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COVER: Members of Le Groupe de la Place Royale in Peter Boncham's production of *Hank's Place*. Photograph by Andrew Oxenham.

The 20th Anniversary of Le Groupe de la Place Royale

A Celebration and a Legacy for Canadian Modern Dance

by Hilary McLaughlin

The survival of modern dance, its declining attendance mated cosily with declining public funding, is not talked about metaphorically or philosophically. The discussion is about pay for the dancers, the studio rental, the reined-in season in the recycled costumes.

With only modest fanfare, Le Groupe de la Place Royale celebrated its 20th anniversary in February. Against a lot of odds, and facing a lot of resistance, it has survived a tough decade in Montreal, and another in Ottawa.

The fact that the company mounted a fall season at Ottawa's York Street Theatre and its anniversary season at the National Arts Centre—and didn't look tacky in the process—is nothing short of a triumph.

But survival is a daily concern for all dance companies in Canada. Le Groupe's *vingtaine* is important because of the hope it brings—the proof that it can be done.

Far more interesting, however, is what it is that has been done. What, after 20 years, is Le Groupe de la Place Royale? Where is it? What's behind the company? What's ahead?

The history of Le Groupe reflects the history of Quebec, of the arts in Quebec, of interesting artists in Quebec. It is a history of aesthetics and change.

The beginning was incredibly exciting. Peter Boneham, at 30, having chucked dancing after an unsatisfactory career in ballet followed by Broadway, was lured from the United States to Montreal by his pal Vincent Warren to join Les Grands Ballets Canadiens and to try some modern dancing with "a couple of crazy ladies".

Not so crazy, as it turned out. One of them was Jeanne Renaud, of whom Boneham says: "My mentor, maybe—more than a strong influence on my life. A great psychologist, a fine creator, a vibrant person. She made me look at myself and find out what I wanted from dance."

Renaud, plugged into the entire Quebec arts scene, was full of ideas and energy. Boneham suggested she form a company; she made him assistant artistic director. Ballet had gone stale for him; with Renaud and Le Groupe he had the chance to create.

"Jeanne was very encouraging to me as a creator," Boneham recalls. "Very generous—a catalyst. We'd do a program of five numbers; four would be hers, but always there would be one of mine."

The musicians, the sculptors, the painters of Quebec were

pressed into service, not just to score or design, but to participate actively in the preparation of a total theatrical work. *Festival Magazine* reported in early 1967 that Le Groupe "works closely with sculptors, composers, poets and other artists and presents productions that appeal to those who are interested in all forms of artistic expression of our time".

One of those who was interested was an 18-year-old who became a student at, what was then, the very small school of Le Groupe de la Place Royale. His name was Jean-Pierre Perreault. Twenty years later, he remembers the atmosphere of the early days: "Jeanne couldn't pay us much, but she gave dinners all the time, especially to Peter and me. We'd be sitting at the table with the most interesting artists of the day. Jeanne was wonderful—teaching us to take risks, to try things, not to be afraid."

Looking back, both Boneham and Perreault refer to those early days of the company in terms of Diaghilev. To them, Renaud was a female, Quebec counterpart.

The fledgling company made its mark on artistic Montreal—aided, in part, by the lack of competition. Arts previews in the newspapers gave Le Groupe equal space with—and sometimes higher billing than—Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

Renaud's works were identified as having discipline and flow; Boneham's were characterized as more calisthenic and balletic. While he was acknowledged as displaying a grain of humour in his works, she was a choreographer "who insists that she has no use for emotion in her choreography, which is meant to express only her feeling for form or structure".

Early photographs of the company illustrate that they created a striking visual impact onstage; they also bear out John Fraser's contention, published in the *Globe and Mail* in 1972, that "this company owes as much to ballet as to modern dance".

From the first, the dancers were good. Nora Hemenway, Cheryl Prophet, Mary (later Maria) Formolo. Perreault, who started dancing at the relatively late age of 18, admits, "I couldn't do much technically, but you could always put me on a stage." The combination of a Nureyev-like appearance and a kind of *chutzpah* garnered him reviews as good as those of his betters. What he may have lacked in technique, he contributed in imagination.

But, while Quebec's artistic community was a motherlode



Michel Fontaine

Members of the company (left to right: Cheryl Prophet, William James, Jean-Pierre Perreault and Roberta Mohler) in *Les Nouveaux Espaces*, choreographed by Peter Boneham and Jean-Pierre Perreault.

for the company's creative spirits, and a substantial following was being built up in Montreal and around Quebec, the province was deaf to pleas for financial support. Only the Canada Council was producing any grants, and the company was constantly on the brink of folding for lack of funds.

The battle became too much for Jeanne Renaud, and she departed in 1972. Boneham was tempted to let it all go with her. Maria Formolo (who was an American, like Boneham) urged him to keep *Le Groupe* going. "She would have been the obvious choice as co-director," Boneham recalls. "She was the best dancer, the most ready. But—two Americans . . ."

He invited Jean-Pierre Perreault to become assistant director. After eight months of this arrangement, however, Perreault felt he "couldn't be Peter's assistant any more". He decided to quit. Boneham countered by offering him co-directorship. Perreault accepted—and stayed for nine more years.

In 1977, fed up with the miserliness of Quebec funding agencies—despite the company's steady growth in reputation and popularity—*Le Groupe de la Place Royale* moved to Ottawa. With the company came a core of dancers who, with few changes, would stay together until the summer of 1985.

One of these dancers was Michael Montanaro, who became assistant to Boneham when Perreault left in 1982. Montanaro himself left in 1984, to return, as Perreault had,

to Montreal. It was with Montanaro's exit that Peter Boneham finally took the reins, single-handedly, of the company he had helped to found.

But that is to anticipate: the definition, the direction and the character of *Le Groupe de la Place Royale* belong, obviously, to the decade of joint leadership by Boneham and Perreault.

"We were so different," Perreault cannot emphasize this point often enough in reminiscing about the company (which he, unlike Renaud, does willingly—not uncritically, but enthusiastically). It is true. Boneham knows and admits it, and it is as clear as day when one sees a program featuring the work of both choreographers.

"Jean-Pierre is so intellectual. If art comes from the gut, his gut is in his head," says Boneham. "He delves so strongly into everything, he reads and reads, he studies philosophy. For instance, he's profoundly influenced by his travels in Asia. He's almost like a perfect person."

"Peter is more intuitive than I am," says Perreault. "He would have instant responses. He's emotional, a people person. He has very personal relationships with the dancers. His centre of gravity is high, mine is low."

Talking of artists who have passed through the company and gone on—and thinking specifically of Perreault—Boneham says, "You're proud to be a part of it. It's like being a parent—you're always harder on your own kids than others, and hardest of all if the kid is an idiot—in some ways, Jean-



John Lederman

Bill James and Tassy Teekman in Jean-Pierre Perreault's production of *Calliope*.

Pierre was my idiot child."

"Peter is paternalistic in some ways," declares Perreault. "He's a good teacher; he'll get much out of people. He made me look fantastic when I'd been dancing a year. He loves the challenge of taking some little, fat butterball and making him dance—he could work with basket-cases."

Other differences involved methods of administering the company, ways of dealing with the dancers, interpretations of democracy. As creators, the two followed their own stars, which lent agreeable variety to the repertoire for both dancers and audiences. There were plenty of storms, but much was accomplished: a substantial body of work from each of the directors, the beginnings of choreography from members of the company, consistently strong performances as the company toured.

With most of Boneham's later works requiring the dancers to sing and/or speak, members of the company had been receiving voice lessons since the mid-1970s. Perreault's work frequently employed visuals, such as slides or films (as did some of Boneham's), and one of his signatures was the raked set, or ramps.

Both spoke of aesthetics and purity of art, and of total theatrical experiences—like-minded, but artistically very dissimilar. Perreault's movement tended toward the abstract, the distilled; Boneham's was often more illustrative.

Inevitably, the demands on the dancers varied, to the point that both choreographers could not be satisfied while keeping the company together. "Peter was moving more and more into voice," Perreault says of the period 1980-81, when he began to make his final moves toward leaving the company. "Both our work had reached a certain maturity, and there was no room for compromise any more. We each needed certain types of performers and structures. Le Groupe had become a high-budget, administratively-heavy company—if I had stayed, it would have had to be more free. I needed more freedom. It wasn't a hard separation—Peter needed a company for his work, I didn't."

Meanwhile, Michael Montanaro was emerging as a choreographer of sufficient promise to have his workshop pieces increasingly absorbed into the company's repertoire.

By the early 1980s, Le Groupe de la Place Royale was financially better off than it had ever been. But it still was not easy for a dancer to make a great living; and the demands on the company's members were heavy: teaching, voice lessons, classes, rehearsals and choreography.

The spirit of Ariel finally overtook Perreault's insecurity—"I was looking in the *Citizen* for jobs—as a shoe salesman. Then, by the end of the first week I was booked for two years."—and he went.

Michael Montanaro's tenure as Boneham's assistant was brief, chiefly because he found the financial responsibility for company members' lives a terrific strain, detrimental to his creative work at a point where it was just coming into its own.

When Montanaro left, Boneham formed a sort of artistic committee of senior dancers to help steer the company along. He occasionally reflects as to whether they felt that one or more of them would accede to Montanaro's title. No one received an offer, however; for Boneham, after one of his periodic soul-searches as to whether he should go or stay, finally realized what the others always knew, and decided to fly solo for the first time.

"Peter needs a company right now. And he needs a young company right now," avers Perreault. That's what he has, for the majority of the "old" company left in the summer of 1985, after each had spent almost 10 years with the company. They were all in their '30s; they had all done too much to stay with Le Groupe any longer. "It was time," Boneham declares. Easy for him to say.

When Le Groupe opened at the York Street Theatre last November, the company Boneham presented had only been together for a few weeks, and only two of the dancers had been in the company the previous season. *But if you hadn't known, you wouldn't have known.* Boneham simply raided his school, and the company was born again—as cohesive as the old, but new.

Boneham took a critical pummeling in 1983 for his *Faustus*, billed as an opera for dancers. In a way, it was the culmination of where his work had been leading him for the past few years. As his interest in voice grew, it was inevitable that he would attempt a work in which it was of paramount impor-



Carol Uhlmann

Michael Montanaro and Tassy Teekman in *Dernière Paille*, choreographed by Jean-Pierre Perreault.

Members of Le Groupe de la Place Royale in Michael Montanaro's production of *Walking on Glass*.



Andrew Oxenham

tance. He still feels pain at the memory of how the piece was received in certain segments of the dance community, but says that without *Faustus*, there could not have been *The Living Room* and *Hank's Place*, his subsequent pieces.

Hank's Place features quite a clever use of a television monitor (upgraded to the status of "video"). It also has an onstage sax player and a great deal of spoken text, as well as some well-considered and energetic movement.

The texts are more spoken than sung these days, and Boneham is talking more of dramatic coaches than singing ones for the company.

Most of all, however, he is talking about technology. "It moves so fast, you can't keep up. But it's big bucks, and I don't have the money. Dance is becoming R & D [research and development], not experimental! I'd like to work with robotic things. I see my work more and more as making movies, more than dance. I want the audience closer, smaller."

Presumably we can expect to hear more from Le Groupe's dancers, as well as to see them and—depending on the funds—more screens, multiplying images.

If *Hank's Place*, Boneham's latest major work, and his recent utterances are any clue, Le Groupe is well along a route that is becoming known as dance-theatre. Britain's Second Stride, recently seen in Canada, practises this genre, though not as well as Le Groupe de la Place Royale—which, perhaps, provides a long-missing clue as to why Le Groupe has been so successful in Europe in recent years. Its work is in the vanguard of what is being done there, and is on a par with the local product.

Peter Boneham will have more successes, and more failures, in his next phase with Le Groupe. As always, we can expect the unexpected, count on being surprised.

What lies ahead, however, is not limited to what comes out of the Sparks Street Mall in Ottawa. Le Groupe, more than any other company in the country, has produced a legacy. "Le Groupe has taken the arts so far," says Michael Montanaro. "Peter Boneham may or may not be famous, but dance history in Canada will show that Le Groupe will be one of the

most influential companies—not only in the people who came through it, but in the groundwork they have laid."

Across the country—from Maria Formolo opening up the west to Jeanne Renaud running Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, to Cheryl Prophet dancing, for a time, with Paul-André Fortier, and Bill James teaching and choreographing in Toronto—the offspring of Le Groupe de la Place Royale are making their mark on Canadian dance, as choreographers, as dancers, as teachers.

"They're rooted," Boneham says of the ones he helped produce. "They can teach, create, do other things—they have whole minds and interests."

Boneham continues: "It's the people I remember. I don't want videos of my classes to pass on, but there are very few good modern dance teachers around; all of my people are good ones. That's how it's passed on. Tassy [Teekman], Bill [James]—they're doing it their way, but . . . I taught Jean-Pierre. Now he teaches, in his own way."

He says Perreault "is standing in a class of his own, one of the best choreographers—not just in Canada, but in the world. When I went to see Jean-Pierre's *Joe*, it was magnificent. I went to see *Stella* and I cried. I'm proud to have been a part of it."

Montanaro is well on his way as a choreographer to be reckoned with. True to his roots, he longs for "a multi-media centre, where all these artists will be working together—and it won't just be dance".

His new company, Montanaro Dance, made its debut, performing *East of Egypt*, a long work using six screens, at Montreal's International Festival of New Dance last fall. (Also featured at the Festival were works by Perreault and former Le Groupe dancers Tassy Teekman and Janet Oxley.)

"I'm a born teacher," Boneham has said of himself, "and I know dance best, so I teach dance. I'm a born leader."

His former colleagues, in various ways, readily concede this. "Peter needs followers right now," says Jean-Pierre Perreault. What he means, really, is that Boneham's choreography is at such a stage that he wants to work with dancers who will just take it on and perform it.

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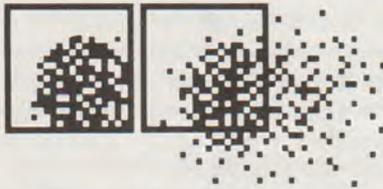
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Michael Montanaro gets somewhat closer to it: "Peter is a difficult person." (An assessment Boneham himself would not deny.) "He will, however, help people mature to the point that they're as strong as he is, and then they'll want to leave. He's very selfish, but he's very generous about giving opportunities to others. He's a true artistic director, and the company exists because of that.

"He's a leader, he's open, he says whatever's on his mind. Sometimes that means a lack of discretion or tact. People of his personality type are often hated for what they say. He's not of the generation that sees the grey area—it's all black and white for Peter. But I'm finding out slowly what he already knew when I met him."

Peter Boneham is 51 now, and far from rich, although, with luck, he won't have to sell his furniture again to make ends meet. "I've never been interested in security," he says. "I'll want a change again. I don't want to spend till I'm 65 with the company."

What he dreams of, from time to time, is "a laboratory where people can come and see a product develop—a small place, with video, doing experimental work. Things that we show when they're ready to be shown, things with a short lifespan. I want a small space where the independents can come and perform. We have to make the creative process interesting and attractive to the public."

Perreault says Boneham will stay with the company forever. But if he does, it will be with a company that regularly undergoes transmogrifications.

Le Groupe de la Place Royale has taken dance away from old—and even recent—definitions of what dance is and should be. A recurring question is whether what the company does is really dance. Are they—Boneham, Perreault, Montanaro and, perhaps, the others—really redefining dance?—or are they rejecting it?

Recently, in an impatient aside, Perreault declared, "The trouble with choreographers is they deal too much with dancing!"

Boneham's recorded views on this huge question have evolved over the years, but it seems likely that he would adhere to a remark made in an interview published in *Performing Arts in Canada* in 1974. "Life," he claimed, "is dance."

Life is also full of irony. Over the years, Le Groupe has developed a following that is supportive of—and even devoted to—its cutting-edge work. It has also had its critics, fostered into hostility by the very sharpness of those edges.

Yet, reviewing Perreault's *Stella* at the International Festival of New Dance in Montreal last fall, Anna Kisselgoff wrote in the *New York Times*: "Perreault is not a newcomer to dance. He received a mainstream modern-dance background while performing from 1967 to 1981 with . . . Le Groupe de la Place Royale."

Mainstream, indeed. This of Perreault, who often said, in one form or another, that he neither sought nor expected to appeal to 99 per cent of the audience population.

Kisselgoff's words just prove that if one survives long enough, one becomes perceived as part of the establishment, or the established. Is it too long since she has seen Le Groupe?—or is she right on top of the game? Is the "mainstream" these days occupied by choreographers whose least concern is dance?

Le Groupe de la Place Royale will probably provide the answer to this question in the years to come. The company is part—a great part—of the reason the question has to be asked. And that, too, is a legacy. •

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Prologue to the Performing Arts: Education is the Key

by Maureen Lennon

For many thousands of Ontario school children, the only opportunity that they will ever have to witness a live performance by a professional dance company comes their way courtesy of their school's administration and the organization known as Prologue to the Performing Arts.

First established by a corps of volunteers nearly 20 years ago, Prologue to the Performing Arts was designed to bring a wide range of performing arts into the schools of the province. Since its inception in 1967, Prologue has quadrupled the size of its staff and volunteers, and the number of performances available to Ontario students has increased from 111 the first year to over 1,600 annually. There is no other organization like it in Canada.

Prologue functions like an artists' management firm. There is a roster of individual artists and performing arts companies, each presenting various types of programs. Prologue sells these programs to school boards or individual schools throughout the province.

The annual operating budget is \$750,000, one-quarter of which is funded by the Ontario Arts Council; the remainder is generated by program sales. The support from the Ontario Arts Council enables Prologue to offer top-quality programs to schools at a reasonable fee—regardless of the location of the school. Thus, schools in northern Ontario can take advantage of the programs offered by Prologue as easily as schools in and around the metropolitan centres (where most of the performing companies are based).

Prospective artists and performing arts companies are auditioned before being taken on contract. As well, companies remaining with Prologue over a number of years are monitored constantly to make sure that their standard of performance remains consistently high.

In addition to high-calibre performances, Prologue looks for imaginative programming specifically geared to young audiences. "We're trying to expose the youth in Ontario schools to high-quality performances which are presented in an accessible manner," says Terri Kuhl, Prologue's executive director. "We'll entertain any possibility. We try to provide something that will be of the most benefit to the students—to give them an experience that they might not seek out on their own."

Last year Prologue sold a total of 120 dance performances to Ontario schools. There are four dance companies on the

Prologue roster for the 1985-86 season: Dancemakers, the National Ballet of Canada, the National Tap Dance Company of Canada and Ottawa Dance Theatre.

A typical Prologue dance program will run approximately 50 to 60 minutes. Each company designs its own presentation, and some try to give the students a look at the supporting elements that accompany a dance performance.

"I suggested we do some makeup, because I thought it would appeal to the children," explains Victoria Bertram, a principal character dancer with the National Ballet of Canada. She and her husband, Jacques Gorrissen, another principal character dancer with the National Ballet, put on witch makeup for the students.

Bertram describes what happens: "Jacques puts on Madge from *La Sylphide*, which disguises him as a woman, and I put on the Carabosse witch makeup from *Sleeping Beauty*. We start off with no makeup at all, so that the children see our faces—that we're just ordinary-looking people. As the show progresses, we put on our theatrical makeup, right there in front of them.

"Meanwhile, Charles [Kirby, also a principal character dancer with the company] is explaining about the theatre—that this is the makeup area; that Mary McDonald [the company's principal pianist] represents the orchestra, which we couldn't, of course, bring. Then there's a demonstration, like a small class.

"I feel that, for children who are slightly bored with watching the exercises, having the makeup go on at the same time is like having a two-ring circus. There's a diversion.

"They really enjoy watching the makeup. We get lots of questions. Does it hurt our faces?—things like that."

The National Ballet's program also includes a session of mime interpretation, during which children from the audience are brought up on the stage and encouraged to decipher what Bertram is saying with her hands. As well, there are excerpts from the classical repertoire which demonstrate different dance styles, a solo jazz number and a question-and-answer period at the end.

Ottawa Dance Theatre has a program which introduces the students to the history of dancing and demonstrates the influences that other arts, such as music and film, have had on dance.

"We present a series of vignettes on the evolution of dance

as a performing art," says Judith Davies, the company's artistic director. "Students learn how classical ballet technique evolved, how modern technique evolved, what the exercises are, why they're done, what the difference is between theatrical dancing and folk dancing, the influence of music, film, etc. We basically try to capsulize for youngsters what dance is all about."

Dancemakers, which was formed in 1974, began working with Prologue in 1976 and, with the exception of two seasons, has performed in Ontario schools each year since then. The company presents a combination of drama and modern dance specifically tailored for students in grades one through eight.

Terri Kuhl comments: "Dancemakers goes back quite a way with Prologue. They used to present more of a lecture-demo program, but now they've changed. There's no one magic formula to make something educational."

The current production offered through Prologue is *When the Bough Breaks*, in which choreographer Patricia Fraser examines some of the rewards and difficulties of peaceful co-existence.

"They use movement to convey emotions," says Kuhl. "The students see that the body can express feelings and ideas."

The National Tap Dance Company of Canada has two brief productions designed for students from kindergarten to grade six level. The dancing is a potpourri of jigs, reels, step-dancing and tap, accompanied by French-Canadian folk music and original music.

This company is, perhaps, one of the most unique on the

Prologue roster. "No repertoire for a tap company exists," explains Steve Dymond, one of the co-founders [with William Orłowski] of the National Tap Dance Company. "Everything is new. Prologue has been one of the strongest factors in the development of the company, because they have commissioned three works which later entered the main repertoire of the company."

Jennifer's Dream and *The Sandwich* are featured during the company's 1985-86 Prologue season. *Jennifer's Dream* deals with a young girl's relationship with her grandfather. *The Sandwich* is a lesson in tolerance. This is the third year that it has been offered through Prologue.

Apparently, high-tech gizmos are not the only things that hold children's interest these days. "The kids in the schools are a whole new audience for tap dancing," says Dymond gleefully. "They like it because they can hear it, and they will jump up and try to do it immediately."

Educational touring does not make money for the dance companies, who believe that bringing live dance performances into schools is an investment in future audiences. "Education is the key to absolutely everything," asserts Charles Kirby. "The more that any audience understands, at any age, then the easier it becomes to establish repertoire."

For years, of all the performing arts, dance in particular has been subject to stereotypical misconceptions and pre-conceived notions. Bringing dance programs into schools in a format which allows students to see the artists, first of all, as people and, secondly, as creative artists has helped to dispel some of the old myths.

"Nothing impresses anybody as much as true dedication to



Charles Kirby, principal character dancer with the National Ballet of Canada, addresses the young members of a Prologue audience.

anything, whether it's a sport, dance, music—whatever," says Judith Davies. "To see that these people can talk and suffer injuries like the students' favourite hockey players or their favourite football players, and to see that they have to train so hard to get to their level of physical proficiency, which is obvious once they start to move, immediately tends to dampen



Part of the National Ballet's Prologue program involves a mime demonstration. Here, a young member of the audience, aided by Charles Kirby, tries to decipher the mimed gestures of principal character dancer Victoria Bertram, dressed as Carabosse from *The Sleeping Beauty*.

any preconceived notions of guys running around, flitting about on tiptoe."

Victoria Bertram has noticed that even some of the teachers tease one another about seeing the ballet with their students; however, they, too, are soon caught up in the spell of a live performance. "After the first five minutes, it's amazing," she relates. "There's a hush, and even the teachers are sitting there wide-eyed about a whole different aspect of ballet that they were probably never aware of."

For the dancers involved in Prologue performances, the feedback is immediate and easily interpreted. "The kids ooh and aah when 'Mr. Muscleman', David Roxander [a first soloist with the National Ballet], comes out," says Bertram. "He's a particularly good asset to our program, because he represents the more athletic dancer, rather than the refined, sophisticated dancer. There's an actual two-minute stop in the program while the kids recover from seeing him. He does a jazz solo with a saxophone and a black hat, and they think he's just great. They're always asking him if he does weight-lifting or breakdancing."

Often the companies receive letters from the children,

thanking the performers for their visit. The children also ask for more information about the technique of dancing and, invariably, they invite the performers to return as soon as possible.

Now that Prologue has been in place long enough for a generation to pass through the school system and out into the world, performing groups are beginning to notice a new sophistication in their audiences. "When we do our major school matinees at [Toronto's] O'Keefe Centre, the children now respond completely differently than they used to," Charles Kirby notes. "When I joined the company [in 1965], and we did school matinees, it would sometimes sound like a free-for-all. The kids were rowdy and restless and noisy.

"It isn't like that any more. They have become more exposed to theatre through Prologue. The kids have learned that they shouldn't be leery of it. They've been getting inside information on what not just ballet, but all theatre people do. So now they can go and just be an audience and enjoy the show."

When asked if Prologue is working, all those connected with it agree that it is. Victoria Bertram, who has two children, says "I think it is necessary for the schools. It's great to get in there and have the human element. You can put it on a TV screen, but it's not the same as actually meeting people."

Judith Davies agrees: "I think the work that we do through Prologue is extremely important. Often we're going into smaller towns in northern Ontario, where they receive little or no exposure to live performing arts. They see it on television or films. But the actual live, hands-on experience of having performers right there, being able to talk with them, I feel is extremely important."

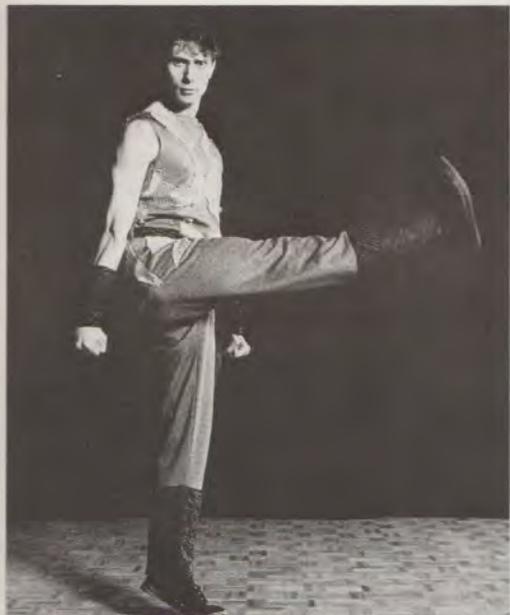
The dancers who tour for Prologue are quite used to walking into performing environments which are less than ideal. Sometimes the temperature of the room isn't comfortable, or the lighting is poor. Often they are dancing on small, makeshift stages.

School gymnasiums are the most common performing spaces available, and their floors are usually concrete. It is much easier to sustain an injury working on this type of surface than a wooden stage floor.

Last year, however, members of Ottawa Dance Theatre encountered something far more hostile in one school auditorium. "We went into an inner-city school, in probably one of



Members of the National Tap Dance Company of Canada (left to right: Heather Ronald, Leslie McAfee, Stephen Greig and Glen Kotyk) in William Orlowski's production of *The Sandwich*.



Michael Conway of Dancemakers in Patricia Fraser's production of *When the Bough Breaks*.

the toughest neighbourhoods in Toronto, to do a group of performances for junior high school students," relates Judith Davies. "Because of their attitudes at that age, they are probably the most difficult audience to play. It's that wonderful age where they know everything, no matter what. The situation was compounded by the fact that these kids were often from underprivileged families that have had no exposure to the

arts. A lot of factors governing the background of these kids put them into the category of touch kids to teach.

"When we walked into that school, it was like walking into a war zone. It was them against us. The attitude of the teachers was, 'I hope you know what you're getting yourselves into. We don't know what the reaction is going to be. This could be a riot, you know.'

"Well, we have a program that includes a lot of jazz, and we also get the kids up breakdancing, because it's a street dance. It's something they relate to immediately.

"At this particular performance, there was the usual snickering and snorting in the background as the men, particularly, went through a classical ballet barre and centre. But, very slowly, within the next 20 minutes, I realized that we *had* them. By the end of the performance, we had kids cheering, screaming, hooting and yelling.

"All of a sudden, one lad, who was obviously the school trouble-maker, yelled out from the balcony, 'How come that dancer likes to hit kids?' He was referring to Ron Proulx, a dancer who is a phenomenal athlete. Ron had chucked some little kids under the chin or ruffled their hair as he was dancing—so this kid was just being really provocative.

"Ron turned around and answered, 'Because I just love mutilating little kids. Ha, ha, ha!' With that, he tore across the room, scaled a 15-foot wall, flew over the balcony with what can only be described as a flying camel, grabbed the kid and gave him a big hug.

"Everybody went nuts. It was total, universal enthusiasm for something that everybody in that room could relate to. What had basically been them *against* us in the beginning had turned into them *with* us." •

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Les Sortilèges

Créateurs et interprètes d'un état d'âme

par Marici Dillon



Le *Valse-Lancier* se dansait à Montréal au début du siècle.

Quand en 1966, on avait tout simplement demandé à Jimmy Di Genova de préparer une partie du spectacle pour le gala de l'école Saint-Stanislas où il enseignait, aurait-il pu s'imaginer que, 20 ans plus tard, il tiendrait la scène de la Place des Arts avec une cinquantaine de danseurs nous entraînant sans relâche dans un étourdissant tour du monde en 28 numéros et 500 costumes? C'est à nous maintenant de lui tirer la révérence et de lui dire bravo! pour cet extraordinaire cheminement.

Il y a effectivement de quoi s'en émerveiller d'autant plus que l'Ensemble national de folklore Les Sortilèges, qui se déclare la seule troupe de danse folklorique professionnelle

au Québec et au Canada, a toujours vécu dans une situation précaire. Peut-être doit-il sa survie au fait que son fondateur, M. Di Genova, cumule les fonctions de directeur artistique et administratif, une situation rare au Canada, qui lui permet de rêver sans toutefois bâtir de châteaux en Espagne. Pourtant, il nous dévoile une corne d'abondance à laquelle il pourrait puiser à volonté si la réalité des moyens financiers limités dont il dispose ne mettait un frein à la réalisation de mises en scène à la mesure de la richesse du folklore international.

Car Les Sortilèges dépassent largement le périmètre de leur province et ne font pas "que du québécois" comme le

public en a conclu en voyant leurs représentations pour Expo 67 ou encore à la télévision vers la fin des années 70.

Le répertoire qu'ils nous ont présenté fin novembre 1985 pour célébrer leur 20^e anniversaire nous a aussi fait traverser une douzaine de pays dont l'Italie, la Roumanie, la Russie, le Mexique, l'Ukraine et Israël. Et avec *Quagigue*, l'Angleterre, l'Irlande, les États-Unis et le Québec ont pour une fois accordé leurs violons dans une chorégraphie qui démontre l'universalité du folklore.

Jimmy Di Genova me précisait à ce propos certaines affinités dans les traditions occidentales. Il a par exemple re-



La mariée va bientôt dévoiler son joli visage dans la *Suite chassidique* de Pologne.

marqué que les danseurs Morris de Grande-Bretagne que l'on a vus à l'oeuvre dans *Rapper Sword Dance*, et les *Calushari* de Roumanie sont de la même famille, et leurs danses ont la même origine celtique.

On pourrait d'ailleurs aller beaucoup plus loin, me disait-il, et "récrire l'histoire par le biais du folklore en poussant les recherches ethnologiques". Un projet excessivement ambitieux pour un directeur artistique, me direz-vous! Mais ne vous y trompez pas, Jimmy Di Genova sait de quoi il parle. Il est une mine d'or de connaissances sur des civilisations et des modes de vie qui se sont perdus en raison du développement économique et technologique—des connaissances qu'il a acquises en faisant les recherches nécessaires pour faire revivre chacune de ses danses sur scène dans toute leur authenticité.

Quand à la fin de leur spectacle en Turquie en juillet 1983, le public s'adressait à eux en turc, pensant avoir vu leurs propres compatriotes danser, c'était pour Les Sortilèges le plus beau compliment qu'on pouvait leur faire et l'indice probant qu'ils avaient réussi à interpréter un état d'âme juste.

Bien qu'il n'en n'ait pas le titre, M. Di Genova est un véritable ethnologue, et tous les documents qu'il a rassemblés sont regroupés, depuis 1977, au Centre de documentation Marius Barbeau (le célèbre folkloriste québécois), sous le même toit que l'école des Sortilèges. C'est le plus important centre privé au Québec qui se consacre aux arts et aux traditions populaires. La bibliothèque compte un millier de volumes sur le costume, la danse et la musique traditionnelle au Québec et à l'étranger, des périodiques et des tiroirs pleins à craquer de dossiers et de notations de danse. Il y a aussi une vidéothèque et une collection de diapositives.

Le Centre diffuse sept disques recréant l'ambiance des soirées d'antan et cinq volumes de danses enfantines et traditionnelles québécoises dans les collections *J'ai tant dansé* et *Chant de mon pays*.

Il lance à présent un appel aux éditeurs intéressés pour publier un document sur "le costume en milieu rural au Québec au 19^e siècle" qui a demandé cinq années de recherches.

Les Sortilèges perpétuent une histoire et des traditions qui risquent fort de tomber dans l'oubli le plus total s'ils ne les faisaient si bien revivre sur scène. Leur directeur transmet avec fougue sa passion du folklore aux jeunes générations. Ses danseurs ne se contentent d'ailleurs pas de giguer sur scène, et pour être véritablement porteur du message des peuples qui ont fait le folklore, ils doivent avoir un vécu en dehors de la scène. Ils danseront par exemple avec des Israéliens dans une fête pour savourer et faire l'expérience de cet état d'âme dont ils seront l'interprète et qu'ils feront vivre au public. Ils confectionnent eux-mêmes les ceintures fléchées qu'ils portent pendant leurs représentations. En vivant ainsi le folklore, ils sont à même de redonner vie à l'âme villageoise avec sensibilité et authenticité, car aux Sortilèges, le danseur se veut tout autant créateur qu'interprète.

L'Ensemble forme ses propres danseurs. Ils n'ont d'ailleurs pas le choix car il n'y a pas d'école nationale de folklore au Canada et personne d'autre ne donne de formation professionnelle dans cette discipline. C'est peut-être regrettable, mais par contre, les futurs professionnels qui sont recrutés entre 18 et 25 ans, sont modelés au style Sortilèges en entrant directement dans leur pensée.

Un des objectifs de la compagnie est d'ailleurs d'augmenter le nombre de ses danseurs. Elle voudrait également développer davantage le chant, et le rêve serait d'avoir les musiciens sur scène. Mais connaissant la variété du répertoire des Sortilèges, ce serait un luxe qui les mènerait incontestablement à la ruine. Imaginons simplement le nombre et la variété des instruments de musique quand on passe du Mexique en Pologne, ou du Québec en Arménie, et ainsi de suite!

Mais on peut tout de même se permettre certaines satisfactions comme par exemple quand ils ont eu la joie d'accueillir le meilleur musicien de Roumanie au Festival inter-



Sur une chorégraphie de Sonia Vartanian, *Keamancha* tire son nom d'un instrument arménien.

national de Drummondville, en juillet 1982, ou encore les chanteurs, les danseurs et les musiciens du groupe Zig Zaghini de Molise en Italie, en septembre dernier.

Sur le plan international, Les Sortilèges ont bien roulé leur bosse depuis 1967. Leurs tournées les ont menés entre autres en France, en Israël, en Grande-Bretagne, à la Martinique, en Bulgarie, aux États-Unis, en Turquie et tout dernièrement, en août et septembre 1985, au Japon.

Dans les périodes de 7 minutes qu'on leur avait accordé pendant 15 jours à l'Exposition universelle de Tsukuba, ils ont remporté un énorme succès auprès d'un public japonais fasciné par l'art québécois de "faire chanter les pieds". Que d'exotisme et que d'exubérance sur un rythme accéléré pour cette nation où, traditionnellement, les mouvements corporels sont réduits à leur plus simple expression!

Les Sortilèges doivent d'ailleurs revenir au Japon en 86-87 dans le cadre d'une tournée en Extrême-Orient—un projet qui devrait aboutir à des événements organisés avec Hong Kong, Taiwan, le Japon, l'Australie et d'autres pays du sud-est asiatique. Dans un avenir plus proche, ils doivent se rendre en Europe dans un an et les préparatifs ont été entamés lors d'une pré-tournée en décembre dernier à Belgrade, Bucarest, Budapest, Prague, Varsovie, Francfort, Bruxelles et Paris. Et très bientôt, le 20 mars, ils vont tenir la scène du Carnegie Hall à New York! Ils ont aussi été invités à participer au prochain Festival du Mexique et au Festival d'Athènes. Les offres ne manquent donc pas, ce qui indiquerait que le folklore est en bonne santé.

Pour en revenir au Canada, l'Ensemble marque sa présence aussi bien sur scène à Montréal ou en tournée, que par ses ateliers-conférences, ses programmes d'animation dans les écoles, et son enseignement auprès des enfants et des adultes qui peuvent s'initier à la gigue, aux traditions populaires et à la danse québécoise et ethnique. Chose étonnante, ils ne sont venus qu'une seule fois à Toronto, en août 1982 au Harbourfront Theatre, alors qu'à priori, on pourrait penser que le multiculturalisme de la plus grande ville du Canada serait un facteur favorable et que le public serait attiré par leurs danses internationales.



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Il reste encore beaucoup d'incompréhension et d'ignorance comme en ont témoigné les fous rires au Théâtre Maisonneuve au beau milieu de *Glamoc*, le numéro le plus poignant du Gala d'anniversaire. Dans la pénombre et le silence ponctué par le rythme de leurs pas et de leurs médailles, les danseurs évoquaient cette période de l'occupation turque en Bosnie-Herzégovine où les villageois se retireraient dans les montagnes pour se divertir, leurs conquérants leur ayant interdit de danser. Ces spectateurs n'auraient sans doute pas montré un tel manque de tact s'ils s'étaient donné la peine de lire les notes explicatives que Les Sortilèges prennent toujours le soin de reproduire pour chaque numéro au programme.

L'incompréhension est enracinée encore plus profondément quand on pense que le Conseil des Arts du Canada ne reconnaît toujours pas le folklore parmi les formes de danse qu'il subventionne. Les Sortilèges prouvent une fois de plus que nul n'est prophète en son pays. On entrevoit cependant une lueur d'espoir maintenant que, non sans mal et avec toute la persuasion qu'on lui connaît, M. Di Genova a réussi à ce que le Conseil des Arts délègue enfin quelqu'un pour assister au Gala du 20e anniversaire. Ce qui ne veut pas pour autant dire que les subventions vont commencer à pleuvoir, loin de là. On en est tout simplement au stade de la simple reconnaissance.

Ils ont tout de même reçu la bénédiction du ministère de l'Éducation et le ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec leur a accordé cette année une subvention au fonctionnement de l'ordre de 50 000 \$. Les milieux d'affaires s'intéressent à eux, en particulier Hydro-Québec, qui grâce à l'entremise de son président-directeur général, M. Guy Coulombe, également président d'honneur des Sortilèges, a agit en qualité de commanditaire pour la soirée du 27 novembre dernier.

On ne peut enfin évoquer Les Sortilèges sans parler de la richesse et des couleurs de leurs costumes réalisés depuis plusieurs années par Monique Cyr et son équipe. Ceux qui n'ont pas encore eu la chance de voir les danseurs sur scène peuvent avoir un aperçu de la qualité des costumes en feuilletant la brochure-souvenir des 20 ans avec ses reproductions en couleur très attrayantes. Monique Cyr tient avant tout à l'authenticité à laquelle elle parvient par ses recherches et ses lectures, en consultant des photos ou des dessins ou en faisant appel à la mémoire des danseurs qui, dans leurs tournées, ont pu voir des costumes authentiques.

Les Sortilèges possèdent vingt-trois costumes d'origines différentes et neuf séries de vêtements québécois. Ils ont été exécutés selon les modèles d'autrefois en les adaptant dans certains cas à la scène, comme par exemple dans *Sortilèges!* ou les toutes petites fleurs traditionnelles de "l'indienne" du costume féminin ont dû être grossies pour que les spectateurs puissent les apprécier, sans toutefois trahir le style du vêtement.

Les Sortilèges ont fait le pas en recréant sur scène les traditions, les festivités saisonnières et la saveur et le labeur de la vie paysanne. La participation sociale qui allait autrefois de pair avec de telles réjouissances, n'existe plus à présent. On ne peut plus créer de folklore car il s'inscrit dans le contexte d'une vie rurale qui n'a plus cours. Le folklore est maintenant un art de la scène à part entière, et à ce titre, comme Jimmy Di Genova aimerait nous le faire comprendre, permettons à ceux qui veulent le perpétuer de lui donner une qualité artistique en leur laissant leur propre façon de l'interpréter et de le présenter. ●



The National Tap Dance Company of Canada

Special thanks and appreciation to the Ontario Arts Council for their guidance, continued support of and interest in the development of The National Tap Dance Company of Canada over the past 10 years.

The National Tap Dance Company of Canada also thanks the Government of Canada through the Department of Communications, the Department of External Affairs and the Canada Council; the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture; the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, and the City of Toronto for their assistance.

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Russian Dancers in Alberta

The Start of a New Era of Cultural Exchange

by Igor and Jessica Levental



Alexandre Bogatyrev



Nina Ananyashvili

Photographs by Jessica Levental

Last October, with much fanfare, the Alberta Ballet Company formally announced the greatest coup in its history. After three years of negotiations involving some of the highest-ranking figures in the Alberta and Soviet governments, two of Russia's leading ballet stars, Nadezhda Pavlova and Alexandre Bogatyrev, were to perform as guest artists with the Alberta Ballet Company in Edmonton and Calgary in mid-November.

A mere two days before the dancers were scheduled to arrive, however, their appearances were suddenly cancelled by Gosconcert, the Soviet government booking agency.

A last-minute replacement was arranged by Peter Roberts, once Canada's ambassador to the U.S.S.R., now director of the Canada Council.

Had he not been able to do this, the unexpected turn of

events would have spelled a permanent end to a high-level cultural exchange that began in June 1982 when Mary LeMessurier, Alberta's minister of culture, wrote to her Soviet counterpart, Piotr Demichev, formally inviting the Bolshoi dancers to Alberta.

In March 1985, Gosconcert had paved the way for the first Canadian appearance by Soviet dancers in 10 years when it confirmed that two Bolshoi dancers, Tatiana Golikova and Mikhail Tzivin, would perform in Alberta. But following the Alberta visit, last May, of Politburo member Vitaly Vorotnikov, the Russians decided to cement their growing cordiality with Alberta by sending bigger stars: Pavlova and Bogatyrev. Then, in early November, the telegram arrived cancelling the visit.

"We were deeply disappointed," recalls Blair Odney, the



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Alberta Ballet Company's marketing manager. Still, the Company managed to salvage the situation by enlisting the aid of Peter Roberts.

Less than two days later, the Alberta Ballet Company learned that Nina Anyashvili, a young dancer who recently won a gold medal at the Moscow International Competition of Ballet Artists, would accompany Bogatyrev to Alberta in Pavlova's place. The dates of the Russian dancers' appearance in Calgary were hastily changed from November 8-9 to November 18-19. (The Edmonton dates, November 12-13, remained the same.)

The program was also swiftly rearranged. The Grand Pas de deux from *The Sleeping Beauty* remained, but *The Dying Swan* and the Pas de deux from *The Flames of Paris* were replaced by the Vision Pas de deux from *Raymonda* and the Black Swan Pas de deux from the third act of *Swan Lake*.

Overall, Anyashvili and Bogatyrev danced with such a high degree of precision and control that on opening night in Edmonton one could not have guessed that the two had arrived a mere eight hours earlier, after a 16-hour flight from Moscow.

The Russians' performances, which were nothing less than



Mariane Beauséjour and Claude Caron in Brydon Paige's production of *The Nutcracker* for the Alberta Ballet Company.

The Alberta Ballet Company

According to the second edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ballet*, Canada has three top ballet companies: the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the National Ballet of Canada and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

There is a fourth company, in Western Canada, however, that soon may command enough attention to join the big three. It is the Alberta Ballet Company, which has grown in size and reputation to the point where it has built up a respectable repertoire and is now the fourth largest ballet company in the country. During its 1984-85 season, the Company performed, in Alberta and on tour, for audiences in excess of 60,000.

The Alberta Ballet Company traces its roots to the early '50s and to its founder, Ruth Carse, who was then director of the ballet program at the Muriel Taylor School of Dance in Edmonton. Around that time, a small group of dancers formed a troupe called Dance Interlude. In 1960 it became the Edmonton Ballet, and in 1967 the Alberta Ballet Company. In 1975 it became the province's first permanent, professional dance organization.

brehtaking, received warm and unrestrained applause from the audience. Backstage they received an even longer ovation from the dancers of the Alberta Ballet Company, who remained behind to pay private tribute to their guests.

The gesture was much appreciated. "We were met by true friends; we were very touched," Anyashvili said later.

Mariane Beauséjour, principal dancer with the Alberta Ballet Company, appeared in the three works presented by the Company on the program—artistic director Brydon Paige's production of *The Firebird*, Brian Macdonald's *Canto Indio* and George Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante*. She confirms that the feeling was mutual: "We felt that they were a part of us, and they quickly won our respect."

At 22, Nina Anyashvili was a newcomer to Canada, although she had already danced in Germany, Belgium, Mexico, Bulgaria and several other countries. In addition to her gold medal from the Moscow competition, in 1981 she won the Grand Prix in the international competition held at Varna, Bulgaria.

At the age of six, she started as a figure skater in Tbilisi, in the Soviet Republic of Georgia. Her dancing ability was spotted very early, and at the age of nine she entered a local ballet

Now, 11 years later, the Alberta Ballet Company has some 30 works in its repertoire and an impressive touring record. In addition to its annual Alberta tours, over the last three years the Company has performed in British Columbia and in the United States. In 1985 the Alberta Ballet Company made its Toronto debut.

Brydon Paige, artistic director of the Alberta Ballet Company since 1976, has helped create a company that Toronto critic Deirdre Kelly, writing in the *Globe and Mail*, described as "truly young, vivacious and enthusiastic".

These characteristics are particularly apparent in such ballets as Paige's own production of *The Firebird* and George Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante*, which, first performed by the Alberta Ballet Company last November, exhibited the Company's growing sense of artistic maturity, as well as its youthful vigour.

The repertoire also includes Paige's productions of *The Nutcracker* and *Coppélia*, which succeed as the theatrical spectacles they are designed to be, stories expressed through dance.

Part of the reason for the strong dramatic element in the Company's productions must be attributed to the style of principal dancer Mariane Beauséjour. A capable actress, she performs her roles with tremendous conviction and sensitivity. She is currently partnered by Claude Caron, who, like Beauséjour, is from Quebec.

Both dancers stand out, artistically and technically, from the rest of the Alberta Ballet Company, demonstrating secure movement and steady line. The dancing ability of the corps de ballet, on the other hand, is generally inconsistent, which is hardly uncharacteristic of a young and growing company.

Constrained by a \$250,000 accumulated deficit, the Alberta Ballet Company has been forced to perform to recorded music since the 1980-81 season. Its music policy is currently being re-evaluated: through a recent survey, the Alberta Ballet Company is trying to determine whether its audience (which has been maintained at over 30,000 per season in Edmonton and Calgary) would be willing to pay a \$2 to \$5 premium, per ticket, to bring back live music.

The Company has thus arrived at a plateau of sorts in its development. Depending on the future funding situation, the Alberta Ballet Company's management will be in a position to decide how to improve artistic quality within the Company. By bringing in better dancers, using a live orchestra and providing more elaborate sets, the Alberta Ballet Company has the potential to propel itself into the top ranks of Canadian ballet.

school. Four years later, she moved to Moscow.

Ananyashvili made her debut with the Bolshoi Ballet in 1981, dancing the role of Odette-Odile in *Swan Lake*. Her repertoire, which is primarily classical, includes Myrtha, Kitri and Raymonda. She has danced with most of the Bolshoi's principal dancers.

As for Alexandre Bogatyrev, his career took off in 1967 when, still a student, he was awarded the Vaslav Nijinsky Prize, the highest award at the Paris Dance Academy. In 1969 he joined the Bolshoi Ballet; he is now a principal dancer with the company.

At 36, he has performed most of the leading male roles in classical dance. His credits also include new ballets, such as Radion Schedrin's *The Seagull* and *The Lady with a Dog*, which he performed with the legendary Maya Plisetskaya.

Bogatyrev's most frequent partner at the Bolshoi, however, is Natalia Bessmertnova, one of the foremost interpreters of classical roles in the Soviet Union today.

Ananyashvili and Bogatyrev both take pride in the fact that the Soviet school of dance is so strongly oriented towards classical ballet. "Our tradition is classical," acknowledged Bogatyrev. "It is also over 200 years old. With a company of 290 dancers, the Bolshoi is able to stage the traditional repertoire in the grandiose style it requires. Furthermore, we have cultivated a style of technique whereby you can always recognize a Russian dancer by his line, posture, hand movement, deportment."

How did the Russian dancers react to the Alberta Ballet Company's performances of modern ballets? "We admire Western dancers," said Bogatyrev. "They have a polished technique, excellent stage presence and a high sense of drama." He did, however, admit that this form of dance is not nearly as well accepted, or as frequently performed, in the U.S.S.R. as it is in the West.

Part of the reason for the slow introduction of modern dance/ballet into the Soviet Union is certainly cultural taste and a strong sense of heritage associated with classical ballet. Another factor may be that the U.S.S.R. has had very limited contact with Western choreographers. (Roland Petit's staging of *Notre Dame de Paris* for the Kirov Ballet in Leningrad and Pierre Lacotte's production of *Nathalie* for Moscow's Classic Ballet are exceptions to the rule.)

Soviet choreographers rarely venture West, but Soviet dancers often do. Ananyashvili and Bogatyrev will continue to spend a lot of time abroad; in early 1986 they are expected to perform in Austria, Argentina and Brazil.

During their stay in Alberta, the Soviet dancers took three days off to travel to the Rockies. They also spent some time meeting with members of the dance community—Bogatyrev, who spends part of his time in Russia teaching, gave a master class while he was in Calgary.

Although Ananyashvili speaks virtually no English, Bogatyrev is next to fluent and served as spokesman for the two. But, nevertheless, they are both gregarious types. "We love meeting new people," affirmed Bogatyrev.

After the Russian dancers' visit was over, Mariane Beauséjour remarked, "They don't behave like stars, they act like down-to-earth human beings."

It is hoped that this visit represents only the beginning of enhanced relations between Soviet and Canadian dancers. Will the Alberta Ballet Company send some of its members to Moscow in the future? Mariane Beauséjour, probably speaking on behalf of all her colleagues, answers, "Maybe one day." •

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Robert Desrosiers: Like No One But Himself

by Pat Kaiser

In a recent CBC television profile, Robert Bateman, the acclaimed wildlife artist, offhandedly remarked, "There are no rules to the imagination."

Sad to say, his declaration is, for the most part, wishful thinking. Right from the beginning, the individual's imagination is cultivated according to very definite, accepted standards of expression. The rules to the imagination are laid down firmly, to guide everything from the Tooth Fairies and Easter Bunnies of childhood to the "correct" colour co-ordinations of adulthood—even to the methods and the vocabulary of putting together a dance.

Canadian dance's most potent violator of these rules is Robert Desrosiers, winner of the 1985 Jean A. Chalmers Choreographic Award. Since establishing Desrosiers Dance Theatre in 1980, he has not so much rewritten the existing codes as gone codeless.

The credit "concept and choreography by Robert Desrosiers" in a program note is a warning to the uninitiated: what will be seen is full of entrancing incompatibles and sheer incomprehensibles. The giddy contents of a costume closet, a makeup trunk and a bulging special effects carpetbag literally pour out, with stream-of-consciousness unpredictability,



Ultracity was a landmark piece for Desrosiers Dance Theatre: (left to right) Robert Desrosiers, David Wood, Sylvie Plamondon.

Cylla von Fiedemann



Cylla von Tiedemann

Ultracity: (floor, left to right) Caitlan Maggs, Claudia Moore; (upper level, left to right) Jean François Maccabee, Tom Brouillette, Danielle Tardif, Daniel Tremblay, Eric Tessier-Lavigne.

over Desrosiers' amalgam of dance, mime, song, acrobatics, vaudeville and live music. His works break most of the traditional rules of dance and theatre.

Numbering around a dozen, his concoctions tend to be structurally unsound and on the anaemic side in choreographic invention. Yet, paradoxically, it must be said: he is a genius. No other word seems to do.

His odysseys send admirers bolting for the thesaurus, in search of dazzling nouns and adjectives. Every past violator of sense, logic and reality—from Harpo Marx to Hieronymous Bosch to Buster Keaton—has been dredged up by writers for comparison, as if Desrosiers' similarity to such legendary figures will, somehow, legitimize our belief in his brilliance.

But the scattered, bewigged pianist in *L'Hotel Perdu* is not at all like Harpo Marx; a buoyant Desrosiers playground bears little resemblance to a cruel Bosch garden; and the only thing truly like Keaton about the cow-spinning central figure in *Bad Weather* is his hat.

Desrosiers has certainly had specific theatrical influences; but they have been appropriated, submerged and, now, have given way to Desrosiers' own development. He has emerged like no one but himself.

William Littler, after seeing the 1984 *Ultracity* at Toronto's Premiere Dance Theatre, wrote in the *Toronto Star*: "I have to

make an appointment with my analyst. Desrosiers himself probably doesn't need one."

The fibre of Desrosiers' approach to life has its roots in Eastern philosophy, and his conversation is marked by brief phrases that touch on a painstaking personal voyage of exploration and discovery. "Whatever one refines in one's life—for me, my dance, for example—it affects *everything* else. Each moment, each of my actions, every thought."

He speaks quietly, with acute clarity and conviction, with a compelling glow, almost perversely charming.

An insistent refrain resonates through the man. "Complete, complete, complete *positiveness* in everything! You can let something get too big for you; you can feel crushed, completely paranoid," he says forcefully. "You *have* to stop looking at it that way."

Easier said than done; but, for his collaborators, there is little that is tortured about this genius, and the quality rubs off pleasantly.

Gregg Parks, a member of Desrosiers Dance Theatre, praises Desrosiers' outlook when encountering the frustrations of the business. "Robert has this genuine confidence," he relates. "It doesn't matter, it'll be all right.' We need that. And he's right—it's the only way. I think it's one of the things that makes him a joy to work with."



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John Alleyne in the National Ballet of Canada production of *Blue Snake*. Erik Bruhn, the company's artistic director, remarked that Desrosiers made the dancers "move in such a way that their families and friends could not recognize them".



Andrew Oxenham

By engaging Desrosiers to choreograph *Blue Snake* for the National Ballet of Canada, Erik Bruhn, the company's artistic director, set sail on lively waters very foreign to the National Ballet's dancers and audiences. *Blue Snake* was a pricey item, but Bruhn didn't worry. "It was never a risk," he says. "Robert has an attitude that inspires complete trust. 'Everything will be okay,' he says, and, of course, it is. I never doubted him for one moment."

Blue Snake was as structurally unsound and choreographically as in need as any of Desrosiers' pieces for his own company—and as wonderful. "Meaning" was there, for those who required it. Witness Desrosiers' program note: "The Liturgy of the Process of Life is the Shedding of Skin within Forever." "No Meaning" was also there, for those happy with knockout visuals.

Desrosiers eases into a mild little smile. "*Blue Snake* is Disneyland." He shrugs. There is no contradiction; to Desrosiers, the meadow of the mind is a rich, open pasture, not to be fenced off into neat corrals. Buddha, Marcel Marceau and a cartoonist's flaming dragon are not all that far away from one another.

It makes for good, colourful copy; and Desrosiers leaves himself open, from time to time, for journalists to paint a portrait of picturesque dementia.

Yet something resembling common sanity lurks calmly

around the man whose National Ballet colossus has made his name familiar and fashionable to drop as far afield as *Swan Lake* suburbia.

He seems unimpressed. "It changes nothing, popularity. I'm stuck with what I am." Shrug. "In one sense, it has its freedom. The popularity allows me to not have to struggle to show my work. It allows me access to *myself*."

"I look at my work, and I still see it as being undeveloped; yet, I like it. The acceptance of me is, perhaps, because my work shows I'm interested in people, in entertaining them. I think I put on shows I would like to see."

Desrosiers talks about the need he feels for an empathetic relationship with the audience. "Not that you are creating just for your audience," he says. "For instance, John Cage says it doesn't matter how much you're strangling your audience. To a certain extent, he's probably right. But it's one of my addictions. It *does* matter to me that people are receiving energy and not being drowned, or crawling away with boredom."

"Watching Pina Bausch, I found her work quite fabulous; but, at the same time, I certainly wouldn't do that to my audience. I don't mind being bored for a half-hour when there are also [in Bausch's work] passages that are powerful. I feel very good about the attempt, and I respect it."

Desrosiers credits Lindsay Kemp, whose company he

danced with in 1978, as the source of his regard for the people out front. "[Kemp] was like that about his audiences," he nods.

With Kemp, Desrosiers learned the skills of stagecraft, but it was the eye-searing visuals and deafening pitch which had some locals writing off Desrosiers Dance Theatre as a "Kemp rip-off" in its early Toronto appearances.

Although the company itself skyrocketed to prominence, its founder spent considerable time grappling around in the dark shadows of a great many sources before he found the launching pad.

Desrosiers' abandonment of the National Ballet, after years at the National Ballet School and just one year in the company's corps de ballet, is something of a legend. "I knew, from a very early age, that it was the *theatre* I was in love with, not exactly the dancing," he says.

What followed, too, is the stuff of legend: the probing trek to self-discovery. He moved through the dance worlds of New York, London and Europe, burrowing deep into Tai Chi and Eastern philosophies, before briefly resettling in his hometown of Montreal, where he worked with "a mad Mexican character, Hugo Romero".

For Desrosiers, "Romero provided the first real boost to just moving, giving me the confidence to throw myself all over the place, in touch with that primal quality".

Montreal was the site for a few early, ambitious stabs at dance-theatre before Desrosiers returned to Toronto, to work briefly with Dancemakers, Ballet Ys and Toronto Dance Theatre.

His time with Toronto Dance Theatre produced work on *Night Clown* and the emergence of *Dream in a Dream*, with Mitch Kirsch, for a 1980 workshop. Yet it is not the fledgling choreographer, but the dancer whom Toronto Dance Theatre's co-founder Peter Randazzo recalls: "A phenomenal dancer! He did things—does things—I've never seen before."

With fanciful eloquence, Desrosiers sprinkles his talk with thoughts on the "small seeds", the "small germs", that remain when the chaff of the creative process is cleared away. He cites *Dream in a Dream*, in which two Little Men soft-shoe in the face of a machine-gun, as his "germ piece". He explains: "It showed me how it all might blend. In my first *Brass Fountain*, I was consciously devising a style of movement."

He put together the company "because it was the only thing for me to do with what I wanted to do with theatre". Shortly thereafter, early in 1981, he was the first recipient of the Jacqueline Lemieux Prize.

"My early performers—such as Helen Jones, Nancy Ferguson, Mitch Kirsch—we were all in search of 'something else'," he recalls. Part of the means to that "something else" had been demonstrated, for Desrosiers, in Lindsay Kemp's sturdy inter-relation with those with whom he works—a feature Desrosiers finds regrettably absent in other dance dynasties.

Dancer Claudia Moore—there since the beginning, sharing Desrosiers' explorations—reflects on the close ties of the company members, some of whom participated in its "birth". She agrees that a musketeer-like camaraderie permeates the workplace. "I could never imagine Robert holding an audition!" she says. "He likes to have personal connection with his people."

Desrosiers comments: "I've found, in having my own company, the key thing is working *with* people, the working

together. You can reach this dictatorial state where you say, 'We must do it my way!'—but you must allow those cords to loosen."

Ultracity was a landmark for its mastermind in more than its full-evening length and rather unprecedented use of a plot peg: it occupied two of the three weeks of the company's successful run at Toronto's Premiere Dance Theatre last year. The running time was a venture not previously undertaken in the theatre's history.

Gregg Parks (listed in the 1985 *Ultracity* program as company performer, assistant artistic director and company manager—"They can't find me a title," he confides) is so unshakably certain about Desrosiers' audience appeal that he would have liked to flaunt it during the Toronto run of *Ultracity* last fall.

"I wanted to put a big advertisement in the newspaper that read, 'If you don't have a good time, we'll give you your money back!'," he explains. "It's not that we couldn't afford to do that—we couldn't afford the *ad*!"

"But I believe Robert's work can satisfy a full range, from a true theatre audience to a dance audience to [people] going out for their one-night-a-year. Maybe, in going to *Ultracity*, they won't understand it, but they'll have a good time."

Claudia Moore speaks of Desrosiers' choreographic methods and the creative roles his dozen dancers play: "Robert tends to keep things to himself, to let them cook inside him. I think *Ultracity* was festering away inside for about a year. We found [it] through workshop improvisations.

"That's what makes him so satisfying to work with. A dancer is much more than a choreographer's tool. One might play with a prop in a way he did not imagine, and that's fine, it's welcome. For the Moon duet [in *Ultracity*], we found a few props at Comus [the company's home]. We didn't know where they came from, or who they belonged to. We just put on the video machine and improvised for a couple of hours. And that's typical."

Parks comments on Desrosiers, the choreographer: "Robert is one of the most open creators I've seen. Of course, he's demanding when he's working to get something specific, but, once it's there, he opens it up for others to play with.

"He never stops someone from experimenting, and improvisation goes on all the time during performances. If something doesn't work, he doesn't mind—as long as the person recognizes that it doesn't work."

Improvisation in performance is also practised by the three musician-composers who perform live with the company. Lindsay Kemp's example of the live music format has proven invaluable: the triumvirate of John Lang, Ahmed Hassan and Jean Dorais has fashioned a witty, definitive Desrosiers sound of pulsing drive, misty delicacy and spiralling delirium.

Lang lives at the synthesizer, as if part of the beast; Hassan handles percussion and voice sounds; and Dorais takes care of electric guitar.

The three joke that Desrosiers "rescued each of us from various states of destitution". Lang relates: "We started at Lennoxville, two years ago. None of us had met before that. Robert said, 'I need electronic sounds.' I said, 'I have a room-full. Come, take a look.'"

Lang feels that Desrosiers' work "has a variety impossible to touch. His theatrical concept is not a chicken-or-egg, dance-or-music first thing. The goal is the realization of a storyboard and whatever elements fill it in."

He believes firmly that the Desrosiers players are in inspir-

Robert Desrosiers and Claudia Moore in Peter Randazzo's *A Simple Melody* (1979) for Toronto Dance Theatre. Randazzo, co-founder of the company, says of Desrosiers: "A phenomenal dancer! He did things—does things—I've never seen before."



Andrew Oxenham

ing synchronization. "We're a good team. Robert knows he can say to us, 'I want a Reichian sort of thing.' And he'll get it. You know, he really does want the world."

Lang says it with approval, and adds, "Robert feels there have been no failures. *Ciel Rouge* [created in 1983]—there was a no-prop piece that had no life of its own, but it spawned a lot that popped up elsewhere."

A Desrosiers creation is not sacred territory, but is subject to enormous visual and audio rewrites. The live music format allows the triumvirate "to play with the sound every night, and it's a unique opportunity. One of us generally functions as the 'glue'—taking care of entrances, exits, particular progressions in the action—while the others travel and banter around it on instinct and imagination. Robert believes live music is vital."

With its taped soundscape, *Blue Snake* was a necessary compromise for Hassan and Lang.

It was also a radical change for a choreographer not known for punctuality, and accustomed to creating, via workshop, in spotty, improvisational steps. "I had to walk in there with a pretty defined idea of the entire piece—the music, the costumes [by Jerrard Smith]—start to finish," recalls Desrosiers. "It was a new experience for me."

When he began the project, Desrosiers had a higher ambition in mind than tailoring the National Ballet's dancers to fit his style. "I wanted *Blue Snake* to be theirs, to stand for them," he says.

Erik Bruhn recalls: "He was very patient, making [the dancers] move in such a way that their families and friends could not recognize them. Generally, a body will reveal itself to a parent, even if covered up—but they didn't know their own kin. That's where real art begins; that's what Robert did for us. And it was painless."

Desrosiers confesses that it was a luxury, "having everything built for me. And not dancing in it relieved a lot of pressure." But he believes he is "like [Merce] Cunningham, wanting to be a part of everything. If my dancers have to split their feet, I like to be part of that, too."

Erik Bruhn makes no bones about his admiration for

Desrosiers. "Robert is *the one* on the Toronto dance scene who fascinates me," he declares. "Robert, I know, will go on and expand. There will be periods of fallow, periods of repetition. And so what? Go to an art gallery and study the greatest painters—Picasso goes in stages and steps (his Blue period, then Cubism, and so on); but the signature is there. Robert is just at the beginning of what is yet to come."

Desrosiers himself is less partial to making predictions. "I know I'm going forward, that's all. And that is a feeling, not really a thought with any shape."

His interest in video suggests a natural direction. Dancing the role of the yearning bellhop in the Ann Ditchburn-Leonard Cohen production *I am a Hotel*, Desrosiers demonstrated the sort of curious, instant tension that forbids a camera eye to look away.

His duet with Claudia Moore in *All That Bach*, broadcast last year on the CBC and TVOntario, indicated that the fascination could go beyond simple presence and incredible dancing ability. The brief dance served the composer surprisingly well—and the medium even better.

"He was totally involved in the medium [in creating the duet]," recalls Larry Weinstein, director of *All That Bach*. "He was in on the cutting, making suggestions for jump-cuts, dissolves, that sort of thing."

The program's producer, Niv Fichman, exclaims, "Think of what he could do with film!" Fichman, who has been impressed with the possibilities since his first sight of Desrosiers in 1981, flatly insists, "That's where he's ultimately heading. It's the perfect medium for him; it's already there in his pieces."

During the filming of a study of Canadian composers, director Fichman, although focusing on Ahmed Hassan and John Lang, conveniently overshot the making of *Blue Snake*, including the final ballet, in full. With Desrosiers overseeing bits of the process, the extra footage was subsequently assembled into a television hour, which is likely to appear—with the fiscal blessing of the National Film Board and the CBC—sometime this fall.

Gregg Parks is certain that television can be an effective

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canvas for Desrosiers' artistry. "His work is ideal for it. He can be successful at it—and get a larger audience," he asserts, determinedly turning the conversation toward the subject of finances.

In 1985, the company's box office was up 300 per cent; but, still, the creation of a new piece had to be postponed.

"We need a bigger market," says Parks. "A Desrosiers piece costs money to mount." He offers a one-word illustration of his point: "*Ultracity*."

Desrosiers comments: "Financially, the company's just pulling together now. I've only been collecting anything resembling a salary for a year-and-a-half. My father got us through the beginning—he's wonderful, he never questions his children's ambitions. And before that . . ."

He shrugs. "I spent years making masks—living on peanut butter for weeks, because there wasn't anything else. I didn't mind it; I wasn't suffering. I chose it.

"I was restructuring myself all that time," he continues. "It accumulates without your knowing where it's heading. You could say it took six months to make *Blue Snake*, but it took years."

1985 was an important year for Desrosiers and his company. Beyond *Blue Snake*, *Ultracity* and the Jean A. Chalmers Choreographic Award, there was a major restructuring of the administrative side of the company. "We are now an *organized* organization," says Gregg Parks.

And there were critically acclaimed performances away from home. France, however, was more pleased with the company's Paris premiere than was Desrosiers. An artist known for blithely sailing past the limitations of the stage, he found himself up against unavoidable limitations. "The Pompidou Centre is an art gallery, not the place for my dances. *And all those fire regulations!*" he says, shaking his head.

Of the company's appearance at the International Festival of New Dance in Montreal last fall, Desrosiers says, "We tried, but sometimes the stars aren't in the right order." Accepting, he brushes it off.

At the beginning of this year, in February, members of Desrosiers Dance Theatre headed for Hong Kong. During the summer, they will appear at Expo 86 in Vancouver.

Parks casts ambitious eyes across the 49th parallel. "Running *Ultracity* in a big theatre in the United States—it's a step Robert must take," says Parks. "I believe he can gain more popularity in the States than anyone from Canada yet has."

The Americans have taken approving note of the company's small forays into the southern market. There have been performances at such prestigious events as Jacob's Pillow in Massachusetts and the American Dance Festival in North Carolina.

"When I was in the States last summer," relates Desrosiers, "spinning my cow [in *Bad Weather*—I think it may be very simple imagery, but it was fresh for them."

Searching for the words to explain, he is plainly dissatisfied, dealing again with a feeling, not a thought that lends itself to words. "*Something* was there for them—that the Americans don't have in the same way."

Not much like the bigger, bleaker, callously '80s stream of modern dance emanating from Quebec. When this is pointed out to him, he seems surprisingly surprised. "No," he reflects, "I'm not much like them, am I? My accordion and harmonica—and my cow!"

Robert Desrosiers pauses to consider, and then arrives at a self-assessment sure to raise a few eyebrows. "Well," he muses, "maybe I'm old-fashioned." •



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Education: The University of Waterloo

by Kirsten Y. Gunter

Dwindling public funds wreak economic havoc on many members of Canada's dance community, and the word austerity has taken on new meaning for many areas of the dance world, including the dance department at the University of Waterloo in Ontario.

Having come through a difficult economic period and weathered the storm, the University's dance program, in a somewhat revamped form, received ratification last summer.

It was felt that those students interested in the bio-physical sciences could keep their link with the dance department by taking a minor in dance, while obtaining their bachelor of science degrees from the department of kinesiology. So, the University of Waterloo's unique bachelor of science degree in dance is no longer offered, although there are hopes, should the economic situation improve, that it might be revived in the future.

The result is a dance program that has strengthened its general and honours bachelor of arts degree programs by refining its focus. The overall concept is the study of Western theatrical dance, and the two main areas of concentration are developmental foundations in dance and history/culture.

Developmental foundations of the training process—the specialty of Ruth Priddle, chairman of the department—examines, in depth, motor and motor-perceptual development in conjunction with cognitive and physical growth in the dancer aged six to 16. The applied setting is the Carousel Dance Centre, operated by Dr. Priddle at the University; here students work with children on developing technique and creativity.

History/culture includes several dance history courses and one ethnology course in its core curriculum. The changes and addition of upper-level courses—including a history of dance in Canada and an ethnology course on festivals and rituals in Canada—have not altered the basic shape of the degree. If anything, they have reinforced an already highly structured program.

Increased pre-requisites for the student's chosen area of concentration will encourage students to stream earlier and, it is hoped, will enable them to develop a stronger background in a specific area of study.

Until these changes were made, students came out of the program with a good general knowledge of dance; but some, going on to graduate studies, had difficulty in fulfilling pre-requisite requirements in their chosen fields of specialization.

As well, job-conscious students may attempt to diversify their studies, now that the average bachelor of arts degree is no longer an automatic guarantee of employment. To that end, joint honours degrees are now available in dance and

history, dance and psychology, and dance and recreation and leisure studies.

The University of Waterloo offers a serious academic dance program. The fact that the dance program is firmly rooted in the academic tradition explains why students do not audition. Dance classes are an integral part of the program, but are not mandatory—except for students in the developmental foundations in dance stream, for whom comprehensive knowledge of dance techniques (ballet and modern) is a must.

It is, first and foremost, a university degree program. There is a heavy course load demand on students, who carry six full courses in the first two years. Those in the honours degree program will have to complete 22 full courses, of which 16 are degree requirements, before graduation.

If the program seems a little too rigidly constructed, it is perhaps due to the fear that has nagged dance scholars since dance degrees were first granted by universities: the fear of not being taken seriously.

There are five full-time faculty members; they conduct research and teach in five distinct areas. Ruth Priddle, chairman of the department, is continuing post-doctoral research on creativity in children.

Jillian Officer, past chairman, is compiling a dictionary of Canadian dance, an activity which reflects her background in dance history.

Rhonda Ryman is one of the few people in the world with full qualifications in both Benesh and Laban notation. She has worked extensively with the University's computer science department, using a computer on Benesh scores, and is now working with the kinesiology department to develop notation for gait analysis.

Nina De Shane, currently finishing her doctorate in ethnomusicology, is heavily involved in various aspects of multiculturalism.

The newest addition to the faculty is John Chapman, former director of the National Academy of Indian Dance in London, England. He holds a PhD in dance history and teaches courses in dance criticism.

If there are doubts on the part of students caught in the midst of the degree changes, there are also assurances on the part of the faculty that no student will be forced to sacrifice his or her program of study as a result of the transition. Those students already in the bachelor of science in dance program will be offered the necessary courses to complete their degrees. Student who enter the new dance program at the University of Waterloo will belong to a new breed of renaissance—in the classical sense of the word—dance scholars.

Out with the old; in with the new! ●

In Review: Performances



David Street

Veronica Tennant made her Toronto debut as Tatiana in the National Ballet of Canada production of John Cranko's *Onegin* during the company's November season.

Toronto

Reviewed by William Littler

When I think about 1985 in dance terms, I see a giant head staring from the stage of O'Keefe Centre, grabbing the dancers of the National Ballet in its enormous fists and shoving them into its mouth.

Yes, this was the year of *Blue Snake*, the most visually spectacular production ever staged by this country's major ballet company and the badge of Robert Desrosiers' emergence into the front ranks of Canadian choreographers.

Before the year was out, this same Robert Desrosiers had become the first figure in Canadian dance to sustain a three-week season at Harbourfront with his own company. Add the company's European and New York debuts to this list of

achievements and it is easy to see why the National Ballet School alumnus deserves to be identified as man of the year in dance.

Not that the year has been otherwise uneventful. Although its less than brilliantly organized European tour did not entirely fulfil Erik Bruhn's expectations for the revitalized National Ballet, the dancers have probably never looked better.

Remember their week of November 19? It would have been memorable enough, just for the experience of watching Natalia Makarova partnered by Reid Anderson in a handsome production of John Cranko's *Onegin*.

But this was a company that could also offer, on succeeding days, world class casts of *Onegin* headed by Veronica Tennant, Karen Kain, Sabina Allemann and Frank Augustyn. Kain, by the way, danced like a dream all year.

Although it has been a good year in terms of visiting ballet stars, Cynthia Gregory, Fernando Bujones and Carla Fracci among them, it has been a typically bad year in terms of visiting ballet companies.

Oh, one or two interesting smaller ensembles continued to come our way, notably Sweden's Cullberg Ballet. But where were the great European and American ballet companies that should have been ornamenting O'Keefe Centre's stage?

Thanks largely to the enterprise of Harbourfront, which picked up where the late, lamented Ryerson dance series left off, we have at least continued to be well supplied in mainstream modern dance, with the Paul Taylor Dance Company lending particular distinction to the season.

But some of the most innovative work came not from the visitors, but from the folks at home, several of whom found a valuable showcase in the mid-October Inde '85 Festival organized by Terrill Maguire at 1087 Queen Street West, and others of whom continued to find shelter beneath the umbrella known as Danceworks, which celebrated its 40th (production) anniversary.

Anyone harbouring the misconception during 1985 that the independent performance artist is a person of the past must have had both eyes opened by Elizabeth Chitty's *Moral Passion*. Anyone tempted to write off Eddy Toussaint following some devastating London reviews must have found equal lid-raising provocation in his staging of Mozart's *Requiem* for the Mainly Mozart Festival.

But, for me, 1985 will be remembered specially as the year I saw Paul Draper live for the first time. The legendary tap dancer arrived in May for a series of master classes under the auspices of the National Tap Dance Company, and would you believe it? There he was, in his 76th year, still tapping away with the best of them.

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Winnipeg

Reviewed by Jacqui Good

It has been a season for building, with bricks and dance steps, for both major dance companies in Manitoba.

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet not only broke ground for a new home [*Dance in Canada*, Winter 1985/86, Issue Number 46], but also set off on an extensive cross-Canada tour underwritten by the duMaurier Foundation's largest-ever donation to dance.

This season Arnold Spohr, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's artistic director, commissioned three new Canadian works for the company. One will mark the return of former company choreographer Brian Macdonald. And two, remarkably, have been commissioned from teachers at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School. Jacques Lemay, director of the jazz division, will offer an upbeat circus story, *The Big Top*, this spring. Sandra Neels' *The War Collection* received its world premiere in October.

The subtitle of Neels' work is "a series of war portraits, inspired by the times". The work is exactly that—a series of images, snapshots almost, on the theme of war and peace inspired by the times (the MX, the Cruise, the mushroom cloud) and the choreographer's visit last year to San Diego, where she saw a harbour full of warships, and tourists blithely eating ice-cream cones, totally unaware of the lethal possibilities all around them.

From that image sprung Neels' portrait of a future time

and a people who respond automatically, unthinkingly, to a call to war. The first section, a sort of unisex military drill, is particularly effective. And it is hard to forget the appearance of three world leaders on roller skates, with sparklers attached.

Sandra Neels has come up with a dance that is made-to-measure for the audience and the times. Manitoba recently declared itself a nuclear-free province, and the first night audience responded enthusiastically to the combination of special effects, strong images and a political message that is not at all threatening. How can you not applaud an ending that shows ordinary people turning a nuclear missile into a dove?

I did wonder why Spohr commissioned an anti-war piece when the best one ever created—*The Green Table*, by Kurt Jooss—is already in the company repertoire. *The Green Table* is extremely powerful; but perhaps that is its problem: it definitely doesn't leave a smile on your face, and smiles and sparklers seem the order of the '80s and of *The War Collection*.

The rest of the company's October home program appeared to be exhumed from the '60s and '70s. The longest and least successful of the works was Brian Macdonald's *Aimez-Vous Bach?*. This time around, the dance seemed self-conscious—arch, instead of witty. And it was under-rehearsed. The season's new dancers hadn't yet melded their styles, or even managed to get all the legs and arms going in the same direction at the same time.

But then along came John Kaminski, as a sort of dancing rebel without a cause, and the stage came alive. He is a dancer who has just become better and better over the past couple of seasons. He's warm and assured, and a treat to watch. Ka-

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minski has that indefinable something: stage presence. And so does Patti Caplette, his partner in *Pas de deux Romantique*.

Speaking of stage presence, there's Evelyn Hart, who has it in spades. Her *Black Swan* was fluid and fluttery, with just the right touch of menace. She's the complete *femme fatale*, a black-widow spider of a woman. And she set off sparks with partner Barry Watt, who recently joined the company.



David Cooper

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet's Evelyn Hart, who, says reviewer Jacqui Good, "is almost certainly the best dancer in the country".

One pas de deux from Hart in October was not enough for local Royal Winnipeg Ballet fans, who can only hope that a future commission will yield a juicy, demanding role for the woman who is almost certainly the best dancer in the country.

Contemporary Dancers Canada opened much-needed new rehearsal and studio space in November, and named it after founding artistic director Rachel Browne.

The company was kept busy through the fall, rehearsing four newly-commissioned works to be presented in January. Works by Charles Moulton, Michael Montanaro, Murray Darroch and company choreographer Ruth Cansfield promise to stretch Contemporary Dancers Canada further in the avant-garde direction set by the company's artistic director, Tedd Robinson.

Contemporary Dancers Canada opened the season with a return engagement by solo artist Margie Gillis, who was the hit of last spring's Festival of Contemporary Dance. She has acquired what amounts to a cult following in Winnipeg.

In December the company offered *Dance Experience*, a program of new works by its members. Highlights of the evening included David Kurzer's *Three Short Studies*, portraits of woman through the past decades, and Fiona Drinnan's *And it's all good clean fun*.

Drinnan's work employed the considerable dramatic and dancing skills of D-Anne Kuby and Algernon Williams to provide a disturbing counterpoint to a tape of increasingly



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Richard Stoker

Stacy King and Bridget Fernandez, members of Newfoundland Dance Theatre's Young Dancers, in *Desiderata*.

tasteless, sexist and racist humour. The clambering on shoulders and the slams to the floor may have been obvious, but they had an undeniable effect.

Contemporary Dancers Canada, like the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, has looked to its members for new works and has not been disappointed.

St. John's

Reviewed by Linda L. Rimsay

The fall of 1985 was mainly a period of preparation for Newfoundland's two regional dance companies—the Atlantic Dance Company and Newfoundland Dance Theatre. Both will be giving major performances early in 1986.

One memorable performance in St. John's last fall gave us a peek at what the choreographic future holds. In keeping with the spirit created by the International Year for Youth, Newfoundland Dance Theatre sponsored *Artists in Concert*, an opportunity for young artists, musicians, poets, actors, dancers and choreographers to share their artistic statements with the public.

Whether it is fair or not, I think we generally tend to think of young artists' presentations as a series of three-minute dance routines set to popular music. Such was, happily, not the case with this production.

Six dance works were presented, with a maturity in subject and composition worthy of many notables in the field. The works fell into two main categories: man in conflict, and pure movement.

Upheaval, by Kate Story, was a well-thought-out 13-minute modern piece reflecting primitive instincts with regard to nature's oddities. Working with 10 dancers, Story continually provided a combination of a balanced stage and dramatic excitement.

Two other works, *The Missing Link*, by Jennifer Dick, and Jessica Webb's . . . *Divided We Fall*, both explored a contemporary version of the same basic, primitive qualities in man.

Dick's work became a bit more complicated in structure as she established an interesting visual problem to solve, continually trying to maintain a triangle in one form or another with her dancers. It was the lack of a third side which kept things in motion.

Bridget Fernandez used two dancers in *Desiderata* in an effort to explore the need to understand one's self. This, too, was a work of conflict, and the dancers demonstrated the op-



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posing qualities of personality in an attempt to define their own. Also evident was the concept of the ideal personality, which sometimes calls us back from being who or what we would like to be at any given moment.

Margaret Rehner's work for five dancers accurately reflected the quality suggested by its title, *Air*. She placed the dancers in solos and in groups of two, three, four and five, as they explored all possible levels and directions of movement. There was no attempt at a profound statement—which was a pleasant contrast to the other works, as it allowed us to partake of the pleasure of watching dancers move through space with envied freedom and control.

Europa, by Diane Crocker, was also without philosophical commentary, but was more intellectually challenging for any audience willing to exert themselves and watch how the movement so clearly reflected the intricacies of the music. The ease with which one movement went into the next was often covered by a very sophisticated series of events.

So many of us involved in dance—as critics, choreographers, artistic directors, dancers, etc.—are so firmly lodged in the ruts of the traditional or the trendy, that we often fail to realize the necessity of looking at works choreographed by relatively inexperienced artists. These are the very works we need to see, to give us the necessary competitive nudge which will give us cause to look at an artistic problem with new insight and imagination.

Earlier this year, in February, Newfoundland Dance Theatre's Young Dancers were invited to perform at the Centre for the Arts in Michigan. In March, the Atlantic Dance Company returns to St. John's Arts and Culture Centre with a completely new repertoire.

The interest in and enthusiasm for dance in Newfoundland has grown considerably over the past few years, to such an extent that there is now talk of the creation of another regional company in the near future. ●

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What's New and What's Happening . . . People, Performances and Exhibits

The Karen Jamieson Dance Company is scheduled to present its first evening-long piece, *Altamira*, at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, April 2-5. The work features a music environment by composer Bruce Ruddell and musician Sal Ferreras, and costumes by Barbara Claydon.

Transitions '86, the dance touring company based at the Laban Centre in London, England, has commissioned new works from Simon Fraser University's **Grant Strate** and **Santa Aloi** for its 1986 season.

Ballet British Columbia, Vancouver's new classical ballet company, is scheduled to make its debut at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, April 11-12.

Rooted in Ballet Horizons and Pacific Ballet Theatre, Ballet British Columbia is a company of 14 young dancers who will perform a repertoire of classic and contemporary works.

Annette av Paul, former principal dancer with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, is serving as artistic consultant for the company.

The mixed program for the inaugural performances includes Brian Macdonald's *Time Out of Mind* and the Rose Adagio from *The Sleeping Beauty*, both staged by Annette av Paul.

In February, **Chan Hon Goh** of Vancouver won the Prix de Lausanne at the International Competition of Dance in Switzerland. She has been offered a full scholarship at Rosella Hightower's summer school in Cannes, France.

The only Canadian dancer in the competition, Chan Hon Goh is the daughter of Choo Chiat Goh, founder and artistic director of Vancouver's Goh Ballet Academy and the Goh Ballet.

Western Theatre Ballet is scheduled to make its first tour of British Columbia this spring, appearing in Kelowna, Kamloops, Victoria, North Vancouver and Kitimat.

Repertoire includes *La Classe*, choreographed by the company's artistic director, Ian J. Robertson; George

Mager's *Pastorale*; and *Paquita*, staged by Mary Abdel Malek.

Mile Zero Dance, a new modern and modern-jazz dance company in Edmonton, gave its first performances in February at the John L. Haar Theatre at Grant MacEwan Community College.

The company, formed by co-artistic directors Andrea Rabinovitch and Debra Shantz (both of whom teach dance at Grant MacEwan Community College and are former members of the Brian Webb Dance Company), takes an interdisciplinary approach to dance. A strong emphasis has been placed on collaboration with other dancers and musicians, and a strong visual element has been introduced through work with Alberta artists and designers.

Changes in the roster of the **Alberta Ballet Company**: Claude Caron, now in his fourth season with the company, has been promoted to principal dancer.

Joining the company are Desiree Champion, a former principal dancer with Saskatchewan Theatre Ballet; Clark Blakely and Stephen Lawrence Lloyd, former apprentices with the Alberta Ballet Company; and Kelly Douglas, a graduate of the professional program of the Alberta Ballet School.

These dancers replace Sandra Currie, David Chipman Seibert, Traci Owens and Robin Franklin, who have left the company.

Calgary's **Sun-Ergos** will present a new show, *Doors and Corridors*, at the Scarboro Community Centre, April 24-May 4.

As part of the 1986 **Banff Festival of the Arts**, the Festival Ballet will present a program of short ballets, July 17-19.

The program is scheduled to include Frederick Ashton's *Les Rendez-Vous*, staged by Alexander Grant, and George Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments*, staged by Patricia Neary. As well, there will be a new work by the recipient of the Clifford E. Lee Choreography Award, plus another work to be announced.

There will also be a workshop production of contemporary and classical dance works, August 7-9.

This spring, **Saskatchewan Theatre Ballet** will present two ballets developed with the aid of CUSO/CIDA: *They Planted Many Seeds* and *Breaking the Silence*, both choreographed by Robyn Allen.

The company's tour will include performances in Banff (May 18), Calgary (May 24), Vancouver (May 30) and Victoria (May 31).

The spring tour of the **Royal Winnipeg Ballet** continues in April, with performances in Ontario (London, April 4-5; Ottawa, April 7-8; Kingston, April 14; Kitchener, April 15), Quebec (Montreal, April 10-12) and the United States (Detroit, Michigan, April 16-20; St. Paul, Minnesota, April 22-23; Denver, Colorado, April 25-26).

Repertoire for the tour includes George Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante*; *The War Collection*, choreographed by Sandra Neels; *Nuages* and *Symphony in D*, both by Jiri Kylian; Brian Macdonald's *Aimez-Vous Bach?*; *Translucent Tones*, by Nils Christie; and Maurice Béjart's *Song of a Wayfarer*.

Andalucia Dancers will present *Flamenco Concert III*, under the direction of Carmen de Torres, at the Manitoba Theatre Centre in Winnipeg, June 29.

The performance will feature a special appearance by Spain's Carlos Robles.

Susan Benson, one of Canada's leading designers for theatre, ballet and opera, has been named a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

She is designing the costumes for a new work choreographed by Brian Macdonald for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. The production will receive its premiere in May.

During the 1983-84 season, she designed the costumes for the National Ballet of Canada's production of *L'Ile Inconnue* by Constantin Patsalas.

This spring, **Le Groupe de la Place Royale** will present its annual *Choreographic Events* at the company's studio in Ottawa.

The first program, March 27-29, features the company's dancers in new choreography by Michael Montanaro, who has created a multi-media dance trilogy, *Dreams*—one of the largest dance projects ever conceived of and undertaken singlehandedly by one choreographer.

Dreams has been set on three Canadian modern dance companies: Part I, *When You Least Expect It . . . Here I Am*, on Le Groupe de la Place Royale; Part II on Contemporary Dancers Canada; and Part III, *East of Egypt*, which received its premiere at the Montreal International Festival of New Dance in 1985, on the Montanaro Dance Company.

The entire trilogy will be performed in Winnipeg at the Contemporary Dance Festival, May 14-16.

The second program, April 25-26, features the dancers of Le Groupe de la Place Royale in *Public Works/Travaux Publiques*, a new dance by Julie West.

The National Ballet of Canada has announced plans for its 1986-87 Toronto performances.

The fall season (November 8-30) will feature *The Merry Widow*, a full-length ballet by Ronald Hynd; Peter Wright's production of *Giselle*, with guest artists Evelyn Hart, principal dancer with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and Jean-Charles Gil, principal dancer with Roland Petit's Ballet de Marseille; and a

mixed program—Harald Lander's *Etudes*, Constantin Patsalas' *Piano Concerto* and a new work by company member David Allan.

The National Ballet's annual *Nutcracker* performances will be from December 17 to January 2.

The winter season (February 11-March 1) includes Erik Bruhn's production of *Coppélia*; a revival of the company's acclaimed *Tribute to George Balanchine*, featuring *Serenade*, *The Four Temperaments* and *Symphony in C*; and a mixed program—Bruhn's *Here We Come*, Maurice Béjart's *Song of a Wayfarer*, *Raymonda Act III* and a new ballet by Patsalas.

A highlight of the winter season will be a 35th anniversary celebration, which artistic director Erik Bruhn has invited Celia Franca, the company's founder, to produce.

The spring season (April 22-May 8) includes performances of Rudolf Nureyev's *Sleeping Beauty*, with guest artist Evelyn Hart, and a mixed program featuring *Les Sylphides* and Robert Desrosiers' *Blue Snake*.

In January, **Danny Grossman Dance Company** made its seventh appearance at Harbourfront in Toronto, performing for a week at Premiere Dance Theatre.

Among the works featured were *Scherzi*, *Ces Plaisirs* (commissioned for the 1985 Guelph Spring Festival), *Magneto Dynamo*, *Divine Air*, *Bella* and *Endangered Species*.

Grossman is choreographing a new

work for the National Ballet of Canada, to be presented during the company's spring season in Toronto, April 30-May 11. It will be the second of his works—following *Endangered Species*, which the company first performed during the 1983-84 season—to enter the National Ballet's repertoire.

Theatre Ballet of Canada celebrated its fifth anniversary with a performance at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, February 13.

The program featured four works by Lawrence Gradus, the company's artistic director: revivals of *Symétrie inquiétante* and *Angel*, and two new works—*Secrets*, set to music by Oliver Knussen, and *Twenty Dances*, a collection of 20 choreographic miniatures set to piano selections by Franz Schubert. Also on the program, Gerald Arpino's *Confetti*.

The program for performances by **T.I.D.E.** at Premiere Dance Theatre in Toronto, February 27-March 1, was scheduled to include *Read Between the Lines* and *Acrylic Lace*, both by Kathryn Ricketts; *Two Have and Two Hold*, by Paula Ravitz; and Denise Fujiwara's *Life Lines*.

Nadia Potts gave her final performance with the National Ballet of Canada on March 1 at the O'Keefe Centre in Toronto. Partnered by Tomas Schrammek, she danced the role of Lise in Frederick Ashton's *La Fille Mal Gardée*.

A member of the National Ballet for 20 years (17 as a principal dancer), she has left the company to pursue a teaching career.

Happenings at **Danceworks** in Toronto: *Danceworks 41* (March 19-22) featured the work of Daniel Tremblay (*The Passenger*, *Stanza*, *Forgotten Journey*), Miryam Moutillet (*Free Lance*, *Nickel-Odeon*, *In Extremis*) and Julie West (*ABC*, a world premiere).

Works by Louise Parent and Dena Davida (*Pièce de Résistance*), Andrew Harwood and James Saya (*Above See Level*) and Rhonda Abrams (*The Pedestrians*) are scheduled for *Danceworks 42* (April 30-May 3).

Manhattan Tap Company and works by Tassy Teekman and Susan McNaughton have been announced for *Danceworks 43* (May 7-10).

The program for the 1986-87 season of dance performances at Harbourfront's



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Harry Gray

Nadia Potts was showered with flowers during curtain calls following her final performance with the National Ballet of Canada in March.

Mabel—Two Nights at the Bowling Alley and We Can Do That.

The company's April tour also includes performances in the United States: Detroit (April 5), Toledo (April 16-18) and Cleveland (April 24-25).

Dance Theatre Workshop, a new company directed by Dennis Michaelson, Louis-André Paquette and Dianne Sharp, will present its first season, May 1-10, at the Ryerson Theatre in Toronto.

Repertoire is scheduled to include *Clear Passage*, choreographed by Bayla Goldman; *Wrap the Rock*, *The Magic in Allofus*, *Zara* and *It Takes Two to Tango*, all by Louis-André Paquette; and Dennis Michaelson's *Styles and Rhythms*.

The National Ballet School will present its annual performances, May 15-17, at the MacMillan Theatre in Toronto.

The program will include *A Choreographic Offering*, choreographed by José Limon; an excerpt from *Swan Lake*; and a new ballet created for the School by Rudi van Dantzig, artistic director of the Dutch National Ballet.

Donald Himes' Toronto Dance Theatre production of *Babar, The Little Elephant* will be performed by students from the **School of Toronto Dance Theatre** at Harbourfront in Toronto, May 17-19, as part of the International Children's Festival.

Desrosiers Dance Theatre will appear at the 1986 Guelph Spring Festival in May.

The National Ballet of Canada has been invited to perform at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, July 22-27.

Repertoire will include *Alice*, the National Ballet's new work by Glen Tetley, plus another work to be announced.

Erik Bruhn, the company's artistic

Premiere Dance Theatre in Toronto has been announced.

Artists and companies scheduled to appear are **MOMIX** (September 23-October 4), **Tango X 4** (October 7-11), **Maria Benitez Spanish Dance Company**, with guest artist José Greco (October 28-November 1), **Desrosiers Dance Theatre** (November 18-29), **The Manhattan Ballet** (December 9-13), **Ann Ditchburn Dances** (January 13-17), **Toronto Dance Theatre** (January 20-24), **Northern Lights Dance Theatre** (January 27-31), **Margie Gillis** (February 3-14), **American Ballet Comedy** (February 17-21), **Danny Grossman Dance Company** (March 10-21), the **Alberta Ballet Company** (March 24-28) and **Randy Glynn Dance Project** (April 7-11).

Dancemakers will present a choreographic workshop at its Toronto studio, April 8-12.

The program will include a preview of artistic director Carol Anderson's *Angel Food*, which features an original score by Michael J. Baker; works by

company members Susan McKenzie, Conrad Alexandrowicz (*Gaga*), Danielle Belec (*Ye Ondine*) and Philip Drube (*What's A Matter Baby?*); and *Desperate Fantasies*, created by guest choreographer Susan Cash.

The annual spring performances by Belleville's **Quinte Dance Centre** will take place in Belleville (April 12) and Kingston (April 13).

Guest artists Kimberly Glasco and Serge Lavoie, members of the National Ballet of Canada, will perform the *Mazurka* and *Pas de deux* from *Les Sylphides*.

Also on the program: excerpts from *The Nutcracker*; *Wand of Youth*, choreographed by the National Ballet's David Allan; and *Expectations*, a new work by Ricky Beaulieu of the Quinte Dance Centre.

Windsor-based **Gina Lori Riley Dance Enterprises** is scheduled to appear at Premiere Dance Theatre in Toronto, April 13, presenting the local premiere of Riley's full-length work,

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director, comments: "When I became artistic director of the National Ballet of Canada in 1983, I was committed to fostering an indigenous repertoire for the company. With Tetley's latest work, created especially for the National Ballet, we will be presenting a unique program which will showcase the wealth of talent within the company."

Fortier Danse Création will present *Chaleurs*, choreographed by Paul-André Fortier, in Montreal, March 4-16.

The work, with music by Walter Boudreau, features dancers Vincent Warren, Christina Coleman, Gilles Brisson, Luc Charpentier, Marie-Andrée Gougeon, Denis Lavoie, Manon Levac and Catherine Tardif.

Passage, a ballet created by **James Kudelka** for American Ballet Theatre II in 1983, enters the repertoire of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens and the Joffrey Ballet this spring. It is set to a motet, *Spem in Alium*, by 17th-century English composer Thomas Tallis.

Following a tour of Belgium, **O Vertigo Danse** will appear in its first Montreal season, March 12-30.

Featured will be the world premiere of *Timber*, a work staged and choreographed by Ginette Laurin, the company's founder, with the collaboration of company members Louise Bédard, Kenneth Gould, Johanne Madore and Gilles Simard. The original score has



Robert Etchevery

Jerilyn Dana principal dancer with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, in *Alliances*, choreographed by James Kudelka. After an 11-year career with the company, she retired in March.

been composed by René Lussier. Cinematic elements have been directed by Pierre Hébert and produced by the National Film Board of Canada.

Jerilyn Dana has retired from Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. She gave her final performance at Place des Arts in Montreal on March 22.

She joined the company in 1975 and was promoted to principal dancer in 1977.

Linda Stearns, co-artistic director of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, comments: "Above all, Jerilyn will be remembered for her extreme professionalism and dedication to her art form. Her quiet manner, loyalty and devotion have provided a fine example for her fellow company members to follow."

On March 20, Montreal-based **Les Sortilèges** will appear at Carnegie Hall in New York.

This spring, **La Compagnie danse Jo Lechay** will appear in Brussels, Belgium (April 25-29) and in four cities in France—Montpellier (May 1-6), Toulouse (May 7-16), Dreux (May 19-25) and St. Germain (May 22).

Nova Dance Theatre will present a season of modern dance at the Sir James Dunn Theatre in Halifax, April 11-13.

The program will include two premieres: *Anthemological Persuasion*, choreographed by Francine Boucher, and *Shakin' the Blues*, by company member Leica Hardy. Also featured will be *Grecia*, by Jeanne Robinson, Nova Dance Theatre's artistic director, and Beverly Brown's *Yesterday at Dawn When No One Thought to Look*.

The Atlantic Dance Festival, a multicultural and multi-disciplinary event to be held in Halifax in May, is a unique merging of two simultaneous yet independent dance festivals.

One festival, organized by Dance Nova Scotia and the Dance in Canada Association, Atlantic Region, will showcase such diverse dance forms as modern, ballet, ballroom, folk and Highland in six evenings of performances. As well, there will be demonstrations, displays and film showings throughout the city.

Developing choreographers will have their work judged, and the first Atlantic Choreographer's Award, consisting of a \$500 scholarship, will be presented.

The second festival, sponsored by the Eye Level Gallery, will feature the work of Canadian independent dancer/choreographers. ●

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86

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When the 14th annual Dance in Canada conference unfolds in Vancouver, it will offer some very special jewels for its delegates and public guests. Amidst a city celebrating Expo 86, the Vancouver centennial and the 100th birthday of the completion of the Canadian railway, the conference will emerge with a sophisticated focus on the current "state of the art" across our nation.

In keeping with the theme of Expo 86—Transportation and Communication, "Man in Motion"—Conference '86 is entitled DANCE ON TRACK/DANSE ENTR'ACTE, a program of daily performances, activities and events which are an ideal expression of this theme.

DANCE ON TRACK/DANSE ENTR'ACTE will address such topics as the choreographic process today; research on dance; booking and funding; the new generation of dance professionals; aesthetics and criticism.

The Dance in Canada Association's annual conferences bring together the key movers and shakers and participants from all walks of the dance community for a unique week of assessment and growth. DANCE ON TRACK/DANSE ENTR'ACTE will not only meet these goals, but surpass them.

The performances to be produced at DANCE ON TRACK/DANSE ENTR'ACTE will provide a spectacular look at Canada's dance community. Dance programming has also been scheduled on site at Expo 86, at the Canada Pavilion and as part of the Royal Bank/Expo 86 World Festival.

A major highlight of the conference will be **Dance in Canada!**, a "Canada Presents" feature attraction of the Royal Bank/Expo 86 World Festival, sponsored by the Government of Canada through the Department of Communications. This project, which started with a nation-wide World Festival choreography competition in January 1985, provided commission funds to five winners for the development of premieres to be produced under one roof during DANCE ON TRACK/DANSE ENTR'ACTE.

Dance in Canada! has evolved into an important celebration of the high quality of artistic achievement within the Canadian dance community.

From Montreal, the six-member **O Vertigo Danse**, who have fast been gaining a sensational reputation for their particularly energetic style, will present **Light Rapid Transit**, choreographed by artistic director **Ginette Laurin**, with music by René Lussier.

Toronto Dance Theatre will offer a premiere by gifted artist **Christopher House**, one of the company's resident choreographers. The piece, as yet untitled, is a collaboration with Canadian composer Ann Southam.

From Vancouver, **Lee Eisler**—choreographer, performance artist and co-director of **Jumpstart**—will present a premiere in collaboration with multi-disciplinary artist (and co-director) Nelson Gray and composer John Chillona.

Paula Ross, choreographer and director of Vancouver's **Paula Ross Dance Company**, will present **Mobile**, a work, created in collaboration with set designer Bodo Pfeiffer, which focuses on man's need to explore, travel and communicate.

Also from Vancouver, **Jennifer Mascal** of **E.D.A.M.** (Experimental Dance and Music) will present **Parade**, a "not literal", theatrical reconstruction of Jean Cocteau's 1917 work, with music by Erik Satie, John Oswald and Henry Kaiser.

Dance in Canada! performances (August 12, 13 and 14 at the Vancouver Playhouse) will provide an exceptional opportunity to catch the latest from these major artists and will stir our imaginations about new ideas and forms developing today, thereby influencing the growth of tomorrow's dance.

In addition, other performances to watch for during DANCE ON TRACK/DANSE ENTR'ACTE are: the World Festival production of **Ballet Gala**, featuring world premieres from Canada's top three ballet companies: Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the National Ballet of Canada; **Dance in Canada showcases**, noon-hour and evening performances featuring works by a variety of professional companies and independents from across the country; and **Encore! Encore!**, a project which brings Canada's theatrical dance heritage back to life through the reconstruction of choreography from before 1950, to be presented during DANCE ON TRACK/DANSE ENTR'ACTE at the Canada Pavilion.

The 14th Dance in Canada Association conference will be housed on the beautiful University of British Columbia campus, with performances occurring on campus, downtown and at the Expo 86 site.

For information, contact Nicola Follows, Co-ordinator, Suite 501, 1 Alexander Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1B2. (604) 684-1404.

Dance in Canada! and *Ballet Gala* are "Canada Presents" feature attractions at the Royal Bank/EXPO 86 World Festival and are sponsored by the Government of Canada through the Department of Communications.

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