)', being derived from the Sanskrit verb *ni* meaning 'lead' with the prefix *abhi*, 'towards'. Thus the purpose of mimetic dance is to lead or convey the mood of the song to the audience through its interpretation in movement. The dancer aims to show the entire range of human emotions with her gestures. The interpretation can be on two levels, first as a literal translation of the words, then on an associative plane where she draws on her imagination and skill at improvisation.

The mime is highly stylized – one dancer can assume a number of different roles. For instance, to portray the pangs of love, the Bharata Natyam dancer takes the stance of the god of love, drawing his bow to release an arrow of love. At the next moment the dancer is again the maiden

who feels the flutter in her heart as it is pierced by the dart.

The hands are of great importance. There are 28 single hand and 24 double hand gestures (*nr̥tta hasta*, commonly called *mudra*) that are used in myriad ways. They comprise a language in themselves. The hands are often a focal point of the dance, but in fact they are also instruments of the more profound aims of the dance. As the *Abhinaya Darpana* explains:

For wherever the hand moves, there the glances follow; where the glances go, the mind follows; where the mind goes, the mood follows; where the mood goes, there the flavour (rasa) arises.

Aesthetics

What is this flavour called *rasa*? The word has been variously translated – 'aesthetic rapture' is one of the more evocative versions – and is known as the ultimate aim of all Indian arts. The *rasa* or aesthetic experience arises from the dominant mood or *bhāva* of the dance. The moods are clearly delineated in the dance texts and permeate a performance. Human emotions are categorized into eight basic sentiments: love, mirth, sorrow, anger, energy, fear, disgust and wonder. Sometimes a ninth is added called *śānta* or serenity. A dancer develops such control over her facial muscles that each of these emotions can be represented through subtle movements such as trembling lips, flared nostrils, or detailed movements of the eyes and eyebrows. A skilled artist can bring tears to the eyes and even colour to the face. The dancer's ability to portray the basic mood – love in its varied forms finds particular favour in the dance – combines with the other elements of the performance to impart the aesthetic experience to the audience.

No act of communication can be one-sided; there must always be someone to listen, watch and, hopefully, understand. So the Indian theorists developed the concept of a sensitive spectator, *sahṛdaya*, which literally means 'someone with heart'. The qualifications of the ideal spectator are in some ways as exacting as those of a dancer. The *Nāṭya Śāstra* mentions such attributes as good character, quiet behaviour and learning, virtue, honesty, knowledge of the different arts, and especially the ability to sympathize:

He who attains gladness on seeing a person glad and sorrow on seeing him sorry, and who feels miserable on



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tradition to explore. Over the
ences have had the opportun-
hakali dance-drama from the
ala; Bharata Natyam from
ne softer Odissi style from the
athak, which is noted for its

rhythms. Indian exponents of the dance, as well as a few
Canadians who have devoted themselves to the tradition,
are earnestly endeavouring to make Indian dance known
and appreciated in the West.

That a dance, which is highly formalized and yet still
open to an influx of new life, has persisted for over 2,000
years, bears witness to the innate strength of dance as an
expressive form. In a country where we place so much
emphasis on the new and the ephemeral, perhaps Indian
dance is one of the sources from which we can learn that a
culture can be built to last.

Glossary

nāṭya drama, including dance

karāṇa cadence of movement

abhinaya acting, expressive gesture

nr̥tta pure dance

rāga musical scale

bhāva mood, emotion

bhaṅga bend

with prefix - *sama*: even-bend

tri: three-bend

nr̥tta hasta hand gesture called *mudra*

Devadasi temple dancer

(*dasi*: servant, *deva*: of god)

nattuvanas teacher, musician

sahṛdaya sensitive spectator

(*sa*: with, *hr̥daya*: heart)

rasa aesthetic experience, flavour

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seeing him miserable, is considered fit to be a spectator of drama.

The onus of fulfilling the aesthetic aims is not left solely to the artist. For it is expected that the audience will be prepared for and susceptible to the mood of the performance. A suggestive comment referring to music describes this responsibility well.

Those who are musical, perfect the rendering of the song by the force of their own imagination and emotion.

This act of response, which is marked by a kind of aesthetic thrill beyond the realm of everyday experience, is aesthetic rapture, is *rasa*.

Indian dance offers a rich tradition to explore. Over the past few years Canadian audiences have had the opportunity to see the main styles: Kathakali dance-drama from the south-western state of Kerala; Bharata Natyam from south-eastern Tamil Nadu; the softer Odissi style from the east; and from the north, Kathak, which is noted for its rhythms. Indian exponents of the dance, as well as a few Canadians who have devoted themselves to the tradition, are earnestly endeavouring to make Indian dance known and appreciated in the West.

That a dance, which is highly formalized and yet still open to an influx of new life, has persisted for over 2,000 years, bears witness to the innate strength of dance as an expressive form. In a country where we place so much emphasis on the new and the ephemeral, perhaps Indian dance is one of the sources from which we can learn that a culture can be built to last.

Glossary

nāṭya drama, including dance

karāṇa cadence of movement

abhinaya acting, expressive gesture

nṛtta pure dance

rāga musical scale

bhāva mood, emotion

bhaṅga bend

with prefix - *sama*: even-bend
tri: three-bend

nṛtta hasta hand gesture called *mudra*

Devadasi temple dancer

(*dasi*: servant, *deva*: of god)

nattuvanas teacher, musician

sahṛdaya sensitive spectator

(*sa*: with, *hrdaya*: heart)

rasa aesthetic experience, flavour

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Michael Crabb

The Future Beckons

Dance in Canada Heads Towards a New Decade

Last year's Dance in Canada Conference, held in Vancouver, gave clear notice to anyone interested that solid realities and practical concerns have taken the forefront in the minds of dance people across the nation. Political squabbles of earlier years sank into obscurity and the 1978 conference ushered in a busy year of activity for the Dance in Canada Association.

A new regional office was established in Alberta and the existing regions stepped up their efforts to serve their local communities. In Saskatchewan and other regions there were film-showings and workshops. Ontario held its own ambitious and successful conference. British Columbia launched a local *Dancer's Directory* (a comprehensive handbook of useful information) with provincial funding. Membership in the national association increased steadily through the year to reach a total of 800 – more than double what it was three years ago.

This year's conference, held at the University of Waterloo from June 27 to July 2, reinforced the general direction within the dance community towards realistic, practical goals. At a very placid annual General Meeting, association members heard about new regional offices being formed in Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia. They saw the progress of the national *Dancer's Directory*, due to be published this December, and had in their hands the first colour issue of the magazine.

Although there was serious discussion concerning the future of annual conferences which have become both expensive and time-consuming to mount, the future survival of the association itself, even in the midst of a gloomy economy, was never in serious question.

By returning to Ontario, the 1979 Dance in Canada Conference had, geographically, come full circle. Since the first conference at York University in 1973, the dance community has gathered in Montreal, Edmonton, Halifax, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Over the years, a general format for the conference has emerged. Successive organizers have tried to cater to as broad a range of interests as possible: performers, educators, administrators, researchers, therapists – even critics. Daily programmes have traditionally incorporated a selection of events, run-

ning concurrently. In the evenings there have been performances by dancers from across Canada and in recent years this performance aspect has taken a larger share of the conference with the scheduling of lunchtime shows in studios and, weather permitting, outdoor spaces.

The Waterloo conference followed the broad trends of this established pattern but, like every other conference, had its own distinguishing characteristics. The overall theme was 'The Future', an appropriate choice for the end of a decade, and remarkably enough much of the actual content lived up to this imposing title. Two of the four keynote speakers had very important messages for those about to embrace the challenge of the eighties. Bella Lewitzky, a sage and kindly woman, bid her audience to have no illusions about the 'dance explosion' of the seventies and to eschew personality for the sake of the art. British-American critic and historian, David Vaughan, had stimulating things to say about the need for solid structure in the choreography of the future.

Evening performances and morning keynote speeches were the only occasions when all conference delegates had the chance to get together. More than any previous conference, this one had been organized by people determined that nobody should be bored. There were up to nine events happening at one time: even if you had a skateboard and boundless energy there was only so much you could avoid missing. Looking back over the schedule one finds there were, apart from the four keynote addresses, 27 'sessions' (panel presentations and discussions), 20 workshops, 18 classes (seven ballet, six modern and the rest jazz or ethnic) and the presentation of 38 scholarly papers grouped into sessions of three at a time. Performances occurred in six different locations and involved more than 60 artists. Although the figures are a little confusing because of the number attending only part of the conference, total participation was in the order of 500 people.

Because there was so much happening, no one reporter can hope to give a very thorough overall impression. However, certain features of the daytime programme stand out in the memory. There seemed to be a healthy degree of cross-fertilization going on. This has been true of earlier



Margie Gillis

conferences but was more pronounced at Waterloo. Partly because the organizers had decided not to 'stream' events as had been done in Vancouver, one saw delegates with very specialized interests attending a range of events right outside their own field. The overall result may have been less focused but, to many people's minds, the process of easy communication, both formal and informal, among dance people from all places and of many interests is the

most valuable and significant feature of these annual national conferences.

Dance research and scholarship enjoyed a higher profile at Waterloo than at any previous conference. The range of topics, all the way from Graham Jackson on 'Sexuality in Graham's Choreography and It's Influence on Contemporary Choreographers', to Mary Kaprelian's extraordinarily forceful paper, 'Parallel Trends in the Development of German Expressionist Painting and Modern Dance', suggest how vital the theoretical aspect of dance has become. For the first time, a selection of these papers, *New Directions in Dance*, was published before the conference - a tribute to the tenacity of the editor, Diana Taplin, and the publishers, Pergamon Press.

In the Year of the Child, it was fitting that several sessions should have been devoted to the child and dance, just as it was well timed to choose the centenary of the birth of Rudolf von Laban as the year to concentrate people's attention on notation. Exponents of Laban's theories of movement analysis, together with adherents of the Benesh system and Sutton Movement Shorthand combined happily to discuss the implications of writing dance. Visiting English critic, Nicholas Dromgoole, emphasized the need for dancers and choreographers to become literate. The possibilities and opportunities provided by the various notation systems is clearly to have an enormous impact on the future of the art. Perhaps the most helpful aspect of the discussions about notation was the way they dispelled wrong-headed and paranoid conceptions harboured by some artists of the 'threat' posed by notation to dance as an expressive art.

Breadth of vision and imagination were the predominant tones of the Waterloo conference which, partly by design and partly by chance, happened to be the most cosmopolitan and least parochial of all the conferences. Not all the people from abroad were invited guests: many came because they thought the event was important - a noteworthy achievement for the organizers.

Even if future conferences are on a smaller scale than Waterloo's it is unlikely that they will be abandoned entirely. The maturity of concern now shown by the dance community in Canada and the rapid expansion of the art itself into new areas of theory and practice will make these annual gatherings even more important in the eighties than they have been in the seventies.

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Iro Tembeck

East and West and In Between

The Shape of Canadian Dance

Each Dance in Canada Conference has included a series of performances which amount to a crash programme in Canadian choreography handed out in massive doses. These performances have been called variously, 'festivals', 'inventories' and 'marathons'. However one chooses to name them and making allowance for the absence of several of the well established dance companies, they do provide a valuable opportunity to take stock of the shape of Canadian dance from coast to coast.

It takes time for the images to sink into the mind and to reveal their meaning. The process of categorizing these experiences is fraught with danger. However, as a performer and creator of dance I would like to share some of my own conclusions about the state of dance invention in Canada as reflected in these conference performances. I hope others may be prompted to share their own with us all.

First, there are marked territorial differences in the content of what may loosely be called 'modern dance' across Canada. The West Coast emphasizes casualness of execution, random structure and a 'laid-back' style accurately depicting the mood of the moment. In Ontario, generally, ideas seem to constitute the *raison d'être* of most dances, whether or not they are composed in a traditional movement vocabulary. If dance can at any point be called 'conceptual' then it is Ontario where one goes to look for it. Artists there take an idea and pursue it rigorously. Yet, where does this leave dance, as such?

In Quebec the image is almost invariably one of dance-theatre or drama. The theatrical content may be comic or dramatic, folksy or social – but it is always dance theatre. At the last conference, all the pieces by Quebecers reflected a specific situation and were seriously personal.

Presumably, these regional differences, the casualness of the West Coast, the intellectuality of Ontario with its regiments of university-trained dance-artists and the social consciousness of Quebec, all reflect local values and varying needs.

Next, recent conferences have highlighted the emergence of a new breed of dancers. More of them could

be seen sitting in on lectures and panels, participating in meetings and generally educating themselves in much more than dancing itself. As a result it has become harder to categorize these individuals who float easily from one area of the discipline/art to another. They seem to function naturally and at once as performers, educators, theorists and even as administrators.

Third, because of the financial hardships being felt by everyone it seemed that there was a heavy preponderance of soloists or of dancers working in very small groups. A majority of these were women. In the welter of sensations projected by them during a long series of performances it becomes increasingly hard to retain any sense of their individual distinctiveness as artists.

Which suggests a fourth observation. There is an atomization of modern dance in Canada caused by a pronounced trend towards personal statement in creation and performance. The dance expression becomes a means of self discovery – a subjective process that can only be done alone. In addition, although there has been a clear improvement in the technical proficiency of dancers, what has actually been offered to us in performance has been an increasing sparseness of movement. This may be seen as a trend which parallels the direction being taken by other art forms. However, the pervasive influence of minimalism could be dangerous, leading to a process of *reductio ad absurdum*.

What the modern dance of Canada truly lacks is a sense of structure. This was a point raised at the Waterloo conference by Rose Anne Thom in a session on dance criticism. But lack of form is the inevitable character of dances which are mostly self-expressive in nature. They are vehicles to show off the performer's integrity towards the subject since, more often than not, the performer and creator are one and the same person. Only when we have quenched the thirst to perform ourselves will we emerge as choreographers working towards a well wrought structure. It is hard also for audiences to distinguish between performance appeal and structural content when the originators of each are the same.



Dianne Carrière and Ninoska Gomez

Since dance is still a youthful art in Canada, there is a pressing need for us to emerge with a full-fledged style. The means to achieve this is through full-fledged individuals whose personalities carry the performances through. This is the stage we are at: searching for personalities and for self-expression. But we must not forget that this is a means only and should not become an end in itself.

Something David Vaughan said during his thoughtful address to the Waterloo conference suggests my final observation. To paraphrase his comments, if the dance of the future will mostly be seen on television the personal statement, in terms of its immediate impact, will be lost and the performance may well look very flat. We might well see a slow disappearance of the art form itself. To ensure the survival of dance there must be a conscious search for 'significant form'. Dancer-choreographers must discipline themselves to illustrate things that go beyond personal experience and statement. Only then may a definite style emerge.

A good test of the strength of a piece of choreography is a change of cast. If the piece survives with its original impact the work itself was most probably well structured. Bella Lewitzky, like David Vaughan, another of the 'key-note' speakers at the Waterloo conference, rightly iterated the danger of too much emphasis on the performer at the cost of content. Certainly we can develop superstars and dance heroes. As Lewitzky was careful to point out, that is in fact what the much vaunted 'dance explosion' of the last few years has really amounted to. But we do this at the price of the art form.

The responsible alternative is to emphasize the form and content of the choreography itself, not to diminish the importance of the performer but to establish a healthy and reasonable balance of mutually indispensable components in the total dance experience.

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Rhonda Ryman
 Training the Dancer
 IX

The Spine in Motion

In her last article, Rhonda Ryman explained the structure of the vertebral column. Here she discusses what happens when the spine moves.

An understanding of the bony and ligamentous structure of the vertebral column along with the lines of pull of the muscles surrounding it gives us considerable insight into the nature and range of movements possible throughout the spine. In broad terms, the bony spine may be compared to a column of bricks decreasing in size from bottom to top, separated not by mortar but by gelatinous pads, and giving rise to projections of varying shapes. The ligaments are like tie-rods which prevent excessive movement and brace the column. The muscles act as guy-wires to splint or stabilize it and guide its movements. Each brick may move slightly between the adjacent bricks until their respective projections interlock to prevent further motion. Although the amount of movement between any two bricks is relatively little, their combined movements make possible a considerable range. When the joints at various levels do not share equally in the movement, the aesthetically beautiful line of the curve is destroyed. In the well used spine, movement occurs freely throughout the vertebrae according to the architecture of each region and the cooperative action of the muscles surrounding it. The joints are not stressed through disuse or overuse and the musculature is balanced – neither tight and bound (hypertonic) nor weak and flaccid (hypotonic).

Forward and Back Bends

Forward and back bends are those which occur in the sagittal or anteroposterior plane of the body by flexion (forward bending), extension (return to neutral) and hyperextension (movement past neutral) of the spine. These movements occur most freely in the region of the neck and waist, partially owing to the orientation of the articular facet joints, as described and illustrated in my last

article; in the cervical region they face obliquely up and down, while in the lumbar area they are directed obliquely sideways. Furthermore, the intervertebral discs of these regions are relatively large, allowing considerable flexion-extension movement between adjacent vertebral bodies. As the bodies tilt, the pad-like disc is momentarily deformed and becomes wedge-shaped. Because the disc is incompressible, as the vertebral bodies come together on one side, they are forced apart on the other. Chronic or continuous deformation as a result of poor posture (lordosis), the strain of lifting or high arabesques may lead to degeneration of the disc in susceptible individuals. In both the cervical and lumbar regions, firm control is needed in the anterior trunk and neck muscles to limit excessively free hyper-extension.

In the thoracic spine, flexion and extension are comparatively limited because of the relative thinness of the intervertebral discs, the flatness or slight concavity of the upper and lower surfaces of the vertebral bodies (which further limits the usefulness of the discs) and the almost vertical orientation of the articular facets; that is to say, the joint surfaces face obliquely forward and back. Extension is further hindered by the overlapping of the obliquely projecting spinous processes. Thoracic movements in general are restricted by the rib cage. The multiple joints at which the ribs and thoracic vertebrae articulate, along with the bony and cartilaginous components of the cage, orient and limit the movements of the thoracic spine. Changes in the rib cage occur with all thoracic spine movements.

Muscular control of trunk flexion and extension is achieved through the cooperative action of the anterior and posterior trunk and neck muscles. (See Diagrams 1 and 2.) Movements of the torso depend greatly on stability from well placed legs and pelvis. Thigh muscles work cooperatively with trunk muscles to brace the hip joint. Hip extensors such as the hamstrings and gluteus maximus work cooperatively with trunk flexors such as the abdom-

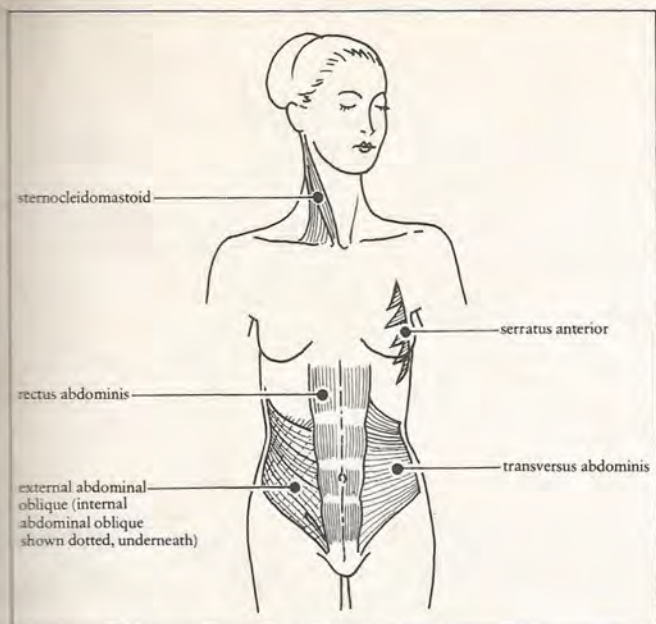


Diagram 1 Major Muscles of the Trunk - anterior (schematic only)

inals to prevent the swaybacked stance and provide a stable base for trunk and arm actions.

It may be helpful to note that a port de bras forward is controlled largely by muscles on the back of the body. Although this movement is initiated by the hip flexors, once the head is displaced in front of the body's centre of gravity the trunk continues to move toward the ground passively, in response to the pull of gravity. It is the neck, back and hip *extensor* muscles, that is, those on the back of the body, which control this movement by their active lengthening (eccentric contraction) against the resistance of gravity. This explains the sensation at the back of the thighs during the port de bras forward: the hamstrings and gluteus maximus lengthen with tension to control the forward tilting of the pelvis. Imagine that two thick elastic bands run from each sitting bone to the back of each thigh. These gradually lengthen, resisting the pelvic tilting. This helps explain why inability to perform a deep port de bras forward may be the result of short hamstring muscles as well as tight back muscles. Despite traditional directions to the contrary, the hips must shift back as a unit to counterbalance the forward displacement of the torso. Through control of the posterior thigh muscles, as previously described, this shift occurs gradually and unobtrusively. To initiate the body's return to the erect position, the neck, back and hip extensors actively shorten (contract concentrically) to extend the torso.

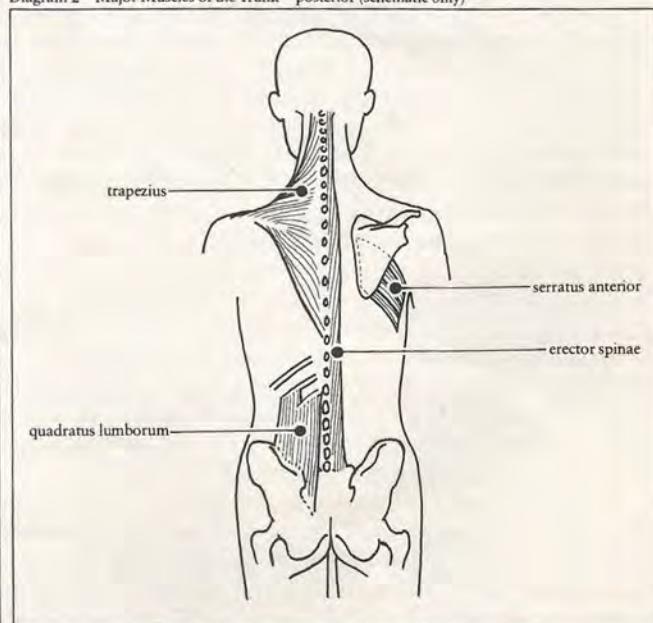
The modern dance 'contraction' also involves trunk flexion, but with a difference. In a Graham contraction, for instance, the impulse for movement involves a powerful shortening (concentric contraction) of the abdominal muscles, which compresses the abdomen and chest and forcefully expels air from the lungs. Looking again at Diagram 1, consider the lines of pull of the abdominal muscles in order to appreciate the skeletal movements which their shortening will cause. As the contraction is initiated, the hip crests move slightly upward and backward, and the lumbar spine is flexed to elongate or even reverse its natural curve, depending on the individual's degree of flexibility. The thoracic spine also flexes slightly

to complete the 'hollowing' effect, but the shoulders maintain their vertical alignment over the hip joints. The front of the abdomen is also 'narrowed' by the forceful contraction of the transverse abdominals, often called the muscle of forced expiration. Professor John Wilson has suggested that it is primarily these muscles which initiate the contraction. In order to control the amount of trunk flexion and thereby prevent the back from 'collapsing', the powerful abdominal contraction is strongly counteracted by tension (co-contraction) in the back extensors, hence the stretching sensation in the back.

When the contraction is performed standing, there is a tendency for the knees to flex in response to the pelvic action, in order to slacken the Y ligament and possibly the anterior thigh muscles. Beginning dancers often remark that the contraction seems easier to achieve sitting on the floor, perhaps since the balance problem is thus alleviated. In addition to this, sitting involves thigh flexion which slackens the iliofemoral or Y ligament. (See 'Posture in Dance: Sense and Nonsense', Spring 1978). From this position it is much easier to tilt the hip crests backward. However, students with tight hamstrings and lower back muscles may be unable to sit on the floor properly, that is, with the pelvis vertical. For these, it may be helpful to learn the movement sitting on a chair.

The ballet back bend and modern dance 'high release' involve extension or hyperextension of the spine. As described, these actions occur freely in the cervical and lumbar spine, but are limited in the thoracic region. The most glaring common faults involve 'collapsing' of the lower back (excessive lumbar hyperextension), tension in the chest or shoulder area (usually elevation or lifting of the shoulder girdle) and compressing of the neck (excessive cervical hyperextension) - all anatomically predictable problems. The natural lack of uniform flexibility in the spine makes it difficult to achieve the long graceful arch of the classical back bend. Furthermore, it has been emphasized that the spine is weakest at the points where the curves merge - the cervicothoracic, thoracolumbar and lumbosacral joints. This weakened capacity is increased as the curves are exaggerated, as in

Diagram 2 Major Muscles of the Trunk - posterior (schematic only)



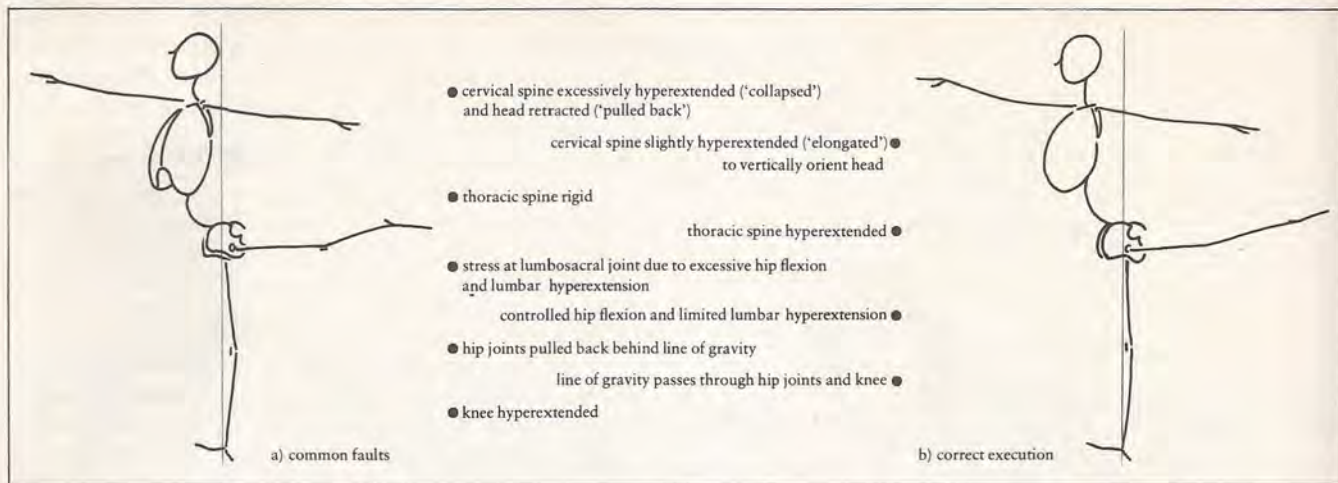


Diagram 3 Schematic Representation of an Arabesque - sideview

a poorly executed back bend. Training must therefore focus on increasing flexibility in the thoracic spine (to a natural limit) and building muscular strength in order to control the flexibility of the cervical and lumbar regions.

It is worth noting here that, traditionally, sit-ups and leg raises have been favourite means of building abdominal strength. Recent research, however, shows that they place great strain on the lower back. A safer exercise is the diagonal sit-up in which the individual sits with knees bent up, soles of the feet together on the floor (held down by a partner or hooked under a piece of furniture), and hands clasped behind the head. Bring the elbows forward toward the knees, then lower the torso backwards to 45° angle with the floor. Gradually increase the number of repetitions, as strength increases.

Developing muscular control is a particular problem for the tall gawky student. How often has the loose jointed, swan-necked protégé strained into a breathtakingly deep back bend only to become 'stuck' there, without sufficient strength to erect herself! Part of the difficulty arises because the neck and trunk flexor muscles have been lengthened past the point where they can contract efficiently. (Every muscle has an optimum length for powerful contraction.) But there is another factor. The longer the back and neck, the farther the head will be displaced behind the body, requiring greater muscular strength to move it. You can easily demonstrate this physical reality by hanging a heavy bag at the end of your outstretched arm and trying to lift it. Move it slightly closer to your body and try to lift it again. The farther the bag is from your body, the harder it is to lift. In biomechanical terms, the farther the mass is distributed from the axis of rotation, the greater the force required to displace the mass. This principle applies to countless dance situations such as leg extensions and lifts as well as to body bends.

Back bends are initiated by extension in the thoracic spine which elongates the C curve of that region, hence the direction to lengthen the back up before arching backwards. As has been mentioned, thoracic extension is limited in most individuals and increasing its flexibility involves strengthening the upper back muscles.

As the back bend is initiated by the upper back extensor muscles, there is a tendency for the neck and lower back to 'collapse' (hyperextend excessively). These regions must be stabilized by tension in the anterior neck and trunk muscles. It may be helpful to visualize a thick elastic band

running from the tip of the breastbone and lower borders of the ribs to the pubic bone and hip crests, bracing the lower back. Once the head is displaced behind the body's centre of gravity, the trunk continues to move toward the ground passively, in response to the pull of gravity. To counterbalance the backward displacement of the torso, the hips shift very slightly forward as a unit (they do not tilt), gradually and unobtrusively. This forward shift extends the hip joint causing a stretching sensation in the groin. If the anterior thigh muscles or Y ligaments are tight or short, the student may incorrectly 'pull back' in the hips to alleviate this sensation, causing a 'sway back', (see cartoon). To sense the correct action, visualize a plane of glass which passes below the hip crests and lies parallel to the ground. If the hip crests tilt forward, the front end drops lower and the back end lifts; if the pelvis is vertical, the plane is level. As the back bend deepens, the level plane shifts very slightly forward as a unit; the front end does not drop nor does the back end lift.

The neck and back *flexor* muscles, (those on the front of the torso), control the back bend by their active lengthening (eccentric contraction) and accomplish the return by their active shortening (concentric contraction). Visualize the thick elastic band representing the lines of pull of the abdominal muscles. Watch it carefully lengthen with resistance as the trunk arches back, then gradually shorten as it returns. To visualize the lines of pull of certain neck flexor muscles, imagine that two thick elastic bands run from the skull behind each earlobe to the respective collar bone. As the head turns slightly to the left in the backbend, the right elastic lengthens and vice versa.

Side Bends and Twists

Side bending (lateral flexion) and twisting (horizontal rotation) naturally occur together in the spine owing to the slightly oblique orientation of all the articular facets and the diagonal lines of pull of many trunk muscles. This helps explain many common faults in the execution of ports de bras sideways, épaulement and modern dance spirals: the dancer must be able to isolate bending and twisting movements, to orient the body in square, clean lines as needed.

In the cervical region, lateral flexion, when accompanied by rotation, is fairly free owing to the thickness of

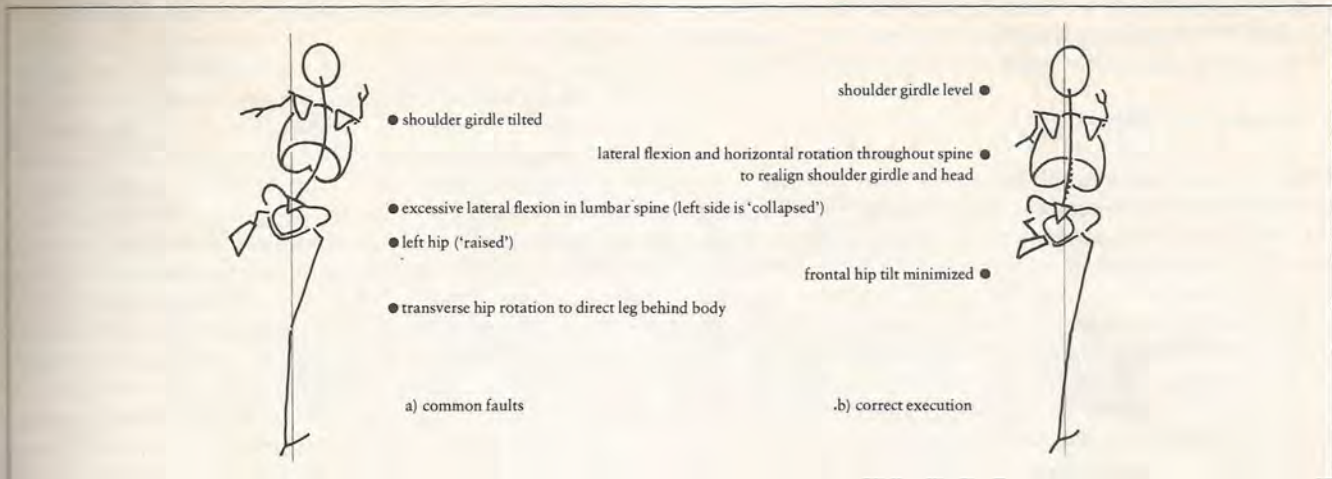


Diagram 4 Schematic Representation of an Arabesque - backview

the discs and the lateral convexity of the lower surfaces of the bodies, and the corresponding concavity of their upper surfaces. Lateral flexion is also rather free in the lumbar spine, especially the lower segments, but rotation is limited by the almost sagittal orientation of the articular facets which causes the joints to interlock as rotation is initiated. In the thoracic spine, the multiple articulations with the ribs as well as the bony and cartilaginous components of the rib cage limit lateral flexion and rotation, although rotation is the freest movement in this region. Lateral flexion occurs by sliding of the articular processes of two adjacent vertebrae and is eventually limited by impact of the processes on the side of the movement. During this movement, the rib cage is lowered and shrinks (the ribs are brought closely together) on the side of the movement, and elevated and enlarged (the ribs are spread out) on the opposite side. Rotation in the thoracic spine occurs by sliding of the articular processes and by rotation and twisting of the intervertebral disc. This potentially great degree of rotation, however, is limited by the rib cage which is attached by costal cartilage (slightly elastic connective tissue) to the breastbone. Thus, as the thoracic column rotates, each slightly elastic rib pair is distorted. In the young, the rib cage is still flexible, but as the costal cartilages ossify (become bone) with age, it becomes almost rigid and the range of thoracic movement is correspondingly reduced.

Many of the muscles involved in lateral flexion and rotation of the spine run diagonally along the trunk (see

Diagrams 1 and 2). The external oblique abdominals, for example, run upward and outward from the pubic bone and hip crests to the lower eight ribs. When both the right and left sides of the muscles shorten, the trunk flexes. But when only the right side shortens, the distance between the right side of the ribs and the pubic bone decreases, causing the trunk to twist left and flex. This action is seen in many natural actions such as kicking. Whereas a soccer player will naturally twist and flex his torso into the swinging leg during a powerful kick, the classical ballet dancer has 'reprogrammed' her actions to prevent this unwanted deviation. A similar deviation tends to occur in port de bras sideways, when the beginning dancer twists the upper torso, causing the ribs to poke and the shoulders to lose their square alignment on the frontal plane. Training develops the careful coordination of muscles on the front and back of the torso to minimize the twisting and reorient the ribs and shoulder girdle in the frontal plane, thereby masking the spinal twisting. Ballet épaulement (literally 'shouldering') actually involves horizontal thoracic rotation which gives the illusion that the shoulders have rotated, one forward and one back. The common fault here also results from the natural lateral flexion which occurs simultaneously with spinal rotation and causes the forward shoulder and ribs to drop. Again, training must focus on reorienting the ribs and shoulders horizontally; the rib cage is positioned vertically with the lower ribs compact and the shoulder blades glide flatly along the back with the backmost blade

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slightly depressed to counteract the shoulder tilt. Modern dance spirals, which involve horizontal rotation of the pelvis and entire spine, involve similar problems.

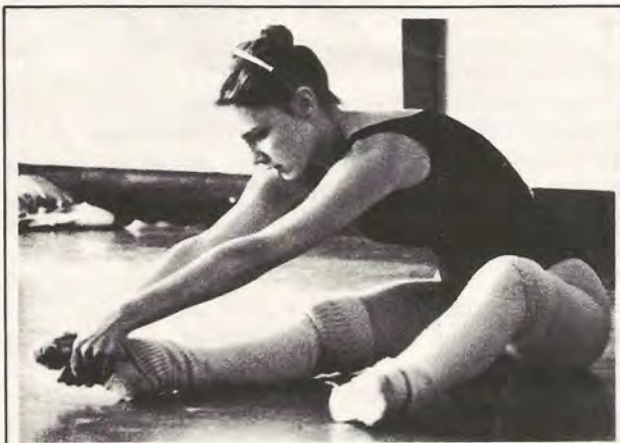
Arabesque and Lifts

High leg extensions in all directions must involve movement of the pelvis to reorient the hip socket which receives the thigh bone. This movement, however, is disguised by a series of adjustments in the spine which serve to reorient vertically the shoulders and head, (see Diagrams 3 and 4). If these adjustments are shared throughout the spine the result is a long graceful curve. This, however, does not occur naturally. In the poorly executed arabesque, for example, the naturally flexible lumbar or cervical regions make the necessary adjustments while the less mobile thoracic spine is uninvolved. A student with an overly rigid back and tight hip joints or with postural deviations may try to compensate by arching (hyperextending) completely at the lumbar spine. This may cause extreme stress at the susceptible lumbosacral joint or lead to stress fractures of the lower back. The dancer who makes such compensations to increase the height of his arabesque should beware of the consequences!

Lifting a partner and landing from jumps may also stress the spine and lead to joint sprains, degenerative arthritis and bruising. Although accidents resulting from fatigue and overexertion are an unfortunate part of the professional dancer's life, constant attention to proper body mechanics during these actions will minimize these

hazards. As previously described, the well used spine is strongly braced by responsive trunk muscles, and its natural s curve is diminished, not obliterated, so that its capacity for absorbing shock is maintained. Lumbar lordosis is particularly to be avoided during lifts. The 'weight' to be lifted, (hopefully moderate), is brought in close to the body: the closer the mass is distributed around the centre of rotation, the body's centre of gravity, the less force is required to displace it. The trunk should be flexed forward as little as possible in order to minimize the stress on the back extensor muscles and involve the more powerful hip extensors. Finally, the push-off of both male and female must be rhythmically and spatially coordinated, smooth and never jerky, so that their combined impulse efficiently and effectively propels the female. At the top of an overhead lift, the female's centre of gravity is directly above that of her partner and his lower back is muscularly braced or splinted while his upper back arches.

The positioning and movements of the spine are also of extreme importance in jumping and turning movements. The strong, supple and well-centred spine facilitates these actions mechanically as well as polishing them aesthetically. Understanding its structure and function can help the intelligent dancer make the most of his natural strengths and safely compensate for his weaknesses. In art as in all other things, tampering with the dictates of nature can be costly.



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Susan Pedwell

Dance: The Healing Art

Dance therapists sweat. They leap in the air, roll on the floor, bang tambourines and occasionally get spat on. But unlike other therapists, who remain tied to a desk pencil-ing notes on a scratch-pad, dance therapists successfully communicate with the autistic, bring joy to the aged, and even quiet hyperactive children.

Why dance therapy is so successful need not be explained to the dancer. The dancer knows that it is exhilarating to leap off the floor, soothing to waft the arms in the air, and enraging to stamp the feet. The dancer like the dance therapist knows that emotion is intertwined with motion. But the dancer is not a dance therapist.

The dance therapist is somebody not only aware of the unity of body and mind, but also able to diagnose mental disturbance by observing movement, and to facilitate emotional change by increasing what are called 'movement repertoires'. If a child has a movement repertoire limited to kicks and punches, the dance therapist will encourage him to explore light, floating gestures. By increasing the child's repertoire to include gentler, more loving movements, the child discovers his gentler, more loving emotions.

In itself, dance is a therapeutic experience. It activates, energizes and gets the heartbeat going. But, unless coupled with a therapeutic approach, dance is not a therapeutic tool. There are several different therapeutic approaches.

If the approach is through behaviour modification, positive reinforcement in the form of hugs and candies will be given when a desired movement is attained. Behaviour therapists argue that abnormal behaviour is acquired in the same ways as normal behaviour – through a process of learning. Normal movement must be taught to those who have learned to move (and feel) in an abnormal way.

If the approach is Jungian, the person may be asked to recall a dream, then dance it out. Afterwards, the client will be asked how the dancing felt. Carl Jung in his form of therapy emphasized examining the subconscious – through such avenues as dream recall – to uncover causes of mental disturbance.

The Gestalt approach, which emphasizes group work, is similar to Jungian dance therapy in that it involves speech. Dance, for some unknown reason, stimulates verbal expression. Dance has returned the gift of speech to such verbally uncommunicative groups as schizophrenics, who have regressed past the use of language, and autistics, who have never reached the level of verbal communica-

tion. Traditional verbal therapies fail to make the initial contact. Dance reaches them on their own level – the non-verbal – then transports them into the verbal.

Most dance therapists draw freely from whatever school of psycho-therapy seems appropriate rather than adhering exclusively to any one method.

The selection of approach and the introduction of specific movements is a delicate learned art. Just as the introduction of appropriate movement helps dispel emotional problems, the introduction of inappropriate movement creates problems. Those who have studied a particular dance discipline may have experienced the pain of having their movements (and corresponding emotions) channelled into areas inappropriate to their personalities. In ballet class, dancer/choreographer Margie Gillis was forced to plaster on a smile and withhold her cascading emotions. She ran out screaming. All dance disciplines demand something emotional from their students. Norma Sue Fisher, a professor of dance therapy at York University, claims that classical ballet, with its restrictions on free-flowing, spontaneous movements demands the binding of emotions. Most ballet students, she adds, counteract this outside class. 'They move clumsily and act as silly as possible.'

Dr Claire Schmais, co-ordinator of the dance therapy programme at New York's Hunter College, has extended the analysis of the emotional aspects of dance disciplines to the point where she can prescribe the study of a particular discipline as therapy. To those who are shy, self-effacing and insecure, Dr Schmais recommends flashy Spanish dancing. For those who are indecisive and unassertive, some strong percussive jazz is advised. And for the sexually uptight – belly dancing.

Unlike the United States, Canada has no licensing system for dance therapists. As a result, Canada hosts a multitude of untrained, potentially harmful dance therapists. Most are dancers, or former dancers, convinced of the emotional benefits of dance. They provide weekend immersions, courses and workshops in what one such 'therapist' referred to as 'getting your head on straight'. Few have studied psychology, and none seem to be aware of the seriousness or complexity of their work. Many boast lightning-rate personality overhauls, but the changes are usually only temporary. The therapy is often painful. What happens to a severely depressed man when thrust into a group and ordered to leap for joy? Trained dance therapists prefer to honour an individual's own timetable

for emotional growth. Their results tend to be long lasting.

The four-year dance therapy programme at York University trains dancers to be sensitive to the emotional subtleties of movement. Nationally, it is the only training programme for dance therapists. Internationally, it is the only one to teach dance therapy at the undergraduate level. Julianna Lau, who initiated the programme in 1970, maintains that students have reached the necessary emotional maturity at a stage others consider 'the kindergarten level'.

The 40 students who are accepted annually into the programme undergo a vigorous training in both psychology and dance. Julianna stresses the importance for dance therapists to have a background in some sort of dance. 'They must be used to working physically and communicating with their body many hours a day. People who haven't been dancers don't know what this is like.' Classes in dance therapy begin in the second year and focus on the understanding and application of Rudolph Laban's effort-shape principles. For the final three years students remain eight weeks after the end of term to work as dance therapists in placements such as senior citizens' homes, treatment centres and public schools.

On graduation, they are awarded a Bachelor of Arts with honours in dance therapy, but not the professional status of dance therapist. To earn the title one must have a master's degree and 3,000 hours of supervised work in the field. It is the American Dance Therapy Association that has defined these terms and until a Canadian association is formed, there will be no Canadian-licensed dance therapists.

Despite this situation most Canadian graduates market themselves as 'dance therapists'. And market themselves they must. It is unlikely one would find an advertisement in any Canadian newspaper requesting a dance therapist. It is up to graduates to knock on doors, and convince institutions of their value.

One York-trained therapist who has done a lot of door-knocking is Melanie Danson of Toronto. Unable to secure a permanent full-time job as a dance therapist, she decided to free-lance. On finding a potential hiring institution, Melanie studies the group it serves and submits a proposal outlining how dance therapy could be of help. Believing movement to be the essence of every human being, Melanie has approached and worked with such diverse groups as the autistic, the physically handicapped and the obese.

Her first assignment working with the obese was at a fasting clinic called 'The New Image'. Designed for those who were anywhere from 5-100 lbs overweight, the seven-day clinic employed, along with a masseur, a macramé instructor, a dietitian, and a psychologist who specialized in the emotional aspects of weight loss. Working closely with the psychologist, Melanie set up a programme sensitive to each of the three emotional stages of fasting.

The body bursts with energy during the first stage. Because it is not being nourished with additives and stimulants, it is extremely receptive to sensual stimulants, such as movement. The emotional state is optimistic and eager, so Melanie designed a dance session with direct, confrontational movements.

Those same bold gestures and high jumps would have caused misery if introduced in the next phase of the fast - the depression stage. At this point, the body is crying out



Julianna Lau

for food. Slow, indirect movement was introduced with 'a comforting amount of sensitivity'. Verbal discussion about personal causes for obesity was found appropriate.

The final stage is a swing into euphoria. Weight has been lost and a group spirit has developed. Circle dances celebrated their success.

It is with the same amount of planning and sensitivity that Melanie Danson approaches each group she works with. When designing a programme for handicapped children and adults, she focused on self-esteem and group cohesion.

Instructing them to form a line with their wheelchairs, she guided the eager group through elaborate floor patterns. When accessory movement was introduced in the upper torso, they grew even more enthusiastic. For many, it was the first time they had moved 'just because it looked good'. Their previous experience with movement was for the practical purpose of getting from one point to another.

Melanie's next target group is the aged. In her studies she has noted a loss of self-image and a feeling of worthlessness in geriatric patients. She postulates that their lack of physical activity contributes to their seemingly chronic incapacity. Melanie is in the process of organizing a group where older people can come together and enjoy the social and physical benefits of dance. She plans to use disco music.

Few graduates of the York dance therapy programme

have Melanie Danson's ingenuity for creating full-time dance therapy work where none exists. Others have settled with practising dance therapy on a part-time basis.

Graduate Jill Mino is employed as a full-time special education teacher at the Browndale Centre for Emotionally Disturbed Children in Barrie, Ontario. But since it is a small school, it does not need a full-time dance therapist. Her extra hours are employed teaching cooking and sewing.

Maxine Heppner of Toronto could not find any work as a dance therapist. She opted to teach creative dance at the YMHA and at St Christopher House, a community centre in one of the city's 'rougher' neighbourhoods. She would not have got the job at St Christopher's had she not had dance therapy training. For years, the co-ordinator had tried to set up a dance programme but, 'the kids were just too wild'. When someone suggested hiring a dance therapist, it was agreed to as a last resort. It worked. The children needed someone sensitive to the emotional aspects of movement.

Although Maxine's classes at St Christopher's are not called dance therapy sessions, she does deal with the children therapeutically. 'How does this movement make you feel? Why?' are typical questions she asks.

Similarly, in her creative dance classes at the YMHA, she deals with the emotions that are elicited by the movement. Her extra skills as a dance therapist encouraged one mother to enroll her autistic son. He derived so much pleasure and benefit, he attended her classes for the next four years. When word got around about Maxine's abilities, two retarded teenagers were enrolled.

Although jobs for dance therapists are still scarce in Canada, opportunities have greatly improved since Julianna Lau's arrival from Germany in 1953. Despite diplomas from Danz Meisterschule in Stuttgart and the University of Frankfurt, the only employment she could then find was as a dancer with a catering agency! She found it 'absolutely terrible' to dance for parties of truckers and grocery store managers. She was unprepared for the whistles and cat-calls, having just left a milieu in which dance was regarded as a serious art form. Finding work with the Toronto Recreation Board teaching children's creative dance classes was thus a relief.

When Thistletown Psychiatric Hospital opened in 1957, Julianna was employed to use movement therapeutically. It was the first time she had worked with seriously disturbed children, and again she faced a situation she was unprepared for. 'I had never seen such awful beasts in my life. I love to exchange and share experiences with children, but I don't like to be spat at, kicked at and ridiculed.' It took a lot of energy to persevere, but by the end of the year she had gained a reputation as the 'Canadian Wonder Worker', and later was given the honour of becoming one of the first 10 members of the American Dance Therapy Association.

Dance therapy in Canada began with Julianna and the 'beasts' at Thistletown. Now her students are scattered across Canada choreographing intricate floor patterns for wheelchair patients, teaching the latest disco steps to the elderly, and with a lot of sweat, freeing the dancer inside the seemingly most limited bodies.



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Michael Crabb

Robert Desrosiers

*Inside you there is always something trying
to pierce through the darkness*



Robert Desrosiers: *Dream in a Dream*

There is a touch of madness about Robert Desrosiers which is at once both irresistibly appealing and mildly unnerving. On stage it can take the form of demonic rage, flashing from his eyes and sending a charge of energy into the audience. Off stage it is communicated in a strange detachment and waif-like character. Although Robert Desrosiers is, by most appearances, a very gentle person, it is not hard to imagine him being transformed into a wild and savage beast.

Casual observers have dismissed Desrosiers as a talented but indolently self-absorbed character. He seems to flit from place to place, from experience to experience without purpose or solid accomplishment. Given his prodigious

gifts as a dancer it has sometimes been hard to understand why he has performed so relatively little. Although he is capable of perfunctory dancing in choreography that is not to his liking, at his best, Robert Desrosiers is a mesmerizing dancer with a powerful stage presence. His concentration and focus are intense. His body is lithe with a particularly flexible upper body and back. In jumps he becomes a great bird, no longer earthbound. There is a raw, primitive quality to his movements yet they could never be called unfinished or unclear.

Robert Desrosiers is not unaware of how some people interpret his character nor of how easy it would be simply to exploit his performing talent and slip into a comfortable routine. Yet everything in his personality rebels against the idea.

Robert Desrosiers' existence is, in fact, a prolonged love affair with the unfolding process of life itself, of life which goes beyond human consciousness to embrace all nature. He therefore sees himself as part of a greater pattern within which he must live his life to its fullest by embracing those things which have deep personal meaning rather than by following conventional external patterns of behaviour. Dance for him is thus not a means to establish a determined place within a complex society but, 'a continuing voyage of personal discovery'.

He became a dancer almost by accident. He was born in Montreal in 1953, the oldest boy among four brothers and three sisters. Neither of his parents were involved in dance or theatre. As a young child he was sent for elocution lessons which included some movement classes. One sister had been taking ballet classes and, without clear recollection of how it happened, Robert was sent along too. He was recommended to audition for the National Ballet School, did so, and was accepted. There was really no choice to be made between staying at a local high school and setting off on an adventure to Toronto.

When he arrived at the National Ballet School in the fall of 1966 he spoke no English. It was two years before he found himself able to communicate easily: he retains an attractively lilting accent. He remembers his years at the school as happy ones. 'I was at the right age to accept that kind of discipline. Had I started later I could never have done it.'

Even by his early teens he had somehow concluded that

he would never be a classical dancer in leading roles. But he did join the National Ballet on graduation from the school in 1971. He lasted one year and then moved on. Already he found it hard to focus his energy on technique for its own sake. 'I was not so concerned about what I was doing as about how I could get close to feeling free through dancing.'

He left for France and spent several months in Paris studying with Raymond Franchetti, deputy ballet director of the Paris Opéra, and with Félix Blaska, a dancer and choreographer of considerable renown who had formed his own company in 1969.

In 1973 Desrosiers moved on to New York, studying with Maggie Black and Stanley Williams. There he was reunited with a close friend from ballet school days, Claudia Moore. When she had completed her contract with the National Ballet, which was making its first appearance at the Metropolitan Opera House with Nureyev, she accompanied Robert on his return to France where they joined the Blaska company in Grenoble. Blaska is a strong-willed man with forceful notions and Desrosiers soon found himself in disagreement. So he and Claudia finished a season with Blaska in Paris and left for London early in 1974.

For six months he did very little until he was persuaded to see Lindsay Kemp's production of *Flowers*. 'I was not particularly blown away by what I saw but I did begin to take Lindsay's classes.' He and Claudia Moore could have joined the Kemp company when it left for New York but they returned to Canada instead, to Montreal and the company of Hugo Romero.

'He was a crazy guy,' says Desrosiers. 'He lived in a fantasy world. It took us time to clue into this. . . . But he was incredible for teaching people how to move. He taught with frantic energy. You never stopped in his classes.'

In the summer of 1975 Desrosiers signed a short-term contract with Les Grands Ballets but was already growing restless in Montreal which he found, as a dancer, too parochial and insular. He preferred Toronto and joined Ballet ys. During his brief, six-month stay with the company, he and Claudia premièred Ann Ditchburn's *Nelligan*, a single event which established both dancers as outstanding artists. However, Robert could not see any point in remaining with Ballet ys since the company itself seemed to have no point. 'There wasn't really a direction there. It didn't start from a concept.'

He moved to Dancemakers and began to perform far more. But other interests drew him away from accepting Dancemakers as a comfortable home. He was already trying to realise ideas of his own to create dance-theatre pieces combining poetry and live music. He experimented in tiny improvised performing spaces (*It's Crime*, *Take the Subway to the Moon* and *Picasso: Phase 1*). 'I relate to dance as a form of theatre. The motivation for my movement comes from theatre, from colours, the psyche, from ideas.'

In the meantime he had also become attracted to Tai Chi. 'At the time I needed a new point of reference: it clicked for me. There was a physicality to it I appreciated and a certain way of stretching which showed me a different way of opening up the body. It has certainly influenced me.' Desrosiers eventually became an instructor and continues to use and teach Tai Chi.

When Lindsay Kemp came to Toronto in April 1978,

Desrosiers soon became involved with the company, performing in *Salomé* and leaving with the company when it moved on to a tour of Venezuela and Spain. With Kemp he had to perform in as many as 10 shows a week and in the process gained a new awareness of the audience and of his own relationship to it. Kemp gives his artists considerable freedom to develop their own roles - as long as the result pleases him. Desrosiers was able to try out ideas and grow as an artist.

Early in 1979, however, he was being pressed to answer an invitation to perform *Nelligan* with Claudia Moore at the National Ballet School's 20th Anniversary Gala. He had misgivings but was persuaded and after an amicable parting with Lindsay Kemp, returned to Toronto. The performance of *Nelligan* was a great success. Desrosiers' misgivings about repeating an earlier triumph were dispelled as he discovered he could introduce a new quality and emphasis to the choreography.

Soon afterwards, he began working on a new piece of his own called *Dream in a Dream*, with Mitch Kirsch, performed twice at the end of Toronto Dance Theatre's Company Choreographic Workshop last June.

The emotional intensity of this 45-minute work stunned many of the audience. Desrosiers sensed an hostility and realised how, in months of work, the impact of the piece had been forgotten in his mind so that the audience's reaction came as a surprise. 'I had a clear purpose to convey the quality of a dream. I had in mind that feeling when you are dreaming in your room and maybe there is a field with a battle going on and yet at other moments you recognize familiar things.'

Now Robert Desrosiers is beginning a season as a full company member of TDT, fresh from his marriage to Claudia Moore who remains one of the company's most striking and versatile dancers. None of which suggests that Robert Desrosiers is settling down. For him, the present is the right moment to be performing regularly again in a situation which will also allow opportunities for him to create his own works. 'TDT provides an environment but I'm not looking for a secure place to spend the next ten years. I am not concerned to become a famous dancer. My goals are internal. As a performer I find the movement must come from inside: for the audience I feel a great responsibility to be as honest as possible in my work. Right now, I know I have to be active. I have tended at times to get locked into my personal process too much. Now I feel I must not close myself off.'

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Max Wyman

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet

Crisis Overcome?

For the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the season that has just ended was to have been a glorious celebration of its 40 years of dancing, culminating in a return to New York in July with Rudolf Nureyev dancing as a guest at every performance.

Instead, the company closed the season in a confusion of firings and quitings. By the end of June, the RWB had lost 11 of its 26 dancers, two of its three associate artistic directors, its general manager, its music director and its company manager. The Nureyev and New York projects had been cancelled and the board of directors was embroiled in conflict with Canadian Actors' Equity over a new contract for the dancers.

At the time, many doomsayers forecast a gloomy future for the RWB. It had lost much of its strongest teaching and performing talent – and it was obvious that the upheavals had further damaged the company's already shaky standing in its home town (by July, subscription sales were running at only half the rate of a year previously).

But this is a company that thrives on crisis. It has a history of weathering storms – whether they're based in problems of personalities, finances or artistic matters, all of which figured in the RWB's crisis of '79 – and there is no question that the RWB will carry on carrying on. Indeed, according to artistic director Arnold Spohr, a man of boundless optimism, 'we are going to have a glorious new decade'.

The question of Spohr's role in the company is a complex one, and central to this entire issue. He has been in charge of the company for more than half its history, and he is the main link with the traditions of popularity and accessibility on which its great successes of the late 1960s were built. It is Spohr, many believe, who is responsible for that unique RWB character – that sense of excitement and freshness – that did as much as the company's repertoire to make it a world-class attraction.

However, in recent seasons there has been an increasingly forceful push to give the RWB image a more 'serious' edge; and Spohr has been spending less and less time in close contact with the company. Early in 1978, in fact, he passed over responsibility for day-to-day operations to three associates – ballet mistress Hilary Cartwright, production coordinator Salvatore Aiello, who had

already been handling much of the nuts and bolts detail, and David Moroni, head of the company school's professional programme.

It was emphasized that Spohr would stay in overall artistic control – but in the months that followed it became evident that some of the distinctive RWB character was missing, and earlier this year the board asked Spohr to become more closely involved again . . . in effect, to put the sparkle back.

Soon after that, in March, Hilary Cartwright announced her resignation – essentially because she believed she and Spohr had such different approaches to their work, and such strong and contrasting personalities, that the company would suffer.

General manager Edward Reger announced his resignation in mid-April. Officially it was for 'personal reasons' – to take a more active role in his family's business. In fact, it was no secret that there was friction between Reger and his colleagues.

Meanwhile, the company (which had reduced its 1977-78 accumulated deficit of \$300,000 by about \$60,000) was involved in increasingly acrimonious negotiations with Equity over a new contract to replace the one that officially expired on June 30. The dancers wanted parity with the National Ballet of Canada by the end of a three-year agreement; Equity was also asking for a cost of living adjustment clause. The board was resisting both proposals.

At the same time, negotiations were under way for a series of appearances with Nureyev in New York and Winnipeg in July, with five of the company's ballerinas dancing with the Russian. Spohr saw this as a chance for the company to 'get back into the major leagues'. Not everyone shared his enthusiasm, but late in April Spohr told the dancers the contract had been signed. This was not in fact the case. On April 27, the dancers were told the contract hinged on *them*. If they would not agree to do New York at the old contract rates the deal would fall through. The dancers took the position that this was not a decision for them to make, and bounced it back to management and the board. The Nureyev agreement was never completed.

Several of the dancers felt they had been betrayed by



David Moroni - a larger role

Spohr over the New York question. Spohr, for his part, was said - though he later denied it - to have put together a list of 'bad seeds' within the company. And at a 40th birthday party for the company at its final Winnipeg performances of the season, he was heard complaining to non-company members about how certain dancers had 'ruined everything'.

That weekend the resignations began, and Aiello - who had been 'really proud' of the quality of those final Winnipeg performances - watched aghast as the company disintegrated about him. In one day, seven dancers told him they were leaving. They gave him a variety of reasons. He asked them if they would stay if Spohr had less to do with the day-to-day running of the company, and he says most told him they would. He conveyed this to Spohr and to the board; he also said that if the dancers went he would have to go too.

However, these moves became labelled as a power-play by Aiello and a conspiracy to have Spohr ousted. Aiello denies this vehemently, but on May 24 the board announced it was letting Aiello go. (With him went his wife, principal dancer Marina Eglevsky). At the same time, Spohr was confirmed as artistic director and Moroni was confirmed as sole associate artistic director, with responsibility for day-to-day operations.

Spohr says he is sorry to see the dancers go; but he is thrilled, he says, at the changes. Moroni, he says, is an embodiment of the RWB tradition. Personally, he says he will stay on for another couple of years to get what he calls the continuity going, and then, he says, he will definitely move on.

Plans for the upcoming season were announced before the end of June - new works by Hans van Manen and Rudi van Dantzig, the return of Bonnie Wyckoff after a season with the Joffrey, new promotions, new additions from the Moroni arm of the company school.

There is, indeed, no question that the RWB will go on. Some may want to echo Spohr's own toast in his address *in absentia* to the annual meeting in June: 'Here's to all of us probing and forging ahead.'

At the same time, it's perhaps worth spending a moment wondering whether all this forging and probing really needed to be achieved at the expense of so much human disarray.

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In Review

Maria Formolo – Dance Solo Dance Concert

Dance Works Studio Theatre
Regina

14 and 15 July 1979

Canada now harbours a bevy of talented solo artists, all women and mostly working independently. With a nod to Judy Jarvis, an institution in herself, one scans the roster of the old-fashioned type 'independents' – the ones who *dance* – Jennifer Mascal, Sara Shelton, Margie Gillis, Judith Marcuse, Roberta Mohler, Francine Boucher, Terrill Maguire. Maria Formolo fits right in with them. Each is a fine dancer/choreographer in a class by herself but none can yet, as a rule, sustain a full and satisfying concert alone. All have a couple of works that should be seen, and a bunch of other 'stuff' that belongs, if anywhere, in a presentation to friends and intimates, who'll be interested, curious and loving enough to sit through it.

An audience for new solo dance doesn't pay to be loving. It wants to see virtuoso technique. It wants electricity – and it wants to be moved.

It is 14 years since Maria Formolo presented her last entirely solo evening of work, a period during which she has subjected her dance artistry to development in Canada:

first, with Le Groupe de la Place Royale for several years, and then, as co-founder and artistic director of an established Saskatchewan (of all places!) – based modern dance company.

Although a recently published interview reported the artist as having 'something new to say', most of the work in *Letting Go* had been forecast in *Arrest, Search, and Seizure*, her last solo concert given in Chicago in 1965.

The most striking difference between the two solo concerts was not as much in content as, predictably, in the physical presence of Maria Formolo. At 21, she was flat and bony, with no waist or hips to speak of, ribs and pelvis bones visible from 14 rows back. Now we hardly see any bones at all – it's muscle, and line – an actual human being, discernibly a woman.

She distorted motion then, a little like Marcuse sometimes does. Her style was quirky, rough, angular, fast-paced, intent, but pretty much blank-faced, except for occasional glimpses of surprise. Her movement range was broad and won critical acclaim, but as a performer, she had a long way to go.

And she made it. Formolo, in her current solo offering, is superb, and has never performed with more assured authority. When she dances you still don't believe your eyes, and she hardly sweats at all: there is no

laboured breathing, no popping neck muscles on the leaps, no little pauses to spot before the triples.

One is not aware of any stress. The movement flows as naturally unselfconscious as breath itself. One feels that one is witnessing an effortless refinement. Within seconds, the audience is alert, relaxed, knowing whatever she aims to do, she'll do magnificently, all that is supposed to balance will balance, that nothing can possibly go wrong. And nothing does. Formolo does indeed know what she's doing, she doesn't have to think about it anymore, and neither do we. We can all enjoy the whole of it, and not even consider the technique. She is done showing off what she can do – she's past it.

Formolo makes music of technique.

If artistry, as thus described, was all that was intended by Formolo in her solo concert one could end the review right here – on a rave.

There's more to it, of course, than form – somewhere along the line, form theoretically marries content, and maybe the offspring is art. And if that offspring is an achievement, two pieces by maestro Petre Bodeut, *Neolith* and *Incantation* come very close indeed. There is a shadow of nostalgia attached for the maestro is a fine old man from another era and he has become wise, unafraid of things which speak to the 'soul of man'. There is nothing impertinent or presumptuous about his wisdom, or the dances he makes to give it language. His craft is serene.

Neolith, with haunting pan-pipe and organ melodies, is like a primitive stone carving come to life. It is a warm and mellow work, almost sacred, as if the thought of the one who carved it set it apart, gave it life for one brief moment, and its message was a meditation. Formolo lets us know about earth-bound balances here, and slow sustained control – there is a weight and an inexorability to the dance. It is mysterious and profound.

Run Away Moon is set to 'Night of the Four Moons', (George Crumb), which includes as text, a Lorca poem: the child tells the moon to run away but the moon whispers to the child that it is not the moon who is soon to die.

Formolo flies, only to land in sudden,

Maria Formolo in *Run Away Moon*



sharp, prolonged gravity-defying balances. It must be punishing, this dance, but if it is, we never see it.

Run Away Moon is a Strate/Formolo work, and Grant Strate, like Bodeut, has given Formolo a vehicle for her music in this difficult dynamic work. And if Bodeut has made an icon and a mandala, Strate has made a portrait that captures mischief, petulance, and a naively lyric recklessness. It is probably the finest piece ever set on Formolo, and it is her finest vehicle. It reveals her more completely as a person and more thoroughly as an artist than most of her 'home made' work ever will. She dances it as if she knows the reflection of her that it is – and it is masterful.

Letting Go, as choreographed by Peter Boneham, is obviously a very personal and cathartic statement – with an unidentified taped score, which includes unidentified music, and Formolo's unidentified voice talking about all manner of things – something about a mind-over-matter event during which someone convinced her that her arm bent in the wrong way, something about suffering and being trod upon, and some vague ironic comments about practising technique to get at soul.

Letting Go starts out well. The first minutes have firecrackers in the steps, and one expects a build to dynamite – fizzle, yawn. Unless you are a pseudo-intellectual fascinated with attached meanings, ('surreal absurdity; it's hysterical', I heard one audience member comment during intermission), the piece is thin – the beginnings of a serious work and then, a bunch of doodles. If only Formolo were dancing, as in *dancing*, and relying on the artistry that is hers, to say to us, in a way we want to hear, what's on her mind, what's on Boneham's mind. But no.

Formolo brushes her hair, frolics with a black umbrella that eventually gives her a real emotional hassle, sobs horribly and moans, 'why is it so dark?'. When it is nearly over, she looks dishevelled and beautiful for one sitting-center moment, and you become aware that it has been a long time since the first fireworks.

Both Formolo and Boneham are too old for this sort of thing – too mature in their art to throw tripe at an audience. They both know better, and can make good work, but they indulged each other. Aside from their current covens of intimates, this work of theirs is unlikely to be of much interest ever, to anyone.

After intermission, *Incantation* starts off on the right track again. If *Letting Go* was the fall, *Incantation* is a sign of recovery – an aggressive and forceful Roumanian exorcism, displaying the performer as performer, lying back on a cushion of technique, to deliver a very gripping and enthralling experience.

Elements, in five sections, uses natural sounds, Sumac, Partch, Rypdahl and soundscapes from Algonquin Park. The five sections of dance are derived from the five

elements. Formolo performs, as a solo, a piece première on the Dance Works company last spring.

Susanne M. Swibold has created richly coloured projected images for Wood, Fire, Earth, Air and Water, with natural forms juxtaposed, flip-flopped for symmetry. It is a virtuoso exhibition of incredibly fine light imagery. Jung would love it, Freud would swallow his tongue, and no Rorschach test ever took you on the journey into subconsciousness that Swibold's art does.

Meanwhile, back on stage, Formolo is interpreting the elements one by one. Slides come on while she's off-stage alternately adding, layer by layer, section by section, leather cuffs with fringes, beaded belts, feathers to her braids, a deerskin-looking chemise, with bead and tooth jewelry.

The problem has many facets here. One is Indians. Formolo perhaps wishes she had been born an Indian, or sees herself as one, or her designer has an Indian fix. *Somebody*, at any rate, went Native and it was a big mistake – more a mistake than rubbing one's face with burnt cork to give a speech about the oppression of the blacks, because it didn't have that once-removed symbolic quality to it. It was real, serious, deadly earnest – and totally confusing.

(Come to think of it, even the preceding costume for *Incantation* had looked like a Haida Angeliq fashion – what's going on here?)

The choreography seems then, unfinished. One assumes, in good faith, that the dance was to be the unifying factor for all components from *Elements*, but since the dance was locked into a costume design image that *became* a strong visual factor in itself, there wasn't much left to thread it all together.

Like some other Formolo works, this one may develop into something, if the slide imagery and the dancer can find their complement, and if the 'Indian Thing' is visually erased. It's not too late to start over: the sound, the imagery, the dancer, and the elements as conceptual material, were all there. But it's definitely in search of an author.

Prairie Wind is a song (no dancer) which introduces us to the power and glory of Karen Howe, a relatively new vocal talent who writes her own work and belts her music out with drive and power. Hers is a gutsy voice indeed – somewhere between an angry Joni, a subdued Buffy, and some solid free style slaloming all her own. The acoustics bounced lyrics off their own syllables, but while there was doubt as to what was sung, there was no doubt at all that the woman could sing.

But with Karen Howe dressed in a long chemise, with a headband, and a little drum to sing a song with a tom-tom beat, one couldn't help thinking she'd be a marvellous folksinger if only they hadn't tried to make her look like an Indian too.

By the time the song was over, you're sure

that *A Woman's Journey*, composed and sung by Karen Howe, will return Formolo as herself again, unencumbered by the symbols of another culture ... Maybe *that's* the point?

But no, in she comes in Indian clackers made of carved horn, rattling. The *Journey* has some striking movements which bear evidence of maestro Bodeut's influence. As a work, its choreographic strengths are in this influence. But the visual image gets in the way again, and as for meaning – who can get past the stereotype long enough to wonder?

The programme, as a whole, was discursive, and almost backwards in shape, like what happens when one tries to write upside down. One of the first two numbers should have ended the show, preceded by *Incantation*.

We didn't get the best of Formolo's own work as a choreographer on this programme for some reason. Some of the works that were left in mothballs (the exquisite *Whales*, for one example, and that strange sculpture work called *The Nulf Dance*), give us the emotion, the movement, instead of asking us to witness it. That's what makes them worth looking at, and because they're *there*, the new works are by comparison, like a forced march through a bog.

So, it's the same old story. Formolo, like many other dance soloists now at work in Canada, has some work worth looking at. One of these days, a discerning impresario is going to select the best works of each soloist, arrange them all on a two-evening programme called *Woman Dance*, and find himself with full houses and standing ovations in every 600-seat theatre in Canada. And the United States and Europe. There is talent enough here to put the contribution of the dance soloist as artist back into the history of modern dance. (Mr Haber, are you hearing an offer you can't refuse? Judy? Francine? Robbie? Judith? Terrill? Jennifer? Sara? Margie? Maria?)

Meanwhile, applause is a language too complex to be defined, in terms of specific message. Applause for a performer, in her own right, has a timbre, a ring of tribute all its own. The applause for Formolo was enthusiastic, generous, and left no doubt that the ovations were for the dancer as performing artist, whose offering surpassed the weakness of some of the content. The audience had been given images to keep, and the applause continued a long long time.

Canada really should be spreading those images, and gathering that applause all over the world, for its solo dance artists.

VIRGINIA PYNE

The Judy Jarvis Dance and Theatre Company

Hart House Theatre
Toronto

25 - 27 May 1979

Celebration and retrospection were the apparent motivating impulses behind the Judy Jarvis Dance Company's spring performances. The coincidental gathering of several dancers from earlier Jarvis companies complemented this direction. The repertoire included *Flight* from more than a decade ago and the company première of *Nuntius*, created for Dance Works in Regina in 1977. In fact, most of the repertoire dated from the late seventies.

This retrospective mood encouraged a look at the choreographer's development over the past 12 years, the length of time that Jarvis has been working in Toronto. As a Canadian choreographer, Jarvis has persevered longer than most and her work has remained independent of many popular North American choreographic trends (Graham, Cunningham, Tharp, Nikolais). Her almost isolationist commitment to her own conceptions of dance makes itself felt through the idiosyncratic choreographic statements that abound in her pieces. But the commitment to her own conceptions does not always degenerate into idiosyncrasy; it is based on a distinctive, solid approach to dance that has been Jarvis's trademark. The spring performances gave us a chance to examine the perimeters of that approach over the years.

As one of Toronto's modern dance pioneers, Jarvis can be faulted neither for narrowness or a lack of vision. 'Life,' she has stated, is the base of her work — not, as is the case with many modern choreographers, the vocabulary of movement — and to express life's diversity on stage Jarvis employs theatre as an essential ingredient. Mime, masks, storytelling and dancers who function as much as actors as dancers, are included as theatrical elements in most of the pieces.

The subject-matter she chooses is as diverse as her approach. Sometimes she provides simply a mimetic presentation of action, or a situation, and sometimes the subject is presented as an abstract entity, hidden under layers of personal choreographic short-hand and connections.

It is in the latter sort of pieces that many of Jarvis's problems occur. To express a complex subject through her multi-level approach, a number of meshings have to take place: an integration of choreographic idea and dance step; a mesh of dance and theatre, and a mesh of audience and performer so that the performer's message comes across. In some of her pieces (*Three Women* for instance) this occurs, and in others it doesn't. When there is no mesh the dance seems nothing more than incompletely realized ideas that have been



Nuntius by Judy Jarvis

haphazardly distributed between various elements: dance, theatre, mime, etc. The result is a feeling of overkill, without, at the same time, knowing exactly what the message is.

The worst offenders as incompletely realized ideas were the works choreographed in 1978: *Hairy Edge*, *Chester*, and *Shell*.

Hairy Edge was subtitled a satire on show biz, but the satire got lost between the dancers' poses, the ever-present step ladder and the general vacuity of movement. The point just fizzled away as the separate elements refused to jell into any recognizable form. As a piece of choreography it was dull and as a piece of theatre it was oversimplified and overly-dramatic.

Chester was a more lively bit of dancing and better choreographed, but it also suffered from an uneasy balance between theatre and dance. Beginning as dance and ending as theatre the piece tended to cancel itself out as both. The mood and emotions that were initially depicted through movement were suddenly transformed and recast by the introduction of speech. The dramatic jump in the medium and in the role of the dancers came across as a purely personal and arbitrary step — a progression that did not woo the audience into going along with it, but left us in the dark and wondering why.

A common and not entirely successful characteristic of these dances, and of most of the other Jarvis pieces, is the emphasis placed on the dancers as actors, rather than as dancers. Jarvis's choreographic vision demands a more explicit expression than a dancer's moving torso can give, so the Jarvis dancers are tapped for their dramatic abilities as well. This element brings with it certain problems of definition to the audience's relationship with the dancers. If the dancers were less characterized and remained primarily within their role as dancers on stage, the area of concentration — the body — would be easily defined for the audience. But when the dancers are actors as they are

in this company, the audience is compelled to deal continually with the performer's face — since that is where much of the action is going on. The result is a de-emphasis of the choreographic form that should hold the dance together, and it adversely affects the performer-audience relationship by throwing the dancer's own personality and the way of expressing constantly into relief.

When Jarvis uses masks, as she does in *Nuntius* (1977), she effectively solves this problem. The mask neutralizes the dancer's personality, establishes the character's identity and permits the audience to return its attention to the body. This restores a needed focus to the movement and still leaves the area of theatre intact. *Nuntius* gained immeasurably from this technique and generally impressed me as a fine piece of choreography. The flaw was the ending: a clichéd, superficial depiction of modern society's alienation through an all-cast disco workout.

Jarvis, up to now, has been most successful when she has stayed simple and hasn't crammed either too many ideas or too many performing elements into her compositions. A neglected element of the company's 1978 work though is the use of masks. The pieces suffer from an imperfect balance between dance and theatre that the mask has solved for Jarvis before. The pieces also suffered because one sensed that they were hurried, that the choreographic ideas had been translated into movement in a slapdash way that allowed for insufficient attention to the quality of movement itself.

Perhaps because Jarvis is trying to do too much in nearly all areas at this point, she is skimping on herself as a dancer. She is letting theatre and her choreographic ambitions overrule the importance of interesting movement. And perhaps it is time for her as a choreographer to return to the dancer as a dancer rather than as an actor, and to put her skills to more polished ends than they are presently being used for.

CAROLINE GRAY

Toronto Dance Theatre

St. Lawrence Centre
Toronto
25 - 28 April 1979

Company Choreographic Workshop

Company Studio
Toronto
20 - 30 June 1979

Toronto Dance Theatre not only presented a season at the St. Lawrence Centre in April, but also held a Company Choreographic Workshop at the splendid new Winchester Street performing studio at the end of June.

Guest artist for the St. Lawrence season was the Alvin Ailey company's Clive Thompson, who was given less to perform than one expected. Though he came into his own in the 'Yesterday' solo from David Earle's *Ray Charles Suite*, more often than not, he seemed miscast. The role of Theseus in Earle's *Mythos* was a case in point. *Mythos* really belongs to its Phaedra, Claudia Moore, and Theseus (unlike Phaedra) is not a believable character. The stiffly-pleated tunic made Thompson's body look lumpish, and the rigid, brutal movements seemed to constrict him.

In contrast, Thompson did some intriguing things with the role of Her Guest in Patricia Beatty's *Against Sleep*. He gave the impression of a playful and deadly beast who lived in the loops of the bed, and Beatty, with her inimitable dry humour as sharp as ever, easily matched his performance.

Beatty's new work, *Seastill*, was one of the best things the season offered. The green-blue lighting and Ann Southam's evocative score were only part of the magic. Beatty succeeded in creating an underwater lull, an impression of life directed by tides. Water creatures groped on the sandy floor, living by feel. Feeding, copulating, they seemed oddly unspecific in kind, though frogs seemed to emerge at one point, and humorous grungy crabs.

The other première of the season was Peter Randazzo's *The Light Brigade*, with a music collage by David Davis. There was something empty-hearted and lazy about it. Outside props (also by Davis) swallowed some of the sections whole. It gave one a feeling of being gimmicked into laughter.

Its failure made an unsettling contrast to Randazzo's *L'Assassin Menace*, which has never looked better. The brilliant precision of Randazzo's movements as Fantômas had the indefinable comic wizardry of a Jacques Tati character, and as the Lady, Nancy Ferguson proved she excels at the witty surreal.

There were inspired moments in the collaborative work of Ferguson and Earle, *Rejoice in the Lamb*, to Benjamin Britten's setting of the poem by Christopher Smart. Exotic Mesopotamian animal-gods were



Grace Miyagawa, Tanya Evidente in *Opus #4* by David Hochoy

celebrating the pagan exuberance of Smart's psalm. 'When I consider my cat Jeffrey' was choreographically decorated by two complementary versions of Cat, but the double effect was not always in focus. Confused and uneven elements receded when the Old Testament creatures made a stately and bizarre procession offstage at the end.

The Workshop's two programmes offered a predictably uneven range of experiments. One of the best was Karen Duplisea's revision of the unicorn legend, *Re'em*, to music by George Axon. As the maiden, Duplisea was alternately melting and ferocious, and her unicorn, Robert Desrosiers, was more like a satyr than a noble beast. Their chase had a Spenserian ambivalence, as it was never entirely clear who was being hunted. The resolution seemed to occur several times, but one was led to think this was an effect Duplisea intended.

Christopher House's solo for Claudia Moore, *Mantis*, to music by Edgard Varèse, was equally effective. Moore created the self-complications of an insect's existence, its illusory terrors, the hazards of spindly limbs and their queasy strength. The movement began slowly, almost torturingly, with rapid shifts of focus imparting a sense of

tension. Yet, one had a consistent impression of the creature's accelerated metabolic rate. The empty stage always seemed an enclosing and claustrophobic space.

David Hochoy and Dennis Highway danced a *Duet* they had choreographed to the slow movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*. It was a battle of wills or temperaments without physical contact, their exchange of roles drawing on tensions of harmony below the melody. Hochoy's superb power as a dancer was striking.

The refreshing quality of Hochoy's *Opus No. 4*, to music by Poulenc, was not just a matter of a transparent child, Tanya Evidente. Through her ingenuous eyes one saw an adult world that had the complicated quality of Poulenc's music, sometimes silly, sometimes profound.

Wendy Chiles' *Tex-Made* was clever and hilarious: people, and fragments of people, between bedsheets. The zany deadpan activities of Billyann Balay were complemented by a crowd of zombie exercise freaks, and an increasing mound of unaware sleepers. Charles Flanders gobbled munchies as he piled himself into the vertical billboard bed.

Mitch Kirsch's *Tompkin Square* was too strenuously serious, a relentlessly undiluted

version of alienation and inanity in modern life. The painfully grim humour went on and on.

In Claudia Moore's *Isis and Nefertari*, Ferguson and Moore were figurines or hieroglyphs inside a pyramid. Their movements were flat and hypnotic, except for a sudden rush of animated freedom towards the end. The explosive release abruptly pulled back on itself, and closed. It was nothing if not enigmatic.

Unfortunately, I missed Robert Desrosiers' *Dream in a Dream* which was only performed twice. A friend has described it to me vividly and favourably as a dance-theatre piece of 'Lindsay Kempified surrealism'. Using only two dancers, Desrosiers and Mitch Kirsch, and live, at times deafening music, it apparently combined in its extreme range of dynamics and its overtones of Asian martial arts, a state of human desolation, disorientation and despair. I can only look forward to its next performance.

TDT could hardly be accused of neglecting the search for new choreographic talent. What appears to be a policy of refusing no one the chance to try, though it might wear the audience at times, needs no other vindication than the work of House, Hochoy, Duplisea, and Chiles. One looks forward to seeing them fill out the company's repertoire in distinctive new directions.

ELLEN SHEARER

Ace Buddies

Leah Posluns Studio
26 - 29 April 1979

Three Working

15 Dance Lab
18 - 20 May 1979

Recent Pasts

Harbourfront
24 May - 2 June 1979

Toronto

Toronto witnessed a dance-packed spring this year. We were reminded once again of the wide spectrum of method and intention refracted by the work of this city's modern dance choreographers.

Three recent graduates of York University, Anita Shack, Christopher House and Joe Bietola, presented *Three Working*, a tightly woven evening of fast action and clear-eyed exuberance in the cavernous dark space of 15 Dance Lab. *Oro Buono Ora Cattivo*, choreographed and danced by Joe Bietola with Anita Shack, was based on varied sequences of movement that repeat, twist backwards and turn inside out. This wildly paced harmony often intersected and suddenly and quite magically the two dancers would move in unison or in canon. Recognizable

everyday gestures — throwing dice, spitting, slicking back hair — were sewn into the action. Whether turned sideways or on the floor, the two kept their gaze fixed brazenly to the front, examining their audience as closely as we did them. The piece ended in a cacophony of wildly flung limbs, scuffling jazz shoes and out-of-breath breathing.

They Pitched Camp was as dramatic in content as *Oro Buono Ora Cattivo* was motion-oriented. Based on images from Cocteau's *Les Enfants Terribles*, this work by Christopher House did indeed detail a brother-sister relationship in which love, hate, jealousy and tenderness battle. The action centred around a large red chair, in which pyjama-clad Anita and Christopher confront each other playing games that alternate between the playful and the violent. One minute they were somersaulting across the chair and the next Christopher was aiming a peashooter at Anita or pinning her to the floor in a gruesome head lock. There followed a lost-in-the-forest sequence in which they moved away from their home base chair to search about furtively to the sound of crickets. Forced out of fear to call a temporary truce, they curled up together on the floor. Yet, as soon as one of them showed the least sign of passivity, the other retaliated and the next minute they were rolling across the floor. In the end they both slumped down exhausted on the chair. Brother looks at sister and sister looks away.

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The work is tremendously complicated motionally and emotionally and we sit in suspense throughout, never sure of what will happen next. It is an exceptional piece. Unfortunately Christopher House also showed himself capable of exceptional narcissism. He has performed *Timpán Reel* several times over the past winter. Set to traditional Irish music, this solo appears to have little purpose other than to display Christopher's commendable arabesque, bare chest and limpid brown eyes.

Narcissism appeared as one of the distinguishing features of the Ace Buddies concert a few weeks earlier. This group of three women, Holly Small, Maxine Heppner and Robyn Simpson, have been giving an annual concert in Toronto for the last three years. They have been noted in the past for their intriguing compositional concepts and a wry humour. Yet this year one was struck not only by an excessive display of self-indulgence but also a general lack of dancing. The programme had an incredible number of pieces so bland in consistency and with such uninflected dynamic that it soon became difficult to distinguish beginning from end and one piece from the next. This featureless evening quickly became a blur of flashy costumes, bird-brain stares and sultry nymphet poses. In fact most of the dancers performed with such an embarrassing coyness and excessive affectation that I can only hope this had not been the choreographers' deliberate intention. Two redeeming pieces on the programme were *Where Does Disco* and *Lost and Found*, both by Holly Small. The first was an attention-grabbing opening number in which five women in silky red and blue pyjamas built interesting line patterns, solo and group back-up formations to strobe lights and a disco beat. *Lost and Found* was a work quite opposite in tempo and volume. In this solo Holly created a mood of thoughtful melancholy to piano improvisation by Peter Penev. Clad in white and with an introspective focus she explored the vast number of ways in which one can locomote along the ground.

A retrospective of experimental dance in Toronto over the past six years was the working premise behind Recent Pasts. Missing Associates opened the series, followed by Anna Blewchamp, Janice Hladki, Johanna Householder, Louise Garfield and Margaret Dragu, each offering us slices of their recent work. This five-programme event was sponsored by A Space and took place at Harbourfront, a lakefront setting as windswept and refreshing as the dance material being offered. A videotape library, workshops and a choreographers' forum were included in the programming and an exhibit of photographs and dance posters lined three sides of the performance space. It was frustrating not to be able to glean any information from this display about the chronological development of the artists. Dancers often neglect to date their posters

and programmes, an unfortunate occurrence, for more often than not this is all the evidence left after the event. The substantiality of the Recent Pasts series did point though to the acceptance that new dance is achieving in Toronto as a viable art form.

One work that stood out in my mind for its cool clarity, its clean-cut intentions — precisely areas in which Ace Buddies failed — was Janice Hladki's *A Party*, (1977). The piece, full of *double entendres* about little girls playing make believe and young women preening themselves for the big date, begins with three women in fifties-style party dresses travelling diagonally across the stage, a lit sparkler in each hand. They move with a crystalline austerity and when the sparklers go out they continue their many lateral journeys, accumulating patterns of deliberate, sparing gesture. They pull on elbow-length white gloves, rustle their many-layered crinolines and finally, spreading them about themselves, sit down to watch a home movie of little girls at a birthday party some 20 years ago. We see that the three performers relate by the colour of their dresses to three 'main characters' in the movie. When the movie is over they abstract one of the actions of the little girls, simulating exclamations over presents and playing party games, their attention focussed on the central woman in yellow. Through these concise vignettes emerges an abstraction of physical and gestural accessories that create the feminine illusion. The two friends begin to wind party streamers around the woman in yellow, decorating her as one would a Christmas tree. She intones in a deadpan protest the lines of a popular fifties love song, 'I'll cry if I want to, I'll cry cry cry', and we see that her friends are not merely decorating her but trussing her up. I remember *A Party* as a unique experience; its eccentric associations and inventions linger long in the mind.

KATHRYN BROWNELL



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The Royal Ballet

Place des Arts
Montreal
3 - 8 July 1979

There were mob scenes at the box office the night Nureyev opened in New York City with the National Ballet of Canada in tow. There were gaping holes in the parterre the same night when Britain's Royal Ballet began its first visit to Montreal since Expo 67. Though last-minute sales were brisk, the company eventually played its eight performances to 66% houses. Since the Royal on tour is a mammoth operation, involving 75 dancers, 1,200 costumes, 3,000 pairs of shoes and over 130 tons of scenery, break even point would have been beyond the 100% mark. Causes for the poor houses are ascribed variously to the Ayatollah Khomeini: because the July 4th gas shortage kept Americans from neighbouring states at home; the high price of tickets (\$25 top); too-traditional programming (three *Swan Lakes*, three *Sleeping Beauties* and two triple bills); bad timing (they preceded the Bolshoi by a fortnight); and lack of guest artists. The latter was a matter of policy. The Royal's new artistic director, Norman Morrice, has declared a moratorium on superstars in order to give the company's own principals a chance to shine and to scotch the insidious trend which was turning the Royal Ballet (in Wayne Eagling's phrase) into a 'Rent-a-Corps'.

So much for the brave rhetoric.

What in fact accounted for the quirky casting was ballerina Merle Park's March foot operation which, though said to be highly successful, has reduced her workload considerably. A scheduled Aurora was given to Marguerite Porter; Park appeared only twice: she took the Fonteyn role in both performances of *Birthday Offering* and danced the first of *La Fin du Jour*.

Merle Park: *La fin du jour*



Of course, any Park is better than no Park at all but her absence pointed up what Dame Ninette de Valois recently called, with her customary tact, 'a gap between great dancers' and it made for some strange bedfellows.

In the opening night *Swan Lake*, Anthony Dowell, pensive elegance incarnate, was paired with Lesley Collier, a soubrette par excellence, whose style, body and temperament suit neither Odette nor Odile, nor Dowell. Dowell's Act I variation was the highlight of the evening and possibly of the decade. Reflective, understated, it was thought sculpted into movement.

Next day a funeral matinée was an all-Canadian affair with Vancouver's Jennifer Penney a blond and brittle Odile and an Odette souffrante, solicitously fetched and carried by Montreal-born Wayne Eagling (a more accessible Siegfried than Dowell's Hamlet-like presence) whose clean line seems in danger of being eroded by bad posture and mannered dancing.

Swan Lake finally came together at the third performance with David Wall partnering Monica Mason. These two excellent artists, not made for each other, proved that necessity is the mother of invention. Mason is skirting 40 but youth in the great roles is more of a hindrance than an advantage. She is not tall, lithe or lissome. Her Odile was an iron butterfly, dispensing a glittering cascade of steps one could barely follow with the naked eye. Her Odette was taken at a slow, dreamy pace, with extreme delicacy. The strong profile and great black eyes, reminiscent of Picasso's Jacqueline, compel attention. Her Act II exit was a marvel to behold: she literally rippled all over. Wall, initially plagued by balance problems, was a manly, regal prince, not beyond a passing flirtation with the Act I waltzers; a sunny, self-possessed prince, not the frightened mother's boy Eagling had given us earlier in the day.

The strength of this company is the Company: the discipline and musicality of the corps, the ballon of the boys, the regimented etherealness of the girls. Much of the opening night disaster and subsequent problems can be laid at the door of the Heinz 57 varieties local pickup orchestra which defied the best efforts of all the Royal's conductors to elicit anything resembling music.

After the ups and downs of the Swans, the triple bill brought us into the 20th century. *Birthday Offering*, Ashton's 1956 *pièce d'occasion*, is a series of brief, whimsical variations for seven tiaraed ladies, a mazurka for their men and a nice pas de deux in the middle for Wall and Park. There is just enough detail to establish character but Ashton never pushes; his choreography is fast and playful, secure in the knowledge that his dancers can do anything he wants, so why make them leap through hoops to prove it? One is not battered into submission by the sheer exertion of the dancers; rather one is amused and charmed. Even

Glazunov seems more palatable than usual.

The crowning glory of the week was Ashton's most recent major ballet, excerpted from Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, about a family being fragmented by the presence of a young tutor who acts as a magnet for all the female members of the household. The central roles are taken by Dowell, as the young man, and Marguerite Porter as the bored Russian wife summering in the country. Porter is a tall, ravishing creature whose every movement unfolds in stages. Never eclipsed by Lynn Seymour's original — and quite different — concept of the role, Porter is unfailingly, innately graceful. Her body ebbs and flows with the exaggerated eccentricity of high fashion models: limpid and dramatically wrapped in melancholy. Dowell, who had not danced the part in a year, acted up a storm. When, rebuffed, he pursued her to the couch, I had visions of Stanley Kowalski just barely being held in check. It always comes as a surprise that superstars become superstars because they do give more than mere mortals. The same of course holds true of Ashton. The man is incapable of a wrong move. And for all his restrained good taste, dealing in pretty pictures is not enough; his characters constantly reveal their feelings in choreographic asides: a fluttering adolescent heart is echoed in the featheriest of battements, a few dipping steps taken from Russian folk motifs bring the steppes into the house, and Porters' long white hands, carving wild designs in the air, are almost past dance and border on neurotic 'acting out'.

The evening closed with Kenneth Macmillan's *La Fin du Jour*, premiered in mid-March. It is MacMillan's update on *Les Biches*: a high camp exercise in contortionist athleticism for 10 men and women and two pairs of soloists. In a programme note he alludes to the decadent thirties, mindless fashionplates sealed in an endless

Jennifer Penney and Wayne Eagling: *La fin du jour*



cocktail hour, in an attempt to ignore the world's headlong rush toward the holocaust. There has always been a dark side to MacMillan's work and it can be argued that his stated intention is borne out by the cool narcissism of the piece. It could also be argued that the great emptiness in *La Fin du Jour* reflects not an era bereft of a vision for the future but, sadly, a lack of choreographic invention. It is a showy piece, provocatively costumed by Ian Spurling, which utilizes Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G major* and treats its bodies like objects in a dream sequence.

The Royal ended its visit with three performances of the encyclopaedic new *Sleeping Beauty*, with choreography by Sergueyev out of Petipa with several assists by Ashton, MacMillan and Lopukhov, in a production where it is hard to see the forest for the trees. There are too many frolicking maidens, bucolic lads and a positive surfeit of fairies; the whole thing is cumbrously over-produced which makes it seem twice as long as it is. Fears of overtime costs had caused great bleeding chunks to be excised, primarily the Awakening Pas de Deux and Florimund's trip across the cyclorama, but even so it ran almost three hours.

In the first cast Jennifer Penney displayed a crispness that smacked slightly of let's-get-on-with-it and a positively awesome balance, while David Wall was an engaging though pretty dumb Prince. Eagling danced an agile Blue Bird but all of them were eclipsed by Monica Mason's magnificently sulphurous, fire-breathing Carabosse. The Sunday matinée was something of a farm team affair. Collier was a hard-edged Aurora partnered by an elastic Mark Silver.

The last Beauty was a revelation. Marguerite Porter, who had been sublime in *Month*, was anything but the girlish princess the part demands; Eagling on the other hand revealed unexpected flashes of humour which rendered the usually cardboard Florimund into a bewitched, bothered and bewildered youth. In the final Grand Pas de Deux, despite a rumoured foot injury, he danced like a demon. He also provided continuous vocal support to Porter who was dancing only her third Beauty ever, and the first in 18 months.

Despite a mercurial week, the Royal is still one of the great companies of the world. Whatever criticism one advances, it must be understood – and especially in the Canadian context – that one starts criticizing at a level where ultimate praise begins for most other companies. It is true that they did not put their best feet forward in Montreal, and toward the end of the week the company was obviously ragged with exhaustion, but they left behind plenty to ponder until their next visit, possibly two years hence.

Besides, just as one swallow does not herald spring, so one turkey does not signify Götterdämmerung.

KATI VITA



Frank Anderson, Ib Andersen

Soloists of the Royal Danish Ballet

City Center
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19 June - 1 July 1979

Auguste Bournonville was born in Copenhagen on 21 August, 1805, and entered early upon the career his father called 'la carrière la plus glorieuse du monde', that of a dancer. Antoine Bournonville was himself a dancer, and his son combined his influence with a sensibility matured in Paris in the 1820s, where he read Noverre and studied with Vestris. Auguste returned to Denmark in 1830, displeased with decadent trends in Romantic ballet and the denigration of the male dancer, and was until 1877 director of the Royal Danish Ballet. In his work with this company he forged at once a link in the chain of the Romantic ballet, and a unique style – an artistic heritage passed on through several generations of Danish dancers to the present day.

Bournonville never achieved international renown in his lifetime, and fully expected his ballets to die out after a time. In fact, several of his works are familiar to audiences throughout the world – particularly his version of Filippo Taglioni's *La Sylphide* – and the celebration this year of the centenary of his death includes the production of a number of works long out of repertory. Of the eight surviving ballets, and one pas de deux, six will be given by the Royal Danish Ballet in Copenhagen during the week of 24 - 30 November: *Konservatoriet*, *Far From Denmark*, *A Folk Tale*, *The King's Volunteers on Amager*, *Kermesse in Bruges*, *Napoli*, *La Sylphide*, *La Ventana* and the pas de deux from *The Flower Festival in Genzano*. As an offshoot of this project, soloists of the company have been on tour, presenting excerpts from these and other ballets, as well as miscellaneous pieces.

The most striking feature of their season was of course the style, and after that its context, which one tried to deduce from these excerpts, much as archaeologists in the 1920s evoked Greece and Egypt from tantalising fragments of stone and papyrus.

Bournonville style requires of the dancer roundness and suppleness, the forward inclination and stillness of the upper body, and great freedom and speed below. It stresses *batterie*, elevation and *ballon*; sudden shifts of speed and direction, and above all artlessness and deceptive simplicity in performance, unlike the emphatic Russian school.

As if anticipating that we would want a summation of his technique, Bournonville created *Konservatoriet* in 1849. The original ballet was a romantic comedy in two acts, featuring a scene in a French ballet school, reminiscent of Paris Conservatoire where he studied. The scene was arranged as a *divertissement* in 1941 by Valborg Borchsenius and Harold Lander. In this form it is now seen in the repertory of several companies. It is a pure dance period piece requiring not only uniform academic excellence but an aptly conveyed historical atmosphere. It is organised into *divertissements* made up of classroom movements, from *plié* and *battement* through to complicated *enchaînement* in which the rudimentary structure of actual ballets can be glimpsed.

Hans Beck, an accomplished Bournonville dancer at the turn of the century, and also a director of the company, made a similar piece in *Bournonville Etudes*, a composite of exercises from the Bournonville school's Monday to Saturday classes (instituted by Beck), which concentrate on different steps and problems in technique each day, in an ascending scale of difficulty. The touring company alternated this piece with *Konservatoriet* as a programme opener.

For the remainder of each programme, the dancing left the salon and came into the theatre (Bournonville's own distinction in

another connection) with solos, pas de deux and divertissements, some of them all that remains of the ballets of which they were originally a part. These most clearly reveal the choreographer's great range of invention with a limited number of steps and keen eye for detail, as well as the modifications in style that have taken place over the years.

In his autobiography, *My Theatre Life* (recently translated into English by Patricia N. McAndrew and available from the Wesleyan University Press), Bournonville writes, 'whenever I read a story, the characters come alive in my imagination, with definite physiognomies, costumes and surroundings ... In this way, a whole host of *tableaux vivants* have been stored in my mind. They have become one with my art, and from the moment I took up composition, they have always been ready at hand'. All Bournonville dances are character dances to this extent. (Discussing the actors of his day, he always reserved his highest approbation for those virtuosi who could command a wide range of personalities). Some of the individual solos and pas de deux are nationalistic vignettes. *La Lithuanienne* (1844) is a solo for a ballerina, pert and precise as a doll, but warmer in feeling. Unlike Petipa, Bournonville does not conscript an indigenous dance style and change its rhythm and emphasis for his work, but uses his own movement vocabulary, embellished with gestures and suggestive images. In this piece there is a frequent use of *relevé*, accompanied by heel clicking and saluting, so that the dancer appears constantly to be standing to attention. *Polka Militaire* (1842) originally for two couples but given here with one, uses the same devices to something like the same ends. The 'Mirror Dance' from *La Ventana* is more subtle: a Spanish Señorita dances with her reflection in the mirror and dreams of the Señor she has just met. The swaying back is 'Spanish', but is also characteristic of the pleasurable narcissism of a woman contemplating love.

Perhaps the most complete character sketch is in the 'Jockey Dance' from *From Siberia to Moscow*, revived through films made by Danish court photographer Peter Elfelt in 1905. It is all that we have of Bournonville's last ballet. 'The Jockey Dance' is one of the great small comic dances in the world, compressing with Chaplinesque wit the attitude and style of English riding and equestrian life, as Bournonville perceived it, into a 10-minute gallop across the stage. The two jockeys enter side by side, at a decorous canter, show off for one another by demonstrating *retirés*, belabour their own and each other's mounts, get run away with, suddenly recall the race and pursue each other into the wings. In the 1905 film the dance is performed by Gustav Uhlendorff and Richard Jensen, both short men, with masculine ferocity. At City Center I saw Ib Andersen and Bjarne Hecht, both tall and long legged. Andersen danced with mischievous bouyancy, and Hecht, who has an



Peter Martins, Eva Kloborg

India-rubber face, seemed bemused to be on a horse at all, but determined to make the best of it. It was interesting to see how much the shape of the steps and comic balance changed as a result.

Naturalism is not only part of the Bournonville schooling, but of the structure of the ballets. These are essentially about communities — villages, countries, and divertissements and pas de deux emerge logically from the action — there are no set pieces. In his work, as in his writings, Bournonville seems to combine 18th century rationality — a belief in harmony and the social order — with 19th century romanticism, with its isolated heroes and lure of the fabulous. In the pas de deux a limited vocabulary of movements produces dances of very different modes and moods. The man has much more to do here than in Russian classical ballet. The partners are always dancing for and with each other, so details of their relationship change the meanings of gestures we see repeated over and over throughout the works. Just to document one example, there always appears a moment when the girl withholds her hand from her partner, who extends his in expectation or supplication. In the pas de deux from *The Kermesse in Bruges*, Act I, the lovers are young, innocent and uncertain of each other. The hand withheld is an image of shyness, and it is given as a token of trust. There is very little touching, the boy and girl admire one another's dancing, he is diffident and courteous. At one performance I saw this was danced by Lise Stripp and Bjarne Hecht, the youngest members of the touring company, who were ideally suited to it.

Bournonville made a divertissement and pas de deux for Rossini's *William Tell*. The dancers wear Tyrolean clothes and perform every movement with one hand on their suspenders — another national 'character' gesture of the kind which appears in *La*

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L'arabesque. The movement is bold and competitive. When the girl withholds her hand here, she has her back to her partner in affronted independence. The pas de deux is integrated with the divertissement for two couples, so even in this small work Bournonville suggests a community situation.

The *Flower Festival* pas de deux is Bournonville's most celebrated. The couple are intimate and daring with one another, they touch frequently, and the girl swoons back into the boy's arms. Their contained sensuality is similar to that of Lise and Colas in Frederick Ashton's 'Bournonville' ballet, *La Fille Mal Gardée*. The tentative hand gesture here is frankly teasing.

During the season the pas de deux were often danced by the Royal Danish Ballet's prodigal sons, Peter Martins, Peter Schaufuss and Adam Luders, who highlight the intricacies of Bournonville style by the changes in their own. Schaufuss has been dancing in bravura roles for years, and he is extremely vigorous and raw, hurtling into every movement and creating points of impact in passages that are meant to flow effortlessly. Adam Luders has the same problem with Bournonville that he has at New York City Ballet, of being too careful in his preparations and unfinished in his technique. Peter Martins danced superbly, with all the technical aplomb the roles call for, but I could imagine him throwing a full-scale production out of balance by his larger-than-life quality. He managed to suggest his weight and size without using them, where Bournonville wanted the duel with gravity to go unnoticed. Even among the regular company members, if one went looking for a consistent style one found instead a group of individualists. Bournonville tradition is unbroken but the style is not. After the departure of Harold Lander from the company in 1948, it was opened to more international influences, especially the Russian influence of Vera Volkova. Doing Bournonville on pointe had already placed an emphasis on balances and precision which were not there initially. New teaching methods and the change in dancers' bodies from the short fuller forms of the last century to the taller, leaner Balanchine type of today has completely altered the line as well. Documentation indicates that Bournonville *à terre*, used for instance, low attitudes but rarely an arabesque. Yet now every pas de deux we see includes a moment in which the woman is supported in *arabesque penchée*.

Both this and the point work are trends the choreographer would almost certainly have deplored. 'What warrant can be found in the entire realm of art for a leg lifted to the height of the shoulder, nay, even to the crown of the head? Is it a pleasing impression that is produced by an entire solo *sur les pointes*, and by those leaps which end in a squat?' The actual transmission of the works fell into decline after the 1950s and particularly during the directorship of Flemming Flindt, who wanted to broaden the company's scope. The style was no longer a birthright. Many of these dancers are learning it for the first time.

The tour's most promising young soloist is Ib Andersen, who combines a lovely technique with a gift for characterization and contagious zest for dancing, although he sometimes, in more energetic moments, loses the rounded contours the style needs. Frank Andersen and Arne Villumsen also danced well, Villumsen managing credibly the extremely difficult divertissement from *The Kermesse In Bruges*, with its triple tours en l'air into arabesque. The company has a superb stylist in Linda Hindberg, a graceful and lucid dancer whose feet seem suspended in the air between each step. Eva Kloborg is strong and flamboyant; too knowing for something like *The Kermesse in Bruges*, Act 1 pas de deux, but delightfully spirited in *William Tell*. Niels Kehlet is a splendid actor, as convincing and absorbed in playing the tambourine for the 'Tarantella' in *Napoli* as in directing the class in *Konservatoriet*. Each programme ended with the pas de six and Tarantella from *Napoli*, Act III. The ballet was Bournonville's homage to Italy, but it seems particularly emblematic of all his work. The bride and groom are at the centre of an animated community, and everyone has a role to play. With deceptive spontaneity they thrust the dancing onto one another, so that it is with great surprise that distinct couples emerge for the finale. It is an irresistibly joyous work, like the gift of dancing given to the hero of *The Kermesse in Bruges*, which disarms his enemies. It also reminds us that Bournonville is a living tradition, offering sentiment without sentimentality, wit without cruelty, serenity without naiveté. In this, the year of his centenary, we can perhaps do no better than Bournonville bids us: 'Remember me with kindness and say: *Le style c'est l'homme!*'

SARAH MONTAGUE

The San Francisco Ballet War Memorial Opera House San Francisco May 1979

Only a few years ago this company took to the streets with a tin cup to raise money for its production of *Romeo and Juliet*. 1979 finds it flush, and by the time I arrived in May it had already aired three of five new ballets with commissioned scores and full decors.

A lot of federal money went into Michael Smuin's ambitious Indian project, and the Shaklee Corporation provided additional funding. *A Song For Dead Warriors* realizes a long-term fascination of this Montana-born choreographer with the paradox of the American Indian — his past glories and the ignominy of the present. Glory is easy to depict, but ignominy invariably presents problems on the stage. Norbert Vesak tried to frame the plight of Rita Joe in dance terms several years ago, and the stylized ballet trappings became its principal embarrassment. Smuin takes nothing from the academy that obviously came from there and makes us feel that his dances spring entirely from colloquial sources. Most of them are striking. But the dramatic passages are ugly, and at least two are needlessly disgusting.

The work is danced entirely behind a scrim, on which textures and literal images are projected. One episode depicts a dance in the smoke-filled meeting hall on the reservation, and the tacky chain of light-bulbs seems suspended in a nicotine fog. But soon we tire of effects — knowing that they are infinite in their potentials — and wish that Mr Smuin would put away his new slide projector and get back to the job.

There are authentic Indian dances (Smuin researched and consulted extensively to realize the work and lists a hundred credits as his sources), and some genuine native music is interpolated with an inchoate score by Charles Fox, who writes generally for the media.

Antonio Lopez and Tina Santos danced to exhaustion in the semi-darkness. Both are adept at performing the frenetic dance passages that Smuin uses as pepper in his compositions. But the rape is all too clinical, and the letting of blood for a scalping (no red streamers here, as in *Shinju*, to depict a stylized demise) is of dubious taste. Willa



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Kim's costumes are enchanting. The fringes on them become erect with each turn, and in a multiple spin they remain horizontal, like arrows fixed in the dancers' bodies. With such an effective way to excite, why use buckets of blood?

John McFall also did a lot of study for his new ballet, *Le Rêve de Cyrano* and came up with a more muted offering. Fidelity Savings and Loan Association offered funds; these obviously went into the gorgeous three-dimensional pile of bold arches and sky-blue drapes, which cried for more traffic than Mr. McFall could produce. Joaquin Nin-Culmell wrote a piquant score like those Rieti used to put together on Italian opera melodies.

It is a chamber ballet for three characters and a small corps of males who serve as cavaliers. The electric Attila Ficzer has both the sensitivity and physical eloquence to do as much as he could in portraying a character noted for extravagant declamation. But shortly McFall runs out of material and has little left for Jim Sohm and Allyson Deane, who play Christian and Roxane as decorative props in a dance monologue. Roland Petit had no better luck in bringing *Cyrano* to the ballet stage some 20 years ago. At present, McFall seems much more secure in the abstract ballets he does so well.

The company performs the early Balanchine works with a sort of race memory, as if facets of performance long forgotten have been preserved in a time capsule which the Christensen brothers have guarded since their participation in the genesis of the works for the American Ballet and Ballet Caravan. For years they used the Berman decors from the original *Concerto Barocco* of 1941, which Balanchine gave them when he found them too elaborate for his own purposes. Now this ballet and *Serenade* are danced in white costumes against a blue cyclorama. I can't remember more eloquent renditions of these pieces. Lynda Meyer was the first soloist in both, soft as silk but with wells of inner power. Gina Ness was the livelier counterpart in *Barocco*, and the graceful Betsy Erickson was second ballerina in *Serenade*. All three are blondes — a rare commodity in any company. Ficzer led Erickson in the waltz pas de deux — an unlikely partnership because of differences in height and physique, but one which achieved sheer harmony.

Jerome Robbins' *Circus Polka* had its San Francisco première and served as a show-piece for the kids of the school. Prepared for the worst, I could not stop grinning after Richard Cammack cracked his whip and the first 16 baby-ballerinas pranced in. By the time all 48 prepubescents had strutted their stuff and settled in a formation of the composer's initials, replete with two periods, we were shouting for an encore. Stravinsky's five-minute raspberry to Franz Schubert, originally composed for 50 elephants, has served the San Francisco Ballet well.

LELAND WINDREICH

Dancers Dancing

Herbert Migdoll
Scarborough: Prentice-Hall
1978

Herbert Migdoll, an established New York-based photographer, has produced an exciting, lavish collection of dance images spanning a 14-year period. *Dancers Dancing*, also designed and written by the photographer, seems destined to occupy a prominent space on the coffee table by virtue of its size alone. The volume measures a whopping 11 1/2" by 16" but regrettably contains merely 29 images.

It is debatable whether a photographer should be so totally involved in the design of his own book. My feeling is that in this instance, the presentation of the images suffers somewhat from the excesses of both design and accompanying text, which perhaps draws too much attention to themselves. The general tone of the writing, as exemplified by Migdoll's repeated use of the word 'successful' in reference to his photographs seems somewhat pretentious and unnecessary.

The book is an experimental tour de force and on this level succeeds admirably, illustrating the wide range of gimmickry at the disposal of the inventive photographer. Migdoll has displayed an ability to handle more than half a dozen of these devices, ranging from the conventional to the bizarre. Studio and outdoor studies, performance action shots (both traditional and experimental), solarizations, montages, screened studies, multiple imagery, time lapse shots, etc. . . . most of which are visually arresting. The cover and other studio studies have a rather catalogue-ish effect, resulting from the flat, undramatic lighting and are, perhaps, the least effective images.

'My intention is to capture on a two-dimensional surface some of the electricity generated by the live performance of a dancer, and to create an image with its own distinctive spirit. . . . I feel that by extending the component of color through solarization, or the component of time by time-lapse studies, I am able to create imagery that relates to the initial excitement I personally experience when viewing the dance', explains Migdoll.

The challenge to any artist whose subject matter is dance is to recreate (within the confines of his medium) some element or essence of the original dance experience. To be truly successful, the image must stand on its own merits as either an objective or impressionistic statement. Most artists are identifiable by a uniformity of style. Perhaps diversity is this photographer's trademark. He succeeds on different levels.

The Japanese color printing is superb. At \$11.95, the book is a bargain and should be in everyone's collection.

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The award to the successful choreographer will be \$3000 plus travel and in-residence expenses to enable the successful candidate to spend approximately six weeks at The Banff Centre during July/August 1980, working with advanced students and professional dancers, using the production and staging facilities of The School in order to prepare the work for presentation as part of the annual Dance/Ballet Banff Festival of the Arts production.

Submissions to be made not later than January 15, 1980. Final selection to be announced March 31, 1980.

For Application Forms and further details write:

The Clifford E. Lee
Choreography Award Committee
c/o Ken Madsen, Associate Director
The Banff Centre
Banff, Alberta T0L 0C0.

The Shapes of Change: Images of American Dance

Marcia Siegel

Boston: Houghton Mifflin

1979

Dance is an activity which confronts both performers and audience with the stark realization of how moments of experience die continually in time. Dancing is, among many other things, all about time. Marcia Siegel knows this in the very marrow of her bones. The titles of her two previously published collections of reviews and critical essays, *At the Vanishing Point* and *Watching the Dance Go By*, testify to what might almost be described as an obsessive pre-occupation. These titles amount to a lament: each danced moment is, in an absolute sense, irretrievable, vanishing at the instant of its birth, allowing one nothing more than to watch passively as it, quite literally, goes by. In Siegel's mind there is clearly a connection between the evanescence of dance, (and the passive helplessness of the observer), and the need to do something to preserve its experience in a way that goes far beyond collections of reviews. In *The Shapes of Change*, Marcia Siegel has met this need and, in the process, made a major contribution to American dance scholarship.

'I began this book', she writes in her introduction, 'because of a desperate and continuing sense that not enough was being done to impede the extinction of yesterday's dance.' The essential and inherent ephemerality of dance may provide much of its power to fascinate, to give audience and performer a sense of the uniqueness of the theatrical event, of the purity it enjoys in a continual present.

However, because primary historical evidence for dance is generally scarce, it is hard to construct an objective record of the past. The figures and events of the early years assume mythic proportions and properties. For those who love to deal in the stuff of legend, no more agreeable state of affairs could be imagined. But, for an historian of

culture as committed and hard-nosed as Siegel, it simply will not do. The sense of urgency to give American dance its history has thus dictated the form and focus of an exacting inquiry.

The task posed many complex and inter-related questions. What were the cultural circumstances surrounding the appearance of dance in American society? Who were its first exponents and what was the nature of their contributions? Above all, what were the trends, forms, styles and aesthetic concerns that made American dance specifically American?

Marcia Siegel has taken a tough route to reach the answers to these questions. Setting aside the more convenient methods of classification, such as the generic typologies 'ballet' and 'modern', and the linear sequences of a mere chronology, she has instead chosen to organize historical events and processes against a thematic framework, crossing the lines of demarcation between the so-called 'academic' and 'expressive' forms of dance, between choreographic styles and tendencies and the personalities of their creators.

After burrowing into as much available documentary evidence as possible, on film and videotape, in contemporary commentary and more comprehensive critical evaluations, and after much travelling to see revivals of early works, she has emerged with 50 or so 'signal' choreographies and has grouped them according to the particular developments and discoveries they embody.

She begins with an account of the conditions of American culture at the turn of the century, chronicling its responses to the decayed sophistication of European art and thought. Particularly she notes the reactions of a deeply conservative society to the exoticism of the Diaghilev Ballet and to the emigrés drawn from the ranks of its fragmented offspring. In 'The Denishawn Succession', Siegel turns to the grandparents of American modern dance and to the peculiar middle-ground of sensibility they inhabited. 'Beginnings' deals with five early works of the first generation of prime movers, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Helen Tamiris. 'Rituals' examines Graham's

Primitive Mysteries and Humphrey's *The Shakers* while 'Neoclassicism I' launches bravely into a study of early formalist experiments in American choreography, discerning lines of connection and divergence between two works each of Humphrey and Balanchine.

All of these analytical forays open with precise discussions of the cultural and aesthetic contexts, then proceed to exhaustive reckonings of specific examples. Siegel's solid familiarity with the circumstances of creative motivation is apparent throughout. The rich detailing of each thematic problem is maintained in the analysis of its corresponding elements in particular works. The author has that enviable capacity for regarding the part without losing sight of the whole. The perspicacity of her judgements, the wit and quickness of her eye, and the incisiveness of her arguments are everywhere in full view. She is able to catch sight of the most delicate of choreographic features and to draw valuable conclusions from the clues they contain.

In the two chapters entitled 'Crystallization', she describes how the quality of completeness, 'that knife-blade moment of perfection', that bespeaks the attainment of full artistic maturity. She is no less adroit in perceiving the convulsive stops and starts that lead to such pure and unhindered expressions, but here she is concerned primarily with masterworks. 'The Epic Graham' and 'Balanchine's America' are filled with appreciations of such treasures as *Night Journey* and *The Four Temperaments*. The pleasure felt in the excursions taken through these high places is evident in the calm fluency of her language. Her enjoyment is infectious. It cannot but charge the enthusiasm of any reader who, with Siegel, shares her sense of urgency to catch some fragment of these visions and hold it for a while: not merely to witness the passing of irretrievable moments but to reach out and touch the shapes of change themselves.

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Stardance

Spider and Jeanne Robinson
New York: Dial Press/James V
1979

I have a lot of reasons to like *Stardance*, the least of which are that its author and my Nova Scotia colleagues of mine have my name in it. Spider and Jeanne Robinson have written the saga of the gravity dancers, free-fall choreographers whose sensitivity and communication succeed where international diplomats and the military are helpless in dealing with mysterious aliens from deep space.

The Robinsons fuse 21st-century technology with basic concepts from improvisation and the humorous rhetoric of the 1960's. They locate the side base of their jet-propelled dancers in Toronto, and name one of their heroines Norrey Drummond, after a dancer long active in training Canadian modern dancers, and immigrants like Jeannie and me.

Those of us who have long considered the dance community, with its humane not-for-profit values and its concern to celebrate the life of the body, one of the last safe heavens, will rejoice in this book. Armstead, the embittered, injured video man who narrates the tale and directs the company, transcends his game leg in zero-g and

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do not shape up, who fail to follow certain instructions to the letter, are despatched in grisly ways. The small troupe which comes through – and which, toward the end, is augmented by the first zero-gravity pregnancy – evolves to new levels of oneness with the universe. Serious science-fiction buffs tell me it's a first-rate example of the genre; I like it because it's a smashing read.

Stardance is one of those dangerous novels that will keep you up all night or make you miss your stop on the subway. As



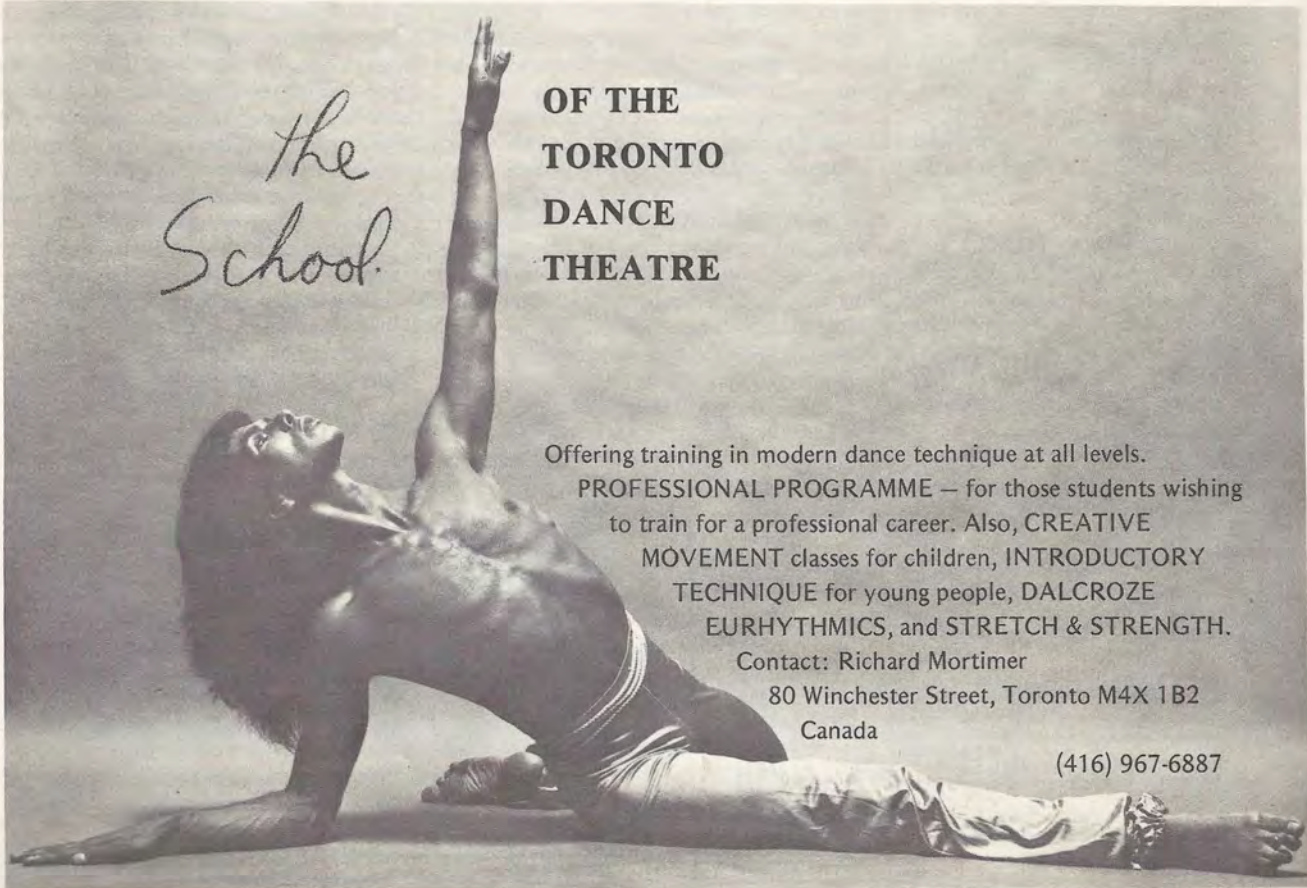
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Stardance

Spider and Jeanne Robinson
New York: Dial Press/James Wade
1979

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The Robinsons fuse 21st-century technology with basic concepts from contact improvisation and the human-potential rhetoric of the 1960's. They locate the earth-side base of their jet-propelled dance studio in Toronto, and name one of their heroines Norrey Drummond, after a dancer long active in training Canadian modern dancers, and immigrants like Jeannie and me.

Those of us who have long considered the dance community, with its humane not-for-profit values and its concern to celebrate the life of the body, one of the last safe heavens, will rejoice in this book. Armstead, the embittered, injured video man who narrates the tale and directs the company, transcends his game leg in zero-g and

becomes an intergalactic star; he also outgrows his booze habit and finds fulfillment, in his art and among people he loves. He does these things in an off-hand, wise-cracking tone, keeping us engrossed in the lives of these people: I perceive shadows of Lawrence Adams in Armstead, though Robinson assures me the resemblance is coincidental.

The novel's authentic detail includes its acknowledgement, charming if belated, that dance community love affairs sometimes happen among people of the same sex. *Stardance* begins near enough in the future — at the end of the 1980s and outward in real time from there — to win our credence easily: it's not a fantasy, but a lucid projection taken to a logical extreme. The Stardancers transform existing space technology to their own aesthetic ends. They survive crises of human and mechanical error. Dancers who do not shape up, who fail to follow certain instructions to the letter, are despatched in grisly ways. The small troupe which comes through — and which, toward the end, is augmented by the first zero-gravity pregnancy — evolves to new levels of oneness with the universe. Serious science-fiction buffs tell me it's a first-rate example of the genre; I like it because it's a smashing read.

Stardance is one of those dangerous novels that will keep you up all night or make you miss your stop on the subway. As

this review goes to press, the film options have not yet been picked up. Canadian dancer-actors who want some juicy parts might well pressure their local development corporations to make it where it belongs — in Toronto. A Quantum Science Fiction novel, *Stardance* was published in March of this year by Dial Press. The hardcover version is absurdly expensive in Canada, but the paperback should be appearing shortly.

ELIZABETH ZIMMER



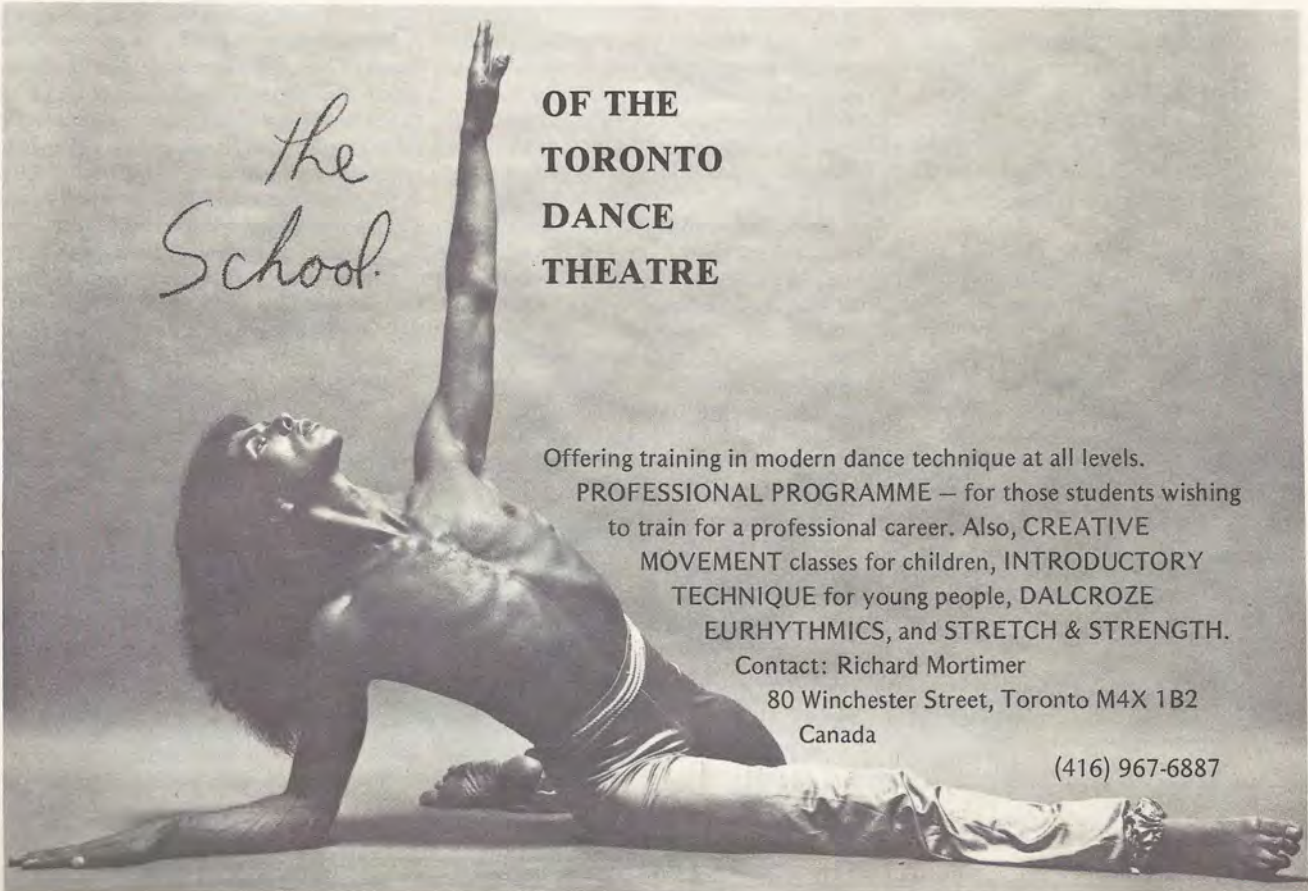
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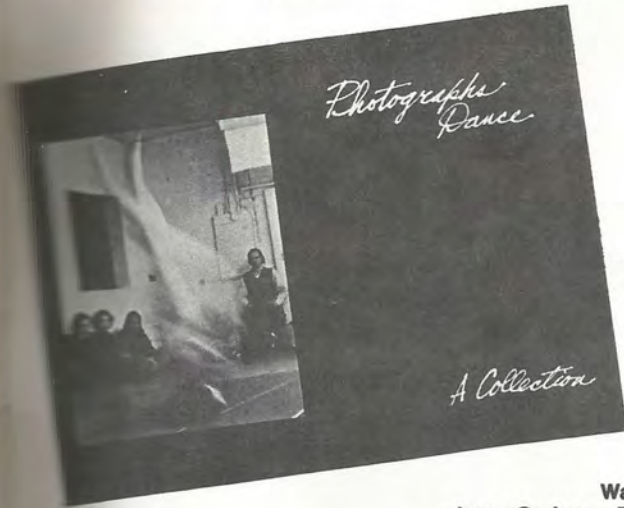
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

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Arts

September 18-21	Winnipeg*†	Centennial Concert Hall
September 25-30	Vancouver*†	Queen Elizabeth Theatre
October 2 & 3	Prince George*†	Vanier Hall/Prince George Senior Secondary School
October 5 & 6	Edmonton*†	Jubilee Auditorium
October 8 & 9	Calgary*†	Jubilee Auditorium
October 12 & 13	Saskatoon*†	Saskatoon Centennial Auditorium
October 15-17	Regina*†	Saskatchewan Centre of the Arts
November 7-24	Toronto*	O'Keefe Centre
*These performances have been made possible in part through a grant from IBM Canada Ltd.  † With the assistance of the  of the Canada Council		

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The National Ballet of Canada

Celia Franca, Founder

Alexander Grant, Artistic Director Robert Johnston, Administrative Director George Crum, Musical Director

Fall Performance Schedule 1979

September 6-9	Montreal	Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier/Place des Arts
September 18-21	Winnipeg*†	Centennial Concert Hall
September 25-30	Vancouver*†	Queen Elizabeth Theatre
October 2 & 3	Prince George*†	Vanier Hall/Prince George Senior Secondary School
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Noticeboard

At its annual general meeting in Waterloo this summer the **Dance in Canada Association** elected the new **Board of Directors** for 1979/80. They are Ruth Priddle (Chairman), Brian Robinson (1st Vice-Chairman), Dianne Miller (2nd Vice-Chairman), Peter Hoff (Acting Regional Officer for Ontario), Dorothy Harris (Alberta Regional Officer/Secretary), Sonja Barton (Saskatchewan Regional Officer), Mauryne Allan (BC Regional Officer), Greg Parks (Dancers Forum Representative), Judith Marcuse, Zella Wolofsky, Pamela Grundy, Gabby Miceli, Yves Cousineau, Vincent Warren and Murray Farr. Nikki Abraham retains her post as Business Manager.

Ruth Priddle



The **Canada Council** has agreed in principle that all landed immigrants will be eligible to compete for Aid to Artists grants if they have lived in Canada for five consecutive years. The citizenship of applicants is an issue which has concerned the Council for some years. In April 1978 Council adopted a policy stating that a landed immigrant who had not applied for Canadian citizenship was eligible for only one grant, and then, only during the first three years of residence. However, this restriction could be waived for exceptional artists and in the end it proved too difficult for Council advisors and juries to define 'exceptional'. The new regulation will take effect April 1, 1980.

Britain's **Ballet For All** has re-formed under the leadership of **Kerrison Cooke** who has left the London Festival Ballet to become its new artistic director.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Vancouver's **David Lui** has orchestrated a grand year of dance for that city's Queen

Elizabeth Theatre. Appearing during the fall are The National Ballet of Canada (Sept. 25 - 30), The Ballet Internacional de Caracas (Oct. 24 - 26) and The Royal Winnipeg Ballet (Dec. 4 - 8). In 1980 Vancouver audiences can see the Eliot Feld Ballet, The Houston Ballet, José Molina Bailes Espanoles, The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and The Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Judith Marcuse co-directed a Vancouver Playhouse production of *Jacques Brel is ...* this summer. She will be doing more choreography for theatre and opera in the new year as well as setting new work on various Canadian and US dance companies. She plans to perform a programme of her own choreography next summer.

ALBERTA

The **Alberta Ballet Company** participated in the National Arts Centre Festival at the end of July performing Brian Macdonald's choreography for the NAC's production of Massenet's *Cinderella*. The company's Ottawa debut followed a visit to the International Arts Festival in Cyprus where their programme included three works by principal dancer Lambros Lambrou - *Ballos*, *Othello* and *Threnody*. This was the first time Lambrou, a native of Cyprus, has shown his choreography in his homeland.

Robert Greenwood and **Dana Luebke**, Co-Artistic Directors of Calgary's Sun-Ergos, both attended the Laban Centenary in London at Goldsmiths College in July. Two separate fellowships from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation amounting to £390 enabled Luebke to participate in the Murray Louis professional dance project at the centenary and to attend the International Course for Professional Choreographers and Composers in Surrey during August. After the Laban Seminars Greenwood went on to Worcester for meetings of Dance and the Child: International. He is Communications Officer for the organization and represented Canada on the Steering Committee along with Dorothy Harris from the University of Alberta.

SASKATCHEWAN

Keith Urban, recently of Toronto's Dancemakers, has joined **Dance Works** as Co-

artistic Director with **Maria Formolo**. Dancers this year are Stephen Karcher, formerly of Mountain Dance Theatre, Susan MacKenzie, a graduate of York University Dance Department and Marnie Gladwell, an ex-student of Dance Works' school. The company's new managing director is Raymond Griffith Koehler. Toronto dancer/choreographer **Roberta Mohler** will be guest artist with Dance Works this fall. Much of her time will be devoted to teaching in the School but she will also choreograph and give solo performances.

In October the company will be touring Alberta with the Regina Symphony Orchestra Chamber Ensemble. The same month they will add two musicians to their roster to tour northern Manitoba with 'The Vaudeville Show'.

MANITOBA

Winnipeg's **Contemporary Dancers** have five new dancers this season all but one of whom are York University graduates. Joining the company are Francisco Alvarez (via Vancouver's Prism Dance Theatre), Monica George, Marilyn Biderman, and two trainees, Ted Robinson and American dancer David Holmes, Jr. Sara Brummel, Nancy Paris, Jim Davis, Kim Hughes, Debbie Smith and Grant McDaniel have all left the company.

New works by Lynne Taylor (collaborating with Judith Lander), and by Judith Marcuse, will be added to the company's repertoire. The company will tour the western provinces in November and December and will visit Ontario in February of 1980.

Tom Scurfield is the new Executive Director.

ONTARIO

Anna Blewchamp of Toronto has been named winner of the 1979 **Jean A. Chalmers Award in Choreography**. The award, worth \$3,000, is made annually to assist outstanding choreographers in improving their skills through study and work projects.

Born in London, England, Anna Blewchamp began her dance training with the Ballet Rambert School. In 1969 she became a Canadian landed immigrant and has made Toronto her home ever since. She has been associated with the Toronto based company Dancemakers since 1975, first as



Danny Grossman with Anna Blewchamp

choreographer, then as associate director (1977/78) and now as artistic director. As well as the many dances she has set on Dancemakers, Ms Blewchamp's works are in the repertoire of Contemporary Dancers of Winnipeg, the Junction Dance Company (England) and Ballet Ys of Toronto.

The jurors for this year's Chalmers Award were Grant Strate, William Littler, Lois Smith, Judith Marcuse and Dick Foose. The award was presented at a ceremony during the Dance in Canada Conference by Danny Grossman.

Betty Oliphant, Director of the National Ballet School, has been awarded one of three Molson prizes for 1978. The prizes, worth \$20,000 each, have been awarded annually since 1963 to recognize outstanding and continuing contributions to the arts, humanities or social sciences. The prizes are administered by the Canada Council and financed by a donation from the Molson Foundation.

Owen Montague, 16-year-old student of the National Ballet School, won a bronze medal in the junior division of the 1st International Ballet Competition in Jackson, Mississippi. Two other students from the school, Susan Dromisky and Tony Randazzo, were among the 10 entrants who made it to the third round. William Starrett, formerly of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, also was awarded a bronze medal in the professional division. Alexander Grant, Artistic Director of the National Ballet, was one of the judges for the ballet competition.

Early in September the Ontario School of Ballet will open its doors for the first time. Although the building and the name is new, the school is in fact a relocated version of the dance programme of Humber College. The artistic director, Sarah Lockett, will

continue to teach beginner's ballet classes at Humber, but her principal teaching will take place at her new school in the west end of Toronto. The new premises include three studios and classes will be taught in three divisions with several levels within each division, based on the RAD syllabus.

Gerry Eldred, Administrative Director of The National Ballet since 1972, left the company in August to become Administrative Director and Academic Principal of the National Ballet School. He is succeeded by Robert D. Johnston, former Deputy Minister of Culture and Recreation for the Ontario Government. Mr Johnston has a Bachelor of Commerce and a Master of Commerce degree from the University of Toronto and has served with the Ontario Government since 1964.

Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn have been invited to spend three weeks teaching and coaching in China in late November. They are now officially Dr Kain and Dr Augustyn since York University's Faculty of Fine Arts conferred honorary degrees on them at Spring Convocation. This fall Augustyn will be invested as an Officer of the Order of Canada.

James Kudelka has been awarded a Canada Council Grant to travel and study choreography in Europe. He leaves this September for a nine-month leave-of-absence. Choreologist Susa Menck has joined the staff of John Neumeier's Hamburg State Opera Ballet in Germany. Esther Murillo, Constantin Patsalas and Raymond Smith have all been promoted to first soloists. Peter Schaufuss along with two other former members of the Royal Danish Ballet, Peter Martins and Adam Luders, and a company of soloists from the Danish Ballet performed an all-Bournonville programme in June and July to celebrate Bournonville's centenary. They toured seven US cities as well as Spoleto, Italy, and Monte Carlo. It has been reported, though not yet confirmed, that Anthony Dowell of the Royal Ballet will appear as a guest of the National Ballet in his original roles of Oberon (*The Dream*) and the leading man in van Manen's *Four Schumann Pieces*.

Versatile Bibi Caspari has created a one woman show of monologue, mime and

dance entitled *The Lady and The Fool*. Her collection of characters ranging from virgin to vamp to buffoon will be presented September 20 - 23 and 27 - 30 at the Harbourfront Studio Theatre.

This summer 15 Dance Lab published *Photographs Dance: A Collection*, including dance images by 16 photographers 'on the leading edge of Canadian dance photography'. It is edited by Miriam Adams and Lynn Rotin.

Toronto's Margaret Dragu, well-known avant garde dance artist and stripper with a touch of class, is now launched into a second career as an actress. This year she appeared in the Factory Theatre Lab production *33 1/3 Double Live*, and in Toronto Free Theatre's *Angel City* and has just finished shooting *Surfacing*, a film based on the novel by Margaret Atwood. Dragu portrays one of the four lead characters - Anna, a vulnerable and rather pathetic floozie. The film, shot in the wilds of Ontario, is directed by Claude Jutra and also stars American actors Joseph Bottoms and Kathleen Beller, and Canadian R.H. Thomson.

Margaret Dragu



Anne Ditchburn has left the National Ballet because of disagreement with the artistic direction. She plans to continue choreographing on a free-lance basis.

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The Dance Company of Ontario, under the direction of Lois Smith, will open its first season on October 22 followed by three weeks of performances of *Beauty and the Beast* sponsored by Prologue to the Performing Arts. During the Christmas holiday season the young company will present a new ballet choreographed by Lois Smith and Earl Kraul. The new year holds another three weeks of performing for Prologue.

Last June the company gave a benefit performance - 'Friends and Students of Lois Smith Present' - which featured guest artists Vanessa Harwood, Tomas Schramek and Debbie Smith.

Indian dancer Anjali will be performing in Ottawa on October 26 and 27 at the National Arts Centre. From there she will travel to Vancouver to give solo performances at the Centennial Planetarium November 3, and at the Centennial Theatre, North Vancouver, November 4 and 5. She will lecture at the Planetarium on the relationship between Indian Dance, sculpture and myth.

QUEBEC

On June 25 *Les Grandes Ballets Canadiens* embarked on a month-long tour of Switzerland, France, Italy and Yugoslavia. The tour, which included some of the foremost summer festivals in Europe, opened at the

Lausanne International Festival and continued on to 11 cities in the four countries. Most of the performances were in open air theatres often on the sites of historic buildings. The company's repertoire featured choreography by Canadians Brian Macdonald and Brydon Paige, as well as the music of Gilles Vigneault, Pierre Mercure and R. Murray Schafer.

The Ballet-Concentration Course at L'Ecole Pierre-Laporte is growing. Auditions are held throughout the province of Quebec and this year 50 candidates have been selected. 1978/79 graduates have been admitted to a Montreal CEGEP following official approval by the Quebec Education Ministry. On May 19, 30 students of L'Ecole Pierre-Laporte and L'Ecole Supérieure des Grands Ballets Canadiens performed at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts as part of the *Matinées Symphoniques* of the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal.

Madame Ludmilla Chiriaeff has recorded a programme for Radio-Quebec television entitled *Visage* produced by Marius Todoresco. It is a portrait of Madame Chiriaeff based on material and comments provided by those who have worked closely with her during her career. A film entitled *Portrait of Ludmilla Chiriaeff* produced by the CBC will be aired this Fall.

Les Ballets Jazz will tour Quebec in October before leaving for a seven-week tour of France and Italy. Among the many performances confirmed are seven performances in the Olympic Theatre in Rome.

In the new year the company will add three new ballets to its repertoire. Well-known Canadian choreographer, Judith Marcuse, will create a new ballet to French-Canadian music. Buzz Miller of the American Dance Machine, New York, will reconstruct choreography of famous American musicals and they will also acquire another new work by Lynne Taylor. Last year she set a French version of *Diary* on the company.

China has given a warm welcome to Margie Gillis, celebrating her as the first Canadian solo Modern dancer to visit them. It all started when Gillis embarked on a trip to China and Japan last July with no prior theatre bookings, only the intention of dancing when and wherever she could. Her first impromptu performances in parks and on streetcorners soon gained wide attention and led to sold-out engagements in major theatres in Shenyang, Peking and Shanghai. She also gave lectures and classes to the Shanghai Ballet and the China Dance Association. Another Oriental tour is planned for the fall of 1980 including several theatre engagements, a three-week regional school tour and television appearances.



'She's only got a bit part in *Swan Lake*, but she takes her roles very seriously.'

Letter to the Editor

Ottawa

Dear Sir,

I enclose a copy of my reply to a letter from Grant Strate which you printed in the Summer 1979 edition of *Dance in Canada*. Would you kindly publish this reply.

Yours sincerely,
Timothy Porteous,
Associate Director,
The Canada Council.

The complete text of Timothy Porteous' letter follows:

Thank you for your letter about the Canada Council's grants to the National Ballet School.

As I indicated in my letter, about 70% of the School's budget is expended on its

payroll. While it is true that the payroll did not increase \$280,000 in a single year, it did increase by more than that over the two-year period 1974-76. (To keep such an increase in perspective it is worth noting that in 1975-76 alone academic salaries at York increased by almost \$3,000,000). In 1974-75 the School incurred a considerable deficit which indicates that, in that year, it was not receiving 'proper support (from) Council or anyone else'. In the years since the Council increased the School's grant, it has managed to balance its budget, although with greater difficulty each year.

You write: 'Let us have some statistics. How many staff did the School actually lose to other institutions because of salary differences'. The Council would be pleased if that statistic turned out to be zero. That was one of the Council's objectives in raising the grant.

I thought it would be interesting for the readers of *Dance In Canada* to know the factual basis on which the Council's 1975-76 increase was calculated. But I am less concerned about the details of a four-year old calculation than about the provision of adequate support now and in the future to maintain the quality of the School.

Your letter states: 'The National Ballet School is a great school and no one objects to its proper support by Council or anyone else.' On that we are in full agreement.

Yours sincerely,
Timothy Porteous.

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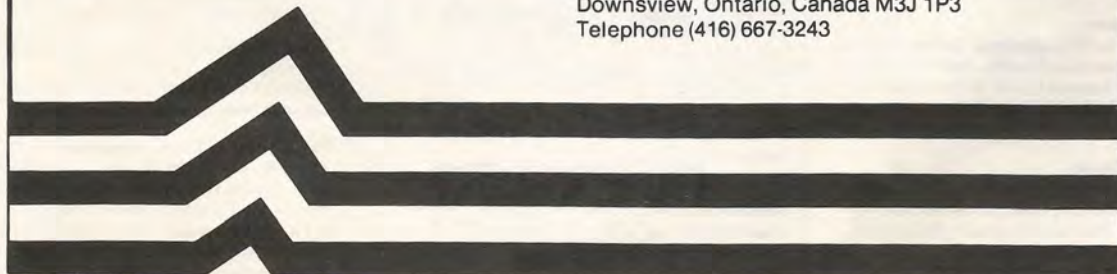
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Dance at a Glance

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: Nikki Abraham, Business Manager, Dance in Canada, 100 Richmond Street East, Suite 325, Toronto, Ontario, M5C 2P9 (416) 368-4793.

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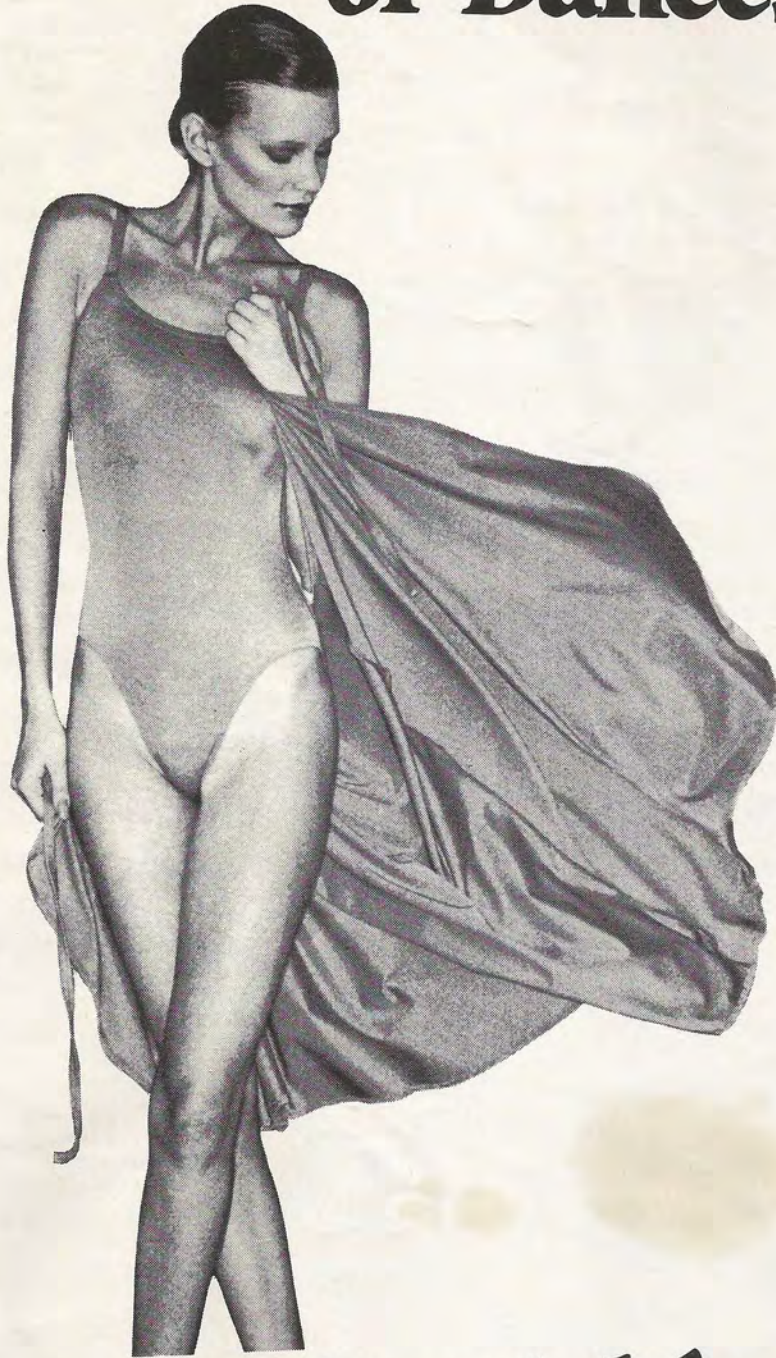
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