
Autumn 1983 Automne 83

Dance in Canada Danse au

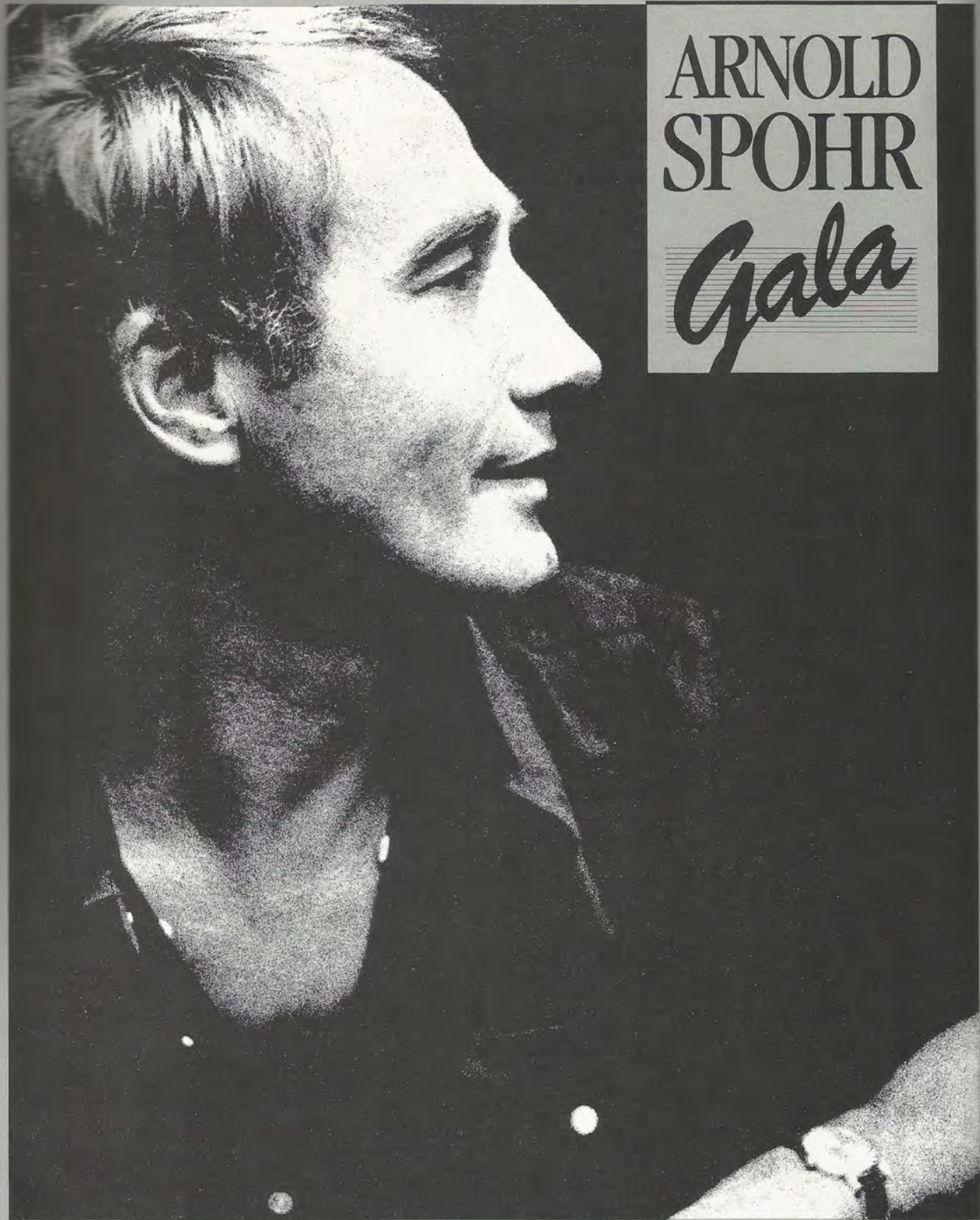


Jeff Hyslop

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Dance in Canada Danse au

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“I Can Do That!”

Jeff Hyslop’s Formula For Success

GUY SHULMAN

Jeff Hyslop est l'un des artistes canadiens les plus complets. Son énergie infatigable et son goût du risque lui ont permis de mener avec succès une carrière de danseur et d'acteur indépendant, une combinaison rare de talents sur la scène artistique canadienne. Hyslop est un virtuose de la danse et il a démontré ses talents de chanteur et d'acteur dans la tournée internationale de "Chorus Line" et dans "Anne of Green Gables" au Festival de Charlottetown. Il a également travaillé pour la télévision et son spectacle spécial "Dancin' Man" a été particulièrement remarqué. Jeff Hyslop possède une vitalité intense et il exprime son goût de l'aventure dans sa carrière d'artiste indépendant.

Canada is not an easy place to be a dancer. Just being able to eke out a living as a dancer here is a sizeable achievement. To go beyond that and to become a successful dancer — without becoming a member of a dance company — is close to miraculous!

As a child, dancer Jeff Hyslop always saw himself becoming part of a large, supportive company in order to earn a living. In Canada dancers are not encour-



Jeff Hyslop with Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn in *L'Histoire du Soldat*, April 1983.

...to think otherwise, but when the opportunity to join dance companies scattered Hyslop found he didn't want it.

"I was afraid a company would want to mold me to its standards rather than let me develop my own. From as far back as I can always wanted to do more than any dance company's repertoire allowed."

Hyslop's approach to dance now is what it always was, instinctive and general. He embraced dancing indiscriminately — all forms of dance: ballet, jazz, tap — it made no difference.

"As a child I'd go from my latest favourite dance style to my newest favourite dance style. Now I do what the job calls for."

Jeff Hyslop never set out to be a free-lancer. He only set out to do what he wanted to do. He explains this calmly. He seems almost too relaxed for a dancer. Perhaps it's because he's nursing a cold — again! Hyslop hates being sick because he doesn't slow down. He's always working. He loves to work.

Canada, it seems, is reluctant to encourage stars

Jeff shuns such labels as "prodigy" or "gifted child" but he fits the definition perfectly. He grew up in Vancouver on what appears to be British Columbia's answer to Walton's Mountain. It was Mom, Dad, Sis and Jeff — a happy, close family with no drunks, drugs or divorces. His family, of which he speaks lovingly, was supportive without being pushy. "They had no particular vested interest in my being in show business. If I had wanted to be a fireman I'm sure my parents would have enrolled me in a pole-dancing class".

But it was dance class instead — a combination of ballet, jazz and tap — every day after school for 11 years. His teacher was the gifted Grace Macdonald of Vancouver. He remembers her with warm nostalgia. She was his mentor. "Miss Grace", as she was respectfully addressed by all her pupils, (including her star Jeff), ran her classes rigidly — "the iron toe in the velvet shoe".

Grace Macdonald recognized Hyslop's natural dance ability right away. After he'd been taking classes for two years, the Bolshoi Ballet visited Vancouver and Grace Macdonald arranged for Jeff to audition for them. He was chosen among dozens of hopefuls to perform with the Bolshoi across Canada. When the tour was over Jeff was offered a scholarship to travel to Russia and live, study and dance with the Bolshoi. He was only 11 years old.

For anyone wanting a career as a dancer, joining the Bolshoi was like starting at the top of the dream heap. But even then Jeff Hyslop couldn't visualize himself as a company dancer, although he accepted the Bolshoi's invitation eagerly. Learning has to be a selfish act — Hyslop wanted to learn as much as there was to know about dance — and the Bolshoi! Even at age 11 his career was his first priority.

Jeff Hyslop is lean and boyishly handsome with curly reddish brown hair faintly reminiscent of a young Garfunkel. He pulls a wayward curl unconsciously as he remembers preparing to move to Russia as a little boy. His parents were ready to let him go but only if Jeff's mother could accompany him.

"The most amazing thing for me about that whole Bolshoi experience is not the Bolshoi itself or that scholarship. It was that my mother, at her own expense, was totally prepared to redirect the course of her life — leave husband and daughter behind and move to Russia with me! But the Russians wouldn't go for it. I guess they'd heard about Mom!"

The free-lancer's blessing is also his curse. Independence can be as much a burden as a boon. For dancers, in Canada especially, it is a fight, often to the professional bitter end, not to be typed to one style.

"Sometimes faking it is an art in itself. I'm often confident but terrified"

And if you want to and can do more than simply dance, the fight is yet more complicated. Too often a double or triple talent is a double or triple curse. A famous Canadian critic once said with all sincerity: "If you can dance — don't sing. And if you must dance and sing — don't act!" Canada, it seems, is reluctant to encourage stars — as if to succeed in show business were somehow a gaudy achievement. And to be able to do more than one thing well is considered "showy".

Jeff Hyslop, like so many others, had to leave Canada to be "recognized".

"I Can Do That" — even before the song became one of Jeff's signature pieces from *A Chorus Line* it became his personal philosophy. Jeff still suffers from one weakness. He hates to turn down work. The only criteria Jeff uses in accepting jobs is that they be different from what he's done before. When Jeff toured with *A Chorus Line* from 1977-79, he played three different roles in London, England, Toronto, New York, San Francisco and

other major US cities. It was in this blockbuster hit musical that Jeff Hyslop burst into the national and international limelight.

"I Can Do That" was one of Jeff's front-flipping, show-stopping solos. His jubilant voice easily reached the back of the theatre as he sang the story of a little boy who knew he had to be a dancer.

His earliest stage engagements were in the chorus of *Rigoletto* and *Aida* for the Vancouver Opera. Then Jesus in *Godspell*, Dick in *Dames at Sea*, the lead dancer in *Gypsy*, *Carousel* and many more — all in Vancouver.

Jeff wanted to do more and be more.

"I'd still like to meet the people who think they know what Canadian audiences want — especially at the CBC"

"I Can Do That" — it's an apt motto, one that any free-lance performer has to be able to say and believe. Dancers especially must be able to do it all. It's an attitude for Jeff Hyslop that teeters between confidence and bravado. Any artist who doesn't believe in his own self-worth will never convince an audience he is worthy of their time and money. Jeff, who is known for his high kicks and smooth moves on stage, both as a dancer and as a choreographer, never appears to be in a hurry off stage. Sometimes you wonder if this outer calm reflects total inner control or its opposite, a precariously repressed panic.

"Sometimes faking it is an art in itself. I'm often confident but terrified.

Whenever I've been scared to do something I've always known that's exactly the right thing for me to do. It's like an internal dare. Cowardice is something I've always hated the most in my life."

Being a free-lance dancer means living an unglamorous gypsy existence — hotels, airplanes, buses, trains, bad food, loneliness and fatigue. It soon stops being exciting. It's taken its toll on Jeff in different ways. He had an earlier bout with pneumonia and now has a frustratingly low tolerance to illness. Jeff is often feeling less than in tip top shape but has never missed or diminished a performance because of it.

"Fortunately I love to travel. I would like to do it with 14 trunks and three servants. But one smart suitcase is more my style — for now!"

From 1968, at age 17, to 1971, Jeff gave up the free-lance life and joined the Charlottetown Festival. It allowed him the greatest scope in performing — and to

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The Clifford E. Lee Foundation, in cooperation with The Banff Centre School of Fine Arts will again be offering the annual award established in 1978 to encourage the development of Canadian choreography.

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Submissions will be adjudicated on the basis of existing works, supporting references, together with proposals for a new work to be premiered as part of The Banff Festival Dance Presentation.

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fresh audiences. He played Gilbert in the Festival production of *Anne of Green Gables* at Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan and at New York City Center.

Jeff Hyslop grew up in television's golden age and was an avid fan — but not of the usual kids' shows such as *Lassie* or *Flipper*. Jeff loved the entertainment shows, *Ed Sullivan*, *American Bandstand*, the amateur talent shows.

"I knew I could do what they were doing on these shows. Thank God other people thought so too!"

Jeff was the lead dancer in a number of TV variety shows — *The Tommy Hunter Comedy Hour*, *Miss Teen Canada*. He was a regular on *The Raes* series.

"Some of the TV shows I was on were real turkey meat — but I don't like to think my contribution to those shows was."

**"If I told him to dance on his fingers
and sing with his toes he'd be able to
do it . . . and beautifully"**

Hyslop has appeared as guest star on many TV specials in Canada, the US and England. He has worked with Anne Murray, André Gagnon, René Simard — and Karen Kain.

"I really admire Jeff and the scope of his talent", says Canada's favourite ballerina. "I enjoy working with him a lot. He accomplishes what all dancers, all performers, aspire to do — make it look easy, whether it's ballet or jazz. He basically just likes to have a good time. When we first worked together on the Genie Awards some five years ago we were Fred and Ginger. We started to laugh the first day we worked together. We just finished working together (in *The Soldier's Tale* at Roy Thompson Hall) — we're still laughing."

Jeff's dancing has been influenced by many people — Astaire, Kelly and two other gentlemen he had the pleasure of working with — Ray Bolger and Donald O'Connor. And by a contemporary hero of Jeff's who worked with him in the Burt Bacharach Special in London — Bette Midler.

Jeff was finally given his own CBC Super-special in 1980 — the internationally acclaimed *Dancin' Man*.

"I had always dreamt of performing on television, and when I did that I dreamt of performing on a national special with big name stars and when I did that I wanted it all to happen on my own special! It's important to have that challenge, the stimulation of the next hurdle. But I had to push and push for it. I wanted *Dancin'*

Man to be something I had seen very little of on CBC — pure entertainment! I'm very proud of *Dancin' Man*."

The show was produced in 1980 with guest stars Karen Kain, Frank Augustyn, Ann Reinking and recent Tony award winner, Honi Coles. It was also nominated for two Actra Awards, for best writing and (Jeff) for best performance.

Ironically, *Dancin' Man* was an instance of when the show almost didn't go on. The pas de deux Ann Ditchburn choreographed for Hyslop and Karen Kain was a steamy duet of writhing bodies. One week before the show was to be aired the censors pulled it. Only fine negotiations saved it.

"We nearly lost the Prairies on that one. It was a very hot issue over a very hot pas de deux. There should have been a camera at rehearsals — we would have lost the Maritimes too. But the audiences loved it. I'd still like to meet the people who think they know what Canadian audiences want — especially at the CBC."

Dancin' Man has since been sold to over 18 countries, from Ireland to South Africa and including the United States and England.

Not many performers can cross media the way Jeff Hyslop does. Whether with the National Tap Dance Company as the lead in *The Tin Soldier* or as the star of his own Ritz Cracker commercials — Jeff can do that!

Currently he is capturing the hearts and minds of pre-schoolers everywhere as the star of his own successful television series *Today's Special*, produced by TV Ontario, and recently sold to the United States.

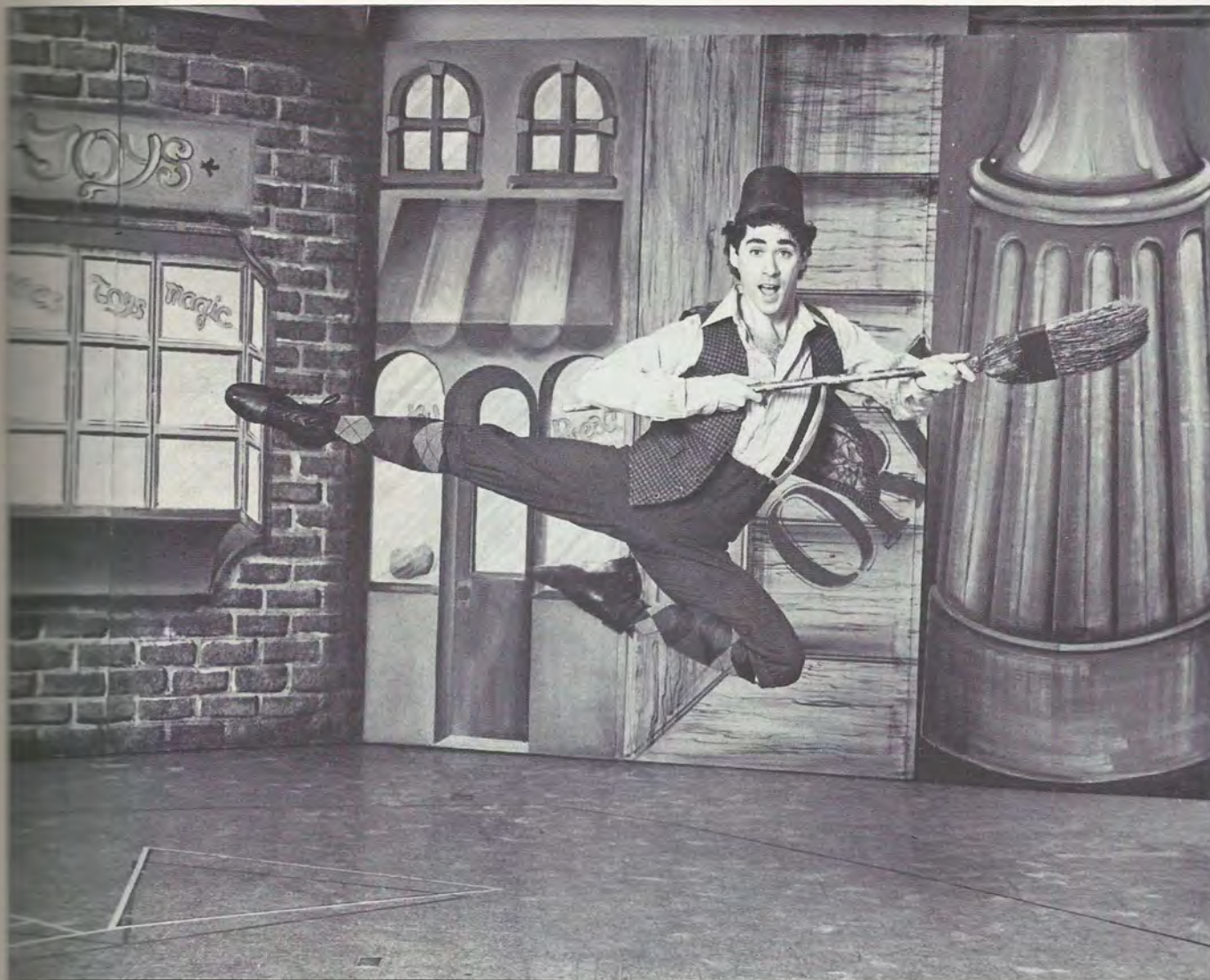
The "performance bug" is different from the "dance bug". Some dancers hate to perform; some performers hate to dance. Some hate the stage; others hate TV.

"I love to do it all. Television allows me to move far more people and do more of everything I like."

**"Cowardice is something I've always
hated the most in my life"**

Today's Special is set in a department store after closing. Jeff plays Jeff, a department store mannequin who comes to life when he is wearing a magic hat. It's sort of a cross between *Frosty the Snowman* and *Sesame Street* — teaching basic concepts and definitions in an entertaining way.

In 1982 *Today's Special* won the Gold Plaque for Best Educational Children's Program at the Chicago Film Festival. Having done approximately 70 of these shows, Jeff shows no sign of slowing



Jeff Hyslop in the National Tap Dance Company of Canada's production: *The Tin Soldier*, December 1980.

down. "It's one sure way my daughter gets to see me."

The free-lance life has taken its toll on Jeff Hyslop, husband and father. Jeff is married to Vancouver-born singer and actress Ruth Nichol. They have one daughter, Gemma, aged 7. It has not been an easy road for the Hyslops keeping two show business careers and a family together.

"Ruth and I have a very difficult dilemma resolved in the easiest way for me. Ruth has always sacrificed her career for mine, for our family and for the kind of life we want for us with Gemma."

Jeff's earliest heroes were Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly. It's no surprise that Jeff always wanted to be in the movies. He has been in two films so far. The first was as a lead dancer in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, filmed in Israel and choreographed by Robert Iscove.

"Jeff Hyslop", says the Canadian-born choreographer, is one of the most facile

dancers I have ever worked with. If I told him to dance on his fingers and sing with his toes he'd be able to do it.... and beautifully. And more than that, the camera loves him".

Jeff's second film is the soon-to-be-released *The Wars* directed by Robin Phillips — formerly director of the Stratford Festival and now the director of Theatre London in London, Ontario. *The Wars* was another new challenge for Jeff. There was no dancing or singing — just straight acting.

"Of course I was very scared so I knew it was the right thing for me to do. I knew I'd turn in a performance I would be proud of with Robin directing or I'd still be out in that mud field with Robin yelling 'Do it again please, Jeffrey!'".

The curse and the blessing of the free-lance life. As soon as Jeff and family were settled in their beautiful Rosedale, Toronto apartment they had to move to Vancouver — to go where the work is.

They have moved six times in the last two and a half years. Just as they were settled in Vancouver Jeff accepted Robin Phillips' invitation to join Theatre London as actor, choreographer and dancer. Ruth knew she unpacked too soon.

Dancers know their performing careers are more finite than most. The mortality of every dancer looms just behind them like a shadow you can always see out of the corner of an eye.

Jeff Hyslop has now embarked on a whole new dimension in his career, as a stage actor in a repertory company, a company which, at last, may enable him to have the freedom to do it all.

"As long as I'm honest with myself and with the people in my life, it will reflect in my work. It's all just a matter of responsibility and not being afraid, isn't it?"

Photo-Gallery: Chris Randle



Jennifer Mascall

Chris Randle was born in Vancouver and raised both in the West Coast city and, for a period, in Montreal. He first became interested in photography while working on a cruise ship to Alaska: "It was too beautiful not to take pictures". Randle then studied photography at the Vancouver Community College and now works for one of the city's large commercial studios.

In the late seventies, Randle began photographing the contact improvisation

Originaire de Vancouver, Chris Randall a vécu dans cette ville et également pendant un certain temps à Montréal. Il a commencé à s'intéresser à la photographie alors qu'il travaillait sur un bateau de croisière à destination de l'Alaska. Le paysage était tellement impressionnant qu'il a voulu le capturer en photo. Et même maintenant, son désir serait de passer son temps à voyager et prendre des photos. Randall a suivi un cours de photographie au Vancouver Community College et travaille à présent pour un important studio commercial à Vancouver. Il s'intéresse aux divers aspects de la photographie et s'est rapproché de la danse à la fin des années 70 grâce à des amis, le groupe Fulcrum, qui faisaient de la contact-improvisation. Plus récemment, Randall a travaillé avec les danseurs du Terminal City Dance Research et avec le groupe expérimental EDAM. Photographier des danseurs offre à Chris Randall un changement et une occasion de s'exprimer artistiquement. Il envisage la photographie de la danse dans une optique différente de celle des danseurs qui, eux, se concentrent sur la position de leur corps dans l'image. Le photographe, lui, recherche l'effet d'ensemble. Randall perçoit la danse comme une série de tableaux animés plutôt qu'une série fluide de mouvements. Pour lui, la danse apporte l'élément humain essentiel qu'il recherche dans son travail.

group Fulcrum. More recently he began to work with the dancers of Terminal City Dance Research and with the experimental group, EDAM. Although Randle enjoys many different kinds of photographic work and would love to spend his time travelling and taking pictures he looks on dance as, "an interesting way to be creatively uncommercial".

Dance is a very difficult medium to work within. Too frequently images are gone before I'm even aware of them. During a rehearsal or performance it's impossible to control anything — totally different from the studio. The challenge makes a really good dance shot very rewarding."



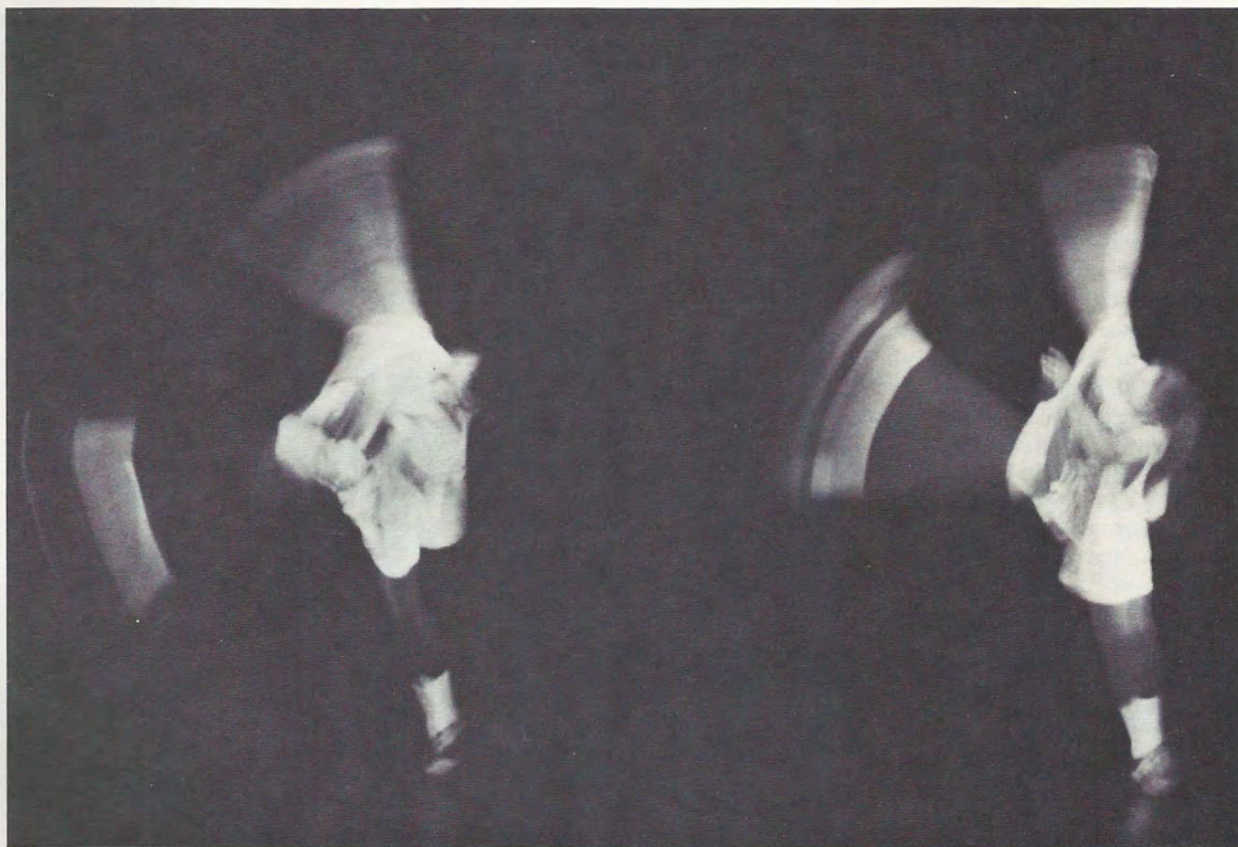
Savannah Walling



Karen Rimmer

Randle, like most dance photographers, has discovered that what he looks for in a photograph is not necessarily the same as what the dancers want. "I'm concerned with lighting, lines, emotion and backgrounds whereas they are generally interested in what their bodies are doing. I function in images and dance to me seems to be a series of animations rather than a fluid continuum."

Randle uses a Hasselblad and strobe lighting for studio work and a Pentax LX 35mm camera for performance and rehearsal work. He does all his own darkroom work and, unusually, prefers to use color negative film all the time from which he can make black and white prints on Panalure paper if desired.



Lola McLaughlin and Barbara Bourget.



Helen Clarke



Poster for Terminal City Dance Research.

The Thinking Foot

Teaching Dance Literacy In School

GRANT STRATE

Most observers would agree that school children should experience dance as a joyful, personally liberating activity. Their teachers should encourage the free exploration of movement. Dance, most would agree, should and does carry a wonderful potential for the healthy personal and physical development of young people. Unfortunately, however, the dance experience of children in school does not, as it would seem, equip them to recognize dance as an art form. They are not encouraged to appreciate the power, beauty and social significance of dance and fail therefore to develop a love for the art which they can carry into their adult lives.

Dance, as it occurs in our schools, is too often treated as a diversion. Music and the visual arts start by being offered for their recreational value but their teaching is intended to include the aesthetic dimension. The same ought to be true of dance. The fact that its aesthetic purposes are generally neglected is not hard to explain.

Children are not equipped in school to recognize dance as an art form

The beginnings of art education or of any education for that matter require the best, most knowledgeable and sensitive teachers. Sadly, however, dance in our Canadian school system is, with few exceptions, regarded as an offshoot of physical education. To be an accredited dance teacher in the school system the usual course is to pass through a university physical education program where little or no instruction is offered about how to teach dance as an art rather than as a mere activity — and, one might add, a primarily female activity.

Both university programs and the structural biases of most school systems conspire to relegate dance to a peripheral position in the overall education of children. Worse yet, the professional artists appear to show little interest in what goes on in schools. Their prejudice is that what schools do in art and what artists do are alien and unrelated.

Perhaps part of the problem derives from the very general misconception of what dance as an art is all about. Dance,

Les élèves des écoles canadiennes ne sont pas sensibilisés au fait que la danse est autre chose qu'une forme amusante d'activité physique. Dès les premières années de leur scolarité, ils reçoivent en général une éducation musicale ou artistique rudimentaire avec des cours de technique et d'appréciation de l'art dont la danse est exclue. Les enseignants responsables des programmes de danse dans les écoles viennent souvent de facultés d'éducation physique et voient la danse comme une simple activité physique plutôt qu'un art. De leur côté, les danseurs professionnels s'intéressent rarement à l'éducation des enfants dans les écoles. Le grand public a par ailleurs une conception erronée de la danse comme forme d'art qui est souvent considérée comme une expression spontanée. On devrait apprendre aux élèves comment la danse peut être utilisée comme moyen de communication. Mais leurs professeurs doivent auparavant y être préparés et le système scolaire doit changer d'optique envers la danse.

in the popular view, is the "feelingest" of all the arts, a natural, totally spontaneous release of energy. Dance, after all, is said to be the oldest of all the arts. Therefore, surely, it is also the most egalitarian of the arts, accessible to anyone at any time as the material for the art act, without recourse to other materials. Then again, in dance the body is the material and expression of the art, producing a quantity of highly personalized, emotionally charged work. It's a powerful medium but it can easily be misread, producing a great deal of aesthetic confusion for its audiences.

Education is the essential precursor to understanding

The facts, however, are rather different. For all its visceral power, dance also exists as an independent art form with its own language. It is capable of abstract expression. All art forms have their own language, their own special kinds of literacy. In the most general sense, art may be defined as a manipulation of natural materials to create symbols of communicative power, both emotional and intellectual. Literacy in a particular art form implies the intelligent and consistent ordering of otherwise arbitrary elements.

A work of art also implies an engaged receiver of the artist's message. Appreciation rests on an understanding of the literature of the art form whether it be

music, poetry or dance. And art does not exist in a cultural vacuum. Aesthetic education requires an understanding of the historical milieu, the social and political context in which the art exists or, historically, in which it was created.

The literacy of dance is arguably less clear than those of other primary arts because so often it has been attached to the literacy of music and narrative. Even so, it is, for example, quite possible to appreciate the academic code of classical ballet as a clear literacy fully satisfying in itself as an aesthetic experience, given a degree of preknowledge. That preknowledge implies work and study on our part. Education is the essential precursor to understanding.

A plea for better teachers

How, to offer other examples, could one hope to experience the expressive intent of, say, Javanese, Balinese or Indian classical dance without paying some attention to the conventions of those forms?

The question is at what stage do you begin to teach art literacy? Some authorities insist that art in the schools should be entirely experiential but how few students in a creative writing class have not also been instructed in the mysteries of rhyming pentameters or blank verse? Visual art teachers point to their colour circles and hold forth on the principles of perspective in drawing. Music teachers

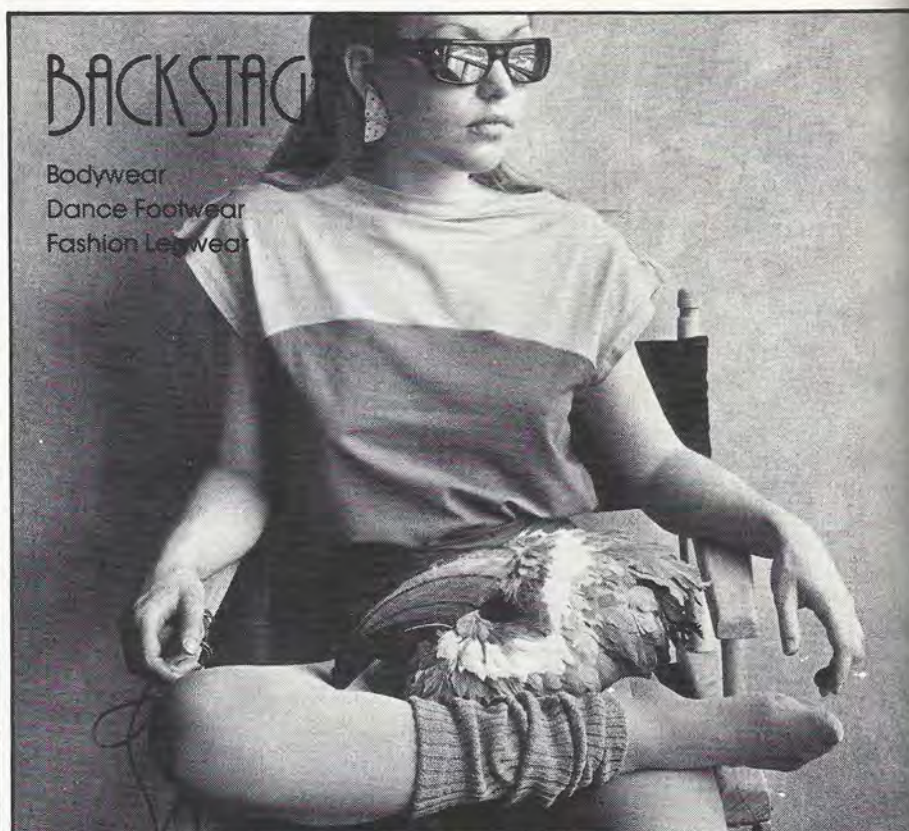
often explain the rudiments of music notation.

Dance, sadly, rarely gets this kind of treatment. Children experience it as a personal activity without learning that dance is a literate art.

The solution, which will necessarily require some radical changes throughout both the school and university systems, is for teachers to augment the dance program offered to their pupils with increasing amounts of information about the way in which dance can be shaped into a communicative medium. It will require better educated dance teachers, particularly at the elementary level, teachers who fully understand what dance is as an art form. These will be people who have acknowledged that there is no dichotomy between mind and body, that moving, thinking and feeling are simultaneous and combine as one process.

None of this need detract from the pleasure children get from being allowed to dance for the sheer joy of moving. What it will give them is something they can take into the adult world so that dance will not be relegated to the distant memory of their schooldays.

Professor Strate's article is based on a paper of the same title given at the 1983 Dance in Canada conference in Saskatoon.



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DANCE IN CANADA CANADA DANCE AWARD

Dance in Canada Association is pleased to announce a call for nominations for the first annual **CANADA DANCE AWARD** to be presented at the **1984 DANCE IN CANADA CONFERENCE**, Toronto, June 26-July 1, 1984.

This Award has been established to recognize "significant contribution to the development of dance in Canada" by one or more individuals. The Award may be presented posthumously.

Dance in Canada will appoint a Jury each year comprised of professionals representing a broad cross-section of disciplines and geographic location in the dance community. The Jury will review the nominees and, if appropriate, recommend to the Board of Directors a recipient for approval.

Deadline for nominations is November 30, 1983. Copies of nomination form are available from: Dance in Canada Association, 38 Charles St. East, Toronto M4Y 1T1.

DANSE AU CANADA PRIX DANSE CANADA

L'Association Danse au Canada a le plaisir d'annoncer qu'elle lance un appel aux nominations pour le premier **PRIX** annuel **DANSE CANADA** qui sera présenté à l'occasion du Colloque Danse au Canada 1984 à Toronto, du 26 juin au 1er juillet 1984.

Ce Prix a été institué pour honorer un ou plusieurs individus dont la contribution au développement de la danse au Canada a été particulièrement notoire. Le prix pourra être présenté à titre posthume.

L'ADAC nommera a chaque année un jury de professionnels représentant largement la diversité des disciplines et des lieux géographiques de la communauté de la danse. Le jury examinera les candidatures et, le cas échéant, recommandera un lauréat au conseil d'administration pour approbation. Date limite de soumission des candidatures: le 30 novembre 1983. Pour obtenir des formulaires de candidature, s'adresser à l'ADAC, 38 Charles St. East, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 1T1.

Dressing the Dance

Toronto Dance Theatre's Denis Joffre

PAT KAISER

Denis Joffre of the Toronto Dance Theatre is probably the most imaginative costume designer creating for the Canadian dance stage. Yet in the wake of this year's Canadian and American debuts of James Kudelka's *In Paradisum* for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens for which he created the costumes, Joffre opened two newspapers to discover two highly symbolic — if predictable — inaccuracies. In

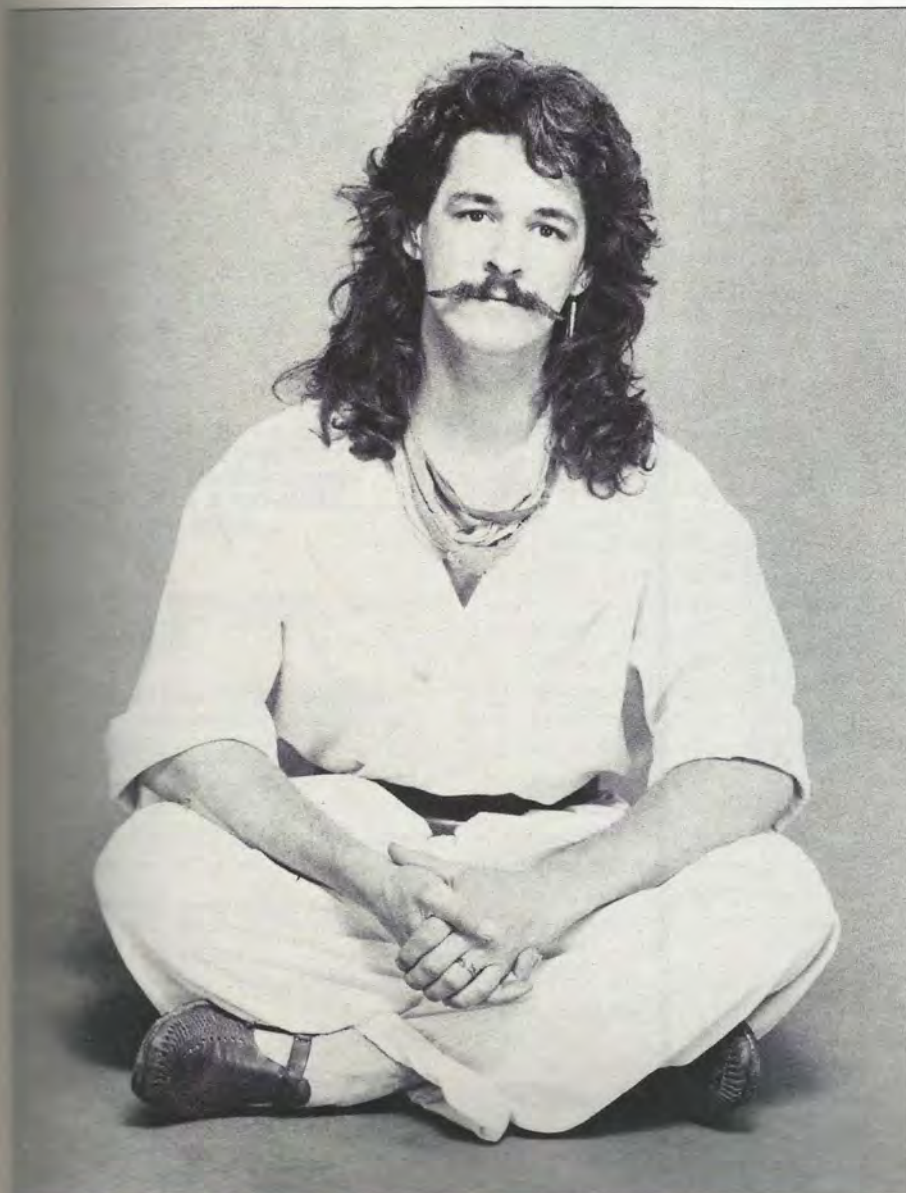
Montreal, a writer found him a brand new Christian name. In New York, a reviewer restored his proper first name to him and then thoughtfully anglicized it, as if correcting a spelling error.

The irony is that despite the high calibre of his work, he was probably fortunate to find the press mentioning him at all in more than a typical uncredited one-word reference to costume colour. It's as if the

only ones of any importance in a dance collaboration are the choreographers, the dancers, and stretching it a bit, perhaps the composer. The costume designer, like the set and lighting designers, is a neglected species.

Joffre relays only slight disappointment and utterly no surprise over the slipshod mistreatment of his name. "Right or wrong, I get great inspiration from being recognized. It spurs on the creative adrenalin", he explains with a grin. "However, it would have been really nice if they had gotten the name right."

Low-keyed amusement may be the only recourse to a traditional injustice, but Joffre is no artistic featherweight. He occupies a highly exclusive category, that of both costume and fashion designer, with his own couturier label and clientele. And certainly he is no visual wallflower; the eccentric sophistication, fine detailing and depth of high fashion are never far



Denis Joffre

Denis Joffre est considéré comme l'un des créateurs de costumes les plus originaux dans le monde de la danse au Canada. Le récent succès de ses costumes pour les Grands Ballets Canadiens pour "In Paradisum", chorégraphié par James Kudelka, n'a rien de surprenant pour ceux qui ont vu les créations qu'il a réalisées pour le Toronto Dance Theatre.

Denis a étudié la danse à Ottawa, mais il s'est dirigé vers la couture et la création de modèles lorsqu'il s'est rendu compte que ses débuts tardifs dans la danse, à l'âge de 18 ans, auraient limité sa progression artistique et professionnelle. Ses créations de mode ont attiré l'attention de David Earle du Toronto Dance Theatre qui lui a demandé de créer les costumes de "Frost Watch" en 1980. Joffre devenait par la suite créateur de costumes en résidence et costumier principal au TDT.

C'est son expérience de la mode qui donne aux costumes de Denis Joffre leur style distinctif.

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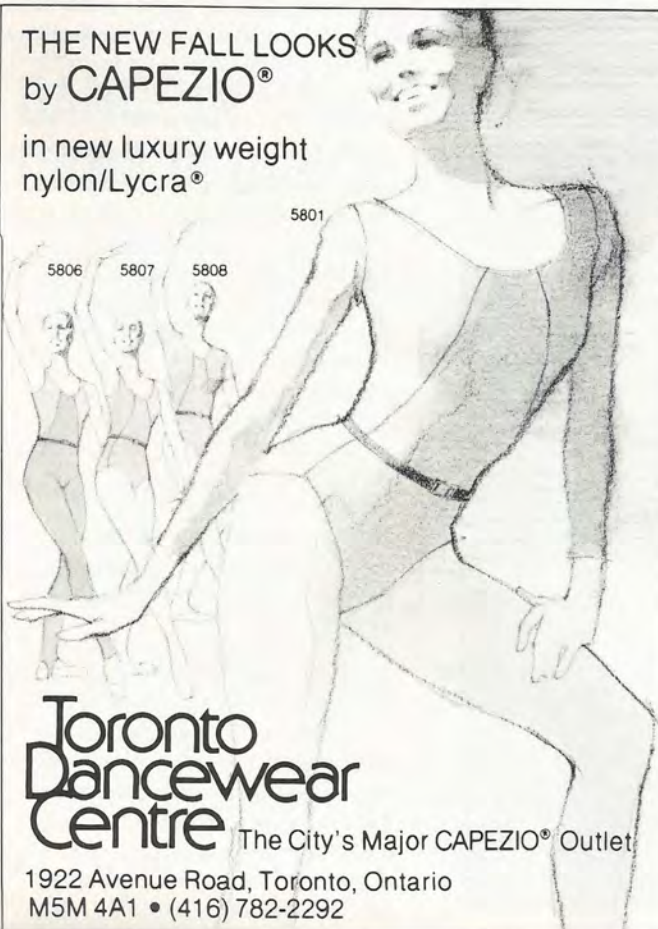
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away, either from the dance stage, the runway — or his own attire. He sports a warty personal image; he wears his mustache waxed, his pants mottled and frayed, his neck scarves tied and arranged in more ways than you would think possible, and a sweatshirt whose designer initials, not being his own, are fastidiously obliterated by safety pins.

In his three years as TDT's designer and wardrobe master, Joffre's flare and originality have been fundamental in forging the definitive "look" of the company. Joffre remains true to a choreographer's spirit and aim while filtering that aim through his own unique style. He can take the basic unitard and transform it, with a back dipped a little lower, a geometric plecing or smocky twist in front, a little draping at the ankle. He has handled anything his choreographers have thrown at him, from the rich black velour loungewear of *Fleet*, Christopher House's study in time and texture, to Patricia Beatty's green halter gown with its gold chainmail insert for her obscurely dramatic *Rite for Future Time*, to Charles Flanders' bizarrely elegant half-man half-woman evening attire for his *Androgyny Mon Amour*.

The Joffre-David Earle combination is perhaps the most potent. Towards realizing Earle's vision of heaven and hell in *Exit, Nightfall*, Joffre created a startling image: flesh-tone unitards, each emblazoned with a large inverted black triangle whose tip plunges down through the crotch.

"Erotic on a subconscious level", remarks Joffre, "the triangle is also a classic religious symbol of the trinity. Death has both elements".

Flare and originality forge a definitive "look" for TDT

Audiences and dancers alike find his creations compelling, and it is the *haute couture* side of Joffre's professional life that gives his stage work its distinctiveness. There are very few designers doing both and those who most readily come to mind occupy, in Joffre's words, "Mount Olympus".

"Of course, there's Halston for Martha Graham — that's legend — and word has it that the Shaw Festival has nabbed Leo Chevalier."

The reputations of these two are as fashion designers first and foremost. Joffre's dual identities run parallel, with his stage designs keeping him close to a first and earliest love, dance and theatre. He danced in and produced costumes for high school productions, but formal dance



James Kudelka's *In Paradisum* — Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

instruction did not begin until he was 18, at the Classical Ballet Studio of Ottawa. Three years later, Joffre found himself in Dayton, Ohio, as a full-time soloist with a semi-professional company. It was a tenure that came to a self-imposed close after only six months.

"I was very homesick, very disillusioned. I knew the most I could ever hope for was to be a soloist or a demi-soloist with a better company — and then what? And so I quit cold turkey."

In his high school days he had apprenticed with various Ottawa tailors and in Dayton had made ends meet by doing alterations in boutiques. With performing behind him, he considered doing stage costuming, but as a self-confessed romantic, "I took the very classic, very corny attitude. If I couldn't be on the stage, I didn't want to be anywhere near it".

Returning to Ottawa, he married, took a year of professional fashion training at Richard Robinson's School of Haute Couture and Design, and with the annual award for best student design under his belt, he opened an alterations shop and soon developed a clientele for custom designs.

The year was 1977, and Joffre got the bug to move again, this time a little further than Dayton. The Joffres sold everything they owned and, donning army fatigues and backpacks, trekked through Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. He

maintains it was the best thing he ever did. An intended two months ballooned into nine.

He returned to settle in Toronto, toting with him an inspired new direction that his designs would take both offstage and on, a taste for the unstructured drapery lines that look party to a bustling Moroccan marketplace — a fondness most fully embodied in David Earle's *Realm*.

In 1980, his work came to the attention of the Toronto Dance Theatre not long after he had opened a small studio and introduced his private label. TDT commissioned him for an evening of three works. For Earle's *Frost Watch*, a searing depiction of two people in mourning, Joffre dressed both in long skirts, putting the woman in a kimono top and leaving the man bare-chested.

The piece entered the repertoire; the costumes figure crucially in the reason. Two years later, the *Globe and Mail's* Alina Gildiner, reviewing an evening of Earle's work, said of *Frost Watch*: "Denis Joffre's costumes — blocks of pure deep colour cut in modified Japanese style with the definition of cloisonné art — echo Earle's movements". Gildiner went on to add, "Indeed, all of Joffre's costumes for the piece are evidence of the same sensibility of purity of line and design that Earle has".

"*Frost Watch*", remarks Joffre, "is one of my best in terms of emotional representation, of what I'm feeling about

something. It's also one of the best examples of my work; very simple, plain, very precise".

The year after *Frost Watch*, having resigned himself to a return to the world of the dance stage he had once vowed to avoid, he was engaged as resident costume designer and wardrobe master. He is responsible for all costumes, design, pattern drafting, sewing and costuming laundry and maintenance.

The TDT premises, a renovated building contains a small showroom that is devoted to Joffre's fashion designs. "My fashion design is personal statement, as the designer has complete control. My costume design is interpretation. It's a collaboration, with someone else having the final say. I feel the designer's basic duty is to interpret the dance instead of just facilitating the image. If a choreographer tells me the exact shape he wants, the exact colour groupings and fabrics and detailing and so on, of course I'll do it but I won't be happy with the restrictions."

The haute couture side of Joffre's professional life gives his stage work its distinctiveness.

Made-to-measure to Joffre's philosophy was the complex challenge recently issued to him by James Kudelka for *In Paradisum*, a ballet with the theme of death as a transitory state.

"James came to me with a bit of rehearsal tape and very specific images in resource materials, but almost nothing as a formed eventual image of the dance. The piece was conveyed to me, at that point, in verbal explanation. I was allowed to go away and think about it, to let it grow in my own way over several months."

The roles in Kudelka's new work are not defined sexually but are interchangeable between male and female dancers. *In Paradisum* is also rooted in an urban, familial context. Joffre therefore came up with circle skirts for both sexes — "a bit of the *Frost Watch* imagery", he comments, "but taken in an androgynous direction". He wanted a continuity in design but an individuality from costume to costume. "It occurred to me that we search for the personal image by focussing on the neckline. And so I gave each unitard an individualized neckline. I cut them from a cotton-Lycra blend — a fabric seen in the classroom but rarely on the stage. It has an ideally organic look, it's like a natural extension of the skin."

The success of his designs for *In Paradisum* are making 1983 a banner year for both sides of Joffre's professional life.

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David Earle's *Exit, Night Fall* — Toronto Dance Theatre.

In the spring, his first fashion show, a prestigious private affair for 150 people, was followed fittingly by a show for Toronto's Japanese Cultural Centre, at which he was the featured designer.

"One of the things I didn't expect was to

evolve in both fields at once", says Joffre, with satisfaction. "One isn't shooting ahead of the other."

Undoubtedly, these days the excuses for getting Denis Joffre's name wrong in print are growing thin.

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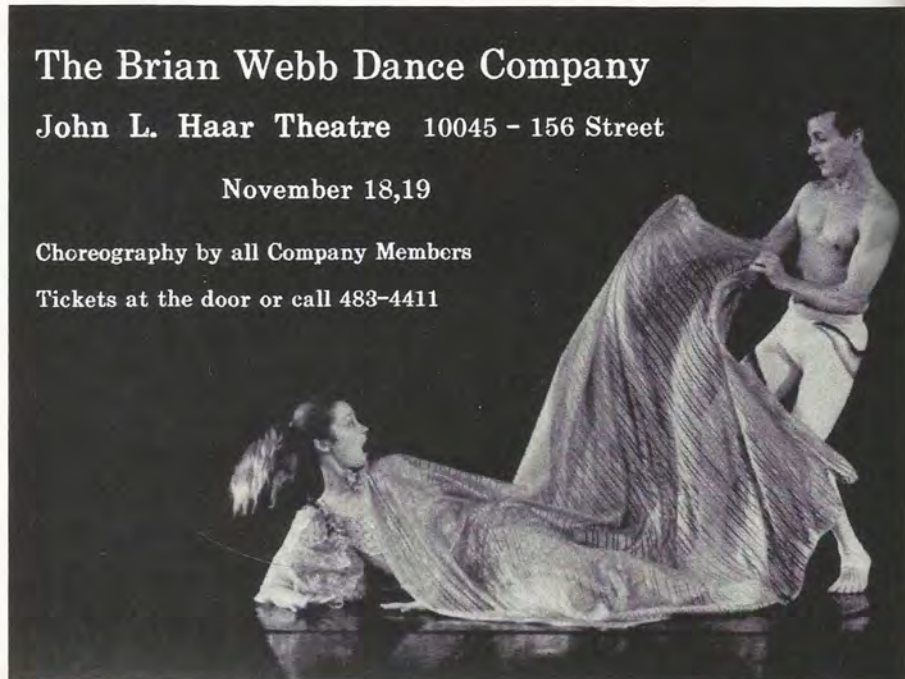
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Ashley Page in Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Valley of Shadows* — The Royal Ballet.

“Jennifer Penney Is Indisposed”

A Canadian Dance Critic's Notes From Abroad

GRAHAM JACKSON

March 28, London: There are no fruit and vegetable shops in Covent Garden anymore — but there are boutiques and stalls selling just about everything else, from designer china to recordings of rare Broadway shows. From mid-morning to night every evening (except Sunday), the shopkeepers ply their trade here; they are never without customers. People throng

Inigo Jones' newly-renovated market and the neighbouring streets until the last minute. Most are shopping, but many are blissfully content just to sit (or stand) and watch, hail an acquaintance, quaff a pint or two, toss a few pence into an itinerant flautist's open case, take a peek at the Larry Rivers exhibit at the little gallery in upper Floral Street and/or read *The*

Evening Standard. In the midst of all this activity — and active indolence — serenely inconspicuous sits the Royal Opera House.

It shares the quarter quite easily with its commercially minded neighbours; it asks for no more important role than just to be there. For about half an hour after the curtain rises on the evening's opera or



Timothy Page in Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Valley of Shadows* — The Royal Ballet.

ballet, the shopkeepers continue to hawk their wares. They take little or no notice of their revered neighbour's schedule and yet one can sense that they are deeply attuned to its very heartbeat; even though many have never been inside its great doors, they are among the reverent. Just so, the lobby and staircase and chandeliered Crush Bar and orchestra stalls and balconies — every part of the Opera House itself — have long ago absorbed the rhythms of the adjoining streets and arcades and squares. Which is probably what makes the Royal Opera House the greatest theatre of its kind in the world.

March 29, before the show: It is the first in a series of Proms Concerts tonight. The red plush seats of the orchestra stalls have been removed in order to admit about 300 ballet-lovers at £3 (\$5.50) a piece. Even now the queue to purchase the treasured places on the carpet curves snake-like through the rainy grey square fronting the old market building. At six o'clock, one and a half hours before curtain, people just released from their nine-to-five shifts excitedly join lovers, spouses, friends, who have been standing in the rain since two or three that afternoon. Under clusters of black umbrellas, the reunited share hard-boiled eggs and bread, oranges and chocolate from sparkling gold and blue papers, and coffee, or more likely tea, from thermoses.

Inside the theatre, many who, unwilling to face queues, inclement weather or carpet-squatting, have purchased regular seats, come early to partake of similar picnics — sandwiches, *crudités*, ices and coffee purchased from one of the theatre's food bars. Some of the picnickers are businessmen, others secretaries and office boys, still others hairdressers, antique-store clerks, university students, librarians. None of them has gone home to change. They have come with the faint smell of the office, study or shop about them. Many carry briefcases, some peruse sheafs of paper, library books or professional literature as they consume their supper. (The English go to great lengths not to appear to scrutinize others too closely.) The reading stops however for the beer or wine that celebrates supper's end. I find no evidence of great expectation among them; they seem, as far as I can discern, to possess no notion that what they are going to see is — as the Italians would have it — *un' spettacolo*, or that they are participants in a Grand Event. Going to the ballet simply what these people do.

At first, I put my own excitement down to the tourist in me. Then, I realize that much of the tingling I'm feeling is habit:

the *frisson* of the theatre-goer who has been taught to keep art and life separate. I have always felt during these pre-performance vigils as though I were on the verge of entering an exotic, forbidden Never-Neverland. Perhaps, I think as I look about me, *this* explains why Canadians enjoy no continuously evolving cultural life — we haven't yet figured out that culture goes with hard-boiled eggs and briefcases.

March 29, after the show: I have been to London four times for extended periods and during those sojourns I have seen about 20 performances by the Royal Ballet or its relative, the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet. But I've only ever seen Canadian-born Jennifer Penney dance once — as the heroine of MacMillan's opulent *Manon*. Most of the time I enter the Opera House knowing she's scheduled to perform only to be confronted with the notice board in the lobby apologizing, "The Management regrets that Jennifer Penney is indisposed. Her role in _____ will be danced by _____." The frequency of this apology has given it the status of a landmark to which I can always count on returning with each visit. Tonight I have not been disappointed: Jennifer Penney will not be dancing *La Fin du Jour*.

There's something about the apology, the wording, I suppose, that seems to sum up the style of English ballet — its good manners, its diplomacy, its tastefulness. The star of the evening, however, is not at all polite. It is a revival of George Balanchine's *The Prodigal Son* with its foreboding Rouault decor and vehement score by Prokofiev. A young dancer named Ashley Page (who will dance just about everything I see this season) has the title role and glamorous Genesis Rosato plays the Morticia-like Siren. The performance as a whole is tough and angular without being remorselessly Art Deco and Page demonstrates a visceral power I am not used to seeing on the Covent Garden stage, at least from one of the Royal Ballet's own. After the limp, white rose-petalled *Bayadère* that preceded it, *this Prodigal Son* is a piece of dynamite.

The evening closes with a more characteristically English entertainment, Kenneth MacMillan's Noël Coward toast to the 1930s, *La Fin du Jour*. In place of Jennifer Penney is swan-necked Marguerite Porter. Merle Park is her saucy cohort in a strawberry-red marcelled wig and David Wall and Wayne Eagling, by now the two "old men" of the Royal Ballet, have thankless roles as their partners. (Both men seem to be working too hard; Eagling sports a perpetual grimace.) The dance *is* remorselessly Art Deco; its

hardness, its angularity is extremely brittle, precious. It does, however, convey, more effectively perhaps than a better ballet might do, the determined escapism of an era dogged by financial and political crises. As Merle Park slams shut the door which throughout the ballet has yawned onto a twilight landscape, she sounds the death knell of the 1930s and heralds perhaps the arrival of the first bombers. The audience applauds with patriotic fervour: *La Fin du Jour* is a piece of their history.

April 2: Proms audiences are not as reserved as regular Opera House audiences. The £3 admission makes them almost giddy in their appreciation, but they are nowhere near as vociferous as Canadian cheap-seat audiences. By comparison, they sit on their hands.

I sit on my hands, too, for most of an all-MacMillan evening. It has opened with his recent *Orpheus*, set to the same music Balanchine used so remarkably in the 1940s. MacMillan's impression of the Orpheus-Eurydice legend is dominated by a gold-runged tower designed by Nicholas Georgiadis (the designer of Nureyev's *Sleeping Beauty*) and the soft-core grappling of an angel of Light (Ashley Page) and an Angel of Darkness (Phillip Broomhead). For the rest, Eagling agonizes as Orpheus, Marguerite Porter wafts as Eurydice and a chorus of Furies in flame-hued Folies Bergères costumes, (c. 1948), harrasses them both. It's a tatty, trite vision and MacMillan's use of Stravinsky's music feels like burglary. The audience is confused, but is willing to give the dance the benefit of the doubt.

The latest MacMillan opus, *Valley of Shadows*, loosely based on Giorgio Bassani's delicate novel, *The Garden of the Finzi Continis*, and probably Vittorio de Sica's extraordinary film of the same, is worse — maybe the worst ballet MacMillan has ever made. Garden scenes of flirtations, jealousies and domestic misunderstanding alternate with impasto tableaux of suffering in Mauthausen. (For the former, MacMillan has dug up Tchaikovsky's *Souvenirs de Florence*; for the latter, Martinu's *Double Concerto*, the same Tetley used for his ballet *Sphinx*. Does MacMillan now need to depend on other choreographers' musical inspiration?)

The initial shock of the concentration camp setting quickly turns into quiet shudders of disbelief at MacMillan's shamelessness: dancers in ballet slippers and grey and white-striped fatigues dragging one another about the stage in simulations of angst! The garden scenes slide more reluctantly into absurdity



Luciana Savignano and Louis Perrella in rehearsal for Louis Falco's *Lo Spazio di Leonardo*.

(melodrama with generous helpings of caramel) thanks largely to the intelligence of Page in the role of the heroine's seducer. As the curtain descends most of the audience is ecstatic, but I hear — for the first time ever in the Opera House — boos amid the cheers and whistles. In the interval I spot Martin Sherman in the Crush Bar. He is the author of *Bent*, an enormously successful play about the fate of homosexuals under the Nazis, which features a brilliant, affecting final scene set in the quarry at Mauthausen. I wonder if he was one of the outraged who booed.

The evening comes to an end peaceably with Fauré's *Requiem*. I keep wishing the obviously entranced audience could catch Toronto Dance Theatre's version. MacMillan's is no discredit to the choreographer but the modernisms it clearly evokes from him are not well served by the

dancers even though the lovely and versatile Lesley Collier heads the cast.

On my way out of the theatre, I sense elation in the air. The audience streaming forth towards car parks or taxi stands or the nearby Covent Garden tube station brandish their programs like prizes and talk volubly about what they've seen. With mounting enthusiasm the conversation quickly turns to Tandoori cooking and rents in Camden Town and borrowing a car for next weekend's jaunt and Regine Crespin's impending appearance as the Mother Superior in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* at the ROH, but returns to the ballet frequently for a fix. It's not that the ballet has lifted these people out of humdrum lives — a trivializing work such as *Valley of Shadows* could effect no such miracle anyway — but it has made clearer the (latent) possibilities for creativity in

every aspect of their lives. How, I wonder, will I ever go to dance again in Canada?

April 7, Milano: In Milan, the façades of the city's 19th-century apartment houses are salmon, rose, canary, peach, avocado and mustard colours. Sophisticated shades. The façades of the inhabitants, too, are sophisticated. Whether strolling in the Galleria, lounging in chrome and glass pastry shops, shopping at Peck — Milan's equivalent to Harrod's Food Halls, only dearer — or sipping wine in theatre lobbies, the Milanese are an amazingly well turned-out people. Some of them probably haven't got a lira in the bank, but the façade must be served. You have only to saunter down the Via Montenapoleone to see what will be hot in *Vogue* and *GQ* three or four issues hence. At a performance of Friedrich Schiller's Romantic tragedy, *Mary Stuart*, directed by the flamboyant Franco Zeffirelli and starring those two tigresses of the Italian theatre, Rosella Falk (Elisabetta) and Valentina Cortese (Maria), the Milanese bourgeoisie are most impressed by Signora Falk's floor-length fox fur hunting cape.

Dance seems to bring out their passion for surfaces. It provides them with the perfect excuse for physical vanity. Unlike the English, the Milanese see going to the ballet as pre-eminently a social event, one that requires adequate time for preparation. Performances begin at 8:45 or 9 o'clock (officially, that is; the Milanese are always at least half an hour late for everything) so that the rites of toilette can be fully observed.

For Louis Falco's *Lo Spazio di Leonardo* at the Teatro Carcano, the crowd is young (in its 20s) and breathtaking. It's more than their "avant-garde" attire — the girls in rainbow skirts layered like Swiss tortes and the boys in shirts outfitted with epaulettes and zippers and cords that suggest instant transformations, into parachutes, sails, wings perhaps. It's the seductive angle of the head on the neck, the assured way the chest is presented, the flirtation of hips, the eloquence of the hands that clinch their impact on spectators. No wonder dance draws them.

They especially like Falco's work, it flatters their self image. Commissioned by the City fathers to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Leonardo's stay in Milan, *Leonardo's Room* stars one of the two great *prime absolute* of Italian ballet, Luciana Savignano, cavorting through a series of scenes on a da Vinci theme in company with 26 male dancers. The choreography is pretty much what we have come to expect from Falco — a lot of

hanging loose, a lot of baring it — only it's been amplified a hundred times. The scenario concerns a modern boy (a real little boy; children are a favourite past-time among the Milanese) on a bizarre journey through Leonardo-land which includes several references — oblique and otherwise — to Leonardo's drawings and to that city landmark, the *Cenacolo* (*The Last Supper*, housed in the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie). After 10 minutes or so, however, the audience has discarded the scenario like the cone of a *gelato* and is consuming the dancers with great relish. Falco holds a mirror up to them and they prove as vulnerable as Narcissus to the images contained there: Luciana Savignano in black evening dress and veil, the eternal mystery woman, dark, beautiful, irresistibly tragic; young men in loin cloths — eternal Christs; young men in horses masks — eternal studs; young men in birds wings — eternal Ganymedes — and eternally half-naked. At the end of it all, feeling a bit embarrassed, as adults caught indulging childish desires, the spectators demand a bit of significance to relieve their guilt. Always accommodating, Falco gives them a beware-the-holocaust message and a plea for brotherhood — on behalf of Leonardo naturally and accompanied by a disco beat — and the audience leaves the theatre with a graceful swagger.

April 8: The Teatro Nuovo is a jewel of an Art Deco theatre under the Piazza San Babila. Its walls are panelled in a glowing dark wood and the wonderfully comfortable seats — the Italians call them *poltrone*, or armchairs — are upholstered in a velvety material the colour of old gold. The light fixtures which seem both avant-garde and old-fashioned at the same time resemble clusters of glass petals. It is here that La Scala has decided to mount a memorial to a 100 years of ballet, "from Taglioni to Diaghilev". The director is Beppe Menegatti and the star is his wife, Carla Fracci. She will perform 16 excerpts from the Romantic and Neo-Romantic ballet repertoire, assisted by Roland Petit's Denys Gano, a young Roumanian

superstar named Gheorghe Iancu and actress Giulia Lazzarini.

The performance is delayed 45 minutes. When no explanation is tendered, the audience, grown tired of cruising one another, becomes edgy — there is not much ventilation in the Teatro Nuovo, programs have become fans and eyes are flashing but not out of coquettishness. When the curtain finally does go up, nothing is right: sets refuse to fly, Lazzarini forgets her lines (a rather facile dance history lesson) and must rely throughout on her notes; not only that, the sound system distorts her voice so that it sounds as if it were coming through a grater; and the piano, stationed in front of the stage on a level with the audience, blocks the view of people in the dress circle left. Still, there is Carla Fracci, the other great *prima assoluta* of the Italian ballet, and the audience, vociferous in its displeasure with everything else, adores her as it might the Holy Virgin — she is infallible. She is, in fact, extraordinary. The Taglioni mantle suits her especially well. Her partners are good, too, the Roumanian a real spitfire, but the iridescent light she casts on the proceedings nearly defeats their machismo. When the performance finally draws to a close, Serge Lifar makes a surprise appearance on stage to pay tribute to Fracci and to remind the audience, as no overblown text could do, that dance indeed has an honourable history.


It is 12:30 when I finally get out of the theatre and the subways have closed for the night. I have to walk back to my hotel and by the time I arrive, the front door is locked. I ring and while I wait I curse the concert for its length, the municipal government for its train service, the hotel for its lack of trust and finally the Milanese as a race for their self-indulgence and irresponsibility. Once inside, I am able again to accept that inconvenience is a way of being here and, like a Milanese myself, offer a prayer to the ineffable beauty of Carla Fracci.

April 14, Paris: It is not surprising that

painters have always come to Paris to work. The skies alone provide ample challenge to the painter's palette; even on rainy days, Paris skies can come up with a veritable rainbow range of greys — from slate to pearl — to delight and inspire. The Parisians tend to behave as if this were no natural coincidence but some divine favour granted a chosen people. They often seem to live in the sky, in fact, perhaps because they project such an aloofness, from the vantage point of the heavens, they can best play their favourite role — supreme arbiter of taste.

I'm not sure when but recently the Parisians decided that dance from New York is the best there is, so any dancer or company hailing from the Big Apple, regardless of hometown reputation, is given extravagant welcomes in Paris. In just a few years New York dance has carved out a sizeable niche for itself in Paris' rather chilly heart and the devotees come in droves to salute it — as well as their own sensitivity and insightfulness.

The Paris Opéra Ballet, which can boast such fine dancers as Noëlla Pantois, Michel Denard, Wilfride Piolet and the current rage of New York ballet circles, Patric Dupond, has turned the entire month over to a triple bill of American choreographies: Glen Tetley's grounded tribute to John Cranko, *Voluntaries*, which the audience receives as a nice apertif; Alvin Ailey's *Au Bord du Precipice*, a kind of paint-by-numbers portrait of a rock star done-in by drugs and sex (who else but Jim Morrison? — he's buried in Pere Lachaise cemetery), which the audience cannot thank enough; and Andy de Groat's *Nouvelle Lune* (*C'est a dire*), a gorgeous duet for Wilfride Piolet and her brooding husband, Jean Guizerix, which many of the audience loathe to the point of jeers and catcalls. A Parisian friend quickly assures me that the Paris Opéra Ballet crowd doesn't know anything about dance, is no barometer for the dance-going public. In other circumstances he feels sure that the deGroat would be loudly praised.



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I am not sure and my uncertainty is amplified when the next evening I attend a series of supper hour concerts at the Théâtre de la Ville presented by the Centre de Recherche choréographique de l'Opéra de Paris (the Opéra Ballet's experimental wing, in other words), now headed by ex-Ailey dancer, Ulysses Dove. In the lobby before the show, cliques of cool young intellectuals and artists in shades of austere (no salmon or rose or saffron, here) hover warily.

The concert begins with the ludicrously titled *Mad Rush* (I do not suspect the choreographer of irony) by Lucinda Childs; it is similar to every other Lucinda Childs group piece I have ever seen: anally sensitive, ashen-faced, spiritually drunken and endless. I cannot help feeling Childs deeply mistrusts the expressive potential of the human body — and that the French as a race support her mistrust. Paradoxically, the audience shouts and carries on ecstatically at its conclusion; some leap to their feet like people overflowing with testimony at a revival meeting.

The evening's second work, *Fin de Parcours* (Version fugitive) by one, François Verret, is not as wildly applauded though approval is definitely in the air. Its images are doubtless considered just a trifle too obvious, i.e. literary: two young men rushing at one another and locking horns in a ritualistically aggressive way; another young man conversing with his Siamese twin, a dummy, on a trapeze above the combatants (he later dances a tango with his wooden companion); a fat man drinking at a small spotlight table before changing his shirt; a girl in aviator's cap and goggles rushing on for a quick show-and-tell. The audience wants "to think about it" before giving it full marks. For my money, it holds enough interest to make up for the sterility of *Mad Rush* and *Pieces of Dreams*, the final work and an uncomfortable mixture of Ailey razzmatazz and minimalist non-involvement by director Dove.

Later as the bus climbs to Menilmon-

tant, one of the highest points (and best lookouts) in Paris, and then home, the sunset, so generous in its spread of colour after such a dismal day, reminds me of the glorious de Groat duet again. I can see the Opéra stage stripped of all its accoutrements, the back wall lifted to reveal the great expanse of foyer beyond — Degas' foyer — only the ceiling decorated, hung with white plastic cloud shapes. I can see the two dancers, together, alone, moving simply — no pretend austerity, but real simplicity — to the strains of Chopin *Etudes* played live on stage. I remember with a shiver that at one point the clouds are lowered to the stage and Piollet, strolling among them as through a field of lilies, discovers and releases a pair of doves. I remember I nearly cried — I could cry again.

My friend was wrong. The audience this afternoon would have booed de Groat, too. The choreographer, like Piollet with her doves, has too easily, too forthrightly discovered and released his dance; it requires no analysis, no justification, no certification. Under Paris skies, everything *must* be certified.

April 22, back in London: The Joyce Trisler Danscompany has been to Sadler's Wells in my absence with its charming Denishawn suite. There is no ballet at the ROH until the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet turns up in May for a triple bill. Only Regine Crespin in *The Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Fortunately I manage to get a ticket to see *Cats*, the celebrated Andrew Lloyd Webber musical that boasts a class libretto by T.S. Eliot (selections from *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*) and bright choreography by Gilliam Lynne the sheer inventiveness of which makes it rather unique on the London stage. Most musical and revue dances are sub-standard, even for a show containing as much dance talent as Wayne Sleep's *Dash* at the neo-Gothic Apollo Victoria Theatre. *Cats'* dances nearly overflow with wit and character. The "Jellicle Ball" sequence and the "McCavity Fight" are particularly atmospheric, ripe with a quality I can only

describe as "catness" — impertinent backsides, flicking wrists, silken shoulders, scorching eyes.

The original dance heavy of *Cats*, Wayne Sleep, has bequeathed his part of Mr. Mistofelees to Kim Reeder, a nimble, likeable former soloist of the SWRB. Also from the SWRB, Kenn Wells impersonates the officious Railway Cat, Skimble-shanks. In the role of the Rumposcat is Canadian born Roland Alexander who 10 years ago was a curious fixture at TDT's studios. The real star for me, however, is Angela Richards, Elaine Page's replacement as the tattered old Glamour Cat, Grizabella. It is Richards' role to sing the haunting *Memory* and she does, in a throaty, plaintive voice that vividly conjures up Eliot's "windy city". Her rhapsody lingers about the set for minutes after she has done, much like the moonlight the song evokes. Afterwards, as I make my way to the Covent Garden tube for the last time, I hear it still, floating through the lamplight like autumn leaves.



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In Review

**Dance in Canada
Conference**
Saskatoon
June 8-11, 1983.

Performances at the Saskatoon Dance in Canada Conference were definitely of the "mixed-bag" variety. The three noon concerts and three evening programs, containing over 60 individual dances, guaranteed that the distribution of quality would follow a typical bell-curve, and it did. The best work was concise, polished and intelligent. The worst was eye-glazing, mind-numbing schlock. And, as might be expected, most of the best work originated in the major Canadian centres. The creative tension of an urban context has a noticeable effect on the dance produced within it. Happily, this generalization collapsed on several occasions.

Much of the noon performance material was of student recital quality, and unfit for the

audience at a conference of this nature to endure. Unfinished choreography, dancers with no sense of their energy centre, mistaking static stares for dramatic intensity; all were in evidence, and served, ironically, to cast brighter light on the performances of quality.

Charles-Mathieu Brunelle's *Sans Histoire* was a brief, pointed solo notable for its clarity and the appealing, dagger-like attack of its dancer, Manon Jacob. Barbara Bonner, of the Brian Webb Dance Company, presented an intriguing array of movement in *Stalactites*, while Marian Sarach injected a few minutes of hilarity into an otherwise morose program with her (apparently) tongue-in-cheek *Dances of Isadora*. Her second dance, *Followers*, is best described as sensual, post-modern, ethnic chic, concerned somehow, I believe, with the pulsings of history.

The three evening concerts

were arranged in a national/regional/national sequence, accentuating the disparities between dance on the national level and that of a more provincial focus. The first evening, "Canadian Kaleidoscope", held on an airless night in an ancient sauna of a theatre on the University of Saskatchewan campus, contained some of the best work of the entire conference.

Silvy Panet-Raymond's *Dog Eat Dog*, a saucy and cleanly gymnastic dance, full of good-natured violence, was a tighter piece than when it was shown in Vancouver in the spring. Iro Tembeck's earthy, brooding mobility came to the fore in her *Amazonic*, although her only prop, a knotted rope ladder, hung onstage solely as a point of departure and begged to be more fully integrated with the dance.

The lush syncopations of Rina Singha's *Two Talas*, an increasingly inebriated Elaine

Bowman in *The 12% Solution*, and Susan Cash's joyful and often exquisite moments of madness all added to the variety of this first evening, but it was left to Sun•Ergos to provide the most compelling and theatrically-crafted work. Dana Luebke's recital of *Blood Wedding* in his *Luna* was the most consummate blending of text and technique I have yet seen, a flawless rendering of works that resonated through the accompanying series of movements executed with knife-like precision. In *Stroke*, choreographer Robert Greenwood stood stark still in the space and was slowly wrapped in a shroud of gauze by Luebke, while Greenwood's taped voice recounted the mute agony of voicelessness suffered by an aged stroke victim as he expresses his inner desire to tell her he loves her. Simple and direct, Sun•Ergos presented the gems of the evening.

The Friday evening offering,



Cheremosh Ukrainian Dance Ensemble closed the final performance of the 1983 Saskatoon Dance in Canada Conference with a Hopak.



Two members of the Canadian Children's Dance Theatre in *Street Songs*.

"Saskatchewan Dances", was essentially a series of children and youths (en masse) dancing in numbers that ranged from jazz and ballet to Highland, Chinese and Ukrainian folk styles. This work, of course, is no different from similar manifestations in any of the other provinces, except that it seems to be the only dance that can hold students and audiences in Saskatchewan.

Friday's work was the type that a writer is often at a loss to speak about without feeling more like an adjudicator. The kids were fun to watch and two pieces did stand out and bear comment. Bill Brittain's *Indian Hoop Dance* seemed more indigenous to Saskatchewan than did the transplanted work from distant cultures. His performance consisted of a number of intricate manipulations of over a dozen hoops into complex patterns, made all the more difficult by the constant step-hop rhythm he maintained throughout his dance. Maureen McKellar (Saskatchewan-born one assumes) contributed *One Sailing Wait*, based on her experiences waiting for a British Columbia ferry. Performed with ten dancers to the music of Steve Reich, *Wait* was a looping work of patterns, admirably suited to the caver-

nous Centennial Auditorium stage.

"Canada Dances" Saturday's long final program, brought this low-key conference to a low-key close. Jo Lechay, in a silent solo entitled *Edge*, successfully sustained the actual tension of body and implied tension of mind for the duration of her dance, a noteworthy accomplishment. Renald Rabu's *On a Cold Winter's Eve* explored the emotional basis of a relationship and what promised to be merely a puerile statement turned out to be a well-crafted dance ably performed by Charie Evans and Gaetan Masse.

Dancemakers' Carol Anderson bravely created a dance to Satie's *Trois Gymnopédies*, and managed, against the odds, a delicate, layered and personal study that took advantage of the spacious punctuations provided by the music. The Canadian Children's Dance Theatre demonstrated convincingly the excellence and professionalism that children can attain. Their *Street Songs*, danced to the exuberant choral music of Carl Orff, capitalized on the toys, games and pastimes of children to present the appreciative audience with a carnival of

beautifully-timed playground antics.

Paul Gaulin and company's *Spaceworms* with its character's great cervical extensions had an Aesop-like feel. This was followed by Clifford E. Lee award winner Martine Epoque's *Point Virgule*, a sombre, almost funereal and largely obscure dance.

Terry Hunter's starkly understated excerpt from *Drum House* left out the dynamism that is one of the features of the work, but Eddy Toussaint's *A Simple Moment* gained its strength by its precisely matter-of-fact but quartz-like duet manoeuvres, performed by Anik Bissonnette and Louis Robitaille.

The most ambitious of dances came from Toronto's T.I.D.E. and the fertile mind of Allan Risdill. *Images from Bittersuite*, transcended obvious technical difficulties to evoke an almost painterly tableau of sails, sunsets, oceans, flowing rainbows and a trio of dancers seemingly plucked from Breugel.

It's an impossible task to watch six programs of dance at a national conference, then attempt statements that won't offend, ignore or shortchange at least some of the participants. Yet assessments must be made if these gatherings are to benefit the growth and appreciation of dance. Expectations are difficult to meet at the best of times. Coming up squarely against them, one must evaluate both the expectations and the reality.

This conference was a case in point. Assessed as the national forum for performance of dance, the questions naturally arise: Should all types of dance have their hour on stage? Should just anyone be allowed to perform? Who assesses quality and balance in assembling the concerts? The performances at a Dance in Canada Conference should be important events. If they are not, we have only ourselves to blame.

PETER RYAN

Banff Festival Dance

Eric Harvie Theatre
Banff Centre
28-30 July, 1983.

Although pleasing an audience is partly an aim of the annual summer Banff Festival of the Arts, the primary objective, quite correctly, is to provide an enriching educational experience for the performers. The Banff Centre is, after all, a school. Students in a variety of arts disciplines have been flocking there now for half a century. The faculty includes many noted international artists. Some of the students are pretty hot too.

These circumstances help explain why the Banff Festival's dance presentation is almost always a marathon event combining a range of styles you would not ordinarily expect to find lumped together on one program.

This year, for example, there were two classical pas de deux — August Bournonville's for the Rossini opera *William Tell* and Lev Ivanov's famous love-match from Act II of *Swan Lake* — and a contemporary classic, Sir Frederick Ashton's *Les Patineurs*. Visiting guest master-class teacher Laura Alonso (daughter of famed Alicia), staged the pas de deux in what one assumes is the Cuban style — flamboyant and showy — while ex-National Ballet director Alexander Grant produced *Les Patineurs* once Canadian notator Robyn Hughes had taught the steps from a Benesh score. Ashton's 1931 sugary masterpiece is a potential minefield for dancers unused to the great British choreographer's quirky steps and complex port de bras. Yet, the Banff ensemble — a combination of the 13-member Alberta Ballet Company, auditioned students and invited guests — acquitted itself admirably, with the young New Zealander, Allan Barry, making a particularly strong impression in the leading Blue Boy role.

Every Banff dance show now includes a new work by the



Daniel McLaren in Brian Macdonald's *Findings*.

winner of the Clifford E. Lee Award for Choreography — this year it was Montrealer Martine Epoque — and, since 1983 is Banff's 50th Anniversary, the program also offered two commissioned works, Eva von Gency's *Lancez Votre Rêve* and Banff dance department head Brian Macdonald's *Findings*.

In all, it made for close to a three-hour show but the variety was enough to sustain one's interest even when the choreography was unimpressive.

Jazz dance exponent and former ballerina Eva von Gency probably made a fatal mistake when she chose a collage of music by the Alan Parsons Project, Pat Metheny and Lyle Mays as the accompaniment for *Lancez Votre Rêve*. Apparently she was inspired by an entry in Anaïs Nin's journal — an invocation to throw caution to the wind and to "launch your dream".

Unfortunately, the ballet's dreary, mostly low-key music worked against the choreography. Like so much electronic sound it was vacantly portentous without ever really propelling the dance. The cast of 10, decked out by Julia

Tribe in dazzling colours, could do little to compensate for such a deadening drone. Most of the choreography was of a nonedescrpt jazz-ballet-Broadway variety and, for a program-opener, the whole thing, flashy lighting and soaring kite included, fell decidedly flat.

The pace was hardly quickened by Martine Epoque's *Constellation I*, described in a note by the choreographer as "a sort of encounter of the third kind".

Epoque admits to liking Sci-Fi — no discredit there — but that does not warrant her obscure effort to translate Sci-Fi themes into dance.

For the first four minutes of *Constellation I* you can hardly see a thing — just flashing green lights that could be a flying saucer and then the moving beams of flashlights, presumably manipulated by dancer-cosmic-beings.

Even when lighting designer Jane Reisman is allowed to illuminate the stage there's little to be seen. Four shiny round dais of different heights and diameters are distributed around the stage and these are revolved as the

dancers atop them strike elegant and exotic poses. It's hard to tell who the dancers are supposed to represent. They don't have big green heads or webbed feet but in their trendy jumpsuits look remarkably like chic party-goers at some extra-terrestrial disco.

The pace quickens just as one is getting used to its sluggishness. Dancers flood to and fro in mildly frenzied waves. Something is amiss with them. We never know what. The dance ends, as it began, in gloom.

The centrepiece and crowning achievement of the Banff program turned out to be Brian Macdonald's *Findings*. It's a masterful, tautly constructed work which draws heavily on a number of his earlier ballets, both thematically and choreographically, but which distills them into a memorable statement of Macdonald's views on contemporary society and the art of dance.

Findings has three clearly defined but linked sections. The first presents a youthful world of hope and joy. The second is an ugly tangled jungle of human strife and violence. The final section, devoid of mimic gestures or obvious representations of human emotion, is a pure neo-classical ballet. Alone it would look like Macdonald's personal statement about the art of choreography. In the context of

Findings, it is an an assertion of

confidence in the enduring value of human reason — restrained, tranquil and measured.

Although much of the work's impact derives from the choreography, Macdonald has been particularly well served by his collaborators. Diaghilev would have applauded the harmonious integration of music, decors and movement.

Claude Girard's set is stunning in its elegant geometric simplicity. A large circle encases a maze-like pattern and forms the back drop. Horizontal and vertical bars (they later disappear) radiate from it. In front of all this is a large monkey-gym whose sole inhabitant — admirably danced by Daniel McLaren — forms the human link between the ballet's three sections.

The music sandwiches a cacophonous modern composition by Serge Garant between two serene selections from J.S. Bach. Garant's disturbing score is the perfect accompaniment to the jagged, fragmented choreography of *Findings'* central section.

Findings uses dance to say the things dance can say best. It is a richly evocative and affecting work which will, no doubt, find a welcome home in the repertory of Macdonald's home company, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

MICHAEL CRABB



Gaetan Masse and Giaconda Barbuto in Martine Epoque's *Constellation I*.

National Ballet of Canada
O'Keefe Centre
Toronto
4-22 May, 1983.

Alexander Grant stepped down from his post as Artistic Director of the National Ballet with a flourish, offering Toronto audiences Glen Tetley's *Sphinx*, (originally created for American Ballet Theatre in 1978), and Anthony Dowell's *Don Juan* as a parting gift. The gift was enthusiastically received, as it well deserved to be. A new acquisition for the company and a new role for one of the world's foremost dancers command our attention. The lasting merit of the Tetley, however, has yet to be proved and Dowell's flawless performance made clearer than ever the limitations inherent in Neumeier's ballet.

Sphinx, the glamorous centre-piece of the spring season's mixed programs, is based on the second act of Jean Cocteau's *La Machine Infernale*. In it, the young Oedipus, still a stranger to Thebes, as to his ultimate destiny, encounters in the desert a young girl who reveals to him the riddle of the Sphinx. She is, however, the Sphinx in mortal guise and her revelation is a sacrifice to her love for Oedipus. When Anubis, the god of death, compels her to put the young stranger to the test, Oedipus defeats her with the knowledge she has given him and callously leaves her to pursue his own fate. The Sphinx subsides under Anubis' control, condemned to remain an immortal because of her betrayal at the hands of a mortal lover.

Tetley declines the extremes of full story-ballet or purely abstract dance, distilling from this material instead the essence of the relationships between the characters, mortal and immortal. He places his central emphasis on the Sphinx, her bondage, as an immortal, to Anubis, and her longing, as a mortal, for Oedipus. The powerful opening and closing sections of the ballet explore the immortal relation-



Mary Jago and Anthony Dowell in *Don Juan*.

ship between Anubis and the Sphinx. Like much of the ballet, which repeats key choreographic motifs at significant points, these are remarkably symmetrical in form. Their emotional impact, however, is sharply differentiated. The opening creates tension, as Anubis and the Sphinx exemplify the power-struggle between fate and love; the closing dispels that tension, resigned to the superior force of fate and the short-sighted indifference of human love.

The two central sections, the encounter between Oedipus and the Sphinx and a trio for all three characters, are less clearly defined. The problem here lies with Oedipus, whose nature and relationship to the Sphinx are murky at best. Twice Tetley gives them a daring, acrobatic lift, the Sphinx curling round Oedipus' head and then falling from his shoulders to lie across his bent knee. But here, the repetition

seems merely symmetrical and reveals no change in basic relationships. Tetley seems at a loss to create the sense, paramount in Cocteau's play, of Oedipus as a young man for whom destiny is waiting. His exit for Thebes crystallizes the problem. What should be a momentous turning point looks merely like a dancer getting offstage.

These are problems in conception, not in execution. The cast I saw — Karen Kain as the Sphinx, Frank Augustyn as Oedipus, Kevin Pugh as Anubis — dealt convincingly with the essentially classical dance vocabulary which Tetley fashions into his own distinctive idiom. Anubis is yet another triumph for Kevin Pugh. His dancing was precise, muscular and taut, his elevation wonderfully controlled, his clean, light landings flawlessly in profile to evoke the Egyptian, hieratic nature of the part. Kain's *Sphinx*, by con-

trast, was sinuous, voluptuous and feline, genuinely sensual in a way that redeemed her from the meretricious and demeaning sexiness of *Quartet* in the February season.

Kain's body type rightly determined her interpretation of the part. A tinier dancer (guest artist Elisabetta Terabust and Sabina Alleman both took part later in the season) would be less predatory, more supplicating, more nearly Cocteau's "little girl of seventeen". But Martine van Hamel, another womanly ballerina, was Tetley's first *Sphinx* at ABT, so perhaps Kain is true to his conception of the part.

Augustyn danced Oedipus with the full commitment and concentration that characterized his performance in *Giselle* with Evelyn Hart but that have not always been his in previous seasons. Gone was the air of abstracted indifference that has often marred past performances. Augustyn was fully present as Oedipus, concentrating all of his resources on mastering this new but not very clearly defined material.

The essential classicism of *Sphinx* makes it an intelligent choice for the National's repertoire, for in a sense, it can be seen as *Swan Lake* revisited, concentrated and made new. Anubis, the Sphinx and Oedipus remind us of von Rothbart, Odette and Siegfried; both ballets focus on a woman, immortal but with longings for mortality, torn between the immortal who controls her and the mortal who loves her insufficiently. The National's production of *Swan Lake*, of course, blurs this relationship by substituting the Black Queen for von Rothbart. Seeing the clarity with which Pugh and Kain defined the sinister struggle between Anubis and the Sphinx made me wish more than ever for a new *Swan Lake* that would be true to this essential element of the story.

Sphinx, then, makes a coherent addition to the National's repertoire and is well served by its dancers. It looked exotic and mysterious in the first

mixed program, set off against *Collective Symphony*, but its exoticism paled when it followed Constantin Patsalas' *Nataraja*, another work with a sculptural set that seeks to integrate ballet with sculptural line. Indeed, Tetley's work as a whole looked less convincing when juxtaposed against Patsalas'. This isn't necessarily a value judgment on the two choreographers. Rather, it is symptomatic of the relationship between choreographer and company. Perhaps *Nataraja*, made for the company by its resident choreographer, belongs to the company in a way that *Sphinx* cannot.

By contrast, Anthony Dowell, even though he's a guest, seems to belong with the National in such a way that his presence illuminates the company and its work. In this case, his finished, elegant performance of *Don Juan*, a new role for him, served to emphasize the curiously divided nature of John Neumeier's ballet. Here is a ballet that mocks its central character and, in the process, parodies its own dance vocabulary through the ludicrous dance-within-a-dance convention it employs. The only way out of this dilemma for past *Don Juans*, irrevocably cast in the Nureyev mold, has been immense flamboyance and exaggerated narcissism. Such *Don Juans* would use sheer force of personality to make us overlook the ballet's divided nature. Dowell recast the role, brought our attention back to dance itself, and so forced audiences to re-evaluate the entire ballet. His narcissism took on an appealing air of irony and self-mockery; for flamboyance, he substituted the purest, most elegant classical form to be seen on the stage today. His two brief solos rediscovered the eighteenth-century basis of the work in Gluck's wonderful music and so made the exaggerated parody of the servant players seem tawdry and ineffective. When a dancer makes classical form speak with Dowell's grandeur and eloquence, parody of the

form seems sacrilegious.

As usual, Dowell's generous presence inspired the rest of the company. Veronica Tennant produced a fiery and passionate *Dona Ana*, well-contrasted to Dowell's icy coolness. Mary Jago's *Lady in White*, consistently her most effective role in the repertoire, was made even more substantial by Dowell's discreet, stylish partnering.

Dowell's guest relationship with the National is one of the principal benefits of Alexander Grant's connections with the Royal Ballet, and the acquisition of significant Ashton repertoire is another. For both of these, the National and its audiences must be grateful to Grant. They remind a new generation of dancers of the company's roots in British ballet. When the time for

impartial evaluation of Grant's tenure comes round this influence on the rising generation of dancers may well be seen as his most lasting achievement. In Ashton, he has given them a significant body of repertoire; in Dowell, he has given them an impeccable model and source of inspiration; with this basis, his casting them increasingly in major roles has begun giving them the exposure and experience fundamental to the company's continued strength.

JAMES NEUFELD

Professor Neufeld teaches at Trent University and writes about ballet for The Journal of Canadian Studies.

**Triskelion
Dance Foundation**
Concordia University
Montreal
26-28 May, 1983.

Pointépiénu
UQAM
Montreal
19-20 May, 1983.

That crunching sound you hear is *The Critic Eating Her Words*. Back in 1978, I made fun of Linda Rabin's workshop at "Octobre en Danse". She told dancers to turn into worms and they wiggled; to turn into apple trees and they branched out. I was appalled to see adults ready to abdicate the self to the extent demanded by Rabin. It seemed emblematic of the generation that had handed its children to Dr. Spock on a platter and had thought Viet Nam was a daytime television serial. Their eager self-hypnosis bespoke their relief at relinquishing the reins, even temporarily, to an authority figure. I saw in Rabin's workshop and the responses it elicited, all that was wrong with the world and said so.

Today I am eating my words. Her system works. Certainly the results worked for me in the stillness of her whitewashed, fern-hung studio one warm spring afternoon, as she and Dwight Shelton (miraculously rescued from his post-Grands Ballets Canadiens professional limbo) drew me into the heart of a work I would normally have sloughed off as (ugh!) minimalism.

A Moment Sitting is 13 minutes of nervestretchingly slow, inexorable movement, etching the length and breadth of a doomed relationship. The very absence of motion intensifies the impact. Its components are two chairs, two bodies and total concentration. You cannot call it dance; more like psychodrama: errors of timing, misread impulses, missed opportunities, gestures ignored: just like real life. Rabin follows Shelton like *The Hound of Heaven* but each



Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn in *Sphinx*.



Linda Rabin and Dwight Shelton in *A Moment Sitting*.

laborious arrival finds him gone.

A Moment Sitting is set, incongruously, to Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*. The contexts are incompatible but the curious hollow sweetness of the music serves to emphasize the maddening detachment of this minuet of emotional cripples. It dates from Rabin's mid-seventies Zen phase when she fled to Japan to contemplate her navel.

Her current choreographic crop could not be more different.

The major new piece is *With Brahms*, a long, buoyant, flying, flitting work full of wind-mill arms, airborne splits, figure eights, whirling, soaring, ultra-romantic solos rippling along with the piano. Rabin, it seems, has choreographed an honest-to-goodness ballet. Her intensity, humor and, above all, clarity of structure, come blazing through even though the fleet-footed arpeggios are occasionally given unexpected heft by performers with modern dance backgrounds.

With so many self-proclaimed choreographers in Montreal, all competing for so few trained bodies in order to form companies, it is a wonder anyone can cobble together from a pickup team of Munchkins a stylistically homogenous dance company. Some, like Jo Lechay, bend with the wind

and choreograph for their dancers' idiosyncrasies. Rabin is too much her own woman to have done that; consequently her work is frequently undone by her dancers.

The disparate group works best in a visually intriguing pieced called *In Twilight*, for Shelton and four women. It begins with lots of momentum and kinetic energy: formations splintering into mirror images or a maverick dancing against the grain. The centre section has an improbable daisy-chain crawling out of the primaeval slime. Rabin suggests they may be forest creatures feeding at dusk but there are intimations of Oberon's magic potion, spurts of unpredictable movement lapsing into a narcotic trance and apprehension hovering in the air. The section stands on its own, unconnected and unresolved because the finale brings back the four girls in poses reminiscent of *La Bayadère* and sends them off with elaborate leg swings and insistent stomping.

Rabin has created another, quite dissimilar work to Bartok's piano music. *Presto-Querelle* is built along classic pas de deux lines for Shelton and quicksilver Danielle Tardif. It has fast footwork; small, propulsive, Tayloresque jumps; solo turns followed by the two dancers romping off in all directions. It has a breezy,

"look, Ma, no hands" feeling.

In *Wands*, four yellow shower curtain rods pass for poles, fronds, hockey sticks, samurai lances, harpoons and brooms to shake the cobwebs loose. The score, Phillip Werren's first, and possibly last, computer piece, ranges from jungle sounds fraught with mystery to the roar of an aeroplane engine at too close quarters.

Rabin has been around a long time. Something of a celebrity for her ritualistic *The White Goddess* in 1977, her work was not seen again in Montreal until she created *Premonition*, a solo about nuclear holocaust, for Margie Gillis in 1979. She made waves again last year when les Grands Ballets Canadiens commissioned her to make *Tellurian*, an undulating, seaweedy group piece, for the company, which was generally well received. She has now formed The Triskelion Dance Foundation. (She has a penchant for offbeat names; this one comes from Celtic lore, the three-legged Greek shield found on Isle of Man pennies.) It is hoped that this will provide her with a solid base to train her own dancers. A choreographer of Rabin's obvious gifts should not have to compromise.

Not having seen Pointépiénu in action for several years, one tends to believe repeated raves in minor Swiss and French provincial newspapers, citing Pointépiénu's accessibility, humor and lack of intellectual pretension.

Having seen Pointépiénu, memory comes flooding back. An evening of five recent works by founder Louise Latreille proves again that she has misunderstood her Mudra training. Instead of enlisting other disciplines to enhance dance, she swamps it with terminal cuteness. For the sake of audience and dancers alike, one can only hope the end is nigh.

KATI VITA

Murray Darroch and Guests

Toronto Dance Theatre Studio
16-18 June, 1983.

Murray Darroch has been a background phenomenon in Toronto dance for some time. He received the bulk of his early training, which began in 1973, at the Toronto Dance Theatre and appeared annually with the company in Donald Himes's production of *Babar the Little Elephant* over the course of seven years. But these and other early performances did less, in my estimate, to foster his highly idiosyncratic presence than his success as a teacher.

Darroch spent two summers as guest modern artist and demonstrator at Lois Smith's Summer School of Dance, as well as joining the faculty of the School of the Toronto Dance Theatre in 1976. There and at Pavlychenko Studio he taught some of the city's best fitness classes, attended by dancers, other artists, and desperate slobbs alike. They were remarkable, not only for Darroch's ability to take muscles to the limit, but for the running commentary he provided. The one-liners were dry sexual innuendos, prods at the gamut of vanities and fantasies that bring people to lie on dirty studio floors, sweating and straining. In the words that Darroch the teacher used to augment movement was the special ingredient lacking in the Darroch who once simply performed other people's choreography.

It's no surprise that in the past four years, as he has emerged increasingly as a choreographer himself, Darroch has relied more on words, and used them more deftly, than most other contemporary choreographers here. The program of works he and guest choreographers Phyllis Whyte and Conrad Alexandrowicz presented was the most recent example of Darroch as an essayist who uses dance to make droll social observations

about the foibles and falseness of an especially rarified segment of modern urban life. He is at his best as the skeleton at the cocktail party — Fran Lebowitz, sometimes even Oscar Wilde, in tights.

The characters Darroch writes about in his choreography have destructive relationships of the haute WASP sort: done quietly and with a smile. *Never-Ever Enders* (1983) and *Never-Enders* (1980) are examples. The relationships in these two pieces are passive-aggressive par excellence. In the first, a couple dances as much apart as it's possible to be together. The throws and lifts are impersonal; the civility masks violence. The whole thing is funny and was crazily interjected with two spoken passages by actress Susan Vanderwerff, who emerged first to tell a long, shaggy-dog tale about a frog seeking a bank loan and later to recount, in a French accent, a woman's experience on the Champs Elyssés, making love under a parked car "wiz ma love-airrr."

In *Never-enders* Darroch uses another approach to create a similar ironic distance and humorous alienation, a great genteel height from which people bespatter each other. "Just brush my teeth before you leave me", go the lyrics in a rehash of *Angel of the Morning*. She in evening white and he in black, this couple argues about whose turn it is to be depressed from their respective chairs; in the background their negatively dressed real selves act out truer emotions. The scrambled, stream-of-consciousness script here is a melange of choice quotations from everyone from Mary Tyler Moore to Marlene Dietrich, Mervyn Peake to Virginia Woolf, William Shakespeare to Lewis Carroll, Fred Astaire to Pauline Kael.

Amongst the other five works Darroch contributed to the program was *World Weary* (1983). In it the destructive relationship is to the self. Here a drunken upper-class type

applauds the deep meaning in Noël Coward tunes: "I'm world weary, world weary/I find it so dreary, so dreary...I wanna get back to nature and relax", black bow tie loosened and body dissolved (it was given a fine rubbery performance by Conrad Alexandrowicz). It's an example of the ironic — and, importantly, self-ironic — perspective that seems unique to Darroch, and here it is checked just before the foppish ennui becomes too much.

Des Petites Lumières (1983), however, suggests, that it is easier to take Darroch seriously when he's being funny than when he's simply being serious, in which case he easily gets carried away with himself. He is less prone to self-irony where there is humor than where there isn't, for there is no restraining perspective here. Though performed well by Francisco Alvarez, the piece is an overwrought existential tid-bit, asloush in a vale of darkness, illuminated haphazardly by little lights attached to the dancer's body and by fragments of mournful Tennyson poetry flying out from the constant background whispering.

A more successful "serious" piece is *Fragile* (1982), in which dancer Susan Greskevitch sat in a wide second position on the floor, her body dislocated into various disharmonious parts. But the most successful mixture of the sadness in these pieces and the irony in the others was *Supporting Our Lady of Perpetual Motion, Parts 1 and 2*, (both 1983). Here dancer Sioux Hartle did battle with a mannequin in a sort of dance and song evocation of destructive dependency which is finally resolved in Part 2.

Guests Phyllis Whyte and Conrad Alexandrowicz also used words in their pieces. Each contributed one piece to each of the two programs; I only saw the first program. Like Darroch, they also are concerned with the disjointedness and complexity of modern relationships. But Whyte is far

more clearly analytical. Both the movement and words in her *Talking, Talking* (1983) are more literal and psychologically defined. About another passive-aggressive, urbane relationship, it also uses broader, bigger movement than Darroch's works and depicts the couple's conflicted need for and disappointment with each other. In a most impressive observation of the way unhappy, and often enough happy, couples function, Whyte has them resolve their mutual dissatisfaction by reaching a middle ground of shared intolerance of others.

Conrad Alexandrowicz's *Johnny Get Angry* was one of the evening's finest fusions of not only words and movement, but of various types of relationships. Broken into sections that are at times performed in silence, at times to fragments of the song from which its title comes, the work slides brilliantly between representing antagonism with another and with both one's own body and self, showing how all these are interconnected. The dancer's hands especially play a remarkable choreographic role, the mutinous semaphore gestures sometimes defying him for a life of their own, sometimes beneficently and other times destructively.

More than many evenings of dance, this one seems best described collectively as, quite simply, smart. And, in an odd way, it seemed much like a literary evening: the readings, the density, the definition of imagery and purpose, the oddly narrative perspective in most of the works. It reminded me at the time of T.S. Eliot's *J. Alfred Prufrock* — "oh so elegant/so intelligent", a dim, evening world of characters both fearful and daring.

ALINA GILDINER

Actus: In Contrast
Palmerston Library
Toronto
2-4 June, 1983.

To understand the eclectic nature of the dance concert given by Actus Institute one must first understand the nature of the school itself. Under its artistic director, the internationally known ballet teacher, Maureen Webster-Consolati, Actus, (a Greek word meaning "in a state of possibility realized"), was created to break down the barriers between dance enclaves and provide a total dance education. Consolati found that because modern and jazz classes, for example, extended the range of her ballet performances, she, therefore, wanted to create an open class school the curricula of which would include not only all dance forms, but such diverse subjects as counselling in nutrition, injury prevention and resumé writing. Such an ambitious undertaking will obviously take several years to consolidate, but the wider horizons of Actus were visible in its first concert.

Two choreographers dominated the program — Paula Thomson and Janice Dulak. Although the women have widely different backgrounds, at times their works overlapped, especially in their use of lyrical dance movements to capture and reflect musical rhythms and patterns. Thus, at first viewing, Thomson's *In Contrast* and Dulak's *Stream*, both abstract works for four dancers, were quite alike and not particularly memorable. As well, the disciplined ensemble work required by the choreography was not evident. Individuals a beat ahead or behind proved distracting.

On the other hand, Dulak's solo, *Solace*, to the ragged rhythms of Scott Joplin, was as fine an emotional interpretation of music as one would see anywhere — broad sweeping movements, punctuated by abrupt gestures of anger and self-pity, interspersed with slow



Paul Thomson's *Symbiosis*.

periods of reflection. In *Symbiosis*, Thomson shrouded two dancers in material, one piece covering the entire surface of the floor, the other only the body. The dancers were thus able to create fabulous shapes, alone and with each other, that were particularly evocative of movements and designs in nature. Visually, the work was stunning in its constantly shifting pictures.

The latter half of the concert demonstrated the many creative avenues Actus intends to explore. *Closing Time*, Dulak's narrative, contrasted one dancer in a simple dress against a backdrop of a chorus made up of three women, sitting at a cafe table, arrayed in variations of the basic black cocktail outfit. The soloist showed confusion and bewilderment in her movements while the chorus shifted position provocatively, exuding confidence and boredom. The contrast suggested a range of questions about the two sides of woman's nature, as well as demonstrating an interesting use of movement and stasis.

The remaining two pieces were complete departures from

most dance programs and spoke well for the theatricality of future Actus concerts. In *Dance Baroque*, three women under Elaine Biagi-Turner, performed four works from 1704 in period costumes to live music (flute and harpsichord) giving the audience a visual lesson in dance history. The rigid formality of the period as seen in the limited hand, shoulder and head gestures, differed sharply with energetic footwork with its roots in country dances. This segment was both fascinating and illuminating. *Crème de la Crème* had the dancers in their clown personas. In clownwork, an actor takes on one identity and perfects that personality; thus the six dancers and one actor were completely different and very funny. Thomson, who put the piece together, let her imagination run wild and even if the whole made no sense, the individual flights of fancy were worth the whole evening, especially the slow motion curling game with the dancers as stones, sliding and spinning down the ice.

PAULA CITRON

Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians

Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, B.C.
7-8 April, 1983.

Since Martha Graham's early touring days, the university circuit has afforded time, performing space and encouragement to pioneers in the dance arts. This year Laura Dean finally made her Vancouver debut — but also in the benign atmosphere of academe, drawing to the small stage atop Burnaby Mountain the kind of highly motivated audience that watches dance with a firm purpose. Many became ecstatic converts, while some local critics preferred to deal with Dean's work in the context of a waning pop-art movement associated with sitars, trances and drugs.

Dean now has a following on three continents, and her work is substantially financed at home in the United States. In recent years she has created dances (and their scores) for the Joffrey Ballet, doubtlessly learning in the process that keeping an audience captive has advantages. The minimal or pedestrian movement which was her main concern in earlier years has become part of a larger and more flamboyant vocabulary. Her dances are now quite finite. Protracted dances such as the 1979 work, *Music*, with its 15-minute episode of uninterrupted spinning, frequently emptied the theatres where she played. Now Dean offers shorter dance conceptions, packed with a masterfully organized miscellany. Archaeologist and scavenger, Dean extracts movement from history, traditional forms and the world around her. Her growing audience delights in recognizing a familiar figure in a pristine state, plucked from a known source, polished and set in an ingenious new format.

Dean's present company is mostly new and she has set new tasks for her dancers, coming to terms with theatrical issues previously ignored. There are now movements requiring

technical prowess associated with more stringent schools of dance. Her dancers are acquiring an individuality through entrances (earlier works found the group on stage at curtain's rise and fall), and the costuming in two new ensemble works involves a departure from the loose pyjama-like garment which concealed the source of strength in earlier Dean dances. She's now experimenting with stage lighting, and she is thinking about the issue of gender.

Sky Light, which had its premiere in 1982, has her six dancers in bright buttercup tights with sequined waistbands, entering individually and establishing their territories. The relentless percussion score and shafts of overhead light provide the energy sources for the dance which evolves, working up to the complex configurations which characterize all her group dances. This piece has a sharp, martial quality and shows us dancers who are fully in charge of their destinies, rather than mesmeric pawns in some happy cosmic plan.

In *Inner Circle*, Dean's most recent ensemble creation, Ching Gonzalez is the first to enter with a short signature dance, followed in sequence by each dancer; they ultimately form a wedge behind him and answer his movement with synchronized counterpoint. The men are in black harem pants, which billow effectively when they spin, while the girls, in red boots and short skirts, resemble inverted tulips when they turn. Dean's score is for synthesizer and percussion, and the dance makes a brash, aggressive statement. Most of the elements we expect from a Dean creation are aired — unison movements which shift to canon, the shoulder shakes we associate with the dances of gypsies, the robust stampings, the squat plié supporting a coiling torso and arms. There is a new lassoing movement with fist clenched, and Dean's usually gentle kicks are now full split ones. There are grand jétés

and other borrowings from ballet. The spinning, exceptionally elaborate in this dance, frequently involves the dancers moving at three different velocities.

Sandwiched between these two new group works was *Enochian*, a provocatively-titled duet which demonstrates a departure from just about everything Dean has considered to date. This is an invocation and dance for Ching Gonzalez and Dean. The hand movements are allegedly based on 3,500-year-old Egyptian gestures, and the transaction of the dancers depicts a meeting of Isis and Osiris. Gonzalez, in the characteristic Dean pyjama garment, performs his luxurious request in pools of overhead light, retreating when Dean enters in a diagonal progression. Her heavily sequined black and white garb, the Eastern trappings of her synthesizer score, and the manipulation of her arms and hands in tension and repose evoke in essence an Orient that Ruth St. Denis could barely touch in a lifetime of trying. A title with Biblical connotations and a dance from pagan antiquity — what better way to salute the hybrid American dance heritage to which she has become a self-acknowledged heir?

LELAND WINDREICH

The Royal Ballet

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden
London
July, 1983.

For decades now, there have been two virtually equal claimants to the title of greatest living choreographer; with the death of Balanchine, the right of Sir Frederick Ashton to that title must be unchallenged. Hence, any new Ashton ballet is a major event in the dance world, even if the new work is a *pièce d'occasion* like *Varii Capricci*, created to open the Royal Ballet's 1983 Metropolitan Opera House season and, incidentally, a memorial to composer Sir William Walton. He was a long-time friend and collaborator of Ashton and died only a few days after he finished adapting the clever and attractive set of bagatelles that comprise *Varii Capricci* for the ballet. The work's London premiere in July, created just as great a sensation as it had reportedly done in New York during the Royal's brief visit there earlier this year.

As light, bright, and sparkling as *Façade*, another Ashton-Walton piece dating from 1931 and still freshly amusing, *Varii Capricci* is an updated version of *Façade's* encounter of the Debutante and the Dago. It's a languid Saturday Afternoon Fever, with John Travolta (Anthony Dowell as Lo Straniero) meeting a cheerfully foxy Mrs. Robinson (Antoinette Sibley as La Capricciosa). Dowell, flam-



Antoinette Sibley and Anthony Dowell in Sir Frederick Ashton's *Varii Capricci* — The Royal Ballet.

boyantly macho in black shirt, white trousers, Elvis Presley pompadour, and dark glasses, struts, slouches, mugs, and dances like a disco dream in an unnecessary attempt to seduce the ice-hot Sibley, lavish patroness of a Mediterranean garden (itself, as presented by David Hockney, a bright evocation of Walton's exotic garden on Ischia: the ballet is full of in-jokes).

Sibley, as delighted by her new toy as ever Peggy Guggenheim was, is sometimes coy, retracting a hand that Dowell is about to seize, sometimes calculatedly brazen, caressing Dowell's thigh and astonishing him into a reflexive smoothing of his hair, a repeated (and continually funny) mannerism

in the ballet. The plot is minimal: an inconsequential flirtation between two people with nothing in common but leisure, place, and a taste for the outrageous. The dances, for the lead couple and for a polished corps of four extravagantly beautiful young couples in Ossie Clark's brilliant frills and draperies, are witty variations on social dances and the *danse d'école*, full of briskly shimmied shoulders, flicked wrists, rolling hips, and flashy jumps and spins, all precisely and stylishly performed.

Allusions, choreographic and otherwise, abound: to Nijinska's *Les Biches*, another chic and ambiguous house-party, to Ashton's *The Dream* made for Sibley and Dowell in



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1964, (also on the program), to *Scènes de Ballet*, long a grand vehicle for Sibley, who plays the superbly confident grande dame with tongue ever so delicately in cheek. There's even a hint of *A Month in the Country*: while the work's heroine tragically fondles the rose left by her young lover as the ballet ends, La Capricciosa dons the decamping Dowell's black sunglasses with a well-judged hint of nostalgia before they are reclaimed by their owner in a flourish of torero music. Whether the work will last isn't really the issue: this is a deliciously light-hearted frolic whose success is well-deserved, a *jeu d'esprit* from the cunning hand of a master.

Glen Tetley's recent *Dances of Albion: Dark Night Glad Day*, also on the program, is a long, 50-or-so minute work set to Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings* (1942) and *Sinfonia da Requiem* (1942). Typically sculptural in visual effect and emotionally dramatic, the ballet focusses on two couples (Stephen Jefferies and Lesley Collier as a loving, nurturing pair, Wayne Eagling and Rosalyn Whitten as tormented partners in darker passion) who are disrupted by two angels of death (Stephen Beagley and a splendidly baleful Ashley Page). As is usual with Tetley's ballets, there is much that is beautiful, much that is potently theatrical, and the dancing is simply extraordinary: Royal dancers don't often get to do what one might loosely call "modern ballet," and they seem to thrive on it,

especially Jefferies, Eagling, and Page. But for me the ballet is, finally, too long, too fragmented; a story lurks just below the surfaced, but I can't grasp it even with the aid of the poetic texts. This is neither abstract nor story ballet, neither classical nor really modern, and it leaves me uneasy.

The general state of the Royal, however, is anything but uneasy these days. Sibley and Park, well into their forties, are superb; Dowell is, quite simply, Lord of the Dance, which takes nothing away from Jefferies and Eagling, now entering their prime. Dancers such as Collier, Jennifer Penney, and Marguerite Porter would be an asset to any company, and younger soloists and corps members are getting, and meriting, remarkable opportunities: Stephen Sheriff, for instance, made an amazing debut as Puck in *The Dream*, and Ravenna Tucker, a Eurasian beauty with something of Gelsey Kirkland's delicacy, shone in Ashton's *Voices of Spring*. If the repertoire is less adventurous than one might wish, that's normal in classical companies. With young dancer-choreographers (David Bintley, Michael Corder, Derek Deane) getting more chances, with Ashton in creative mood, with MacMillan turning out new works, with the dancers responding to Tetley as they do, adventure may not be quite so necessary.

PENELOPE DOOB



Jean-Charles Gil in *L'Arlesienne* — Ballet National de Marseille.

Ballet National de Marseille Roland Petit
Place des Arts
Montreal
6-10 July, 1983.

Roland Petit is not one of the 20th century's great choreographers. However, the 59-year-old Frenchman has proved to be a remarkably versatile and resilient showman. He's worked in Hollywood, in musicals and theatrical reviews, and his ballets pop up in the repertoires of a number of leading international companies, principally, of course, in his own Ballet National de Marseille.

When the city fathers of that rather disreputable Mediterranean port decided they wanted a high-profile ballet company, they knew Petit was the man to turn to. It's been a long haul, but now, 11 years later and with the tributes of many North American dance critics still ringing in their ears, the 55 members of the Petit company are being hailed in France as the country's premier ballet company.

Petit's approach to ballet is governed by his instinctive theatricality. He thinks of the stage as a place to make magic. His appeal is to the senses, not the intellect. His dances are chic, sometimes sexy — often verging on the crass or vulgar.

Who but Petit, for example, would dare touch Marcel Proust and the French writer's monumentally complex novel *A La recherche du temps perdu*? The choreographic result called, *Les Intermittences du Coeur*, is a travesty of Proust but as an evening of dance theatre, it is often riveting. The program-notes are a hoot — no help at all, even if you've read the book — and the characters on stage are often hard to pick out. What we get is an extravagant turn-of-the-century costume drama with variations on the themes of love, death, corruption and sexual decadence. There's no stylistic consistency and some of the ballet's 13 scenes are truly embarrassing in their tastelessness but the total effect is a knock-out.

Le Jeune Homme et la Mort, first choreographed in 1946 for the incomparable Jean Babilé, has since been tackled by many great dancers including Nureyev and Baryshnikov, but its presence on the mixed program which Petit offered Montreal audiences demonstrated the essential difference between a work that is a period piece and one that is plain dated.

Le Jeune Homme was inspired by an idea of Jean Cocteau. A young artist is driven by the anguish of unre-

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quited love to commit suicide. Afterwards the unconcerned object of his affection returns as the figure of Death to lead him across the roofs of Paris.

The man's role demands a precise and acrobatic technique combined with the ability to project inner turmoil. Too often, dancers have resorted to superficial gesture to accomplish this. Luigi Bonino, sharing the role at alternate performances with guest artist Patrick Dupond, did not. His lady friend, danced by another guest, Natalia Makarova, seemed, on the other hand, to treat the ballet like some hideous joke and didn't even bother to complete the choreography.

Her attitude is probably justified. *Le Jeune Homme* has lost its power to impress and ends up looking rather silly.

Its companions on the mixed bill were a 40-minute excerpt from a full-length abstract ballet created by Petit last December — *Soirée Debussy* — and his *L'Arlesienne*, to Bizet's suites from a play by Alphonse Daudet. The Debussy work is a company show-off piece in a range of styles. It's more like a cabaret routine than a ballet but the Montreal audience seemed to approve. *L'Arlesienne* is more serious stuff. It's a grim little drama about a man's fatal romantic obsession — a creature of his imagination whom we never see — and its collision with the strictures of a conservative community. In this ballet, Petit shows he does have some sense of choreographic design, even of inventiveness in terms of steps, but the central male role remains problematic.

Frédéri has to convince us that he really is obsessed while at the same time throwing off some quite demanding steps. I missed Denys Ganio, whom friends tell me was terrific, but Jean-Charles Gil was no slouch.

Gil appeared with the National Ballet as James in *La Sylphide* three years ago. He was clearly a young dancer of sound technique and consider-

able dramatic promise. Now, a lot of that promise has been fulfilled and the Spanish-born dancer, still only in his early 20s, has managed to harmonize his technical and dramatic gifts to make himself an altogether very impressive artist.

In *L'Arlesienne*, he used inflections of the whole body to convey his inner anguish, even a touch of madness, and by the end of watching him work his way towards suicide, one could almost share his total despair.

The leading woman in *L'Arlesienne* has a less rewarding role and the exotically beautiful Dominique Khal-founi, whom Petit lured away from the Paris Opera Ballet in 1980, did not look very comfortable as Vivette.

Elsewhere, however, she shone, especially in the Proust ballet. Indeed, Khal-founi, Gil, Ganio and Luigi Bonino, the company's resident stars, all gave proof of their quality and made it that much harder to understand why those promoting the Ballet de Marseille's North American tour (Montreal was sandwiched between visits to Washington, DC, and New York) would think it necessary to burden the company with a glut of imported stars: Makarova, Dupond and Richard Cragun in Montreal, with the addition of Nureyev in New York.

Petit's dancers are stars in their own right and can make his choreography look better than it probably deserves. Next time he should show us that he is worthy of them by creating suitable vehicles for Khal-founi, Gil, Ganio and the rest.

KEVIN SINGEN



The Kol Demama Dance Company in *Attachments*.

Kol Demama Dance Company
Place des Arts
Montreal
22 May, 1983.

Any dancer will tell you, the essence of dance is an act of faith. Dancers are absolutely dependent on each other. They leap into the void believing they'll be caught, and more often than not, they are. Imagine this dependence intensified a hundredfold and you have Kol Demama, an Israeli company of 14 dancers, half of them deaf-mutes.

Choreographer Moshe Efrati, a charter member of Batsheva, has been working with deaf dancers since 1969. Kol Demama (which means the voice of silence) mixes deaf-mutes and hearing dancers so seamlessly that the issue of who is which instantly becomes academic. Hearing dancers transmit signals literally by making waves in the air and the deaf dancers respond to the

vibrations. Efrati's style derives from Graham but it is given an extraordinary, poignant subtext by the subtle touches he has insinuated in order to cue the deaf dancers.

Being a dancer himself, Efrati is dancer oriented. Costumes are gleaming elastic tights; scenery is stark back-drop leavened by classical draperies. Lighting is dramatic, echoing perhaps the harsh sun of Israel and the sudden darkness of a desert night, which drops like stone. There is a touch of narcissism in the choice of male dancers who are all Efrati lookalikes.

The corps is strong and sleek but two dancers stood out: Esti Nadler, a compelling dancing actress trained in Stuttgart and Amnon Damti, a towering Yemenite who, to borrow a phrase from John Le Carré, appeared to have been made by the same firm that built Stonehenge.

The evening, which was a benefit for the Hebrew Cultu-

ral Organization of Canada, was devoted to three works, all by Efrati. *Attachements*, dedicated to the memory of Efrati's brother, was, like the other two, abstract but fraught with fragmentary relationships, forming, dissolving and reforming. There was much balletic running around which remained unintegrated with the remaining bulk of modern dance movements.

Dalet Amot (A Man with Walls) mixed elements of calisthenics. The frequent use of movements in unison or canon invested them with meaning and provided a sociological context.

Chapters/Voices used as its soundtrack the amplified, sometimes eerie efforts at speech made by the deaf. One remembers less of the steps than of the fabric of communication knitting the group together. Nervous hand gestures, clandestine taps on the floor, a faunlike cock of the head, and a tendency to peel off from the group in triplets, all wove a subliminal web of support and caring. Subliminal, because the company as a whole is faceless, fast and rather asexual. Efrati's choreography is strong on structure but soon runs out of choreographic steam. It did not seem to matter. The medium was the message.

KATI VITA



Flashdance Staying Alive Paramount Pictures 1983.

I hope Sylvester Stallone knows more about boxing than he does about dance. I would hate to think my notions about a boxer's life, gleaned first from Marlon Brando *On the Waterfront* and later heavily re-inforced by Stallone's Rocky Balboa, are as non-sensical as the picture he has painted of a dancer's life in the recently released Paramount production *Staying Alive*.

John Travolta's intensive physical training for his lead role in *Staying Alive* has been hyped into one of the main selling points of the film. Too bad they trained him for the wrong movie. Travolta looks like Rocky in tights, with the bulging biceps, chest and thighs dancers strive *not* to develop.

In *Saturday Night Fever*, Travolta was playing a character well within his range of capabilities. The Tony Manero who sparked all that disco-mania, possessed a certain dumb charm and animal grace on the floor of Brooklyn's Odyssey: 2001 club. Without question Travolta is convincing and very hot in that style of choreographed social dancing. What a dance audience is probably most eager to find out is if he has acquired the technical subtleties of a theatrical dancer.

The answer is not as obvious as one might imagine. Costume, choreography and most of all, clever editing, protect him from scrutiny. We see him spinning and flying through the air but rarely see him take off or land. He is often carrying girls around in complicated lifts, but we seldom see how he got them up there or whether they got back down smoothly. The choreography is pretty much of the "step-ball-change, bump and grind" variety. He's never required to stretch his legs or point his feet, which are carefully shrouded in layers of messy-looking legwarmers.

Nevertheless, Travolta's technical short-comings are not what turns the film sour. Audiences, especially film audiences, can be made to accept anything. The most unlikely of situations can work if the character himself is strong, sympathetic and even remotely believable. But Tony Manero — as Travolta and Stallone have decided to play him — is a self-centred moron. His approach to life reflects a chauvinist double standard not worthy of a caveman. His dancing fails because his approach is invariably mean, predatory and pointlessly violent. We are supposed to believe it's his "anger" that makes him special. What is truly unforgivable about this film is that it doesn't even attempt to communicate a sense of the joy or even the pure physical excitement of dancing. Nobody seems to *like* it very much. Their lives play out in some sort of combat zone. Stallone has substituted a dance studio for a boxing ring only this time you don't even care who wins.

Aside from the insurmountable problem of a central character who is repulsive, the inconsistencies and falsehoods of the script are legion. Dancers from Alicia Alonso to Ann Miller, Margot Fonteyn to Shirley MacLean notwithstanding, this film solemnly informs us that, "male dancers' careers are twice as long as female dancers' careers and therefore men have twice as many opportunities as women and therefore women have to be realistic and content with whatever they can get". This bit of brilliant logic is supposed to explain why Jackie (Manero's sometime girlfriend, valiantly played by Cynthia Rhodes) who is obviously dripping with singing and acting talent, plods along anonymously in the chorus while Manero sulks and bullies his way into the lead role. What it really does is perpetuate the disgusting notion that a man who studies dance for more than half an hour can land a

starring role on Broadway while a woman who's been dancing since she was three is lucky to get a part in the chorus and a job teaching aerobics at a third-rate studio run by some gorgon named Fatima.

A little more subtle and a lot more offensive is the implication that Travolta captures the lead role because he is a "real man". After a predictable tantrum, he struts back into the studio. The original lead dancer, a stereotypical "dancer type", is dismissed and Manero proceeds to do everything but swing his partner around by her long hair in a display of masculine domination — the message to middle America being it's O.K. to be a dancer as long as you're not gay. And what this film has to say about love relationships between men and women is better off forgotten.

The auditions, rehearsals and performances of an improbable Broadway show called *Satan's Alley* lend *Staying Alive* what little structure it has and some of the details concerning this are just silly enough to mention. *Satan's Alley* is an impossible show to find on Broadway. *Staying Alive's* choreographer, Dennon Rawles, has a background staging Las Vegas revues, which explains a lot. The show has a multi-storeyed shiny chrome set and lots of smoke and dramatic lighting but it's too big to fit on any Broadway stage I've ever seen. There is no singing, no acting, not even a scrap of story-line, no costume changes from beginning to end and the director/choreographer sits in the lighting booth on opening night saying stupid things like, "Give me a white spot!" And, by the way, what Broadway theatre backs onto the waterfront?

To add insult to injury we are dishd up a nice little climax in which Tony Manero throws his partner Laura (played by Finola Hughes) across the stage and proceeds to do a solo, while she, having throughout the film shown herself to be even more danger-



John Travolta in the Satan's Alley finale of *Staying Alive*.

ously conceited and self-centred than he is, sits watching him like a dope. And she's not even injured because at the last possible second she jetées 10 feet in the air and lands squarely on top of a rapidly rising hydraulic pedestal. From there the neanderthal Manero heaves her up another 10 feet in a spectacular one-arm lift that he holds for an eternity as the two ascend into a smoky heaven.

Flashdance, also a Paramount production, inspires considerably less ill-will. It is essentially a good-natured, straight-forward film and Jennifer Beals is a lot prettier than John Travolta.

Beals plays Alex, a young woman who appears equally ravishing in her day-job as an industrial welder and in her night-job as a dancer in a mythical club called Mawby's where stunning women perform highly conceptual and slick dance numbers for a

bunch of beer-drinking bozos. The plot is silly and inconsequential. Alex's love interest is not the least bit interesting, and her dreams of becoming a professional dancer in a ballet company are not very convincing.

The film is sort of a conglomeration of styles, at times resembling an aerobics video, at other times masquerading as a Truffaut film from the 1960s. It's like watching a lot of different TV commercials strung together, which is not surprising since the director, Adrian Lyne, has an established reputation directing commercials including a series for Calvin Klein.

The tremendous success of *Flashdance* has nothing to do with its writing, acting or directorial vision. These conventional elements of a feature film exist merely to hold the dance sequences together, and these are quite sensational. Lyne and choreographer

Jeffrey Hornaday have pulled out all the stops.

While the choreography itself is not inspired, the marriage of dance, music, camera work and editing creates real cinematic excitement. My favourite dance number begins with the central character, Alex, draping herself backwards over a chair and yanking a cord to unleash a shower of water which splashes down her bare chest. While the audience is still recovering from the shock, she hurls herself into a sort of choreographed temper tantrum with dripping black curls and slippery, naked body flying every which way. The sequence is short and snappy, over before you know what hit you.

Lyne favours tight shots, mostly of the dancer's lean thighs and shapely bum which are quite remarkable and which do not belong to Jennifer Beals. The sensational feline body photographed from

every possible angle is that of Marine Jahans, Beals' dancing double, who generates most of the film's excitement, yet is not mentioned in the credits. Paramount claims this was a regrettable oversight.

Cynthia Rhodes (mentioned above) also appears in *Flashdance* as Tina Tech. She's one of the dancers at Mawby's and is featured in a rampage of leather and chains, dark glasses and red lips personifying a ravenous man-eater with just the right touch of camp.

The other saving grace of *Flashdance* is the phenomenon of spin-dancing or break-dancing which has become popular in clubs and on the streets mainly of New York and Los Angeles. Some of the film's best moments occur in an outdoor sequence where Alex joins a crowd watching some kids dancing on the sidewalk. They move like quicksilver, spinning incredibly on their heads, on their shoulders, curled into a tight ball or stretched out parallel to the ground and spinning on one hand.

The two strengths of *Flashdance* — the break-dancing and the electrifying presence of Marine Jahans — come together in the final dance sequence, Alex's audition before a grim jury of characters from the fictional ballet company she (misguidedly) wishes to join. Clad only in a tiny black leotard, black ankle warmers and jazz shoes, she gives them a taste of street dancing they are not likely ever to forget. They sit with mouths agape and eyes popping as this seemingly possessed little creature dives through the air, spins like a top and propels her perfect limbs hither and yon as if her very soul were on fire. Predictably, these cartoon types give her a standing ovation and she runs, happy and exhausted into the waiting arms of her insufferably sweet boyfriend.

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Book Beat



David Ashmole and Galina Samsova in the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet production of *Swan Lake* which is discussed in a new book by Barbara Newman.

Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet
Swan Lake, by Barbara Newman and Leslie E. Spatt.
(Dance Books, 1983. £7.95)

The Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet presented its new production of *Swan Lake* at The Palace Theatre, Manchester, 27 November 1981. Canadian audiences will have ample opportunity to see it during the British company's forthcoming tour. (See "Noticeboard" for details).

Dance writer Barbara Newman and photographer Leslie E. Spatt contrived to document the evolution of this new production and the result is an informative, often absorbing book which, apart from its specific intentions, reveals a great amount in general about the way large ballet companies operate.

The book is structured like a journal with a countdown to the first performance. The account opens with only 12 weeks left to the premiere. Much remains to be done and the ensuing weeks emerge as a frantic scramble to get everything ready on time. As the clock ticks away, irrevocable decisions must be made.

Rehearsal time is woefully insufficient. There is a sense of impending doom. Finally, however, things begin to fall into shape. There is much eleventh-hour fixing — of costumes, lights, even of steps, but the ballet goes on and is a success.

Peter Wright, artistic director of the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet and, with company ballerina Galina Samsova, producer of the new *Swan Lake*, emerges from this account as a coolly efficient hero.

Ballet fans will enjoy this inside view of a dance troupe at work but they may have trouble finding the book in Canada, in which case they should write direct for order information to Dance Books, 9 Cecil Court, London WC2, England.

MICHAEL CRABB

What is Dance? Readings in Theory and Criticism, edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen.
(Oxford University Press, 1983. \$25.00)

Of the 60 articles in this enterprising collaboration, only a handful attempt to

answer the question posed in the title. The majority however, represents timely and significant points of view on a many-faceted subject. Roger Copeland of Oberlin College is a professor of theatre and dance while Marshall Cohen's field is philosophy, at the College of Staten Island. Each is represented by two studies in this anthology. The other articles are drawn from a 200-year span of writings on dance. The result may have been designed as a potential textbook for their respective students, but its application could prove limited in other educational settings.

Aesthetics is the main concern and, beyond the search for definition and an examination of dance's scope, there are writings on style and identity, essays on related art forms, and a sprinkling of diversified socio-anthropological studies. Two articles are on dance notation, and included are representative examples of the works of six important dance critics.

In their preface, dated November 1982, the editors suggest that the volume is a "long overdue" companion to collections in more established art fields, suggesting that this is the first of its kind. But Selma Jeanne Cohen's *Dance as Theatre Art* (Dodd, Mead, 1974) covers much of the same ground from an historian's viewpoint, drawing upon materials from some of the same writers Copeland and Cohen feature. Cobbett Steinberg's more compact but impressive collection, *The Dance Anthology* (New American Library, 1980) offers 38 articles which were brought together with similar intentions. It sells for \$9.95 and seems not only a better organized compendium but one which has a basically broader appeal to the general reader. It also includes seven of the major contributions

included in *What is Dance?* These — key statements by Gautier and Valery, Noverre, Duncan and Michel Fokine, Constant Lambert and Havlock Ellis — add prestige to any anthology, and it's easy to see how Copeland and Cohen were reluctant to exclude them. Had they been a bit more good-natured about being scooped by Steinberg, however, they could have replaced these pronouncements with writings by or about other giants whom they mention only in passing — Bournonville, Massine, Humphrey and Tudor being a few who come to mind.

In comparison *What is Dance?* offers a longer and harder approach, containing a number of peripherally related articles which tend to blur the general focus of the anthology.

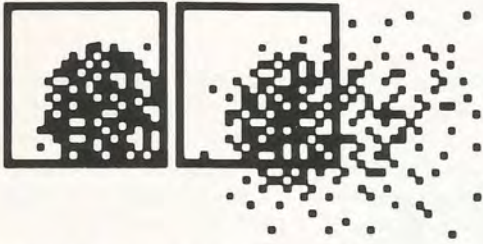
IN BRIEF

Readers not willing to endure the anguished family life and unsettled sexuality of Jill Johnston may prefer to browse through *Mother Bound* (Random House of Canada, 1983. \$12.95) and seek out the passages in which the erstwhile dance critic for *The Village Voice* remembers her associations with John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and the members of the Judson Church movement of the 1960s. Page 128 is an excellent starting point, and the illustrations are worth a glance.

Marie Rambert's autobiography *Quicksilver* (Macmillan, 1983. \$17.95), has been reissued with a tribute by Sir Frederick Ashton. Biased and reflective of a not-too-trustworthy memory, it offers nonetheless a lively assessment of an era which saw the rebirth of ballet in Western Europe and England.

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Noticeboard

The Sadlers' Wells Royal Ballet will make its first tour of Canada for six weeks this fall. The 80-member company will appear in nine cities with a repertoire including a new production of *Swan Lake* by Peter Wright and Galina Samsova, a mixed program of *The Invitation* by Sir Kenneth MacMillan, *Night Moves* by David Bintley and Rudolf Nureyev's version of *Raymonda Act III*. The tour will begin in Kitchener, Ontario, (Oct. 2, 3) and include Ottawa, (Oct. 5-8); Toronto, (Oct. 12-16); Winnipeg, (Oct. 18-23); Regina, (Oct. 25, 26); Saskatoon, (Oct. 28); Edmonton, (Oct. 31-Nov. 2); Calgary, (Nov. 4, 5); and Vancouver, (Nov. 8-13).

The London-based company, under the artistic direction of Peter Wright, has existed under various titles since 1946. As the Sadlers' Wells Theatre Ballet it visited Canada during the fifties. It was later known as the Royal Ballet Touring Company and, from 1970-76 as The Royal Ballet New Group.

Like its larger sister company based at Covent Garden, the SWRB draws most of its dancers from the Royal Ballet School. It tours far more than the larger company since, in general, its produc-

tions are better suited to the smaller stages found around Great Britain. It is not, however, as has often been implied, a "second" company to the Royal Ballet. From time to time, its principal dancers appear with the Royal Ballet and the company itself occasionally moves from its home-base at the historic Sadlers' Wells Theatre to dance at the Royal Opera House.

Peter Wright is, of course, well known to Canadian audiences through his outstandingly tasteful and lucid productions of *Giselle* for the National Ballet and for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. While Wright has choreographed many original ballets he is generally considered to be one of the world's greatest producers of the classic repertoire. The *Swan Lake* which Canadian audiences will see in October is his latest production and has already been highly praised in Britain.

Christopher House is the winner of the 10th Annual Jean A. Chalmers Award in Choreography. He received his \$5,000 prize June 11, at the Dance in Canada Conference in Saskatoon.

Born in St. John's, Newfoundland, House graduated



Christopher House (second from left) with Sonja Barton, Gordon Pearson and Susan Cohen after accepting the 1983 Chalmers Award.

from the University of Ottawa with a B.A. in Political Science in 1976. Upon graduation he began to study dance with Elizabeth Langley, Nikki Cole and Joyce Schietze in Ottawa. He then enrolled in York

University's dance program and received a B.F.A. in 1979. Almost immediately House became a full-time member of the Toronto Dance Theatre and was appointed the company's first resident choreo-

OBITUARY

Alan Hooper, the director of the Royal Academy of Dancing in London, England, died on July 12 in Oakland, California after falling from the third floor window of a dormitory building at Mills College. Hooper, who was 36, had just arrived to teach at Mills. Local police believe he may have risen in the night and, being exhausted after his 11-hour flight from England, lost his bearings before falling through the low window.

Hooper, who retired from performing as a soloist with the Royal Ballet following an injury, became a renowned teacher. He was well known to many figures in Canadian ballet and for four years taught at the Banff Centre's dance summer school. This year's Banff Festival Dance Presentation was dedicated to Alan Hooper and a fund has been opened to endow a dance scholarship at the Banff Centre. Anyone interested in making a tax-deductible contribution to the Alan Hooper Memorial Scholarship

should do so by making a cheque/money-order payable to "Banff Centre: Alan Hooper Scholarship" and sending it to Ken Madsen, Vice-President, Special Projects, Banff Centre, P.O. Box 1020, Banff, Alberta, T0L 0C0. Interest from the endowment fund will be matched by the Alberta government.

On the same day, July 12, **Edwin Denby**, the distinguished American dance critic and poet, committed suicide at his summer home in Searsmont, Maine. Denby, who was born in China, where his father was American consul in Shanghai, wrote about dance for *Modern Music* magazine, 1936-42 and for the *New York Herald Tribune*, 1942-45. He then worked freelance. Denby, who was 80 when he died, was among the pioneers of dance criticism in America. His two volumes of collected criticism, *Looking at the Dance* (1949) and *Dancers, Buildings and People in the Street* (1965) have become classics in their genre and are still in print.



Marian Tait and David Ashmole in *Night Moves*. David Bintley's ballet will form part of a mixed program to be presented across Canada by the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet during its tour this October and November.

grapher in 1982. A number of House's works are in the repertoire of TDT including *Toss Quintet*, *Boulevard* and *Fleet*.

The award is administered by the Ontario Arts Council through the Floyd S. Chalmers Fund and is made annually to assist professional choreographers who have displayed outstanding creative abilities in dance.

Peggy MacLeod, executive director of the Dance in Canada Association for the past two years has resigned to take up a new appointment as national co-ordinator of the Toronto-based Association of Cultural Executives. The 7-year-old organization has 194 members and one of MacLeod's jobs is to increase that figure. She will also be responsible for corporate fundraising (ACE gets no government subsidy) and for convening a conference in 1984 to examine the relations between the salaried administrators and boards of directors of arts organizations.

The 11th Annual Dance in Canada Conference, held on the campus of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, June 8-12, attracted a total of 206 delegates from across the country — considerably more than had been expected.

As usual, the conference

activities included classes, workshops, panels, lectures and a wide range of performances (see Peter Ryan's review in this issue).

Conference Chairperson Sonja Barton and her indefatigable team of helpers provided a friendly and welcoming atmosphere and somehow arranged for the sun to shine throughout most of the conference.

Highlights of the Saskatoon Conference, judging by the response of delegates, included an animated address by Canadian-born choreographer Norbert Vesak, a moving demonstration of how people with physical disabilities can be helped to experience the joy of dance — and a handsome 39-item exhibition of dance prints and lithographs. This exhibition was curated by Yves Cousineau who, together with Quebec dance historian Pierre Guilmette, has produced an attractive, illustrated catalogue.

Dance and the Electronic Age was the title of a pioneering workshop held in the studios of Toronto Dance Theatre, June 20 to July 1. Six Canadian choreographers worked intensively with an equal number of TV/video directors to explore the possibilities and technology of dance on the small screen.

Choreographers and directors teamed up to work on



Dance for the Handicapped Workshop at the 1983 Dance in Canada Conference, Saskatoon.

specific dances which were finally taped. The emphasis was on exploring the medium rather than on producing finished masterpieces. Each day's activities concluded with a roundtable discussion and viewing of work in progress.

The 12-day program — budgeted at \$80,000 — was financed through participants' fees and by grants from the Laidlaw Foundation, Wintario, the Canada Council Dance Section and the Ontario Arts Council Dance and Video departments.

Faculty included America's legendary ballet star Edward Villella, who has developed a new career in directing dance on television, the renowned Radio-Canada producer Pierre Morin and Production Designer Hugo Wüthrich. Technical Co-ordination was by Terry McGlade who during his 10 years as a video/TV director has worked on a number of projects with choreographers.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

The National Dance Critics' Seminar takes place November 7 to 12 in Vancouver at the centre for the Arts, Simon Fraser University. The seminar will be conducted by Deborah Jowitt, dance critic of *The Village Voice*, New York; William Littler, dance and music critic of *The Toronto Star*; Selma Odom, dance historian, York University, Toronto; and

Max Wyman, author and dance and drama critic of the *Vancouver Province*. Workshops in dance literacy and criticism will be supplemented by movement classes, lectures, panel discussions, film showings and several live performances including one by the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet which will then be in Vancouver as part of its Canadian tour.

EDAM, Vancouver's newest experimental dance group, made its Toronto debut August 12-14 at the Toronto Dance Theatre studios. Included were works by Jennifer Mascall, Barbara Bourget, Lola MacLaughlin, Ahmed Hassan and Peter Ryan and featured performances by Jay Hirabayashi as well as Toronto dancers Susan McKenzie, Souix Hartle and William Douglas.

The Anna Wyman Dance Theatre will leave Vancouver at the end of September for a 10-week tour of France, Belgium and Switzerland. The tour itinerary consists of performances in more than 30 European cities including Brussels, Marseille, Dijon and Chartres.

The Paula Ross Dance Company opens its fall season at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, (Oct. 25-29). Following its home season the company will embark on an extensive tour of the interior of British Columbia, (Nov. 7-25).



Peggy MacLeod, who leaves Dance in Canada on September 9 after two years as Executive Director, gives Arnold Spohr a congratulatory kiss after his acceptance of a 1983 Canadian Conference of the Arts Diplôme d'Honneur: Rideau Hall, Ottawa.

ALBERTA

Keith Urban and **Maria Formolo** of the Edmonton-based Formolo and Urban Dance Company spent six weeks in New Zealand, 18 April to 31 May, teaching and performing. They visited Dunedin, Christchurch, Auckland, New Plymouth and Wellington.

The tour was sponsored by the New Zealand Dance Federation and received support from Alberta Culture Touring, and The Alberta Foundation for the Performing Arts and Western Canada Lotteries, Alberta Division. The Canadian High Commission in New Zealand also offered assistance.

The two dancers found themselves warmly greeted wherever they went and in Wellington and Christchurch special "cushion concerts" were held at which local performers danced in honour of the visitors.

They found their students to be generally "strong, athletic and eager". There was considerable interest in the movement improvisation classes they taught.

On their way back from New Zealand, Maria Formolo and Keith Urban stopped off in Fiji where Maria was able to arrange unscheduled performances for guests of the local Hyatt Regency Hotel. They

then flew back to Canada and continued on to a workshop in Chicago before finally getting home to Edmonton. In July they taught at the Alberta Ballet School and then at Lakeland College in Vermilion, Alberta, where they also performed.

On October 22, Formolo and Urban Dance begin an Ontario tour in Thunder Bay and will continue to Almont, (Oct. 28-29); Lakefield and Peterborough, (Nov. 3-4); London, (Nov. 10-12) and Windsor, (Nov. 13).

The Alberta Ballet Company has initiated a new Young People's Ballet Series this year at the John L. Haar Theatre at Grant MacEwan College. The series is designed as an introduction to ballet and will include fall, winter and spring performances. The company will tour to Alaska and Alberta this fall. During 1984 choreographer James Kudelka will set a work previously created for the National Ballet choreographic workshop and artistic director Brydon Paige will choreograph *Raymonda Variations*.

Dancewest's 1983/84 season opens with the National Ballet (Calgary — Sept. 23, 34; Edmonton — Sept. 25, 26) and includes the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet (Edmonton — Nov. 1, 2; Calgary — Nov. 4, 5)

and The Royal Winnipeg Ballet (Edmonton — Nov. 29, 30; Calgary — Dec. 2, 3). The Alberta Ballet Company presents *Nutcracker* (Edmonton — Dec. 23, 24, 26; Calgary — Dec. 28-31), a mixed program (Edmonton — Feb. 7, 8; Calgary — Feb. 24, 25) and *Cinderella* (Edmonton — Mar. 27, 28; Calgary — Apr. 20, 21). The season closes with the Canadian debut of the Tokyo Ballet (Edmonton — May 21, 22; Calgary — May 24, 25).

MANITOBA

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet's first event of the season is a Gala Celebration, October 18, in honour of Arnold Spohr's 25th Anniversary as artistic director. The gala includes a performance featuring the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and a post-performance reception when a special presentation will be made to Arnold Spohr. The SWRB will perform *Raymonda Act III*, the RWB will perform Paddy Stone's *Variations on Strike Up The Band* and together the two companies will dance Hans Van Manen's *Five Tangos*. In mid-November the RWB embarks on a western Canada tour returning in December for its annual presentation of *The Nutcracker*.

Svea Eckloff, formerly principal dancer of the Alberta Ballet, has joined the company as a senior soloist. Martin Schlapfer has also joined as a soloist from the Basler Stadt

Ballet. New corps members are Stephen Hyde and Professional Division graduates Diane Buck and Peter Narbutas.

Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers have expanded their 1983/84 season to four engagements. The season opens with a guest appearance by Annabell Gamson from New York who will perform *The Dances of Isadora Duncan* at the company's season opener (Sept. 14-17). Composer/performer Fred Penner will highlight the holiday show (Dec. 7-10) in *Dance Through the Ages* choreographed by Odette Heyn-Penner. The company's annual company choreographic presentation, *Dance Experience*, is now part of the formal season and will feature an evening of works by resident choreographer Tedd Robinson and other company members (March 7-10). The final performances of the season will feature a number of company premiers. Founding artistic director Rachel Brown and the new artistic director, Bill Evans, will both present works. As well, New York choreographer Rosalind Newman, Vancouver's Jennifer Mascall and former company dancer Charles Moulton, who now directs his own troupe in New York, will all choreograph works for the company.

Contemporary Dancers will make a three-week tour of Manitoba in November and will tour British Columbia for the month of February.

Two dancers from the company's Professional Pro-



Maria Formolo and Keith Urban ham it up among the April autumn leaves during a break from teaching and performing in Dunedin, during their tour of New Zealand.

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gramme, directed by Odette Heyn-Penner, have joined the company. They are David Kurzer and Cathy Cornes. Christopher Gower formerly with Ottawa Dance Theatre, Joel Skewky, from Miami and Eriq Redd from Los Angeles have also joined the company.

Evelyn Polish assumes the new title of Executive Director this fall while Lin Gibson is now the Publicity/Development Manager and Diana Davis assumes the full-time position of Tour Co-ordinator.

Evelyn Hart, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's internationally acclaimed ballerina, has been named a Member of the Order of Canada. It is the latest in a string of awards for the Toronto-born dancer who, in 1980, won the first-place gold medal at the International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria. Hart will be invested with her order of Canada in Ottawa on October 5. During the summer, Hart appeared with a number of other ballet stars at the famous Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Lee, Massachusetts, and at Liberty State Park, August 1-13.

ONTARIO

Toronto Dance Theatre will open its 15th Anniversary Season with the unveiling of Patricia Beatty's *Painters and the Dance Project* at the recently renovated St. Lawrence Centre, (Sept. 22-24). *Painters and the Dance* is a unique project, three years in the making, for which Beatty won the Victor Martyn Lynch-Staunton Award, an award usually given exclusively to painters. She commissioned two noted Canadian painters, Graham Coughtry and Gordon Rayner, to create vast canvasses to envelop and define the performing space. Canadian composers Ann Southam and Robert Daigneault were commissioned to write original scores for the new works. Beatty's choreography for the project is designed to make her dancers part of the painting to give the canvass a

three-dimensional life. Also featured will be Beatty's *Skyliving and Seastill* with designs by Aiko Suzuki and with guest appearances by William Douglas, Dindi Lidge, Terrill Maguire, Stephen Raptis and Holly Small.

An Evening of Works by Christopher House is next on TDT's fall agenda. House, this year's Chalmers Award winner, will premier two new works in this, the second evening program devoted entirely to his choreography, (Nov. 10-13).

TDT is sponsoring a special holiday production, *The Court of Miracles*, as part of its 15th Anniversary Season. *The Court of Miracles* promises to be a unique collaboration of Canadian dance and music artists which will join TDT and some of the senior students of its professional program with Dancemakers and many noted guest artists in a production written and directed by David Earle. Choreography is by Earle and Christopher House and the artistic director of Dancemakers, Carol Anderson, as well as a special guest choreographer. *The Court of Miracles* is based on a traditional fable, set in Medieval times. There will be dancers, mimes, jugglers, puppeteers, acrobats and minstrels to tell the tale of good deeds triumphing over poverty and unhappiness.

Dancemakers opens its fall season with an Evening of Solos presented in the company's Toronto studios (Sept. 17, 18). The program will consist of recent solos choreographed by company members as well as several well-known Canadian choreographers. The company will perform at the Premier Dance Theatre (Sept. 30) and will give a benefit performance for the Koffler Centre Program in Dance at the Leah Posluns Theatre (Oct. 5). During November Dancemakers will make a three-week tour of Western Canada performing works from the current repertoire as well as a new quartet choreographed by co-



Former National Ballet of Canada artistic directors Alexander Grant and Celia Franca rehearse the Tango from Sir Frederick Ashton's *Façade* for a lecture demonstration at the University of Ottawa in July.

director Carol Anderson.

In December the company will perform in a collaborative project for the holiday season, *The Court of Miracles*; (for details, read under "Toronto Dance Theatre").

Theatre Ballet of Canada will participate in a gala fund-raising performance at Ottawa's National Arts Centre, November 7. The gala is planned as a salute to the Ontario Arts Council on its 20th anniversary and will raise funds for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. TBC shares the program with the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra, the Cantata Singers, the Ottawa Board of Education Children's Choir and guest artists Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn. TBC will premier artistic director Lawrence Gradus' latest work *Moralities* set to the music of Hans Weiner Henze. The NAC performance is sponsored by Northern Telecom Limited.

TBC will then embark on a brief tour (Nov. 26-Dec. 3) which will include Belleville, Ontario, Ypsilanti, Michigan, Oswego, New York and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

New York dancer Daniel Ray has joined the company this season increasing the company roster to 10 dancers.

TBC's first international appearance was a five-week tour of California, Mexico, Central and South America

last May. The Ottawa company performed in facilities ranging from the imperial-style Teatro Nacional in San José to a bull-ring in Torreón.

Celia Franca gave a series of five lectures at the University of Ottawa throughout April, May and June. More than 160 people attended the lectures which introduced the basics of ballet and related dance forms. Students from The School of Dance pre-professional program gave on-stage demonstrations to illustrate the lectures. A highlight of the lecture series was the performance by Celia Franca and Alexander Grant of the tango from Sir Frederick Ashton's 1931 ballet *Façade*. The lecture series continues throughout the fall.

The Second International Summer School in Benesh Movement Notation was held at the University of Waterloo, July 25 to August 12. The summer school was offered in co-operation with the Institute of Choreology, London, England, under the artistic direction of Monica Parker, director of the Institute in London and former principal choreologist of the Royal Ballet. Instructors included Wendy Walker, company choreologist of American Ballet Theatre; Elizabeth Cunniffe of the Institute of Choreology, and Ilana Supru, company choreologist of the Bat-Dor Dance Company in Tel Aviv.

The **Dance Ontario** branch of the Dance in Canada Association has initiated the founding of the Toronto Dance Umbrella. The Dance Umbrella project is designed to assist dance companies based in or touring to Toronto. Services the Dance Umbrella intends to develop include: a comprehensive mailing list; a Toronto Dance Calendar to advertise dance events and to help companies plan their Toronto seasons so as to avoid conflicting dates as much as possible; a resource centre to provide information on venues for dance, qualified technicians and equipment rental; an annual Dance Umbrella Festival; advance publicity for Toronto appearances of out-of-town companies; and a long-term plan to develop a regular touring circuit throughout Ontario. If you wish to participate in the development of the Toronto Dance Umbrella contact Dance Ontario, c/o Premiere Dance Theatre, 207 Queens Quay West, 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario. M5J 1A7. (416) 869-8460.

Terrill Maguire, the independent choreographer, co-directed with R. Murray Schaeffer and Rob MacKenzie, the first annual Sound Symposium in St. John's, Newfoundland dur-

ing July. Maguire gave performances and workshops and collaborated on an environmental dance production with St. John's Choreographer Cathy Ferri. Maguire also appeared with the Mel Wong Dance Company in New York last May and in June choreographed Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* at the Muhlenberg College Summer Music Theatre in Pennsylvania. In September Maguire will participate in Patricia Beatty's *Painters and the Dance Project* at the St. Lawrence Centre and will premiere her dance/theatre work *Cutting Losses #1* in a program of her recent choreography at the Toronto Dance Theatre, (Oct. 6-8). In November Maguire will perform in the Simon Fraser University Fine Arts concert series and in December she will give performances in Northern California.

Le Groupe de la Place Royale will premier artistic director Peter Boneham's *Faustus, An Opera For Dancers* at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, (Oct. 14, 15) and then will travel to Montreal's Centaur II, (Nov. 9-12), and to the Toronto Dance Theatre, (Nov. 15-19). *Faustus*, based on the Gertrude Stein play, has an original score by John Plant,

costumes and sets by Arthur Penson and lighting design by John Monroe. Robert Krupinski has joined Le Groupe from Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers.

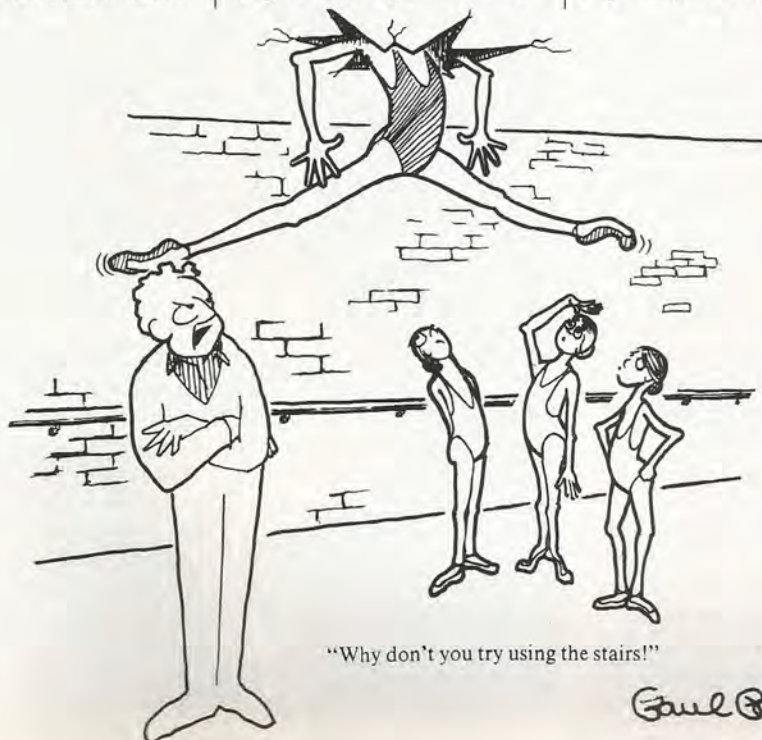
Juan Antonio, a distinguished dancer and former associate director of the Louis Falco Dance Company, began his new duties as artistic director of Les Ballets Jazz Dance Centre in Toronto on June 1. Among the goals Antonio has set for the Dance Centre is the creation of a second company of Les Ballets Jazz in Montreal. Toward this end he presented a performance at the Toronto Dance Theatre, (Aug. 4-6) featuring students of the school and guest dancers Phyllis Eckler, Michael Conway and Pierre Godreault. Modern dance will be given more emphasis this year at the Centre. The school has previously been known as a jazz school with solid ballet classes. Jaun Antonio himself teaches intermediate and advanced modern classes in the exuberant Falco style.

Danceworks 32 will feature new work by choreographers Gina Lori Riley of Windsor as well as Carole Anderson, Conrad Alexandrowicz and Denise Fujiwara, at the Toronto

Dance Theatre (Oct. 13-15). Danceworks director Mimi Beck plans a Hallowe'en fundraiser, "The Late Show", to be held at Harbourfront (Oct. 31). The final Danceworks of 1983 — Danceworks 33 — will feature choreographers Kai Lai, Murray Darroch both of Toronto, Peter Ryan of Vancouver and Christian Swenson and Helen Walkley from Seattle. (Dec. 1-3).

The Premiere Dance Theatre in Toronto's Queen's Quay Terminal will be officially inaugurated September 24. Its first season will include performances by 14 North American dance companies. The gala opening, a \$100-a-ticket black tie affair, will feature a specially commissioned work entitled *Pari Passu* by Canadian choreographer Judith Marcuse. The gala will open with a new work by Montreal soloist Margie Gillis and will include the Robert Desrosier Dance Theatre in an excerpt from *The Fool's Table*, Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers in Tedd Robinson's *Who Could Ask For Anything More?*, Sara Pettitt of the Toronto Dance Theatre in Peter Randazzo's *Enter the Dawn*, La Compagnie de danse Eddy Toussaint in *A Simple Moment*, Danny Grossman's virtuosic solo *Curious Schools of Theatrical Dancing* and a pas de deux by National Ballet rising stars Yoko Ichino and Kevin Pugh. The gala opening will be followed by a Festival Week of Dance, (Sept. 27-Oct. 1).

The Premier Dance Theatre's 1983/84 season offers two subscription series. The Star Series includes Margie Gillis (Oct. 4-8), American Ballet Comedie (Oct. 25-29), Danny Grossman Dance Theatre (Dec. 6-10), Danielle Leveillé (Jan. 24-28), Judith Marcuse Dance Projects (March 27-31) and the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company (April 17-21). The Great Performers series includes the Robert Desrosiers Dance Theatre (Oct. 18-22), American Ballet Theatre II (Nov. 22-26), Theatre Ballet of



"Why don't you try using the stairs!"

Paul Buxal '83

Canada (Jan. 10-14), Dance-makers (Jan. 31-Feb. 4), The Joffrey II (March 6-10), Toronto Dance Theatre (April 3-7) and La compagnie de danse Eddy Toussaint (May 1-5).

QUEBEC

Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal has already embarked on a busy new season which will see it dance on three continents before the end of the year! In early September, the company toured within the Montreal area. It performs in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Sept. 21) and in Boston (Sept. 24) before leaving on a European tour. The highlight of the visit will be Les Ballets Jazz's participation in the 20th anniversary Paris International Dance Festival. The company will be appearing at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, October 24-29. Other companies included in the Paris Festival are The New York City Ballet, Nederlands Dans Theater and Joyce Trissler Dance Company.

A tour of Swiss cities precedes the Paris festival: Geneva, (Oct. 1-2); Lausanne, (Oct. 3); Berne, (Oct. 4); Lugano, (Oct. 5) and Zurich, (Oct. 7). Les Ballets Jazz then visits a number of French centres before arriving in Paris.

In November, the company will open an African tour in Casablanca, (Nov. 1). The tour, which ends November 15, will take the company to Rabat, Morocco; Dakar, Senegal; Abidjan, Ivory Coast; Libreville, Gabon; Yaunde, Cameroun and Kinshasa in Zaire.

Then it's back to Canada for a tour to Trois Rivière, (Nov. 20); Sherbrooke, (Nov. 22); then from Quebec into Ontario — Guelph, (Nov. 24); London, (Nov. 25); Kingston, (Nov. 28). This will be followed by a tour of Atlantic Canada: Edmundston, N.B., (Nov. 31); Moncton, N.B. (Dec. 1); Sackville, N.B., (Dec. 2); Halifax, N.S., (Dec. 3) and St. John's, Nfld., (Dec. 4). The company then



The Premier Dance Theatre in Harbourfront's renovated Queen's Quay Terminal, Toronto, opens officially with a gala performance on September 24.

breaks new ground by returning to French territory to become the first foreign dance troupe to visit St. Pierre and Miquelon islands, (Dec. 6 and 7). The Préfêt has arranged for the company to be transported from Canada in his own private vessel.

In July, Les Ballets Jazz was once again refused a Canada Council project grant.

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens danced at the City Centre in New York for the second year in a row, May 25 to June 5. As before, the dancers were well received by audiences and critics alike although some of the choreography presented was coolly treated by the press. The company's performances of two Balanchine classics, *Concerto Barocco* and *Serenade* were highly praised and James Kudelka's latest work, *In Paradisum* was widely admired. Brydon Paige's *Astaire*, conceived as a joint tribute to the legendary American dancer of the title and to Les Grands

Ballets' own John Stanzel, was greeted enthusiastically by audiences. The established critics, however, did not care for it although Claude Girard's set received many compliments.

Regardless of mixed reviews, the critics agreed that Les Grands Ballets has established itself as a welcome and respected visitor to New York.

Les Grands Ballets will begin its fall season with a tour of the maritimes including performances in Halifax, (Sept. 30, Oct. 1); St. John, N.B., (Oct. 3); Fredericton, N.B., (Oct. 4, 5); Rivière du Loup, (Oct. 7) as well as Burlington, Vermont, (Oct. 20-21). The company appears at Toronto's O'Keefe Centre, (Oct. 25-29), and from there travels to Guelph, (Oct. 31) and to Ottawa's National Arts Centre, (Nov. 2-5). The company's home season in Montreal's Place des Arts, (Nov. 10-12, 18, 19), will feature a revival of Fernand Nault's highly successful *Tommy* (1970). The company's

fall season closes in Quebec City (Nov. 25, 26).

NOVA SCOTIA

Joseph Wallin, choreographer and Highland dance teacher, is the winner of the 1983 DANCING Award for outstanding contribution to the development of dance in Nova Scotia. Wallin was the first Nova Scotian to set up a school for Highland dance and to qualify as an examiner for the British Association of Teachers of Dance. A former member of the Buchta Dancers, Wallin was instrumental in establishing a Canadian syllabus in stage dance for the Canadian Association of Teachers of Dance.

Other recipients of the DANCING Awards were Ella Browne (Ballet), Len Hart (Ballroom), Kathy Selby (Education), Pat Kent (Ethnic), Ann Marie Comeau (Folk), Marie Urquhart (Highland), Jeanne Robinson (Modern), Ray Caverzan (Therapy).

Letters to the Editor

Moose Jaw

An article by Denise Ball in the Summer/83 issue of *Dance in Canada* regarding Dance in Saskatchewan has the potential to do harm.

National attention in a highly-respected professional magazine read by all Dance in Canada members and subscribers is distressing when, although there are good points, the write-up actually damages the credibility of many involved in the province's dance. Saskatchewan is among the best organized, strongest and consistently growing dance fields in Canada.

The article has excited enough adverse reaction to become spread by word-of-mouth. Since it specifically discusses dance festivals and

names the Moose Jaw Festival of Dance, we feel obligated to respond publicly.

Concerning festivals, it quotes only one teacher's actual complaints — about problems blamed on the festival's large size.

Negative, not sufficiently researched writing "puts down" all past entrants whether they earned awards or simply had an opportunity to perform in public — learning from the experience, from the general comments of adjudicators and from written adjudication sheets and cassette tapes made for every entry and given to the teachers to assist further work and improvement.

It also can discourage future festival entries and donors of

awards and scholarships that totalled well over \$2,700 in 1983 plus trophies and other awards.

Time is given for dancers to prepare physically and emotionally before performances. Order is maintained by basic discipline. Discipline is one of the most beneficial lessons taught in dance.

Certainly *this* Festival is not remotely, "like being in a cattle sale", where "the kid gets a number and is pushed through the shute".

The article says adjudicators can do no more than hand out marks and trophies for the teacher to use as "artifacts for advertising the schools". All awards and most trophies go to the students who earn them. Only group trophies go to dance studios.

Other positive aspects not mentioned include the value of seeing the work of other teachers and students, the friendships with peers that are forged, the encouragement of serious dance study.

Awards for summer schools such as Fort Qu'Appelle, Banff, Kelowna, the Royal Winnipeg and National Ballet schools are not lightly given nor received. Recipients are required to attend and work very hard. The benefits to students and our provincial dance scene are obvious.

A significant number of our young teachers and performers are in dance today because of the Festival — not only the result of awards, but because of the recognition of talent, the encouragement, the assurance that this talent was worthy of nurturing and "staying with it".

That the Moose Jaw Festival is entering its 25th year says something.

The theme of Denise Ball's article, "Toward A New Unity in Saskatchewan Dance" is excellent, but unity must

include the media which carries great impact with its printed words, to provide positive reporting and criticism along the road toward our common goal.

Sandra Dewald
President
Moose Jaw Festival of
Dance Association

Denise Ball replies:

While I quoted one teacher directly, her comments reflect an attitude held by a significant number of teachers in the province. At least three teachers interviewed for the story were critical of the way dance festivals operate. These teachers, working in Regina, Saskatoon and Yorkton, all expressed dissatisfaction with the size and lack of individual attention paid to competitors. Several of the most highly respected teachers in Saskatchewan refuse to enter their students in festivals for the reasons I quoted in the story. Rather than attacking Dance in Canada for failing to carry "positive reporting" on the Moose Jaw Festival of Dance Association, Ms. Dewald might spend her time and energy more constructively by giving serious consideration to the criticisms expressed by a significant segment of the dance education community in Saskatchewan — a segment which, one assumes, the festival is intended to serve.

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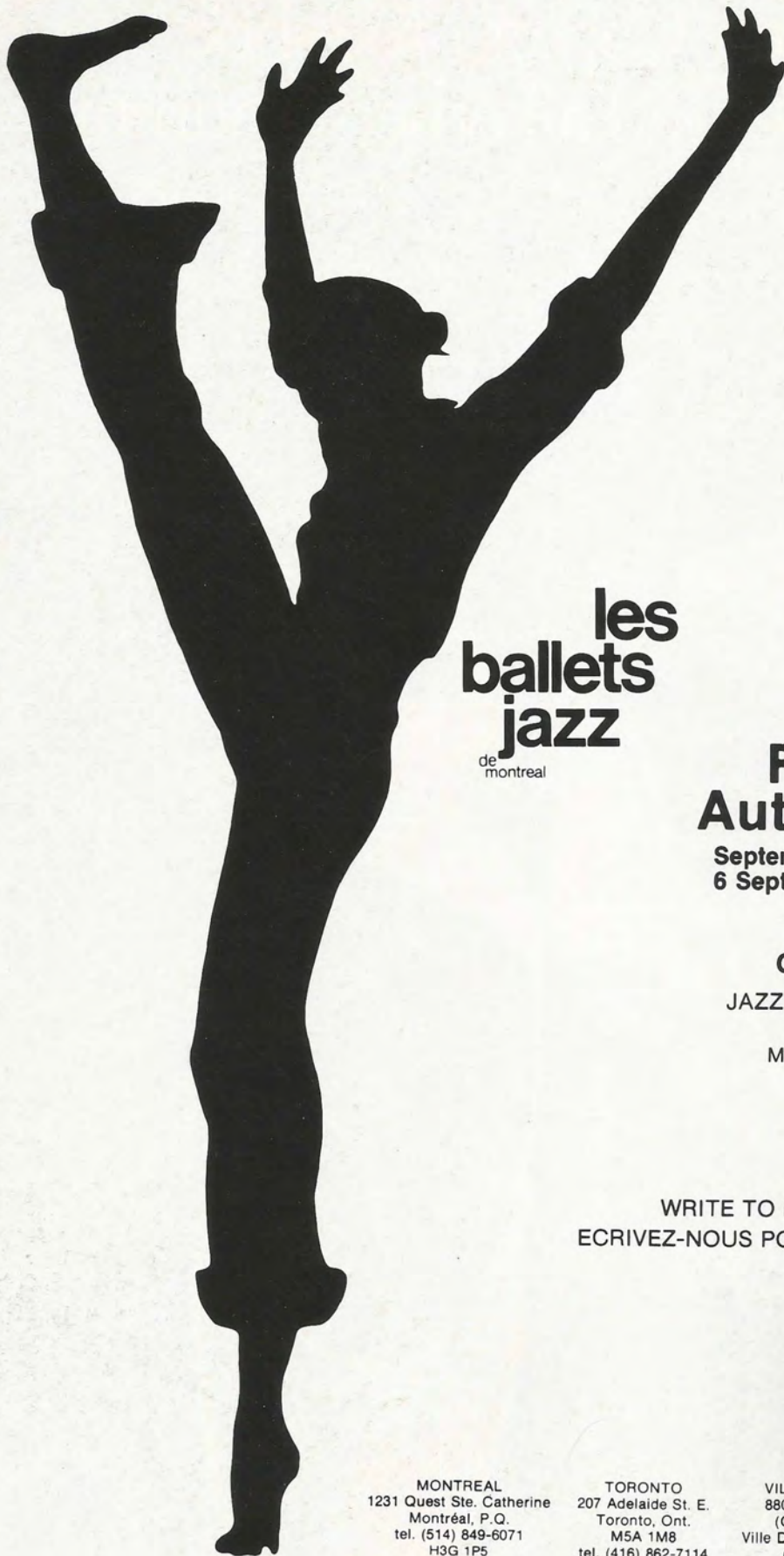
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