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Dance in Canada

ISSUE NUMBER 23
SPRING 1980 PRINTEMPS

Dance in Canada is published quarterly in Toronto, Canada by Dance in Canada Association.

The publication Dance in Canada is included with membership in Dance in Canada Association.

Dance in Canada Association is registered as charitable organization number 00441-22-13. Donations are tax deductible.

The views expressed in the articles in this publication are not necessarily those of Dance in Canada. The publication is not responsible for the return of unsolicited material unless accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Dance in Canada publishes in the language of origin, English or French. We will be returning to our complete bilingual format whenever funds become available.

Subscription: \$7.50 per year. Single copy \$2.00.

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Back issues of Dance in Canada are available in microfilm from Micromedia Limited, Box 502, Station 'S', Toronto, Ontario M5M 4L8.

ISSN 0317-9737

Second class mail registration number 03874. Return postage guaranteed.

Please send notification of change of address, subscription orders and undeliverable copies to:

Dance in Canada/Danse au Canada
100 Richmond St. E., Suite 325
Toronto M5C 2P9

Danse au Canada est publiée trimestriellement à Toronto, Canada par l'Association de la Danse au Canada.

L'Association de la Danse au Canada est enregistrée comme organisme bénéficiaire. Le numéro d'enregistrement est 00441-22-13.

Les dons faits à l'association seront admis en déduction.

Les membres de l'Association de la Danse au Canada recevront d'office le revue Danse au Canada.

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Le numéro recommandé de la poste deuxième classe 03874.

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August Bournonville

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Ontario

The Canada Council

BC Cultural fund

Printed in Mississauga by Garden City Press

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COVER:

Owen Montague seen in a typical pose from August Bournonville's *Napoli*. Owen, who has attended the National Ballet School for the past six years, comes from Jarvis, Ontario. In 1979 he won the Bronze Medal in the Junior Division at the International Ballet Competition in Jackson, Mississippi.

Photo by Andrew Oxenham

Erratum

Owing to last-minute technical difficulties in production we were not able to print full details of last issue's cover photo. For the curious, here are the facts: Claudia Moore and Robert Desrosiers in David Earle's *Boat, River, Moon*. The photo, courtesy of Toronto Dance Theatre, was by Andrew Oxenham.

CREDITS

David Antcherl, diagrams, p. 13, 14, & 16; Bob Barnett, p. 42; George Bélinsky, p. 19; Pierre Denault, p. 43; Barry Gray, p. 4; Doug Guildford, drawing, p. 3; John R. Johnsen, p. 30; Andrew Oxenham, p. 26 & 42; Louise Péres, p. 37; Maurice Seymour, p. 37.

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Erik Bruhn

August Bournonville



The Precious Legacy of a Choreographic Genius

Youth has a reputation for being irreverent and iconoclastic and it was as a youth that I formed my first impressions of August Bournonville — not particularly favourable impressions! I was then a student at the Royal Ballet School in Copenhagen where the syllabus of daily classes, devised by Hans Beck, himself a pupil of Bournonville, was the staple of our ballet training.

Although I am a Dane myself, I am willing to admit that as a small nation we have a tendency to be smug, insular and parochial. Quite rightly, there was a firm desire within the Royal Danish Ballet to preserve the traditions of Bournonville as he had always been the mainstay of our repertory. However, it seemed to me that preservation should mean 'keeping alive', not embalming, and from my youthful standpoint Bournonville was more embalmed than alive in Denmark. Although there were attempts to inject vitality into the company, (for example, Harald Lander choreographed many ballets of which only *Etudes*, now entering the Canadian National Ballet's repertoire, survives), in general the Danish ballet had allowed itself to become isolated from the mainstream of development. For a young, ambitious dancer, this was frustrating.

Now that Patricia McAndrew has provided us with a splendidly vital translation of Bournonville's memoirs which I had found such heavy going in the original Danish, we can all discover the full richness of his personality and life. He was a cultivated, well travelled man whose intel-

lectual and artistic interests ranged far beyond ballet. He certainly had a big ego and, late in life, was depressed to think that his work might not survive even in Denmark.

He was also a virtuoso dancer, trained in Paris under the great August Vestris, but also by his own father Antoine, a former pupil of Noverre, and in Denmark by Vincenzo Galeotti. The essential basis of his art was, however, French and it incorporated both classical 18th century traditions and the changes taking place in Paris in the second decade of the 19th century when ballerinas went on pointe, the Romantic era began and the female dancer established her ascendancy.

If Bournonville were around today in our own era of women's liberation I have a feeling we would be calling him a male chauvinist. He certainly had very fixed notions about the role of women in society and in the theatre! As a fine male dancer he had no intention of being eclipsed by women. So it was that when he began his long period of work in Copenhagen, which lasted roughly from 1830 with a short interruption until his death in 1879, Bournonville brought with him the technique learned in Paris of the 1820s, filtered through his own preferences as a dancer and coloured by his insistence on the importance of the male.

He created about three dozen major works and innumerable divertissements for the Royal Danish Ballet but only a few had survived to be in the company's repertoire



Peter Schaufuss in *La Sylphide*

when I began my career. These, it was claimed, were 'authentic'. However, as I have since learned, Bournonville suffered, like many choreographers both before and after him, from inadequate methods of recording steps. The traditional method of one dancer passing on a role to the next is successful to a point and in Copenhagen Hans Beck lived on until 1952 — an important direct link with August Bournonville himself.

As students we were all told exactly how a step or *enchaînement* was to be performed. Most of what Bournonville had created for the Royal Danish Ballet reflected very much his own strengths and weaknesses as a dancer. This carried over into the classes as well. He had a very good ballon and had fantastic beats but, as he admits in his memoirs, he was not much of a turner. For me, it was ridiculous and frustrating only to be allowed to do, say, one or two turns when I could easily do three or four within the same music.

So, my first impressions were lukewarm. Later, however, when I got away from the rigid conservatism of Copenhagen, had matured a bit and was able to breath what to me seemed to be new life into Bournonville I came to the firm conclusion that he was a genius and that his contribution to the art of ballet dancing remains very important.

I would not wish to set myself up as some great authority on Bournonville but I do know he has inspired me to do things in my career. Some people have objected to the way I have interpreted him but what I have done has been in the best belief that it is what he might have wanted to do, given the changes and advances in western ballet generally.

In restaging Bournonville, I have tried to retain accurately what I sense as the motivating spirit of his work and have not invented 'Bournonville' steps. Where I have made changes they have all come from his classes or from other works of his. I have witnessed sufficient argument among so-called experts about what is right and what is wrong Bournonville to feel confident that I've committed no historical crime against the master.

I cannot forget the complacency of some Danish dancers who told me they knew Bournonville so well they could do it in their sleep. My reaction was, 'It looks like it too'.

What is it that makes Bournonville an enduringly important part of the ballet tradition? For me it has to do with his personal conviction that dancing justifies itself and needs nothing else to make it 'art'. In that sense he is very modern, a purist, but also in the strict sense of the word, a classicist. Of course, he was very much a product of his times and during his long reign at the Royal Ballet produced works that contented the prosperous bourgeois audiences of the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. For some tastes of today, his heavy reliance on mimed gesture in full-length works to deal with the actual plot seems awkward: the unrelenting joyousness of his choreography seems superficial. But, although that may explain why so often the Bournonville we see now is just the *pas de deux* or divertissements from longer works, we must not forget that he was deliberate in his work. He did have a self-imposed image of what dance could express. For him it was a matter of joy, happiness and beauty but also a matter of dance for dance's sake — and that is important.

Perhaps because of its skillful and in some respects untypical integration of dance and story, Bournonville's version of *La Sylphide*, created a few years after the Paris original to a new score, has survived best of all his full-length works and in it we can see also the fundamental characteristics of his choreography.

As a dancer whose training linked him with the reforms of Noverre, Bournonville did not want to draw attention to technical feats for their own sake. The way he links steps, the marvellously fertile imagination with which he used a perhaps limited vocabulary with brilliant eloquence, distinguishes him from the Russian tradition. In Bournonville there are no obvious preparations. Sequences are fluently linked and when dancers travel across the stage they dance, not walk. His own natural gift for ballon and batterie has lent his choreography a charming fleet-footed lightness which contrasts refreshingly with the

modern trend to more grounded adagio work. But then, Bournonville did not try to use ballet to express dark emotions in slow solos. His sensibility was utterly different. This buoyancy, while requiring just as great a purity of style and execution as, say, Petipa, nevertheless seems more three-dimensional.

While elsewhere in Europe the male dancer languished, acting as little more than a porter for the ballerina or even being replaced by women *en travestie*, in Denmark, because of Bournonville, the male remained at least equal partner with the female. In his ballets, men and women really *dance* together. It is what makes, for example, the pas de deux from *Flower Festival in Genzano* so strikingly different from *Le Corsaire* or *Don Quixote*.

In a way, you could argue about whether the female dancer came out as well as the male dancer. When people speak of a 'Bournonville dancer' they are invariably referring to a man. The Bournonville training produces men with good ballon, fast foot-work and a general lightness. Unfortunately for them, however, the women are expected to jump their way around the stage as much as the men and there is a tendency for them to develop unflatteringly large calves. It does not affect the men the same way. Instead they develop rather handsome, slim legs and very flexible, strong ankles. I would say this has a significant effect in helping the Bournonville-trained men to last longer. At 43, although I could not jump as high as I had in my early career, I could still create a lightness in my work which, I believe, contrasted with the obvious strain frequently seen in aging Russian dancers. It is true that when I came to North America and began to dance Petipa I had to work on developing a new kind of strength in my legs but my foundation in Bournonville helped me perform Petipa with a special quality of line and smoothness.

Bournonville, in addition to his many other characteristics as a choreographer, was intensely musical. Perhaps people are right to criticise the rinky-tinky scores he used, but if one goes beneath the surface and examines their rhythmic structure we find a complexity to which Bournonville responded with brilliant imagination. His choreography requires a deep musicality from dancers. It is not sufficient simply to hear the music: you must feel it. Only then can a dancer master the intricacy of phrasing and counts in Bournonville's choreography.

In his time I think you can say he was unusual in his use of counterpoint and I like to think that Balanchine, during his stay in Denmark, was confirmed in some of his own unusual musicality by what he saw of Bournonville's work. Of course, I cannot prove it, but it is interesting that Balanchine now refers to Bournonville as a 'master'. Bournonville was way ahead of Petipa in this and his particular way of using music has certainly inspired my own work.

Today, we have to find a way to incorporate the best of the Bournonville tradition within our modern style of dancing. The contemporary ballet physique is of course different and for that reason alone we cannot hope to present Bournonville as a museum replica. But we should try to preserve his spirit, to retain in all our concern for deep expressiveness some of the pure joyousness of his dancing, its vitality and exhilaration, its speed and lightness. If we can do this we will have fulfilled Bournonville's dearest wish — not to be forgotten.



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DANCE

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Indian dance has begun to make its mark on the Canadian dance scene, increasingly so over the past decade. There are two different breeds among Indian dancers who appear regularly across the country, those born in Canada, who have travelled to the East and have been entranced by the beauty and intricacy of Indian dance, and those originally from India, who have expanded their horizons in the opposite direction and have come to make their homes in Canada. There are now also dancers being trained in the traditional art here in Canada who hold strong promise for the future.

Since most of the Indian styles tend to be performed in solo performance, there is considerable flexibility to the course each dancer's career can take. The individual dancers are not bound by the constraints of a company, but neither do they have the ready made context in which to work, nor a well marked trail to follow. Flexibility and an imaginative approach are the characteristics which distinguish these artists and which help them to meet the challenge of propagating their art.

Each dancer has responded to this task in a different way. Teaching — privately, in schools or for university workshops — is one means through which more people are being touched by this traditional dance. One dancer has supplemented her performing schedule by turning to academic pursuits and is soon to publish a richly illustrated book. Another has concentrated on teaching deaf children to explore movement and respond to rhythm. In the sphere of performance there is a move to choreograph or commission new works that lend themselves to different performance situations and to creating new ways of presentation which enhance understanding and render some of the initially foreign gestures meaningful. Film and video are also being used for experimental teaching methods and to promote wider exposure.

One of the first to attempt to bridge the gap between East and West was Ottawa born Ann-Marie Gaston, who goes by the name of Anjali. In the mid-sixties, she went to India as a volunteer with CUSO to teach science and physical education. While there she began studying the classical dance, already having a background in modern dance, and she worked up to her Indian first performance, her *arangetrum*, in order to be in time to perform at Expo '67 in Montreal. I remember clearly a demonstration she

gave at an Ottawa dance studio at about this time, how amazing I found the extremely fine control of hand and eye movements in this my initial exposure to Indian dance.

For 16 years Anjali has pursued the dance of India, making regular trips back and forth, learning four different styles — Bharata Natyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi, and Kathakali. Although Bharata Natyam is her principal form, in Toronto last October she gave a vivid rendition in Kathakali of the hero, Bhima, watching a forest scene. Especially striking were her wonder-filled eyes as she watched, as Bhima, and then portrayed a great elephant quietly bathing, who is attacked by an even greater python. Nothing seems unbelievable when the Kathakali acting style is able to conjure up characters larger than life.

One of the aspects of presentation that Anjali initiated and which she uses to full advantage is the blend of slides, narration and explanation which support her dancing. To give a sense of the context and history, slides are projected above her so that correspondences between the living dance and the still image can be made. Before each dance her husband, Tony, tells the story such as the Ramayana, illustrated by exquisite miniature paintings which help to bring out the flavour of each scene, while Anjali sketches out the gestures that are key to each episode. Such carefully worked out preludes to a dance really set the mood and give an audience an entrance into the particular world of dance.

One of Anjali's recent achievements is a forthcoming book that is the outcome of studies at Oxford University and her thesis on the relationships between dance, sculpture and myth. She accomplished this project while continuing to dance and travel, lecture and teach, and make a special television programme in India.

A westerner making an eastern tradition her own is quite a rare phenomenon. When I questioned her about possible feelings of foreignness, Anjali described her first visit to Orissa to study that dance form. There she was mistaken for an Indian from another part of the country! A 'foreigner' from a few hundred or a few thousand miles away was initially equally foreign and potentially adaptable to the customs of the specific region.

An interesting ramification of the traditional way of learning was Anjali's western impulse to write down the dances as she learnt them. For her personal notation she

Rosemary Jeanes

The World of Indian Dance: 3

THE CANADIAN CONNECTION

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Anjali

uses stick figures for the poses and the onomatopoeic syllables for the rhythm. Since an oral tradition was not generally written down, Anjali used to record the dances at home after a lesson in order to avoid the teacher's disapproval. When she was able, several years later, to show her old teacher compositions that he could no longer remember, he became quite excited.

According to Anjali, the dance is changing very quickly; yet she also admits that great variation is possible within each item. Apparently a traditional master can show a student as many as 25 different ways of executing a movement, and it is impossible to ask a great artist like Balasaraswati to show you exactly the same thing he did yesterday. Traditional art moves through its exponents rather than remaining static. For the artist is more concerned with revealing the poetry of the dance than simply outlining its grammar.

Anjali has reached the stage where she can choreograph within the form, and begin to innovate and rework traditional Indian themes. Her commitment to Indian dance is strong, her feelings for it spoken with characteristic enthusiasm: 'I just love the rhythm . . . and the expression, which is not so developed in western dance'.

Well known to the dance community in Canada is Menaka Thakkar, who exudes a sense of complete dedication to her dance and an energy that explodes in many different directions. She first came to Canada in 1972 to visit her family, found herself invited to perform, and has not stopped since.

Menaka comes from a remarkable family who themselves reflect the spectrum of Indian art. Her oldest sister was herself a dancer and Menaka's first teacher, but now devotes her time to photography — of dance, of rural Indian life, and is presently embarking on a study of

painting. Another sister is an expert in its most continuous and extant form, and has recently completed her Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. One brother has married a dancer, another brother, though an economics professor at the University of Toronto, is an art connoisseur. His explanations and the dance-poetry elucidate all Menaka's

gifts. Menaka's gifts is her ability to combine her artistic sensibility with an analytical mind that she brings to her work. Although she grew up with dancing, and received formal lessons when she was only six and began to teach the basic steps from watching and copying others, this in no way dimmed her interest in the practice, this in no way dimmed her understanding of how the body moves. With her guru, Nana Thakkar, she delved anatomically, finding and exploring the movements of the body that most naturally corresponds to body structure. Balance, breath and centre are pivotal words in her vocabulary. Yoga is a related discipline that informs her dance, developing control over both body and mind. While practising most strenuously, she

works for relaxation in the style, for an ease that allows the flow of energy so vital to any dancer, especially one who presents a continuous solo performance of three hours. Underlying Menaka's technical understanding and ability lies a very ancient Indian concept, *brahmananda*, signifying, in Menaka's words, 'divine joy for dancers'.

Even though Menaka gave her first full programme at the age of 16, she continued to study several different styles in order to explore the different ways in which the body is used. She also graduated from art college where her favourite subjects were portrait drawing and anatomy, which naturally connect with the two aspects of her passion, the expression and technique of dance. At her father's insistence, the ceremony of her arangetrum, her first professional performance, was not celebrated until six years later in order to allow full development of her sense of responsibility to the dance.

Menaka speaks of how much she has learnt of her own art through being away from India and consequently questioning that which was formerly taken for granted. Since coming to Canada she has branched out in many different directions, touring the country several times, giving lectures and demonstrations at a number of universities. She has been involved with and attended Dance in Canada conferences since the organization's inception. Return study trips to India keep strong the links to her source, and yet she continues to innovate and choreograph such works as a dance-drama, *Sitaswayamvaram* in 1978 and the delightful, *Wise Monkey and Foolish Crocodile* for and with children in 1979. She has ventured even further to experiment with a non-Indian solo that Grant Strate choreographed for her. And finally there is Menaka's school, Nrtyakala, where her sensitive instruction is beginning to bear its fruits in beautifully trained and expressive dancers.

Rina Singha is an exponent of Kathak, the north Indian court-derived style. Trained under Guru Shambu Maharaj, in the traditional Lucknow style, she recognizes her good fortune of being able to study under a truly great master. Under his direction she would work for six months to perfect one small movement through constant repetition. The subtlety of Kathak demands such meticulous work in order to achieve its aims — to express the symbolic



Anjali

uses stick figures for the poses and the onomatopoeic syllables for the rhythm. Since an oral tradition was not generally written down, Anjali used to record the dances at home after a lesson in order to avoid the teacher's disapproval. When she was able, several years later, to show her old teacher compositions that he could no longer remember, he became quite excited.

According to Anjali, the dance is changing very quickly; yet she also admits that great variation is possible within each item. Apparently a traditional master can show a student as many as 25 different ways of executing a movement, and it is impossible to ask a great artist like Balasaraswati to show you exactly the same thing he did yesterday. Traditional art moves through its exponents rather than remaining static. For the artist is more concerned with revealing the poetry of the dance than simply outlining its grammar.

Anjali has reached the stage where she can choreograph within the form, and begin to innovate and rework traditional Indian themes. Her commitment to Indian dance is strong, her feelings for it spoken with characteristic enthusiasm: 'I just love the rhythm . . . and the expression, which is not so developed in western dance'.

Well known to the dance community in Canada is Menaka Thakkar, who exudes a sense of complete dedication to her dance and an energy that explodes in many different directions. She first came to Canada in 1972 to visit her family, found herself invited to perform, and has not stopped since.

Menaka comes from a remarkable family who themselves reflect the spectrum of Indian art. Her oldest sister was herself a dancer and Menaka's first teacher, but now devotes her time to photography — of dance, of rural Indian life, and is presently embarking on a study of

modern Indian painting. Another sister is an expert in Sanskrit drama in its most continuous and extant form, Kutiyattam, and has recently completed her Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. One brother has married a dancer, while her oldest brother, though an economics professor at York, is a great art connoisseur. His explanations and translations of the dance-poetry elucidate all Menaka's performances.

One of Menaka's gifts is her ability to combine her artistry as a dancer with an analytical mind that she brings to her teaching. Although she grew up with dancing, beginning actual lessons when she was only six and already knowing the basic steps from watching and copying her sister's practice, this in no way dimmed her curiosity about how the body moves. With her guru, Nana Kasar, she worked anatomically, finding and exploring the centre of gravity that most naturally corresponds to body movement. Spine, breath and centre are pivotal words in Menaka's dance vocabulary. Yoga is a related discipline that she brings to her dance, developing control over both mind and body. While practising most strenuously, she works for relaxation in the style, for an ease that allows the flow of energy so vital to any dancer, especially one who presents a continuous solo performance of three hours. Underlying Menaka's technical understanding and ability lies a very ancient Indian concept, *brahmananda*, signifying, in Menaka's words, 'divine joy for dancers'.

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rather than literal meaning of the theme. Rina and her contemporaries were like children to their teachers, to whom they looked not only for dance training but also the spiritual understanding of life through dance. Accordingly, the two spheres that mattered most to her teacher were art and god, and any praise of a performance was passed on as thanks to god.

Moving to England, Rina began working towards her Ph.D. at the London School of Economics, in Geography, her second interest. But she felt the drive to return to dancing and began performing again with Ram Gopal. She also co-authored a good survey/history, *Indian Dances: Their History and Growth*, before coming to Canada in 1965.

Raising a family while pursuing her interests in dance and education has directed Rina's activities over the past years. Because her own daughter is deaf, she began experimenting with movement and rhythm which she found so helpful that she now teaches groups of deaf children with great success. Videotapes that she showed at the CORD/ADG Conference on Asian Dance, captured the efforts and achievements of non-hearing children as they learnt rhythmic folk dances and discovered the mimetic gesture language of Indian dance. Rina speaks of the self-confidence the children gain and of their improved self-image.

The other field in which Rina is most involved is multiculturalism and the exciting possibilities in Canada where the human geography of the whole world is represented. She herself has studied folk dances from around the world and has passed these on to the children she works with in the schools and through the Inner City Angels. One project in which she was recently involved centred on the idea that studying about cultures through their arts can reduce racial prejudices. A different preconception that dissolves in her classes is the sentiment that boys do not dance, only play hockey. All children are drawn to dance through the example of her own exuberant devotion.

For The Year of the Child, Rina's personal project was a programme at Harbourfront, *The Children's Parade of Nations*, in which 100 children danced for an audience of 400! She continues to teach, perform and choreograph, combining her varied interests and affirming, as she reflects on the various way one's life shapes itself, 'this is the way I like to use my art — in different ways'.

Another Canadian, Madhurika, from Edmonton, began her foray into Indian dance in England. After five years she received a scholarship to study in India, primarily the Bharata Natyam style though she has recently studied the Odissi form too. Tall, dark and strikingly beautiful in an almost Indian fashion, she is a dancer to watch for when she returns this year from her third study trip to India.

Kathakali is a tremendously complex style that likewise has attracted Canadian exponents. The Quebec troupe, Teatram, comprising Richard and Larry Tremblay and Pauline Côté, perform in the traditional Kathakali idiom. They made their first appearance in Toronto last June to present, *The Story of a Flower*, to favourable reviews.

Of those who have reached their dancing maturity in Canada, Gitanjali is the one who truly embodies the ideals of Indian beauty and a feeling for the dance, coupled with a Canadian outlook. She has spent equal halves of her life in India and Canada and is married to a Canadian



Gitanjali

filmmaker. Born in India, she began her serious training and decided to become a dancer at Kalakshetra, the South Indian school founded by Rukmini Devi. Wondering how to continue upon her return to Canada, she quickly found the means: 'As soon as I met Menaka and saw her dance I knew I didn't have to worry about it'. After four years of intensive study, Menaka presented her at her arangetrum in Toronto in 1977, the first full ceremony to be performed in this country.

Gitanjali has a keen mind, and was pushed by her family towards scholastic endeavour in which she showed promise. But her mind was made up when she first saw the complex Bharata Natyam being taught so systematically at Kalakshetra and realized that dancing demanded as much of a person as academics.

During the past few years Gitanjali has performed in various parts of Canada and twice in New York. Last year she spent several months in India studying and giving performances. Her university studies and knowledge of Sanskrit literature inspired her to commission, in India, dances based on her own ideas. At an October performance in Toronto she presented two main items which depict the way that poets have seen women in India. In the first of these, she mimes the stories of eight heroines, becoming each of them successively. The other dance deals with the different character types of women and is an intriguing study which brings out the basic concept that in all Indian literature women are invariably portrayed in their relationship to men, never as individuals. The fascinating point of this programme is the way it presents a dancer exploring the values of her heritage from a perspective that has been influenced by her Canadian upbringing.

Future plans include film work with her husband, perhaps of an historical nature, on the devadasi or temple dancers.

A further spark came to light at a special occasion in December, the 'junior arangetrum' of a very promising pupil of Menaka. On her eleventh birthday, Canadian-born Nova Bhattacharya gave her first full-length solo performance. The afternoon was entirely delightful as the gifted young dancer executed the first half of her programme in deft Bharata Natyam style. Quickly one forgot that it was a child dancing, as her clarity of form and rhythm won the spectators' hearts. And the glimpses of expression, very much her own, more than hinted at an acting talent to match. The whole performance was beautifully presented, and stands as a fine tribute to the excellence of her teacher, Menaka Thakkar.

This look into the background and interests of the Indian dancers presently active in Canada illustrates how a few people are covering a remarkable amount of territory. They provide us with opportunities to see performance of most of the important styles at a level that compares admirably with the best dancers in India. But perhaps the most significant in the long run are the other activities: teaching in different environments to different ends; researching various aspects of the dance for presentation and written work; experimenting with choreography within each style but also extending the boundaries. Above all, these dancers are making more accessible to us the delights of Indian dance as it takes root and flourishes in its Canadian setting.

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Richard Forzley

Bonnie Wycoff

Prairie Star

For the past few years the Royal Winnipeg Ballet has maintained a rather egalitarian policy making the choreography and the music the main attractions rather than particular dancers. But if a dancer with style, strength and technical skill is illuminated by a kind of controlled animal power that fills the stage with intense super-charged emotion – especially if that life force is trying to burst from a lithe, flexible body – the audience immediately recognizes the performer's stellar qualities in spite of any decreed policy. If dance really does provide us with an intense physical metaphor for life by combining narcissism, masochism and an almost mystical dedication of spirit and flesh, then the dancer who most successfully produces the consequent Dionysian release of our feelings becomes an immediate star.

Bonnie Wycoff is such a dancer.

When Bonnie was a 17-year-old soloist with her hometown Boston Ballet Company, Agnes de Mille recognized these special qualities in her and cast her as the lead in her famous ballet *Rodeo*. After that, although the Boston Ballet gave her a splendid education with its heavy concentration on Balanchine choreography, the challenges began to run out as the desire to explore a different repertoire increased. When Arnold Spohr, artistic director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, appeared on the scene she willingly allowed him to spirit her away to the sweeping expanse of the Canadian prairies where she enjoyed a ready-made repertoire of principal roles in ballets by Neumeier, Jooss, de Mille, Macdonald and Vesak. She says that from the moment she arrived she felt '... in tune with this place – with this environment – with Winnipeg. I knew I would always find my centre here'.

In Arnold Spohr she found her model director, 'always vibrating with creative energy, generous and totally devoted to bringing out the special gifts in each dancer'. Their relationship has always been one based on trust and faith. 'It's been very, very satisfying. I was very lucky to find so early on a director like that.' And Spohr was equally blessed with a dancer who, as Alan Levitan of the *Providence Journal* in Rhode Island said, 'makes dance seem such a logical extension of everything that is good in life'.



Through Arnold Spohr she began an association with the Argentinian choreographer Oscar Araiz: 'my perfect dream of a choreographer, sheer heaven to work with. His concepts and movements have a power and beauty beyond words'. Initially, though, Bonnie found his work difficult with its complicated integration of classical, modern and jazz styles. But, she says, 'I dance by my wits'. Ultimately she found herself the quintessential Araiz dancer. 'It's rare to find a choreographer so complementary to a dancer and he seems to feel I'm an important dancer for his choreography.' So important, in fact, that he made a major work specifically for her. *Mahler IV: Eternity is Now* is one of those ballets, however flawed it may be, that touches the soul with its evocative other-worldly imagery as it explores the permanence of eternal happiness and the indestructibility of innocence. For Bonnie it's particularly significant

since, as she notes, 'it's the first ballet that's ever been created for me. It's so special for me. It's just like going home'. Anna Kisselgoff of the *New York Times* describes her in *Mahler* as, 'the ingénue to top all ingénues... tender and delicate, with the lightest and most amazing of floating bourrées across the floor'.

In the fall of 1978 Bonnie took a year away from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet to dance with the Joffrey Ballet in New York. 'I went to New York to turn myself inside out', she says. And that's exactly what happened. 'I had it all figured out that Joffrey was just fabulous — my ideal kind of director — but as it turned out it was a bad year for him and I barely saw him. I was out of contact with the things I wanted from him most — his presence, his ideas, his enthusiasm, his direction. All of the things I need from him I had no access to. I did not feel healthy there.' The pressure of her New York existence resulted in several minor injuries and added 15 stress-related pounds to her slender body. But ultimately it proved to be a valuable experience. 'Usually dancers are so isolated in the way that they only have time in their lives for their own business and never have any time to take in other information about their field.' But Bonnie used her time in New York to work with other teachers and dancers and to see a lot of new dance. The result was 'a new way of seeing' that has changed her dancing. 'I am more myself — more fully me than I was before New York.' Even her appreciation for Robert Joffrey as a man remains intact: 'In our last meeting I was very confused and distraught and he set me straight about myself as a dancer and my work. He really crystalized a lot of beautiful things in terms of foundation for building the next stage of my career'.

Now that she's back in Winnipeg, Bonnie Wyckoff is relaxed and thin again and alive with the 'sense of gentle power' she feels there in contrast to the 'very violent way' New York supports dance. With a new self-awareness, her dancing has changed from that of a light, airy and occasionally undisciplined girl to a more earth-bound mature woman with a superb understanding of space and weight. 'There's no opportunity to use that kind of knowledge or even learn it in classical training', she explains, 'so there's just no exposure to it. But with new knowledge comes inevitable integration with the dancing'.

And for Bonnie the dancing is what it's all about. 'The sweat and the struggle with the body has never been a sacrifice for me. The work itself is full of incredible highs and intense discoveries of self. You go into that studio every day and face the mirror and you face your reality. You can't deceive it and you learn very quickly to face your life, to come to terms with your flaws. Because you have no choice, no time and no easy method of avoiding them, you have to subdue them.'

'For me dance is vibrant and alive. But insight and understanding come only through the work. It's constant, necessary and often a battle with the body, subjugating it to the will of the mind.'

She points out that, sometimes, 'I let a little technique go in order to keep a working intelligence going when I'm dancing'. But it's that very perception of dance that allows her to take her audience into the magical world she lives in. She wants them to be as swept away by the enchantment of dance as she still can be. 'I often thought that dance could no longer transport me and then I saw Alicia Alonso do *Giselle* and cried from beginning to end. I was never so



transported in my life. I never dreamed I would respond like that to another dancer or dance performance.'

Now that she's back at home with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, her authentic delight at what she calls the 'good health' of the company is contagious — 'health, I mean, in every way. It's functioning really smoothly and with a lot of respiration — a lot of breath, a lot of give and take and good energy flow'. Here she gets the kind of diversity that she loves, working one day with Dame Alicia Markova on *Les Sylphides* and the next with Hans van Manen on *Songs Without Words*. 'It feels so good to be pulled and extended. I could never give that up in favour of working with one choreographer — even Oscar. It's so important to keep that stretch going because then you remain maximally flexible.'

As for the future 'this city is a place to hang my psyche' since it's 'very close to my nature'. There will probably be projects that take her away from Winnipeg from time to time 'but it's not in my nature to make plans. Unexpected things just seem to happen.' This 'accidental' approach to her life leaves her open to any number of possibilities that may or may not include the Shaw Festival this summer with Judith Marcuse or a stint in Geneva, Switzerland with Oscar Araiz this fall. But 'Mr. Spohr understands that'.

With mature calm she insists that 'stardom is not the impetus of my career. My obsession is to grow and be enjoyed as a dancer. Fulfilling my potential is what's going to make me happy in the end'. Right now Winnipeg is the 'very happy, very peaceful place' where Bonnie Wyckoff feels she can accomplish all of that best.

Rhonda Ryman

Training the Dancer

XI

The Knee

Achilles Heel of the Dancing Body

The knee is the largest and most complex joint in the body and its two prime mechanical functions are diametrically opposed. It must ensure great stability when completely extended and subjected to the stress of body weight. It must provide great mobility necessary for locomotion and for optimally orienting the foot in relation to the ground. In reconciling these mutually exclusive requirements, the knee of even a relatively sedentary person is prone to sprains and dislocations. With the extreme demands of jumping, turning, and extensive 'kneework', it is no wonder that the knees may often be a dancer's 'Achilles Heel'!

Unlike the hip joint, the knee does not gain its strength by its boney structure but instead by the number and strength of its ligaments and surrounding muscles. Forcing the joint into unnatural positions places stress on ligaments intended to control the knee's range of movements. Prolonged stress causes them to lengthen and lose their ability to stabilize the joint. A recent survey of dance injuries reported by Dr. Ernest L. Washington cites ligamentous injuries as the most prevalent type of knee problem. Certain muscles surrounding the knee also act to stabilize the joint, but no amount of muscle support can fully compensate for ligamentous laxity. While many knee injuries in the older dancer result from over-use and joint degeneration, a great number of knee problems are simply a matter of forcing the joint into positions it was never meant to assume. Since the knee is constructed for mobility as well as stability, this can happen all too easily. A brief overview of this very complex joint should help us understand which movements can be safely achieved, and which should be avoided whenever possible.

Knee Structure

In the upright position the body weight is transmitted at the knee joint from the femur or thigh bone (at the rounded lateral and medial condyles of its expanded lower end) to the tibia or shin bone (at the flat upper surfaces of its two condyles, see Diagram 1). The patella, or knee cap, is a triangular sesamoid bone lying in the tendon of the anterior thigh muscles, the quadriceps group, in the groove between the medial and lateral femoral condyles. It is strongly anchored by the patellar ligament to a tuberosity (rough projection) on the upper front end of the tibia. It

serves to protect the front of the knee joint and also to increase the angle of insertion (attachment) of the quadriceps muscle thereby increasing its leverage for knee extension. The fibula, a long slender bone lying outside the tibia, articulates with the lower surface of the lateral tibial condyle and does not directly enter into the knee joint, although it provides attachment both for ligaments which stabilize the outer aspect of the knee and for certain knee flexors. Between the almost flat upper surface of each tibial condyle and the more rounded contour of the respective femoral condyle lies a tough crescent-shaped fibrocartilage or meniscus which adapts to the shape of these condyles and thereby adds stability to the joint. Each meniscus buffers the jars of locomotion, prevents frictional wear by aiding lubrication, and conforming to each bone surface facilitates movement and disperses more evenly the forces transmitted at the knee joint. It is important to note that the lateral or outer meniscus is smaller in circumference than the medial or inner one, as will shortly be discussed.

The four major ligaments of the knee are the medial (tibial) and lateral (fibular) collateral ligaments which run down the inner and outer sides of the knee respectively, and the anterior and posterior cruciate ligaments which connect the areas deep between the condyles of the tibia and femur. When the knee is extended the collateral ligaments are taut, preventing any lateral or sideways deviations in the joint. It is these ligaments which are stressed in leg deviations such as knock knees (the medial is stressed) and bow legs (the lateral is stressed). During knee flexion the medial and lateral collateral ligaments are loosened, so that lateral stability of the knee joint is greatly diminished, for example, during landings from jumps. If the knee is not flexed in line with the toes but is allowed to deviate forward and inward (as in the knock kneed dancer), considerable stress is placed on the aspect of the knee. The cruciate ligaments maintain forward-backward knee stability as the joint is flexed. During flexion, the femoral condyles would roll like wheels off the back edge of the tibia if they were not restrained by structures such as the anterior cruciate ligament. This ligament is also involved in the final stage of full knee extension. Constantly forcing the knees to hyperextend when the leg is weightbearing (that is, pushing the knee caps backward)

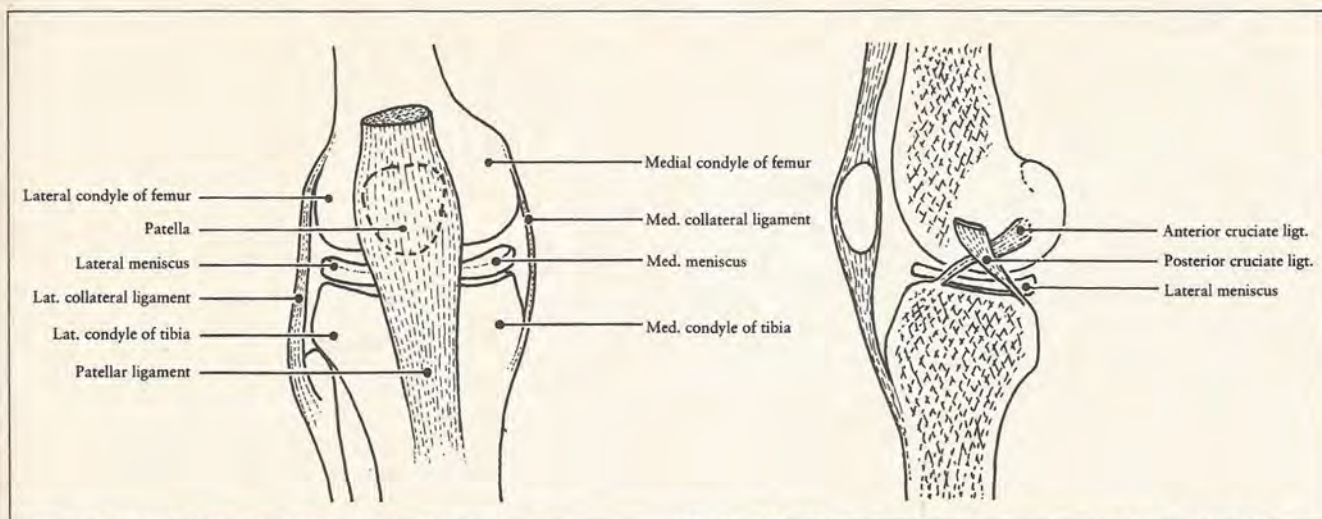


Diagram 1a) Anterior view of knee joint, simplified

Diagram 1b) Section through knee joint, viewed from medial side

places a great deal of stress on the anterior cruciate ligament and posterior joint capsule. Eventually this may cause them to be stretched and thus lose their capacity to stabilize the joint. The posterior cruciate ligament, along with the popliteus muscle, prevents the femoral condyles from sliding too far forward on the tibia during positions of extreme knee flexion, such as the depth of a grand plié. The ligaments also limit rotation of the femur on the tibia.

Movements of the Knee

The main actions of the hingelike knee joint are flexion and extension, although rotation is possible when the joint is flexed. Flexion, or bending, is the freest movement, occurring passively (i.e. with external assistance such as gravity or the force of another person) up to 160 degrees or when the soft tissue of the calf and thigh impinge. The knee will actively flex up to 140 degrees when the hip is flexed, but only 120 degrees when the hip is extended because of lessened hamstring efficiency. (Each muscle has a particular length from which it can exert the most force). When the hip is hyper-extended, as for example in a parallel attitude (see Diagram 3) knee flexion is also limited by the length of the rectus femoris, a long muscle on the front of the thigh, since this muscle crosses both the hip and the knee joint. During this attitude, the dancer may try to alleviate the stretching sensation in the front of the thigh by 'pulling back in the hip', that is, arching the lower back and flexing rather than hyperextending the hip joint, a practice which ruins the attitude line.

The knee can normally be extended five to 10 degrees past a straight line. This means that in the upright position, a plumb line seen from the side falling through the hip joint and ankle, passes just in front of the knee joint. The knees are considered to be hyperextended only when this amount is exceeded and the plumb line passes well in front of the joint. Extension past the normal range (hyperextension) is limited by ligaments and other passive connective tissue. When an individual's structure allows the knees to hyperextend naturally, the knee extensor muscles (quadriceps) can relax while the gravitational torque keeps the joint 'locked'. Students with hyperextended knees should be discouraged from forcing extension and encouraged to keep the knees in a visually straight line while 'pulling up the thighs', that is, while maintaining a slight tension or co-contraction in the knee flexors (hamstrings) and exten-

sors (quadriceps) to muscularly brace the joint. On the other hand, the student with tight hyperflexed knees—legs which never look straight—may be encouraged to stretch behind the knee as much as possible without harmful effects. The goal is a correct balance of knee flexors and extensors to meet the precise needs of the individual.

As the joint approaches full extension, an automatic and involuntary rotational action occurs as a result of the joint's structure. As mentioned, the surface areas of the medial meniscus and femoral condyle for articulation with each other are greater than those of the lateral meniscus and femoral condyle. As the knee approaches full extension the posterior cruciate ligament stops the forward roll of both femoral condyles. They begin to spin until the anterior cruciate ligament checks movement of the lateral femoral condyle to which it is attached and the joint becomes 'close-packed', that is, the femur is in close approximation with the tibia. The larger medial condyle, however, with its larger articular surface, can continue to move. As the quadriceps continue to contract the medial femoral condyle slides backward and the whole femur pivots about the taut anterior cruciate ligament. The femur will rotate on the tibia until the articular surfaces are congruous and the joint is completely 'close-packed' or 'locked' and therefore in a better position for supporting the body weight. No further rotation is possible when the joint is extended in this manner, a factor which ensures postural stability. The inward femoral rotation accompanying the last phase of knee extension in a weightbearing leg is often called the 'screw-home mechanism'. To sense this action, stand with the feet parallel and slightly apart. Extend the knee fully and observe how the knee caps rotate inward to face each other just slightly. Action of the popliteus muscle is said to be necessary to unlock the weightbearing knee and reverse the 'screw-home mechanism'. Whereas muscular contraction is necessary to fully extend the normal knee, the loose hyperextended knee easily snaps back into extension past the normal five to 10 degrees, especially when accompanied by a lordotic stance in which the weight is thrust back over the heels causing the line of gravity to fall well in front of the knee joint. As mentioned before, the dancer with hyperextended knees must not allow this hyperextension in a weightbearing leg but should keep the knee in a visually straight line. In this position, the 'screw-home mechanism'

does not come into play, and the knee joint is not fully stabilized. Balanced tension in the muscles surrounding the knee is therefore of extreme importance in bracing the joint. Correction of pelvic placement is also crucial to the dancer working with this leg structure.

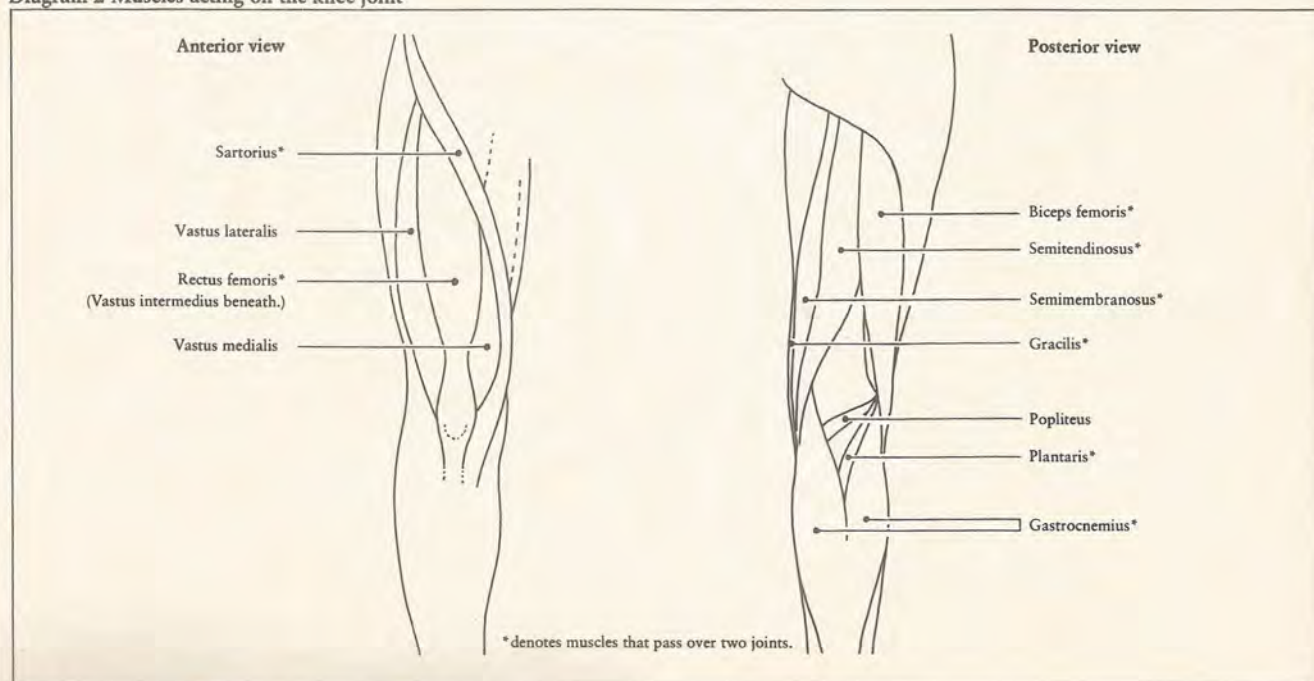
Whereas flexion and extension occur in movements of the femoral condyles on the menisci, rotation occurs by the movement of the femoral condyles and a twisting. Although no rotation is possible in the fully extended knee joint apart from the 'screw-home mechanism', rotation can occur as the knee is flexed and is freest when the knee is at right angles. Sit in a chair with the thigh and shin at a 90 degree angle to each other and turn the toes outward and inward without disturbing the thigh. The normal range is about 40 degrees of outward rotation and 30 degrees of inward rotation. This accounts for the young dancer's eagerness to assume a fifth position by bending the knees, planting the feet in as great a turn-out as possible, and then painfully restretching the knees. As the knees begin to extend, the amount of normal rotation decreases and stress is placed on structures such as the medial collateral ligament. Ironically our instinctive understanding of the natural functioning of the body often leads us to apply this information incorrectly and even harmfully. Dance teachers and physicians constantly cite forcing the turn-out as a major technical fault and cause of a host of leg deviations (notably tibial torsion) and injuries, yet students persist in the practice. Forcing the turn-out in this manner changes only the position of the shin and foot and may give the student the false impression of good turn-out, preventing him from working on true hip rotation.

Because the knee is able to rotate when it is flexed, it is possible to press the heels forward at the bottom of a grand plié in an incorrect attempt to increase turn-out. The heels then contact the floor in an exaggerated position which cannot be maintained as the knees extend. At the depth of a grand plié the menisci are in an extremely vulnerable position and any sudden jerky rotation may cause a tear

which is unlikely to heal normally. The traditional direction 'Don't sit at the bottom of a plié!' warns the student of this danger. The controlled lowering of a plié is accomplished by eccentric contraction of the knee extensors, that is, by their gradual lengthening to resist the downward pull of gravity. If tension is not maintained in these and surrounding muscles, the body is allowed to drop at the bottom of the squat. The joint is no longer braced and therefore particularly vulnerable, and considerable muscular involvement is required to erect the body from this position. Pirouettes from grand plié create a particularly vulnerable situation and should therefore be attempted only by advanced dancers without knee problems. Dr. Washington's survey cites meniscal tears as the second most frequent knee injury in theatrical dancers.

Knee rotation normally serves to augment the amount of turning movement possible in the trunk (throughout the spine and at the hip) and also to reorient the foot relative to the slope or irregularities of the ground. Pushed to an extreme, knee rotation may compensate for restricted motion in other joints, as we have seen regarding turn-out. When correctly utilized, however, knee rotation serves many valuable functions in dance. Turning out at the knee of a non-weightbearing leg is not harmful and creates various aesthetic effects. By rotating the tibia outward on the femur during frappés, développés or attitudes, for example, the foot appears more turned out. As the knee approaches full extension, of course, that extra turn-out is naturally lost. It is likely that beaten jumps are traditionally performed with slightly 'relaxed' knees so that the calves can be rotated at the knee enough to cross each other more easily. Knee relaxation may serve a similar function in *bourrées courus* where the heels must easily slip past one another. Try standing in fifth position on full or demi-pointe. Note the amount of turn-out visible at the heels when the knees are fully extended. Now relax the knees and see if the heels can be turned slightly more without stressing the knee joint or rolling at the ankles.

Diagram 2 Muscles acting on the knee joint



Knee rotation makes possible movements such as *ronds de jambe en l'air* and *petits battements*. These non-weightbearing movements which exercise the muscles involved in knee rotation strengthen and prepare the knee for weight-bearing movements involving knee rotation, such as the push-off for pirouettes or turning jumps and pivoting *en fondu* with a bent knee. Through training the dancer will learn how to control the amount and rate of knee rotation in order to avoid traumatic jerking actions which are both unattractive and unsafe. He will also learn to regain the proper alignment of the knee over the toes as soon as possible when landing from turns.

Kneework

Since the knee region lacks any great amount of fat and muscle padding, it is extremely vulnerable to bruising, as any modern dancer involved in 'kneework' can confirm. In the kneeling position, the body weight is born on the uppermost front surface of the tibia, its tuberosity. This rough bone surface provides attachment for the quadriceps knee extensor muscles via the patellar ligament. Continued weightbearing or the trauma of sudden falls onto the tibial tuberosity can lead not only to bruising but also to a chronic irritation of the bursae, sacs which serve to pad and protect the joint. When this chronic inflammatory condition occurs, the abnormal amount of fluid within the bursa often produces pain, although range of motion is not restricted. In this case the adage holds true, 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure'. Dancers involved in extensive kneework should not wait for problems to arise, but should wear protective knee pads from the beginning of training and rehearsals. It must be emphasized that good control of the torso, hip and knee joints (i.e. strength in the abdomen and thighs) is a prerequisite for kneework, just as good control of the hip, knee and ankle is crucial for pointework.

Another problem area is fourth position on the floor, a sitting position with one leg bent in front and one bent behind the body. If tightness in the hip joints prevents the necessary abduction with lateral rotation of the thighs, a very great stress is placed on the inner aspect of the back knee, especially the medial collateral ligament and the outer aspect of the front knee at the lateral collateral ligament. Since the knee joint is much less stable than the deep socketed hip joint, the knee — the weaker link — will suffer first the effect of stress. Instead of increasing range of motion at the hip (the physical goal of the position), range of motion is ironically increased at the knee where it is neither needed nor desired. Dancers with tight hips should seek to attain this position very gradually. Attempt the position sitting on a cushion and use progressively thinner cushions as hip flexibility increases. Even dancers with loose hip joints must take care in this position. At all times, the shin and foot should maintain a good relationship to the thigh and the floor: don't stress the knee by allowing the back heel to lift toward the ceiling, or the front heel to drop toward the floor. And heed any pain signals these positions may cause. Personal discretion is of prime importance. Remember that once a ligament is stretched, it will never spontaneously regain its original length.

Muscles Surrounding the Knee (see Diagram 2)

Of the 12 muscles which produce knee movements, four

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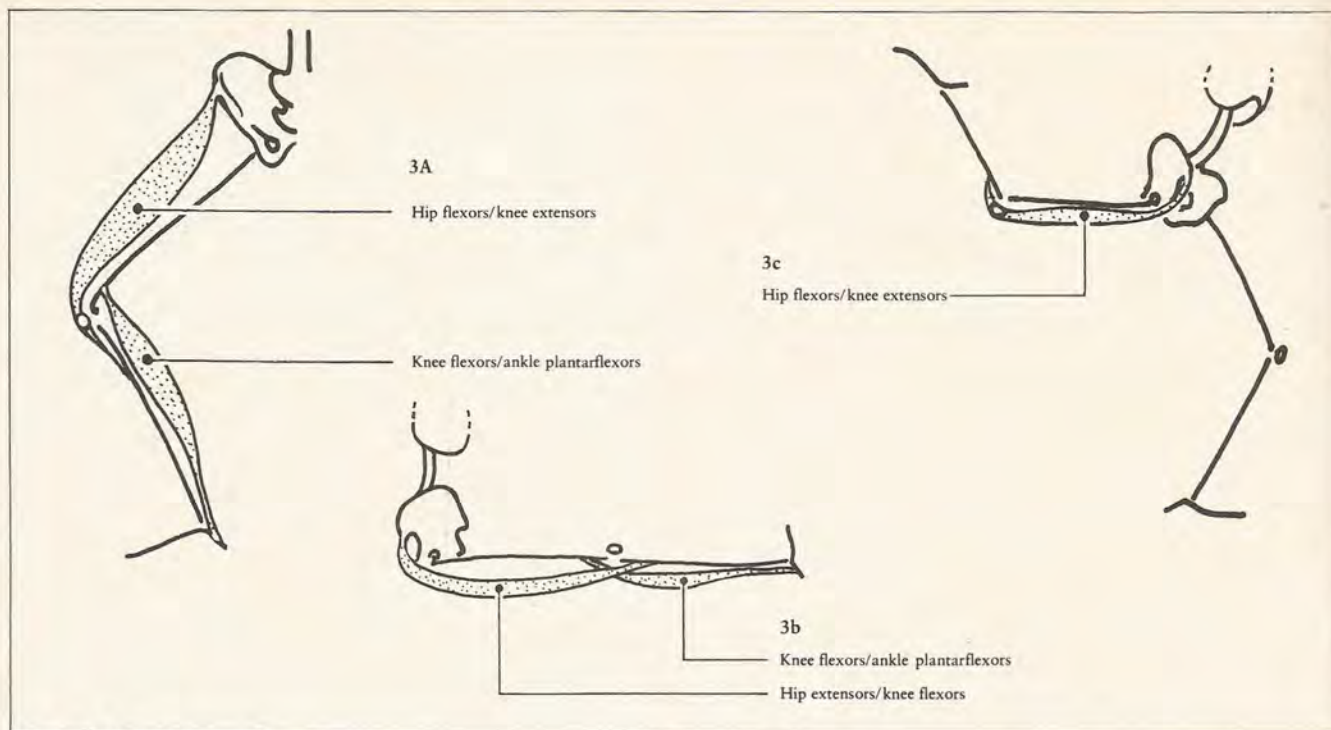


Diagram 3 Two-joint muscles

(three vasti and popliteus) are one-joint muscles — that is they act on the knee joint alone — and eight are two-joint muscles. Six two-joint muscles (rectus femoris, sartorius, gracilis and three hamstrings) act on the hip and knee, while the remaining two (gastrocnemius and plantaris) control ankle and knee actions. Those muscles crossing the hip and knee transfer the force of powerful one-joint muscles which originate on the pelvis and lumbar spine to the distal parts of the leg. The proximal two-joint muscles in turn overlap with muscles crossing the knee and ankle joint to further transfer the effective force of muscle contraction to the foot. This muscle structure promotes economy of effort in powerful kicking and jumping movements by co-ordinating the actions of the three main joints — the hip, knee and ankle. In locomotor movements such as walking, running and jumping, the joints flex sequentially from ankle to hip, and then extend sequentially in reverse order. Force is transferred from the stronger proximal segments near the trunk, to the smaller distal segments. Consider the push-off of a jump (see Diagram 3a). Although research has not confirmed the sequence of muscle actions in dance jumps, certain predictions are possible. As the hip joint begins to extend and lift the body — initiated by powerful one-joint hip extensors such as gluteus maximus — the rectus femoris, a hip flexor lying in the front of the thigh, begins to lengthen. This stretch or pull on the rectus femoris is followed by a powerful contraction of that muscle — similar to the shortening of a stretched elastic — which extends the knee. As the knee begins to extend, a similar stretch in the gastrocnemius or calf muscle causes a powerful contraction which plantar flexes the ankle joint. In this way, action in one segment is transmitted to an adjacent segment effectively and economically. As mentioned in previous articles, the effective force of contraction for a given muscle varies as it lengthens and shortens, and as its angle of insertion (and therefore its leverage) changes. This helps explain why there is a specific depth of demi plié

from which the knee extensors can exert most force. Too deep a demi plié can be just as ineffective as too shallow a crouch. The efficiency of the rectus femoris as a knee extensor increases as the hip extends (being greatest at approximately 90 degrees), so that during the push-off there is an optimal moment for powerful knee action. This explains why timing is such a crucial factor in achieving good *ballon*, the bouncy quality giving the illusion of effortless jumps. In a well-timed series of jumps, the landing from one actually facilitates the push-off for the next, hence the direction to 'Use your demi-plié!'. As the body weight is reborne by the legs, a great demand is placed on the leg musculature and a great many motor units (a nerve cell and the muscle fibres it innervates) are stimulated, producing a strong muscular contraction. (Compare the height you can achieve on a single jump versus a series of jumps.) On the landing, the leg joints flex with resistance (by eccentric contraction of the knee extensors) to slow down the body as it returns to the ground. The greater the duration of the demi plié landing, the longer the time for the dissipation of the body's impact, that is, for shock absorption. Thus even a naturally small demi plié that is well controlled can be used more effectively than a deeper, uncontrolled plié.

Certain dance movements are made more difficult owing to the action of two-joint muscles. Examples of these are positions involving simultaneous hip flexion and knee extension, such as long sit (see Diagram 3b), *developpé devant* and *grand battement devant*. Since the hamstring muscles cross the back of both the hip and knee joints, they are at their greatest length when the hip is flexed and the knee extended. Dancers with short hamstrings, therefore, cannot assume this position without considerable pain at the back of the thigh. The pull is alleviated either by rolling the hip crests backward to extend the hip joint, or by lifting and flexing the knee, both unacceptable in long sitting. It may be necessary to sit on a cushion while learning the position until sufficient extensibility is achieved in the

hamstrings. Long sit becomes further complicated when the ankles are dorsiflexed, when the toes are brought toward the knees. Here, the calf muscles are at their greatest length as well, since they cross the back of the knee and ankle joints. A similar situation with respect to the anterior thigh muscles occurs in a parallel attitude as previously described (see Diagram 3c). If stretching these muscles is undertaken patiently and soundly, through slow, sustained stretching and *never* by percussive, jerky bounces, the muscles may lengthen in time. Muscular imbalance in the three vasti muscles can be associated with deviations of the patella away from its position in the groove between the femoral condyles. Muscular balance in the knee extensors is therefore one of several factors of considerable importance in the prevention of patellar dislocations. Such injuries are ranked among the third most frequent reported by Dr. Washington. Muscular imbalance between the quadriceps and the hamstrings inhibits the co-ordinated actions of the hip and knee joints and renders the knee unstable, making it particularly prone to injury. Normally, the knee extensors exceed the flexors in strength by 10 per cent. A greater difference predisposes the weaker group to strains. Attaining a balanced development of quadriceps and hamstrings is therefore of particular value in preventing knee injuries: flexibility must not be cultivated to the detriment of strength in either group. In addition to preventing knee problems, a balanced development produces the aesthetically pleasing contours so important to the well-trained dancer.

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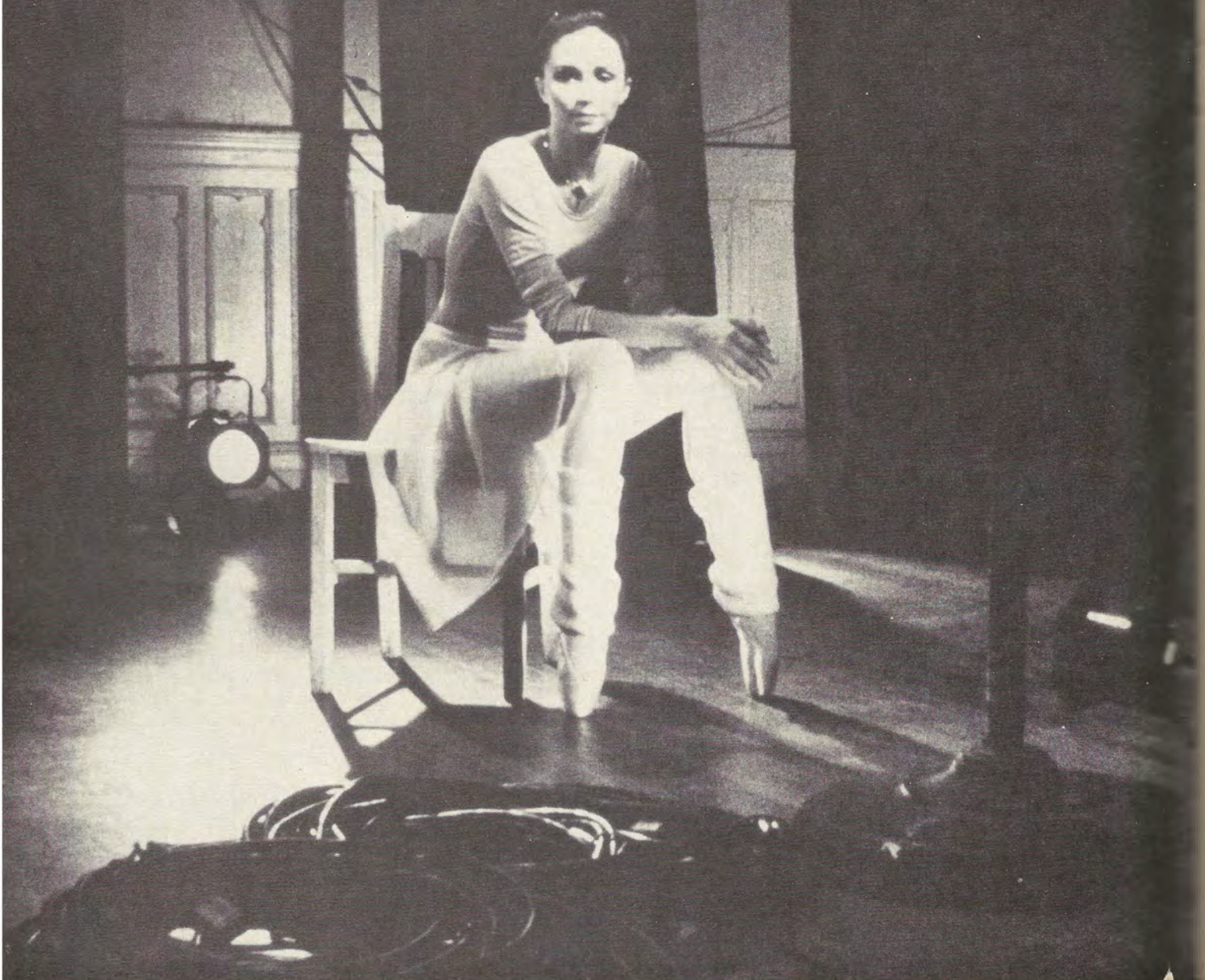
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In Review

Pointépiénu

Théâtre Oblique
Paris

15 October-4 November 1979

Pour sa première tournée en Europe, France et Belgique, la compagnie canadienne Pointépiénu s'est installée à Paris pour trois semaines (du 15 octobre au 4 novembre) au Théâtre Oblique. Créée en 1976 par Louise Latreille, formée à l'école des Grands Ballets Canadiens et à Mudra, la compagnie commence à être honorablement connue au Québec et Louise Latreille a du mal à cacher sa déception devant les rangs à demi-vides du Théâtre Oblique où les gags chorégraphiques de ses danseurs tombent dans un morne silence.

C'est cependant un spectacle très diversifié, rapidement enlevé qu'elle propose. L'ensemble de la troupe a une solide formation classique — ils ont tous été, pour la plupart, formés à l'école des Grands Ballets Canadiens — complétée par un travail sur le rythme et les techniques de contraction-décontraction de la danse contemporaine que Louise Latreille dispense elle-même.

Dans ses ballets, puisqu'elle est pour l'instant la seule chorégraphe de la troupe, Louise Latreille s'exprime à partir du vocabulaire classique qu'elle maîtrise et utilise parfaitement dans tous les registres. C'est d'ailleurs avec celui-ci qu'elle est la plus convaincante. Les courtes pièces qu'elle présente dans son programme et qui font appel à d'autres styles d'expression restent, en effet, assez superficielles: ainsi, dans *Corridors*, la technique afro-américaine mal dominée retient peu l'intérêt; dans *Aphrodite*, en dépit de la tunique et des ports de bras à l'antique, le sujet reste d'une décevante banalité chorégraphique. De même, les thèmes graves semblent peu lui convenir: avec *Corde d'Assaut*, elle aborde le conflit intérieur d'une femme qui



Louise Latreille of Pointépiénu

veut quelque chose, en prend possession, l'entretient en finalement ne peut le garder à cause des choix qu'elle a dû faire dans sa vie'.

L'illustration chorégraphique reste aussi floue que la définition du sujet. La compagnie Pointépiénu semble née pour la gaieté et l'humour et Louise Latreille, en ce domaine, enchaîne des constructions chorégraphiques exigeantes et sans facilité. Dans *I, II et 3*, on assiste aux jeux tendres et rivaux de deux amis qui se disputent les faveurs d'une jeune fille, laquelle attise avec complaisance cette dualité. On a souvent fait référence à Louis Falco pour l'humour dont fait preuve ce ballet mais on pense irrésistiblement aussi à ces dessins animés où une souris malicieuse vient à bout de naïfs matous. On peut en outre

admirer la belle harmonie de lignes et de mouvements des deux danseurs de la compagnie Anthony Bouchard et Alexandre Bélin (ex-premier danseur des Grands Ballets Canadiens qui a rallié Pointépiénu en 1979) que l'on retrouve avec plaisir dans *Malbrough s'en va t'en Guerre*. Là encore, deux amis s'affrontent, se provoquent ou s'épaulent dans une belle réalisation plastique. A l'assaut des prouesses techniques (pirouettes, grands jetés, grands dégagés, manèges) répond le jeu aérien de deux cubes en tubulures de couleur tour à tour abri, prison ou simple prolongement du mouvement. En fin de programme, Louise Latreille rend hommage à son Québec natal avec *La Bottine Souriante*, scandée par les rythmes folkloriques de cuillères de bois. Dans un éclatement de couleurs, blanc-bleu, blanc-jaune, blanc-rouge, trois couples jouent avec des bancs de même couleur: clin d'œil à la gymnastique suédoise, aux rondes enfantines ou aux postures des équilibristes, c'est la danse en liberté, le plaisir de bouger ensemble.

Si nous mentionnons en dernier lieu *Puzzle*, de Maguy Marin, dansé également par Pointépiénu, c'est que ce ballet gagne ici ses lettres de noblesse. Dansé pour la première fois par une autre compagnie que le Ballet Théâtre de l'Arche, il n'a rien perdu de son mordant et de sa drôlerie. Cela suffirait à confirmer, si besoin en était, l'acuité du talent de la chorégraphe.

Louise Latreille poursuit sa tournée par la Belgique, mais elle espère bien d'ici là avoir conquis le public parisien. Son vœu actuel: pouvoir présenter sa compagnie, en France, au cours des Festivals de l'été.

JEANNE MARESCAL

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**Le Groupe de
la Place Royale**

Grand Theatre
Kingston
27 November 1979

Le Groupe's ways and means have been controversial for more than a decade. Some see their work as pure gold, others are convinced they're still hammering in the mines. As they move toward their third generation of artistic direction, Le Groupe shares the esteemed patina of survival, the burnish of endurance, with other established companies. There ends the similarity. Why is it that when the curtain goes up on Le Groupe de la Place Royale, there is nothing to compare them with?

Part of the answer may be in the character of Peter Boneham, with his notorious, manic dissatisfactions with achievement: a gleefully ranting distrust of creation/destruction. Part of the answer may be in Jean-Pierre Perrault, who prevails with a holier sense of art and artists. Part of the answer is in Le Groupe's tradition of ensemble, which only *begins* with dancers who can dance: the group requires great personal investment, including *not* dancing sometimes.

From this odd chemistry has come a kinetic line of dance, accomplishments of an incredibly fast-paced and often brilliant artistic imagination. Avant garde? No, closer to 20th century Romantic, with tomorrow's favourite flavour, and a crazy streak.

When the curtain goes up, we see a company that hasn't settled in on itself, hasn't settled down, showing works that may already, by their standards, be obsolete. The programme is boldly imaginative, far beyond what we see when *other* curtains rise. It leads one to suspect that a lot of what others are producing, Le Groupe has had in its scrapbook for years.

The programme at the Grand Theatre in Kingston was a complete dichotomy: the first half was plum-nuts-and-mellow-fruitfulness; the second half was warm statues and sacred cows. The impression is that Le Groupe is on the brink of another quantum leap.

The format of *13 Choreographies*, which opened the show, goes back to at least 1975. The company presents a potpourri of short dances, as created by various company members. Each work is distinctive and complete: some limp, some fly, but since nothing lasts longer than two minutes, one simply enjoys the glimmers of personality, technical skill, quirkiness, musicality as they go by. The glimmers provide strong, faceted impressions: muscle, guts, precision in the opening duet with Michael Montanaro and Stephen Raptis on rhythm sticks, bare-chested, jumping, leaping, never missing a beat, laughing; the ridiculous vamping of Tassy Teekman,

modelling a red plastic sheet as if it were a floor-length mink; absurd silliness, as plastic heaps squeak, grow into a towering squabble of small-headed bottle-neck beasts in a noisy nonsense argument which gurgles to defeat; technique *pouring* out of Elaine Rudnicki's fast 60-count change-per-beat solo, and Stephen's flashy floor-level barrel rolls, off-centre leaps, risks with balance/momentum; the plastic strip upstaging and inhibiting (among other things) Suzanne McCarrey's playful solo; the 'Where's Bill?' feeling, when William James finishes a pas de deux with Tassie that doesn't establish him as a dancer — stiff partnering, due to a demanding singing part; cloying cuteness, as three huge plastic squares, on stumpy starpoint legs, shuffle through Tea For Two as Michael taps fuzzily in and out; delightfully sharp full-company unison, each delivering clever vocal lines as they go, beginning with 'A cut is not a slice' — all undermined when, by the end, the author of the play-script used has not been credited vocally (a sluff is a sluff is a sluff, but some are unforgivable); an infectiously hilarious finale, beginning with a long grey worm of dancers on the floor, butts to audience — they'd be sitting on each others shoulders, if they were standing up — rolling onto their backs one by one, facing the audience one by one, then a quick breakup, feet to audience. Silence. 'Proing?' says 'one, thrusting arms and legs straight up, with a quick glimpse of face and torso, and splats down flat again. All the little segments pick it up, bobbing faster and faster, proinging, to an absolute epidemic of laughter.

Somewhere, in the middle of all that, was one 'for keeps': a stunning work, performed by Michael Montanaro and Tassy Teekman. Though pas de deux is the formal name, this one felt more like (?/?) performed as a simultaneous solo; it was two sides of movement, odd, poignant, beginning with mimed fisticuffs, slowly circling, wary. Nothing appears to touch, but Michael opens his hands around her fists, to stop them. He moves behind her, close as skin, following her aggression, anger, rage (all contained, slow) with a simultaneous identical image, but soothing, cushioning. Her hands remain closed, arms overhead, fists turning tightly from the wrist, and his hands move up beside them, protecting. She has turned on him often, when the wary circling begins again. (You know the sound, when lots of people let out held breath quietly, at the same time? It's one of those.)

In the 1975 version of *13*, with Boneham as M.C. introducing the works, each was credited to its maker. They still should be.

Runaway, by Michael Montanaro, is a dance of 'complex hand-clapping, knee slapping, and sneaker tapping ... worked into accents, rhythms, and patterns ... whimsical, happy, lightly zany ...' Thus spake the program note. There is also lots



Vent d'est

of foot pounding, and some butt-whacking. The dance looks like the fast drill of a prize-winning marching band, with bodies as instruments, precision beats, staccato textures, and rests when an arm is raised. It required considerable stamina, and must have been rehearsed to a metronome. It was delightful to see and hear, and it went on and on and on (and ON and ON) anon anon.

The first half of the evening provided laughter, pleasure, insight into personalities, appreciation for ensemble. It was a noisy intermission, and the lobby cleared fast. Where was the walk-out audience Le Groupe has been rumored to have for the last three years? This audience was buzzing with energy in response to what they'd seen.

Programming may be private territory; the people who left during *Vent D'Est* had been given expectations by the first part of the performance, and those expectations were aborted by the programming, not by 'insensitivity' to the work, or boredom. Those who left were probably the ones who had been the first back to their seats. Something needs fixing here: one solution may be a three-part programme that winds down a little in the middle . . . to *Love Songs* maybe?

The opening moment of *Vent d'est*, by Jean-Pierre Perrault, were striking: an ethereal atmosphere of light, intriguingly peaceful sounds, foreground dancers in silhouette, upstage delicately lit, dim. According to Perrault, this was to be ' . . . a new form of performance, my personal vision of a 35-minute universe with a logic of its own . . . It is all about seeing' (programme note). It was an enchanting place, in many ways, revealed in a series of sculptural poses that in turn, revealed things we did not want to see, and hadn't: unison movement in desperate need of cleaning; dancers struggling to hold dif-

ficult long balances in the half-light (arabesque, extended knee bent, torso high over the hip . . . a serene touch); ensemble broken by the comings and goings of The Stranger, whose interactions with the rest often seemed strained and precarious. Though the dance was rich with images, the physical requirements seemed cruelly demanding of voice/body control; some of the body effects could have been sacrificed. The striking moments seemed rendered effortlessly. One of these was the mens' trio, in which Michael and Bill caught and held Jean-Pierre in a series of jumps and leaps. The three were working so closely, physically, that the jumps took on unreal two-dimensional qualities, motion not only arrested, but stopped with an almost supernatural strength, *no sense of weight*, taut, solid, without visible effort. Another stunner, a different logic. And the womens' trio also embodied it, standing still, identically completing and repeating an intricate phrase of hands and arms only, precise motions, functional, like weaving on a large invisible loom, very fast, with great absorption, for minutes - perfect, and beautiful.

It should be impossible to overvalue Le Groupe's work, not only for their walk-about quality of imagination (which in itself gives them distinction), and bold performance, but also because they are a company which is birthing, nurturing, a line of artists. The genealogy started with Jeanne Renaud, and the branches begin with Boneham and Perrault. Makes one wonder where else in Canada, and with whom, among the burnished, the genealogies will begin, when the history of modern dance here is written . . . Who's coming along, through the established companies; who's the next generation?

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Appropriately enough *The Sleeping Beauty* opened the National Ballet's fall season. The company is looking somnolent these days, perhaps still absorbing the shocks of the London critics, and seems to be waiting for a handsome prince to bring it once again to life. Certainly he is not the musical director, who led any number of dull performances; nor does the management of the company appear to be giving the necessary drive that would raise the level of performance. Still the opening week of Beauties brought some pleasure: Mary Jago's Principal Fairy danced with expansiveness and full awareness of the christening festivities; Peter Schaufuss and Veronica Tennant's gleaming second act; Kevin Pugh's promising Bluebird; Lois Smith's warm and gracious Queen; and the general good manners of the *corps* in the Prologue. Otherwise most performances were routine, with little sense of drama or conflict. What the production needs is Nureyev to take a second look and do some much-needed revising.

A handsome prince did appear in the person of Anthony Dowell, long enough to show us what *The Dream* and *Four Schumann Pieces* are all about, but not long enough to awaken his colleagues. Well, not quite. Veronica Tennant, regaining strength and confidence daily it seems, at last found herself with a partner she could trust. Her final performance with Dowell of *The Dream*, let it be recorded, was as wild and passionate as any this viewer has seen in fifteen years. Dowell, a dancer of extraordinary fluency and sensitivity to music, drew from Tennant an interpretation that revealed all of Titania's wilful and seductive nature. Their final pas de deux was the apex of the season and if it didn't quite tear the O'Keefe apart—not a bad idea at that—the audience has only its own inexperience of great dancing to blame.

This, it should be added, was not the Anthony Dowell who first danced Oberon some fifteen years ago. Then his portrayal, while noted for its fluency of movement and phrasing of music, was characterized by reserve and remoteness. Over the years Dowell has developed his portrayal to the point where Oberon's dominion over his kingdom cannot be disputed. Against such portrayals, other Oberons should not be compared. David Nixon and Albert Forister made their first Toronto appearances in the role. Each needs more coaching, and each should note, along with Tomas Schramek, that Oberon, King of the Fairies, does not stamp his foot in order to attract attention.



Anthony Dowell in *The Dream*

Dowell also appeared in *Four Schumann Pieces*. Since this ballet by Hans van Manen was made especially for him, it was to be expected that his performance would reveal facets of the choreography not usually apparent. What one did not expect to perceive was a sharper sense of the ballet's structure. Normally *Four Schumann Pieces* is a lengthy solo with six background couples, two of them particularly prominent. With Dowell's dancing, however, the ballet became, admittedly only in some undefined and unspecified way, a dance about a dancer, his personality, and the dance. The roles of the principal women and the second man—in this case, Karen Kain, Nadia Potts and Clinton Rothwell—added a dimension to the central character, making *Four Schumann Pieces* a more interesting ballet than before. Pity, however, that Dowell did not dance in this ballet with Mary Jago. Her performance, as throughout the season, was suffused with an energy and a sense of music that put many of her colleagues to shame. Every time she danced *Four Schumann Pieces* or *Collective Symphony*, she did so differently. Nearly everyone else appeared to be going through the motions: it was often dispiriting.

Coppélia, in Erik Bruhn's production, was revived on 21 November. It took me nearly the whole of the first act to overcome my amazement at the truly garish sets and costumes. How can one forget such things? In any event, the first per-

formance showed Tennant and Schaufuss in good, at times brilliant, form; but her characterization of Swanilda is so driven one had at times to look away just for a moment's relief and relaxation. Perhaps Tennant realized that much of the life has oozed out of this production and was desperately trying to revive her sagging colleagues. Somehow I doubt that, though her observation—were it hers—would indeed be correct. Erik Bruhn returned to the role of Dr. Coppélius that first night, a little more subdued than on previous occasions, but his mime in the second scene was a joy—even the repeats. Neither Constantin Patsalas nor Jacques Gorrissen conveys quite the same sense of wonder when the doll suddenly and miraculously comes to life, though each in his different way presents a valid reading of the part.

At a later performance Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn brought some glamour, a little faded perhaps, to the proceedings. The choreography does not entirely suit Kain, and Augustyn, of late, gives the appearance of tearing at choreography as if to make some Petrushka-like statement about art or dance or himself. Though they were magical in the last act, their first act was, to be impolite, bitchy. There's now more than a hint of competition when they dance together, and their performances are worrying.

In another way so too were the Swanilda and Franz of Mary Jago and Tomas Schramek. She looked very nervous, and their partnering underrehearsed. Schramek has developed the habit of moving in closer and closer upon his partner, especially in supported turns, which must be especially unnerving. Still, she is the best classical dancer among the National's women; certainly she's the best *adagio* dancer and her work is always rewarding to watch. If her performance was in some ways unsatisfactory that says as much about her apparent nerves as it does the viewer's expectations. Jago is at least the company's sweetest and most affectionate Swanilda, though it's not easy to believe in her cruelty to Dr. Coppélius. Throwing his precious toys about is not the sort of thing nice young girls do.

With a few exceptions—and I have barely mentioned the enormously promising Kevin Pugh—the company is marking time, at least artistically. Financially the season was a near sell-out, and the point after all is to keep working. But there should be growth as well, and that appears to have ceased. What the principals and soloists need is more and more coaching; the *corps* more discipline; the company as a whole more sense of direction. One handsome prince, even one so fine and so welcome as Anthony Dowell, does not a season make.

LAWRENCE HASKETT

Dance Works

Studio Theatre
Regina
26-30 December 1979

Two productions by Regina Modern Dance Works, *Winterpiece* and *Peter and the Wolf*, were presented in Christmas week. Under the artistic direction of Maria Formolo and Keith Urban, the company demonstrated that it has not only come of age, but that it has done so with a considerable degree of artistic merit.

Prokofiev's well-known score for *Peter and the Wolf* had been choreographed (and was narrated) by Keith Urban. The Russian fairy tale sparkled with interesting eccentricities of movement. Urban's imaginative and witty choreography included yoga-like positions for the duck, sparse but spritely movements for the bird, and a kinetic subtlety of flowing movement for a completely believable and mischievous cat and wolf.

The dancer's impish delight in defining distinctive personalities for Peter and the animals was colourful and convincing. Humour and warmth prevailed as the dancers moved through high extensions, lengthy balances and smooth transitions of gesture and folk rhythms to produce a cohesive whole.

Despite Urban's clever choreographic conception of *Peter and the Wolf*, the

emphasis upon theatricality of characterization limited the amount of pure dance. Unconventional arabesques, falls and spins, impressive unexpected effort changes, remain 'on stage' rather than surging across the footlights. It is top entertainment in its creative interpretation, but lacks an expansiveness in movement of which the company is capable.

Winterpiece is a poignant, poetic, collaborative work of choreography, by Maria Formolo, and music, by Tom Schudel. From the start, there is a sense of 'feeling at home' as the audience recognizes the theme, the time, the place, the joys and loneliness of winter on the prairies. Inspired by William Kureleck's paintings, the dances are alive, responsive, and at the same time, soothing. The dance style and music verges on reverence and devotion. Its effect is as warning as that of a chinook wind.

Winterpiece has five sections. A prelude, two crowd dances which fittingly open and close *Winterpiece* and, in between, images and visions of winter play activities. The latter are brought to a dramatic climax by the sudden interruption of a blizzard. Stillness and loneliness prevail until the conclusion is produced by a return to the lyricism of the opening prelude.

The tempo of the prelude is as whimsical as a lullaby. Danced by Keith Urban, it begins against the believable illusion of endless prairie space. The simplicity and

stark contrast of a straggling snowfence against a completely white setting underscores the harshness and loneliness of a windswept prairie scene.

The intense simplicity of setting is matched in the sculptural dance style. Angular movements of flexed foot, leg, arm and hand, coupled with a striking sense of lightness in music and step, essay a child's world of wide-eyed wonderment and innocence. Simple gestures of face and hand slide into quick-time as a youthful spirit discovers the spontaneous joy of the moment through lively skips, hops and leaps. All of these are punctuated in stop-time. The crows, as harbingers of both winter and spring on the prairie, evoke some of the best imagery and choreography. Flying in ragged rhythm, in unexpected circle, line and pair formations, the dancers flutter, flap, swoop, and soar until the wind is almost heard to whistle. Their total lack of decorum is furthered by cawing and squawking in saucy disobedience to all that is acceptable. A noisy, brassy spirit, like that of the westerner in the East, borders on being disagreeable. It is a spirit which relates something of the courage and confidence of prairie people who prosper best under adversity.

The sudden disappearance of the crows signals winter's magical arrival. The dancers, dressed in loose fitting caps, scarves, mittens, bulky clothing of red, yellow and blue, provide a storybook quality to this

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miracle. Freezing and melting through a kaleidoscope of winter scenes, the dancers' Laban-like efforts of push and press, flick and glide, relate the everchanging qualities of snow and wonder of winter. There is a dreamlike, timeless quality to the choreography as frolicsome scenes freeze, melt and flow in slow liquid states. Only in a few instances does the movement risk losing the balanced tension qualities necessary for real life drama.

The blizzard scene is masterfully engineered when white fabric acting as clouds is lowered to the ground. Manipulating the material with imaginative control, the storm begins softly with ripples and waves of white upon the stage. The intensity of movement and music escalates until a howling whiteness envelops the entire space. The whirling effect of Susan MacKenzie's scarf dance in the background has the dual effect of whipping the storm to its highest fury and producing the eerie silence of calm when a blizzard's wrath has subsided. One is reminded of the haunting, lonely atmosphere created by prairie novelist, Sinclair Ross.

Winterpiece concludes with the arrival of Spring and the crows. Keith Urban's hymn-like dance to Spring breaks the sculptural motif of the choreography to introduce the joy of pure movement. Joined by the crows, there is a heroic and mocking message: winter has not only been survived, it has been enjoyed.

Maria Formolo's choreography shows a delicate ability to juxtapose the casual with the contrived, the gentle and whimsical with the strong and structural. The synthesis of polarities causes something within us to thaw.

PAT DEWAR

The Alberta Ballet

Jubilee Auditorium

Calgary

20-21 November 1979

Dance buffs here in Peter Lougheed's occidental sheikdom wish the Alberta Ballet well. Easterners may bemoan our oil parsimony, but their artistic exports have been equally niggling. The National Ballet drops around at best every two or three years, invariably with yet another Swan Beauty or Sleeping Lake. So in sheer self protection we must develop our own quality company. Moreover, the Canada Council has persistently denied The Alberta Ballet more than token funding, while pouring tax dollars into questionable enterprises elsewhere. Westerners automatically sympathize with anyone dumped on by Ottawa.

Unfortunately, good wishes neither help beggars ride nor thrill audiences. ABC's fall season once more revealed the many positive results of Brydon Paige's four-year directorship, along with some (would it were not so) disheartening ones. His *Guiliani Variations*, yet another attractively costumed, abstract 'opener' in classical form, features movement that is never ugly and inappropriate, or glaringly original. However it does display the company's considerable advances in technique and assurance under his stewardship. Unfortunately, classical movement cruelly spotlights the slightest technical flaws, such as Mariane Beauséjour's stiffness in the upper back and Kevin Peterman's unattractive feet (that ubiquitous male bugaboo). In fact, by professional standards too many unstretched legs, unsustainable turn-outs and sloppy positions were displayed, implying that some pickiness during technique classes may be in order.

The second and third pieces together buttressed other doubts. William Dollar's hoaky soap opera, *Combat*, could with a touch more exaggeration, become hilarious high camp. Consider. Two horsebacked adversaries duel to the death. Would Richard the Lion Heart have promenaded his opponent perkily in *attitude devant*? The heroine succumbs. Her quivering legs suggest, rather, that she has to visit the john. Fittingly, the melodramatic music could accompany *Spiderman*, since *Combat* should be serialized for Saturday kid vid. From this horse ballet I fled to the lobby for some welcome oats and hay.

Lambros Lambrou's *Sun Dances*, clearly the audience favourite, had some attractive moments, although the dim lights intensified the critic's problem of writing decipherable notes in the dark. Was this 'Sun Dance' set in a total eclipse? Classical, jazz, modernistic, even some Egyptianish movements were imposed on an ethnic score; it looked as if Mr. Lambrou had simply invented some combinations while ignoring the accompaniment. Merce Cunningham being our reigning deity, this is sometimes acceptable, for example, with the amorphous sounds of a John Cage. But with folkish music, which elicits particular associations, the movement will merely seem an arbitrary rather than an inevitable partner.

The guest artists we can quickly dismiss. Sylvester Campbell looked badly out of shape, at times virtually marking. Hopping pirouettes, floppity arms, straining shoulders, heels rarely touching the floor. Sonia Vartanian was precise, controlled and very strong, but rather hard and cold, lacking in humour or lyricism. She was quite miscast in her assigned roles.

Sometimes your best friends *will* tell you, so some general criticisms are here offered, emphatically in a constructive

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spirit. For by the common scuttlebutt ABC simply does not produce much excitement; unless things improve, sparse audiences will continue. With all Mr. Paige's positive contributions, he has made too many mistakes in choosing repertoire. For new ballets that fail he cannot entirely be faulted, but surely pieces he selects from other reps, as known quantities, should be worthwhile. Sadly, *Combat* is not the only piece of trash he has imported. We have also done penance through Eric Hyrst's *Labyrinth* (a laughable Romeo and Juliet in 12 minutes, featuring the melodramatically pointed finger of accusation), and Fernand Nault's *Dance Concertante*, an abomination to Stravinsky.

In the same vein, he recently appointed Mr. Lambrou resident choreographer. I have already, in these pages, supported youngsters receiving repeated chances to compose. But sadly, Mr. Lambrou's four repertoire contributions have lacked any noticeable spark of originality or theatrical imagination. His next 'World Premieres' will not cause a stampede at the box-office. Yet other promising talents around here have been ignored. Larry McKinnon produced one fine work and, being a native Albertan, should have had another commission long before now. Calgarian Vicki Adams-Willis could surpass any work ABC now has before sitting down to breakfast. I wonder if Mr. Paige is even aware that she exists? If I were saddled with his mediocre repertoire, I would be spending a lot of effort to discover fresh, exciting talent, perhaps by initiating a frequently promised choreographic workshop. Lack of funds is no excuse; many young composers will work for virtually nothing. When you're drawing flies anyway, what can you lose by taking some chances?

Last grievous error. The company is portrayed as much better than it is, so customers often feel ripped off. By performing in the mammoth Jubilee and putting themselves in a ticket package with major international companies, they invite comparisons which must be negative. They even charge the same ticket prices as, say, the National Ballet, with only 12 dancers (who would be hard pressed to make the National's back row) and taped music instead of live orchestra. In short, they are rapidly becoming victims of their own pretensions.

JOCK ABRA

City Ballet, Ballet Ys, The National Tap Dance Company, Dance Company of Ontario, Dancemakers

Toronto
December 1979


Toronto witnessed a strange phenomenon this Christmas season — an epidemic of dance shows primarily for children. Following the example of the National Ballet's perennial *Nutcracker*, almost every other company in the city from tap to ballet seemed to be cashing in on the holiday season. Dance enthusiasts often sniff at children's productions but these shows do serve a purpose. Not only do they determine the financial survival of many companies but they also bring a new and highly impressionable audience to the dance theatre — perhaps the dancers and dancomanes of tomorrow. And that is why it is so reprehensible when a production is as lame and embarrassing as City Ballet's *Nutcracker* or as kitschy and confused as Ballet Y's *Clown of Hearts* or the National Tap Dance Company's *Tin Soldier*, for they could well turn off as many young viewers as they turn on.

It does take spunk to mount a mini-*Nutcracker* while the National Ballet is playing

their usual sold-out season a few blocks away. Yet spunk and inventiveness, (a surprising walking clock, a magician who appears in a cloud of smoke), could not make up for a glaring technical deficiency and the stilted pseudo-19th century party mannerisms of Marijan Bayer's City Ballet *Nutcracker*.

Spunk was one of the main elements of the National Tap Dance Company's rerun of *The Tin Soldier*, expanded from last year and with a few new characters. Shoulder shrugging tap numbers, taken out of time and context, rarely propelled the story forward as much as they interrupted and confused it. It was never clear why the Troll lady, Bonnie Monaghan, objected so much to the soldier boy's romance with the ballerina, and the battle in boogie time between the tin soldiers and the gangster gutter rats seemed to keep bebopping on forever. Fortunately much of this scattered syncopation was held together by the strong presence and technique of guest star Jeff Hyslop. Perhaps it was he who inspired the tot tapping in the aisle at intermission.

Ballet Y's production *Clown of Hearts* did inspire some children to get up and dance. Encouraged to sit on the apron of the stage, their dancing was in fact worked into the performance itself. This simplistic tale concerns a minstrel clown, his friend the cat and a bullying organ grinder named Oscar. It concludes with the happy union



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Dancemakers: *The Nightingale*

of the clown and a doll who is brought to life. The production, while competent and occasionally charming, seemed to lack whatever it takes to make a work truly inspired. *Clown of Hearts* does not credit its child audience with much intelligence and too often dissolves into cuteness, unremitting smiles and titillating, leggy poses.

Fortunately there were two 'inspired' productions on the Christmas circuit. The recently formed Dance Company of Ontario presented *The Dancing Circus*, a pageant of all the acts one would ever expect to find at the circus, choreographed by Lois Smith and Earl Kraul. Included were three seals who smiled themselves silly, a cowardly lion who bourrées in fright, a litter of baby poodles and a herd of elephants with vacuum cleaner hose trunks. The dancers, who for this production included company members and young students of the George Brown School of Dance, all have an ability to create illusion and magic. One reason *The Dancing Circus* works so well is that the choreographers have allowed the dance to tell the story on its own without the simplistic mime gestures of *Clown of Hearts* or *Tin Soldier*. One sequence comes to mind: Jeremy the Clown falls asleep and dreams of his true love, the tightrope walker, while a corps of Candyfloss fairies cast a spell over him. He wakes to find that his formerly disdainful lady does indeed love him. Not high drama perhaps, but the stuff fairy tales and childhood are made of.

The other highlight of Christmas week

was Dancemaker's debut of *The Nightingale*. This Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale is about a nightingale who rescues the Emperor of China from his deathbed even though he has captured and then abandoned her in favour of a jewelled mechanical bird who sings only one perfect song. Peggy Baker's choreography has Tai Chi stances to its stylization and the costumes and banners by Mary Ford are lavishly beautiful. It would have been very easy to slip into a Charlie Chan impression of things Chinese. Fortunately the production suggests, instead, the kind of delicate 18th-century French Chinoiserie one associates with fantastical, fairytale China. Memorable moments included a mimed journey through jungles, over hills and across streams as the Emperor's servants search for the Nightingale. The movements of the little bird, danced by Carol Anderson, are spare and contained, virtuosic without being acrobatic. Other delights included the umbrella toting Chancellor, Pierre Le Chasseur, with his marvellous expressions of disdain at the bumptuous antics of the Imperial Music Master, Daniel Albert. Michael Baker's exquisite music played only on Eastern instruments, and the arrival of the mechanical bird in a packing crate complete with wind-up key and assembly instructions. *The Nightingale* is sparing and subtle—let us hope it becomes a staple of Christmas fare.

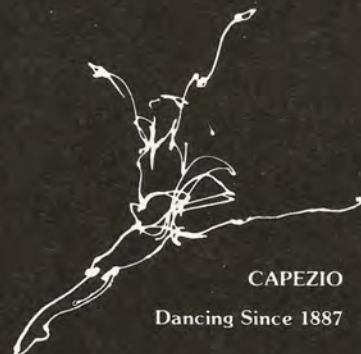
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CAPEZIO

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Within the erupting world of modern dance, one can think of few companies to describe as classical, and given the history of modern dance perhaps there is only one company where the name fits: the Martha Graham Dance Company.

The Graham company has achieved its unique position predominantly by virtue of its founder's pivotal role in the development of modern dance, but also through its own longevity, quality of dancers and stylistic consistency. As with any living entity though, the company has undergone changes over the years, bringing new issues to the fore in its definition of itself and in audiences' perceptions of the company. A question that the company's recent visit to Hamilton raised, can be summed up in the different gradations of meaning encompassed by the description 'classical'. One is, 'of the highest quality', another, 'orthodox and sound, but not quite up to date'; the question is, what is the Graham company's current position along that continuum?

The historical heritage of the company has not been matched by contemporary fame, but 1979 Hamilton audiences were treated to a great deal more than the ghost of Martha Graham past. There were new pieces — by Graham — and there was much to praise in the dancers' performing skills. Uniformly they were a fine group of dancers, strong and highly disciplined. Toronto and Hamilton audiences have not been treated to such superb dancing in a long time — nor to such elegant costumes and sets.

But although the company cannot be accused of a lack of vitality among its dancers, nor of simply reworking its choreographic past, many questions remain about its justifications for existing now, and without Martha Graham dancing. Is the Graham technique, with which the company continues to be stamped, still interesting? Does the repertoire work without Martha Graham's presence on stage? Is the company's current direction a fruitful one? My answers after seeing the company in Hamilton have put me into the corps of nattering nabobs of negativism: a decided 'no' to the first, a tentative 'no' to the second, and a disappointed 'no' to the third.

The unmistakable Graham technique has changed little since it was solidified in the 1920s and '30s. The movements have become so familiar to dancers and dance audiences alike that the product has become the process: a performance by the Graham company looks a lot like (in content, not execution of course) the movement sequences employed in thousands of

modern dance classrooms across North America. Its character is theatrical, dominated by the tension between opposites, rigidly codified, and a very literal expression of emotion. Graham's technique, although ahead of the times when she created it, inevitably reflected them, and back then it seems the emotional battlegrounds were carried out in clear, black and white landscapes. Graham's vocabulary of movement delineates the contours of these opposites: struggle and rest, pain and its relief, desire and duty, raging grief and blinding joy. In one sense, time has passed both the conceptual framework and the language by. Abstract movement, ambiguity, rationalism, a sense of the absurd — all of these elements have entered the art since then. But in another sense, Graham remains with us.



She continues to be an integral part of the contemporary dance world through the work of hordes of other modern dance choreographers — either through imitation, adaptation or rejection. Her effect on subsequent choreographers, including the inevitable revolt against her art by many, now famous, figures, is perhaps the most telling indicator of her immense achievements. These choreographers have shown us how time has passed her by, but their work would not have existed in the same form without hers.

Returning to her company, where no revolt has occurred to light the way, the question must be asked whether the repertoire continues to work without Graham's tremendous performing presence. The company members have remained faithful to her choreographic style, but no stars of any great dimension have emerged to replace Graham — and the repertoire does require dancers with great theatrical presence, if not star quality. Graham repeatedly created central heroine roles for herself, roles which not one of the present female members of the company can quite fill. Elisa Monte took on the lead

in *Embattled Garden*, *O Thou Desire Who Art About to Sing*, and *Errand into the Maze*, and danced supply and expressively. But she still lacked the ability to capture centre stage with her statement, as Graham would have. Too often the result was an undermining of the quality of her dancing by the feeling that the theatrical moment was not succeeding. And since in Graham's works the theatrical moment is all — the piece fails.

Why can't the dancers achieve the dramatic pinnacles they are scaling for? Perhaps for two reasons: it is such a physically and dramatically demanding style it tends to absorb all but the very strongest and most expressive dancers. Also, the style is not the dancers' own; it is Graham's through and through. The process of subordination takes its toll particularly where the original dramatic statement, the genuine emotion, is needed. Because of this it seems unlikely that the company is going to transcend its present theatrical bounds and produce other performers of Graham's like.

But despite this complaint it is necessary to point to the very high quality work of particular dancers such as Peggy Lyman, Yuriko Kimura, Tim Wengerd and David Brown. Lyman almost manages to transcend the downward feel of the choreography through her lyrically flexible and expansive torso. Yuriko Kimura and Elisa Monte are the closest the company now comes to great heroines and their work suffers perhaps only in comparison with their predecessor. Of the males Tim Wengerd's strength and control were remarkable in a number of roles and David Brown was entirely convincing in *Errand into the Maze*.

Both the flaw (and charm) of the newer pieces that we saw in Hamilton is the emphasis on a finessed form. In Graham's masterpieces — *Appalachian Spring* comes to mind — everything works, down to the last emotional detail, and one does not pick particularly on the form as the glory of the piece. But in these newer works it feels as though Graham's energy has gone into creating extraordinarily well-crafted jewels — safe, self-contained entities — rather than reaching out to our spirits and our minds. The polish that she applies even amounts, in a few cases, to a death blow, because while it makes the piece almost formally perfect, it sums up the artificiality and limits of her technique. She has not failed universally with these latest pieces but they do not approach the strength of earlier works. And while this is not the least bit surprising in a choreographer who has been at it for a long, long time, it does tend to slide the company toward the 'orthodox and sound, but not quite up to date' end of the classical continuum.

CAROLINE GRAY

Ballet Internacional de Caracas

Queen Elizabeth Theatre
Vancouver

24-27 October 1979

Not since the thirties when the Ballet Russe took Vancouver by storm, and the fifties when passionate race memories were stirred by the visits of the Sadler's Wells Ballet has a dance company scored so conspicuously with the paying public in this unpredictable community. Right up to opening night, all information regarding repertoire and performers was withheld; yet audiences bought out three houses without a clue about what they would be seeing and who would dance. The rush for seats necessitated a fourth performance, for which 100 extra chairs were installed over the covered orchestra pit. No two performances were identical, and 10 ballets were shown, including six by the company's director, Vicente Nebrada, and two by Alvin Ailey.

It's simple to explain the great appeal: the company has 25 brilliant and cocky young dancers, who move with confidence, high style and a theatrical pizzazz that melts the hardest of hearts. They make it clear that they adore being on stage and invariably draw their audiences into what becomes an intimate collaboration.

Their pint-sized prima ballerina, Zhandra Rodriguez, was formerly a soloist with ABT, where she was grounded in the classics. She now divides her time between this nomadic group and John Neumeier's company in Hamburg. Nebrada, her countryman, has devised a number of zappy vehicles which show her technical brilliance and a style reminiscent of the sexy magnetism that once endeared Renée (Zizi) Jeanmaire to the multitudes.

Alexi Zubiria, a soloist who four years ago in Bogota had never seen a ballet when at age 15 he shyly wandered into the local dancing school in search of female companionship, explained that the macho mentality in the Caribbean nations categorizes male dancers with the freaks. It's clear then why Nebrada has developed his company to dispel the myths and aim for the popular market at home. The boys are seen in such splashy pieces as *Percussion for Six Men* and *Batucada Fantástica*, each requiring feats of incredible technical prowess and athletic skill, and lots of swaggering. Most of what was shown to Vancouver is geared to dazzle and stun; but some of the pieces lose impact on second viewing.

Nuestros Valses is Nebrada's most engaging and inspired work, danced to bittersweet piano music by the Venezuelan composer, Teresa Carreno. He respects the phrasing that the waltz tempo demands

but manages to avoid symmetry in his groupings. It's a ballet of complex meanderings leading to tense and explosive encounters. *Gemini*, set to the adagietto of Mahler's Fifth Symphony (I can think of two other ballets currently using that much abused piece of music) is what perhaps now is the mandatory pas de deux for male dancers. The projection of ova-like forms on the cyclorama suggests more of the laboratory than the bedroom to me, but I appear to have been in a minority. Margo Sappington's *Rodin, Mis en Vie* is a choreographic game of 'statues' — eleven tableaux depicting the sculptor's creations in motion and repose. Some of the images are haunting, notably the tossing and catching of a confrere by the Burghers of Calais, but the piece is episodic and without direction. Alvin Ailey's *The River* suits the company for solidifying the style which is now its current signature. Now where will it go next?

The company boasts six splendid male dancers, headed by two sassy Americans: Zane Wilson and Dale Talley. Wilson's movements are big, exuberant and rambunctious, while the slippery Talley, trained in tap dancing as a boy in North Carolina, is whimsical and elastic — all arms and legs going in sundry directions. Manuel Molina from the Philippines has a dark, tropical quality in his phrasing, while the aforementioned Zubiria is compact

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Zane Wilson

and sensual like a cub about to spring. Two others have elegance: Yvan Michaud has a regality in carriage and a softness that conceals the brute force required for his unbelievable turns. Yanis Pikieris, Silver Medal winner at Jackson last year, is 19; with his fastidious classical line, he's the most likely candidate for a career as a danseur noble.

Less spectacular fare is demanded of the girls, but New Orleans-born Ann Arnoult has a silken technique and a wit which would make her a natural as Taglioni in a revival of *Pas de Quatre*. Blonde Gina Bugatti moves with a sweet, lyrical seriousness, while the exquisite Marielena Mencia personifies the company's piquant Latin character. Right there is the next cast for *Three Virgins and a Devil*: stand by, Miss de Mille!

I'm sure this company could handle a much wider scope than that which the current offerings demand. There is enough talent to populate several ballet companies in the next generation. Vancouver impresario, David Y. H. Lui, who must have smiled all the way to the bank after that week, has signed them for a longer period in 1980. Let's hope that when they return they'll have passed from their pop-art adolescence into the maturity that their gifts deserve.

LELAND WINDREICH



The Royal Danish Ballet Bournonville Festival

Royal Theatre
Copenhagen
24-30 November 1979

Shortly before his death in 1879 Danish choreographer August Bournonville thought that his dozens of ballets, created while he was ballet master at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen (1830 to 1877) would not long survive.

50 years ago, even in the last decade, it seemed his pessimism was justified. The Danes themselves paid scant attention to his works and in the rest of the world he was valued chiefly by historians. But some works did survive and last November the Royal Theatre mounted a festival of eight ballets and a pas de deux. Hordes of Americans, a large contingent from France and critics from, among other countries, England, Germany, Austria, Norway and Holland gathered in Copenhagen to celebrate Bournonville's centenary. Their enthusiasm—prolonged ovations and flower throwing—took the local and notoriously conservative Danish audience rather by surprise.

As originally announced, the festival was to include every available bit of Bournonville choreography. This was not quite what happened, but the eight ballets (not all complete) did give us a sense of Bournonville's multi-faceted genius even while it confirmed him as a romantic. The current enthusiasm for reconstruction has produced several choreographic fragments and some of these were presented as fringe events in the well-organized festival.

Thus, we were able to see, on film, the male pas de deux, *The Jockeys' Dance*, from the ballet *From Siberia to Moscow*. We saw it first in a painstakingly reprocessed version from 1905 and in a 1979 film with Frank and Ib Andersen. The latter, young, vibrant and immensely talented is soon to join the sizeable Danish contingent at the New York City Ballet.

Other fringe events included live performances at the Royal Museum of excerpts such as *Polka Militaire* which reflects Bournonville's love of and borrowing from European folk dance (witness his famous tarantella in *Napoli*).

The meticulous preservation of Bournonville mime in the bedchamber scene of *A Folk Tale* was explained by assistant ballet director Kirsten Ralov, marked by the dancers and then danced, to piano accompaniment, at the charming little Court Theatre with its raked stage and spiral staircase.

The ballets proper presented at the Royal Theatre in various states of completeness included an early one, *La Sylphide* (1836). It is perhaps the complete Bournonville ballet best known outside Denmark: the versions we see in other com-

panies, staged by alumni such as Erik Bruhn, are remarkably accurate.

Of special interest in the Danish production are the technical effects. The Royal Theatre has not changed much since 1861, (when Bournonville said it would never work), and the stage machinery dates from that era. The traps are operated by one or two men pulling on ropes beneath the stage and these rise evenly to the surface of the stage without leaving ridges or depressions as modern hydraulic machinery often does.

The main use of traps in *La Sylphide* is to make Madge's witch-cauldron disappear, but other technical tricks also worked well. Particularly impressive was the perfectly posed, romantic positions the Sylphide and her two escorting sylphs manage to hold as they are carried aloft on wires at the end of the ballet. It was like a summing up of the whole era of romantic ballet.

Napoli (1842) is famous for the divertissements of the third act and this was used, after an earlier presentation of the full-evening ballet, to close the festival. No expense was spared. The second-storey bridge was crowded with extras whose duty it was to applaud and wave banners at the dancers on stage below. The famous pas de six and the equally admired tarantella gave the audience its fill of such fine dancers as Ib Andersen and Flemming Ryberg.

Konservatoriet (1849) began as a much longer ballet with lots of mime now never performed in its entirety—a tribute by Bournonville to his days as a student and performer in Paris. Today we get just the studio scene. It shows us both adult and infant dancers, led by a violinist, mostly in centre work. For a good deal of the time the dancers restrict themselves to relatively simple technical feats—one or two pirouettes or *tours en l'air* rather than multiple ones—appropriate to the technical accomplishments of the period. However, during the week we were told that the contemporary attitude to maintaining authenticity in Bournonville is fairly relaxed. Nobody would think, for instance, of limiting leg extension to 90 degrees. Instructors try to preserve a balance between period authenticity and modern taste for virtuosity.

One thing they will not do, however, is to adopt the Russian view which believes in devouring as much horizontal space as possible. The Bournonville style more often uses vertical space without the elaborate preparations so favoured in Russia. Once landed again, the dancer may go into a complex *enchaînement*, prone to be cursed as 'idiotic' by the performers in rehearsal but eventually accomplished to dazzle the audience.

The Kermesse in Bruges (1851) is based on Flemish folk life and succeeds in spite of its seemingly disparate elements. There is a lot of unremarkable narrative, a realistic



Konservatoriet

clerical procession and arbitrary classical ensemble numbers inserted at strategic moments. Despite the creakiness of the plot the whole thing manages to cohere wonderfully. You come away knowing you've seen a side of Bournonville not shown in any other of his surviving ballets.

A *Folk Tale* (1854) is one of his most popular ballets and foreign visitors to the festival were treated to two full dress rehearsals and an explanation of the mime in addition to the formal evening performance. It is a story of trolls (marvellously mimed), the substitution of a changeling for a human baby, and a group of woodland dancers who are the exact Danish equivalent of the Willis in *Giselle*.

The female troll, Birthe, is one of the most horrendously bad-tempered characters in all ballet while the human girl, Hilde, is one of the sweetest. The music, by Danish composers Gade and Hartmann, is more than serviceable—the bridal waltz is said to be played at many Danish weddings. The mime is superbly timed, the traps work smoothly: altogether this is a period piece at its best.

Bournonville was a lively man of sharp intelligence and considerable humour. He was more than just a keen observer of his times and not averse to trying to reform the morals of the rest of Europe. Thus, in *La Ventana* (1856) he attempted to ameliorate what he considered to be the undesirable lasciviousness of Spanish dancing then enormously popular across Europe. (He had already done an earlier Spanish ballet *The Toreador*, now disappeared, in 1840).

La Ventana may be proper but it is not dull. It includes a famous mirror dance, a graceful pas de deux and a fine pas de trois.

The pas de deux from *Flower Festival in Genzano* (1858) is one of the most widely travelled pieces of Bournonville. Seeing the Danes dance it again was a reminder of how well they have taught the essentials of

its charm and innocence to dancers of other nations—the characteristic grace of the two young lovers' arm movements, the precision and lightness of the footwork and the effortless ballon.

Far From Denmark (1860) is a curiosity without which one's knowledge of the surviving Bournonville repertory would be sadly incomplete. Though the background elements include the political tension between Germany and Denmark (again showing Bournonville as the mirror of his times) the heart of the ballet is a series of divertissements performed onboard ship. The national dances would now be considered racist but the innocence of Bournonville's intentions protects him from criticism. So we watch and enjoy such things as Eskimos rubbing noses, North American Indians decked out in feather headdresses and warpaint, a Chinese pas de cinq—and Negroes straight out of a minstrel show.

The last ballet presented was *The King's Volunteers on Amager* which, though created in 1871, deals with childhood memories of Denmark's response to the Napoleonic wars. Set in 1808, it involves a Don Juan character based on real life and mixes a good deal of folk dance with classical set pieces. It shows another side of the choreographer and, in a festival such as this, it is important to realize that for every ballet which has survived there are dozens which have perished. What would we think of a Balanchine festival in the year 2079 which gave us *Apollo*, *Serenade* and *Agon* but neglected such ballets as *Stars and Stripes*?

When Flemming Flindt was director of the Royal Danish Ballet, beginning in 1966, he made a strong effort to modernize the repertoire, inviting such choreographers as José Limon, Glen Tetley, Paul Taylor and Murray Louis. His own ballet, *The Lesson*, is well known in several countries. Even while the festival was running at the Royal Theatre, Flindt's other ballet based on an

Ionesco play, *The Triumph of Death*, was playing to small houses at the Circus Theatre.

The staging of the Bournonville festival was a triumph over physical difficulties. Backstage quarters are incredibly cramped and the traffic of backcloths for the two theatres meets at one unbelievably congested corner. The people who have to work in these cramped conditions hope to persuade the government, not overly generous in funding the arts, that it must grant the millions of kroner needed to reconstruct backstage and storage facilities. However, there are no plans to 'improve' the auditorium. It is a jewel, seating only 1,400 people—therefore requiring a government subsidy of about seven times the actual ticket cost!

The Bournonville festival proved that the choreographer's own pessimism was unfounded. After a long period of desultory interest when the repertory reflected more the modern tastes of Flemming Flindt, his successor, Henning Kronstam has given strong support to a Bournonville revival—without shunning modern works. Among his colleagues who still have the Bournonville ballets in their muscles are Hans Brenaa, still very active at 70, and Kirsten Ralov. The enormous enthusiasm of the international festival audience (even the Chinese press was there) must have convinced Kronstam that he's on the right track.

LAURETTA THISTLE

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The Mini-Bolshoi

Canadian Tour

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The intention was of course splendid: to bring a first-rate troupe of Soviet ballet dancers performing a classical repertoire to isolated and mostly neglected communities across Canada. After all, the National Ballet has been talking for so long about producing a compact touring troupe to service small-town Canada that there is little foreseeable hope of anything much besides talk. Enter George Zukerman, a man with a passionate and democratic love for the arts who doubles as a concert bassoonist and impresario. His tours as a musician to Russia have allowed him to develop a familiarity with its performing artists and the patient endurance to negotiate with its paper-shovelling cultural bureaucrats.

Zukerman's commitment to bring live performance to small Canadian communities is strong and real. In 1978 it was a 15-member Russian variety troupe. For 1979 it was to be a troupe of dancers who he would launch without government subsidy on a 50-city, 67-day marathon tour, almost entirely one night stands. A confusing and sometimes contradictory flow of advance publicity suggested that what Canadians would see was the cream of Soviet ballet dancing — 'the splendour of

dazzling Soviet dance brilliance', as one enthusiastic promoter described it.

Since most of the tour was to take 'The Mini-Bolshoi-Mini Ballet' to communities that rarely see top-flight live performance of any kind it seemed appropriate to re-view the company in this setting, both near the start and close of its great trek. As it happened, apart from the fact that towards the end of the tour the company was showing understandable signs of wear, the overall impression formed at the outset remained essentially unchanged.

First, the company's title needs explaining. This was not a troupe from the Bolshoi theatre in Moscow nor even a troupe of Bolshoi-trained dancers. The majority of the 12 artists, three men and nine women, hailed from the State Opera and Ballet Theatre of Odessa. Unless one had been unlucky enough to see the real Bolshoi last summer, the Mini-Bolshoi's title might have led one to expect something greater than what was actually produced.

In the eyes of the Soviets, audiences the world over are little more than peasants for whom it is unnecessary to show those minor courtesies that have become a conventional part of western theatre. Thus, the Mini-Bolshoi gave no indication other than a long and confusing general list of repertoire what it was dancing or who was dancing it. Names appeared with initials

instead of first names so it was nigh impossible to figure out who had done what.

Most programmes included a series of divertissements accompanied by a longer work. In Meaford, Ontario, on the second tour stop, it was an abbreviated version of *Swan Lake* Act II performed by a corps of eight in semi-gloom, occasionally punctuated by determined but rarely accurate stabs from a lone follow-spot. In Oakville, on a considerably better stage, it was a two-dancer, one-act version of *Romeo and Juliet* set to the Tchaikovsky Fantasy Overture by the troupe's artistic director, Victor Smirnov. Rather than attempting to evoke the poetic essence of the story, Smirnov chose instead a swiftly paced summary of events; lots of mime gestures, lots of rolling around on the floor and no poetry. It was more calculated to provoke giggling than tears. As for the bit of *Swan Lake*, it was danced with the precision of well manipulated puppets but was completely devoid of mood or feeling. Although Sergei Gorbachev looked very princely and weebegone he found his Odette more than two hands could manage. Natalia Barysheva, the Odette in question, did little to help matters — with all the feeling stripped and only the steps left she could have been an old hen as easily as a young swan.

Fortunately, there were moments of relief. Whenever Alexander Yapparov ap-

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peared a new energy flowed across the footlights. A good jumper with soft landings, Yapparov also proved himself musical and witty. It was not his fault that the stages he had to dance on were sometimes too small: he quickly developed a knack of rebounding off the proscenium without injury. Tatania Stepanova had many of the same qualities and was even more successful at containing herself to the working stage.

Yet it needed a whole company of Yapparovs and Stepanovas to bring life to the flashy string of divertissements which constituted much of the Mini-Bolshoi's repertoire. In the absence of any real choreographic interest everything fell to the dancers who, generally speaking, were not equal to the challenge.

So what of the audiences who paid good money, no doubt lured by the less than accurate name and promotion? In Meaford the troupe got an ovation. I have heard stories of similar responses elsewhere. Was this a reward for effort, a knee-jerk reaction to the hammer-blow of high-powered promotion or a genuine response to exciting entertainment? The psychology of audiences will remain a mystery. Did they really think they were seeing the best? If so, they were sorely deluded. Would it have been better to have got nothing rather than this third-rate bunch from Russia performing watered down classics and ludicrous 'new creations'? It remains an open question. My own feeling tends to the opinion that those who get little should get the very best. Is there an impresario willing to risk a bundle on that?

MICHAEL CRABB

My Theatre Life

August Bournonville
Translated from the Danish
and annotated by Patricia McAndrew
Middletown, Conn.:
Wesleyan University Press
1979

In 1878 August Bournonville finished the third volume of his remarkable autobiography with a postscript containing this statement:

I cherish no illusions as to the continued existence of my works in the repertoire of the Royal Theatre, but I do feel strengthened and encouraged by the confident thought that *Beauty* will never cease to maintain its place on the Danish stage.

He died the following year. A century later in Copenhagen, in November 1979, his countrymen lovingly mounted eight Bournonville ballets and divertissements which have survived in the theatre which saw their first creation.

Five of these are known to audiences abroad in one form or another through recreations made by emissaries of a later generation — Harald Lander, Hans Brenaa and Erik Bruhn — for companies from Budapest to Toronto. The Royal Danish Ballet, an organization too cumbersome to attempt frequent tours, has put its propaganda in the hands of the small groups of soloists who are expert in its characteristic style and into the talents of such seasoned travellers as Toni Lander, Peter Schaufuss, Peter Martins and Adam Luders. These visitors and settlers have sparked a vigorous interest in Danish ballet.

During one of the main company's infrequent North American tours in 1965,

the American scholar Patricia McAndrew became fascinated by its style and was determined to master the Danish language in order to discover more about Bournonville. This led to the 10-year-project of translating his leisurely composed memoirs. The result is a tapestry of 19th century European life and customs, a definitive chronicle of Danish theatre and its ballet, and the life story of a poet and philosopher, critic and voyager, who found in the composition of ballets the most gratifying medium for his talents.

McAndrew doubtless saw the considerable appeal of the book and the rich treasures it contained — the insights into the political scene, thoughtful biographical essays on such contemporaries as Hans Christian Andersen, Bertel Thorvaldsen, Jenny Lind and Lucille Grahn, discourses on Richard Wagner and the musical theatre of the times, and the vibrant travelogues of the regions where Bournonville lived and worked. She retained all of the text, including even five of Bournonville's eleven lyric poems, but omitted the detailed scenarios of a dozen ballets which he had recorded. Still intact are the chatty discourses on the production of each of his theatre pieces, with some often fascinating though generally long-winded digressions into the times and circumstances of their creation.

Bournonville finished the first volume of his memoirs in 1847 and the second in 1865, with no intention of further instalments at either junction. But he appears to have required the medium of writing to handle the torrent of creativity which could not be directed totally into dance materials. From the ballet synopses and the way he describes them it becomes apparent that concise statement and the application

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of editing techniques were not among his concerns.

La Sylphide, the ballet by which the contemporary world knows him best, is afforded only a few paragraphs (his *Abdallah*, presented in 1855 and now long forgotten, inspires 25 pages of discussion). The fact that Filippo Taglioni had taken his plot from Louis Henry, who had offered the first version in Milan in 1822, was small comfort to Bournonville when the Paris ballet world accused him of plagiarism. As a matter of fact, he had seen Taglioni's production only once, and in the version he conceived to a new musical score for Danish audiences, he undertook a reassessment of the materials, enhancing the dramatic scope of the hero, James, and providing the brilliant Scottish trappings with an authenticity lacking in the earlier conceptions.

In the final volume Bournonville recapitulates his childhood and youth with a depth that only the wisdom of his years could provide. Also in this volume are his travel chronicles; the account of an excursion to Russia in 1874 is in itself worth the high price of this bountiful work.

At age 69 he was determined to get the most out of the journey and set about learning to read, write and speak Russian so that he could communicate with considerable efficiency. In St. Petersburg he was received with affection by his colleagues, ballet-master Marius Petipa, and Christian Johansson, principal teacher at the Imperial School. As their guests he attended a characteristic performance at the Bolshoi Theatre (The Maryinsky was then exclusively the showcase for Russian opera) where his integrity to his own fixed aesthetics appears to have won out over the requisites for friendship. The ballet was Marius Petipa's immensely popular *Don Quixote*. How shatteringly close were Bournonville's statements to those made one hundred years later by the New York critics who wrote on a restoration of this ballet by an American company:

I sought in vain to discover plot, dramatic interest, logical consistence, or anything which might remotely resemble sanity. And even if I were fortunate enough to come upon a trace of it in Petipa's *Don Quixote*, the impression was immediately effaced by an unending and monotonous host of feats and bravura, all of which were rewarded with salvos of applause and curtain calls... Thus, if one can become inured to *the offensive*, that which is utterly *ridiculous* and *absurd* must strike one in the eye and gradually reduce art to nothing more than the most wretched buffoonery.

LELAND WINDREICH

A Handbook for the Ballet Accompanist

Gerald R. Lishka
Bloomington: Indiana
University Press
1979

As a ballet accompanist I wish Gerald Lishka's handbook had been available when I began my career 22 years ago.

Most ballet accompanists would agree that the warm-up class is the greatest challenge in the course of their work. The mood of a dancer can be lifted or depressed by the choice and presentation of music for this class. Lishka's book deals aptly with this part of ballet accompaniment. From this perspective it gives a detailed, in-depth picture of the behind-the-scenes workings of the ballet world. The author attempts to invoke balletic ideas into the mind of the pianist, providing him or her with a language and the mental attitude required to fuse the two arts — music and dance.

I was pleased to note Lishka's insistence on the importance of maintaining high musical standards while stressing that the pianist must not indiscriminately cater to unmusicality or particular technical weaknesses in dancers.

The author advocates an avoidance of standard ballet repertoire for the warm-up class while outlining examples of the extensive piano repertoire, operatic scores and good Broadway show music, all of which is readily available. He gives a good outline of the ballet warm-up from barre to centre and seems to have covered all the difficulties which could befall a pianist, such as cold rooms, poor pianos, bad lighting and other afflictions.

This book could be considered an instant immersion course in the art of ballet accompaniment. The author is insistent in pointing out that a good accompanist must have a solid musical foundation.

Lishka recognizes as well the importance of using live music in the ballet studio in order to keep this a living art form rather than letting it fall victim to prefabricated tapes or other forms of recorded music.

'The challenge confronting the ballet accompanist is to provide the quality of musical support and inspiration that is absolutely necessary for the dancer while maintaining the pianist's own sense of musical individuality and integrity.' I heartily concur with Lishka's sentiments. His handbook for the ballet accompanist, while perhaps overly detailed for the experienced practitioner, will nevertheless be an enormous help to a young pianist beginning a career in a ballet company or studio.

MARY MCDONALD



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The Dance Catalog

Nancy Reynolds
Don Mills: General
1979

Dance Now

Jan Murray
Unionville: Penguin
1979

Although prophets tell us that the 'dance explosion' may have exhausted its blast, publishers still seem eager to cash in on what they perceive to be a profitable corner of the market. Usually this exercise in commercialism results in over-priced photographic essays, focused on personalities and supplemented by puffy texts.

To an extent, *The Dance Catalog* and *Dance Now* bear the marks of crass commercialism. Both could be accused of superficiality yet each is redeemed by the ultimate victory of author over publisher.

Dance Now is a slim little volume in Penguin's 'Kestrel' series. It may be intended for younger readers but is likely to have a broader appeal. Written by Jan Murray, Canadian by birth but now settled in England, the book provides a brisk and intelligent survey of dance wherever and however it may manifest itself. It reflects Jan Murray's acquisitive and inquisitive personality and drips with her own ebullient spirit and infectious enthusiasm. Included are sections on training, popular social dance, classical ballet, modern, experimental and ethnic dance. There is a useful compendium of general information at the end with a list of recommended readings, both books and magazines, which wisely enough includes *Dance in Canada*. Undoubtedly, the most appealing feature of this affordable book is the brilliant selection of photographs, excellently reproduced, which provide a perfect visual companion to the text, both of them seeking to represent (successfully) the vast multiplicity of dance.

Occasionally, Jan Murray's hyper-energetic writing leads her into dangerous exaggeration: residents of Halifax (Murray's hometown) would no doubt be surprised to learn that their city receives, 'frequent visits from world-famous troupes', and Haber Artists can only mull ruefully over Murray's assertion that Karen Kain, 'is caught up in a whirl of international guest appearances'.

There are oddities in the bibliography too. Considering limitations of space and volumes competing for inclusion Keith Money's photo album on John Curry, with a text by the ace skater himself, might appear misplaced under the heading 'Classical Ballet: The Mainstream' and it is highly debatable whether Alvin Ailey should fall under the category of 'Ethnic

Dance'. It is hard to conceive of a reading list that excludes Jamake Highwater's *Dance: Rituals of Experience* or Marcia Siegel's *The Shapes of Change* from both the 'modern' and 'alternative' dance lists.

Allowing for all this, *Dance Now* remains a lovably passionate and opinionated book, and, incidentally, because Jan Murray knows the British and European scene best, it leans heavily towards her local critical beat—a healthy antidote to all the books that leave us with an impression that little of interest or originality happens the other side of the Atlantic.

The Dance Catalog, edited by New York writer Nancy Reynolds, proclaims itself in a subtitle to be 'A Complete Guide to Today's World of Dance'. That, of course, is the publisher's description. In her introduction, Reynolds more honestly calls the book the 'introductory *Yellow Pages* to Dance USA, 1979'. It may seem churlish to point out that *The Dance Catalog* actually has pale cream coloured pages with the result that some of the many photographs lose their sparkle, but beyond that minor scruple Reynolds's words hold true.

It is a slick, flashy publication. The romanticised image of the dancer presented in soft focus pastel colours on the glossy cover says it all. However, Reynolds is a serious lady and has not allowed marketing gimmickry to destroy the book's purpose, or, more exactly, purposes. *The Dance Catalog* tries to cover such a vast territory that it really amounts to several brief books in one. It's a 'How To' book, an introduction-to-the-art book, a 'come fly with me through dance history' book, a dance directory, and more. Needless to say, in its 256 pages not every topic gets adequate treatment. It smacks of one of those knowledge-made-easy, instant authority guides. Anyone having read it diligently without prior knowledge could put up a pretty impressive performance at a gathering of dance nuts—as long as he did not have to elaborate.

It's easy to pick holes in such an ambitious publication so some of the book's many virtues should be mentioned. Like *Dance Now*, *The Dance Catalog* presents dance as a universe of many interdependent stars. There is a useful section on alternate careers in dance although the choice of the word alternate betrays a lingering prejudice somewhere. The importance of money in the life of dance companies earns itself a whole section with sensible hints on basic management. As well as reviewing the various forms of conventionally accepted 'dance', there is also information on gymnastics, martial arts, fencing, yoga, mime and general exercise. There are sound warnings about the danger of getting bad training, complemented by actual recommendations about who is good and to be trusted.

But this is emphatically not 'A Complete Guide to Today's World of Dance'. It does

not have the cosmopolitan flavour of Jan Murray's book and because it is the result of communal literary labour, *The Dance Catalog* lacks personality. Reynolds undertook a Herculean task in editing it, but that cannot excuse the errors, some of them the result of outdated research. Quite apart from the fact that Les Grands Ballets is not, as we are told here, 'wholly subsidized', it is neither directed by Brian Macdonald. In fact he was out of that job almost two years ago. Even the company's address is given incorrectly. Other listed companies get little bibliographies attached: not the Canadian companies (and there are books on the National and the Royal Winnipeg). In every respect *The Dance Catalog* is an American book that takes imperialistic side glances at the little folk elsewhere. Reading Jan Murray's lively paean will do much to right the balance.

KEVIN SINGEN

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The Bournonville School The Daily Classes, Music, Benesh Notation, Labanotation

Edited by Kirsten Ralov
New York: Marcel Dekker
1979

When Kirsten Ralov graduated from the Royal Danish Ballet School into the company, Hans Beck, Bournonville's last protégé, predicted a great future for her as an exponent of August Bournonville's style. His prediction was more accurate, perhaps, than even he suspected.

Kirsten Ralov performed with the Royal Danish Ballet for 35 years, dancing principal roles in almost all the Bournonville ballets. Now she is a teacher at the Royal Danish Ballet School, and very much in demand as a guest teacher abroad. She is president of the Bournonville Council, was made Knight of Dannebrog in 1953, became Associate Director of the Royal Danish Ballet in 1978 and in 1979 edited *The Bournonville School*, a four-volume work that will help preserve the Bournonville tradition for generations to come.

Walter Terry, in his introduction to Part 1, *The Daily Classes* describes Ralov's accomplishment as 'a spirited but almost

scientific preservation and exposition' of Bournonville. She gives us a brief introduction, pointing out the stylistic elements which characterize the Bournonville School, stressing how important it is for dancers to study the technique if they are to perform the Bournonville ballets.

There is a very useful glossary of terms peculiar to Bournonville, in which she explains just how the *chassé contretemps* must look, how most pirouettes are executed *sur le cou-de-pied*, what, precisely, is meant by the terms *porté*, *posé* and so on. She also includes a list of nicknames the Danish dancers have given many of the enchainements, such as 'The Chinaman', 'The Dark Step', 'Summer Step' and 'The Door Step'—so named because it is the last enchainement of the last class of the week and upon finishing it the dancers might dance right out the door! This list, as well as a number of black and white photographs of Kirsten Ralov, her husband Fredbjørn Bjørnsson and many other Bournonville dancers, past and present, bring an element of humanity to an otherwise very straightforward, practical accounting of the Bournonville classes, day by day, enchainement by enchainement.

Ralov has arranged her longhand recording into four columns. Column 1 gives the bar number of the music; column 2 gives the beat of that bar; column 3 tells

what the feet should be doing and the direction of travel; column 4 describes the arm positions.

In Part 2, *The Music*, Hans Beck is credited with responsibility not only for preserving the Bournonville ballets and school but also for providing a musical library, which, while not of the highest aesthetic standards is eminently suitable to the Bournonville enchainements in its rhythms, phrasings and tonalities. It fulfills an important supportive function in the training of Bournonville dancers. Originally the accompaniment was played by a violinist, but in 1930 piano accompaniment was introduced and within four years all the music was transcribed from violin to piano. This is the first time the traditional class accompaniment has been published. (In Denmark the music is still in handwritten script.) It is arranged by Harald Agersnap and recorded by Poul Gnatt.

Parts 1 and 2 of *The Bournonville School* provide a thorough account of the Bournonville style. While they are obviously not a replacement for teachers (no student should ever attempt to study dance from a book) they are a valuable information source for students and teachers alike.

However, for the 'kine-literate' (Ann Hutchinson Guest's term meaning able-to-read-movement) there are Parts 3 and 4. Part 3, *The Benesh Notation*, is recorded

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by Sandra Caverly, Associate Professor of Dance at York University. It includes a section of detailed notes which set down, for us, the all-important Bournonville conventions—the typically soft curving arms, pirouettes executed *sur le cou-de-pied*, the easy, natural head movements, and so on—just as Kirsten Ralov has done in the long-hand volume. In Benesh Notation, once a particular position or movement quality is established as the convention at the beginning of the score it is not necessary to keep repeating it throughout so the daily classes in Benesh notation have a remarkably clean and visually pleasing appearance as penned by Professor Caverly.

Part 4, *The Labanotation*, is recorded by Ann Hutchinson Guest, a specialist in dance notation. She has studied 24 different systems! She is founder of the Language of Dance Centre in London and honorary president of the Dance Notation Bureau in New York. Part 4 has three extensive glossaries which explain the special Labanotation usages, abbreviations and specific notes on notating the Bournonville style. Because Labanotation is rather slow and meticulous to write, and because publishers do have deadlines, the final score for each 'day' of Bournonville's six classes was done by a different notator. All are duly acknowledged, even one whose score was lost forever in the postal system and had to be redone.

The virtues of notation are immediately apparent when you have all four volumes at hand. Not only are the notated scores perfectly clear and unambiguous, but they take up about half the space of the long-hand recording. Benesh, in particular, is very visual and conveys the movement almost instantly. Laban is able to communicate the inner motivation of a movement far more clearly and economically than is possible with words.

The Bournonville School is invaluable as an historic record, and a practical aid for teachers and students but one hopes that, as dance scholarship hurries to catch up with the rest of the arts, the notation volumes will make the preservation of the Danish ballet tradition all the more true to August Bournonville's original inspiration.

HOLLY SMALL



Alicia Alonso The Story of a Ballerina

Beatrice Siegel
Toronto: Saunders
1979

Erik Bruhn: Danseur Noble

John Gruen
Markham, Ont.: Penguin
1979

Of Alicia Alonso, Agnes de Mille once remarked, 'She will talk or dance unperturbed through Armageddon'. If the essay which the loquacious Cuban recently prepared for Charles Payne's *American Ballet Theatre* is indicative of her abilities to organize her palaver, she expresses herself with a shrewd insight and no little wit—moreover, she has kept fastidious records to document her dancing career. Erik Bruhn also wrote a fetching chapter in that book and has produced intelligent monographs on ballet technique and Bournonville. Why ever did these two entrust the telling of their life stories to professional writers? The results offer a lesson to any dancer concerned about how he/she may best be represented to posterity.



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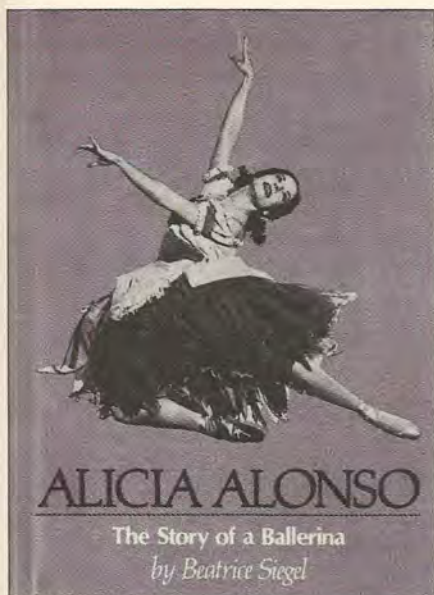
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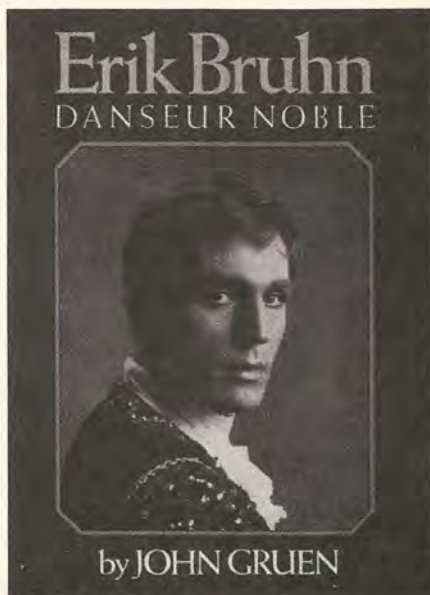
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Alicia Alonso

Alonso and Bruhn are among the last direct heirs of the Ballet Russe legacy. Born in Havana and Copenhagen respectively and aware of the limitations in their home theatres, they were drawn to the Diaghilev traditions nurtured in the United States, starting as young dancers in the ranks of Ballet Theatre. Alonso's model became Alicia Markova; Bruhn's was Igor Youskevitch. Both novices made auspicious debuts in *Giselle* — Alonso guided and partnered by the mature Anton Dolin in 1943, and Bruhn, by the mature Markova in 1955. Alonso and Bruhn danced brilliantly together with Ballet Theatre but never developed an ongoing partnership.

Beatrice Siegel's study is the second book on Alonso (Tana de Gamez brought out her pictorial tribute in 1971, and Walter Terry is presently writing a third biography). Written for a young adult audience, it has the frustrating containment and narrow perspective that the genre seems to require. There's no doubt that Siegel has been thorough in her research and she has come up with some fascinating material on Alicia's roots, her childhood, her early struggles in New York, and the



Erik Bruhn

early work initiated in Havana's Pro-Arte school which afforded Alonso a performing base during her frequent home visits. Most of the informal data appear to have been derived from interviews with the ballerina, but there's nary a note nor a reference to any specific document or person consulted.

Since the writer of juvenile books isn't allowed to appear pedantic, she furthermore musn't seem too inquisitive. Alicia's private life is out of bounds in this study; on the penultimate page we learn in one sentence of her divorce after 37 years of marriage to Fernando Alonso and of a second marriage to Pedro Simon. This is as close as we can get to a dancer referred to in the Bruhn biography as 'the fiery Alicia Alonso, ... a vibrant personality who could be scary at times'. Siegel is obliged to remain in awe of her subject and thus hasn't a chance to slip in a contrasting viewpoint. With a final touch of irony, she has asked Alonso's once arch-rival Nora Kaye to write an affectionate preface.

At the other extreme we have the unnerving candidness — as opposed to veracity — of John Gruen's approach to dance

biography. Gruen feels that an artist's various dimensions are best examined by a symposium, and he has interviewed Bruhn's colleagues and friends, whose observations are sprinkled through the book. In time we realize that each viewpoint calls upon the same platitudes, for early in the story Gruen establishes Erik Bruhn as a loner. Loners make pretty uninspired copy. To delay our inevitable realization of this fact, Gruen offers coy distractions. He opens his subject's bedroom door a crack and promptly douses the lights. He quotes the dancer's former partners who contradict Bruhn's accounts of how their hearts got broken. It's going to be a relentless tease for anyone desperately curious about Bruhn's love life and a crashing bore for those who couldn't care less.

Occasionally Gruen inspires his subject for some fascinating speculations. Bruhn's account of what it was like to work for Balanchine is quite shattering, for in the observations made we can now see fully what any dancer with a star orientation has faced before and after him. His dealing with another powerful employer, Lucia Chase, also tell in essence a universal story. Patterns of the love-hate relationships of stellar attractions and their mentors reveal some basic truths of life in the theatre. The Bruhn-Nureyev friendship is given a good deal of attention in this book, but the author seems to insist that Bruhn summarize this multi-layered interaction of two great but enigmatic ballet personalities with a few glib generalities.

Despite many weaknesses, both biographies are worth reading until more definitive studies are produced. And since retirement is imminent for both, perhaps these two great artists might find that their own words can offer greater insight than those produced by a commercial intermediary.

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Mad Shadows The Film

Produced by Don Richards

Directed by Eric Till

1979

The impact and controversy created by *La Belle Bête* (Mad Shadows) continues. From Marie-Claire Blais' startling French-Canadian novel, published in 1959, have sprung Ann Ditchburn's controversial ballet premiered on February 16, 1977 by the National Ballet of Canada and now the film, for television, by Eric Till (director) and Don Richards (producer). It was broadcast by the CBC last November.

The 'rectangle and the dollar', as Twyla Tharp has said, have been producers of dance for quite some time. But as dance technique has progressed and improved steadily, so too has camera technique for filming dance. In addition, the objectives for filming dance have changed. In the light of such television productions as Tharp's *Making Television Dance* and Ditchburn's *Mad Shadows*, television emerges as something much more than documentation from centre-front or an audience-building vehicle in Canada. It emerges as co-creator of dance.

In *Mad Shadows*, particularly, the attempt actually to create a new dimension or experience of dance is more than marginally successful and is always interesting and provocative. Camera and choreography merge and we find ourselves slipping in and out of camera sense and dance sense: quivering fingers, flashing eyes, sex, violence, rage and passion. *Mad Shadows* is a television dance where the cameraman effectively choreographs and the choreographer edits celluloid.

The original ballet packs in eight densely choreographed, physically intense scenes, faithful to Blais' eight metaphorical scenes of 'struggling souls', whilst the television production relieves this struggle somewhat through smooth and quick camera pacing and frequent cutting. The film pares the

work down to an atmospheric essence. Through camera close-ups, facial drama and symbolic props (a glass of water, a scarf, a whip) considerable impact is achieved. The windmill, on the other hand, with its sinister implications, so important in the ballet, is missed in this production. Overall, the television film *Mad Shadows* makes more sense than the ballet in that it is more intelligible. Yet, it sacrifices much of the ballet's kinesthetic tension in the process.

In the fight scene between Isabelle-Marie (Veronica Tennant) and Patrice (Raymond Smith) for instance, the camera produces a successfully frantic speed and exhausted look to the event but the *sound* of violence is dulled. There is no impact of bodies crashing and flailing. The camera becomes a choreographic silencer to the deed. Again, in the first pas de deux between Isabelle-Marie and her blind lover, Michael (Tomas Schramek), the camera produces a sweeping spatial elation and overall lyrical quality in the dancing. In the ballet, on the other hand, Michael's blind groping around Isabelle-Marie continually erupts upon contact with her, creating an altogether different, taut and strained quality. Both are poignant but the camera elicits a tenderness from the choreography where the original infused the dance with emotional and physical collision. There are other instances where the camera's heightened sensitivity to drama eclipses choreography and comes out ahead. In the raunchy 'cane pas de trois', the close-ups of Louis's (Mary Jago) determinedly masochistic face are highly effective as are the cuts back and forth between her various states of undress and Lanz's (Hazaros Surmeyen) vile approaches and cool retreats. Here, we switch out of ballet and into late night movie violence and at times it is hard to distinguish one from the other. This is surely the most fascinating aspect of the production — the television film becomes more of a 'drama' than a 'ballet'. In the television film, too, a much clearer contrast between Michael and Isabelle-

Marie's strained, though innocent love and Louise and Lanz's corruption and vulgarity is revealed than is possible in the ballet. The camera juxtaposes these two states through continual flashes, from the playful tauntings of Isabelle-Marie toward Michael to the exploitive manoeuvrings of Lanz in getting Patrice drunk while Louise looks on. In this juxtaposition the triumph of evil is immediately clear as playful tauntings turn to turbulence and juvenile drunkenness turns to rejection and hatred. In the original ballet this statement is delayed and is much less insistent.

The atmosphere of the television film is firmly decided from the opening scene where mist and whispers prevail and an 'overture' of characters stream across the screen. The 'ladies in black', so ambiguous in the ballet, emerge in the film as much clearer symbols of conscience and warning. Through the camera's delicate glimpses at the appearance of these ladies and Isabelle-Marie's facial response to them, these symbolic figures 'shadow' the scenes rather than 'intrude' upon them. After one searching pas de deux between Isabelle-Marie and Michael, a host of characters make an untimely entrance, starting with a frilly little girl on a tricycle (as unlikely as ever) and including Lanz, Louise, Patrice, the ladies in black and others. In the ballet, this scene has always struck me as an awkward and abrupt change. In the film it works as a dream-like invasion of Isabelle-Marie's privacy — as neurotic interferences in her mind. In fact, it is this quality of *mind* — the emotional deformation of the characters — that the camera so successfully illuminates beyond the physical limitations of the original ballet.

With the film *Mad Shadows*, the question is not so much 'can you tell the dancer from the dance?' but rather, 'can you tell the story — from — the — ballet — from — the — camera?'

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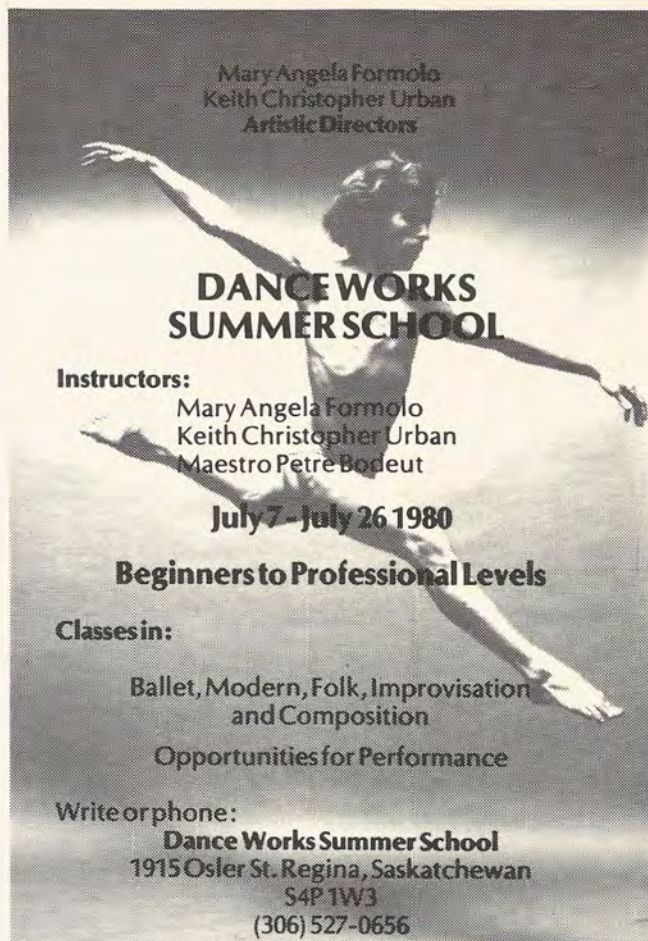
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Noticeboard

Figures recently published by the **Council for Business and the Arts in Canada** reveal the perilous financial situation confronting a number of dance companies this year and into the future. Most companies have been facing high inflation for material production costs without a proportionate increase in either earned revenue, government subsidies or private and corporate sponsorship. In best shape of the major ballet companies is the National which has succeeded in maintaining the highest level of private and corporate patronage among all Canadian companies (13.5% of revenue in the year 1978/79).

Because of the high costs of acquiring and equipping its new premises, Toronto Dance Theatre is carrying an accumulated deficit of almost 45% of its projected revenue. During the year 1978/79 it also had one of the poorest earnings records among Canadian dance companies while the size of its government grants in relation to revenue was among the highest. Detailed information may be obtained from Sarah Edinborough, Research Assistant, Box 64, Toronto-Dominion Centre, Toronto, Ontario M5K 1E7.

The **Canada Council** received a \$2 million supplementary grant from the Secretary of State for its 1980-81 budget. Of this amount \$201,000 will be allocated to artists and arts organizations in the field of dance.

Applications for the **Jean A. Chalmers Award in Choreography** must be submitted by April 25, 1980. The award will be presented at the Dance in Canada Conference this summer in Banff. Previous winners of this prestigious dance award are Judy Jarvis, Lawrence Gradus, Judith Marcuse, Paula Ross, Danny Grossman and Anna Blewchamp. For further details contact: Susan Cohen, Chalmers Award in Choreography, Ontario Arts Council, 151 Bloor Street West, Toronto M5S 1T6.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Pacific Ballet Theatre has a new ballet set to Beatles music. The work is choreographed by **Judith Marcuse**.

Last fall, Judith Marcuse made her debut as a stage director for Victoria's Belfry Theatre production of *Side By Side by Sondheim*. She also choreographed the dance sequences for the Vancouver Opera Association's production of *The Bartered Bride*, directed by Leon Major.

Her *Speakeasy*, choreographed for Dennis Wayne's Dancers, and also performed by Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers, is currently in the repertoire for Dancers' lengthy European tour.

Last summer **Prism Dance Theatre's** co-director **Jamie Zagoudakis** returned to his native Greece for a holiday and ended up making a film for Greek National Television. The film, *History of Greek Dance from Prehistoric to Modern*, was directed and choreographed by Madame Ralloù Manou (Director of the Hellenic Choreodrama) as well as collaborators from Athens and Paris. Shot in the picturesque mountains and ancient temples of Greece, the film recreates dance forms of the past and depicts many of the well-known Greek myths. Mr. Zagoudakis performed many group dances and pas deux and is featured in a solo titled *The Dance of Fertility*.

ALBERTA

This year's **Dance in Canada Conference** will be held in Banff, June 20-22, to coincide with the end of the **National Choreographic Seminar**. Conference delegates will have the opportunity to view first hand the results of the three weeks of intensive work by Canadian choreographers, composers, dancers and musicians under the artistic leadership of Robert Cohan (Choreographic Director), John Herbert McDowell (Musical Director), Helen McGehee

(Modern Dance Teacher), Todd Bolender (Ballet Teacher) and Grant Strate (Administrator and Ballet Teacher).

The Conference will be much the same as those of the past six years with activities divided into three streams: Dancers, Dance Educators and Dance Administrators.

Now in its second season, Edmonton's **Brian Webb Dance Company** has become dance-company-in-residence at Grant MacEwan Community College. The six-member company's fall performances featured two new works by Brian Webb to musical scores by Robert Myers (*The Garden*) and Wendy Albrecht (*Enmui*) who are also affiliated with the college.

The **Calgary Dance Workshop** will present its annual performance *For the Love of Dance* at the University of Calgary Theatre on March 14 and 15. In April and May the company, directed by Florence Skinner, will perform in numerous small towns in southern Alberta.

SASKATCHEWAN

Dance Works has made some rather drastic modifications to its plans for 1979/80 season to avoid what would have been an enormous deficit. The group has whittled \$390,000 from its original budget of more than a half million, by cancelling the nine event subscription series which would have featured major guest artists and replacing it with three Dance Works performances. Further improvements on the company's newly renovated home at 1925 Osler Street have been postponed and they will make do with a smaller staff. Artistic directors Maria Formolo and Keith Urban say that artistically Dance Works has never been stronger and with a new board of directors, and careful administration the company is very optimistic about the future.

Almost two years ago **Natasha Lisakova**, a ballet teacher from London, England visited Saskatchewan as a guest teacher to give classes in Saskatoon and Regina. Four young dancers from Saskatoon were so impressed with the experience that they travelled to England last fall to study at Ms. Lisakova's school in London. Bohdan Zerebecky, Marcella Cenaiko, Glen Ellaschuk and Paula Cherneskey are all working towards taking the Cecchetti Elementary Examination next year.

MANITOBA

Bonnie Wyckoff, a leading dancer of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, has accepted an invitation to dance with the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève. The offer hangs on final approval from the Swiss immigration department.

Contemporary Dancers of Winnipeg have a new studio space. They have moved to Augustine United Church, Second Floor, 444 River Avenue, Osborne Village, Winnipeg.

ONTARIO



Grant Strate and Charlotte Holmes

Grant Strate was the recipient of this year's **Dance Ontario Award**, given annually in recognition of a major and enduring contribution to the development of dance in Ontario. In presenting the award at the opening reception of the Third Annual Dance Ontario Conference, **Charlotte Holmes** (Director of Operations, Ontario Arts Council and last year's winner) paid tribute to Professor Strate's long and important career and remarked, 'It is difficult for us to measure adequately the impact of his contribution—we can only express our deep gratitude and we can thank our lucky stars that such a unique combination of talent and ability coincided with the incredible burst of activity in dance in Ontario in the last two decades.' She described Grant as, 'someone who has never stopped growing, someone who has been for all of us a teacher, a mentor, a collaborator, and best of all, a friend'. The award given Grant Strate is an original sculpture in alabaster by Ontario artist Valdis Leo Ilgacs.

Toronto's **Solar Stage** is helping to develop a new and seemingly unlikely dance audience through their **Lunchtime Theatre** productions. The **Danny Grossman Dance Company** started off this new trend with twice-daily lunchtime performances last November. Workers from the downtown office buildings and stores flocked to the noon hour performances leaving standing-room only for most performances. Dance-makers also met with tremendous success during their **Solar Stage** engagement January 8-19. The **Toronto Dance Theatre** will appear there in the spring. Tentative dates are April 22-May 3.

Toronto's well-known Indian dancer **Menaka Thakkar** travelled to California in late-February where she gave performances in two styles of classical Indian dance—**Bharata Natyam** and **Odissi**—at the University of Fresno. From Fresno she will go on to give performances at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. (March 3), the College of Art, Vancouver (March 4, 5) and at the Courtenay Civic Theatre, Vancouver Island (March 6).

The **Danny Grossman Dance Company** has just completed its first tour of the British Isles with the **Dance Umbrella '80 Festival**. The company appeared at the Laban Centre and the Riverside Studios in London, as well as in Swansea, Bluith Wells, Bristol, Plymouth and Cardiff, Wales. They also gave many lecture demonstrations and master classes while on tour. Performing with **Danny Grossman** this season are **Judith Hendin**, **Eric Bobrow**, **Greg Parks**, **Judith Ann Miller**, **Randy Glynn**, **Pamela Grundy** and **Trish Armstrong**.

Judith Hendin and Randy Glynn in *Ecce Homo*



Allan Risdill and Denise Fujiwara in *Rushes*

In January **Toronto Independent Dance Enterprise (T.I.D.E.)**, a company comprised of **Denise Fujiwara**, **Paula Ravitz** and **Allan Risdill**, performed at a number of Ontario universities including York, Trent, Wilfrid Laurier and at Niagara College. In mid-February **Allan Risdill** gave a solo concert at 15 Dance Lab, in Toronto. The company plan a spring tour to Southwestern Ontario during April when they will premier a new dance choreographed by Ms. Ravitz with music composed by **Tina Pearson**, as well as a new work by **Sara Shelton Mann**.

The **Toronto Dance Theatre** presented its annual **Choreographic Workshop** January

23-27. There were two different programmes of new dances by Ricardo Abreut, Robert Desrosiers, Karen Duplisea, Nancy Ferguson, Charles Flanders, Christopher House, Mitch Kirsch, Susan Macpherson, Claudia Moore and Suzette Sherman. Jeannie Teillet and Grace Miyagawa choreographed and performed a new dance/theatre work written by Graham Jackson.

In February the company performed in Hamilton, Kingston and Cornwall. The tour continues to Cleveland, Ohio (February 29-March 2), Fulton, N.Y. (March 6), Rochester, N.Y. (March 7), Queensborough College, New York City (March 9), Guelph (March 28), and St. Catherines (March 29).

In March TDT will again be presenting Donald Himes' production of *Babar The Little Elephant* performed by students of the TDT School. *Babar* will tour Cleveland, Ohio (March 1), Kingston (March 8) and St. Catherines (March 29) and will play at the St. Lawrence Centre, Toronto March 15-23.

The company's new booking manager is **Anthony Schatzky**, an actor, theatre arts teacher and administrator who has most recently served as tour director for Toronto Arts Productions' Theatre Hour Company.

In their February season the National Ballet premiered three new works — Harald Lander's *Études*, Maurice Béjart's *Song of a Wayfarer* (performed by Frank Augustyn and Tomas Schramek) and Fokine's *Le Spectre de la Rose*. Highlights of the season were a gala performance of *Giselle* starring Natalia Makarova and Peter Martins and the appearance of guest artist Patrick Bissell in *Romeo and Juliet*.

The company has been invited to appear at the opening of the Cervantino Festival, Guanajuato, Mexico, April 26, 27. They will also visit Mexico City April 29, 30 and will perform *Giselle* at both engagements as well as three shorter ballets. Company soloist **Constantin Patsalas** spent most of January in Caracas choreographing a new work with Spanish classical music for the Ballet Contemporaneo de Camara.

The **Shaw Festival Theatre** will produce a new full-evening dance event conceived and choreographed by Vancouver-based dancer-choreographer **Judith Marcuse** with an original score by David Jaggs, David Keeble and others. The small company of dancers will include leading artists, both ballet and modern, from across Canada.

QUEBEC

From January 13 to February 18 **Les Grands Ballets Canadiens** made their fifth major tour of the United States. The company appeared in 28 cities from New York State to Florida. Of the 10 ballets presented, five are by resident choreographers Fernand Nault and Brian Macdonald; the others are by George Balanchine, Maurice Béjart, Paul Taylor and Lar Lubovitch. In April and May **Les Grands Ballets Canadiens** will tour the American Pacific Coast as well as Vancouver, Toronto and London, Ontario.

After several weeks of rumour, it was officially announced on January 21 that a new dance company, incorporating elements of Montreal's *Entre-Six* and Toronto's *Ballet Ys* would be formed in Ottawa under the name **Theatre Ballet of Canada**. Lawrence Gradus will leave Montreal to

become the new company's artistic director. Gordon Pearson, general manager of *Ballet Ys*, will continue in that capacity with *Theatre Ballet*. Gloria Grant, formerly artistic director of *Ballet Ys* will join TBC's board of directors and will have an as yet ill-defined position within the company as Director of Development. Celia Franca, founder and for 23 years artistic director of the *National Ballet*, has been an artistic advisor to *Ballet Ys* for the past year and will join TBC's board.

Celia Franca's home is in Ottawa. In an interview she expressed a willingness to help the new company in any way possible as a kind of 'minister-without-portfolio'.

This surprising development in the Canadian dance world appears to have been precipitated by two related factors: first, the perilous financial condition of *Entre-Six* (an accumulated deficit of more than \$110,000) and the accompanying disarray of its administration following the death last fall of Jacqueline Lemieux; second, the desire of Gloria Grant to move away from the strain of directing *Ballet Ys* and a general feeling that the company's fortunes would benefit by trading Toronto's crowded dance scene for Ottawa. At present, *Le Groupe de la Place Royale* is the only fully professional dance company in the capital.




Lawrence Gradus

Auditions for *Theatre Ballet of Canada*, which will assume the accumulated deficit of *Ballet Ys* only (about \$32,000) will be held in the early spring. The company's first season begins officially on July 1.

Faced with its huge deficit, and no dancers or artistic staff it is unlikely that the board of *Entre-Six* will be able to save that company.

Seven Quebec choreographers will participate in a series of Saturday afternoon dance performances at the **Montreal Museum of Fine Arts**. The artists premiering new work are Daniel Soulieres, Candy Loubert, Sylvie St-Laurent (March 15), Marie Chouinard, Odette Oliver (March 22), Jeanne Renaud and Jean-Pierre Perreault (March 29).



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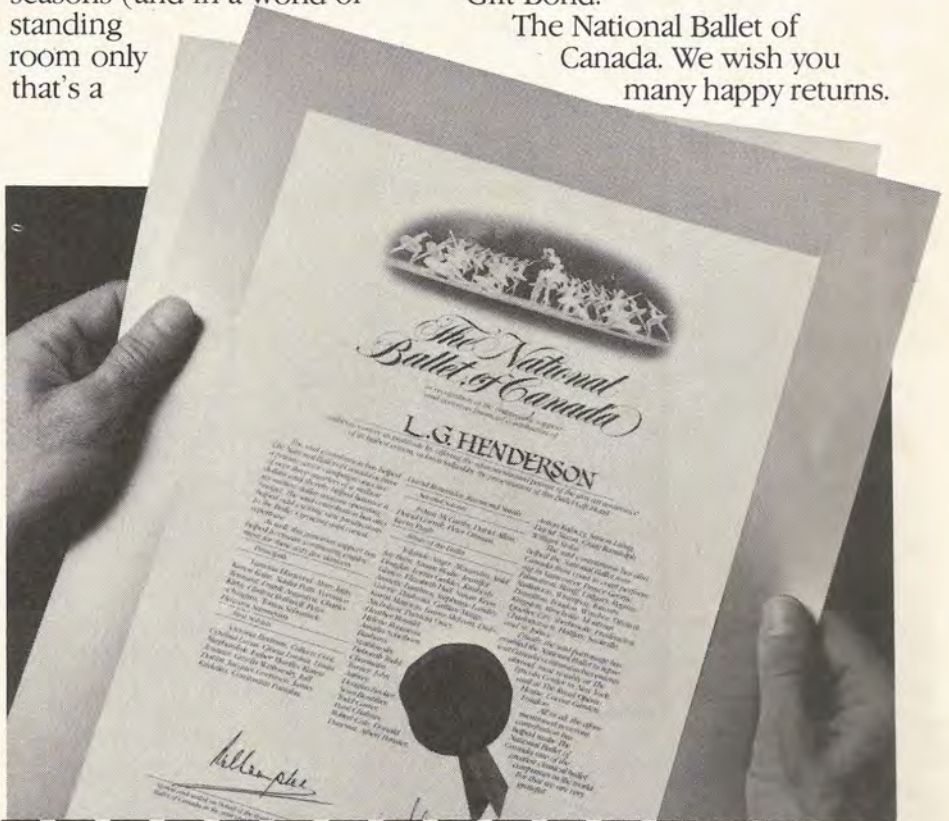
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