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- 49
- 4 **COVER STORY:**
Nesta Toumine:
Classical Ballet on a Shoestring Budget
Rosemary Jeanes Antze
- 12 **Encore! Encore!**
Celebrating Canada's Dance Heritage
Paula Citron
- 19 **Impressions of a Reconstruction**
Capturing the Essence
Rhonda Ryman
- 28 **The Kirov Ballet in North America**
A Triumphant Return
Hilary McLaughlin
- 31 **Wynne Shaw:**
Memories of an Outstanding Teacher
Alanna Matthew
- 34 **In Review: Books**
Paul James Dwyer
- 35 **In Review: Performances**
Susan Inman (Vancouver), *Karen Sherlock* (Calgary & Edmonton), *Jacqui Good* (Winnipeg), *Hilary McLaughlin* (Ottawa), *Paula Citron* (Toronto), *Alice Frost* (Halifax)
- 43 **n.b. What's New and What's Happening . . .**
People, Performances and Exhibits

COVER: Nesta Williams Toumine. (From the collection of Nesta Toumine)

Nesta Toumine: Classical Ballet on a Shoestring Budget

by Rosemary Jeanes Antze

When Anna Pavlova danced her *Snowflake Ballet* at Ottawa's Russell Theatre in 1920, a small girl in the audience made up her mind that one day she would wear a long white ballet dress and marry a Russian. Today, Nesta Toumine looks back on her seven-year-old self and chuckles, "It was rather strange that it came out that way!"

Not only did her romantic vision catapult her into the glamorous world of the various Ballet Russe companies of the 1930s and '40s, but it also returned with her to Ottawa, where, in 1947, she founded the Ottawa Ballet Company and, to this day, continues to teach.

Over the past 40 years she has mounted a dozen full-length classical ballets, choreographed more than 30 original works and trained dancers who have joined major companies throughout the world.

How did a small Ottawa girl—who, at the age of five (when only "knee-high to a grasshopper"), was a "merry little dancer at the end of a line" in a musical show directed by one Professor Sinclair, ballroom master—develop and sustain such a dance career? And why have her accomplishments so long been overlooked?

Nesta Williams began lessons in "Fancy Dancing" at the age of four in the huge ballroom of the former Ottawa Racquet Club. She remembers that, while mothers watched from the balcony, "we girls, in our prettiest starched dresses, with large sashes, perfected the curtsy, rocked our dolls to lullabies and entwined our feet in Irish jigs".

Soon she moved on to more serious fare with Gwen Osborne (who also taught Betty Lowe, Nora White and Pat Wilde). She arranged recital dances, such as a 1926 gavotte modelled after Pavlova's great solo, for Nesta and her brother.

By early 1933 Nesta was continuing her studies in England, taking classes among the famed Russian dancers of the de Basil company with Russian teacher Nicholas Legat.

Then came her first professional engagement, in the 1934 musical *The Golden Toy*, choreographed by Ninette de Valois. She recalls playing two-shows-a-day for six months, "posing amidst artificial lakes, fountains and little mountains, and dashing back and forth between the three revolving stages".

With a friend from the production, Nesta turned her atten-

tion back to serious training and began studying the Cecchetti method under Margaret Craske. After a year of syllabus work, she took her examination before a committee which included the noted dance critic Cyril Beaumont. She felt this solid technical grounding, with its emphasis on good placement and on the reasons for each exercise, filled in gaps in her training; she also hoped it might prove useful when she was ready to return to Canada to teach.

A variety of dancing jobs punctuated her life as a ballet student in London. She supplemented her finances by working in a film choreographed by Anton Dolin, doing a season in the pantomime *Cinderella* and a stint with fan dancer Edna Squire-Brown.

Romantic interest in a young czardas dancer, Sviatoslav Toumine, led her to audition for the Ballet Russe de Paris, a small touring company. So, in 1936 Nesta landed her first real ballet job and set off on a tour of Great Britain. Working with this company came as a shock. "I was given costumes and told to fit them myself," she remembers, "then quickly thrown into the repertoire." The financial backing of the organization was precarious; for the six-month tour the dancers received their full salary only twice.

Born Nesta Williams, she was also compelled to follow the dictum of the day—"dancers are Russian"—and change her name to Maslova (literal translation: meat).

The next year marked her big break. She had returned to Cecchetti classes in London when, one Saturday afternoon, a cablegram from her husband-to-be arrived. It read, "Come at once. Slava." Borrowing the fare from a friend, Nesta took the boat-train from London to Paris, where she was met by Toumine, who was dancing with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Apparently an English girl had come down with the measles, and they needed a replacement in a hurry. After a flurried audition, Nesta began rehearsals for the second act of *Swan Lake*. "I was just put in according to height," she recalls, "and off I went!"

Nesta's quickness to learn and her adaptability made her a valuable asset to the company. "If anybody was sick," she relates, "the ballet master would call, 'Williams! So-and-so's sick tonight. You dance!' And I'd learn the part before the performance, or during intermission." This skill, combined with a photographic memory, earned her first-hand knowledge of a great many roles, both female and male, on which she later drew to mount ballets for her own dancers.



Nesta Williams in Michel Fokine's production of Don Juan, Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, 1938. (From the collection of Nesta Toumine)

Opposite: Frederic Braun, Joanne Ashe and Elizabeth Spohn in *Marie-Madeleine*, 1963. Below: Jean Stoneham, Vladimir Dokoudovsky and Sviatoslav Toumine in *Giselle*, 1948. (From the collection of Nesta Toumine)



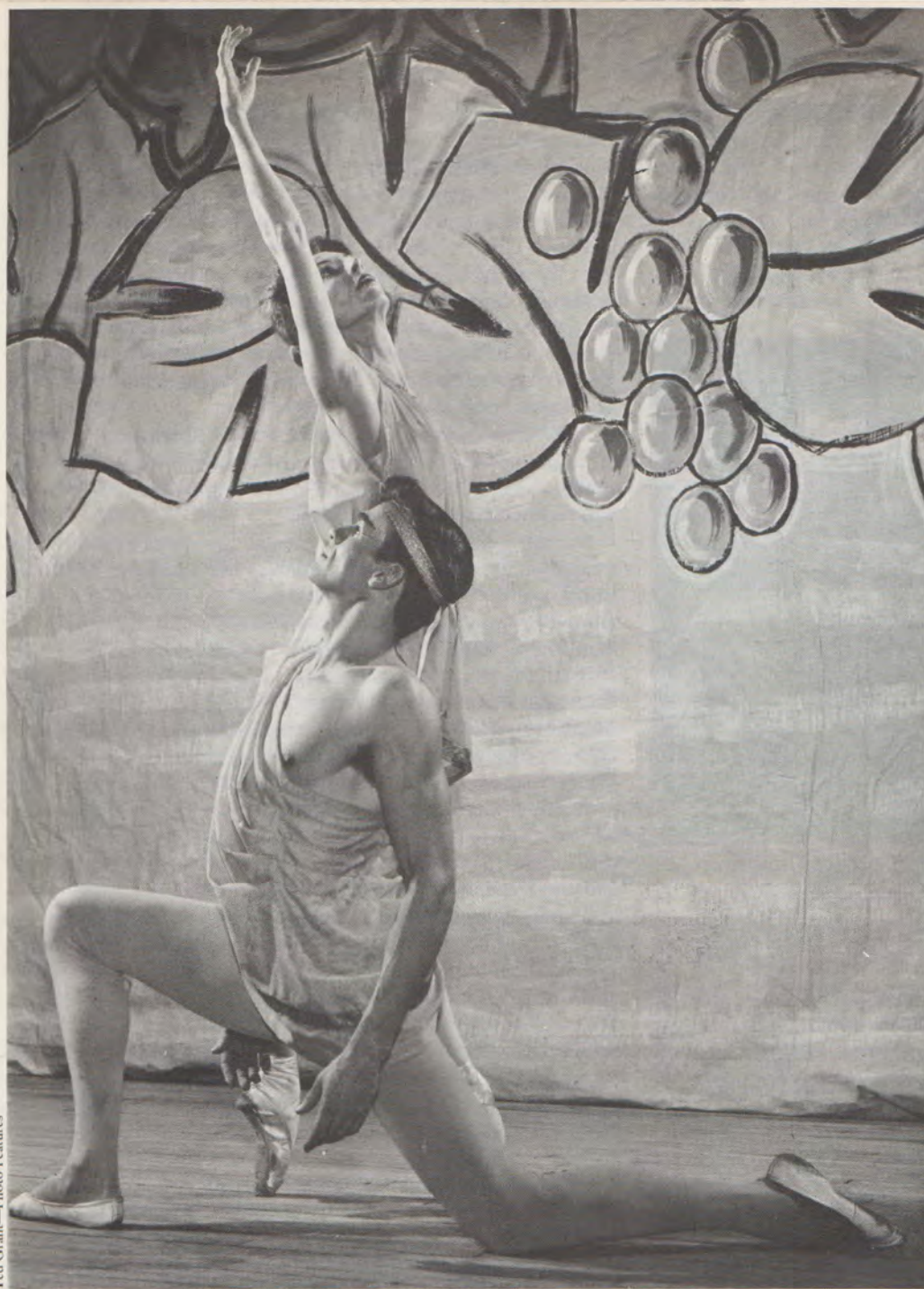
Bill Lingard—Photo Features



Upon completing a tour of England and Scotland, the company settled in its official home, the small, elegant theatre of the Monte Carlo Casino. Now Nesta had truly entered the heart of the ballet world; she began a period of apprenticeship under the major creative figures of the day—Michel Fokine, Leonide Massine and, later, George Balanchine. (Near the end of her performing career, she even had an opportunity to dance in Agnes de Mille's *Rodeo*.) Working within such a range of choreographic approaches and thematic material cer-

tainly enriched her own resources, to be stored up for later use with her own company.

She reminisces about some of these great choreographers. Fokine, she says, was the most exacting, and the stories she tells of him suggest that. She remembers that he would change details in *Les Sylphides*—such as nuances in the arms and timing, or in the way he arranged the corps de ballet according to height—each time he set the ballet. He had no patience with lateness and once made a tardy dancer rehearse her



Joanne Ashe and David Moroni in *The Seasons*, 1961. (From the collection of Nesta Toumine)

part as a “fury” on the floor, still dressed in her sleek black suit.

During performances, Fokine watched and took notes from the centre box. “Once, in *Scheherazade*,” she relates, “he noticed a boy overplaying an amorous caressing motion and immediately rushed backstage, caught the fellow by the ankle and pulled him out of the act.”

Usually he would restrain himself until the ballet was over, but he did not hesitate to give corrections and even rehearse certain bits during the intermission—before allowing the dancers to change costumes for the next ballet!

Massine, in his approach to the creation of a ballet, was apparently very different—much freer and more receptive to ideas from the dancers. She describes him in rehearsal: “He’d give you a skeleton, then a dancer might do something he’d like, and he’d work from there.”

With Balanchine, it was his great musicality that she recalls, particularly in the early masterpieces.

During these years Nesta led a kind of gypsy existence,

mainly on the road—first in Europe, then fleeing from Paris just after World War II broke out and, once the company was based in New York, touring North and South America. On one of these tours, during an engagement in Toronto, Nesta Williams married Sviatoslav Toumine. It was September 18, 1941.

Her two childhood fantasies had now become reality. Nesta Williams had indeed worn many a long white ballet dress (plus a few bizarre outfits designed by Salvador Dali for Massine’s *Bacchanale*). She had also married a Russian, who, after she founded the Ottawa Ballet Company, provided original designs to complement her choreographic ventures.

In 1946 the hot New York summer prompted Nesta to take her two young sons home to Ottawa. There, Yolande Le Duc, another former student of Gwen Osborne, invited her to teach a guest class at the old “Y” gymnasium on Metcalfe Street. Once she began teaching, choreography and directing followed naturally.

Classes went so well that she and Le Duc decided to mount a performance, and the Ottawa Ballet Company made its debut at the Capital Theatre on March 12, 1947. The choice of ballets for that first performance drew on the strengths of Nesta Toumine's professional background and set the company's future course. The opener was *Les Sylphides*, which she herself had danced under Fokine's own guidance. The second work, her two-act *Nutcracker*, became an annual



Jack Mitchell

Rosemary Jeanes, Lorne Toumine and Carol Barrett in *Gymnopédies*, 1966.

Christmas event, inaugurating a holiday tradition that has spread across the continent.

This first performance was no small affair. More than 40 dancers graced the stage, amidst the "futuristic settings" created by Sviatoslav Toumine, and guest artists from New York—including the young Svetlana Beriosova—took principal roles.

The next day, *The Evening Citizen* devoted its whole entertainment page to the performance, proclaiming the success of the Company with the headline "Ottawa Thrills to Choreographic Performance [sic] of Ballet". The display of six photographs suggests a remarkably professional-looking group of dancers. Two full columns of review praised every aspect of the production.

By its next season the Company was able to turn to "home-grown" Canadian ballerina Jean Stoneham to dance the title role in *Giselle*, partnered by Vladimir Dokoudovsky. As well, Nesta Toumine created her first original work, *Once Upon a Time*, set to Strauss waltzes.

In 1949 she added a second original work, *Sonata in C Sharp Minor*, to the repertoire. Following its Ottawa appearances, the Company travelled to the second Canadian Ballet Festival in Toronto.

Anatole Chujoy, editor of *Dance News*, had been invited to come from New York to write reviews of the Festival for *The Globe and Mail*. He rated the Ottawa Ballet Company among the top three Canadian companies, together with the older and comparatively more-established Winnipeg Ballet and the Volkoff Canadian Ballet. He wrote of the Company's performance of *Les Sylphides*: "Not only did they execute the required pas with care and love, they were in the style of the great master's work, no easy task for young dancers." He also praised Nesta Toumine's "choreographic inventiveness"

in *Sonata in C Sharp Minor*. Later, in *Dance News*, he noted the Ottawa Ballet Company's "attentive and loving consideration of the classics . . . through which it fulfills an important mission in the general scheme of Canadian ballet".

After the successes of 1949, Nesta Toumine split with Yolande Le Duc and moved into the next decade as director of the Classical Ballet Company. Over the next few years she developed her dancers' repertoire equally in the classics (notably *Swan Lake*, *Coppélia* and Fokine's *Les Elfes* and the *Polovtsian Dances* from *Prince Igor*) and in new works, and attended all subsequent Canadian Ballet Festivals—even hosting the fifth Festival in 1953.

In 1955 she organized a special gala performance to aid the rebuilding of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, whose scenery, costumes, music, recordings and photographs had all been destroyed by fire the previous year.

During her first 10 years of teaching Nesta Toumine had trained dancers capable of fulfilling her vision of a professional company. She had also built up a loyal following among Ottawa audiences. Now she was ready to break loose from the more cautious approach of mounting the classics. In 1956 the company presented the premieres of four original Canadian works: two story ballets, *David* and *Marie-Madeleine*, with an original, commissioned score by Hector Gratton (this work has been reconstructed recently by *Encore! Encore!*), and two shorter works, *Pas de Deux* and *Les Valses*.

Again the company numbered nearly 40 dancers, continued to draw upon Sviatoslav Toumine for décor and costumes, and danced to a live orchestra under the direction of Eugene Kash.

This bold move into new territory poised the company on the brink of becoming professional. On a shoestring budget, Nesta Toumine formed the Classical Ballet Concert Group and, by 1959, managed to put 12 dancers on monthly salary.

In 1959 the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that "the Classical Ballet Concert Group is moving into the big time". It was noted in the article that, with its core of dancers, "the company was capable of producing 24 ballets, complete with music, sets and costumes, at a moment's notice". By drawing on dancers from the school, it could mount another 16 works.

The dancers' schedules became hectic, with weekend touring around the Ottawa Valley, a series of Saturday-afternoon performances for children and gala performances at Christmas-time. In addition, the Concert Group was the only Canadian company invited to the first Northeast Regional Ballet Festival in the United States.

Through the early 1960s the company maintained its high profile in the Ottawa region and at American ballet festivals. A full-page spread in the *Ottawa Citizen* on February 17, 1961, announced a three-month spring tour, made possible by a small grant from the Canada Council, "to take ballet to communities which see few formal performances". The tour was to be followed by performances in the United States in May and in Quebec City in August. With *The Seasons*, her new work (set to music by Glazounov) choreographed for the tour, Nesta Toumine's creations topped 30.

The seven photographs shown in *The Citizen* spread reveal a sense of the Concert Group's repertoire, from the abstract *Gymnopédies* to the famed romantic *Pas de Quatre*. A picture of *The Nutcracker* displays Sviatoslav Toumine's surreal décor, while two photographs of leading dancers Joanne Ashe and David Moroni show their pure and expressive lines.

Government support of the company reached its peak in 1964, when a \$3,000 grant from the Ontario Arts Council

subsidized a week-long Christmas tour through northern Ontario for the company of 23.

The next spring the company played host to the sixth Northeast Regional Ballet Festival. Eight companies from the United States and one other Canadian company came to Ottawa for the event.

Up to the mid-1960s the Classical Ballet Concert Group steadily grew in reputation, in its repertoire and quality of production, and the skill of its dancers. Nesta Toumine recalls that there were three times when her company was close to becoming fully professional, but, each time, something went wrong. "I can't tell you what it was," she says, "because I was never interested in the business side at all. I had the dancers, and we could have gone. If we could have paid the dancers, we could have had more dates; we could have been on the road."

Ottawa dance critic Laretta Thistle confirms that Nesta Toumine "was too much a creator—she just wasn't up for the whole social whirl involved in launching a ballet company. As a director, she preferred to immerse herself with her dancers in the studio."

On the other hand, it is possible that the small size of Ottawa was also a factor in the disappointments, since private funding was a less viable option there than in the larger centres. Furthermore, throughout the '50s there was considerable competition for limited arts funding, with the National Ballet of Canada just getting off the ground in 1951 and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens beginning in 1958.

These factors, coupled with the fact that the newly formed Canada Council held firmly to the view that three ballet companies were plenty for a country with Canada's population, made prospects look dim.

During all the years of operation, Nesta Toumine took no salary for her work as director or choreographer. She drew on volunteers and on the resources of her school for the necessary support. Once her students were accomplished and committed enough to join the company, their tuition fees were generally waived.

It was in her dancers that she saw her strength and the possibilities for realizing her dreams of a permanent company. With performers like her leading lady and "right hand", Joanne Ashe—a fine technical dancer with a strong dramatic presence, who refused offers from other Canadian companies—Nesta Toumine saw a future for her company.

Until the 1960s Toumine's dancers did stay in Ottawa, taking office jobs or pursuing university degrees that would permit them to dance each evening and on weekends; but when their hopes for a professional company began to wane, they started to move on. David Moroni, who developed into Toumine's *premier danseur* during his 12-year association with her studio, left in 1963 for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. He was soon followed by Marilee Williams (Toumine's niece), Joan Askwith and Victoria Pulkkinen, who later danced with John Neumeier's company in Hamburg. Alistair Munro (who subsequently became a principal dancer with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet in New York), Christopher Bannerman (now a dancer and choreographer with London Contemporary Dancers) and I joined the National Ballet of Canada. Lorne, the Toumine's son, danced with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, as did his former wife, Susan Taylor Toumine, and Richard Sugarman. Carol Barrett became a leading dancer with Northern Dance Theatre in Manchester, Eng-



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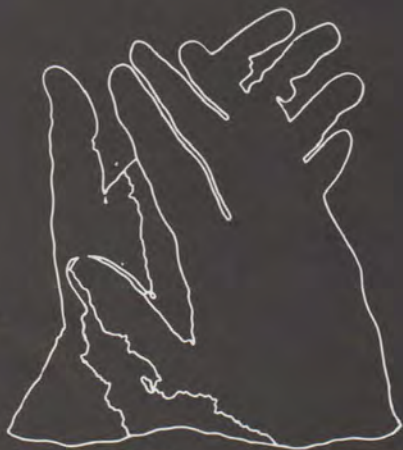
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land, and later joined London Festival Ballet. Several others went on to dance professionally with other companies, including Les Feux Follets.

Despite the loss of so many of the dancers she had been preparing to meet the demands of her choreography, Nesta Toumine persevered. Striving to maintain momentum, in 1965 she changed the company's name to Ballet Imperial. In 1967 she organized appearances at Expo in Montreal and mounted a full-length production of *Cinderella*, set to music by Rossini. The company continued to be invited to American ballet festivals until 1977. Even today, as she goes daily to her studio to teach a new generation of students, she insists, "If only I had the dancers, how much more I could do."

To create and sustain a performing company on virtually no budget for over 30 years is no small achievement, especially at a time when dancers were accorded even less recognition than they are today. Although no company survives as a testament to Nesta Toumine's labour of love, her influence persists through the dance world.

Lauretta Thistle, who, as dance critic for the *Ottawa Citizen*, watched and wrote about the company for many years, is perhaps the best person to assess Nesta Toumine's contribution to Canadian dance.

In a recent interview she observed that Nesta Toumine's teaching produced "a very good, strong, basic technique and dancers who were malleable—hence their success in other companies". She noted that the Classical Ballet Company kept Ottawa audiences familiar with the classics, yet provoked them with new works; and its director knew both her audiences—"she could put together a well-balanced program"—and her dancers—"she stayed within their limits, so that the Company always looked good".

As a choreographer, said Thistle, Nesta Toumine "knew how to use the classical vocabulary to great effect. There were moments of great beauty . . . I remember catching my breath at one or two lifts."

She singled out a short work, *Gymnopédies*, "which was one of her most successful creations. It stayed in the repertoire for years and was a modern ballet—slow, lyrical modern dance. A beautifully sculptured work."

As one of Nesta Toumine's former students, I recall the atmosphere of the dance world she created in her studio. Even today the paintings and designs by her husband look down from the foyer walls, signed portraits of great ballerinas of the past line the office walls and a frieze of photographs of her dancers, in her own ballets, leads towards the studios.

In the real "boom years" of the Classical Ballet Studio on Rideau Street, there was always a sense of openness. Master teachers in other dance styles came to teach and create works: John Stanzel (tap), Eva von Gencsy (jazz), Brenda Beament (Dalcroze-Eurhythmics), and Biroute Nagys and La Verne Mikhail (modern).

The sense of excitement of the theatre emanated from a back room filled with costumes and sets. And late nights spent in long rehearsals—always with a performance to work towards—inspired many a young person to dance.

This love of dancing passed on to her dancers will surely carry Nesta Toumine's legacy, through them, into the future. ●

Research for this article was supported by an Explorations grant from the Canada Council.



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Encore! Encore!

Celebrating Canada's Dance Heritage

by Paula Citron

What began as an article on the Encore! Encore! project took on a life of its own and, of necessity, became an informal history of dance in Canada. How can the reconstruction of works by six choreographers not reflect the time-frame in which the works were created?

Conversations with people involved with the project inevitably led to the question of why these works had to be reconstructed at all. In other words, why had the creative output of these six choreographers been covered over by the veil of time?

This article does not claim to be a complete history of Canadian dance. It is, rather, an examination of the Encore! Encore! project and its ramifications, and, based on the memories of the people who were there, a selective look at Canadian dance history.

For six weeks during April and May 1986, an important project took place in Toronto. Lost works by six Canadian choreographers were reconstructed and documented, both on videotape and with dance notation.

Lawrence and Miriam Adams, former members of the National Ballet of Canada and founders of *Encore! Encore!*, like to quote eminent Canadian composer Louis Applebaum when they talk about why the project of reconstruction was begun. "Recently, Lou Applebaum said that we [Canadians] are not embarrassed by our grandparents anymore," relates Lawrence Adams. "We are no longer ashamed of being Canadians; now, we can look back and find our roots. Five years ago, *Encore!* would not have been possible, but today the climate has changed."

Herbert Whittaker, theatre and dance critic emeritus of Toronto's *Globe and Mail*, agrees: "Canadians could never point at anything and say, 'This is us!' Finally, enough people got ashamed, and a movement in the arts began that was determined to see that we came out of this century with some kind of [documented] history."

The genesis for *Encore! Encore!* was a visit by Lawrence and Miriam Adams, several years ago, to a flea market, where they discovered a program from the 1949 Canadian Ballet Festival, held at Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre. Ten companies from across the country—including the Volkoff Canadian Ballet (Toronto), the Winnipeg Ballet, the Panto-Pacific Ballet Company (Vancouver) and the Ruth Sorel Ballet (Montreal)—had participated. The orchestra was led by well-known conductor Samuel Hershoren.

The credits list the names of many people who went on to enrich the arts in Canada. For example: David Adams, Natalia Butko, Clifford Collier, David Haber, Lilian Jarvis, Arnold Spohr. John Weinzweig, dean of Canadian composers, wrote one of the scores. Herman Voaden, one of Canada's seminal playwrights, was a lighting technician.

Lawrence Adams comments: "It was a shock to discover how naive [Miriam and I] were. We had this incredible length and breadth of theatrical dance history—and didn't know it."

The program whetted the couple's appetite for more information about Canada's vibrant dance past. The next step was a visit to the Volkoff Collection in the theatre department at the Metropolitan Toronto Library. Further research revealed that there had been six Canadian Ballet Festivals (1948 to 1954) in all, rotating between Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. The CBC had actually done a live broadcast, with commentary by Fraser Macdonald, from the 1949 Festival, which had also been filmed by Guy Glover of the National Film Board of Canada.

They also discovered that *The Globe and Mail* had brought in esteemed American dance critic Anatole Chujoy to cover the 1949 Festival, and that the theatre had been sold out for the week's run.

Buoyed with this information, the couple approached the Laidlaw Foundation for funding to extend more research activities. "At first," recalls Miriam Adams, "we wanted to gather material on choreographers and come up with a reasonable list of artists for possible reconstruction. We started to collect press clippings, old photographs and programs. We began talking with people who led us to others. We wrote to every film collection in the country, asking for any dance material [they might have]."

"In the beginning, there were just the two of us doing the basic footwork—the library and press retrieval; but then the project became greater than just reconstructing works. We began to uncover so much material about Canada's dance past that it became clear that an archive was essential."

"We've delved back to the 1920s and into the 'teens—and we're still uncovering information," adds Lawrence Adams. "And we've just touched the tip of the iceberg!"

"Canada wasn't just a hive of local dance activity, either," he continues. "Many companies from Europe and the States toured regularly and usually played to packed houses. Without a doubt, dance has always been popular in Canada."



Madame Hylde,
one of the first
inductees into the
Encore! Dance
Hall of Fame.

Thus, another project was established under the *Encore!* banner: Dance Collection Danse. This, in turn, led to the creation of the *Encore!* Dance Hall of Fame. The first inductees were chosen in recognition of their life achievement in dance. Because of the large number of possible people to be selected, it was decided to consider only those who were over 80 years of age. From east to west, the inductees were: Madame Hylde, Halifax; Maurice and Carmen Morenoff, Montreal; Boris Volkoff (deceased) and Jean Macpherson, Toronto; Fanny and Helen Birdsall, Oakville; Gweneth Lloyd, Winnipeg; and Dorothy Wilson, Victoria.

Seven of the nine inductees attended the gala held at Toronto's Casa Loma in May to honour them; they were escorted by present-day dancers, including Danny Grossman

and Robert Desrosiers. Scattered around the reception area were video monitors showing photographs from their careers. It was a moving ceremony, as each one expressed gratitude for the recognition; truly a meeting of the past and the future of dance.

Another project under the *Encore!* banner is a production designed to highlight some of the outstanding figures of dance in Canada. *There's Always Been a Dance*, using live dancers and video-screen images, opened at the Canada Pavilion at Expo 86 in Vancouver in August and will later tour the country.

With support from all levels of government and various foundations, Lawrence and Miriam Adams were able to add a formidable staff to the *Encore! Encore!* project. At the peak of

The Canadian Ballet Festivals 1948-1954

When the Winnipeg Ballet Club was invited to visit Paris in 1947, manager David Yeddeau attempted to raise funds for the tour. Although he managed to find some money, it was not enough to take the company to Europe.

Instead, Yeddeau came up with the idea of hosting the first Canadian Ballet Festival in 1948. Boris Volkoff, from Toronto, and Ruth Sorel, from Montreal, were invited to bring their companies to Winnipeg.

So successful was this event that Volkoff agreed to host the second Festival in Toronto in 1949, and Sorel the third in Montreal in 1950. The last of the Festivals was held in 1954.

Gordon Wales, who danced at the Canadian Ballet Festivals with companies from Vancouver and Winnipeg, remembers the fun and excitement of just getting there. "The cheapest way to go East was to rent a 'pioneer car'. They had coal-stoves in the back and seats that made up into beds," he remembers. "We had to bring our own food, bedding, cutlery and so forth. They were like covered wagons that the train pulled along. We would load up, get hooked onto the main train and just roll along."

He comments on the significance of the Festivals: "It was important for us to perform elsewhere in Canada—to see other groups and to be reviewed—so that we'd see how we stacked up against other companies."

"Rough and ready" is how Vera Davis describes the Festivals. "There never seemed to be enough time," she recalls. "The rehearsals went on until midnight, and everything happened very fast."

"At one Festival in Montreal," she relates, "I remember we only had one copy of our score, taped together. Samuel Hersenhoren, the conductor, refused to give us an orchestra rehearsal because the score was in such bad shape. He took it away to do homework on it—which meant we had to go on 'cold'. But, afterwards, he did come up to us to congratulate us on the work."

Composer John Weinzweig, who composed the score for Boris Volkoff's 1949 work *The Red Ear of Corn*, feels that the Festivals promoted the use of Canadian music. "One of the criticisms of the first Ballet Festival was the lack of original scores and the use of traditional music," he recalls. "This encouraged a flurry of commissions which carried right through to the end of the Festivals."

Nesta Toumine points out that the Festivals really gave a sense of dance in Canada, and there was a real attempt to include groups from across the country. "The atmosphere at the Festivals was marvelous," she says, "but, by the end of the last one in 1954, you could tell that things were coming to an end. There just wasn't the money any more to tour."

David Adams recalls that one of the first things Celia Franca did in the process of setting up the National Ballet of Canada was to attend the 1950 Festival in Montreal. "I was dancing with the Vancouver Ballet Society when Celia spotted me," he reminisces. The next year, Adams joined the new company and went on to become Canada's first *danseur noble*.

"The Festivals served their purposes," declares Herbert Whittaker. "Just like the Dominion Drama Festival was eclipsed with the advent of professional theatre in Canada, with the growth of professional dance companies, the need for this forum came to an end. The main point is that the Festivals created an audience and an interest in dance, as well as a reservoir of talent for the professional companies to draw on."

"Without a doubt," he sums up, "the Canadian Ballet Festivals were a major event in the history of our culture."

the reconstruction period, *Encore!* employed more than 50 people.

Sonja Barton, a former ballet teacher from Saskatoon, was hired as chief researcher. David Adams, currently a member of the dance staff at Grant MacEwan Community College in Edmonton and a former principal dancer with the National Ballet of Canada and London Festival Ballet, and David Earle, a former artistic director of Toronto Dance Theatre, were choreographic directors, there to aid the choreographers in remounting their works.

Daniel Jackson, a former artistic director of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, was rehearsal director. Rhonda Ryman, a professor of dance at the University of Waterloo, was co-ordinator of notation and chose the five other notators for the project.

Composer Michael Baker was reconstruction co-ordinator; as well, he helped to research the music. National Ballet pianist Gary Arbour recorded the scores to be used during rehearsals.

According to Lawrence and Miriam Adams, the first consideration in choosing the works to be reconstructed for *Encore! Encore!* was the availability of resources. The next was that the works have original scores by Canadian composers. The final consideration was that as many of the works as possible be based on Canadian themes.

With these criteria in mind, six choreographers were selected. Five of them had participated in the Canadian Ballet Festivals; in fact, several of the works chosen for reconstruction had been created expressly for these annual events—although the choreography, overall, spans the years 1945 to 1957.

The six choreographers chosen—Françoise Sullivan, Jeanne Renaud, Nancy Lima-Dent, Nesta Toumine, Gweneth Lloyd and Boris Volkoff—embrace a diversity of backgrounds and choreographic approaches.

Françoise Sullivan and Jeanne Renaud represent the French-Canadian experience. Both had been part of the *Automatiste* movement in Quebec—a gathering of artists who rebelled against repressive political and religious strictures during the Duplessis era. According to Renaud, the movement was an attempt by the artists to feel as free as possible in an inhospitable *milieu*. They concentrated on how they wanted to see the world, and many works were collaborations among artists from several disciplines.

"The word *automatiste* means automatic gesture," explains Renaud, "but the true meaning is spontaneity or release. In other words, it is to express yourself automatically, without any preconceptions. This is freedom. You then pick out from your efforts that which you want to keep. In those days, we *Québécois* were discovering who we were and what we were capable of creating."

Although Sullivan and Renaud began by studying ballet, they both gravitated to New York after World War II—Sullivan to study modern dance with, among others, Franziska Boas; Renaud with Mary Wigman disciple Hanya Holm.

From the early 1960s on, Françoise Sullivan turned her attention from dance and choreography to the visual arts.

Jeanne Renaud, the youngest of the six project choreographers, was the only one who did not participate in the Canadian Ballet Festivals. She spent eight years out of the country, studying and working in New York and Paris.

After raising her children, she began a school of modern dance in Montreal. This led, in 1966, to the formation of Le Groupe de la Place Royale. She has worked as a university teacher and a culture "czar" for the Quebec government, and is currently co-artistic director of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

Renaud's impact is widespread. Le Groupe de la Place Royale, now located in Ottawa, is still a going concern, and



Cylla von Tiedemann

Gweneth Lloyd and Gordon Wales confer during reconstruction rehearsals for The Shadow on the Prairie.

talented Montreal choreographers, including Jean-Pierre Perreault, are among her former pupils.

It is interesting to note that, while she was familiar with dance in New York and Europe, Renaud admits to knowing nothing about dance in English-Canada during the post-war years—confirming that this country really was composed of "two solitudes".

The Sullivan-Renaud works reconstructed were eight short solos and duets, including *Moi-Je-Suis*, which they created together.

Herbert Whittaker has pointed out that modern dance was a discipline that did not have a strong tradition in Toronto, a city dominated by ballet teachers. Nancy Lima-Dent was one of the pioneers of modern dance in the city.

Early in life, Lima-Dent discovered that dance could be used as an expression of social consciousness. She studied in New York and at Connecticut College, and was mostly influenced by Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. In 1949 she founded the New Dance Theatre, a collective in which all the dancers gave equal input—an organization that reflected her idealism and social concerns.

Most of her works related to the human condition, dealing in particular with anti-war themes and the abuse of violence. According to Vera Davis, one of her original dancers who now teaches dance at the University of Toronto, Lima-Dent was able to attract huge audiences who were profoundly moved by the performances.

In 1960 and 1961, together with Bianca Rogge and Yone Kvietyts, Lima-Dent organized the Modern Dance Festival.

She left Toronto for several years in order to teach and per-

form in Sudbury, where she was based at the union hall. According to Davis, she had an excellent following there.

While Lima-Dent contributed to the development of modern dance in Toronto, her impact has also been felt in another way. Her pupil Vera Davis, in turn, taught Kenny Pearl, a former Graham and Ailey dancer who is now artistic director of Toronto Dance Theatre, and Allan Risdill, one of the founders of T.I.D.E.

The Lima-Dent work chosen for reconstruction was *Heroes of Our Time*, set to a score by Harry Freedman. Based on the controversy that raged in the early 1950s over the negative effects of comic-books, the work presents a young boy who lives in a fantasy world of cops and robbers. He gets involved with a street gang whose members commit a robbery. Although the boy is not directly involved, he is shot by police. Vera Davis recalls that grown men in the audience were reduced to tears by *Heroes of Our Time*.

Ottawa-born Nesta Toumine had a glittering career as a dancer in Europe with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Not only did she dance in works by Fokine, Massine and Balanchine, she remembers such artists as Cocteau and Matisse, and the great dancer Serge Lifar coming to rehearsals.

Forced to flee to New York at the beginning of World War II, Toumine continued her career with great success. When she finally settled in Ottawa, she opened a ballet school and used the profits of the enterprise to finance the Classical Ballet Company.

After the Canadian Ballet Festivals ended, Toumine continued to tour Ontario with her company and to attend the American Regional Ballet Festivals—a singular honour, because participation in these events was decided by adjudication. She continued her company until 1977 and still teaches in Ottawa.

A list of dancers produced by Toumine is a veritable "who's who" of Canadian ballet: David Moroni, David Peregrine and André Lewis (the Royal Winnipeg Ballet); Alistair Munro and Rosemary Jeanes (the National Ballet of Canada); Christopher Bannerman (the National Ballet and London Contemporary Dancers); Susan Taylor Toumine (Les Grands Ballets Canadiens); and Toronto dance teacher Richard Sugarman.

Maria Chapdelaine was the Toumine work chosen for reconstruction. It was set to a score by Hector Gratton and was based on a well-known French-Canadian tale about an innocent farm-girl, her roué lover and the stolid man she marries. The work contains lyrical movement, as well as spirited step-dancing.

According to Toumine, she ran into grief with composer Hector Gratton over the production. "Hector had a different story," she explains. "He wrote the music as if it would be on television. He had teddy bears and Maria as an older woman, while I wanted to be true to the novel—because I had always wanted to make it into a dance. He was upset by the work and wouldn't come to meet me." Nonetheless, by sticking to her guns, Toumine transformed a Canadian classic from one medium into another with great veracity.

Two other choreographers whose works were chosen for reconstruction were not born in Canada, yet they absorbed the culture to the point where, as Herbert Whittaker declares, they taught Canadians something about themselves.

Gweneth Lloyd was a true missionary, in the classic British

sense of the word. According to Whittaker, Lloyd came to Canada to bring ballet to the natives and transmit her impeccable English dance training—she had studied with the legendary Margaret Craske—with all the zeal of a religious fanatic.

She picked Winnipeg as her outpost, and the rest is history. Her fledgling school and company, which she founded with the help of pupil Betty Farrally, became the foundation of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Canada's first professional ballet company.

Although she left the company in the early 1950s, she still returned for several years to set ballets on the dancers.

Ever the pioneer, Lloyd moved further west—to Kelowna, a small town in British Columbia's Okanogan Valley, where she opened a school and proceeded to produce a host of dancers who grace the international stage today.

The Shadow on the Prairie, her last work for the Winnipeg company, was set to a score by Robert Flemming. It is a morbid tale of loneliness. A settler's wife is consumed by the emptiness of the prairie. Her sister comes to visit and makes advances to her husband. Lloyd made use of the symbolism of a tree—the only source of visible life to the depressed woman. When the tree loses its leaves, the woman climbs into a trunk and kills herself. In order to increase the realism, Lloyd deliberately set the work off pointe.

David Adams, who was part of Lloyd's first Winnipeg class in 1938 and danced in many of her works, remembers the way she choreographed: "Gweneth was interested in motivation and the reasons behind a movement. It was how [she] worked, and it was the way any of us who had trained with her worked for the rest of our lives. You performed to say something, not to do steps. She believed that ideas must be transferred to the audience."

Boris Volkoff was a feisty Russian immigrant. The son of a peasant, he trained at the State School of Ballet in Moscow. He left the Soviet Union and eventually ended up in the United States, where he worked with Diaghilev disciples Adolph Bolm and Mikhail Mordkin.

He was enticed to come to Toronto to stage vaudeville shows and liked the city well enough to make it his permanent home in 1929. He opened a school and formed a company. As well, he was a prolific choreographer who not only staged works for his own group, but created shows for skating clubs and the Proms concerts.

Many well-known dancers had their start with Boris Volkoff—including Melissa Hayden, who went on to star with Balanchine's New York City Ballet. Nancy Lima-Dent took her first dance lesson with him. As well, many of the early dancers of the National Ballet of Canada were mostly Volkoff-trained.

His greatest triumph was to take his amateur company to the Berlin Olympics in 1936. The company came in fifth in competition—against the best of professionals.

Volkoff's work is represented in the *Encore! Encore!* reconstruction project by *The Red Ear of Corn*, set to a score by John Weinzweig. The work combines two cultures: Indian and French-Canadian. The first part of the ballet recounts the Iroquois belief about why some corn is red. An Indian maiden drops a tray of food she is bringing to her betrothed. Because she broke a taboo, she must be killed. The corn that grows where she died is red, symbolic of her spilled blood.

The second scene takes place at a corn-husking. In *Québécois* folklore, the one who finds the first red ear of corn

gets to pick a chosen mate to dance with, kiss—or even marry.

The two high points of the work are the first-scene tribal dance and the famous barn-dance from the second scene.

Because Volkoff had died more than 10 years before, David Adams re-choreographed *The Red Ear of Corn* based on the remembrances of the original dancers, the entrances and exits marked on the Weinzweig score, and fragments of film and photographs. As one of the original dancers commented, "There is 'after Petipa', and now there is 'after Boris!'"

David Adams, John Weinzweig and Gordon Wales, a former member of the Winnipeg Ballet, compare *The Shadow on the Prairie* and *The Red Ear of Corn* to *Appalachian Spring*, the great folk-ballet by Martha Graham. (In fact, Anatole Chujoy, in his review of the 1949 Canadian Ballet Festival, commented that he found the Weinzweig score for *The Red Ear of Corn* reminiscent of Aaron Copeland, the American composer who worked with Graham.)

By far the most sophisticated choreography reconstructed was by Sullivan and Renaud. Their works are considered by most to be avant-garde, even by today's standards. It must be remembered, however, that they were choreographing for themselves, and each was a highly trained professional dancer. As Herbert Whittaker points out, the other choreographers were setting pieces on part-time dancers who worked during the day at other jobs and could only train and rehearse at night. Thus, their compositions fitted their performers.

Nonetheless, that Volkoff's works made a splash in Berlin says something about their quality. And the fact that so many Canadian-trained dancers went on to international careers also speaks well for the level of teaching in the country.

Vicki Fagan, who trained at the National Ballet School, apprenticed with Contemporary Dancers Canada and is now an independent dancer in Toronto, was one of the dancers who took part in the reconstruction of *The Red Ear of Corn* and *Maria Chapdelaine*. She found the choreography to be simple and naïve. "There was a lot of character-dancing, instead of ballet steps, and I didn't find these pieces very technical," she comments. "They portrayed simple stories that you don't see in dance today. In 1986 terms, they are dated."

On the other hand, Fagan admits that the most difficult aspect of the reconstruction was to find the character. "Today, we do what comes from the gut and 'what's you'. It was hard for us to find the level of stylized acting."

Yet she acknowledges that there was a growing respect for the works and, because there were only six dancers interpreting the roles of up to 30, at times she wanted to run out to the street and drag people in, so that she could see what the whole piece looked like with an ensemble.

Most of the younger dancers were profoundly moved by the experience of working with these figures from the past. They particularly admired their commitment. "If they weren't dancing for money," declares Fagan, "you know they had to be dancing for love of it."

Although the younger dancers were universally praised, the difference in concept was noted by some of the original dancers. "It took a while for the dancers to get into it," observes Davis. "They found it difficult to cope with works that were more drama than steps."



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Gordon Wales, who left Winnipeg in 1954, went on to a career in London's West End that included a lead role in *West Side Story*. He agrees with Davis: "The [reconstruction] dancers had more of a sense of technique, while we had been trained that performance came first, although technique was important. I'm an acting dancer, which is why I was given character parts like the lead in *Shadow*. I would always interpret the story and then make the movement.

"These dancers, on the other hand, work out the movement first. It's hard to get through to these kids, so wrapped up in technique, that feeling is vital. During the reconstruction, Gweneth kept on shouting at them, 'Don't dance it! Perform it!'"

Jeanne Renaud found a difference in the way Louise Bédard danced her works—because of the lack of ballet training that today's contemporary dancers receive. "In a way, the reconstruction was frustrating," she relates, "because the vocabulary of dance was different. I had ballet training, so Louise found it difficult to perform the long circle gestures and the high big splits which pull and stretch the body. [She] brought new aspects to my dances, though. Her impulse and rhythm of movement were different, and she could not exactly capture the fragile aspects, [but] she brought an incredible intensity to the work."

Nesta Toumine was so impressed with the quality of the dancers that, according to Vicki Fagan, she kept repeating that she wished she was setting one of her more challenging works on them, rather than *Maria Chapdelaine*.

Why were these works lost? The answers differ in each case. After 1960, Françoise Sullivan increasingly turned her attention to the visual arts, becoming an accomplished sculptor, painter and photographer. She had never really been part of a company, so there was no group to maintain and carry on her works.

While Jeanne Renaud was away from Canada, the works from her *Automatiste* period fell by the wayside. When she formed Le Groupe de la Place Royale, she went on to new choreographic endeavours. But, as Herbert Whittaker points out, "a company is the self-expression of the man in charge. An artistic director has his own vision, and the works he brings to the company conform to that vision." When Renaud left Le Groupe, Peter Boneham and Jean-Pierre Perreault took the company in their own direction.

Similarly, under later artistic directors the Lloyd repertoire was dropped in Winnipeg. David Adams and Gordon Wales point to the fact that Lloyd wrote everything down. In fact, claims Adams, by reading over her meticulous notes, a dancer could learn a piece of choreography and then just be rehearsed. It should be noted, however, that in 1954 the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's warehouse and all its accumulated sets, costumes and files were destroyed.

Nonetheless, there were dancers around who had performed the repertoire, who could have remounted the works. David Adams theorizes that the Lloyd works were viewed as a stigma of the company's provincial past. "Maybe they thought [the new works] were better than Gweneth's repertoire," he says.

Gordon Wales adds: "I guess they wanted a new company to rise out of the ashes. They began to bring in American and international contemporary choreographers. I suppose they didn't realize what a great choreographer [Gweneth] was. I know the dancers would have enjoyed performing her repertoire."

According to Vera Davis, Nancy Lima-Dent lost her momentum in Toronto because of the years she spent in Sudbury. The New Dance Theatre had not survived her move. When she came back, Patricia Beatty, David Earle and Peter Randazzo had cornered the modern dance market in Toronto, and, what's more, their Toronto Dance Theatre was a professional company. Lima-Dent simply couldn't compete; and so she slowly removed herself from dance.

The tidal wave that swamped the companies of Boris Volkoff and Nesta Toumine was a combination of British ballet and British arrogance. Herbert Whittaker explains: "In 1949, Sadler's Wells Ballet, with Margot Fonteyn, toured the continent and hit everyone like a thunderbolt. No one had ever seen the full-length ballets over here—a whole evening devoted to just one work, with elaborate sets and costumes.

"The patrons of ballet in Toronto wanted a professional company doing the classics in their city, and so they went to the high priestess of British ballet, Ninette de Valois, and that imperious Irish beauty sent them Celia Franca.

"Celia's mission was always to create a classical company; therefore, there was no room for local choreography. Celia became another Ninette. She was going to be the pioneer; therefore, there could be no dance before her. In fact, in the early years of the National Ballet, Volkoff secretly trained the men, but Celia never acknowledged this."

To back up his theory, Whittaker recalls a speech that Tyrone Guthrie gave, in which he claimed that he had brought theatre to Canada when he established the Stratford Festival. Similarly, Celia Franca would say that, when she arrived, Canadians were amateurs who didn't know what a tutu was. "Just where did they get their actors and dancers from?" asks Nesta Toumine.

Whittaker also theorizes that the Winnipeg Ballet Club escaped the effects of the Sadler's Wells visit because of the isolated location of the city and the fact that it was off the beaten track for major tours.

It had been Boris Volkoff's dream to begin a national ballet, but, as Whittaker points out, the female ballet teachers of Toronto banded together 100 per cent behind Franca—because she was in their image. When the National Ballet School was established in 1959, Volkoff's own school slipped in importance.

In Ottawa, Nesta Toumine struggled on with her little company for another 20 years, but her efforts never reached beyond a semi-professional level.

Boris Volkoff was out-manoeuvred; Nesta Toumine was eclipsed. Confined to their own diminished worlds, their works languished.

The impact of *Encore! Encore!* is of monumental importance to dance in Canada. On an immediate level, it has given dancers like Vicki Fagan a sense of their own history. Dance Collection Danse and its archives will continue to grow.

The people who made dance happen in this country will become known. The *Encore!* Dance Hall of Fame is scheduled to induct new members annually, in a different Canadian city each year. *There's Always Been a Dance* will tour the country.

And perhaps, now that they have been documented, the reconstructed works will be remounted. There have already been requests to remount and perform some of the works.

At long last, we, as Canadians, have admitted that we have a dance heritage. Once confined to solitary academics and dance historians, it is now part of the public domain. ●



Nesta Toumine rehearsing the reconstruction dancers in a scene from Maria Chapdelaine.

Impressions of a Reconstruction

Capturing the Essence

by Rhonda Ryman

Rhonda Ryman is professor of dance at the University of Waterloo, where she teaches notation. She co-ordinated the production of notation scores for works reconstructed in the Encore! Encore! project.

What went on in that barn-like Toronto studio can only be described as a labour of love. From April 14 to May 31, 1986, a group of 12 young dancers and their not-so-young mentors assembled to perform a near-impossible task: bringing back to life key works by six pioneering Canadian choreographers.

In another field, the task might seem easy enough; but in the world of choreography, with no written heritage, recapturing the elusive elements that gave life to a great work of the past is like putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle with only a few of the pieces.

More the challenge. The members of the ensemble gathered together by Miriam and Lawrence Adams, producers of *Encore! Encore!*, were equal to it.

But where to begin this adventure? Take one septuagenarian ex-Ballet Russe dancer with the grace of a dove and the memory of an elephant, and you're off. Nesta Toumine

stunned us all with her incredible recall of *Maria Chapdelaine* (originally titled *Marie-Madeleine*), a work she choreographed, based on the well-known French-Canadian folk tale, more than 20 years ago for the Classical Ballet Company of Ottawa.

"I didn't realize how much I was going to fall in love with Nesta Toumine," confides Daniel Jackson, who acted as rehearsal director. "I think it was almost love at first sight for practically anyone who was involved in the project. It was a very moving experience.

"She had an extraordinary memory. Also, I don't think the piece was as old as the other works, and it might have been performed more often." (This is in contrast to other pieces reconstructed, such as Boris Volkoff's *Red Ear of Corn*, which was created almost 40 years ago and performed, in its entirety, only three times.)

Jackson continues: "Nesta was more apt to have problems in relation to musical tempos, which were difficult because the piano recordings made for this project followed the musical markings on [composer Hector] Gratton's score. [In the old days] Nesta would have had a live pianist and could have made adjustments as she liked."

The markings on the piano score were more trouble than help. Labanotator George Montague and I had diligently prepared for the first rehearsal by studying the piano score to familiarize ourselves with melodies and plotline.

When the action taught in the studio repeatedly conflicted with the word notes on the piano score, we discovered that the notes were made by Gratton—and not by the choreographer, as we had naturally assumed. Toumine, it seemed, had so widely digressed from the action envisioned by Gratton that he had disassociated himself from the ballet—hence its temporary title change to *Marie-Madeleine*.

There were the inevitable moments when the music played on, but the movements wouldn't come, and no clues could be found from the score or the press reviews and photographs that lined the lobby walls. At one point, Rosemary Jeanes Antze, a former Toumine dancer and now a dance anthropologist in Toronto, came in to share her recollections; she helped fill in some critical gaps.

When no flickers of memory surfaced, choreographic director David Earle was at hand to fill gaps or make cuts in the music, always careful to preserve the flavour of the original. "I felt that the marriage between the choreographic director and the choreographer, on that occasion in particular, was a highlight of the *Encore! Encore!* experience," remarks Daniel Jackson.

David Earle's gentle touch sustained us through many a tricky situation, as he mediated between Toumine, deep in thought; Jackson, operating the tape machine and mapping shots for the videotaping that ended each rehearsal period; and the six dancers, who often played two or more roles each.

Since some two-week reconstruction periods overlapped, the 12 dancers were split into two groups. Even works with large casts—*Maria Chapdelaine* (30), *Heroes of Our Time* (16), *Shadow on the Prairie* (25) and *The Red Ear of Corn* (22)—were set on six well-used bodies.

There were times when everyone was up and dancing, to fill in as bodies. Jackson soon became irreplaceable as Maria's father, and David Earle did a cameo appearance as the fiddler in the square-dance scene.

Even Toumine pitched right in—and was quite prepared to do so. Seeing her move, with a terrible knee problem, seeing that giving was just wonderful. Age and physical problems were rarely in evidence as she whipped through the first two scenes of the ballet. "As we worked on the process," recalls Jackson, "if we needed to have four extra people on the stage, Nesta automatically became two, and I became the other two."

"The word schizophrenia was absolutely epitomized here," he continues, "when we had to take our two male and four female dancers and turn them into snowflakes and double it." Fortunately, the section was all geometric patterns, so it was possible to visualize the missing bodies. Notator George Montague, through his score, was actually the only person who could account for every dancer.

At mid-week, music for the third scene had not yet been recorded. This gave the dancers—and the notator—a welcome chance to go over the first two scenes.

As soon as the tape was ready, Toumine pressed on, quickly setting the entire ballet, then going back and filling in details. "She looked forward to the cleaning process," relates Jackson, "to making the movement look like it was supposed to look." This involved time to work on individual passages and to mold character studies.

Angela Borgeest and Stanley Taylor alternated with Audrey Brownlow and Chester Ferguson as Maria and Jean, the young lovers. Susan Cash was transformed into an engaging Bébé, Maria's young brother. Along with Vicki Fagan, they doubled as assorted friends, family, snowflakes, winds and wolves to create a touching portrait of family life and love in rural Quebec.

Evolving characterizations through movement was a major focus for Nancy Lima-Dent, choreographer of *Heroes of Our Time*. The work was originally done for the 1950 Canadian Ballet Festival in Montreal, with dancers Marcel Chojnacki, Laya Liberman and other members of Toronto's New Dance Theatre participating in its creation.

Chojnacki and Vera Davis, another of the original dancers, were on hand for its transformation in the '80s to a new score composed by Harry Freedman. The original score, a collection of Russian piano music, had gone the way of much of the original choreography; but the statement *Heroes of Our Time* made was clear in the minds of the original dancers.

The work was a commentary on the raging comic-book controversy of the time. As such, some of the young dancers found its message a bit dated. Substitute computer games in a video arcade, however, and the deeper theme might seem more contemporary.

The action centres on young Binky and his friends, on the blurring line between the fantasy life of adult adventure and the childish reality that ends in tragedy.

"In *Heroes*," says Annabel Helmore, the Benesh notator who produced its score, "the specific movement is not so im-

Marcel Chojnacki, one of the original cast members of Nancy Lima-Dent's Heroes of Our Times, in rehearsal with the reconstruction dancers.



Videotaping the Reconstruction Works: The Techniques of Preservation

A problem common to all the works reconstructed for the *Encore! Encore!* project was the lack of a final performance. "Dancers need that concrete deadline to work towards," asserts choreologist Annabel Helmore. Without it, many felt slightly disoriented and unfocused. As a result, the videotaping that ended each rehearsal period quickly took on the role of a final performance.

Tapes were made at the Arts Television Centre in Toronto, against a white cyclorama and without sets, costumes or decoration. The floor was gridded into 12 sections: four columns up and downstage, and three sections across, corresponding with wings.

portant, as long as it is within context, story line and so on. Nancy resisted setting things, tying things down, especially to specific music counts. She wanted the dancers to recreate the character studies, based on what the individuals had to give. The dancers [had to] use a given structure, concept, basic characterization and build from there.

"After the first few days," Helmore continues, "I realized how it was going to work and had to tear up everything I [had done] the first few days. It was most important to get the structure, contacts, people's locations and inter-relationships—and not the specific steps. With the basic concepts and structure—there was a lot of walking around and interaction—and with the score and video, it may be possible to get the essence."

"It was interesting to see this approach to choreography, as an alternative to classical choreography," remarks dancer Sharon Wehner. "I've been looking at it in the context of its time and in conjunction with the other pieces here."

Helmore agrees. "The piece is quite interesting historically," she says. "Perhaps more so to dancers than to a lay public. Nancy was one of those people who threw away [their] pointe shoes and [were] groping around to fill that void. No other technique was developed in Toronto at that time. Her work was representative of the development of dance at that time. The party scene was based on jitterbug, the social dance of the day."

Using only six dancers created problems. Although all parts could be accounted for in the notation score, Lima-Dent had difficulty in visualizing the total action, the interplay of the various personas, so she cut characters. The dancers also experienced problems in creating multiple personalities, although many had emerged by the day of the videotaping.

Helmore offers a unique perspective. "By following through on the characterizations in the notation score," she says, "you can get some idea of the development of each character. This is more possible via the notation score than the video. Although I was having a hard time following the development of the characters through the rehearsal period, I found I was able to get a better handle on them while writing out the score."

One of the most breathtaking pieces unearthed by *Encore! Encore!* was a collaborative work by Jeanne Renaud, founder of Le Groupe de la Place Royale, Montreal's first professional modern dance company, and Françoise Sullivan, a prominent French-Canadian visual artist and choreographer. The 1948 duet, titled *Moi-Je-Suis*, is a surrealistic vision performed to poetry.

A single stationary camera was mounted at about seven feet from the stage front, and very full, even lighting was maintained.

Since each video is meant to be a documentary, without production elements, props were only indicated—except for utility set pieces, such as a card-table in *Maria Chapdelaine*.

Continuously throughout the tape, there is a band on the bottom of the screen. The lower right side of the band displays an index number, starting at zero and counting up, bearing no relationship to time or rhythm. In the centre of the band is a bar counter, a letter or number coinciding with the music score. At the left side of the band is the number of the scene or act.

Producer Lawrence Adams comments: "In most cases, a bar count is really helpful, in that you can follow the video without a music score in hand. For example, some of the counting in the barn-dance in *Red Ear* is quite complex."

Renaud and Sullivan, who created the work on themselves, were playing with the correlation or, perhaps more correctly, the co-existence of dance movement and sound. Sounds created by the poet reading words at an unset tempo, free to repeat any sections, any number of times, juxtaposed with sounds created by the dancers' breath, the swish of arms and torsos, or the weight of the steps. The work also built on the wordless rapport between two moving bodies, the entropy created when their energies inhabited merging spheres.

Newly set on dancers Louise Bédard and Ginette Boutin, the work had a fantastic dynamic range. Movements erupted like random electric charges passing from one body to another, then subsided into a stillness, only to be recycled with greater intensity. Key movements, such as claps, swings and suspensions, were set—as were some stage locations; but the dancers had freedom to vary the speed of the movements and, very often, their size or direction. They could also decide how many times key phrases were performed and, to some extent, the floor patterns. The visual result was often thrilling.

"To me, the original was kind of the birth of chance choreography," Daniel Jackson speculates. "There were days Ginette and Louise took chances that were beyond human belief. I thought for sure someone was going to get an elbow in the mouth. They were just phenomenal. Very hard in the actual end-product [however], because of the situation of filming."

Indeed, how should the videotape of an improvisationally based piece be viewed? As the final product? Perhaps as one objectification of a choreographic process that can yield a wide range of results?

There would be a danger in looking at the videotapes without referring to the choreographers' notes or the notation score that documents the verbal images and impressions used in setting the work. In this sense, the score serves not only as a record of the structure of the work, but also as archival material that captures certain aspects of the process of its creation. "By looking at the video alone," comments Benesh notator Janis Sandles, "you wouldn't get any sense of how that dance should be reconstructed. You would just recreate the outer shell. And you may lose what the choreographers were getting at, the essence of the piece."

To ensure that the videotapes are used effectively, supplementary material—such as newspaper articles and reviews, interviews, photographs, set and costume designs, and even old film clips—will be available, whenever possible, with each videotape.

Each video begins with a floor plan of the gridded-out stage, shown on a white board, indicating where props are located onstage. A menu is then displayed to list sections of the work and logical breaks in the piece—either scene numbers and breaks, or entrances identified by catchy names that people develop when rehearsing. Beside each section name is the corresponding index number and approximate time on the tape.

A line-up of dancers standing behind identifying character names or roles is displayed before each take. Any overture or introductory music runs during the preliminary information; then the dancers are filmed performing the choreography.

If more than six dancers were needed onstage at any time, that section was retaped, preceded by a new line-up of characters.

When the dance was symmetrical, as with the snowflakes in *Maria Chapdelaine*, the action on each side of the stage was taped

Dancers who have used videotapes are aware that there is more to a work than what can be seen on the screen, but the human tendency is to look at the videotape and believe it. "I know that even when you have a score and a video," laments Sandles, "the dancer will say, 'Okay, I'll find it on the video.' The dancer could have been off a beat, or off his dancing on a particular day; but if it's on the video, it's fixed in stone."

"The interesting thing about videos that are done in theatres," adds Daniel Jackson, "is that there is a time lapse until the recording sound hits the back microphone; so you can often think the work is completely off. It's one of the reasons that very few choreographers will allow those performance videos to be seen to represent their work for something major."

That problem is not an issue with the *Encore! Encore!* videotapes, thanks to the technical expertise of Michael Baker, who was in charge of providing music tapes for the rehearsals and recording them at the video sessions.

His composing talents came to the rescue in unexpected ways during the project. Françoise Sullivan did not have a recording or a score for her work *Black & Tan* and had to hum the melody, accompanied by Daniel Jackson and Ginette Boutin. Baker recorded the song, took it away and reset it on his synthesizer, singing it himself.

"It was very touching, that experience," relates Jackson. "When Françoise heard it, she bawled her eyes out and was thrilled to death. And, of course, everything flooded back into her head, and she put the piece together in minutes. She praised that aspect of the organization, because she felt that that was what collaboration was all about. And that, to her, was beyond only restoration."

New collaborations have been born, as well. Daniel Jackson has invited Françoise Sullivan to create a new work on the company he and Paul-André Fortier have recently formed. "My mind was made up when I saw her work here," he declares. "She will also do the costumes and the décor, and that's very important—to put that aspect of her work onstage. This rarely has happened. Other great artists have surrounded her pieces, but we wanted her to do a total piece."

For decades Sullivan has been a well-respected visual artist, whose work is represented in major galleries and collections. That talent is evident in the intricately formed notations she has made describing some of her works. Most are visual patterns reflecting floor patterns, with word notes. On her first day, she brought them to Benesh notator Janis Sandles and Labanotator Leslie Johnston and said, "Here, you see. Maybe my notation is better than yours!"

Who can dispute that a choreographer who does the nota-

tion for his own work can best capture its essence? The plans

will be included as an appendix to the notation score, because any information that can shed light forms an important part of that score. But, as with any personal notation system, no one except the author will be able to interpret the plans adequately.

separately to aid people who have difficulty transposing sides. In cases where there was some sort of intricate business, the section was retaped in detail, zooming in more tightly or taping from a different angle. The step-dancing in *Maria Chapdelaine*, for example, was recorded from the knees down to show intricate footwork—with and without the music.

Complex scenes were often repeated, with fewer dancers, for clarity; but, with the index and scene numbers always in full view at the bottom of the screen, perspective could not be lost.

Lawrence Adams hopes to add each choreographer's commentary on a second audio track, without music, describing production elements and dramatic qualities relevant to each section shown. "It helps in getting the quality of the action," he says, "and has an archival value, in that you'll hear the choreographer taking you through the work."

ersonalized methods of showing floor plans are often used by choreographers as memory aids. Nesta Toumine remarked that she drew plans for many of her works. Gweneth Lloyd was known to keep meticulous notebooks that included floor plans. Tragically, most of these were destroyed in 1954 by a fire that demolished the home of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Betty Farrally, Lloyd's long-time colleague and now a consultant on dance at the Banff School of Fine Arts, says that Lloyd was able to visualize her choreography clearly in her mind's eye, "like a filmstrip. She never danced a step when setting her works, but had everything written down: the steps on the right-hand side of a page, mirrored by the floor plans on the left, with the music counts running down a central column."

The choreography of *The Shadow on the Prairie* reflects this carefully structured approach. "Gweneth got the idea for *Shadow* from a story she had read, set in one of the Dakotas, about a settler girl from Norway," relates Farrally. "She transplanted the story to tell about a Scottish girl settling in Manitoba. That's why she included Highland steps. The jig is actually set after a Red River jig. She had a real Selkirk settler come up and teach it to us."

A reconstruction within a reconstruction! How was a group of mostly Eastern born-and-bred dancers of the '80s to deal with this?

Fortunately, a 14-minute film of the original 28-minute ballet was made by the National Film Board only a few years after the work's 1950 creation for the company. Lloyd condensed the ballet, and new sets were made for the filming. The original cast performed the lead roles: Carlu Carter (the young wife), Gordon Wales (the husband) and Josephine Andrews (the other woman).

The film is a gem, a work of art in itself, but it was not meant to be choreographic documentation. The shifting camera angles and close-ups often intensify the action—but hide key details. "It was only half as long as the original, and a lot of the dramatic action had to be condensed," cautions Farrally. "The full ballet has more character development, much greater impact."

"I remember the premiere in Winnipeg," she continues.

"We were all so moved and chilled at that last moment, when the spotlight dies on the chest, that everyone forgot that Carlu was still in there! We barely got her out in time for the curtain calls. From then on, one person was designated to get Carlu out of the chest."

Benesh notator Debbie Chapman laughs, "I'll be sure to note that in my score!"

Lloyd, Farrally, Carter, Wales, Andrews—all a little older, but as vibrant as ever—were on hand for the resurrection of this powerful and touching portrait of pioneer life. With choreographic director David Adams and the National Film Board film, they were able to piece together very nearly the entire ballet.

Gordon Wales, still trim and agile even 25 years after leaving the dance world, said it was almost like being in a time capsule, finding himself back in a studio with the same people, doing the same thing. Josephine Andrews, who had also left the profession many years ago, had been terribly concerned that nothing of the original choreography would come back to her. Carlu Carter, who has continued her career in Australia, was eager to begin unravelling the pieces of the puzzle.

Once in the studio, everyone was amazed at how quickly they began fitting together. Nina De Shane, a University of Waterloo ethno-musicologist documenting the project, remarks: "It was a completely natural thing. They had the video, which was a great help, and they had each other. Once the music started, it was just there somewhere, programmed deep inside of them."

It was indeed a high point of the *Encore! Encore!* project to

Everett Staples, Natalia Butko and Gladys Forrester discuss the original production of Boris Volkoff's Red Ear of Corn.



see Wales, Carter and Andrews get up and to witness the movements born again in them. "They wouldn't even realize what they were doing," recounts Debbie Chapman. "They would put on the music, watch a bit of the video and, before they knew it, were dancing parts that weren't on the video. Then they would turn around and say, 'What did I do?'"

Daniel Jackson comments: "You could see the essence of the movement through their bodies, regardless of the shape they're in now. It's wonderful to see that clarity in someone who has really learned a role well."

Once the structure of the work was set, more time was devoted to helping the young dancers develop characterizations. Gweneth Lloyd was very concerned that they get a feeling of the wide open spaces, looking off into the distance, sharing the folksy quality of life in a prairie community. "You're not dancers," she cajoled. "You're people at a square-dance. You're welcoming these people into your community." Very often her body would evoke flashes of movement images—settlers waving to one another, friends reassuring the newcomers—and the young dancers would translate those visions anew.

Andrea Smith and Silvain Brochu, as the young couple, together with Sonya Delwaide, Manon Levac, Loney Reece and Sharon Wehner, made an attractive corps of settlers, updating the story for this generation. The '80s look was unmistakably there. Contrast Carlu Carter's long, straight hair with unisex frizz sported by Andrea Smith, or Gordon Wales' short, sleek cut with the casual shag of Silvain Brochu.

The bare-footed, unitarded bodies were also markedly different from the slippered, long-skirted females seen in the film. "I thought we should have used skirts, so that the girls could get the feel of the movement," relates Betty Farrally. "The sway of the skirts was actually part of the line. For this reconstruction David Adams wouldn't let the girls use skirts, because he wanted to see the lines of their bodies."

Attention to form and technique is a high priority for dancers of this generation. Farrally expresses concern that today's dancers often appear uncomfortable in literal works involving mime or emotional portrayals. "Today's dancers try to analyze everything," she says. "They seem too intellectual, with not enough imagination."

Daniel Jackson suggests that today's training focuses more on technique than acting, leaving the development of characterization up to the imagination and resourcefulness of the individual.

Cliff Collier, one of the original dancers in Boris Volkoff's *Red Ear of Corn*, agrees with Farrally and Jackson. "Dancers of 30 or 40 years ago were often dancing actors as much as acting dancers," he reminisces. "It was certainly that way at Boris' studio."

Volkoff's students worked all day to earn a living and rehearsed at night. There were fewer performing spaces and, therefore, fewer opportunities to perform. "In our day," recalls Natalia Butko, "you were lucky if you got onstage at the time of the show. We had no rehearsals onstage or with live musicians. What we lacked in technique, we formed with our bodies, our personalities, our exuberance."

"Don't get the idea that we couldn't dance," interjects Gladys Forrester. "Half the original National Ballet came from Boris!"

These thoughts were echoed by Isabel Bodkin, Everett Staples and Bill Diver, other former members of the Volkoff Canadian Ballet, on hand to sift through photo albums, press

Inductees: Enco

FANNY and HELEN BIRDSALL trained in Toronto and New York, and opened their first dance studio in 1923. Throughout their 50-year career, the Birdsalls produced and choreographed numerous performances at Massey Hall, the Eaton Auditorium and the Canadian National Exhibition. Among the thousands of students the sisters taught many went on to dance careers in New York and Hollywood and they were among the first to work with dance and the handicapped. In 1984 at age 86, Fanny produced and choreographed a performance for a group of senior citizens.



FANNY BIRDSALL



HELEN BIRDSALL



BORIS VOLKOFF

GWENETH LLOYD studied classical ballet at the Royal Academy of Dancing in London. Immigrating to Winnipeg in 1938, she and compatriot Betty (Hey) Farrally opened a school and later formed the Winnipeg Ballet Club. Under the guiding hand of David Yeddeau, they initiated the First Canadian Ballet Festival in 1948, and in 1949 the Winnipeg Ballet became the first professional ballet company in Canada. Miss Lloyd's major contribution to Canadian dance was made over a 13-year period during which time she choreographed 34 ballets.



GWENETH LLOYD

BORIS VOLKOFF began his dance career in the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow. Defecting to the United States, he joined the American Ballet Theatre when Jack Arthur asked him to join. He then opened a school in Toronto, teaching ballet and modern dance. In 1936 his company represented Canada at the Toronto International Exhibition. A prolific choreographer, he has written and produced works for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Concerts. His Company hosted its first performance in Toronto in 1949, where they performed "The Nutcracker". His work was an inspiration to his dancers and helped to establish long careers in dance.

MADAME HYLDA came to Halifax from Britain following World War I, and soon established herself as a talented and dynamic dancer, teacher, choreographer. As Director of a large and successful school, her insistence on quality and high standards were reflected in the twice-yearly performances. In 1928 her dance reputation resulted in a film news release shown world-wide. Later, she established a weekly schedule of Prologue performances at the Capitol Theatre between movies. For 25 years, Madame Hylda and her dancers became an integral part of the cultural life of Halifax.



MADAME HYLDA

re! Hall of Fame



career at the State School of
West in 1929, he settled in Toronto
at the Uptown Theatre. Volkoff
Russian classical ballet technique.
Canada at the Berlin Olympics.
The Volkoff Canadian Ballet
Opera Company and Promenade
Second Canadian Ballet Festival
his "Red Ear of Corn". Volkoff
many of whom went on to



MAURICE MORENOFF



CARMEN MORENOFF

MAURICE and CARMEN MORENOFF. Maurice spent many hours at his father's Ecole de danse Lacasse-Morenoff in Montreal learning the principles of performance and teaching. Soon recruited to teach, Morenoff touched on all types of dance, and he and his wife CARMEN produced, choreographed and performed in vaudeville, cabaret, musicals, pageants and operas, many of which toured across the continent. The Morenoffs devoted many years to teaching both social dance and classical ballet, while still carrying on their busy personal careers. The tradition of his father's dance school, established in 1895, continues, and Maurice at 81 years of age, still occasionally teaches in his Montreal studio.



JEAN MACPHERSON

JEAN MACPHERSON first studied dance in Toronto in the early 1900's. In later years she worked with Charlotta Zambelli, George Balanchine and Michael Fokine. In 1927, she established a school in Toronto where she taught classical ballet and interpretive dance. A charismatic dancer herself, she choreographed and performed numerous solo concerts both in England and in Canada and was invited by Leopold Stokowski to perform with the Philadelphia Symphony. For several years Miss Macpherson taught classes at Casa Loma and in the 50's operated a school in Hudson, Quebec. Many of her students established professional careers in both ballet and modern dance.



DOROTHY WILSON

DOROTHY WILSON began her dance training in 1899 in England, and later performed in pantomimes prior to moving to Victoria. In 1922 she opened her first studio and later with Nicholas Rusanoff established the Russian School of Ballet. By 1936, she staged a production of Coppelia with her own dancers. In 1940, she moved to Vancouver to teach and began to choreograph productions for Theatre Under the Stars. During the 40's there were eighteen Wilson-trained dancers performing on New York stages. Outstanding students included Ian Gibson, Robert Lindgren, and Duncan Noble who joined the Ballets Russe and Ballet Theatre and Lois Smith, former prima ballerina of the National Ballet of Canada.

reviews, piano scores and old film clips to fan the flames of memory.

There was even an orchestrated 1949 Trans-Canada Network radio broadcast of John Weinzweig's score, with commentary by Fraser Macdonald.

The most important ingredient, however, was missing. Boris Volkoff died more than 10 years ago, leaving a legacy of more than 40 major works in the minds and hearts of Canadian dancers and balletomanes.

The very fecundity that inspired Volkoff to produce new works to feed the appetites of the audiences he was creating prevented any one of his works from enduring. *The Red Ear of Corn*, premiered in Toronto at the 1949 Canadian Ballet Festival, was performed, in its entirety, only three times, although many considered it his greatest work.

Everyone involved in the *Encore! Encore!* project had anticipated that *The Red Ear of Corn* would be the most difficult reconstruction, and it was. "The work was never really in our muscles," says Forrester.

Every now and then, however, a glimmer surfaced. "I just had a revelation!" exclaimed Natalia Butko. "If things keep coming back to me like this, we'll be here another 20 years."

She rose from her chair to become Tekakwitha, the intense young Indian maiden fleeing from her enraged fiancé. Unwillingly betrothed to Chief Renard, she has insulted him by spilling his ritual dinner. She will forfeit her life for the transgression.

But how? "I remember that Renard pulled Tekakwitha by her long black hair," Butko recalled. "I'm sure of that, because I had to dye my hair black for this role. I couldn't wear a wig! I remember everyone closing in on me before I'm killed," she said, her body shrinking to the floor. "The stabbing was not right out in the open . . . I was killed amidst the corn." And from that crimson spot would rise the fabled red ear of corn.

Apart from remembering choreographic detail, even sorting out the plotline posed problems. The first scene is based on the Iroquois tale described in Louvigny de Montigny's poem *La Légende de l'Épi Rouge*. The second scene, set at a corn-husking and barn-dance, depicts the French-Canadian superstition that good luck comes to the finder of the season's first red ear of corn.

Word notes on the piano score, when they could be discerned, conflicted with events described in the poem, in newspaper clippings and in the dancers' memories.

Even the opening was in doubt. "I remember two versions," asserts Butko. "In one, Tekakwitha's friend was alone onstage when the curtain rose, then I made my entrance. In another, we were both onstage when the curtain went up."

Collier remembers the friend onstage, sleeping under a tree, as the curtain rose. "But," he says, "it was not unusual for Boris to change a work after it was set. That's what was exciting! I firmly believe that if Boris were alive today and had been asked to participate in this, many sections would have been changed—because he wouldn't have remembered, or for a number of reasons, such as time constraints or to make improvements.

"All we can do in reviving *Red Ear* is to give an impression of how Boris choreographed, of what his company would have been like. If we don't get that excitement across, it would be better to let his memory be just that—a memory."

The fragmented but highly animated remembrances shared by Volkoff's dancers leave the impression that his contributions are far too important to leave to the ravages of time.

"It's hard to measure the impact of a given individual," says choreographic director David Adams. "It's almost subliminal. Thousands of people have memories of seeing a Volkoff ballet and may have been moved or affected in ways they don't even know. My concern is, what happens when that memory is no longer directly accessible, when there are no direct links to those living traditions?"

Faced with the task of extracting from these haphazard recollections something close enough in spirit and style to the original work, Adams admits, "I don't think it's possible to revive the original choreography, so I have aimed to recreate the essence, not the steps."

But just what is that elusive essence, and how can it be captured apart from the structure of the work?

The essence of Volkoff. Some of it can be gleaned from a short film clip of the barn-dance, recorded onstage at the 1949 Canadian Ballet Festival. But what did that show of the dance, apart from the obvious charisma of the dancers?

Perhaps his gift for bringing out the inner talents of his dancers was, to a great extent, the essence of Volkoff. Cliff Collier offers an interesting insight: "Boris' style of choreography stemmed from his teaching style. He didn't teach syllabus, but rather Russian style, based on the standard elements of a class—barre, centre, allegro, turns; but, within that formula, no two classes were alike. The same for his choreography. He relied on his dancers to learn what he showed them and reproduce it. There was a stylistic quality to Boris' movement that we began to absorb. We wouldn't always know what steps he wanted, but we knew what he didn't want. He had the ability to make the most of his dancers' abilities."

Gladys Forrester laughs in agreement. "Boris used to block out the patterns first and then ask us to fill in sequences," she recalls. "It was like organized chaos, in that he would say, 'I want you to end here and you there.' And we just threaded our way over, picked up a partner, and there we were!"

"In this reconstruction," Collier continues, "you have a group of dancers who cannot say with any sureness, 'These are the steps Boris created.' Yet, if they saw a sequence of steps, they could say, 'This is, or is not, the sort of thing that could have happened here.'

"All of the other reconstructions have had the original choreographer available. When the choreographer has died, it's up to the original dancers to try to get as close to the original work as possible, which is valid if [the end-product] is referred to as rechoreographed. We agree that today's versions are not original Petipa or Bourmonville—but, in essence, the style is there."

Thanks to the input of Volkoff's students, the re-choreographed *Red Ear of Corn* has some elements that Volkoff talked about including, but never actually had the time or the means to set. "The Indian theme from the first scene is repeated at the end," says Collier. "Boris wanted to show the Indians silhouetted in the background, to tie the two scenes together. He also wanted to show a reprise of Tekakwitha's killing, behind the barn-dance couple (the lucky boy who finds the red ear of corn and his chosen girl), to reflect how her suffering brought happiness to later generations."

Betty Farrally endorses the trend toward the use of videotapes and notation scores. "I imagine that the combination of video and notation works best and fastest," she suggests. "You get the overall impression from the video and the details from the notation score."

Notator Janis Sandles comments: "The beauty of the notation score is that it easily records the structural details, such as entrances and exits, and basic choreography—things that we spent so much time debating and working out. Good scores also include verbal descriptions and images that help the dancers bring the movements to life. The choreographer is a maker of images, so his words can be a springboard for his images. Even if a dancer falters in his steps, if the image has come across, the movements are successful."

"From a film or video, you can't separate the performance from the choreography. It's like eating a cake and reading its recipe! Every time a work is done, it can come out differently. If a basic structure is there in the score, more time can be spent on bringing out the dramatic elements, the characterizations and interplay between characters. The score is like a basic script for a play—what a director and a particular cast do with it is up to them."

This open-minded view is not shared by all. Some dancers and choreographers are protective of their works, fearing that a bad production will reflect on the choreography, not the particular interpretation. Or they are concerned that a different interpretation would change the essence of the work, even if all the structural elements were reconstructed to the letter.

"I would like to see people be able to get access to all the videos of these reconstructions, perhaps through public libraries," says Betty Farrally, "but then, I suppose, people might want to put them onstage. Only reputable people should be able to do that."

Forseeing this concern, *Encore! Encore!* has set up an archive of scores, videotapes and supplementary material that will be available to schools or companies wishing to stage a work.

Paradoxically, the choreographers' rights may be protected more through this process than if the works were not recorded, since documentation is one means of establishing copyright or ownership.

Looking back on the seven-week session, it is difficult to project its overall value or impact. In Daniel Jackson's assessment, "the project will be more meaningful in time, in retrospect. Because we live in a far more technical time, it is hard to know how these pieces will be accepted. Audiences have grown very demanding. They like to see chance choreography and they like to see things of technical brilliance, so there are a lot of barriers that have to be broken down. I think the interest will come in time, although I feel the project had to be done now. It is dealing with something historical, and the importance of it at this particular time is the fact that the project exists, not necessarily that the project be meaningful to everybody across the country. It has to reach out, and people have to see it and consider it for what it is."

The variety of pieces reconstructed certainly gives us an insight into the richness and diversity of the mid-20th-century Canadian dance scene—from the improvisationally based pieces of Renaud, Sullivan, Lima-Dent and, to some extent, Volkoff, to the meticulously structured pieces of Toumine and Lloyd.

"This was certainly a very worthwhile project," reflects Betty Farrally. "People should know how it all started. A lot of people worked very hard in those early days."

David Adams echoes the sentiment. "We want professional dancers of today to realize that important things were going on," he declares. "The dance of today wouldn't exist without the dance of before." •



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The Kirov Ballet in North America

A Triumphant Return

by Hilary McLaughlin

The Kirov Ballet made a long-awaited tour of North America this past summer. It had been 22 years since the company last performed here, and its return was preceded by a legendary reputation for its performances of the classics, as well as rumours of recent disarray in its organization and, of course, its history, since 1961, of spectacular defections.

The company performed three programs in Canada: *Swan Lake*; a mixed program of *Chopiniana* (known in the West as *Les Sylphides*), the "Kingdom of the Shades" scene from *La Bayadère* and excerpts from *Paquita*; and a new work, *The Knight in the Tiger's Skin*, choreographed by the Kirov's artistic director, Oleg Vinogradov.

Performances of *Swan Lake* in Montreal were, as everywhere on the tour, sold out. The corps de ballet is beautifully schooled and beautifully choreographed. The principals in the performance I saw were, by and large, undistinguished by anything other than the inability of the men to land *tours en l'air* with much grace. (In fairness, however, they didn't get a whole lot of interesting things to do.)

Two impressions dominated. First, the Kirov's corps de ballet is all it is cracked up to be. These are the "swanniest" swans you'll ever see—the softest arms, the most translucent shifts in movement, the most uniform ensemble work. The swans are always impressive, but these swans introduced a notion that Odette, rather than being an individual swan who catches the Prince's fancy, is a distillation of all of them, a symbol or an essence—almost a *spectre du cygne*.

The second impression, and a crucial one, of the Kirov's *Swan Lake* is that it didn't make any sense at all. The first act, usually the Prince's birthday gathering, was notable for the more or less permanent absence of the Prince from the stage while various courtiers of the usual variety performed—for him? The pas de trois and other set-piece dances were uninspiring, although the gorgeous set and costumes, as well as the novelty of absorbing the Kirov in action, made them watchable—once.

The Queen was barely in evidence, and the general narrative, culminating in the Prince setting out to hunt, was nonexistent. There was no Benno, though one of the Prince's courtly chums did perform a solo variation with a certain authority. (He was not, however, singled out for identification in the inadequate program.)

The first act featured the Joker, a role that has been erased

from most Western productions of the ballet. It is a mercy that it has been retained in the Kirov's production, for, although his presence throughout the first and third acts was irrelevant to the narrative progression, his variations—principally, spectacular *tours* that accomplished great height, spin, *ballon* and graceful landings—were the key signs of motion in the first act. Vitaly Tsetkov danced the role throughout the four performances in Montreal and showed that the Kirov Ballet can produce men of considerable technique, even if it does not emphasize them.

(Parenthetically—and this even applies to the corps de ballet in some instances—the Kirov's tour refined the distinction between schooling and technique. Principal dancers, in particular, showed weaknesses of technique in comparison with their counterparts in the better Western companies, including the National Ballet of Canada.)

The second act was performed much as we are used to it, with the subtle movement and musicality that are hallmarks of the best productions. The Rotbardt character was not as evident as in other stagings, but his rare and brief appearances, however simply choreographed, created a proper aura of sinister terror.

Marat Daukayev, as the Prince, with fractionally more to do in the second act, more or less got through it without offence, which is about the best I can say for him. He telegraphed anything he was going to do involving rotation—his or his ballerina's—with a semi-demented glare that was, to put it mildly, de-romanticizing.

His Odette, Lyubov Kunakova, however, was moving and effective. Her arms were boneless and so prettily extended that the formidable tautness of her legs was proportioned perfectly to the fear and quivering requisite to a meaningful Swan Queen.

As Odile, Kunakova was powerful, and in the pas de deux she seemed tireless. She is not the actress we have seen in many a *Swan Lake*—the distinctions between Odette and Odile were not particularly effective dramatically—but she was electric in motion. Daukayev's circle of *jetés* was as good as anything he performed in Montreal or Ottawa. He and Kunakova saved an otherwise stultifying third act, whose ethnic *divertissements* were astonishing in their choreographic lethargy.

The fourth act featured black cygnets and swans from Rotbardt's camp, with no apparent dramatic purpose other than to make the stage look a little busier than it does in the all-

white act. A final bit of business was the pulling of a wing from Rotbardt's costume by the Prince. This led to the demise of the evil one, thus allowing the Prince and the Swan Queen to live happily after. (John Cranko once wrote, "Odette and Siegfried are not the kind of lovers who can live happily ever after.")

To sum up, a good, sometimes great, performance of a mish-mash of a *Swan Lake*. Those of us who used to resist Erik Bruhn's version for the National Ballet of Canada were revising, as it were, on the wing. Bruhn's first act is far from my favourite, but its narrative sense supports the structure of the ballet completely and, in comparison with the Kirov's production, brilliantly. His character dances are, without exception, superior to the Kirov's. And Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn, among others in the National Ballet, are quite capable of matching any of the Kirov's principal dancers we saw.

In Ottawa, the company's mixed program opened with *Chopiniana*. Again, the corps de ballet was magical—ethereal, soft, making cinematic dissolves of the movement. Olga Likhovskaya was attractive and strong in the solo variations, particularly the "Prelude", which I have never heard played more slowly on the ballet stage—it was played at the slowest tempo of a concert performance, and Likhovskaya never wavered.

But I could not get the National Ballet's Veronica Tennant out of my mind. Her *petits bourrées* in *Les Sylphides* are, to my

mind, definitive in their softness and speed. Mary Jago was no slouch in the role, either. Apart from the challenge of the dirge-like "Prelude", to which test I have never seen them put, I would pit any of the National's principals against the work of Likhovskaya in this role.

Sergey Vikharev, as the youth, was forgettable.

The "Kingdom of the Shades" scene from *La Bayadère* was the high point of the Kirov's tour. Apart from the most exquisite, unmatched corps de ballet work of the repertoire the company brought—and it should *always* perform this work, *wherever* it goes—the ballet illustrates the grandeur of scale, even more than *Swan Lake*. The endless appearance of the Shades in *arabesque penchée* is awesome—even when the 32 dancers have taken their positions downstage, there is an implication that they are still coming, that it is simply beyond mortal capacity to see them all.

With Konstantin Zaklinsky as Solor, the contrast between mortal and Shade was striking. This male principal can do all we would wish—his height, his ease, his *ballon* and his landings were textbook, with feelings dramatically expressed. Galina Mezentseva was an equally strong Nikea. The "scarf" pas de deux demonstrated a well-balanced combination of ethereality and dance pyrotechnics.

In the excerpts from *Paquita*, the Kirov Ballet pulled out all the stops and, for the first time, gave us colour. This is a very well-dressed company, dancing against ravishing sets.

Paquita is *Paquita*, and the soloists and principals got more chances to show off than had previously been possible. The



Members of the Kirov Ballet's famed corps de ballet in *Swan Lake*.

tempi speeded up, and we saw dancers that Balanchine would have loved. It was the first opportunity for the women to blast their way through *pirouettes* at Indy-500-pace, and they showed they could do it.

The lengthy pas de deux that seemed to consist exclusively of supported *pirouettes* was fundamentally dull choreographically, but relatively tough technically, and it was appropriately romantic.

Marat Daukayev was back to annoy us, as he spotted his turns, but Sergey Vikharev was very forceful in his great quasi-Bournonville leaps in the pas de trois.

Everyone was waiting with bated breath to see *The Knight in the Tiger's Skin*, choreographed by the Kirov's artistic director, Oleg Vinogradov, and what his company would make of it.

The work, set to a score by Alexey Machavariani that could be described as down-market Stravinsky—dissonant, melodic, progressive, dramatic and seemingly like a long *Rite of Spring*—was the revelation of the week in Ottawa. If Vinogradov had only one chance to show us his work, he took the opportunity to show us a lot of it.

This ballet is so dense that it is difficult even to sketch a description of it after one viewing. The plot, from a 12th-century Georgian epic, is convoluted and nigh-on incomprehensible anyway; separated lovers, an evil genius and the Kirov corps de ballet are all that matter.

The setting is primitive, primeval, mediaeval—the exteriors could be set in anyone's *Rite of Spring*; the interiors are the castles you would imagine in a 12th-century Georgian epic.

With few principal roles—two couples and the evil one, danced by Sergey Vikharev, who was outstanding—Vinogradov had many opportunities to set pas de deux. The male-female ones—and there are dozens—were notable chiefly,

Galina Mezentseva and Eldar Aliyev in The Knight in the Tiger's Skin, choreographed by Oleg Vinogradov, artistic director of the Kirov Ballet.



U. Larionova

among many virtues, for intriguing twists in the lifts. As Vinogradov began a move you thought you knew from the standard ballet vocabulary, he would surprise you by adding a new stretch, twist, landing, release—and a different one every time.

For all the barbarity of the setting, the love pas de deux were tender, full of emotion and, in this very Russian milieu and very mediaeval time-zone, both Western and modern. Not many direct influences—nothing derivative—but choreography comfortably and importantly in the mainstream of contemporary thought for modern ballet.

There was a sustained scene between the two male principals that began as an exploratory skirmish and ended up with the tenderness of male bonding, closely woven with supported steps, but devoid of homo-eroticism.

Vinogradov has a narrative gift in his movement that made his *Swan Lake* the more disappointing in its inattention to plot structure. The complex story of *The Knight in the Tiger's Skin*—which most of the audience, under the compelling power of the choreography, probably disregarded—nonetheless moved this ballet along in a linear way that did not leave any emotional confusion.

The corps de ballet had some marvellous things to do. Vinogradov used an enormous male corps, in the first appearance that gave us a chance to see it in any detail, and it is as good as its female counterpart. In a particularly effective set-piece, the heroine was in the centre of a stage-wide line of men dressed as extremely war-like chess pieces. All were in *grand plié en seconde* and sustained the position for the better part of a minute. It was powerful, threatening, formidable.

Finally, with this work, I stopped thinking of the National Ballet of Canada. The Kirov Ballet, which is committed to its guardianship of the classics—and long may it remain so—will always have serious competition in its presentation of them and in response to its approach. But, with *The Knight in the Tiger's Skin*, choreographed by its own director, one could think of no company but the Kirov—which shows that the company is a brilliant component of the international ballet scene of the 1980s, with previously unsuspected abilities in the contemporary idioms of ballet.

Oleg Vinogradov wants to return Balanchine to the Soviet repertoire—that, with this company, would be a consummation devoutly to be wished for—as well as to acquire ballets by Robbins, Petit and Béjart. (Béjart's work would sit very well, indeed, on the Kirov Ballet.)

And it may be hoped that, in time, Vinogradov will set his own work on other companies. If *The Knight in the Tiger's Skin* is indicative of his talent, and not merely his whole bag of tricks in one summary production, he is surely one of the major choreographic forces in the world.

One can only hope that it will not be 22 more years, and another director or two, before we see this company again. In touring North America, and in the warmth of this continent's response to the tour, the Kirov Ballet rejoined its own community and proved that it belongs on the world stage. If this is what the company can produce in relative isolation, the possibilities of its contribution—and its own growth—in a more open cultural environment are as staggering a prospect as can be imagined.

The Kirov Ballet leaves us realizing that we, too, have produced great ballet, but the company challenges us, by the scope of its work, to some excellences that are still only dreamed of. ●

Wynne Shaw:

Memories of an Outstanding Teacher

by Alanna Matthew

"An exceptional person."

On the trail of Wynne Shaw, this phrase recurred in every interview. It has been just over a year since her death, and memories are still green. As Pat Olsen, Shaw's god-child and long-time pupil, put it, "I'm upset just talking about her."

Who was Wynne Shaw, and how did she inspire such devotion in her pupils? A remarkable ballet teacher, certainly, who, at one time, had former pupils in almost all the leading companies. An enthusiast who promoted the appreciation of dance in Victoria, her home-town, for over 50 years.

Winnifred Shaw was born in Yorkshire, England. (The date is a mystery.) She came, with her parents, to reside in Victoria, British Columbia. Neither her parents nor the two sisters born in Canada had any theatrical leanings, but Winnifred Shaw had the urge to dance—she would say later, "almost as soon as I could walk".

In 1927 she came, with a group of teenagers, to Dorothy Wilson, head of the successful School of Russian Ballet in Victoria, and asked her to arrange dances for the girls to perform at St. Mary's Church concerts. Dorrie Wilson, now 93, recalls her early impression of Winnifred: "She was too old, of course, to become a professional dancer, but I could see that she had the makings of an excellent teacher."

Shaw, who later became known as Wynne Shaw, stayed with Wilson, taking classes in classical ballet and other forms of dance, and performing in all her productions. In the historic 1936 *Coppélia*—the first performance of the ballet in North America—she portrayed one of Swanilda's friends.

Wilson entrusted more and more classes to Shaw, who eventually became a full partner in the school. Together they travelled to Seattle for training with Novikoff graduate Lee Foley and to San Francisco to study with Ballets Russes star Adolph Bolm.

This openness to other methods continued when Shaw was running her own school, after Wilson had departed in 1941 to take over June Roper's establishment in Vancouver. Shaw would accompany groups of students to summer schools in Canada, the United States and Europe.

In 1950 she journeyed to England to study the Royal Academy of Dancing teachers' course. From that time on, she based her teaching on this method and entered her pupils in the RAD exams with notable success.



Her students carried off awards and trophies at local music festivals and talent competitions. They also performed in musical productions choreographed by Shaw for the Bastion Theatre in Victoria. And, of course, there was the institution of the annual recital at the Royal Theatre, where the pupils' progress in ballet, tap, acrobatics, mime, musical comedy and jazz was highlighted.

In 1942 Shaw's pupils portrayed Norwegian villagers in *The Commandos Strike at Dawn*, a film shot in the Malahat region of Vancouver Island. Shaw choreographed a wedding polka for the entire cast of the film, which starred Paul Muni and Lilian Gish.

During the 1950s, Shaw was involved with a variety pro-



Mary Ross, Wynne Shaw and Diane Farris at the Wynne Shaw Scholarship party, 1978.

gram for CBC television. She would take a group of girls to Vancouver on the Friday night ferry, rehearse and film, and return to Victoria on Sunday night. (One wonders how the girls kept up with their school work!)

Not only did Shaw's pupils get a solid classical foundation and plenty of performing experience, but they were also taught foot care and the now lost art of darning pointe shoes to prolong their life.

This tutelage paid off. Shaw dancers would make their way in dance companies and all branches of the performing arts. Shaw alumna Gillian Regehr was Miss Canada in 1973. Bill McGrath, a talented late-starter at the age of 17, was accepted as a member of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, as were Pat Olsen, Victor Duret and Beverley Ivings.

Sheila Mackinnon, who now teaches, after a long, distinguished career with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, said, "I couldn't possibly have become a dancer without Wynne. I started late. She would scream at me, 'Keep at it!' "

1978 was a banner year for Wynne Shaw, who, although in her '70s, was still teaching. That May, a scholarship in her name was presented to the most promising young dancer at the Victoria Music Festival. Past and present pupils had been contacted to participate in this scholarship, and replies were received from around the world. Former pupils travelled to Victoria for the presentation ceremony, or sent letters or telegrams of congratulation. The climax occurred when Jennifer Sanders, one of Shaw's own pupils, won the award. It was, said Shaw, "the proudest day of my life".

A few months later she was honoured by the Dance in Canada Association at its annual conference. She was named one of eight dance teachers who had made outstanding contributions to dance in British Columbia; she was also one of nine Canadian dance teachers invited to give classes and lead discussions at the conference.

That same year Sheila Mackinnon returned from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet to teach at the Shaw studio in Victoria. Though reluctant to retire, Shaw suffered from a knee injury sustained in a car accident; the three flights of stairs up to her studio had become an ordeal.

She enjoyed a brief but happy retirement and, after a short illness, died during the summer of 1985.

Her name lives on in the Wynne Shaw Scholarship and in

the work of the many dancers who passed through her hands. Some are now fine teachers; they acknowledge the debt they owe her.

Lynette Kelly, Squamish teacher and RAD examiner, said, "People sent their daughters to Wynne not just for the dance training, but for the whole attitude, a preparation for life. Wynne taught you to stick at things.

"An examiner said to me, after testing [Shaw's] pupils, 'How does she get such quality?' Her dancers had beautiful line, correct placement, lovely arms and feet. It was amazing; for someone who couldn't dance, she could get it out of others."

Diane Farris, now owner of an art gallery, remembers: "Wynne always demonstrated on her feet, but didn't do the jumps. [She] never wore a skirt for class, always black or burgundy pants and a tunic.

"[She was] terribly strict. I called her Miss Shaw until I was in my '30s. You just didn't miss a rehearsal for any reason, or you were out of the performance. Everyone wanted to be in the "white" ballet, a *Sylphides*-type piece, last on the program in the recital. You had to graduate, be worthy of it."

Shaw's high standards extended to dress and behaviour both in and out of class. Hair had to be just so, in a chignon, and on outings the girls wore white gloves. Even though she couldn't sew a stitch herself, Shaw expected the dance costumes and tutus to be perfect—reducing many mothers to tears. When the students danced away with top prizes in festivals, however, Shaw's perfectionism was justified.

"She was like the headmistress of a girls' school," says Diane Farris. "Totally dedicated. She wanted the best for her girls."

As Mary Ross, another Shaw student, remembers, "Wynne's perfectionism was sometimes frustrating to us. We'd want to turn multiple *pirouettes* and fall over, but she'd insist on just one turn until it was perfect!"

Pat Olsen recalls driving her daughters—Shaw's third generation of Olsen pupils!—to class, and the girls changing in the car, frantically doing their hair in in buns, terrified of being late for Shaw.

Respected Vancouver ballet teacher Dianne Miller was a student Shaw used frequently for demonstrations, though she suffered from tension at the time. "Friends saw me in class after I'd been a while with Wynne," she relates, "and said, 'Why are your shoulders up around your ears? They never were before.' "

Under a stern exterior, however, Wynne Shaw had a warm heart. She never regretted not marrying and having children of her own. As Mary Ross says, "We were her whole life. She may have seemed very cold and disciplined to some, but underneath she was extremely warm and loving."

Shaw loved to talk of her pupils' achievements and kept voluminous scrapbooks of photos and clippings. Her correspondence was massive, as she wrote not only to former pupils, but remembered their offspring, as well. This loyalty was echoed by her students, who kept in touch with her to the end.

Two posthumous dedications to Shaw have been *Music for the Ballet Class*, a collection composed by pianist Barney Guthrie, and the inaugural performance of the fledgling Ballet British Columbia in Victoria on April 27, 1986.

Wynne Shaw will be remembered for her gifts as an outstanding ballet teacher who endowed her students with an excellent technique, a life-long love of dance and, most important of all, the will to persevere. ●

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In Review: Books

Isadora

Portrait of the Artist
as a Woman
by Fredrika Blair
McGraw-Hill, 1985

Reviewed by Paul James Dwyer

A reassessment of Isadora Duncan's life as an artist has been long overdue. The many legends surrounding her have concentrated on the sensational aspects of her personality and her tragic death. Her flamboyant style was considered great "copy" and, together with her artistic genius, made her world-famous.

Since her death in 1927, the legends have grown to the point that Duncan has found a place in people's minds not so much as a great dancer, but as a cultural icon.

Fredrika Blair spent 35 years interviewing and researching material for *Isadora*, which is plainly the definitive work on this artist. She has documented the different myths and facts in an accessible form; that she accomplished this in an impartial way is no small achievement.

The book is illustrated with many drawings and photo-

graphs never before published. They further our knowledge of the evocative and expressive art that was Duncan's.

Isadora Duncan's work has been associated mainly with lyrical and poetic movement; it is forgotten that she utilized ugliness and weightiness, as well, for the sake of expression. Her final performance, in July 1927, displayed minimalism, a new art form—an artistic approach utilized in this decade. It becomes clear, after some investigation, that Duncan conveyed the entire range of possibilities of movement explored in Western dance so far in this century.

As late as 1979, Margot Fonteyn wrote that "in the modern sense of the theatre, Isadora was an amateur". I asked Fredrika Blair to comment on this statement. "Any dancer who has performed, taught and formed schools on two continents, as well as maintained an international reputation for three decades," she responded, "cannot be termed 'amateur' in any sense of the theatre."

In "Isadora's Legacy", the final chapter of the book, Blair explores the legacy of this catalytic artist. Her influence, felt in many spheres, has left its mark on physical education, fashion, the arts in general and the women's movement.

This unequivocal and explicit biography is recommended for most collections. •

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In Review: Performances

Vancouver

Reviewed by Susan Inman

Fifteen choreographers from across Canada contributed to *Flipside '86*, Vancouver's most recent effort to showcase and support modern and avant-garde dance.

The care and restraint demonstrated in curating the 18 performances at the Firehall Theatre (April 17-19 and May 22-June 8) resulted in a series of remarkable breadth. This range of vision was organized in such a way that, except for one program when works by five choreographers were crammed into an evening, audiences were able to experience diversity without submitting their sensibilities to marathon viewing. In a city currently operating on performance overload, short, well-paced evenings of dance were a wise—perhaps merciful—organizational choice.

Among the most memorable pieces were several that were especially striking because of their emotional clarity and coherence. All of Tom Stroud's theatricalized dance works, which deftly integrate spoken text, were powerful, but his *Under the Table: Wrestling With Dad* is stunning. This insightful conjuring up of the painful symbiosis between a domineering father and a vulnerable son does much to resuscitate the needy genre of psychological dance-drama.

Equally but differently introspective was Leica Hardy's autobiographical statement *Rhyme, Nor Reason*. Hardy creates an intimate glimpse into a personal history by combining recordings of variously aged voices reciting nursery rhymes, family slides exulting in the budding child-dancer and a stream of reflective movement.

Both Hardy and Francine Boucher, with whom she shared an evening's program, have strong dramatic presences supporting richly compatible movement styles. Even when stationary, each dancer exudes an ongoing emotional vibrancy.

This capacity to suggest emotional nuance is also one of Maureen McKellar's many strengths. As well as dealing with the kind of sombreness evoked by Hardy and Boucher, McKellar also explores dance's power to delight and entertain in *Deuce II*, a vision of kewpie-doll party-girls gone wild. Though the dance (ably performed by McKellar and Laurie Jones) has a menacing undertone, with its overabundance of exaggerated grins and grimaces, it comes across as an irresistible invitation to let go and spin into its supercharged energy field.

In Monique Giard's *Emma Juliet*, McKellar presents a fine portrait of an aging bag-lady. In a faded, ruffled dancing-dress, the angry, forlorn character snatches coins from the floor, grasping at any life sustenance, her collection of resentments unravelled in shreds of monologue.

Emma Juliet deals with its subject sensitively and gently, a telling contrast to Thecla Schiphorst's work *What's in the Bag, Lady*. In this piece, bag-ladies become a thematic device around which the choreographer has the chance to experiment with a potpourri of theatrical gimmicks. A crossword puzzle is illuminated on the backdrop and gradually filled in during the jumbled course of the work, a callow mental

exercise in this tasteless exploitation of human suffering.

The dramatic potential of dance surfaced in all of Donna Snipper's works. *Kokoku*, set to a provocative Laurie Anderson score, freshly utilizes the something-is-under-the-mythically-big-skirt motif. In this piece, amidst dark, brooding images, two beautiful nude women are born and bravely define a firm, steady path across the stage.

Besides these explorations of dance's relation to emotional issues, *Flipside '86* highlighted dance's ongoing fascination with movement itself. Gymnastically trained Debbie Brown presented *Tijuana Aug 34th*, which she and Lynda Raino performed wonderfully. Set against a mural of punk graffiti, two dancers alternate between visions of suffocating inertia and bursts of sharply focused feats of expressive acrobatics. This seemed like an important mining of a movement language still not well-integrated into the mainstream of modern dance.

Acrobatics is just one of the many movement styles cleanly blended into the extraordinarily developed vocabulary of Julie West. Her *ABC*, which closed the *Flipside '86* series, is a whirlwind of solo virtuosity.

This showcase of new dance wonderfully demonstrated that independent choreographers are not only thriving in their creative independence, but are using their freedom to produce works which are surprisingly accessible. Most of the dances have the potential to appeal to more than the small coterie of avant-garde dance devotees who composed most of the audiences.

Calgary & Edmonton

Reviewed by Karen Sherlock

April may have come in like a lamb, but spring was anything but meek on the Alberta dance scene. May, especially, brought out a riotous bloom of dance, mainly of the small, local variety, but with a few exotic imports (including Israel's Bat Dor company), as well—a reassuring sign that dance and struggling dance groups are alive and multiplying in Alberta.

In April the Alberta Ballet Company celebrated resident choreographer Lambros Lambrou's 10th anniversary with the Company. Performances in Calgary and Edmonton carried audiences along the five-year artistic path of this internationally known 30-year-old, illuminating an impressive choreographic breadth and an increasing sophistication in crafting movement.

The earthy, elemental *Sundances*, the earliest of three pieces presented, possesses a pleasing, ingenuous rawness, full of the ritualistic pattern of traditional folk-dance and the sensuality evoked by warm sunshine kissing smooth skin.

In contrast, *Shostakovich Piano Concerto No. 2* is a pure classical ballet, but it avoids slipping into stilted style by a novel use of movement and generous sentiment.

Adieu tells of the very different ways in which very different people deal with what Lambrou calls "perhaps the

Evelyn Hart
and André Lewis
of the
Royal Winnipeg
Ballet in
Nuages,
choreographed
by Jiri Kylian.

David Cooper



most difficult time in one's life". Of the three couples who dance their good-byes—the elegant, the impetuous, the compassionate—principal dancers Mariane Beauséjour and Claude Caron were especially strong in their ability to project emotion.

Unfortunately, *Cinderella*, the Company's last offering of the season, was a disappointment on its opening night in Edmonton. Whether the culprit was the choreography or the dancers or both, artistic director Brydon Paige's work fit the dancers at times as painfully as Cinderella's slipper fit her stepsisters.

In Calgary, Dancers' Studio West presented local choreographer Marc Berezowski and a combined concert with Calgary-based Donna Krasnow and Halifax artists Leica Hardy and Francine Boucher.

Several local groups in Edmonton made their first appearance of the season. An all-new Brian Webb Dance Company returned to Edmonton and Calgary in June, after a long absence (while Webb tackled a master's degree in California), with *Quartet for the End of Time*.

The budding Edmonton jazz group Pizzazz was reincarnated in May with a new name and different dance offering. As artistic director Theresa Ross puts it, Synclavier has moved toward a modern influence and away from "flashy sexual".

Alberta Dance Theatre, formerly Alberta Prairie Flower Dancers, served up an entertaining and generally wacky evening of fun, although some of the choreography by Frank Panych and Marian Sarach suffered from excessive length and lack of direction.

The problems come for this company in attempting self-centred abstract pieces—movement for movement's sake—without having developed the technical ability or performance panache of all its dancers with adequate consistency. The dancers' strength is found in shorter, more rollicking pieces with a touch of saucy satire or dry characterization.

The presentation of *Meeting Place—Spirit House*, the brain-child of fabric artist Evelyn Roth, directed by dancer-choreographer Maria Formolo, with contributions from composer Roger Deegan and numerous Edmonton artists, plunged audiences into a child-like world of fantasy, colour, spectacle and absurdity.

Edmonton saw the return of a long-lost son with the arrival of David Hatch Walker, who presented a concert of tap and modern dance in May, after 21 years away from his home-town. Those years included 10 with Martha Graham's company, which left a distinct mark on his style, and four more building his own company in New York.

Winnipeg

Reviewed by Jacqui Good

How about a dance riddle? Here it comes: When is a premiere not a premiere? The answer: (a) When it's a work in progress; (b) When it's new to Winnipeg, but "old hat" everywhere else; (c) When it's three old dances masquerading as one new work; or (d) All of the above.

For Winnipeg audiences, this spring it was (d).

Last year, when it announced its season, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet promised a world premiere by Brian Macdonald. Good news indeed, since Macdonald was the company's very first resident choreographer, and that collaboration between choreographer and company launched two brilliant reputations.

Since the glory days of the '60s, Macdonald has been the artistic director of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens and the inventive stage director behind many operas and the string of Gilbert and Sullivan hits at the Stratford Festival. The idea of bringing him back to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet—nearly 40 years after he began with the company—was splendid.

The execution, however, was a lot more difficult. Twenty

touring dancers and a roving choreographer had schedules that just didn't coincide often enough for the necessary rehearsals.

And, besides, Expo 86 in Vancouver beckoned. A gala event was planned for August 14, with Canada's three major dance companies (the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the National Ballet of Canada and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens) each presenting a world premiere. (*There's that word again—premiere!*) Brian Macdonald's piece seemed to fit the bill, but not if Winnipeg audiences saw it first. So, on May 8 in Winnipeg, we got *Poem*, a "work-in-progress". What Vancouver gets, on August 14, is *Steps*, a "world premiere", of which *Poem* will form a substantial part.

One local reviewer fell for the "work-in-progress" description so completely that she dismissed *Poem* as woefully under-rehearsed. To my eye, however, it was the most assured ensemble work on the program, infused with an opening-night electricity and inspired by the presence of the choreographer.

Handel's *Faithful Shepherd Suite* provides a wonderfully pastoral atmosphere, together with a stunning set, with leafy projections, by Josef Svoboda. Susan Benson (Macdonald's Stratford collaborator) adds beautifully coloured Renaissance costumes. The look and sound is Arcadian romance. Imagine the romantic bits from *Romeo and Juliet*, with a comic couple thrown in for good measure. But there's no plot here—just buoyant music, lyrical movement and faint echoes of trumpets on battlements.

The whole work, *Steps*, will make it onto a Winnipeg stage in October. That's (a).

(b) showed up on the same Royal Winnipeg Ballet spring program. *Nuages* is a pas de deux that has been a big hit on tour since January, but only made it to Winnipeg in May. It was worth the wait. Just as *Belong* was a signature piece for Evelyn Hart and the company in the past, *Nuages* should be it for the next few years.

It's a recent acquisition from choreographer Jiri Kylian, who apparently reshaped the work especially for Hart and her partner, André Lewis. The music is moody and impressionistic Debussy, but what Kylian and the dancers do with it is astounding. The movements are completely unlike those of classical ballet. Evelyn Hart seems without substance; she floats and melts and, in some inexplicable way, becomes the music. *Nuages* is, quite simply, magic.

As for (c), it came a little later in the month, as Contemporary Dancers Canada held its second Festival of Canadian Modern Dance. This has become an extremely popular event, with long lineups and sold-out performances.

This year the artists included members of EDAM, Dance-makers, Desrosiers Dance Theatre and the Danny Grossman Dance Company. All of them, except the embarrassingly inept EDAM company, provided exhilarating programs, with Grossman's *Endangered Species* and *Suburban Tango*, by Contemporary Dancers Canada's Tedd Robinson, particularly pointed and dramatic.

The Festival opened with a strange premiere. Michael Montanaro called the performance of his work *Dreams* "a Canadian dance first". He had set three different works on three different companies over the last couple of years, but had always seen them as part of a larger whole. So, for the Festival he brought together Contemporary Dancers Canada, Le Groupe de la Place Royale and his own Montanaro Dance, and called it "a dream-come-true".

It was a large undertaking that proved a bit too large. Each

section is a substantial work and, because Montanaro wanted to have common threads running through all three, there is a good deal of repetition of both movement and imagery. Interesting as these are, two-and-a-half hours and two intermissions are too much. The choreographic invention ran out before the music.

On the other hand, there was a lot to be impressed by, especially Montanaro's ability to make three different styles and sensibilities merge into a reasonably unified work.

The most conservative and upbeat section is perfect for the long-established Groupe de la Place Royale, which makes its home in good, grey Ottawa. A sombre middle section is the most dramatic and overtly political, quite in keeping with the theatrics of Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers Canada. Montanaro's own company is given the largest and most frenetic section—ideal for the high-voltage Montrealers.

It isn't the high-tech video tricks, the polemic or the on-stage poetry that I remember from *Dreams*; instead, it is the incessant rhythm of the piece, the undercurrent of violence and nightmare, and, especially, the final non-stop frenzy of Michael Montanaro himself, surrounded by six whirling women. Nothing less than one of those terrible dreams where everything is speeded up, and you can't wake up, no matter how much you want to.

So it was (d)—all of the above. A pretty good spring at that.

Ottawa

Reviewed by Hilary McLaughlin

In an Ottawa dance season that contained two anniversaries of significance—the 20th of Le Groupe de la Place Royale, the fifth of Theatre Ballet of Canada—and several disturbing aspects—the financial difficulties of Ottawa Dance Theatre and the decision by Michele Danesh to uproot and close Ballet Shayda—the stellar memory of the year is, nonetheless, the glittering season mounted by the National Arts Centre.

Good seasons at the Centre are becoming so predictable that one runs out of superlatives, but this one was the culmination, to date, of Yvan Saintonge's tenure—building on Ted Demetre's foundations and Donald MacSween's enthusiastic support—as the *magister ludi* of dance presentation in Canada.

(MacSween has stated that he will not renew his contract as director-general of the National Arts Centre when his term expires next spring; it is to be hoped that his successor will continue to support dance programming to the extent that MacSween has. In the dance community of Ottawa—and those cities whose dance fans now have to flock here if they want to see the best programming available in the eastern half of the continent—his presence will be missed.)

This season had it all. It began with a startling festival of international modern dance and ended with three of the most desirable ballet plums available in the world—the Stuttgart Ballet, the Kirov Ballet and, in its only appearance in eastern North America, La Scala Ballet [to be reviewed in the Winter 1986-87 issue of *Dance in Canada*]. In between, there were visits by the three principal Canadian ballet companies and a dazzling sampler of what counts, provokes and entertains in ballet and modern dance throughout the world.

The international festival last fall was a gamble—the National Arts Centre booked companies with little or no profile

in Canada, suffered (and weathered) cancellation problems, and accomplished what Saintonge fervently and wickedly hoped for: stimulated, mixed response from an audience that grew.

The festival opened with a pair of well-received performances by Merce Cunningham's company. Also featured was Edouard Lock's *La La La*, a last-minute replacement for two inevitable European cancellations. (Saintonge later remarked that Lock and his company were probably the greatest beneficiaries of the festival exposure, in that they drew an audience outside the one they usually attract.)

The overwhelming success of Sankai Juku in formerly conservative Ottawa prompted Saintonge to bring Muteki Sha, a female Buto company, to the festival, and this was the earliest success of the week. As in Ottawa's previous experience with this still strangely alien dance form, the impressions were of profound and intense stillness and motion, a painful wringing of emotion from minimal but deeply sculptured movement.

England sent Second Stride, whose forte is dance-drama. The company is said to have better material in its repertoire than we saw in Ottawa. One hopes so. A piece called *Silent Partners*, by co-director Siobhan Davies, was fairly mainstream modern dance, while her partner Ian Spinks' tribute to Alfred Hitchcock's film *Notorious*, entitled *Further and Further Into Night*, while not without interest, was too talky and not mobile enough to sustain its length. In a way, it was anti-dance, or, perhaps, to dance what Graham Greene's "entertainments" are to his novels. The whole thing had a *Casablanca*-cum-Greene-thriller feel to it. One begins to sigh for the days when dancers danced and actors talked.

Tanztheater Wuppertal, Pina Bausch's company, made a spectacular Ottawa debut with *Kontakthof*, a lengthy dance-hall piece larded with repetition, singing and speaking by dancers. Thoroughly avant-garde European dance.

All the companies that performed at the festival shared one thing: extremely imaginative lighting—quite new to the modern dance stage as we usually see it lit in this country by Canadian or American companies. The lighting was a breakthrough revelation, and even the poorer companies can learn from every one of the festival participants.

As well, all the visiting troupes used more sets than we are used to—and used them with flair and without restriction.

The Canadian companies were not at their most vital this season, although not for lack of trying. The National Ballet of Canada brought Robert Desrosiers' *Blue Snake*, whose sets were fun and whose choreography was, to be charitable, unmemorable. (It is always interesting, once one has absorbed the impact of striking non-dance material in a ballet, to start trying to conceive of the movement without the set. Not entirely fair, but interesting.)

In a program that also included John McFall's *Components* and Constantin Patsalas' *Canciones*, each of which has its strengths, the mix was somehow wrong, and none of the three pieces served the company as well as the dancers served the works.

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens brought James Kudelka's *Dracula*, which I wish they would drop from the repertoire. After its initial tableau, it, too, drops into *kitsch*—and without sufficient interesting movement to bring it off. I'm not sure that Kudelka pulled off *Hedda* [an earlier work for the National Ballet] either, but it seems to me that that effort at distillation worked better than this noble but *manqué* attempt at the essence of the Transylvanian legend.

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet, which also presented its all-

too-rarely-seen (in Ottawa) production of *Nutcracker*, had a better mixed program. The highlight was Jiri Kylian's *Nuages*, featuring Evelyn Hart, partnered by André Lewis, at what she does best—the romantic pas de deux. The romantic modern pas de deux, I might add. She looked far better in this lovely, flowing piece than in the *adagio* from *Swan Lake*, where her timing was somewhat idiosyncratic and her ever-soft pointe shoes contrived to spoil her line.

And then there was the Stuttgart Ballet, which brought John Cranko's *Taming of the Shrew* and, along with its younger stars, the legendary partners Marcia Haydée and Richard Cragun.

We may never again see Haydée and Cragun in a full-length ballet on this continent, and, whether we do or not, this was *the* performance of the season. You would never have guessed that they were not both still in their '20s. Haydée must be close to the *assoluta* these days; she has the remarkable stage presence, even in stillness, that demonstrates it more than doing 32 *fouettés* perfectly ever could. And Cragun looks as if he will go on forever.

Even in a town that had two programs and four performances of the Kirov Ballet, the Stuttgart Ballet, led by Haydée and Cragun, was the night to remember. Members of the audience knew that they had seen *something*, and they showed it—not even the response to the glorious opening night of the Kirov Ballet was as warm, as considered or as informed.

The Kirov Ballet's performances at the National Arts Centre [reviewed elsewhere in this issue] did, however, demonstrate that Ottawa does have that most devoutly-wished-for element, an informed audience. In his year of triumphs, it is one of Yvan Saintonge's greatest achievements, and, although he takes his satisfaction in reaction of any sort, he must surely be proud of this.

Dance has been established here, and it has taken root.

Toronto

Reviewed by Paula Citron

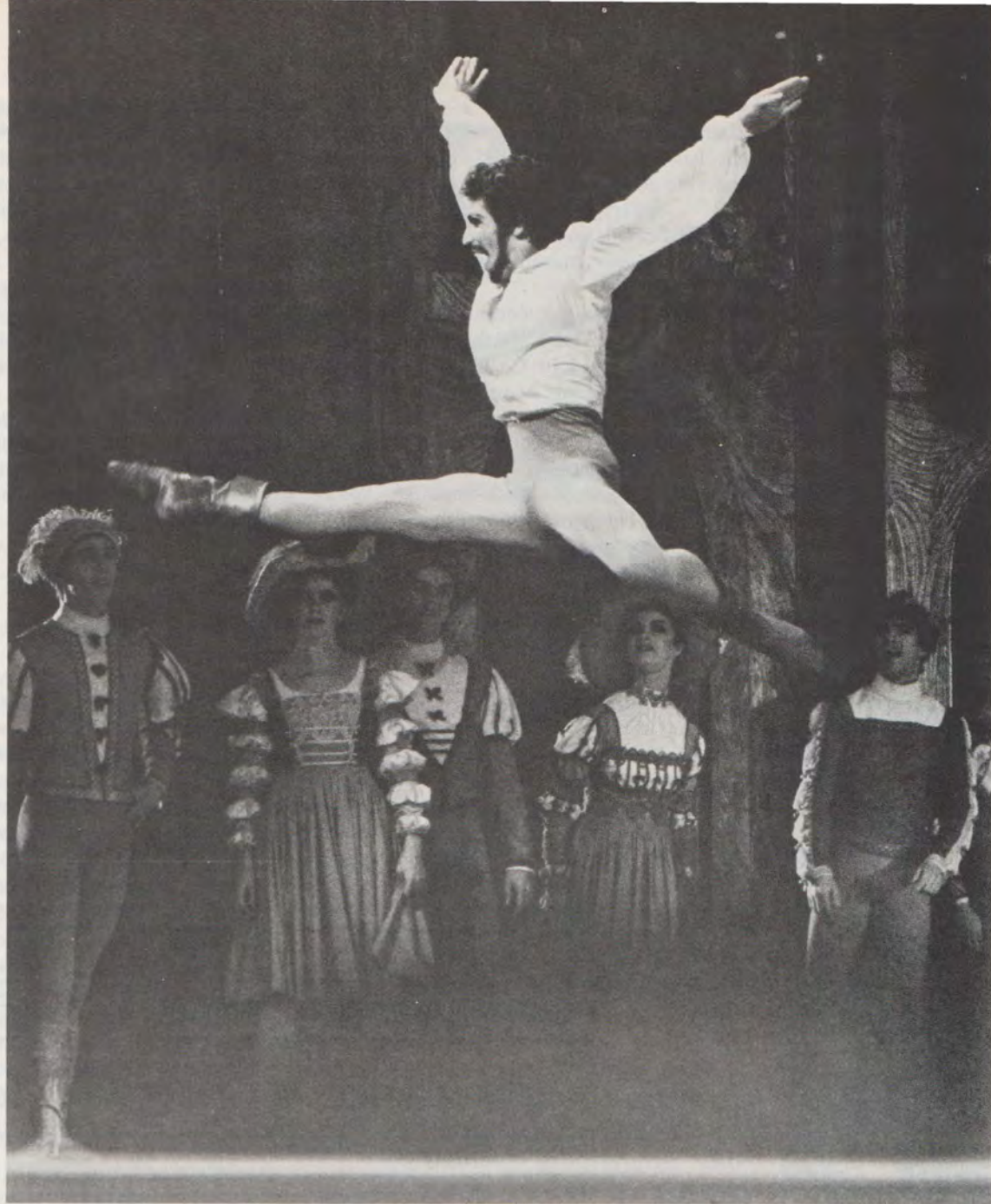
This spring members of the National Ballet of Canada participated in two tribute performances—one to artistic director Erik Bruhn, who died of lung cancer in April; the other to conductor John Goss, who was killed in a car accident in January. Both programs were incredibly moving, each in its own way.

The Bruhn evening, at Toronto's O'Keefe Centre, was produced on a lavish scale. The first part of the program included excerpts from works Bruhn had brought into the repertoire during his tenure as artistic director.

This was followed by reminiscences from members of the company and the international dance community. A veritable "who's who" of the dance world spoke—Celia Franca, Betty Oliphant, William Littler, Veronica Tennant, William Como, Helgi Tomasson, Flemming Flindt and Frank Andersen among them.

Film clips of some of Bruhn's remarkable performances—including excerpts from *La Sylphide*, *Giselle*, *Etudes* and *Don Quixote*—were screened.

The most eloquent tributes came, near the end of the evening, from Natalia Makarova and Carla Fracci. Makarova, who was supposed to speak, had asked if, instead, she might dance her tribute—*The Dying Swan*. Fracci danced the opening from *La Sylphide* with the spirit of Erik Bruhn—an empty



Richard Cragun as Petrucchio in the Stuttgart Ballet's production of John Cranko's *Taming of the Shrew*.

chair onstage where James is supposed to sit. Then she was joined by Fernando Bujones; together they danced a pas de deux from the ballet.

The evening concluded with mezzo-soprano Janice Taylor singing Gustav Mahler's *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*, a favourite of Bruhn's.

The John Goss tribute, at the Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Opera Centre, began with performances by students from the National Ballet School, the place where the conductor, working as a piano accompanist, first fell in love with dance.

The second part of the program included remarks by members of the National Ballet of Canada. This was followed by performances of excerpts from some of his favourite works, as well as works whose premieres he had conducted.

Then members of the National Ballet Orchestra spoke, after which Canadian Opera Company Soprano Irena Welhasch sang Richard Strauss' *Four Last Songs*.

Karen Kain then placed a bouquet of flowers on the empty conductor's stand.

It is the nature of these tributes to go behind the public person to reveal the private person. One realized the impact Erik Bruhn had on the dance world, but, as well, there were wonderful stories that demonstrated his wicked sense of humour and shining humanity. John Goss was shown to be a man of principle and integrity.

There was an unexpressed undercurrent present at both of these events—the feeling that the National Ballet of Canada was moving into unknown times and an unknown future.

Three major international companies came through Toronto at the end of the season, and a more diverse group would be difficult to find.

The Stuttgart Ballet came for four performances of John Cranko's *Taming of the Shrew*. All the elements that Cranko is noted for are in this ballet—the wonderfully drawn characters, the clearly defined story-line. It was fascinating to see the company on which Cranko had actually set his works.

I saw two different casts perform *The Taming of the Shrew* and it is interesting to note how the ballet differed with each cast. Each dancer brought his or her own interpretation to a

role, even to performing different hand movements.

Marcia Haydée and Richard Cragun, as Kate and Petrucchio, were spectacular. The ballet had been created specifically for Cragun, with Petrucchio as a vehicle to show off his talents. Haydée is a marvel.

Annie Mayet and Randy Diamond, in the same roles, were equally enjoyable, although less mature and more rambunctious.

The Stuttgart Ballet is a company with tremendous depth in its ranks and a wonderful *esprit de corps*. To see this ballet was to feel, once again, the loss caused by John Cranko's untimely death and to wonder what other gems he might have produced.

Bat Dor is a Graham-based Israeli modern dance company of interesting dancers and indifferent choreography. Surprisingly, two of the works on the program—a mish-mash of styles—were by Hans van Manen. The more successful was *Songs Without Words*, a lushly romantic work for four couples.

It took Oscar Araiz' *Cantares*, an excerpt from *Iberica* for nine women, to elevate the evening. The work seemed to cover a whole range of female emotions, with a solo dancer balanced against the others.

In and Out had the entire company stuffed into three upright boxes from which they came out periodically to dance. The women were in pointe shoes and seemed uncomfortable. If the work had a purpose, the meaning eluded me. It was an odd closing piece, because it didn't build up to any climax and ended the program with a whimper, not a bang.

In all, I would like to see this company come back with a stronger program, because the dancers deserve better.

Sankai Juku, the Buto company from Japan, defies description. How can one write about a performance to which one responds on a completely emotional level? Buto is a post-war phenomenon that grew out of the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It completely rejects traditional Japanese movement, attempting to find other forms of expression to detail the plight of man. It is dark, nihilistic and gut-wrenching.

The work the company brought was *Kinkan Shonen*, theoretically about the origins of life and death. But Sankai Juku cannot be taken on a literal or even symbolic level; one has to be assailed by the images and intuitively grasp meaning.

The performance captures the magnitude of time and man's puny existence. On the one hand, the audience endures snail-like movement and monotonous music; on the other, we are stretched to the breaking point and given a glimpse into the darker regions of our souls.

Halifax

Reviewed by Alice Frost

Choreographer Eric Emmanuele, based in New York, West Germany and Halifax, was the first to be presented at *Independance '86*, sponsored by the Eye Level Gallery in May. In the sometimes startlingly dramatic and clever use of lights employed throughout his dance series *Little Lights*, *Spot Lights*, *Side lights* and *Neon Lights*, themes emerged—inadvertently?—of a narcissism and sexuality reminiscent of the decadence of pre-World War II German cabaret.

I wasn't sure if Emmanuele, in two robot-styled dances,

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was trying to say something about the dehumanization of humankind, or if he intended to do show-biz pieces. In any case, the mylar-wrapped duet and the sequined solo lacked the speed and glide of breakdancing, or the wit and physical precision of a Murray Louis.

Emmanuele's background is in television, modelling and industrial shows, and the program he chose to present was more suitable for nightclubs than the concert stage.

Sheilagh Hunt's *Splicing Dice* spanned the entire first half of the final two evenings of *Independance '86*. Hunt walks through a grid of floor lights, accompanied by the sound of a heart beat. Arriving at a rack of clothes, she puts on an oversized dress and a pair of high-heeled shoes. Her ankles wobble as she walks, and the audience laughs. The piece ends with Hunt sadly putting on a dress and a pair of shoes that fit, and walking back through her grid of floor lights.

In between, she hands audience members an oversized die to toss back onstage. As numbers on the die turn up, sections of the dance unfold—sections like Hunt singing "Someday My Prince Will Come"; crying and pounding her fists on the floor; preparing and offering coffee to the audience; dancing with her coffee cup.

There is also home-movie quality film footage of Hunt as a child and, as an adult, doing things like having a party with her friends.

The choreographer's point of view shifts unaccountably from poignancy to silliness, and reminds me of the post-modern ferment of the '60s, in that it concerns itself with breaking down the barriers between performer and audience; does away with the rules of classical modern dance composition; and incorporates film, voice and theatre. This cozily rambling piece needs better definition and a reduction in the breathtaking number of purely personal references.

Gwen Noah's *Gorgeous Dresses*, *Gorgeous Girls* had an appealingly emotional and kinetic coherence. Her quick movements and violent gestural language, often seen in dance of the '80s, was tempered with a welcome sensuousness and vulnerability. It's a dance I would like to see again.

Other performers at *Independance '86* were Lee Saunders (Moncton), Elaine Calgary (Calgary), Tom Stroud (Toronto), Julie West (Ottawa and New York), Christianne Miron (Montreal) and Jest in Time Theatre (Halifax).

The first New Choreographers Competition, sponsored by the Dance in Canada Association, Atlantic Region, and Maritime Telephone and Telegraph, inspired would-be choreographers to take the plunge.

The show was a breath of fresh air. How reassuring to know that, just beneath the surface, new ideas are sprouting.

Nova Dance Theatre's recent spring season at the Sir James Dunn Theatre illustrated some of the drawbacks of trying to create and excel in a small artistic community. The company has experienced a fair turn-over of dancers in the past two years. While some have left for personal reasons or because of injuries, others have left because their contracts are poorly funded and are of short duration. When contracts run out, dancers are faced with trying to earn a dance-related living in a city where both performing and learning opportunities are scarce. These factors make it difficult to attract top talent to the province.

And many of the dancers who arrive here don't stay. Artistic director Jeanne Robinson is then faced with finding new dancers, improving their technique, teaching them the repertoire and rehearsing them into a coherent ensemble. This spring, the company was well-rehearsed, but generally of a



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semi-professional calibre. If the dancers stick around, they'll improve, but only so far. Even Louise Hoyt, who improved with the company for four years, reached a plateau that didn't mark the fulfillment of her potential as a dancer. Most of Robinson's dancers look as if they don't work hard enough in enough classes taught by enough gifted teachers.

And the choreography is suffering from the same malaise. Robinson's *Grecia* depicts people at the ocean. Its delicate and successful imagery—sand falling through fingers, the sensuous spinning of arms and legs as if through water—drifts off into non-specific, well-worn movement phrases.

Indices of Refraction exhibits Robinson's great strength as a choreographer—her intense theatrical imagery. The dance was inspired by the novel and film *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, a true story of three young women who went on a picnic. Only one returned; 20 years later, she is still trying to remember what happened that day.

On a dark stage, in a pool of yellow light, Robinson stands in front of a photograph of the missing friends. She wipes her brow and is almost rigid with tension. Her acting is tremendous; she makes the nightmare real and unforgettable. In an adjacent pool of light, the friends, in ghost-like dresses, move as if lost forever.

The total theatrical image—the lighting, set and costumes—is gripping, but the dancing is weak. While Robinson's immobilizing anguish never ceases to fascinate, the chorus of women soon moves in a predictable way, and one wishes they would add to the drama by either deepening it or moving it forward.

Leica Hardy has been contributing to the company's repertoire for the past two years. *Shakin' the Blues*, which received its premiere this spring, consists of popular-styled dances and melodramatic antics set to the '30s and '40s love songs of Ruth Etting.

Last on the program was *Anthemological Persuasion*, a collaboration between Jeanne Robinson and Francine Boucher. The work is a satirical look at patriotic behaviour. The dancers yawn through "O Canada", eat cheezies, turn chairs into bunkers and legs into machine guns. The bright costumes excite the eye, but the choreography is a thin gag—and the audience loves it.

In many ways, dance in Halifax seems to have reached a plateau. For the city's size, dance activity and audience interest appear robust.

I do wish, however, that more choreographers were like Robinson, at least sometimes trying to say something as if it were important to them. Too much of the choreography contributed to Nova Dance Theatre—or done independently—strikes me as weak or facile in conception, vague in communication and amateurish in execution. There are too many entertaining, "dancey" pieces—like *Shakin' the Blues*—that lack inventiveness.

When art isn't the aim, artfulness should be. There is a lot of exposure to great theatrical dancing on television and in movies today. Choreographers can't get away with anything less than terrific production values and imaginative, well-executed dances.

A smaller city can't change the fact that its less sophisticated dance audience is easily pleased and relatively undemanding, or that there is no competition from other companies to inspire a sharper edge. What is needed, then, is gifted teacher-choreographers to help our talented, hard-working dance creators to find greater power and clarity of vision, and a vocabulary uniquely suited to communicate it. ●

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

Montreal artist **Ginette Laurin**, artistic director and choreographer of O Vertigo danse, is the 1986 winner of the **Jean A. Chalmers Choreographic Award**. Joan Chalmers presented the Award to her at the Dance in Canada conference, held in Vancouver in August.

The Jean A. Chalmers Choreographic Award, administered by the Ontario Arts Council, is a national award presented annually to honour professional choreographers who have displayed outstanding creative abilities in dance.

Susan Cohen, dance officer and coordinator of the Chalmers Family Fund at the Ontario Arts Council, reported that the Award jury found Laurin's work showed "enormous energy and vitality. She is a choreographer of great originality who found her own voice right from the beginning."

The Vancouver-based **Goh Ballet Society** played host to two international visitors this past summer. Madame Qu Hao, director of the Beijing Ballet Academy, taught a course for dance teachers at the Goh Ballet Academy.

England's Patricia Rianne spent six weeks in Vancouver, setting her new work, *The Prince of the Pagodas*, on the Goh Ballet Company and teaching intermediate and advanced ballet classes at the Academy.

Arrow Lakes Dance has announced plans to tour British Columbia this fall. The company is scheduled to appear in Cranbrook, Oct. 20-22; Golden, Oct. 23-24; Prince George, Nov. 17-21; Quesnel, Nov. 24-28; and Williams Lake, Dec. 1-5.



Andrew Oxenham

The 1986 Dance Ontario Award was presented to Janet Baldwin and, posthumously, to Boris Volkoff. Janet Baldwin is shown receiving the Award from Herbert Whittaker, last year's recipient.

Anna Wyman Dance Theatre has announced performance plans for the 1986-87 season. The company is scheduled to tour Eastern Canada this fall, with appearances in Quebec (Baie Comeau, Oct. 27; Matane, Oct. 28; Rimouski, Oct. 29; Rivière-du-Loup, Oct. 30) and Ontario (London, Nov. 7-8; Hamilton, Nov. 10).

The company's Vancouver-area appearances this season are scheduled to include a performance at the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse, Nov. 30; two concerts, with members of the Anna Wyman School of Dance Arts, at the North Vancouver Centennial Audito-

rium, Dec. 17-18; a choreographic workshop at the Firehall Theatre, March 5-7; and performances at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, April 24-25.

Repertory Dance Company of Canada has announced additions to its repertoire for the 1986-87 season. Lar Lubovitch will stage one of his works, and Danny Grossman will create a new piece for the company.

Two new works by artistic director Judith Marcuse, set to music by Claudio Monteverdi and R. Murray Schafer, will be presented during the company's fall performances at Vancouver's Queen



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Elizabeth Theatre, Nov. 21-22. Live accompaniment for these works will be provided by the Vancouver Chamber Choir and members of Masterpiece Music.

David Hatch Walker, a former soloist with the Martha Graham Dance Company, joins Repertory Dance Company of Canada this season. Other new members are Debbie Wilson, Andrea Lougheed and apprentices Cassel Miles and Jack Horne.

Gilbert & Sullivan, An Opera/Dance Spectacular was scheduled for performances in Edmonton and Calgary during September. It was a major collaborative effort by the **Alberta Ballet Company** and the Edmonton Opera.

Featured were the Edmonton Opera's production of *Trial by Jury*, a one-act operetta, and the Alberta Ballet Company's production of *Pineapple Poll*, John Cranko's ballet set to a score comprised of selections from the Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire.

Clinton Rothwell, choreographer, teacher and former principal dancer with the San Francisco Ballet, the Dutch National Ballet and the National Ballet of Canada, has been appointed artistic director of the **Edmonton Festival Ballet**. Maria Bokor remains as associate artistic director.

Edmonton Festival Ballet specializes in the presentation of performances and lecture-demonstrations in communities and schools throughout Western Canada, and is affiliated with the Edmonton School of Ballet.

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet has announced its performance schedule for the remainder of 1986. In addition to its home seasons at the Centennial Concert Hall in Winnipeg, Oct. 8-12 and Dec. 26-30, the company will tour Ontario this fall, with engagements in Sault Ste Marie, Oct. 25-26; Toronto, Oct. 30-Nov. 1; Windsor, Nov. 4-5; Kitchener, Nov. 6; Ottawa, Nov. 7-8; and Thunder Bay, Nov. 12-13.

Repertoire for the Winnipeg performances is scheduled to include *Firebird*, *Steps*, *Tschaikovsky Pas de deux* and excerpts from *The Sleeping Beauty* (October), and *The Big Top*, *Le Jazz Hot*, *Nuages* and *Paquita* (December).

Repertoire announced for the tour includes *Family Scenes*, *Belong*, *Façade*, *Steps*, *Tschaikovsky Pas de deux*, *Nuages*, *Symphony in D*, *Song of a Wayfarer* and *Pulcinella Variations*.

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Francis Longheed

Students from Belleville's Quinte Dance Centre had an opportunity to take class with the Kirov Ballet during the company's performances at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa in June. Vladimir Semyenov, a ballet master with the Kirov Ballet, is shown in class with students from the Centre.

Changes in the roster of the **National Ballet of Canada** have been announced by associate artistic directors Valerie Wilder and Lynn Wallis.

Evelyn Hart, principal dancer with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, joins the company this season as resident guest artist.

Principal dancer Raymond Smith and corps de ballet member Susan Dromisky have returned to the company after a year's leave-of-absence spent with London Festival Ballet. First soloist Amalia Schelhorn has also rejoined the company, following an extended maternity leave.

Four National Ballet School graduates have joined the corps de ballet: Jennifer Fournier, Stephen Legate, Anthea Morgan and Brendan Collins.

Jeremy Ransom and Serge Lavoie have taken a year's leave-of-absence—Ransom to dance with the Zurich Ballet, Lavoie with London Festival Ballet.

Theatre Ballet of Canada has announced plans for its 1986-87 season.

Following a series of performances in the Ottawa region during October, the company will begin a November tour of the American Mid-West, with appearances in North and South Dakota, Illinois and Michigan. The dancers will also perform in Saskatoon, Spruce Grove, Brandon and a number of Ontario communities—including Deep River, Timmins, Elliot Lake, Kirkland Lake, Belleville and Kingston.

A choreographic workshop is scheduled in Ottawa during the first part of 1987. In March the company will begin a tour of the eastern United States.

This season new works by Julie West, Lynne Taylor-Corbett, Danny

Grossman and David Allan will be added to the repertoire.

The National Ballet tours Eastern Canada this fall. Performances are scheduled in Fredericton, Sept. 23-24; Charlottetown, Sept. 26-27; Sackville, Sept. 29; Halifax, Oct. 1-4; Corner Brook, Oct. 6; St. John's, Oct. 8-11; and Gander, Oct. 12.

Repertoire announced for the tour includes *Don Quixote*, *Swan Lake* (Act I, Scene 2), *Transfigured Night*, *Hot House*, *Khatchaturian Pas de deux*, *On Occasion*, *Les Sylphides*, *Angali*, *Etc!* and *Reminiscence*.

The National Tap Dance Company of Canada celebrates its 10th anniversary with a gala season at Toronto's Premiere Dance Theatre, Oct. 14-16.

New works to celebrate the first decade have been commissioned from John Stanzel, Paul Draper and William Orlowski, the company's artistic director. A highlight of the gala season will be *Tapelmusik*, a new work created by Brian Macdonald in collaboration with Orlowski.

Dancemakers will tour Northern Ontario in October, with performances scheduled in Atikokan, Oct. 19; Fort Frances, Oct. 20; Emo and Rainy River, Oct. 21; Ear Falls and Red Lake, Oct. 23; Thunder Bay, Oct. 24; Sioux Lookout, Oct. 26; Dryden, Oct. 27; and Ignace, Oct. 28.

Repertoire for the tour will include *Angel Food*, choreographed by artistic director Carol Anderson; *Boys Will be Men*, by company member Conrad Alexandrowicz; and *Desperate Fantasies*, by Susan Cash.

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There are two new members of Dancemakers this season. Dwight Shelton, former rehearsal director with Otawa Dance Theatre and dancer with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, joins the company as rehearsal director and per-

former. Andrea Smith returns to Dancemakers after 10 years in New York, where she was a member of the Martha Graham Dance Company and performed with many independent artists.

They join company members Tatiana Alexandrovna, Danielle Belec, Julia Sasso, Conrad Alexandrowicz, Sylvain Brochu, Philip Drube and Carol Anderson.

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens has announced changes to the roster for the 1986-87 season.

Adam Miller, formerly with Pacific Northwest Ballet and the Boston and Pennsylvania Ballets, joins the company as a principal dancer.

There are two new demi-soloists: Jeffrey Marc Rockland, from the Atlanta Ballet, and Diane Partington, from Ballet du Nord in Croix, France.

Pascal Berlie joins the corps de ballet. He formerly danced with companies in Zurich and Basel, Switzerland.

There are three new apprentices this season: Nathalie Buisson, from the Ecole Supérieure de Danse du Québec; Yvonne Cutaran; and Andrew Giday.

Susan Stewart, Anne-Marie Chayet Martineau, Tamara Chaplin Senez and Yseult Lendvai have left the company.

For the first time, a Canadian regional theatre is presenting a dance company as part of its theatre season. **Theatre New Brunswick** has announced that the **National Tap Dance Company** will perform *The Best of Tap: Fascinating Rhythms*, an evening of music, dance and theatre that features the work of four choreographers, including Brian Macdonald, across New Brunswick, Nov. 15-Dec. 8.

The Company will appear in Fredericton, Nov. 15-22; Edmunston, Nov. 24; Campbellton, Nov. 25; Bathurst, Nov. 26; Chatham, Nov. 27; Moncton, Nov. 28-Dec. 2; Sussex, Dec. 3; Saint John, Dec. 4-6; and St. Stephen, Dec. 8. •



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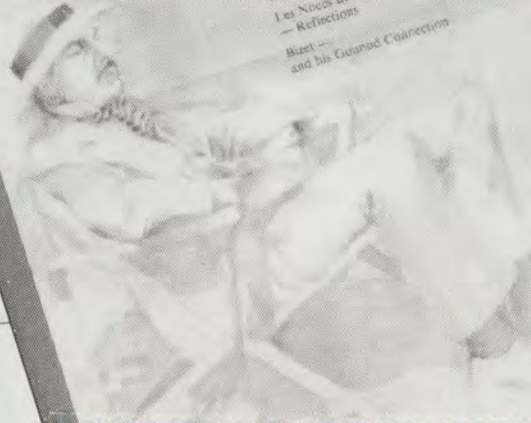
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