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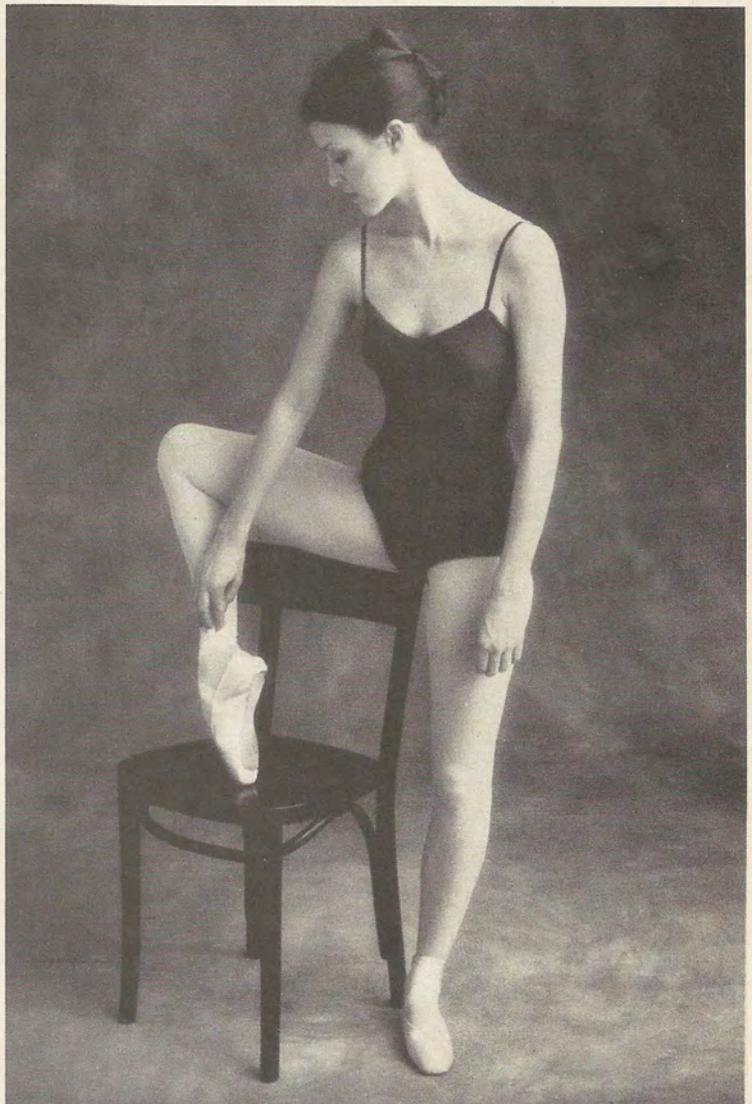
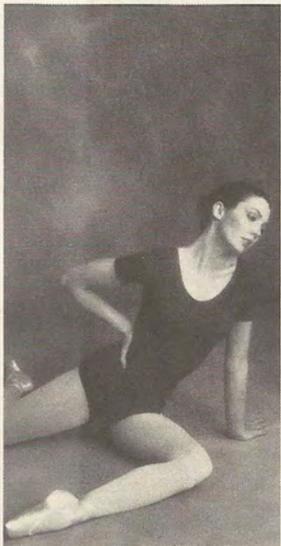
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Dance in Canada

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SUMMER 1980 ETÉ

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COVER

Brian Webb in his own choreography, *The Garden* (1979). Photo by Barry White

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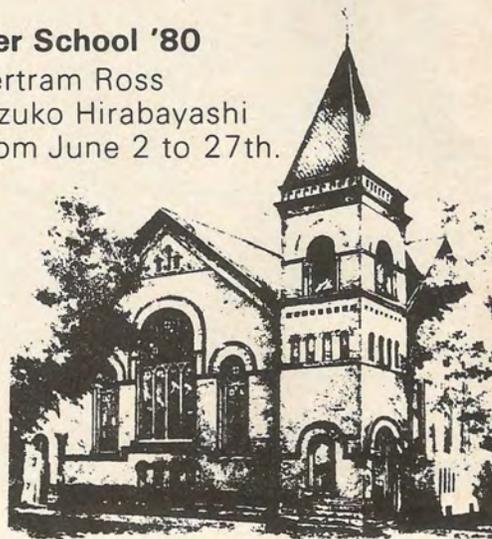
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Brian Macdonald

So You Want To Be A Choreographer?



Brian Macdonald's *Tam Ti Delam*

When I was asked to comment, in the pages of this magazine, on choreography, the request came in the form of jotted notes that were suspiciously like a high-school term paper: -

What is choreography?

How much is *craft*? How is it acquired?

How can a nation help foster . . . etc.

Now I doubt very much that I could pass that kind of exam!

I had tried once, many years ago, and I think I failed. In 1964 I had just been nominated artistic director of the Royal Swedish Ballet and soon after was invited to talk at the newly created Choreographic Institute there in Stockholm where a number of young Swedish dancers and teachers were embarking on a three-year course of study to become choreographers.

It was a serious group, and I began that afternoon by asking them a great many questions about their training and experience, their knowledge of music and art, their aspirations, and their convictions about their own society. It emerged that there were few hard realities in the situation; not much experience, technicoloured dreams, and dubious motivation. At least not one of them seemed to be *burning* to choreograph, although the fat budget provided by the Swedish government might induce that.

I thought I knew where to start to help them.

Ask Lots of Questions

'You must come to the opera house,' I said brightly, 'as often as you wish, rehearsals, classes, performances. Look

at everything and ask yourselves questions. Lots of questions'.

The Royal Swedish Ballet had, at that time, a superb repertoire, the legacy of Mary Skeaping and Antony Tudor, the previous directors: the classics, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, *Coppélia*, *Giselle* . . .

'Start to analyse *Sleeping Beauty*.' I was off. 'Study the fairy variations, look at the richness of those steps all based on *relevé* combinations, the last act adagio with the subtle acrobatics and purity woven into it. Tchaikowsky; study everything he wrote, the violin writing in the adagios, the thematic development, the character divertissements, the codas. Did he learn all that from Petipa or is it elsewhere in his work? What makes *Coppélia* tick away like clockwork all these years?'

Look for Nuance

We had four Tudor pieces in our repertoire: *Pillar of Fire*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Dark Elegies*, and his newest work created for the company, *Echoing of Trumpets*, anti-fascist and poignant, beautifully tailored to the Swedish dancers' Strindbergian sensibilities.

'With Tudor you must look for nuance,' I said, 'the steps are not terribly thrilling, but look how he can put anguish into the legs, and make the torso mute and desperate. He always choreographs about the human condition. Even when he's funny, he's sad, and when he's sad it's terrifying. Study Tudor in every detail and read Proust while you do so. Come to the opera house and watch over and over again. In rehearsal, in performance'.

I thought they were warming to the message.

'Or *Pillar of Fire*, took him a year with Nora Kaye. Restraint and invention war throughout the piece. Listen to the Schoenberg score at home and think what you might choreograph to it. Why does that ballet move you so here in Stockholm, why is that underlying American puritanism so moving here, and in the US and not, for instance, in France where that work is always rejected? Tudor's brightest suggests are right there in the opera house.'

We also had Grigorovitch's first big success, *Stone Flower*, done when he was a young choreographer in Leningrad, long before he became director of the Bolshoi. He had been allowed out of Russia to stage it in non-aligned Sweden, had bought blue jeans, got a crew cut, and turned the opera house upside down.

Abstraction Is a Very Daring Thing

'Ask yourselves about Grigorovitch.' The neophytes, I suspected, had never heard of him. '*Stone Flower* has a very corny political message, obligatory in the USSR, but that second act where he's aiming at abstraction is a very daring thing for him to attempt: look at the vocabulary, certainly not out of Vaganova; the most intriguing part of the ballet. He has a big talent. Study him.'

There was no stopping me now.

'Balanchine should be a textbook for you. The Royal Swedish Ballet was one of the first companies in Europe to get *Symphony in C* in the New York City Ballet version: And *Four Temperaments*. Look at that incredible vocabulary, the sheer danciness of it, the invention and re-invention, the *imperial* size of it all. For starters you should commit one entire movement of it to memory just to enrich your heads. Why does this man, who was so much a part of the Diaghilevian approach to decors, costumes, and production, today reject that and create ballets costumed in practice clothes against blacks to the most intellectually demanding music? You must study his pieces and wonder.'

I was losing my young Swedish hopefuls, I could sense it. The opera house held no treasures for them.

'And of course Birgit Cullberg, your own choreographer, *Miss Julie*, *Moon Reindeer*, *Lady from the Sea*. You can find Jooss in there, but with feminist thunder, and a vocabulary that's angular and calculated. Her works are superbly constructed. She's right here in town, and important.'

This wasn't what they had expected. I headed for surer ground.

Improvise Naked in Front of a Mirror

'And dance, yourselves, every day of your lives if possible, ballet, modern, folk, tap, the in-betweens; improvise naked in front of a mirror if you wish. Do the

Lapps dance? Go up north and study them. Invent. Invent. Invent. You can't use somebody else's voice for your message. Watch athletes, skaters, old actors. Learn everything. Graham, Astaire, Hermes Pan, Fokine. Dare! If it is to be yours it should be original. It isn't all that easy.

Now, if you have a talent for it, making dances is a very heady experience. You can soon enter a world of your own making. Apart from economic considerations, you really don't have to relate to others' work. You can be in your own body, on your own trip, creating on yourself. It's very seductive, making dances. You must be able to distinguish between that and choreography.

Break the Rules but know the Rules You're Breaking

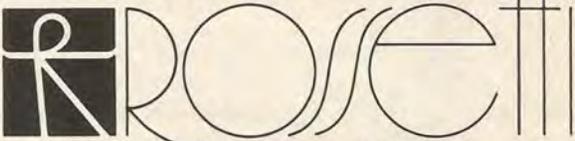
You only encounter tradition when you enter the theatre, and that's where even the most talented can fumble and lose the way. Without knowledge there you are truly lost. Not knowing where you have come from you can only vaguely sense where you might be going. Break the rules but know the rules you're breaking.'

After that one afternoon session I was never invited back to the Choreographic Institute in Stockholm. None of their students ever came to the opera house, ever studied Petipa, Tudor, Balanchine or their own Cullberg, or even watched a class, certainly not while I was there. Perhaps they all graduated with honours and went on to gloriously productive careers. I don't know, I haven't heard of any of them.

* * *

Webster defines *craft*, variously, as art, cunning, power. If we add to that innovation, it becomes an apt description of making dances. Choreography is a singular craft. I'm not sure that it can be taught, although it can be learned.

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Michael Crabb

Focus on Alberta

Part I

The Future Beckons in a Land of Growth and Opportunity

Alberta is 75 years old. The Dance in Canada Association comes to Alberta for the second time to hold its annual conference and the National Choreographic Seminar finds a home in Alberta's Rocky Mountains. To Honour these events we present Focus on Alberta an impressionistic four-part survey of the Alberta dance scene by editor Michael Crabb.

It's been a long time coming but it seems at last as if a real dance community is about to blossom in Alberta. The path along the way is littered with the debris of false starts, shattered dreams and wounded egos, but a process of maturation has taken place. There's a hint of permanence, of a secure future not far ahead, which has rekindled the enthusiasm of dance leaders in the province.

For an Easterner, and worse still an Easterner who started life in England, it's dangerous to try to make generalizations or judgements about the dance scene in Alberta. Although Albertans are willing enough to quarrel among themselves a whiff of criticism from beyond makes them close ranks. They are sensitive people, living down the image of a white stetson culture, determined to be taken seriously, refusing to be condescended to.

And rightly so because however insubstantial some of their cultural achievements may seem from afar the local reality makes them very impressive. Comparisons between what happens in Alberta and what goes on elsewhere in Canada are irrelevant because Alberta *is* Alberta. It has to be seen in its context – a vast territory with a population less than that of either Montreal or Toronto. A majority of Albertans live in two bustling and not particularly beautiful cities. Edmonton and Calgary between them account for almost 60% of the provincial population. A strong rivalry exists between them which, as I soon learned, has to be taken into account when the citizens of one city start talking about those in the other. If Albertans tend to be provincial chauvinists, Calgarians have their own local breed of xenophobia which can include anyone living much beyond 10 miles of the Husky Tower.

Building for tomorrow

Alberta presents strange contrasts. It's hard to tell if it's behind the times or ahead of them. Authentic cowboys and tough oil prospectors rub shoulders with city slickers in smart bespoke suits and Italian shoes on the streets of Calgary. There's a restless energy about Alberta where statistically people live longer than anywhere else in Canada and the divorce rate is also the highest in the country. It's as if Albertan society mirrors the contrasts of its physical landscape and climatic extremes. Albertans are busy people, building for tomorrow, often pulling down and starting again – dynamic, impatient and very proud of themselves. Alberta is in the forefront of the modern world – and also still a frontier. Of course, everyone knows about the oil.

It takes time for a human community to develop its own distinct culture and artistic life. In a materially oriented society to which thousands flock in search of fortune people more readily turn to conventional forms of entertainment than to the questioning, probing introspection of the creative artist. Tastes tend to be conservative, values are concerned with function and efficiency. Product seems more important than process.

So it has been a hard slog for those who have tried to establish an indigenous dance culture in Alberta. Even now, despite the emergence of Dance Alberta as an umbrella organization, the dance community still suffers from its own fragmentation. Alberta seems to breed strong individuals with an instinct for going their own ways. Personal jealousies and vaulting egos hamper progress towards a shared purpose and a shared effort. There is no



Charlene Tarver's *Islands of Infinity* for The Alberta Contemporary Dance Theatre

real dance culture in Alberta but the ingredients for making one exist.

Popular Roots

To start with there is a strong tradition of dance among many of the ethnic groups who have settled in Alberta. The Ukrainian groups, Shumka and its younger competitor Sheremosh, are but the most conspicuous of a large variety of ethnic dance ensembles. At the universities in Calgary and Edmonton widely drawn dance groups work enthusiastically to present annual performances which observers claim provide some of the best dance entertainment of the season.

Then there are the teaching studios with their student concerts from which the human material for future development must come. The Alberta Ballet and the Brian Webb Dance Company both emerged from educational settings. The Calgary Dance Workshop, directed by Florence Skinner, while still a student performing ensemble, could easily become the kernel of a professional company.

In Alberta there is quite a lengthy history of false starts, buoyed on hope and enthusiasm but ultimately consumed by problems of audience development mixed with financial strangulation.

The Rise and Fall of Alberta Contemporary Dance Theatre

Alberta Contemporary Dance Theatre built itself an audience. It was founded and directed on an unpaid part-time basis by Charlene Tarver of Grant McEwan College and Jacqueline Ogg, a drama professor and movement specialist at the University of Alberta. A variety of local dance figures were invited to supplement the repertoire provided by the co-directors. From its beginnings in 1971 the company began to tour but it also accumulated debts. It was oversold by its management and finally succumbed after a brief period under the leadership of Marian Sarach in 1978. Nobody seems to want to talk about the demise of ACDT. It is wrapped in mystery with hints of intrigue. The point is it died.

Anyway, as Charlene Tarver readily admits, ACDT tried to do too much too fast. In her view it reflects a general condition in the provincial capital. 'Edmonton', she explains, 'is an exciting place to be if you like growth but we are marketing ourselves right out of existence, giving the impression we are several decades down the road already'. As head of Grant McEwan's dance programme,

Charlene Tarver urges aspiring professionals to leave Alberta for a while and train in the big established centres. Now some of them are returning. Brian Webb is among them.

In Calgary there have been repeated attempts to form a permanent dance company. There *are* dance companies in Calgary: Sun•Ergos specializes in an exclusive breed of dance theatre dispensed by Robert Greenwood and Dana Luebke. Synergy went belly up but Liza Doolittle and Norma Wood still have Co-Motion and have recently moved into a new studio. But for most Calgarians and Edmontonians the company they want to have, that they seem willing to support in any substantial way, must be rooted in the traditions of classical ballet even if it incorporates a spirit of adventure with new ballets in a modern idiom.

Money

One of the big problems is money and there's no surprise in that. Alberta Culture, the principle source of public arts support in the province is, according to dance consultant Dick Foose, among the most progressive and generous funding agencies of its kind in North America. When Horst Schmid headed the body he fought with missionary zeal for recognition of the arts and largely succeeded in awakening government concern. Alberta Culture, however, does not supply start-up money and limits the extent of its contributions to matching grants up to a limit of 25% of 'eligible annual expenditures'. There are larger grants for artists involved in educational programmes. The policy is healthy in that it makes arts organizations prove they have a market and an audience but, given the circumstances in Alberta and the considerable wealth of the provincial treasury, it may be less than enough.

Albertans naturally have full access to the various programmes administered by the Canada Council but so far no Albertan dance company has qualified for annual operating grants. This is a sore point with the Alberta Ballet in particular. They have received sizeable project grants from Ottawa but have had to reduce a deficit in excess of \$100,000 by presenting other big-name companies in a subscription series including some funded generously by the Canada Council. They see the biggies coasting into their home market aided by Touring Office subsidies while they themselves are consistently turned down for operating funds. The Canada Council has applied its standard assessment procedures but that does not pacify the Albertans. It was even suggested to me that the choice of assessors has been contrived to guarantee a negative response.

All this may say far more about the political sensitivity of Tory Alberta than it does about the fairness of the Canada Council. But the sense of grievance is real.

The Alberta Ballet Makes Steady Progress

What particularly annoys Ruth Carse, founder of the Alberta Ballet, is the fact that they were advised by Ottawa to develop a mixed repertoire of works yet what the audience wants is the classics. The company almost finds itself in a no-win situation. When Jeremy Leslie-Spinks in his brief period as artistic director did try to give the Alberta Ballet a fresh, contemporary look it nearly wrecked years of building.

Brydon Paige, director since the fall of 1976, has tried



Srea Eklof and Michel Rahn of The Alberta Ballet

with considerable success to give the Alberta Ballet a repertoire that combines classical and modern ballet. The company remains compact (12 dancers) and there is still a 10- to 15-week seasonal layoff for the dancers. However, the company management has now been placed in the hands of a forthright and, by all accounts, well organized American, Stanley Ware. He has worked to strengthen the Board of Directors, boost private and corporate financial support and ensure that the company is visibly *Albertan*. The company considers itself the child of Calgary and Edmonton. It just happens to live in the provincial capital. Consequently performances are split equally between the two cities and there is strong Calgary membership on the board. In 1977, Century II Dancers of Calgary ceased operations and that company's supporters added their names to the Calgary Friends of the Alberta Ballet.

Yet to thrive and grow, the Alberta Ballet must tour regularly beyond Alberta. The province simply does not provide a big enough audience base for the length of seasons needed by the company. In effect, the Alberta Ballet has to do what every other ballet company has done and make all Canada its market. But that costs dearly.

Dorothy Harris, Professor of Dance in the Physical Education Faculty of U of A and a senior, respected figure in the dance community, believes the government should make a special commitment to the arts if it really wants to put Alberta firmly on the cultural map. The money involved would be insignificant as a proportion of gross government expenditures. Meanwhile the Alberta Ballet has to move gradually, strengthening its home roots and waiting for the extra cash which may or may not come. Otherwise dancers will leave for work in larger companies offering longer contracts.

Away From the Classical Tradition

For the one-and-a-half-year old Brian Webb Dance Company these problems are less pressing. It intends to

stay small to avoid organizational and financial torpor. Nor does it hamper Carole and Ernst Eder who have established Espace Tournesol as a place where solo artists and small, usually avant garde groups can perform. They have helped keep Edmonton in touch with the latest developments in Canadian modern dance. They have also made a great success of *Interface*, an arts magazine which began as a dance newspaper.

Carole and Ernst, well known across Canada through their involvement in many Dance in Canada conferences, have their own trenchant views on the Alberta dance scene. To them it seems overweighted in favour of educators and administrators while dancers often leave because they feel smothered and because opportunities are few. On the other hand they have seen a tremendous growth in popular support for the arts, including dance. They believe, at last, there is 'a chance for survival' in Alberta.

The future of dance in Alberta is, inevitably, dependent on how the society as a whole grows and develops. You can force a culture with infusions of money and outside expertise only so far. For a worthwhile local artistic community to grow there must be a general settling and slowing down of the feverish pace of Albertan life. Those with patience and a willingness to accept modest progress over the long haul will most likely get their reward. By the time Alberta celebrates its centenary in 2005 the years of frustration, disappointment and tentative growth may be lost in the mists of time.

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Part II

Still Young and Younger Still

Two Dance Pioneers

Ruth Carse

'You mean you're going to talk to Ruth Carse? She must be ancient by now.' Thus a friend greeted the announcement that I was off to interview the founder of the Alberta Ballet. It was an honestly intended comment because the name of Ruth Carse seems for so long to have been inextricably entwined with the history of ballet in Alberta that it's hard to imagine the real person is still right in the thick of things with a working schedule that would make most executives blanch and a bubbling personality which suggests youth rather than middle age.

My first encounter with this remarkable lady was rather like that between an errant schoolchild and an avenging headmistress. It consisted of a forceful scolding. As editor of *Dance in Canada* I had allowed a savage and unjust review of the company she founded and still loves with an understandably motherly affection to find its way into print. Did I know how damaging that was? Had I no idea of my responsibility? Thankfully the sinister mood did not last long but I had cause to reflect on how misleading grey hair can be. The lady has the vigour of entrenched youth.

It's the quality of the pioneer, the thing that has given Ruth Carse the strength to grapple with fortune good and ill and still to look into the future with optimism and determination.

A native Edmontonian, Ruth Carse has had a long and varied career as dancer, choreographer and teacher. She was a soloist in Boris Volkoff's Canadian Ballet, a member of the Radio City Music Hall ballet corps and a charter member of the National Ballet. Injured while studying in England, Ruth Carse returned to Edmonton in 1954 and began a new career teaching and choreographing.

For many years she worked in the school of a much respected Edmonton ballet teacher, Muriel Taylor. She became an advanced RAD teacher and then examiner but meanwhile larger goals were taking shape. Ruth Carse began to choreograph, for television, for operas and musicals and from that there emerged the nucleus of an Edmonton Ballet Company, renamed the Alberta Ballet Company in 1966. It began then as the performing extension of a school, (her own school after she left Muriel Taylor's studio), but Ruth Carse had great ambitions for her troupe. Alberta deserved its own professional ballet company. Dancers should not have to leave their province to pursue a career. Audiences should not be dependent solely on the periodic visits of the big, established companies.

By 1973 the Alberta Ballet Company could call itself



Ruth Carse ARAD ATC

professional. A foundation had been laid, local support had been garnered, there really was a future.

In 1976 Ruth Carse decided the company needed new direction. Either she should pass the associated school over to someone else and concentrate on directing the company or focus her attention on the roots of company development - training. She chose the latter course and remains principal of the Alberta Ballet School (a separate institution since 1978) - but with a very attentive eye on the company.

Her first successor, Jeremy Leslie-Spinks, marched the company off in radical directions. Unwittingly he almost scuttled the company in one year. The financial situation became critical. Audience goodwill and private support was damaged. Ruth Carse found herself back on a familiar trail, trudging around to rebuild damaged foundations and mend fences. 'It has been', she admits, 'a hard uphill battle'.

The advent of Brydon Paige late in 1976 helped introduce a new stability in the company's affairs and Ruth Carse has once again been able to concentrate her attention on the school. One of her achievements there has been to establish a programme linking ballet training at the

grade 10, 11 and 12 levels with the academic courses of Alberta College so promising children have the chance to train professionally as dancers and complete their high school matriculation simultaneously.

Ruth Carse carries her responsibilities with an easy authority. She knows what she's about, is not afraid to condemn the efforts of those she believes are less worthy or qualified and will roundly trounce anyone who dares berate unfairly the company she built. A formidable personality, a real pioneer.

Brian Webb

Brian Webb is young, confident and ambitious. Some would call him cocksure. Those around him seem struck by a mixture of awe and envy - even a slight trace of fear. There's more than a hint of wildness in his face which suggests he does not make a habit of giving in either to foes, friends or circumstances. Within two years he has created a modern dance company from rudimentary materials, taught them a technique which mixes Hawkins, Graham and Webbian athleticism and given them a repertoire entirely of his own devising.

Edmonton is his home. He took a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, danced briefly with the Alberta Contemporary Dance Theatre and with the blessing of its co-director, Charlene Tarver, left for New York in 1971 to study and dance with Erick Hawkins, left to help Carol Conway form her own company, danced in it, began teaching and returned to Edmonton late in 1977. (He went back to New York in 1979 for three months training at the Martha Graham School.)

In Edmonton he became a modern technique instructor at Grant McEwan Community College and within a year had presented a workshop of his own choreography with student dancers. The response was positive. He decided to form his own troupe. The Brian Webb Dance Company was duly incorporated in February 1979 with five dancers and a board of directors that nearly outnumbers them two to one.

Already Brian Webb's company has found a following and performs to good houses (67%) in the Student Union Building's 750-seat theatre, University of Alberta. There are workshops in which company members can choreograph and Webb will take two of his dancers off to Banff this summer as participants in the National Choreographic Seminar.

Brian Webb's plans are clear cut. He wants a small



Brian Webb

company because large companies tend to get consumed with organization at the cost of art and because he likes choreographing for small groups. He plans his dances carefully in advance and presents them on video with details of the counts required to the composers he commissions to write his music. He believes that 'modern' dance needs modern music. 'If you're going to create something new you must go all the way.' He wants to perform for an audience but is not prepared to cater to its existing tastes. 'The audience should come to a concert knowing they are going to see an artist's creativity. The whole trouble in Canada is that there's too much catering.'

Brian Webb continues teaching at Grant McEwan College. Like his dancers he could not exist without a paying job. The company is still only semi-professional but there's no question about its future in Brian Webb's mind. It is going to mature into something permanent and significant.

Judging by the comments of local observers the odds are more than evenly balanced in his favour.



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Part III

Elevation: 5000'

Ballet in Banff



Holly Savage and Reid Anderson in Gwenneth Lloyd's *Bally Nonsense* (1964)

Dancers in Banff jump higher. The top of a grand jeté on the stage of the Eric Harvie Theatre is about as far above sea level as any dancer in Canada can hope to reach – unless of course he's in a plane, and that's cheating. Naturally, it helps to start your jump from well over 4500 feet up.

Alright. So it's a lousy joke but not so bad as a metaphor.

The Banff Centre has been attracting hundreds of students to its summer dance programme for more than three decades and in the process has made a significant contribution to dance training in Canada. Its aspirations are lofty, matching the soaring peaks that close it in on every side. Reality has sometimes fallen short of ambition but the urge to reach for new heights, to develop the potential of individual students to its fullest or to initiate imaginative programmes has been a constant feature of the Banff Centre.

Inspirational Surroundings

It all began in 1933. Ned Corbett, Director of Extension Studies for the University of Alberta set up a summer session School for the Arts in the small resort town of Banff where it was felt the beauty of the unmatched physical surroundings would have an inspirational effect on the students. The emphasis was on theatre arts. The students occupied rented buildings right in the town.

The programme flourished and grew and under its

visionary director, Donald Cameron, eventually moved up the side of Tunnel Mountain to its present site overlooking the great sweep of the Bow River. That was in 1947. Since then the 41-acre campus has sprouted a continuous succession of new buildings (it lost one of them including staff accommodation and photographic labs by fire on December 22, 1979) among which the theatre complex takes pride of place. It houses two stages, the small, intimate Margaret Greenham and the big, comfortable Eric Harvie Theatre where since 1971 the annual Banff Festival of the Arts has been held.

Wholesome Fräuleins Beckoning the Dawn

From the start, dance was included in the summer arts programme although until 1958 it formed part of the Theatre Division of the school. In earliest years classes were given in 'Eurythmics and Movement'. Images of wholesome fräuleins beckoning the dawn to the strains of Wagner inevitably spring to mind. But all that disappears with the advent of Gwenneth Lloyd and the introduction of classes for those exclusively interested in the Gallic rather than Teutonic branch of the art of dance.

Gwenneth Lloyd's association with Banff goes back at least as far as 1946. She remembers that year in particular as the first occasion on which she was invited to Banff as an adviser. She and fellow teacher Mara McBirney took the opportunity to go horseback riding and somehow trotted into the middle of the Indian Parade from which they were unable to extricate themselves until it ended at the Banff Springs Hotel.

In 1950 Gwenneth Lloyd took full charge of ballet instruction with the company and support of her long-time associate and friend, Betty Farrally. Gwenneth eventually retired in 1967 to be replaced as co-director of the Dance Division by Arnold Spohr.

Betty Farrally did not leave Banff. In fact this summer she celebrates her 30th consecutive year at the Centre's summer school. Although she no longer teaches she is the organizational genius behind the whole operation – strict, forthright, efficient and kind. A few years ago she suffered severe injuries in a car accident. It seemed that might be the end of her days with the Banff Centre. Instead she shrugged it off as a tiresome inconvenience letting few people know about the pain she had to endure, bustling around in her indefatigable way. If it ever occurs to anyone to erect a statue on the Banff campus it will most likely be of Betty Farrally.

Guest Teachers

In the years since dance emerged from under the wing of Theatre to become its own unit within the school a steady



Vera Volkova at Banff 1969

stream of guest teachers have been invited to give master classes to the most advanced students. The list is long but the name of Vera Volkova stands out. She came for the first of three visits in 1969. Her presence marked an important departure from the school's close connection with the Royal Academy of Dancing although Alan Hooper, now artistic director of the RAD, has been part of the faculty four times in the last five years. Most recently the Centre has brought two teachers from the Bolshoi school, Natalia Zolotova and Boris Rachmanin to give master classes. This summer it will be the turn of Jorge Garcia from the Cuban Ballet and Frank Bourman of the Minnesota Dance Theatre School.

Naturally the regular faculty has been mainly drawn from within Canada and includes among many others Brian Macdonald, who introduced jazz dancing in 1961 (it has been a permanent and popular feature ever since), and Norbert Vesak who insisted on weaning the summer school from its preoccupation with classical ballet by introducing contemporary movement classes. Earl Kraul used to rent a cabin off campus for his teaching stints at Banff and well remembers the day he missed class because a family of bears had taken up residence on his porch and would not be driven away.

Overcoming the Summer Camp Image

Those are the bare bones of the outer history of dance at Banff. But what of the artistic centre? Here, depending on who you ask, you get different answers. For many years the Banff summer programme, which draws together all branches of the arts with the intention that each should

feed the imagination of the others, suffered from a summer camp image. It was not taken seriously by many outside observers, who as often as not relied on hearsay evidence rather than first-hand scrutiny. Banff was just a place, so the story went, where parents would send kids who showed no more than a glimmer of artistic talent.

Certainly, in earlier years, children were included as part of the summer programme and the range of standards was extreme. But for a long time now the summer programmes have emphasized adult education for those aspiring to, or already embarked on professional careers. In dance, children's classes were dropped in 1967 and every year the summer school attracts a significant proportion of young professionals. Classes are established at appropriate levels and are no longer crowded. Since 1972 when the Ballet/Dance Division recorded its highest enrolment figure (225 students), there has been a steady reduction in size. The emphasis on quality rather than quantity has been a keynote of David Leighton's plan for the Banff Centre ever since he became its director in 1971.

Also, of course, many alternative summer training opportunities have arisen in the recent past and the Banff Centre finds its dance programme in most years more heavily populated with Americans than other artistic divisions. That however causes no great anxiety. Banff, hemmed in though it may be by the Rockies, scans an international horizon. It looks at what a student has in the way of talent more often than it checks his passport. Bursaries are awarded on the sole criteria of merit. Much as its administrators would like it to be thought of as a Canadian institution the Banff Centre refuses to be chauvinistic or to sacrifice standards simply to fulfil some nationalistic intent.

The Emphasis on Performance

One aspect of the Banff summer programme, and a perennially controversial issue, is the emphasis given to performance. It is policy to provide as many participants as possible with stage experience either in a workshop held mid-way through the session or in the festival at the end when students have the chance to dance in works either specially choreographed for them or in an item from the existing repertoire of some established choreographer. This year it will be Brian Macdonald's *Time Out of Mind*. Some students complain that rehearsals cut into their technique classes and sap their energy. Others relish the opportunity. One thing is certain. The contribution of dance to the Banff Festival of the Arts has generally been of high quality and well received by audiences. Like it or not,

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the students seem to give every ounce of energy to the performances.

The dance programme at Banff is not regarded with universal admiration by the dance community elsewhere in Alberta. One hears repeated criticism of its insularity and disregard for the provincial dance scene. 'They never ask us', is a common complaint from leaders of the dance community in Calgary and Edmonton. They point to the fact that the Banff programme has never successfully incorporated a modern dance element thus cutting itself off from some of the most exciting developments and dynamic personalities in Canadian dance during the past decade. It's a criticism one hears beyond Alberta too.

Betty Farrally claims that she and her colleagues have repeatedly tried to include modern dance in the syllabus but the roots of the school's tradition are in ballet and jazz and that's what most students seem to want. As for the insularity of Banff the answer is swift and ready. Banff does not place inordinate store by boundaries either provincial or national. In fact, it believes that a cosmopolitan flavour is one of the school's most valuable assets and a great benefit to all the Canadians who share in it.

Expanding Horizons

But change is on the way and it is occurring outside the domain of Betty Farrally and her co-directors Arnold Spohr and Frank Bourman. Starting this September, Banff launches the six-week pilot project of what it is hoped will, by September 1981, have become a well founded programme in Music Theatre. It will be part of the Banff School's winter cycle whereby the Centre moves further and further into the business of full-time education.

Various plans for the dance component of this winter cycle (two 13-week terms between September and April) were considered. The Centre has opted to pursue the ideas of Michael Bawtree, founder of Toronto's Comus Music Theatre. His plan is to create a 'Music Theatre Ensemble' at Banff involving the talents of singers, actors and dancers all of whom show some facility in the other areas and who are anxious to extend their range as artists. Skill sharing and original creativity will be the key elements of this innovative programme. Mediocre eclecticism will, in the eyes of Bawtree's critics, be the end result.

Bawtree himself is confident something positive will emerge. 'We have moved away from versatility far too much in favour of speciality', says the unflappable Bawtree. 'We are offering a chance to young artists who have completed their professional training in particular areas to extend and round it. We believe it will foster the re-emergence of an honourable performing tradition and make them more employable as artists.'

And Banff may also be in the process of locking itself into a modern/experimental dance programme by offering its facilities as a permanent home for the National Choreographic Seminar being held at the Centre this year from June 2 to 22. The administration would certainly like to be able to welcome the seminar as an annual event and ancillary programme. Such programmes, together with the Lee Choreography Award scheme lend the dance activities of the Banff Centre an air of openness and dynamism very much in keeping with its high ideals.

And the mountains will always be there.



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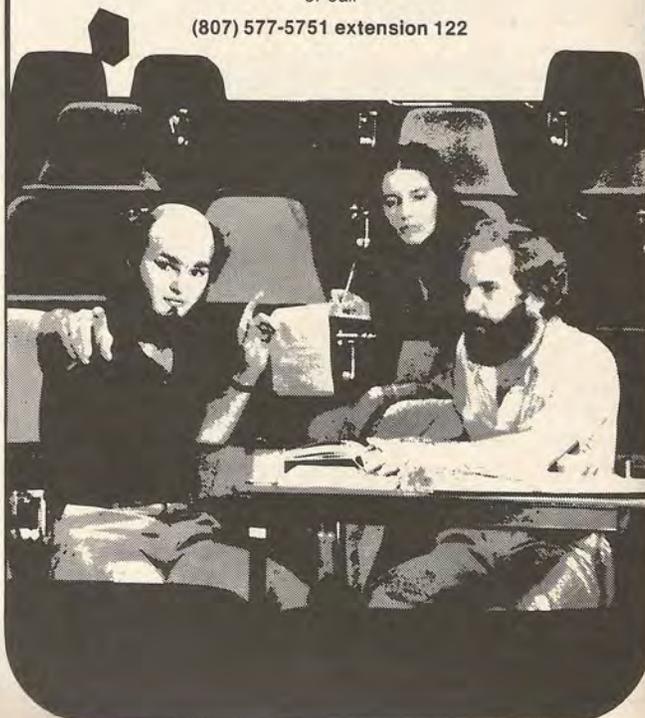
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Part IV

Creative Philanthropy Alberta Style

Clifford E. Lee was a man in the grand tradition of North American philanthropists. On the one hand he had a genius for making money. On the other he had an idealistic urge to help people by spending it with humanitarian generosity. His character in fact presented the happy paradox of a socialistically-minded capitalist. Canadians have been the fortunate beneficiaries of this apparent ideological schizophrenia.

Although the sizeable foundation left by Clifford E. Lee directs a great deal of its resources to social causes, the arts have not been neglected. They are, after all, one of the greatest social causes around. So, three years ago the Clifford E. Lee Foundation of Edmonton agreed to fund a project of the Banff Centre, aimed at fostering the development of Canadian choreography.

Immediate and Tangible Results

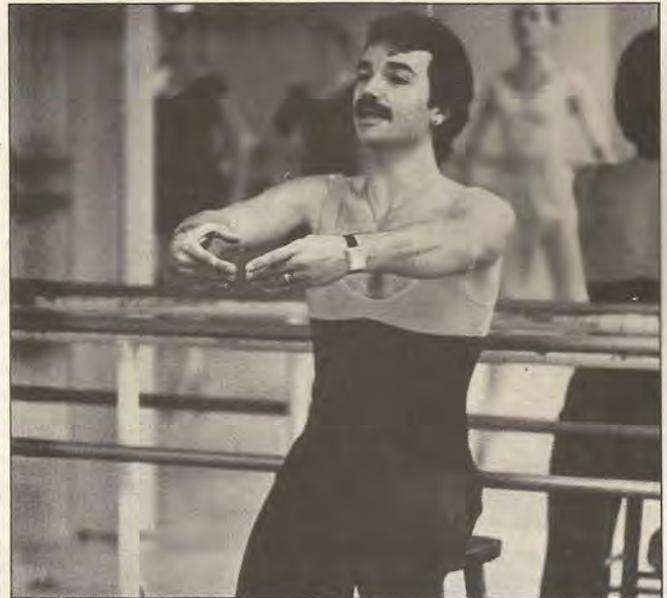
This year's winner, Renald Rabu, apart from receiving an outright award of \$3000 will, like his predecessors (Mauryne Allan in 1978 and Judith Marcuse last year) travel to Banff in July to create a work for the students of the summer dance programme. Unlike the other major national choreographic award offered annually by the Chalmers Foundation, the Lee Award aims to extract some immediate and tangible results. It is a condition of acceptance that the winner set a work on the Banff students to be performed during the annual Banff Festival of the Arts held each August. Extra money is available to cover the costs of this enterprise.

The requirement to produce a work for students may not seem the kindest reward for a talented choreographer yet the results so far have been more than promising. At Banff, the word 'student' may encompass everything from a relative beginner to a professional artist of several years experience. The stage and rehearsal spaces are splendid, the surrounding distractions few.

New Guidelines

In past years, applicants for the Lee Award have had to submit detailed plans for their proposed Banff Festival work. Experience however has already shown that this may be too restrictive a stipulation. Although the actual presentation of a ballet at the Festival will remain central to the Lee concept, future applicants will be assessed with greater emphasis on their general choreographic track record. They will still have to present a proposal for a new work but greater flexibility will be injected into the selection procedure.

Renald Rabu, the 1980 winner, is Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer of the Pacific Ballet Theatre in Vancouver, a company for which he has created eight



Renald Rabu in rehearsal

works in the past five years. Critics have commented on the blend of classical ballet and modern dance idioms in Rabu's choreography, a reflection no doubt of his own tastes and experience.

Renald Rabu: Dancer to Choreographer

A native of Saskatchewan, Renald Rabu (his ancestors came from Brittany) moved to British Columbia in his teens and began training to be a dancer in 1965. He studied for four years at the San Francisco Ballet's official school, later dancing in the company itself, as well augmenting his dance education in England, Montreal and New York. He was associated with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens for five years (1969-74) as dancer, teacher and as choreographer in the pre-professional programme.

It was during a tour with Les Grands Ballets that Rabu's dancing career was effectively ended, the result of a back injury that proved chronic. So, in 1974, at the age of 27, Renald Rabu changed course and started making rather than dancing dances.

His sojourn in Banff will not be without its own curious irony. Alongside his own new work on the Festival dance programme will be Brian Macdonald's *Time Out of Mind*. That was the ballet in which he originally incurred his back injury. No doubt it will give cause for reflection but is unlikely to dampen Renald Rabu's gratitude to the Clifford E. Lee Foundation for taking his second dance career several steps forward.

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 XII
The Root of the Matter
The Ankle and Foot

Perhaps no other activity places as great a demand on the human foot as does the dance. The dancer's foot must be flexible enough to mold itself into the most supple curves or the most angular flexions, yet powerful enough to propel and receive the body weight. The female foot is often called upon to bear the entire weight of the body on the tip of one digit and to maintain that impossible stance for a breathtaking length of time. The male foot must provide the impetus for vaulting leaps and absorb the considerable shock of landing, as well as bear the weight of both dancer and lifted partner. As in other parts of the body, this conflicting need for mobility and stability places extreme stress on the dancer's foot, stress which may lead to a range of problems. Although recently published data on dancers' injuries indicates that many foot related conditions are simply a result of overuse and degeneration, certain problems can be prevented. Careful training to promote a good balance of strength and flexibility will prepare the dancer's feet to withstand the stresses inherent in his art and to gain the meticulous control needed for their sensitive use.

Structure

Each foot is composed of 26 bones (see Diagram 1a) which articulate at over 30 joints and are bound together by a network of ligaments (about 100), muscle tendons and connective tissue. The talus of the foot articulates with both the tibia and fibula (leg bones) at the ankle, a hinge joint capable only of flexion (also called dorsiflexion, since the upper or dorsal aspect of the foot is brought toward the leg) and extension (also called plantar flexion or, in dance terms, 'pointing the foot'). These movements are essential for walking on flat ground since they control forward/backward movements of the foot relative to the leg. Sideways and rotational movements do not normally occur in the healthy ankle joint although the entire foot can be directed inward or outward by action at the hip and the flexed knee joint. A great deal of freedom, however, exists at the joints beneath the ankle, mainly the intertarsal and the tarsometatarsal joints. It is these joints which permit the movements of inversion and eversion, known to the dancer as 'sickling the foot' or 'rolling the ankle' - movements to be avoided whenever possible. When properly controlled, however, inversion and eversion are crucial to the normal functioning of the foot. In conjunction with ankle flexion and extension, these movements orient the sole of the foot directly towards the ground when the leg is not positioned in its normal standing position, perpendicular to the foot, turned neither in nor out. As will be described shortly, such actions are necessary in all of baller's five positions of the feet and also in turning actions such as pirouettes, promenades and turning jumps where a twist of the foot initiates the body's rotation. Action at the intertarsal and tarsometatarsal joints also alters the shape and curvature of the arches of the foot (see Diagram 1b). Their flexibility and resiliency allow the foot to absorb the shock of weight transmission and impart elasticity and suppleness to the step. These arches create an architectural

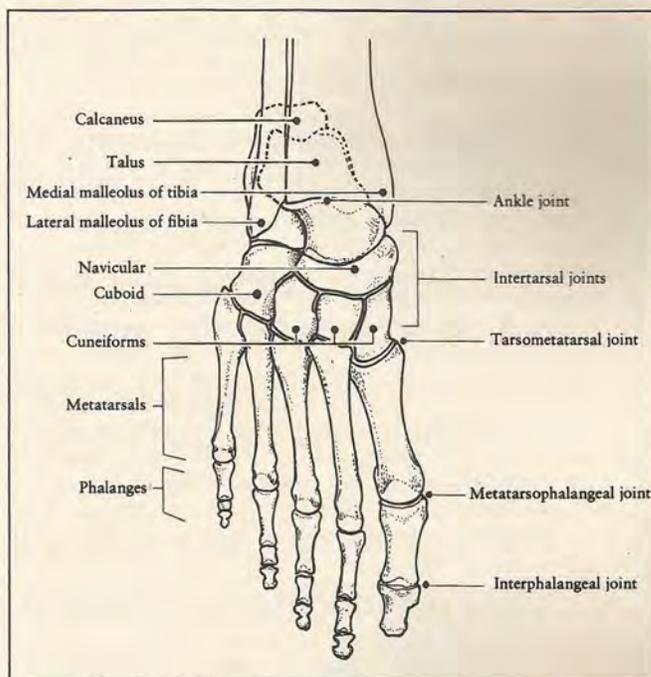


Diagram 1a) The bones of the foot

form which integrates the bones, ligaments and muscles of the foot into a unified structure effectively serving the needs for stability and mobility.

Weight Distribution: 'Centring the Feet'

In the healthy, well aligned foot the body weight is transmitted through the ankle joint, downward and outward toward the ground. The three main arches form a dome-shaped structure which supports the foot at its three corners: the head of the first metatarsal (the inner side of the ball of the foot at the big toe end), the head of the fifth metatarsal (at the little toe end) and at two small projections on the calcaneus (heel bone). In normal, erect posture about half of the body weight is borne on the heels. For a 120 lb. woman, for example, each foot bears 60 lbs. - about 30 lbs. at each heel, 20 lbs. at the inner ball of each foot and 10 lbs. at the outer ball of each foot. When this correct ratio of weight distribution - 3:2:1 - is maintained, the talus or keystone of the foot is in the optimal position for transmitting the body weight from the leg to the foot. The talus is the only bone in the foot to which no muscle directly attaches and its balanced position depends on the maintenance of the plantar arches. In a dancer's stance where the body weight is shifted toward the ball of the foot for increased mobility, the weight distribution is altered accordingly, but the talus must remain centred. Various leg deviations distort this balance. The knock-kneed person with 'rolled-in'

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ankles tends to support a relatively greater amount of body weight on the inner ball of the foot, while a bow-legged person with 'rolled-out' ankles increases his lateral support.

In a well balanced foot position, the plantar ligaments and muscles work effectively to maintain the integrity of the arches, the former resisting violent but short-lasting stresses and the latter coping with sustained strains. The anterior arch, which runs along the ball of the foot, is the shortest, lowest arch and rests on the ground by way of the soft tissues which pad the forefoot. It is spanned on its bottom surface by the weak intermetatarsal ligaments and by the muscle which pulls the big toe towards the second toe. Wearing too short shoes or high heels can lead to the flattening or reversal of this arch ('dropped metatarsal heads') and to the development of pain and callouses on the ball of the foot. The lateral arch extends from the metatarsal of the little toes to the heel and also contacts the ground through its underlying soft tissue. This arch is relatively rigid in order to transmit effectively the propulsive thrust of the calf muscles (gastrocnemius and soleus), for movements such as jumps and relevés. This helps us appreciate the necessity of a well centred foot during powerful take-offs: when a poorly held turn-out causes the ankle to 'roll in' and the lateral arch to lose contact with the ground, a great amount of effective thrust is lost.

The medial arch, running from the head of the big toe metatarsal to the heel, is the longest, highest and most important arch of the foot. The convexity of the arch is maintained by the many plantar ligaments which unite the five bones comprising the arch and resist sudden strains. Longer-lasting stresses are counteracted by various muscles which regulate the amount of curvature of the arch either by tightening the plantar aspect of the foot to shorten its length and increase the curve - as in a 'pointed' foot - or by tightening the dorsal surface to lengthen the foot and flatten the arch - as during a plié. Since the medial arch is easy to see in the turned-out leg, it is often used as a landmark for correcting foot alignment. 'Rolling in' at the ankle occurs when the foot everts - the terms eversion and inversion will be clarified shortly - past the correct amount needed to direct the sole squarely toward the ground and to centre the talus. In a 'rolled in' foot, the medial arch is closer to the ground and the weight is transmitted through the heel and the medial ball of the foot. The often heard command to 'lift the arches' encourages the dancer to decrease this exaggerated foot eversion by contracting the muscles whose tendons run along the medial aspect of the foot (the foot inverters, as shown in Diagram 2).

The arches of a healthy foot are flexible and resilient. They will flatten and lengthen under the weight of the body and regain their curves when the weight is taken off the foot. Pes Planus, or flat feet, is one condition which results when a delicate balance is not maintained in the muscles controlling the plantar arches. When muscular support fails owing to lack of exercise or injury, the ligaments are capable of maintaining the integrity of the arches for a short period. If, however, muscular support is not restored, the ligaments will eventually lengthen to a point where they no longer brace the arches, causing them to collapse for good. This condition is often seen in the retired dancer. Although dance training increases the foot's flexibility by means of stretching various ligaments, it also increases the strength of the foot muscles which partially compensate for the lack of ligamentous stability. After retirement, however, the foot muscles weaken and, in the absence of sufficient ligamentous support, the arches collapse.

Flat Feet

Flat feet occur in relative abundance in urban environments where the ground is even and firm and the feet are braced and protected by shoes. Since the arches of the feet are rarely required to mold themselves to irregularities in the slope or surface of the ground, as they did for primitive man, it is understandable that the supporting muscles atrophy. Dancers avoid this problem, since they spend a great deal of time either in soft slippers or bare

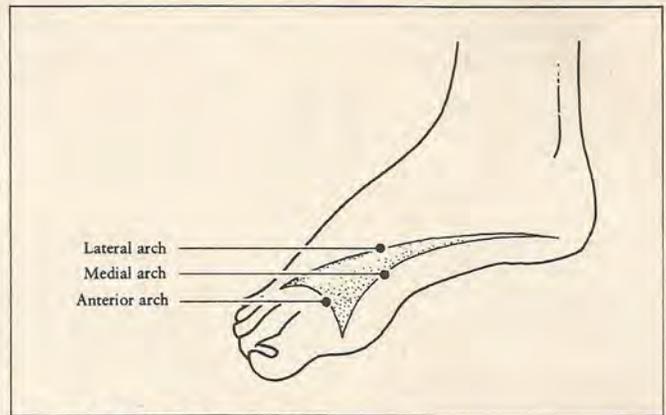


Diagram 1b) The three plantar arches

feet. Excessive wearing of blocked toe shoes prevents the flexible use of the feet and should therefore be avoided, especially during early training. Walking barefoot along beaches, rocks or hills is also highly beneficial to the plantar arches.

Footwear should always fit well, never too tightly, or another condition common to dancers, hallux valgus, better known as bunions, may occur. This condition, an anterior arch imbalance, occurs in feet of a particular configuration when tight, pointed shoes or high heels are worn. Pointe shoes are therefore culprits on several counts. Whereas everyday footwear may fit comfortably, pointe shoes must fit snugly in order to reduce their rubbing on the knuckles of the toes. The feet which are most susceptible to hallux valgus - a short first metatarsal and relatively long second metatarsal - can do well on pointes. (It is an advantage to have short, 'square' toes with the second toe as long as the big toe so that the body weight can be shared by the two.) Confined within a short, pointed toe shoe and under the body weight, the big toe may be cramped toward the second toe, while the head of its metatarsal is splayed outward widening the forefoot. Related changes in the joint capsule and its vicinity may cause the imbalance to become permanent - and permanently painful! Although it is questionable whether the problem can be averted in susceptible individuals, it is generally thought that poor pointework habits, such as 'rolling in' on the ankle to take the brunt of the body weight on the obliquely positioned big toe, aggravate it. Good practices - vertically positioning the two medial toes and centring the ankle joint above them (as in Diagram 2b) will minimize it.

Movements of the Feet

The bony structure of the ankle joints allows only flexion, about 20°-30°, and extension, about 30°-50°, for a total range of motion of 50°-80° (the angle between the sole and the axis of the leg) purely at the ankle. In dance, we work to augment this range by involving the arches of the foot, decreasing their curvatures during flexion (e.g., pliés) and increasing them during extension (e.g., tendus). At the extreme range of ankle flexion, further movement is limited by contact between the talus (ankle bone) and the tibia (shin bone) and by stretching of the posterior joint capsule and the posterior fibres of the collateral ligaments (those bracing the sides of the ankle). Attempts to force this action and deepen a shallow plié may cause the neck of the talus to fracture. Before this position is reached, however, resistance is normally offered by the calf muscles. The gastrocnemius in particular limits ankle flexion when the knee is extended since it crosses behind both knee and ankle. A major goal of training is to maintain the extensibility (ability to lengthen) the calf muscles, particularly the soleus. This may be accomplished by slow prolonged stretches such as pliés. For this reason, a great deal of attention is given to 'firmly planting the heels' as soon as possible in returning from a grande plié. This direction calls upon the ankle flexors (those along the front of the shin) to contract strongly so that the ankle extensors (the calf muscles), will reciprocally relax or lengthen. A

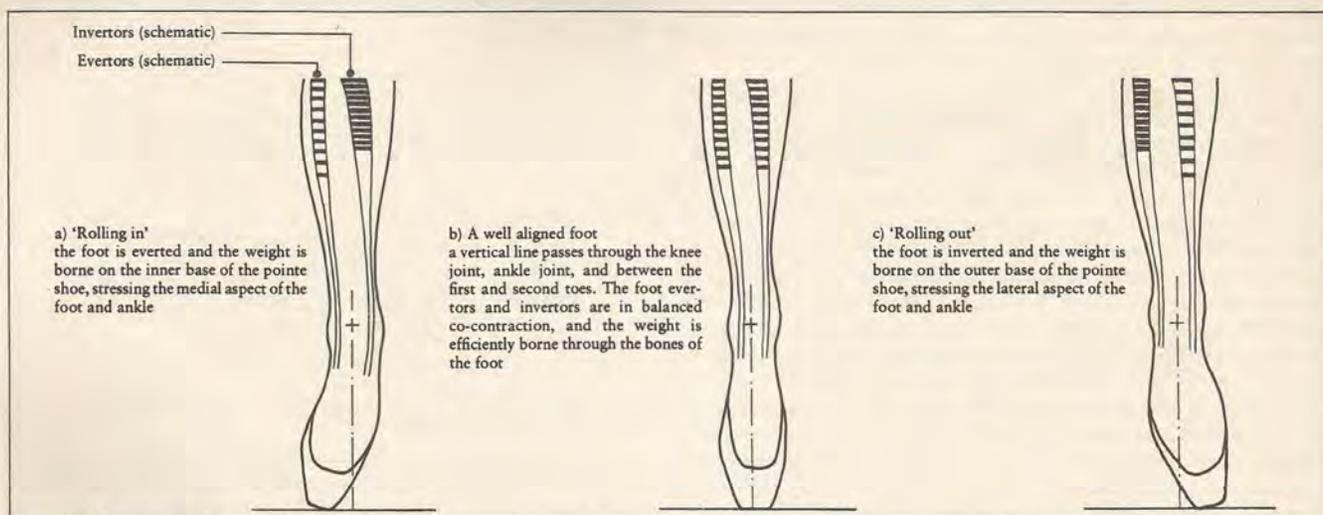


Diagram 2 A vertical right leg on 'pointe' - front view

short Achilles tendon will also significantly limit the range of flexion, and cannot be altered by training, only by surgery.

The Right Amount of Plié

Although a shallow demi plié is the enemy of all dancers (second only to poor turn-out!) each must learn to make the best of what natural gifts he possesses. The great Danish ballet master August Bournonville was known to have brittle landings which he worked to mask by devising fluent transitions into the following movements or quick rebounds into the next jump. His style of choreography sprang so closely from his personal movement characteristic that for generations deep demi pliés were not stressed in Bournonville work at the Royal Danish Ballet School. Since today's allegro involves a range of jumps from the quick and small to the large and broad, the dancer with limited ankle flexion must learn to use whatever plié he possesses with control - slow landings and quick rebounds - and to coordinate torso and arm actions to their greatest benefit. The price of forcing the plié is great - from painful Achilles tendonitis to fractures of the talus. It may be comforting to note that dancers with too great a demi plié are also limited in their jumping abilities: they often sink too deep to effect a strong push-off, since the knee extensors are stretched past the point from which they can optimally contract. Again, finding the appropriate amount of plié is the better solution.

Ankle extension or 'pointing the foot' is also limited by structural factors: the posterior tubercles of the talus meet the posterior margin of the tibia and stretching occurs in the anterior part of the joint capsule and anterior fibres of the collateral ligaments. Dancers who do not naturally possess a well curved foot often force ankle extension to improve the look of the foot. During extreme extension, a small piece of bone (this fragment is known as the os trigonum) may fracture from the talus, causing deep tenderness and pain at the back of the ankle and limiting the range of motion. In extreme cases of this 'posterior impingement syndrome' the joint must be surgically reconstructed. Training the ankle to extend maximally involves strengthening the calf muscles and stretching the ankle flexors. But 'pointing the foot' also involves increasing the curvature of the plantar arches. This can be accomplished in a foot which is naturally resilient, by strengthening the muscles on the plantar aspect of the foot and by stretching the ligaments which limit the curvature of the plantar arches. By manually arching a student's foot, the teacher will be able to assess whether the bones of the foot are tightly knit or whether there is some 'give'. Only in the latter cases will training increase the foot's longitudinal curve.

Creating a Graceful Curve

The goal of good training is to create a compact, gracefully

curved foot, one which will effectively support the body weight either on demi or full pointe (see Diagram 3). This can be achieved most efficiently when the ankle and base of support (either the ball of the foot or the tips of the medial two toes) form a vertical line. Feet which curve either more or less than this optimal amount are mechanically unstable for weightbearing, although extremely well arched feet are aesthetically advantageous. Diagram 3b illustrates a foot whose longitudinal curve is formed primarily through the tarsal bones with less flexibility at the ankle or metatarsal bones. Here, the body weight is efficiently transmitted through the bones. Diagram 3a shows a sturdy, close-knit foot which, although not particularly beautiful, is strong and resists injury. Since it is difficult to achieve a vertical line between the ankle and toes, this foot is mechanically less stable. The ankle extensors (calf muscles) must be especially strong in order to muscularly brace the ankle and counteract the tendency for the heel to drop. Diagram 3c depicts the beautiful but weak foot in which the ankle extends freely and the forefoot is very flexible allowing the plantar arches to increase greatly under the body weight. Here great stress is placed on the ligaments which limit the longitudinal curvature. Unless careful muscular control is maintained to limit this curve, the ligament will be stretched and the foot weakened further.

The many complex joints of the foot permit a considerable range of motion via gliding motion between the seven tarsal bones and action at the five tarso-metatarsal joints. To sense these sit on a chair with the feet together, parallel and flat on the floor with the talus centred. Keeping the knees together, move the toes and forefoot outward - an action called abduction. Now lift the lateral arches off the floor - an action known as pronation which can occur within a range of 25° - 30° . The combination of abduction/pronation (and often flexion) is known as foot eversion. Uncontrolled foot eversion is known to dancers as 'rolling in' when the foot is weightbearing or 'sickling out' when the foot is gesturing. Foot abduction is often allowed in leg extensions such as *attitude devant* or 'Russian arabesque' since it gives the illusion of greater turn-out and presents an attractive line of the leg and foot. In a weightbearing foot, however, abduction must be carefully controlled. When the foot is curved outward far past the position where the knee and inner two toes are aligned, a painful twisting may occur in the ankle, shin and knee disrupting the lateral stability of the legs and stressing various ligaments which medially brace the ankle and knee. The well-known guideline to 'keep the knee centred over the first and second toes' encourages the dancer to avoid this practice. Extreme abduction also aligns the brunt of the body weight over the medial arch, so maintaining well-centred weight support will also guard against turning out too much from the feet.

To sense the action opposite to foot eversion, separate the

parallel feet slightly, once again placing the soles flat on the ground. Without moving the ankles, move the big toes together – an action called foot adduction. (Abduction/adduction has a range of 35°-45°). Then lift the medial arch so that the lateral arches of the foot support the weight – by the action of supination which occurs within a range of 5°. The combination of adduction/supination (and often extension) is called inversion. Uncontrolled foot inversion is known to dancers as 'rolling out' at the ankles or 'sickling the foot inward' and is consciously avoided.

Sickling

As every dancing teacher has learned through experience and observation, the foot naturally 'sickles' or inverts when the beginning student attempts to 'point' or extend the foot. A non-weightbearing foot will normally hang with a slight inversion. This tendency may be attributed to a natural imbalance in the strength of the foot invertors and evertors, with the invertors overpowering their antagonists and pulling the foot inward. Since 'sickling' is such a common problem for beginning dancers, it may be helpful to know that a slight automatic adduction or inward sickling of the foot naturally accompanies extreme extension or powerful pointing of the foot as in a relevé or the push-off for a jump. The muscles most responsible for powerful ankle extension, the calf muscles, contract to pull the sole of the foot medially and posteriorly into a sickled position. While feet which tend to 'sickle' may be aesthetically unfavourable, they are often very strong and their correction is usually a matter of time and care. Good pointework, however, necessitates an ability to control 'sickling', which would make the ankle prone to lateral instability and therefore injury (see Diagram 3). Correction of 'sickling in' involves strengthening the foot evertors via action drawing the outer toes toward the lateral malleolus or outer ankle. Through repetition of the correctly 'pointed' position, the

dancer eventually learns to sense precisely how much muscle tension is required in the foot evertors and invertors, and thus to reproduce the position more reliably.

The structure of each individual's foot – the varying lengths of the toes, the relative width of the forefoot and hindfoot – must be carefully observed in order to assess the aesthetically correct line of the 'pointed' foot. In general, there should be a straight line from the centre of the knee through the centre of the ankle and between the first and second toes. As previously mentioned, certain positions such as Russian arabesque require a slight 'sickling out' or abduction of the lifted foot to create an optical illusion lengthening the line of the leg. Since abduction naturally occurs with flexion, however, exaggerating the 'sickle' will also decrease the amount of foot extension no matter how hard the dancer tries to 'point' the foot.

Traditionally, foot extension is trained via movements such as 'tendus' and 'glissés' in which the non-weightbearing foot is pressed downward and outward against the floor sliding progressively through the whole foot, ball of the foot and toes. This downward pressure is crucial in training the intrinsic muscles of the foot – those which originate and insert on the foot and are involved in maintaining its arches and curvatures. Compare this action to a hand, with the fingers strongly pressing downward across a table top, and sense the tension in the muscles of the palm. Muscles such as the abductors of the big and little toes and certain toe flexors work to tighten the medial and lateral arches and increase the longitudinal curvature of the foot. The toes themselves must be braced in extension at the interphalangeal joints so that they do not curl as the foot 'points', but flex only at the metatarsophalangeal joints. In order to illustrate the undesired effects of flexing the interphalangeal joints, or 'curling the toes', compare their action to that of the fingers. Flex the wrist forward as much as possible (similar to extending the ankle). Then, keeping the fingers straight, try to move them toward the

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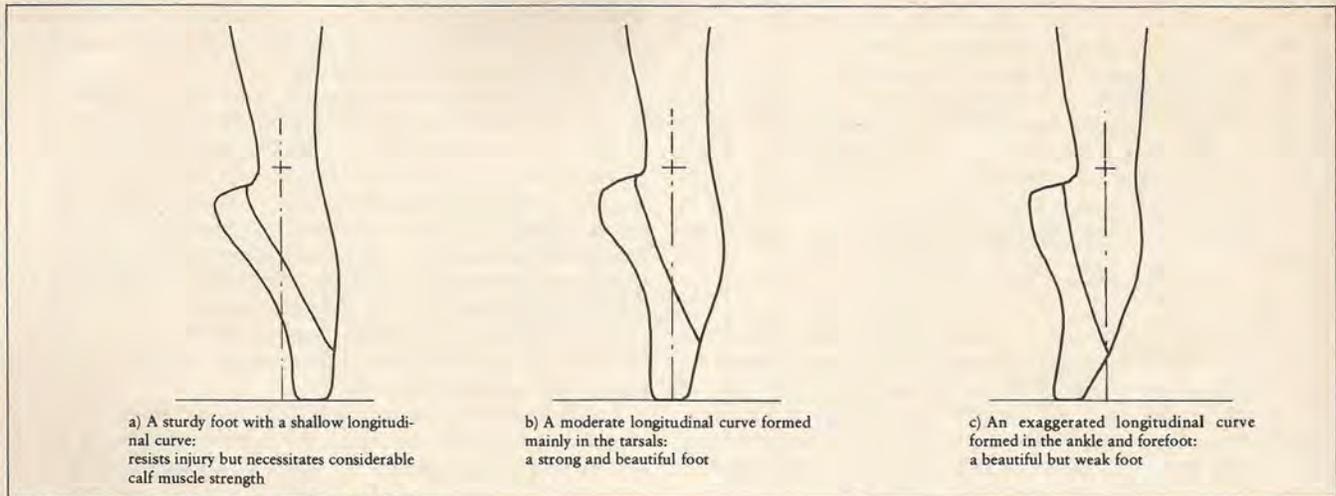


Diagram 3 A vertical right foot on 'pointe' - sideview

forearm until they can go no further (similar to flexing the metatarsophalangeal joints). Now allow the fingers to curl (similar to the flexing toes) and observe what happens. The palm begins to cramp, (how many dancers experience cramping on the sole of the foot when 'curling the toes'!) and the wrist begins to extend. The muscle tendons which pass along the dorsum of the hand or foot and along the fingers or toes will not stretch to allow the last bit of flexion, so flexion is sacrificed at the wrist and ankle. It is not possible to extend the ankle to its fullest when the toes are curled. Ironically, students with limited ankle extension (and therefore poorly 'pointed' feet) often attempt to increase the longitudinal curve of the foot by 'curling the toes', but this only causes cramping and shortens the line of the foot. The practice may also be very detrimental to pointework since it can cause the weight to be borne on the backs or knuckles instead of the tips of the toes.

Positions of the Feet

Controlled eversion and inversion serve valuable functions in reorienting the sole to face the ground and in altering the foot's curvatures and they do occur in many dance positions and movements. As previously mentioned, the only time the weight-bearing foot is neither everted nor inverted is when the feet are positioned parallel to one another, directly in line with the hip joints as in a parallel first position. Correct positioning of the feet places them in the most advantageous position for both bearing the body weight and initiating movement. To do this the talus must be centred so as to provide the correct ratio for weightbearing and thrust. The toes must be firmly planted along the ground, neither curled up, nor lifted, but spread out as wide as possible. This increases the contacting surface area of the foot providing greater stability and a larger area for the application of force against the ground.

To sense how the precise foot position changes according to the leg position, stand in a parallel first position and open the feet to progressively wider parallel second positions. Note how the angle at which the leg meets the foot changes. The foot becomes increasingly inverted in order to position the sole toward the ground. Uncontrolled and excessive inversion causes the body weight to be borne on the outsides of the feet, while insufficient inversion thrusts the weight towards the medial arch. A safe, efficient position can only be achieved through the cooperative action of the muscles which evert and invert the ankle - those whose tendons run along the lateral and medial aspects of the foot respectively.

If it were possible to turn out 90° at each hip joint, first position would require no inversion/eversion. As the weight shifts forward over the balls of the feet in a position of less than 90° turn-out, slight inversion must occur. Observe the feet of a child with very little turnout standing in first position with the weight

over the heels. Note the changes in the feet as the weight shifts forward onto the balls of the feet. Now note the appearance of 'sickling' as the child begins to rise onto demi pointe. With training he will gain the fine control necessary to centre the talus as the rise proceeds through cooperative action between the foot evertors and invertors, and the ankle extensors.

Fourth position provides the clearest example of inversion/eversion. In this position, which is probably the most difficult of the five positions of the feet to achieve correctly, the body weight is centred between the laterally rotated front and back leg with the hips well squared. The heel of the front foot is placed either directly in line with the heel (open fourth) or the head of the big toe metatarsal (closed or crossed fourth) of the back foot. Note how each leg slopes obliquely to meet each foot: the wider the fourth position, the more oblique the leg and the greater the tendency for the front foot to 'roll'; the narrower the position, the closer the leg approaches vertical. The foot of the front leg must be everted to redirect the sole firmly toward the ground, while that of the back leg must be inverted (see Diagram 4). But these actions must be controlled muscularly. Students and teachers will agree that the wider the position, the harder it is to keep the talus properly centred. If the front foot is allowed to 'roll forward', the weight is thrust onto the medial arch and the leg twists, straining the medial aspect of the knee. Shortening the position should allow the beginning student to control the feet better, since they will invert/evert less. Careful training will eventually ensure the muscle control necessary to maintain the foot's centred position during pliés, rises, relevés, etc.

By continuing to shorten the fourth position we arrive at fifth position, with both legs laterally rotated equally at the hip joints, and the heel of the front foot contacting the head of the big toe metatarsal of the back foot. Assuming good placement from the ankles up, there still may be a tendency to abduct the front foot, that is, to press the little toe backward in order to increase the appearance of turnout. If this position can be muscularly held and the weight centred through the foot and knee, it is not harmful. If, however, resin or water is used to stick the foot to the floor in the absence of muscular support, the talus and medial arch will roll forward and the knee may twist well in front of the toes. In this case the student should be encouraged to decrease his turnout to a more manageable degree.

Training the Feet

As with any other part of the body, proper training of the feet must promote an optimal balance of strength and flexibility. Early training focuses on centring the feet with the proper ratio of *weightbearing* on the three corners of each foot. The maintenance of this position will encourage good muscle coordination in the foot and prepare it for *propulsion* and *shock-absorption* in initiating and landing from powerful movements such as relevés

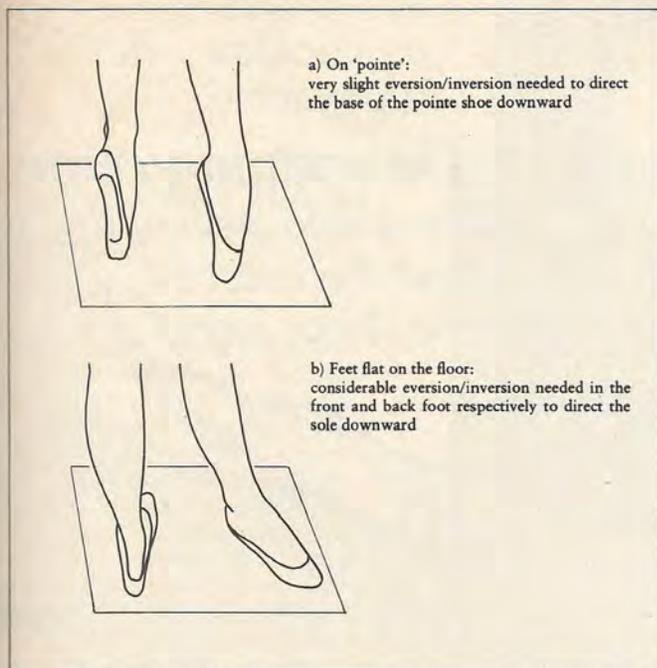


Diagram 4 Fourth position

and jumps. *Non-weightbearing* movements such as tendus, glissés and frappés help train the fine control needed to maintain a good line of the foot, controlling the amount of inversion and eversion through balanced, synergistic action of the muscles on either side of the ankles. Well rounded training includes non-weightbearing actions such as tendus involving circling the ankles and weightbearing actions such as pliés, rises, relevés and jumps done to and from fourth position or en tournant (with a change of facing). These and similar movements which develop powerful controlled twisting actions of the foot are crucial to the performance of pirouettes and turning jumps.

At a recently held Dance Injuries Symposium, Dr Allan J. Ryan suggested that the prepubertal child's foot is particularly prone to injury owing to the incomplete growth of bone and also to the low levels of hormones which promote muscular strength. Strength in bone or muscle actually decreases between the ages of six and 10 owing to rapid increases in the child's height and the lack of proportionate muscle development. During the second growth spurt (age 11 to 13 for females and 13 to 15 for males), increased hormone levels promote bone growth and ossification as well as increases in muscle mass and therefore strength. Maturation of the central nervous system occurring between the ages of six and 14 brings about improvements in motor control and coordination. At this time, training should focus on cultivating fine control at its point of readiness and on strengthening the muscles of the foot in preparation for strenuous footwork such as pointework for females and big jumps for males. Dr Ryan warns that the female foot is not strong enough to bear the full body weight on pointe until the onset of the second growth spurt, and that the muscles of the foot should be well trained before pointework is attempted. Traditionally, pointework is begun at about age 12, after a minimum of two years of good training. It is the teacher's responsibility to resist all pressures to allow the student to attempt this rigorous practice until she is physically ready. Premature pointework, before the bones are sufficiently ossified and the muscles sufficiently strengthened, can lead to severe ligamentous stress, permanently weakened arches and possibly the end of a professional career.

This concludes Professor Ryman's 12-part series on Training the Dancer. For those interested a bibliography is available to complement the series. Write to 'Training the Dancer', c/o Dance in Canada Magazine. Please enclose \$1.00 to cover copying and mailing costs.

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In Review

Toronto Dance Theatre
Queensborough Community College
New York City
9 March 1980

Toronto Dance Theatre's first New York City performance was one component of a performing arts series sponsored by Queensborough Community College; audiences could buy either the five- or seven-performance subscription and get a cultural smorgasbord: an operetta, a symphony orchestra, a Shakespeare play, some modern dance. It's likely most of the audience lived near the college, which is not in the industrial section of Queens just across the East River from Manhattan, but beyond – out past the brick housing projects that face the freeway, their windows shut against the noise and smog, past the old wooden houses in need of paint, in a section of medium-sized brick houses on small plots of land, a genuine suburban air to the neighborhood that could make you forget Manhattan was only a few miles away. It was an audience of people who probably hadn't seen much modern dance, who perhaps weren't sure just what the term means – an audience no doubt like those in the towns and smaller cities where TDT frequently tours.

I've paid attention first to the people sitting in front of the stage rather than the dancers on it because it seems that's what Peter Randazzo has done in the two works he contributed to TDT's New York program. Both dances had an overly calculated feel to them as if, while he was making them, the choreographer would occasionally stop what he was really interested in doing in order to throw in something he thought would please an audience unfamiliar with dance. The result is dances that swing wildly in tone. Much of *L'Assassin Menacé* is witty and stylish; parts of *A Simple Melody* are serious and beautiful. But both works have sections that are superficial and slick, that condescendingly use pop material in order to get sure-fire laughs.

The damage is least in *L'Assassin Menacé*, based on Magritte's painting of the same title. Randazzo has cleverly translated into movement Magritte's pictorial style: two-dimensional figures placed in an exaggeratedly three-dimensional environment, the flatness of the people played off against the deep perspective of the room in which they stand. The dancers move in straight lines, frequently angling their bodies so that the style of the piece becomes almost archaic, as in Nijinsky's *Afternoon of a Faun*.



Patricia Beatty's *Seastill*

Instead of trying to recreate the disturbing, surreal quality of Magritte's work, Randazzo has seized on the painting's wit. The dance has a gleeful Dada silliness to it, as when the assassin, played by Randazzo, dons a fake moustache and breaks into a tap dance. Nancy Ferguson adeptly portrayed the various incarnations of the female character, switching from the bouncy soubrette in short skirt to the elegant vamp in a long black gown.

Randazzo's imaginative adaptation of Magritte's work is supported by David Davis's clever set, in which Magritte's flatly-rendered background – three heads peering in the window with mountains behind them – is depicted by cardboard cutouts that float into view midway through the dance.

L'Assassin Menacé is so successful as a gloss on style – of Magritte and of the 1920s – that it's a real letdown when at the end of the dance Randazzo suddenly abandons all attempts at period flavor: soul music starts playing and Ferguson breaks into rock dancing. The contemporary note is so jarring that it diminishes the effect of everything that's come before; we're out of a world of Dada irrationality into a cynical one of anything-for-a-laugh.

The audience did laugh, though, and they were even more enthusiastic about Randazzo's *A Simple Melody*. It's a grab-bag of a dance: a bit of liturgical solemnity, with brown-robed monks circling to plain-song chants; a helping of lyrical romantic

duet; and a comic-book finale, the dancers dressed as superheroes. The seven sections bear no relation to one another, and Randazzo proceeds as if one will have no effect on the next, trying to jerk the audience's emotions from piety to laughter to tenderness. But after the silliness of the big Esther Williams production number, we're still laughing when the subsequent romantic duet begins – it all starts to seem ludicrous.

That's too bad, for the serious sections are quite well done, and Claudia Moore is stunning in her duet with Robert Desrosiers. All the TDT dancers are strong, and they were better able to show their control in Patricia Beatty's *Seastill*. This slow-paced nature study showed a strong sense of design in its sculptural use of bodies. Though its impulse seems more decorative than kinesthetic, it's an effective piece and beautifully produced. Costumes, set, and lighting all evoke a world of blue-green tranquility, and Ann Southam's score is wavelike in its throbbing repetitions.

Reading about the company before they appeared, I'd gotten the impression that TDT's debt to Martha Graham was so heavy that it interfered with an original identity. That wasn't a problem on the New York program; only David Earle's *Quartet* was obviously Graham-derived. Earle has devised a strong theatrical motif for his psychological drama, using a rope to indicate emotional ties among his four characters. The dancing is sharp and passionate, and Claudia Moore showed she has a whiplash attack to match the lyricism she displayed in *A Simple Melody*. *Quartet* leaves us unsatisfied, though. The three subtitles ('The Bonds of Circumstance,' 'The Bonds of Desire,' 'The Ties Acknowledged') set up expectations that are never fulfilled; there's no clear difference between the sections, and the characters' relationships are never clearly defined. One problem is that though Earle's material is dramatic, his method is curiously dispassionate; the dancers frequently face the audience rather than each other, so there's little chance for them to interact.

Though parts of the New York program were muddled or calculating, still TDT showed it's a company with clear talent among its dancers, directors, and production group. I'll be looking for them again.

MICHAEL ROBERTSON

Michael Robertson is an associate critic for Dance Magazine and his writing has appeared in The Village Voice, Soho Weekly News, and New York Times.

Brian Webb Dance Company

SUB Theatre
University of Alberta
Edmonton
20-21 March 1980

Edmontonians have a strong leaning towards the conservative, especially when it comes to the performing arts. In dance, anything outside the classical chestnuts of the ballet repertoire tends to be regarded as surrealistic dabbling and is viewed with caution if indeed it is viewed at all. Rousing receptions are reserved for visiting companies with readily recognizable names, and a mere breath of the Bolshoi, even suffixed by a diminutive, is enough to bring on an ovation, regardless of a sometimes astonishing lack of artistic and technical quality. Companies such as Keith Urban and Maria Formolo's group from Regina, handicapped by the millstone of 'modern' in their name, have fared very badly, and even performers of international repute, such as Margie Gillis, have had a mediocre response.

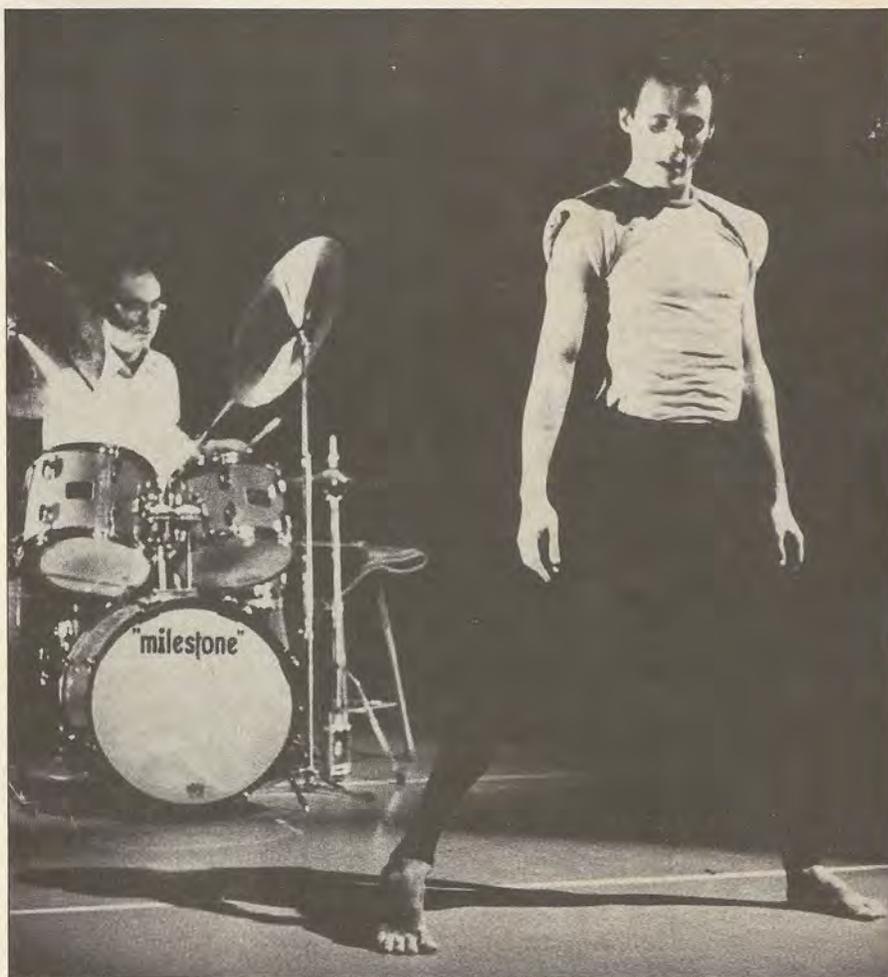
But Brian Webb is an exception. Despite the additional stigma of being a local lad, he has not only succeeded in keeping his modern dance company together but has gained a following which grows noticeably with each performance.

The group's spring concert was a mixture of old and new pieces, with some of the latter showing a maturation both of Brian Webb's abilities as a choreographer and of the performing strength of the company. Others, however, did not appeal any more in this exposure than they did in the concert last November and should be discarded from the repertoire or at least drastically pruned.

The Garden is a long piece and has neither the overall impetus nor variety in pace to hold the interest of the audience. No less boring now than it was first time around, it was an unfortunate choice to begin the programme. The skin-tight, shiny costumes made some of the female dancers look lumpish and ungainly, and emphasized the lack of control and generally shaky appearance of everyone except Webb himself.

The Path, on the other hand, in spite of its meaningless title, was a much better piece in every respect, with a duet danced by Grainne Holman and Brian Webb showing a lyrical quality that has so far emerged all too rarely in his work. Easily the most promising of the three girls in the company, Grainne Holman has a long-limbed, lithe grace which counterpoints Webb's own compact muscular strength very well.

Perhaps one reason the group has managed to remain an entity is the very strong identity it has developed, largely through Webb's artistic direction - all of the pieces are of his creation. This does not, however,



Brian Webb with composer Robert Myers in *runjumptwistfall, land in fourth*

imply a uniformity imposed at the expense of innovation, and in fact there's a good dash of the experimental in Brian Webb's work, especially when he collaborates with local composers and musicians from Grant MacEwan Community College.

Ennui is one such joint effort, resulting in a zany performance by Webb and Ken Gould to music by Wendy Albrecht. Demanding dance it certainly isn't; nor does it appear to have anything to do with 'fantastic images distorting the realities of being' - whatever that may mean. Rather, it's simply a clever, very amusing bit of ham acting and mime. *Ennui*, belying its name, is fun and, if accepted at face value, a refreshing change from attempts to be deeply meaningful which end up merely tedious.

Inherent in experiment, however, is the risk of failure, and Webb's solo, *runjumptwistfall, land in 4th* suffered badly from a gimmicky attempt at set design. Split focus is a legitimate staging device, but it's neither legitimate nor reasonable to expect a single dancer to compete with two separate slide shows, one on either side of him, as well as a vigorous and very visible percussionist. Even given Brian Webb's crispness and vitality, the result was chaotic. With the clutter removed, this piece might have been one of his better efforts.

As it was, the non-essentials were highly distracting and at times downright infuriating.

Odalisque, another recent addition to the repertoire, was a solo portrayal of an eastern concubine, well staged with low-key lighting and a single set of hanging lanterns. But it's a pity Andrea Rabinovitch had neither the technique nor the ability to communicate the mixture of sensuality, fear, and despair she was apparently meant to convey.

As is to be expected in a developing company, there's a great deal of variation in the calibre of the dancers and in the quality of the choreography from one piece to another. Brian Webb's own artistic capabilities are growing rapidly but it's disturbing to note that the company itself seems to be shrinking. Webb and Donna Snipper are instructors at Grant MacEwan Community College, and the other three members of the group are students in the college's programme. If the company is to continue to develop artistically and in other ways, it may soon be faced with the difficulty of attracting and keeping trained professionals - a considerable challenge in the conservative west.

MURIEL STRINGER

Chorégraphes Québécois

Musée des Beaux-Arts
de Montréal
March 1980

Depuis trois ans déjà le Service d'animation du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal organise des spectacles de danse visant à faire connaître les nouvelles tendances de la danse canadienne et américaine. Cette année, Christiane Charette qui est responsable de ces activités, a cherché à mettre en valeur les jeunes chorégraphes indépendants du Québec en plus de réserver un 'happening' pour Jeanne Renaud et le Groupe de la Place Royale, anciennement du Québec.

Trois samedis consécutifs, les 15, 22 et 29 mars, le Musée recevait une clientèle de quelques centaines de personnes qui s'intéressent à ces événements, dans une salle communautaire de la sympathique rue Prince-Arthur du quartier Saint-Denis. Il y a quelques années le Musée recevait les amateurs de danse dans ses propres locaux mais devant l'affluence du public et le caractère parfois inusité des performances de danse qui pouvaient déranger le public du Musée, il a décidé de louer des locaux à l'extérieur: anciens gymnases, salles paroissiales ou communautaires, etc.

Avec un éclairage sommaire et une disposition scénique encore plus primitive, on a voulu donner aux chorégraphes indépendants du Québec une opportunité de se faire valoir. Le résultat n'a pas toujours été à la faveur des interprètes qui devaient se produire dans des conditions difficiles, ni au plus grand bénéfice du public qui était installé sans grand confort ou très bonne visibilité. Ces présentations ont néanmoins leur public, leur raison d'être et leur originalité que n'encourage aucune autre institution.

On a donc donné la 'parole' à sept créateurs: Daniel Soulières, Candy Loubert, Sylvie Saint-Laurent, Marie Chouinard, Odette Oliver, Jeanne Renaud et Jean-Pierre Perreault. Je ne m'attarderai pas sur les trois premiers dont je n'ai pas eu la chance de voir le travail le 15 mars pour me concentrer sur les quatre derniers.

Chouinard et Oliver sont deux jeunes femmes qui font parler d'elles depuis quelques années comme chorégraphes et interprètes. Toutes deux ne résistent pas à la tentation toute légitime de défier le public avec des oeuvres ou des comportements provocants et audacieux. L'audace est parfois génératrice d'originalité et de nouveauté; elle est d'autres fois vide et ridicule, ne faisant que masquer une insuffisance de travail, de structure, de maturité, de souffle, de réflexion, etc.

Odette Oliver a présenté des oeuvres de Tassy Teekman, Peter Boneham et Jean-Pierre Perreault (du Groupe de la Place Royale) et une de ses oeuvres intitulée *Most Anytime at 5*. Sa principale provocation fut de transporter sa loge sur la scène,



Marie Chouinard

au vu de tous, changeant de costumes à chaque numéro, s'essuyant la sueur des aisselles et du pubis, se coiffant, se mouchant, etc, alors que ces gestes sont ceux de l'intimité et de l'arrière-scène. Ils sont absolument sans intérêt pour celui qui paie \$3 pour se faire émerveiller et stimuler par tout ce que le spectacle sublime au contact de la créativité. Ces longs changements de costumes prenaient pratiquement autant d'importance que les oeuvres dansées. Le style d'Odette Oliver est énergique, direct et osé mais elle a parfois des difficultés à contrôler ses mouvements et ses équilibres. Elle maîtrise par contre à merveille l'humour et le clin d'oeil qui lui viennent spontanément. *Most Anytime at 5* fait intervenir des personnages qui sortent de la salle et miment des convives invités à une réception mondaine. Odette Oliver joue le rôle d'une femme du monde, habillée de noir de la tête au pied, femme fatale et aguichante. Au cours de l'oeuvre elle traverse des moments de plus en plus incontrôlables, aux bras d'un partenaire habillé de blanc qui semble vouloir la ramener à l'ordre ou faire comme si rien ne devait paraître. Cette lutte se poursuit, créant un climat dramatique qui va croissant et devient de plus en plus angoissant, jusqu'à ce que le tout s'affaisse on ne sait trop pourquoi et comment. Cette chorégraphie laisse croire à une oeuvre inachevée parce qu'on

n'en saisit pas très bien le sens pourtant des éléments intéressants y sont partiellement développés. Les autres oeuvres interprétées par Odette Oliver sont trop courtes pour qu'on y attache d'importance: ce sont de petits 'flashes' à peine esquissés sans portée profonde.

Marie Chouinard est une créatrice froide, fonctionnelle et abstraite qui possède la rare faculté de 'sortir' complètement de son corps, qu'elle traite alors comme un instrument de précision et de rythmique. Ce don d'extériorisation se manifeste dans toutes ses oeuvres qui ont la netteté et la rigueur d'un mouvement de balancier ou d'un schéma cosmique grave et régulier. La rythmique est la structure fondamentale de son inspiration: toutes ses chorégraphies reproduisent en effet des mouvements oscillatoires ou giratoires, des sauts, des marches, répétés en séquences infinies comme les musiques répétitives, minimales ou primitives dont elle s'inspire. Dans son interprétation, Marie Chouinard exploite une exubérance, une vitalité, un sourire, une concentration et un dynamisme très bien contrôlés tout en jouant avec des éléments chorégraphiques extrêmement réduits. L'intérêt de ses oeuvres réside en partie dans l'organisation spatiale et visuelle qu'elle parvient à composer comme par instinct. *Sa Petite danse sans nom*, où elle transforme la

scène en pissotière est tout à fait banale et sans intérêt; il n'y a pas lieu par contre d'en faire un scandale sinon que les 'censeurs' qui l'ont interdites à plusieurs endroits avaient peut-être raison... *Jaune* est certainement la pièce la plus intéressante qu'elle a présentée le 22 mars dernier. Cette chorégraphie incorpore un écran, des lumières des ombres et des mouvements un peu à la manière d'ombres chinoises. C'est un montage visuel et cinématique qui aurait certainement avantage à être retravaillé et fouillé mais qui ne laisse pas complètement indifférent! Marie Chouinard n'est sans doute pas de l'avis que la danse n'est pas le royaume des idées mais celui des émotions. Insuffler des émotions à des corps géométriques dans l'espace est toute une gageure.

Le 29 mars était consacré à trois individus qui ont marqué les débuts de la danse moderne au Québec dans les années 60: Vincent Warren, Jeanne Renaud et Jean-Pierre Perreault. Vincent Warren a dansé plusieurs saisons avec le Groupe de la Place Royale à titre d'artiste invité. *Fragments* composé par Jeanne Renaud devait faire 'sur-vivre' Vincent Warren à travers une 'nouvelle étape de son processus créateur', celui-ci, comme on le sait, a pris sa retraite de la scène le printemps dernier. Invitant différentes personnalités du monde de la danse à partager une expérience sensorielle avec lui - Eva von Genzcy, Jean-Pierre Perreault, Lise Bernier, Jeanne Renaud, etc - Vincent Warren devait servir de pivot à un montage audio-visuel et chorégraphique. Malheureusement le tout ne s'est jamais élevé plus haut qu'une série de rondes enfantines et de variations grotesques. On a beaucoup abusé du concept d'improvisation qui n'est pas, malgré ce que certains pensent, l'art de faire n'importe quoi n'importe comment, mais le résultat de patientes heures de travail commun de gens qui se connaissent intimement et savent élaborer entre eux des séquences de mouvements auxquels leurs réflexes les habituent à répondre à différentes stimulations. Si les danseurs étaient davantage critiques les uns par rapport aux autres ou lieu de s'auto-encenser mutuellement, leur travail en serait grandement amélioré.

Jean-Pierre Perreault qui a conclu ce programme avec *Événement No 28* pour 12 interprètes et des musiques de chorégraphes antérieures, n'a pas su réchapper l'intérêt et l'enthousiasme des spectateurs qui quittaient nombreux. L'inspiration de Perreault semble s'étioler singulièrement avec les années. *Événement No 28*, complètement incohérent, répétitif, long et monotone était par surcroît mal interprété et d'une gratuité indécente. Les chorégraphes des années '80 devront apprendre que le public n'est plus aussi naïf et ignare qu'autrefois et qu'il se déplace pour venir voir travailler des gens qui le respectent. La danse au Canada a besoin de professionnels et non pas de démagogues.

ANGELE DAGENAIS

National Ballet of Canada

O'Keefe Centre

Toronto

6 February—8 March 1980

Victoria Bertram reveals the National Ballet at its best. A witty and anonymous gypsy in *The Two Pigeons*, an affectionate Berthe, a powerful and malevolent Black Queen, and a compassionate Lady Capulet - all these roles display Bertram as a hardworking, occasionally inspired, always professional dancer. In a better world - say the Kirov or the Royal - Victoria Bertram would be a principal.

Not quite at its best, however, was the National Ballet in Balanchine's *Serenade*, produced by Sara Leland. Unfortunately she failed to persuade the company to dance with appropriate speed and polish, so that *Serenade* looked sluggish. In principal parts, only Mary Jago and Veronica Tennant danced with the necessary clarity and alertness to the music; Karen Kain looked rushed; and Vanessa Harwood chose to dance *Odette*.

Given the National's repertoire, largely narrative, Harwood's approach is not altogether surprising. That Leland permitted it from the corps as well, reveals her failure as a producer, for this is not the way to dance Balanchine's choreography. But the National Ballet needs, so to speak, the mask that narrative provides. When confronted by a ballet that prevents disguise, the dancers settle into the National Ballet smile, as if, by some magic, it could get them through something they did not understand. At the heart of the matter, of course, is schooling: the National Ballet School simply does not produce dancers with sufficiently articulated feet or sufficient speed or strength in the thighs - in a phrase, with sufficient versatility - to dance Balanchine, (or for that matter, Ashton).

The problem of schooling became more evident in *Etudes*, Harald Lander's most famous work. It commences with a variety of exercises at the barre and then moves along to a romantic pas de quatre, a pas de deux, a pas de trois, various solos, ensembles, and a finale. If the listing induces breathlessness, that is the desired effect for, as Stephen Godfrey exclaimed in *The Globe and Mail*, *Etudes* is a workout. Such activity, I have always thought, is best confined to a gym.

Why does *Etudes* have so little effect? On opening night, the dancers were desperately nervous, though rehearsed to the teeth. The steps in *Etudes* are so spare, so open, that even the smile offers no hiding place. Later in the run, the dancers looked more comfortable, but they were not yet in a position to dominate. As a consequence, *Etudes* did not end on a note of exhilaration, but on one of relief. We survived. Again!

Etudes is brutal in its demands. Can the



Raymond Smith in *The Two Pigeons*

women get through those damned fouettés? Will the men manage all those jumps? Will one dancer collide with another coming across those intersecting diagonals? Dangerous indeed; and danger is an exciting thing in the theatre. But when it becomes mere unrelieved anxiety, then it is appropriate to ask if the choice of *Etudes* was courageous or perverse? Since *Etudes* does not convince me that it is, except occasionally, a ballet, I am inclined to the latter view.

No doubt the piece was added to the repertoire in order to stretch the dancers' techniques; instead it reveals once again the limitations of their schooling. Like *Serenade*, *Etudes* cannot be performed successfully until the National Ballet School turns out more versatile graduates. Kevin Pugh, for example, who danced exceptionally well in *Etudes*, does not represent, with his high jump, excellent finish, and general stylishness, the new wave of male dancers. He is, unfortunately, an aberration. Since the school exists to prepare dancers for the stage, it must, therefore, submit to the repertory needs of the company.

Washington Square, newly revised, capitalizes on the company's staccato dancing style. (So too does *Mad Shadows*.) Partly this is the case because James Kudleka is more concerned with getting his story of the jilted-and-jilting heiress across than he is in responding to the score. His approach then, like Ditchburn's, is more a dramatist's than a choreographer's.

Nonetheless, his second or third thoughts on Henry James' novel are all to the good: the narrative is now much clearer; the crowd scenes much abbreviated. Still there is more that could be done by way of clarification and trimming. But for all that, *Washington Square* does offer at least two, possibly three, good parts - Catherine, Dr Sloper, and Morris Townsend - and they are well performed. Catherine's role is, of course, the most important of them all, with Veronica Tennant and Cynthia Lucas two fine interpreters. At least one performance was near-perfect; the cast that evening was Lucas, Kirby, Bertram, and Ottmann.

Then there was *Le Spectre de la Rose*, restaged by Nicolas Beriozoff, with pretty sets and costumes, based on Bakst's original designs, by Geoffrey Guy. Why ballet companies insist on reviving *Spectre* is a mystery, since it no longer has the allure it must have had when first performed in 1911 by Karsavina and Nijinsky. Karen Kain danced attractively as the young virgin who dreams of the spirit of the rose, but like her partner, Frank Augustyn, she was too earthbound. Raymond Smith, dancing with Nadia Potts, was far too sexual in his portrayal - and far too exhausted at the end of it all - so it was left to Kevin Pugh, also with Potts, to suggest the elusiveness of the character. His jumps have that hovering-in-the-air quality one so seldom sees

in a male dancer, and his success was considerable.

The final new ballet was *Song of a Wayfarer*, Maurice Béjart's pas de deux to Mahler's music. The soloists were Frank Augustyn and Tomas Schramek. Both brought all their professional and expressive resources to the piece. Though minor, *Song* had considerable success with the audience and should be a useful vehicle for developing other men in the company - Pugh, Ottmann, and Smith come immediately to mind.

Song is one of those ballets that demands from its dancers great emotional commitment, and such ballets draw from Augustyn his most forceful performances. Moreover, Béjart's choreography is concerned with the floor, and this is the kind of choreography with which Augustyn appears most happy. Horizontal, not vertical space, is his natural element. Augustyn is a closet modern dancer, in the somewhat unfortunate position of having to dance classical parts for which he is not entirely suited temperamentally or physically. One of the pleasures of this season, however, was to see him dancing with partners other than Karen Kain, and a good measure of Mary Jago's and Veronica Tennant's success in *Romeo and Juliet* must go to the intensity, high spirits, and openness of Augustyn's Romeo.

Pity then that the company's senior male

dancer did not dance the gala *Giselle* with Natalia Makarova. Instead, guest artist Peter Martins gave an aristocratic, if distant reading of Albrecht. Makarova's *Giselle* is, of course, legendary for its lightness and speed, and I can think of no other dancer to match her qualities. In the first act the ribbon of a shoe came loose, and this danger must have left her anxious. Once the shoe was repaired, Makarova moved on to an affecting Mad Scene and a second act notable for its weightlessness and total concentration on the music. The remainder of the gala - various pas de deux - was second-rate. Only one item seemed of gala quality, Constantin Patsalas' new pas de deux, *Angali*, particularly remarkable for the sinuous movement of Amelia Schelhorn. On first appearance *Angali* looks too long, but the young corps members, Schelhorn and Paul Chalmer, danced their hearts out. It would be interesting to see it again.

Along with all these - several revivals: *Romeo and Juliet* looking underrehearsed, yet was danced with energy and high spirits. *Swan Lake*, newly decorated by Desmond Heeley and slightly revised by Erik Bruhn, settled down for a satisfactory run. It was chiefly notable for Linda Maybarduk's portrayal of the prince's so-called friend, a characterization of intelligence and vulnerability suffused with tenderness. She reacted to everything in the

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Kevin Pugh and Nadia Potts in *Le Spectre de la Rose*

opening scene, providing lessons in manners and stagecraft to her colleagues and the audience. Kudelka first tapped this same mixture of hurt and maturity in a workshop pas de deux with Albert Forister a year ago. If only some choreographer could capitalize on them...

And there were debuts: the most stunning, that of Mary Jago as Juliet; the most heartening, Raymond Smith as Romeo and Siegfried: (he just may be a *danseur noble*, an animal the company has, arguably, never had); Mary Jago's *Odette/Odile*; and others too numerous to mention. Though the company at times danced listlessly, no one can complain about the distribution of roles.

But the newcomers need coaching. Peter Ottmann and Esther Murillo, who had a crack at *The Two Pigeons*, need to know a lot more about partnering before they can successfully undertake these roles. As well, the pigeons need more rehearsal. Their antics - flopping to the ground or flying back into the wings - are too distracting at present and seem no more than a company joke. The dancer most in need of coaching, however, is Raymond Smith. He has moved very quickly to the big parts, and

brings to Romeo, for example, a passion that is riveting. Indeed he brings such ardour to so much of his work that, if he is not careful, his performances could become one-dimensional and, therefore, boring. Nevertheless, he looks like a born performer, bursting to communicate something, and his partnership with Tennant could be of great benefit to the company and the box office. Yet his inexperience and lack of strength betray him at such moments as the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* or the ballroom scene in *Swan Lake*, and it would be a criminal waste indeed if the company were to leave Smith to develop in some hit-or-miss fashion.

If the National Ballet School must attend to its deficiencies in schooling and extend its curriculum, so too must the National Ballet attend to coaching. Without both, promising soloists will go elsewhere for experience, the next generation of dancers will be unforgivably cheated, and ballet in Toronto, at any rate, will remain forever in bud, never in full flower.

LAWRENCE HASKETT

Royal Winnipeg Ballet

Fox Theatre
Atlanta, Ga.
8 February 1980

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet brought an early Valentine to Atlanta, Ga., with its performance at the Moroccan-style Fox Theatre, a former grandiose movie palace now used for a variety of performing events.

As the fantasy stars twinkled on the cloud-covered ceilings of the 4000-seat house, there was a galaxy of stars twinkling even more brightly on the stage.

No sooner than Hans Van Manen's *Songs Without Words* had opened the evening than it was easy to see that here is a company of very fine dancers. Their posture alone is classical perfection. Add to that an almost incredible ability to extend the limbs beyond the seemingly possible while maintaining a weightless quality and a lilt, and you have part of the portrait of a Winnipeg dancer.

Throughout the evening, the dancers displayed not only superb technique but amazing versatility. Quality, not splashy show, seems to be this company's trademark. You could call them dancer's dancers. The men are strong... and lyrical. The women are lyrical... and strong.

Songs Without Words was lyricism at its most delicate and romantic. It is a ballet for four couples, each of whom dances a tender love duet that seems as gossamer as a drop of dew in the morning sun, yet demands great technical skill. The dancers not only showed remarkable control and balance, but they conveyed a soft romantic feeling. Technique without heart is cold. The only thing cold about the Royal Winnipeg is its snowbound winter.

When Van Manen choreographs a pas de deux he sees to it that there is more for the men to do than just partner. Sometimes, he turns tradition around and has the women doing the supporting and lifting. Often they do footsteps in the air, as if the dancers were bicycling through infinite space.

There is one section in *Songs Without Words*, a pastel-hued love poem overall, in which the eight dancers don't dance at all but stand almost motionless in poses of affection. Only a woman's head drops on a man's shoulder, a man's arm encircles a



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woman's waist . . . little movements creating moments of quiet beauty. It's emotion with motion, quite lovely to see.

If there was a weakness in the Royal Winnipeg's Atlanta appearance it was a tonal sameness throughout the program. Even the flashy *Don Quixote Pas de Deux* didn't have as much fire and pizzazz as it can generate.

The most intriguing work of the evening was *Four Last Songs*, choreographed by the Dutch National Ballet's artistic director Rudi van Dantzig and set to four songs by Richard Strauss. It is a piece about separation and death that skillfully blends both classical and modern movement.

Though low-key and somber in tone, it is never morbid. As lovers part, or are forced to part, one feels the essence of 'parting is such sweet sorrow'. And when Death comes, dressed in black, he is not cruel or malicious, but compassionate and soothing.

The set fits the mood perfectly. The backdrop is a landscape, very much like an Ansel Adams photograph of a stark, moonlit night in an uninhabited land. Lights play against it, changing the moonlight to daybreak and back to nightfall again.

Again, all the dancers were in fine control of the work. Particularly outstanding were Evelyn Hart and Baxter Branstetter.

Pulcinella Variations, choreographed by Michael Smuin to Stravinsky music, rounded out the program. Kathleen Duffy and Joost Pelt were especially captivating in the tarantella portion of this work which was the first American ballet to have its première performance at the new Metropolitan Opera House in Lincoln Center in July, 1968.

For Atlantans, one of the major pluses of a Royal Winnipeg visit is that the company introduces audiences to works it otherwise never sees here, notably those by the Dutch choreographers Van Manen and Van Dantzig this time around, and Kurt Jooss' strongly compelling *The Green Table* on its last visit here in 1975. That work, with Bill Lark as Death and Terry Thomas as the Profiteer, set Atlanta on its ear. The dark, dramatic theme of its antiwar statement and the starkness of its modern movement startled and galvanized the audience.

On this visit, there was no such shocker. It was the only disappointment; like eating a meal of all sweets without something crunchy to chew on.

HELEN C. SMITH

Helen C. Smith writes for the Atlanta Constitution.

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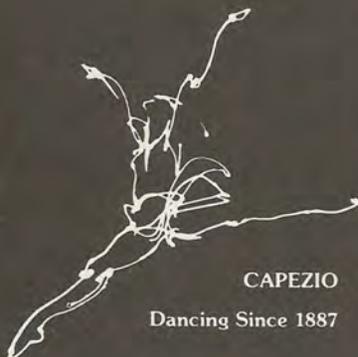


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Les Grands Ballets Canadiens

Places des Arts
Montreal

13-15 and 27-29 March 1980

This time last spring I was raving about Les Grands Ballets Canadiens because I had just caught a glimpse of the streamlined contemporary company straining to break out of two decades of pioneering stodge. By now, one has grown almost blasé about their lineup of choreographers which ranges from Denishawn to Sparemblek.

This spring the GBC's two weekends here were an eclectic mix of old and new, charting their progress but flashing some danger signals along the way. Perhaps it was inevitable that in seeking to broaden the company's stylistic base, they would lose their grip on their classical underpinnings. Never was this more manifest than in the limp and lumpy cavorting during the revival of Fernand Nault's version of *Les Sylphides* which adhered to neither the spirit nor the letter of Fokine.

Rid, at last, of the ballast of bad ballets accumulated prior to Colin McIntyre's arrival on the scene as General Director, the very catholicism of the new artistic policy now threatens to trivialize the repertoire. There is no quarrel with individual works per se - though programming frequently makes little theatrical sense - but important new acquisitions tend to get overwhelmed by a welter of lesser offerings. This is only partially being countered by efforts to consolidate the many new styles to which the dancers are being exposed, (there have been two works each from Paul Taylor and Lar Lubovitch, and Ronald Hynd and Milko Sparemblek are both due back next season to set new works for the company) with the result that standards of performance can vary from the abysmal to the exhilarating within the course of the same evening.

On the credit side, the boys are dancing like demons, several young dancers who have been all but invisible until now are beginning to show enormous potential and, in Sylvie Kinal, the GBC has got itself a genuine, 10,000 watt homegrown Star.

The focal point of the spring season was *The Miraculous Mandarin*, a dance-drama by the Yugoslav choreographer, Milko Sparemblek. On the surface it is a lurid tale of lust and murder but Sparemblek shares Bartók's own view that the subtext is liberation gained through self-respect, so he eschewed the Grand Guignol in favour of the message.

Despite highly stylized movement and Expressionist make-up, Sparemblek's concept rescued the characters from the soulless, alienated abstractions of previous versions; while the symbolism was implicit, each retained a fully fleshed-out humanity.

The action takes place on the dark



Dwight Shelton in *The Miraculous Mandarin*

fringes of society where a prostitute is used by three gangsters to rob her clients. Two revellers come her way followed by a melancholy student. All of them get short shrift. Then suddenly a Chinese Mandarin appears - and it would be hard to imagine a more bizarre, offbeat apparition in the Budapest of 1917 when Bartók wrote this, than a Mandarin in full regalia, complete with pigtail. He is slow to catch fire but once aroused, such is the force of his desire that despite repeated attacks by the thieves, he is incapable of dying until the girl, yielding to compassion, gives herself to him. The tension is such that the end arrives too suddenly; Sparemblek runs out of music after a single hieratic gesture. It is the only disappointment; the rest persists in the mind's eye. The robbers, like modern centurions, white-faced, black-eyed, crouched in silent menace. The revellers, a grotesquely clownish bourgeoisie straight out of Georg Grosz. The student, a poetic young Werther, yearning for love. Andrew Kuharsky, Jean-Hugues Rochette, Edward Hillyer, Jacques Drapeau, John Shields and Peter Tóth-Horgosi (with Sylvain Senez taking over for one performance): all first rate.

Dwight Shelton, physically the antithesis of the emaciated scholar depicted in Chinese scrolls, gave a protean performance, remarkable equally for its delicacy of detail and the singlemindedness of purpose which was an elemental force. Sylvie Kinal, who could have stepped out of Can Can in her red corset and black suspenders, demolished preconceptions with each movement. Her startled faun look gave the lie to her saucy costume and she un-sheathed each luminous limb with a deliberate sensuousness that progressed from detached, programmed eroticism to ultimate generosity of spirit.

Mandarin was given an Urtext production with evocative sets and explicit costumes by painter Claude Girard, music wisely not entrusted to the live pickup orchestra and a dream cast whose response to the work had resonances that went far

beyond what met the eye. No wonder it had been banned for close to 20 years by everyone from Konrad Adenauer to the Archbishop of Prague. They called it indecent but they sensed that it was subversive.

Mandarin was a hard act to follow. Next to it, the kitsch of *Sylphides* and the unrelieved juvenile jollity of Brian MacDonald's *Tam Ti Delam* seemed like so much packing around a priceless work of art. This *habitant* frolic to Gilles Vigneault's tunes is a useful piece since it keeps most of the company hopping most of the time but most of it does not measure up to the driving energy of its third movement in which eight boys singly and collectively try to outdance each other - and succeed in creating real excitement.

Wisely, Les Grands Ballets opted for a total change of pace for their second programme.

Soaring, the Denishawn music visualization to Schumann's *Fantasiestücke Opus 12* (Augschwung), is more than a mere historical curiosity. As reconstructed by Marion Rice, who has kept the Denishawn flame alive in Fitchburg, Mass. for the past 50 years, *Soaring* is a charming period piece which will show up even better in context when, as anticipated, it is eventually paired with one of Ted Shawn's men's dances. *Soaring* lasts only five minutes. The movement is simplicity itself, earthbound but aspiring to the heights. It features five girls and an enormous billowing silk scarf which, by clever manipulation and artful lighting - sometimes too artful lighting - blossoms into graceful images. The girls, especially Betsy Baron, Heather Farquharson and Josée Ledoux, exuded placid joy and sobriety.

The company's most recent acquisition, Ronald Hynd's *Les Valses*, has great potential, so far unrealized owing to the shortness of rehearsal time. Hynd has radically revised two brief ballets he had set to Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* and *La Valse* in 1975 so that today they are seamless companion pieces. Despite an opening night performance that was little short of a shambles, the two linked episodes aboard an ocean liner steaming toward oblivion had elegance, wit and barbed comment. Stylishly dressed by Peter Docherty in 1930's frippery, *Les Valses* was built on the same guarded interplay, suffused with the same fey romanticism as



Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in *Soaring*

Les Biches. The connecting thread between the afternoon flirtations and the evening's revels was Annette av Paul, in fine form as the enigmatic pink butterfly whose Mona Lisa smile and twinkletoeed battements bewitch Colin Simpson.

The production is a perfect marriage of designer and choreographer. Hynd handles his women as objects; they are carried like baggage, borne aloft like pieces of driftwood, frozen in amber, at once reticent and predatory. Peter Docherty translates them into scheming pastel blossoms against a darkling sky clothed in a swirling fabric that moves like a dream. From the moment the curtain goes up, it is evident that Hynd has picked the eyes out of the company. Jerilyn Dana's remoteness is, for once, just exactly right. Baron and Farquharson have that look of puzzled concentration you get when an atavistic memory is just about to surface. The men fare less well. Ill at ease in their joke moustaches and formal clothes, negotiating Hynd's swooping lifts and intricate logistics, only Claude Fréva (who made an unfortunate debut last year as Romeo) looks as if he had ever waltzed before. Nonetheless, even at this rudimentary stage, *Les Valses* is both affecting and effective. Its intimation of gathering darkness, its sweeping flow and spiky classicism and a wealth of well delineated detail were always in evidence and the final ensemble, threatening to spin out of control, was a memorable tableau signalling the

last frantic waltz before the end of the world.

The evening was rounded out by two works which GBC has been dancing since last autumn. Paul Taylor's *Cloven Kingdom* is good natured social comment on the chinks in the civilising veneer that covers our animal nature. The central men's quartet never failed to bring the house down.

Exsultate, Jubilate, Lar Lubovitch's loose-limbed, lazy interpretation of religious ecstasy, set to the Mozart Cantata, was admirably sung by soprano Marie-Danielle Parent and reunited the Mandarin team of Sylvie Kinal and Dwight Shelton in the opening section. Kinal alternated with Wendy Wright who had created the role for GBC. Wright is a tidy dancer, lacking abandon whereas Kinal's performance had substance and pulse. Louise Doré's recitative solo was serenity personified; Doré appeared to be genuinely filled with *The World*. The unorthodox adagio, four bodies wracked by joy, benefited greatly from Craig Miller's Rembrandtesque inner light. Kinal also danced the closing *Vivace*, which Lubovitch translates as literally jumping for joy, and proved once again that good choreography reveals as much about the dancer as it does about the choreographer himself.

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Dancemakers

NDWT Theatre
Toronto
26-30 March 1980

Dancemakers is *dancing* as well as ever but is also producing some very poorly balanced concerts, as its spring season at the NDWT Theatre in March showed. In the second of the three programmes, Janice Hladki's first-class *Fading Fast*, Beth Harris's sophomoric but nonetheless beautiful *Dark of the Moon*, and Carol Anderson's new work, *Quick Studies*, followed hard on one another's heels. They're all very different and in their own ways effective dances, but each of them requires the sort of concentration that leads to mental squinting. Clumped together they made for a stretch of unrelenting sobriety and destroyed the programme's dynamics.

The dancers shine in dramatic pieces such as Karen Rimmer's private harrowing of hell, *Spiral*, and Anna Blewchamp's *Arrival of All Time*, which delves into an author's fragmented psyche as she struggles to maintain her own identity while her characters take on increasing life. The strength of such theatrical pieces is both a blessing and a problem: the company needs equally compelling though more light-hearted works.

Unfortunately, Donald McKayle's *Variations on a Summer's Theme* looks as flimsy on Dancemakers as it did last year. And artistic director Peggy Baker's *Disc* never crystallizes into either a true parody of what lemmings trend-followers can be, or a real lament for the death of substance in pop culture. Only Michael Baker's impressive score and Peggy Baker's virtuoso performance hold the whole together.

Carol Anderson's *Decade* and Paula Ravitz's *Attic* are both solo works about discovery - of oneself and of dance. But where Ravitz's choreography (well-performed by Zella Wolofsky) subtly combined intensity with a gentle self-irony, Anderson's *Decade* seemed too private, as though the journey the choreographer was experiencing simply couldn't be shared with an audience.

Of the nine pieces presented this season, two were Toronto premières. *Sandsteps*, by Grant Strate, attempts to make whole cloth of the world of dance, weaving together the flexed and rhythmically pounding feet of the Far East with the undulating sensuality of North Africa. Just as subtly, a heavy-heeled walk would push off into the elevation Western dance forms have sought. Yet *Sandsteps'* chief attraction lay not in its dynamic qualities, but in one's being able to see the various threads weaving together.

Carol Anderson, one of the company's associate directors, has chosen an appropriate title for her new work - *Quick Studies*. It captures something of the



Patricia Fraser and Daniel Albert in *Dark of the Moon*

dance's painterly qualities: it flitting, half-sketched movements; its lines broken with a sudden flourish; a clump of dancers thinning out as they travel downstage diagonally, like paint on a canvas. It also made lovely use of Ravel's music: the movements were echoed in canon by the dancers and ended in a rippling chain of bodies (although the performers could have been much better synchronized). However, Anderson's programme note - '... le plaisir délicieux et toujours nouveau d'une occupation inutile ...' hinted at a subtle humour and precocity that the choreography did not deliver.

It's curious that *Quick Studies* and Baker's *Disc* (both of which look unfinished and are more workshop than concert pieces as yet) were included in all three programmes while polished pieces like *Spiral*, *Arrival of All Time*, and *Fading Fast* were only in one. Any company is obviously limited by whatever choreography is available, but surely a small concert repertory is better than a poor one. And the result of a poor one, at least in this case, is that the company looks dissipated and directionless, while the truth is that Dancemakers are not making the best use of their strengths.

ALINA GILDNER

Postcards

Roberta Mohler with Jeff Reilly
15 Dance Lab
Toronto
17-19 January 1980

As her latest solo concert attested, Roberta Mohler and her work certainly lend themselves to a visual appraisal. This former dancer with Le Groupe de la Place Royale has mastered the art of seamlessly flowing, rhythmically precise movement, and has the sort of face that makes an otherwise unlovely stage irrelevant. The lyrical quality of her movement created numerous images for the eye's enjoyment, if it did not provide a feeling of mental or emotional absorption.

Absorption was probably too much to ask from a concert called 'Postcards', with the note - 'each dance is a postcard from somewhere within'. The title accurately predicted the brisk variety show that ensued: whimsy was followed by an instrumental monologue, followed by a humorous number, then a stylized piece, then a mood one, another instrumental number; the concert ending with a straight tap selection. The brief glimpses of Roberta Mohler's interior that these offerings purportedly offered were in fact uninformative.

The evening's dance numbers were divided between other choreographers'



Roberta Mohler and Jeff Reilly

work and her own, with Ms Mohler's work ranging from a charmingly offhand series of duets with her accompanist to a dreamlike piece called *Three Chakras*, to a tap number. While the works were too diverse in form and content to allow for any coherent judgment about her choreographic directions, they did establish Ms Mohler's versatility as a performer and her characteristic type of movement: airy, sen-

sitive and graceful. That is about as far as the evening allowed one to go in defining Mohler's particular brand of dancing.

The works of Peter Boneham and Maestro Petre Bodeut both exploited unique aspects of Mohler's talent. Boneham's *Peter's Coat*, a number in which she did weird and wonderful things with a fur coat while singing *Just In Time* ('a cappella') displayed her flair for

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humour, and *Toccatta*, an intricately choreographed piece, provided the evening's most exacting example of her precise, neat footwork.

Jeff Reilly's two instrumental solos, although well performed, were an unwelcome intrusion on the varied glimpses we were getting of Ms Mohler and also contributed to the concert's somewhat scattered feel. However, Reilly was the perfect foil as Mohler's solo accompanist. The tension and interaction between the two in *Vagrant Vignettes* created some of the evening's liveliest moments, and the vision of the two co-operating so singlemindedly through their different mediums was nothing short of inspiring.

Whether that vision of unity would survive a larger stage though is doubtful. The duo's dynamics, like so many of the concert's elements, seemed dependent on 15 Dance Lab's intimate setting. The lyrical - as opposed to introspective or dramatic - quality of Ms Mohler's pieces was another such element; it made close viewing much more pleasurable than, say, gestures indicating agonized internal states would have, but its soothing, hypnotic effect would have been lost in a larger space. The lack of drama and staging would doom all of the evening's numbers, except perhaps *Peter's Coat*, and the tap number, to oblivion, and the latter two would survive only because of their emphasis on technique, rather than mood.

A larger stage may not be the direction in which Roberta Mohler is headed as an independent dancer though. It is difficult to judge from this concert just where she is headed creatively, because it provided so few insights into her conception of herself as an independent dancer. I find it hard to believe that any dancer would start on the treacherous path of going it alone with as negligible a creative vision as was evidenced by this concert, so I can only presume that Mohler suppressed hers for the concert's duration, concentrating instead on entertaining, and will emerge with at least hints of it at some later date. There is no doubt that she has the talent necessary to go in whatever directions her creative impulses take her. It was a disappointment nonetheless that so few of those impulses were in evidence during this concert.

CAROLINE GRAY

Dancers and Musicians of the Kingdom of Butan

Le Tritorium
CEGEP du Vieux Montréal
3 March 1980

In their own language, the Bhutanese aptly call their country Druk Yül, the Land of the Thunder Dragon, and it is as if the country had been guarded by mythical beasts until less than a decade ago. Covering an area four fifths the size of Nova Scotia, Bhutan nestles in the eastern Himalayas, west of Sikkim, south of what used to be Tibet, surrounded on three sides by India. It had no secular schools until 1959, no highway till 1962 and only intrepid Victorian envoys visited it before 1974. Rendered inviolable by the mountains, Bhutanese culture (an amalgam of Chinese, Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist ritual) has survived in pristine condition despite current efforts to enter the 20th century. Among these is the first Western tour, sponsored by The Asia Society, of the Dancers and Musicians of the Kingdom of Bhutan, who came to Montreal as part of their 23-city North American tour prior to a four-country swing through Europe.

Back home, the all-male troupe numbers 150 and the show, which manages to combine aspects of high mass, morality play and picnic, may last several days. Here, mindful of the Occidental attention span, it was condensed to a 90-minute, 14-man Reader's Digest version.

The men danced and clowned, banged their drums, blew their long, telescopic Alpine horns and shook their tiny silvery bells. They wore a rainbow of scarves tucked into their belts, (almost hiding long baggy shorts), elaborate headdresses and masks depicting gods or stylized mortals, and bare feet.

The technique is literally as old as the hills, codified to the nth degree. Every motion has a religious name and meaning; each movement of hand and foot is numbered. Despite that, the whole does not project an easily definable personality. There is speed, colour, ceremony and broad humour but neither the peacock dignity of European male dance, nor the feline deviousness of Indians or the miniaturized acrobatics of the Chinese.

Only three recurring sequences seemed



The Royal Dancers and Musicians from Bhutan

distinctly Bhutanese: an upward jump from a standing start in which they bring both feet simultaneously up to touch their foreheads; a spiralling windmill-like whirling dervish spin and a one-legged hop while the other foot is held at a 45 degree angle from the ankle, familiar from Hindu dancing. Throughout, the hands move in the unexpectedly graceful and timeless gestures that correspond to the mudras of Buddhist ceremony. Bhutan is still a theocracy and many of these dances are believed to bring blessings upon the spectators. There is no showmanship per se, no entrances or exits; performers simply walk on and off. There are no star turns; undetected behind masks, performers constantly switch roles. Their dances reflect the egalitarian quality of their community.

Their clowns, who are everywhere under foot and intrude upon the action, wear big beaked red masks that look like the Joker on old Piatnik playing cards. Chattering away in fluent Bhutanese, darting like magpies into the audience, they kept everyone laughing despite the language barrier.

Traditions musicales du monde, who brought the Bhutanese (and the Korean Court Dancers last December) to Montreal, are providing a valuable opportunity in this ballet-oriented city to broaden our horizons.

KATI VITA

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Margot Fonteyn The Magic of Dance

TV Ontario (BBC)
and the book
Agincourt, Ont.: Methuen
1980

A BBC television series and a lavishly illustrated book, both called *The Magic of Dance* and presided over by Margot Fonteyn, are by definition important events. They will be broadcast and read virtually everywhere; the programmes are available for use in classrooms and studios, thanks to organizations such as TV Ontario which distribute inexpensive colour dubs in several video formats. But as products of 1980 this series and book are curious items. If one hopes to find in them the authority and insight of *Civilisation* or other major BBC offerings, one will be disappointed. If one expects to see dance or learn something about it as one always could from the finely-structured programmes of Margaret Dale (BBC producer from 1954 to 1976), one will be quite surprised. *The Magic of Dance* somehow bypasses the whole issue of BBC high standards: it is scatter-brained, full of bizarre tangents, too bent on supplying in each of the six programmes enough ballet, modern, and jazz or popular dancing to please everyone. The book's personal meanderings are far less confusing than these maddening scripts, which are like nothing so much as choreography that can't keep its mind on what it's doing.

Though *The Magic of Dance* is hardly the substantial, lasting series we deserve, given the dance boom of the seventies, the programmes have beautiful parts and many definite virtues. Among them surely is the fact that they feature the sensibility of a great dancer, not a critic or historian, as artist-host. It goes without saying that most of Fonteyn's dancing is luminous in its perfection, with the added poignancy of marking what must be some of the last performances of her career. She has embodied the highest ballet standards of our century; even past her dancing prime, she is such an elegantly-proportioned being that one learns from her very still-standing posture. As host she is direct, good-natured and distractingly fashionable (her clothes are almost a sub-topic of the series). She lacks assurance and control in her voice, but then she doesn't have all that much to say. Sometimes it looks hard for her to fulfill her master-of-ceremonies functions, but often she is quite spontaneous and animated, as in the last programme, which takes us behind the scenes at Covent Garden for her 60th birthday performance. Here she does a dear little turn with Ashton and dances a retrospective solo he made for the occasion.

Much of the time it is interesting to see the dance world through Fonteyn-coloured glasses. She shows us traditional



Margot Fonteyn interviews Fred Astaire

Chinese exercise groups in the parks of Shanghai where she grew up; she tries to sense the grandeur of Isadora Duncan standing at the Parthenon; she adores students doing folk dances in Spain. Frequently she is seen alone visiting museums, where she imagines the artists who came before her. These include Pavlova's house in London, the Tchaikovsky museum in Russia, and the Drottningholm Court Theatre in Sweden, where she delightfully descends through an 18th century stage trap and activates the still-intact stage machinery. Showing examples, she talks about different kinds of point shoes and how dancers work with them; she shows the tiny slippers she used at age four and a half. This charming sequence epitomizes what is best about the series - Fonteyn, practical and unsentimental, talks about what she knows as a dancer. Worst are the times when she is involved in the unfamiliar task of interviewing figures such as Fred Astaire, Rudolf Nureyev, or Robert Cohan.

The series and book take as their vantage point the dance spanned by Fonteyn's career which began in the thirties. There are excursions into the history of ballet and some musings about the future, but always the focus stays on people who dance. *The Magic of Dance* is about personalities and especially those stars, past and present, with whom Fonteyn feels strong bonds. We see many of the great ones - Baryshnikov, Ulanova, Pavlova, Seymour and others - dancing excerpts which are always carefully introduced, musically complete and, for the most part, well shot. A number of fascinating recreations by Mary Skeaping of dances from lost ballets such as *Flore et Zéphyr* contribute by indicating earlier styles and steps.

It's hard to say in a few words what the subject of each programme actually is, they are such *omnium gathera*. *The Scene*

Changes deals with the shift from ballerina domination to new possibilities for male dancing such as jazz and modern; Astaire and Nureyev are featured. *The Ebb and Flow* talks about changes resulting from artists on the move, touring as Pavlova did or travelling to work as did earlier masters such as the French Marius Petipa, who settled in St. Petersburg. *What is New?* offers a refreshingly European slant on dance innovation; not the usual American-lady version of modern dance history. This programme has a wonderful recreation of a long-winded 1907 skirt dance of Grete Wiesenthal, yet Martha Graham is only represented by a few photographs, a Fonteyn interview with Robert Cohan, and performances - not of Graham works - by London Contemporary Dance Theatre and Dance Theatre of Harlem! *The Romantic Ballet* is perhaps the single most coherent programme, dealing with Taglioni, Bournonville, Elssler, point shoes, the waltz, and later ballets such as *Coppélia* and *Les Sylphides*. *The Magnificent Beginning* goes to the court of Louis XIV, then unaccountably to China and Revolutionary ballet, thence to the France of Roland Petit, to Drottningholm, and to *La Fille mal Gardée*. Finally *Out in the Limelight, Home in the Rain* gives us Fonteyn looking back over her career, takes us to an RAD children's class and a Royal Ballet company class, and concludes with a full performance of Ashton's *Marguerite and Armand* with Fonteyn and Nureyev.

Unlike the series, the book is resolutely organized into chapters on different aspects of dance; they are called 'Dance Magical', then universal, experimental, imperial, aerial, mythological, and traditional. It is avowedly 'not a history' but rather Fonteyn's 'own understanding of people and influences'. At the beginning of this visually rich survey, literally overflowing with portraits and dance images



In Pavlova's London home, Ivy House

(often unfamiliar and many in glorious colour reproductions), she writes simply, 'I commend all these people to you, hoping you will read about them and look searchingly into their pictures'. If one concentrates on looking, the book is thoroughly engaging, a feast of dancers and dancing. If one reads it one will particularly enjoy Fonteyn's brief but lively appreciations of other dancers, of choreographers, and of composers she likes. She describes Ulanova's 'liquid quality of movement', Petipa's 'meticulous construction of his scenarios and choreography' and Ashton's 'way of using dance so that it appears to be the only natural form of communication', Tchaikovsky's total 'sympathy with the rhythms and emotions of dance'. (Nora Kaye, however, was merely Tudor's 'perfect interpreter of murky passions' - that's all the attention they get.)

Most valuable are Fonteyn's reflections on how dancers do their work, how teachers teach and dancers forever study. She makes us feel the long hard work of Marie Taglioni, the results of which she thinks should have gone to Filippo's credit. At times she seems rather too willing to pronounce on what she is unimpressed by or ignorant about: Humphrey and other 'little dynasties' other than Graham, 'the necessary central focus of modern dance'; or the following odd statement: 'All Oriental dance forms originated in India, from where they spread . . .' Sometimes it's rather obvious that her research assistant couldn't quite make up her mind about a matter such as the waltz or the disappearance of male dancing. If they had read the books of Ivor Guest (named as historical adviser but obviously little consulted), they could have avoided errors such as the notion that *Coppélia* was created during the Franco-Prussian War rather than just before it. But then one shouldn't turn to Fonteyn for dance history or criticism. *The Magic of Dance*, her unique impressionistic view, is attractive enough and will please many. And there's still room for other more adventurous television series on dance.

SELMA LANDEN ODOM

New Directions in Dance

Diana Theodores Taplin (Editor)

Toronto: Pergamon

1979

This volume, offering 19 of the 39 papers on dance in various applications read at the seventh Dance in Canada Conference at Waterloo last year, may be the only conference publication in history ever to be printed and packaged for the delegates to receive as they arrived to register. On principle, the idea of preserving all intelligent utterances on the dance is commendable; but in this case, I don't think that the format chosen either justifies or properly serves the contents. The papers are far too disparate to be brought together for any one useful purpose. Ms Taplin has lumped them into categories to convey a hoped-for congruity - aesthetics and criticism, dance history, scientific applications, dance notation, and an oddly matched field 'policy and education'. The book's title itself is a misnomer which has nothing to do with what's inside.

When I got my review copy nine months ago, I promptly read the five papers which were on subjects that interested me, scanned the others with some awe, and put the volume on the shelf where I assumed it would remain until my demise. Now that I take it up again, I'm intimidated by discussions which prominently feature such terms as *semiotics* and *chunking* (neither of which is in my vocabulary nor in my dictionary) and I'm not in the least curious about the data-processing applications of dance competence. And while I've heard of Aristotle, I have no idea who R. G. Collingwood might be. Unless forced, I'll never read the piece called 'Physics and Ballet', nor the article on Sutton Movement Shorthand, nor the consideration of 'The Influence of Morphology, Experience and the Ballet Barre on Verticality of Alignment in the Performance of the Plié.'

As a souvenir of the conference, the volume is a \$25 investment in a petrified doughnut. As such, it's probably destined to lose money for both the courageous Ms Taplin and for her publisher. I wonder what efforts they may have taken to be sure that there will be access to the individual studies by way of proper indexing in the various standard subject bibliographies. If there is no outside service to provide future scholars a route to each study, the volume will serve only as a crypt for the 19 pieces selected. Perhaps the 20 writers whose work wasn't used will fare better: if they can find journals to publish their work, they'll get a wider audience as well as the services which will make their work ultimately retrievable.

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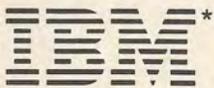
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Noticeboard

The Danny Grossman Dance Company's tour of Great Britain in February was greeted by a torrent of enthusiastic reviews. Even the London critics, notoriously hard to please where modern dance is concerned, found themselves in uncharacteristic agreement when the Grossman troupe appeared at Riverside Studios and the Laban Centre. All of them greeted the return of Grossman, fondly remembered from earlier visits during his years with the Paul Taylor Company, and praised both his dancers and choreography.

National Spirit was the clear favourite, with *Curious Schools* and *Higher* close runners up. Clement Crisp (*Financial Times*) described Danny Grossman as 'a choreographer of notable originality and wit'. Ian Woodward (*Evening News*) found a 'vigour and a plucky enthusiasm' in Grossman's work which lent his troupe 'a decidedly vivacious personality ... On no account miss them. They are tops'. Mary Clarke (*The Guardian* and *Dancing Times*) considered the company, 'immensely professional and versatile'. Clement Crisp summed it all up best: 'If this is Canadian contemporary dance, let us have more of it. In wit, skill and sensitivity, it puts most local exponents absolutely in the shade'.

The duMaurier Council for the Performing Arts has awarded Grants of \$10,000 each to the National Ballet and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet for their 1980-81 performing seasons.

Of the four dance companies appearing at Art Park, Lewiston, NY, this summer, two are Canadian. Returning for its third season, the National Ballet will perform August 19 to 24. The Danny Grossman Dance Company, will visit Art Park for the first time, August 26 and 27. Sharing the Art Park dance season are The Joffrey Ballet, August 5 to 10 and The Pilobolus Dance Theatre, August 12 to 17,

Contraband is a four-month project supported by the Canada Council, directed by choreographer Sara Shelton Mann. It includes two performers familiar to the Canadian dance community; Belinda

Weitzel (formerly of Regina Modern Dance Works) and Freddi Long (formerly of Mountain Dance Theatre) as well as Byron Brown of San Francisco's all-male dance collective Mangrove. The group has just completed a tour which began in San Francisco in late winter and finished in Halifax in the spring. They gave movement workshops and performed *The Float*, a collaborative work incorporating choreography, contact improvisation, silence, music and the unique vocal talents of Byron Brown.

Contraband will be appearing, along with Montreals' CATPOTO, and several American improvisational dance companies, at the Dance as Sport Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 19 to 22.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mountain Dance Theatre gave two performances at the James Cowan Theatre, April 25 and 26, which featured the premiere of *Long Flight Into Open Field*, a new work by Mauryne Allan based on the Brontë family, with an original score by Toronto composer Gordon Phillips. Guest artist Barbara Bourget performed the lead role of Charlotte in this piece as well as a new solo created for her by Ms Allan to the live music of the Vancouver recorder quintet, SHAIR.

From March 21 to April 27, Vancouver's innovative Terminal City Dance toured Victoria, Nanaimo, Fechtel, Whistler, Burns Lake, Cranbrook, Golden and Nelson, in British Columbia, Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta and Seattle, Washington, giving performances and workshops in their distinctive brand of dance theatre.

In recognition of their great contribution to dance in Canada, the Gwenneth Lloyd and Betty Farrally Endowment Fund has been established to help further the training of exceptionally talented young dancers who intend to make a career in dance. Donations in any amount can be made to the fund in care of: Mr Royse Bazett, CA, Honorary Treasurer, The Central Okanagan Foundation, c/o PO Box 1233, Kelowna, BC, V1Y 7P9.

Leslie Manning has been appointed Artistic Director of the Paula Ross Dance Company. Ms Manning has been assistant artistic director since 1976. She will be working in collaboration with Paula Ross, the sole choreographer and founder of the company.

SASKATCHEWAN

On April 12 and 13 the Prairie Dance Lab Association sponsored a conference - 'Saskatchewan Dance: Then and Now' - to commemorate the province's 75th Anniversary. It was held at the Boyan School of Dance in Regina.

In Regina, Mayor Scheider proclaimed March 24 to 30 as Modern Dance Week and commended the entire city to give its enthusiastic support. Activities throughout the week ranged from school demonstrations and children's performances to a Dance Works Benefit Gala and a collaborative performance by Dance Works and the Regina Symphony Chamber Orchestra.

Dance Works has had to make further cutbacks in order to stay in operation. The administration and technical staff are reduced by 50%, the contracts of four dancers will not be renewed and there will be no more self-sponsored touring. So, what remains of the company is a board of directors, a skeleton staff and the two artistic directors, Maria Formolo and Keith Urban, who will focus on residencies, workshops, province-wide clinics and small scale performances. Return to a full company is planned for September 1981, resources permitting.

MANITOBA

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet's spring season, April 9 to 13, opened with Dame Alicia Markova's production of *Les Sylphides* and included three works with a Spanish flavour, (*Don Quixote pas de deux*, *Moncayo I* and *Spanish Dance from Swan Lake*), as well as the Winnipeg premier of Rudi van Dantzig's *Four Last Songs*.



A Tribute To Dr. Gweneth Lloyd, O.C., and Mrs. Betty Farrally

In recognition of their great contribution to dance in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, and to Canada, the Gweneth Lloyd and Betty Farrally Endowment Fund has been established with the purpose of both honouring and assisting to continue the work and lifetime achievements of these two great Canadians.

Honorary Patron: Dame Margot Fonteyn.

The main objective of the Fund is to create a capital trust, the income from which will be applied to help further the training of exceptionally talented young dancers with promise who intend to make a career in dance.

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Donors and contributors furnishing their names will have them entered in a gift book. "A Tribute". This book will be presented to Dr. Lloyd and Mrs. Farrally at a special dinner at Kelowna, the date of which has yet to be announced.

Charitable donation receipts will be issued on request.



Contemporary Dancers in Lynne Taylor-Corbett's *Diary*

Contemporary Dancers of Winnipeg have been as busy as ever touring in Manitoba and Ontario. Associate Artistic Director **Kenneth Lippitz** is leaving the company and **Stephanie Ballard**, long associated with them, first as a dancer then as Director of the apprenticeship programme, will be replacing him.

ONTARIO

Windsor's **Gina Lori-Riley** is making a film based on one of her dances, *Sleeper*. The film, entitled *One of Those Nights* is produced by JFB Films of Toronto and will be released shortly.

Throughout the spring, Ms Lori-Riley has sponsored numerous dance artists at her Windsor studio. In March Pamela Grundy and Greg Parks of the Danny Grossman Dance Company, and Toronto dancer Melodie Benger gave master classes in technique and improvisation. Composer Murray Geddes and dancer Sally Lyons gave performances and workshops in dance and music. A visit by the young Toronto dance troupe TIDE finished off the dance series on an energetic note.

The National Ballet School presented An Evening of Ballet, May 8 to 10 at the St Lawrence Centre in Toronto. The programme consisted of *A Ballet Demonstration* choreographed by Rosalie Brake, and three works new to the NBS students: *Dolly Suite* by Glen Gilmour, Rudi van Dantzig's *Four Last Songs* and *Soledad* by Susana. The programme was repeated in Ottawa at the NAC Opera House on May 14. Back in its Toronto home on Maitland Street, the school celebrated the official opening of its new classroom and residence block. Altogether the building and renovation project, which at last centralizes all the school's property on one campus, cost \$2.6 million.

Five National Ballet dancers, all men, have received promotions: Raymond Smith from first soloist to principal dancer, Peter Ottmann and Kevin Pugh from second

soloist to first soloist, Sean Boutilier and David Nixon, from the corps to second soloist.

Samuel Titchener-Smith, a well-known Toronto ballet master of the 1920s and 1930s died on March 19 this year at the age of 95. After studies in the United States, principally New York and Cleveland, he began teaching in Toronto until closing his school at the outbreak of World War II. Mr. Titchener-Smith, an active Shriner, was elected President of the Dancing Masters of North America in 1932 - the same year that organization held its annual convention in Toronto.

Jeff Hyslop, noted Canadian dancer and choreographer has joined the Stratford Festival as choreographer of *The Beggar's Opera*. Mr Hyslop has appeared frequently on Canadian and American television variety specials. He was lead dancer in the film version of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and danced lead roles in the National tour of *A Chorus Line* and *Godspell*, and was most recently seen in the National Tap Dance Company's production of *The Tin Soldier* at the NAC in Ottawa.

Owing to acute financial difficulties The Toronto Dance Theatre was forced to cancel its two-week spring season originally scheduled for the St Lawrence Centre. Instead the company gave nine performances at its Studio Theatre, May 7 to 18, of new choreography by the three artistic directors, Patricia Beatty, David Earle and Peter Randazzo, company member Christopher House, and the North American premier of *Images* by Rena Gluck of Israel's Batsheva Dance Company.

After 11 years with the Toronto Dance Theatre, **Susan Macpherson** is joining the Danny Grossman Dance Company as guest artist for the 1980-81 season. She will take on duties as teacher, performer and rehearsal assistant to Danny Grossman.

She also plans to prepare a solo concert of works created for her by various choreographers.

On April 19 **MACBECK Studios** in Toronto held an opening benefit. The all-day affair began with a movement class given by Carol Anderson of Dancemakers. There were dance and music workshops and performances. TIDE performed dances from their repertory including *Hit and Run*, *Slide*, a new work by Sara Shelton Mann. Barbara Stowe presented the second of her four-part work - *The Journey of the Sorceress*. A free-wheeling music/dance improvisation held later in the day, was notable particularly for the tenacious, energetic dancing of Denise Fujiwara and Allan Risdill. MACBECK Studios is headed by musician Don MacMillan and dancer Mimi Beck. It offers rehearsal and teaching facilities for both dancers and musicians.



Paula Moreno and members of her Spanish Dance Company

Following a highly successful two-week run at Toronto's Solar Stage, Lunchtime Theatre, The Paula Moreno Spanish Dance Company presented its fourth annual spring season at Hart House Theatre, April 10 to 12. The programme of regional dances, classical Spanish dances and new flamenco pieces was highlighted by Ms Moreno's Spanish dance interpretation of Ravel's *Bolero*. This work was originally presented in performance with the Halifax and Toronto Symphony Orchestras.

The Ottawa Dance Theatre made its National Arts Centre debut in early April. Three new works were presented - *Ceremonies* by Artistic Director Judith Davies, *Rara Avis* by Toronto choreographer Gail Benn and *Air Circus* by Conrad Peterson of Les Ballets Jazz. *Sixteen Minutes Live* and *Islands*, both by Ms Benn, completed the programme. The company had its beginnings in 1969 as a workshop which toured community schools and continually expanded until in 1977 it established itself as Ottawa's first resident professional dance company. Since then ODT has performed extensively throughout Ontario.

The studios of Le Groupe de la Place Royale have provided the Ottawa dance community with a rich and varied selection of performances this spring. Throughout April Le Groupe presented several evenings of new dances by company members. They also imported such diverse dance groups as the improvisation-based Contraband, the Judy Jarvis Dance Company's children's show *Pierre Gynt*, solo dance artists, Odette Oliver and Maria Formolo,

East Indian dancer Menaka Thakkar, and Mirage, a theatre company of five mime artists.

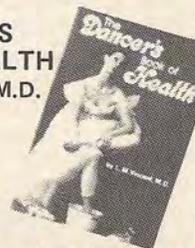
Toronto can look forward to its first dance subscription series, beginning next October and stretching on into June, 1981. Presented by Uriel Luft, Samuel Gesser and Mark Hammond, the series brings six very different dance companies to Toronto, some for the first time, to perform at the 1450-seat Ryerson Theatre. Five are American: Pilobolus Dance Theatre, Jennifer Muller and the Works, Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, Louis Falco Dance Company and Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. The one Canadian company in this commercial venture is Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal which had a tremendously successful season at Toronto's Music Hall Theatre early this spring.

Judith Marcuse's new work for the Shaw Festival will bring together soloists Veronica Tennant and James Kudelka of the National Ballet, Peggy Smith Baker of Dancemakers, John Kaminski and Patti Caplette of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Alexandre Belinsky formerly of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, and Ms Marcuse herself in a full-length ensemble piece with original score by David Keeble and David Jaggs. It will be performed September 5 to 7 at the Festival Theatre, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The New Music and Dance Orchestra with dancers Terrill Maguire and Holly Small performed May 30 and 31 at Fifteen Dance Lab in Toronto. They were in fact the last artists to appear at Fifteen which, during the past six years and under the direction

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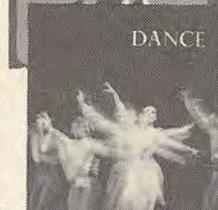
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of Lawrence and Miriam Adams has offered a performing space to over 135 choreographers.

On June 2 **Fifteen Dance Lab** closed its doors as a performing space to concentrate on the publication of a new 20-page monthly tabloid, *Canadian Dance News*.

Although their focus has been Toronto, the Adams have had a notable impact on the development of modern, experimental, avant garde dance across Canada. In explaining the decision to close Fifteen Dance Lab, Lawrence Adams said it was always planned as a finite project. He and Miriam felt they had accomplished what they set out to do and were ready for a change.

QUEBEC

Montreal's **Ballet de la Jeunesse** presented its seventh season May 27 and 28 at the Théâtre Maisonneuve, Place des Arts. The company was founded by Hélène Voronova, a former dancer with Les Ballets Russes du Colonel de Basil, and aims to give young dancers performing experience in a variety of ballet styles from Romantic to Modern. The programme this year included three premières, *The Creation of Birds*, *Ballad* and *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, all choreographed by Ms Voronova.

Axis, the umbrella organization which is a rallying point for independent dancers and choreographers in Montreal, presented 'Creations '80', April 9 and 10 at D. B. Clarke Theatre, Concordia University. Monique Giard, Candy Loubert, Daniel Soulières, Philippe Vita and Iro Tembeck, all presented new choreography.

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens made its second us tour of the season this spring visiting cities in Washington, Oregon, Nevada and California. It then continued to Vancouver, Victoria and east to Toronto and London, presenting a selection of recent additions to the company's repertoire. Among these was Brian Macdonald's *Adieu Robert Schumann* shortly to be filmed by Norman Campbell for the CBC. This work, featuring Annette av Paul, Vincent Warren and celebrated contralto Maureen Forester has been hailed as one of Macdonald's finest creations.

As part of its special cultural undertakings, **Imperial Oil** is sponsoring a new ballet for the National Ballet by **Brian Macdonald** and another for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens by **Fernand Nault**.

Brian Macdonald's new work, *Newcomers*, is a four movement ballet for about 40 of the National's dancers. Each part is based on a Canadian composer's music: André Prévost's *Fantasmies*, Harry Freedman's *Green . . . Blue . . . White: Songs of the Eastern Provinces*, John Weinzwieg's *A square dance*. Music for the fourth movement is being composed by

Lothar Klein who will draw in part from the themes composed for *The Newcomers*, Imperial's centenary film series. *Newcomers* will have its first performance in the National Ballet's fall season.

Les Grands Ballet's new work, *Pas d'Epoque*, by Fernand Nault is a whimsical satirical work composed of 10 short sections - each one inspired by different styles of dance popular in the last 10 decades. *Pas d'Epoque* will be premiered at the centennial celebrations of Imperial Oil at Place des Arts, June 8, 1980.

Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal after a smash-hit season in Toronto last March continued a tour to Quebec and then left for Ireland. They will be dancing overseas again, in Guadeloupe, at the end of June. Meanwhile, Brian Macdonald has created a new work for the company *Entre Nous*. Funded by a grant from Imperial Oil, the new work received its Montreal premier in June.

Despite its continued successes at home and abroad, Les Ballets Jazz is still plagued by financial problems. Artistic director Geneviève Salbaing foresees the inevitable closure of the company if the Canada Council can not be persuaded to reconsider its decision to disbar jazz dance from eligibility for support.

Louis-André Paquette, company répétiteur, and **Denis Michaelson** a répétiteur and leading male dancer with Les Ballets Jazz will leave at the end of the current season. If plans mature, they will open a branch of the company school in Toronto.

For the fifth consecutive summer **Quebec Été Danse** offers intensive courses for dance teachers and students on the campus of **Bishop's University in Lennoxville**. Teachers this summer include Leonie Kramer of Amsterdam, Bruce Merrill of Paris and Phyllis Lamhut of New York.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Dancecast '80 is the first comprehensive summer dance programme in eastern Canada. It will be held at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, August 4 to 23, and is a certified programme of the university's Department of Continuing Education. Thirty classes will be offered each day for novices, intermediate and advanced students and professional dancers. Each student may select a personalized course of study involving both technical training and theoretical dance studies. **Dancecast '80** has an impressive faculty of Canadian experts in every field of dance including among others, ballet teachers Earl Kraul and Mikhail Berkut, Toronto Dance Theatre Artistic Director David Earle, jazz teacher André Lucas, tap dancer William Orlowski and experimental dance artists Sekai and Jennifer Mascall.

NOVA SCOTIA

Contact - Nature is a new dance film by Neal Livingston. Shot in the wilds of Cape Breton Island, the film captures the improvisational work of dancers Sara Shelton Mann, Byron Brown, Jennifer Mascall, Diane Moore, Sandra Levin and musicians Miguel Frascioni, Marvin Green, Paul Hodge, John Oswald and David Prentice. It is available through the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre in Toronto.

On May 2 and 3 at the Sir James Dunn Theatre, the **Jeanne Robinson Dance Project** presented an evening of dances by Jeanne Robinson, Francine Boucher, Diane Moore and Barbara Morgan.

Ms Robinson premiered *Higher Ground*, a multi-media dance collaboration with Halifax media expert, Bob Atkinson. *Higher Ground* is based on her experiences creating zero-gravity dance for her science fiction novel, *Stardance*, and will also be performed in September at Noreascon II, the 1980 world science fiction convention.

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Letter to the Editor

Edmonton

Dear Sir,
As Founder and former Artistic Director of the Alberta Ballet Company and a supporter of Dance in Canada since its inception, I was greatly distressed to read the very destructive and biased review of the Company in your Spring issue. Even the opening statement, 'Dance buffs here in Peter Loughheed's occidental sheikdom' lacks the dignity and serious approach to a very disciplined and beautiful art.

I agree with some of Mr Abra's fault-finding and criticism presented constructively could be of help to the Alberta Ballet Company but to literally destroy the Artistic Director's choreography, choice of repertoire, young choreographers, dancer ('12 dancers who would

be hard pressed to make the National's back row') sounds like the out-pourings of a frustrated dancer, choreographer etc. etc.

That this sort of poor reviewing has gone across Canada to people who have never had the opportunity to see this fresh young company, due to lack of funding, makes me think that you must seek a more informed, less-biased reviewer to retain the respect of Dance in Canada especially in the West.

Sincerely,
Ruth Carse ARAD, ATC
Principal
Alberta Ballet School

Classified

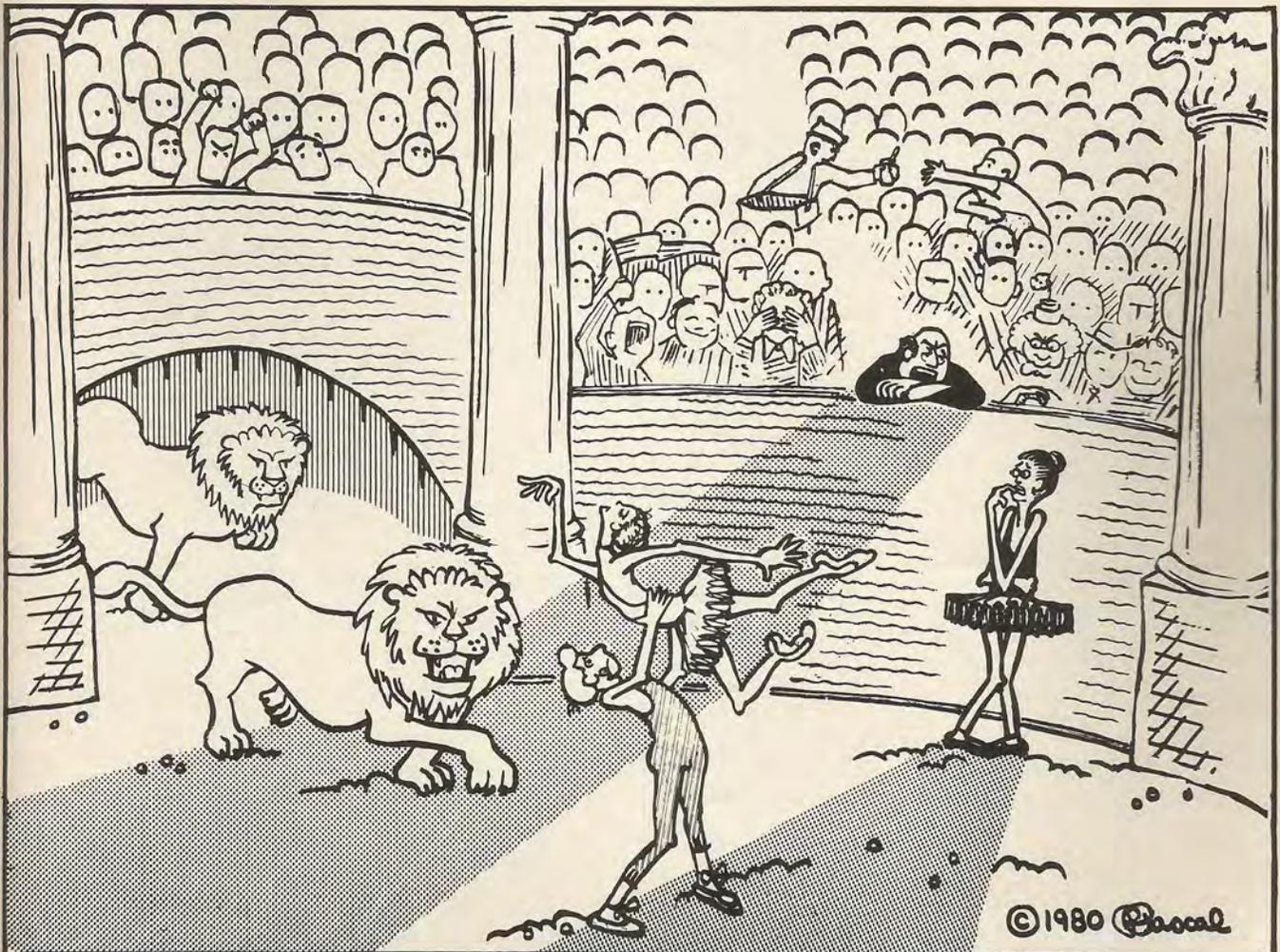
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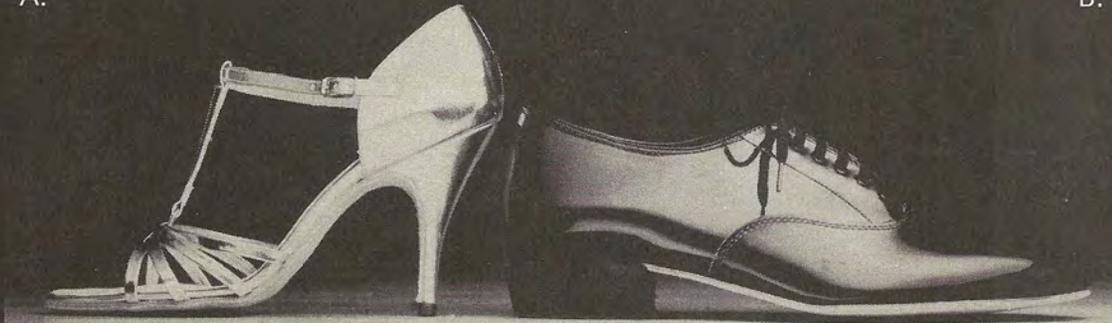
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