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# Editorial!



I won't be the only one glad to see the back of 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating effect on the lives

of everyone, including those working in the dance profession, but with the promise of better times on the horizon with an effective vaccine, let's hope life will become a little more certain in the coming months, and that we will, finally, be able to go back to some kind of normality.

The performing arts are indeed showing signs of being able to make a return to the stage this month in the UK, with a number of West End musicals reopening in London. As

the country is still divided into different tiers of lockdown, however, some enterprising companies, such as Birmingham Royal Ballet, sadly had to cancel hoped-for seasons over the Christmas holidays, proving how difficult it is at the moment for them to plan ahead.

We don't escape the pandemic this month in *Dancing Times*, with reports from France and the US on how dance is coping with COVID-19, but we do learn from Rebecca Haw how it is still possible for dance graduates to audition for jobs. Lastly, I would like to apologise to subscribers whose December magazine arrived very late. Everything was printed and sent out from the printers on schedule; unfortunately, we were all let down by the postal service.

JONATHAN GRAY

## Contributors

### Kristyna Kashvili

transitioned from dance to photography with the same passion and eye for detail. She has collaborated with Thiago Soares on *DUELO* in Lisbon, and the *Thiago Soares e Amigos* tour of Brazil. Other commissions include Moscow City Ballet and the *Brendan Cole Live and Unjudged* UK tour.

### Gavin McCaig

is a Scottish dancer who performs with Northern Ballet. He trained at English National Ballet School and, prior to this, The Dance School of Scotland. He has written several articles for *Dancing Times*.

### Daniel Pratt

was born in south London, and trained with Janie Farrance. He attended The Royal Ballet School Associates Programme, and then Central School of Ballet. He is a dancer with Sarasota Ballet and

has written a number of articles for *Dancing Times*, including a regular online blog, Talking dance.

### Marianka Swain

is a freelance writer and social dancer at several London venues. You can find more of her work at [mkmswain.com](http://mkmswain.com).

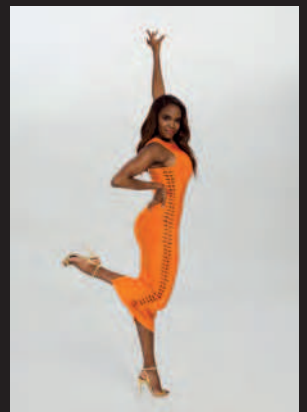
### Deborah Weiss

is a freelance dance writer and critic. She trained at The Royal Ballet School and was a former senior soloist with London Festival (now English National) Ballet. She later danced with the Bayerisches Staatsballett in Munich, where she performed most of the principal roles in the repertoire at that time. She also appeared as a principal with Ballet Cymru, Alexander Roy London Ballet Theatre, Wiener Ballet Theatre, Ballet Creations of London and in the early 1980s was a guest

artist with Staatsballett Berlin, dancing the role of The Sylph in *La Sylphide*.

She began writing reviews for *Dancing Times* in 1993 whilst living in Germany, and has contributed to a number of other publications. She currently writes for *Dancing Times*, *DanceTabs* and *Dance for You*, and is an interviewer for Voices of British Ballet, an oral history project. In recent years, she has also qualified and regularly works as a facilitator on three different programmes that offer help and support to victims of domestic abuse.

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Oti Mabuse.

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The background of the advertisement features a photograph of two dancers in motion, overlaid with a yellow-to-blue gradient. The dancers are in dynamic poses, with one dancer in the foreground and another slightly behind. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

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## Dane Hurst to be new artistic director of Phoenix

**CHOREOGRAPHER AND DANCER DANE HURST** has been appointed the new artistic director of Phoenix Dance Theatre. Hurst will be its eighth artistic director, and takes up the mantle from Sharon Watson who departed the company in May 2020. He begins the role this month, ahead of the company's 40th birthday in November.

Hurst, who is currently the associate artist in residence at Jazzart Dance Theatre and artistic director and founder of the Moving Assembly Project, is a multi-award-winning director, choreographer and dancer. Born in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, he trained at the Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance in London, supported by a Nelson Mandela/Linbury Trust scholarship in 2003, and later joined Rambert Dance Company as the first recipient of the Sally Gilmour memorial trust bursary in 2004.

As a dancer, he has made guest appearances with



Dane Hurst.

National Dance Company of Wales and Company Wayne McGregor, and was a company dancer for Phoenix from 2007 to 2009. His career has garnered him several accolades and critical acclaim, both nationally and internationally. He won the Critics' Circle National Dance Awards twice: first in 2006 in the Spotlight Dancer of the Year category and again in 2014, winning the *Dancing Times* Best Male Dancer of the Year Award.

As a choreographer, Hurst has been commissioned by a wide variety of companies and organisations including Rambert, The Place Prize,

The Barbican, RichMix, *InTransit Festival*, Dulwich Picture Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery and Wilton's Music Hall. He has performed his choreographic works at venues across the UK, including Sadler's Wells, the Robin Howard Theatre, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Royal Opera House, Wilton's, The Commonwealth Institute, the Hall for Cornwall – Truro and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon.

"I am honoured and humbled to take up the role of artistic director for the powerhouse of contemporary dance that is Phoenix Dance Theatre," said Hurst. "I have followed the Phoenix trajectory since being a part of the company from 2007 to 2009. My aim is to celebrate and build upon the foundations laid and successes achieved under the visionary founders and previous directors. As the company approaches its 40th anniversary, there's a

huge amount to celebrate and recognise, not least its rich and expansive history, standing as a beacon of light within the arts and culture industry, championing diversity and achieving excellence."

## Here Come the Boys

**DIRECTED AND CHOREOGRAPHED BY** Gareth Walker, *Here Come The Boys* is set to transfer to the West End in a new production for a 16-week season at the Garrick Theatre, London, from January 27, 2021. *Here Come The Boys* sees *Strictly Come Dancing* stars Aljaž Škorjanec, Pasha Kovalev, Robin Windsor and Graziano di Prima battle it out against a soundtrack of dance floor anthems and club classics to be named the "King of the Dance". *Strictly* celebrity finalist and CBBC presenter Karim Zeroual will host the show, as well as displaying a few of his own dance moves.

Throughout the run at the Garrick, *Here Come the Boys* has promised cast revelations, substitutions and additions. New cast announcements will be made from now until the final performance. For more details, check Instagram, Facebook or [herecometheboysshow.com](http://herecometheboysshow.com).

for 2021 includes *ABT Incubator*. For more information on American Ballet Theatre, visit [abt.org](http://abt.org).

## Cancellations at ABT

**AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE (ABT)** has announced the cancellation of its 2021 season at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. The season, originally planned for June and July of 2021, has been cancelled due to health and safety concerns related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on non-essential gatherings.

In the months ahead, ABT plans offerings of new choreography, created in remote ballet bubbles under strict medical and health guidelines in upstate New York and Southern California, with additional locations to be announced. Digital productions and outdoor socially distanced performances around

the US are planned for spring 2021. Outdoor performances in and around New York City are in the works for summer 2021.

Choreographers premiering new works with ABT in 2021 include New York City Ballet principal dancer Lauren Lovette, Darrell Grand Moultrie, ABT artist in residence Alexei Ratmansky and Sonya Tayeh. Additional creative activity planned



## Marion Tait steps down

MARION TAIT HAS STEPPED down from her role as assistant director of Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB). From this month onwards, she will work part-time, rehearsing and coaching the company dancers. "The present situation with COVID-19 has made it impossible for me to fulfil such a crucial role at Birmingham Royal Ballet at this very important time in its history," Tait said. "I would have loved to have carried on supporting Carlos [Acosta] in his exciting vision for the company and, in a way, I will, as I continue to rehearse and coach the dancers and try to be as useful as I can! I shall still feel part of the Birmingham Royal Ballet family, which is something I am proud to be."

Born in London, Tait joined The Royal Ballet Touring Company (now BRB) at just 17, rising to the rank of



Marion Tait as Hagar in *Pillar of Fire*.

principal and dancing the lead ballerina roles in all the classics. In 1995 she became BRB's ballet mistress, and for many years she taught and rehearsed the company. Until recently she performed character roles such as a scene-stealing Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty* and the Wicked Stepmother in David Bintley's *Cinderella*, which was created for her in 2010.

Tait was made an OBE in 1992 and a CBE in the

2003 Queen's Birthday Honours list. She has twice been nominated for Olivier Awards (Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, 1994, and Hagar in *Pillar of Fire*, 1995), was named Dancer of the Year 1994 and that same year also received the *Evening Standard* Ballet Award for Outstanding Performance. Most recently she was awarded the De Valois Award for Outstanding Achievement 2019 by the Critics' Circle National Dance Awards. She is patron of The Edge arts centre in Solihull.

Marion Tait assisted Desmond Kelly in directing Birmingham Royal Ballet's artistic team for *Ballet Changed My Life – Ballet Hoo!*, the education project documented on Channel 4 during September and October 2006, for which she was presented with a special award at the Critics' Circle National Dance Awards in 2008.

### News in brief

★ **One Dance UK** has announced the appointment of **Amanda Skoog** as the new chair of the board of trustees with immediate effect. The appointment comes following previous chair Sue Wyatt stepping down in 2020 after four years.

★ **GM Artist Hub** has opened a new fund to support independent performing artists in Greater Manchester. GM Artist Hub was formed by 13 leading arts organisations across Greater Manchester to help independent artists access support, advice and opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Originate Fund will offer new co-commissions for new performance works to be created in 2021. There will be three awards of £5,000 on offer to support artists to create new work to share with audiences next summer. The fund will accept expressions of interest until January 10, 2021.

★ **Breaking** – a competitive form of breakdancing – will be part of the final line-up for the Paris 2024 Olympics. It will be the first DanceSport event to feature at an Olympic Games, having been staged at the Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2018.

## Royal Albert Hall at 150

IN THE MOST CHALLENGING conditions it has ever faced, the Royal Albert Hall has unveiled the programme for its anniversary celebrations, which will begin on March 29, 2021 – exactly 150 years on from its opening – and extend into 2022.

The venue's chief executive, Craig Hassall, has announced the plans – which include major new commissions, headline

shows from music legends and anniversary editions of historic community events – while also revealing the completed restoration of the Hall's historic façade, the result of four years' work.

"Despite the devastating impact of the pandemic, which has closed our treasured building to the public for the first time since the Second World War, we are determined to host a full celebration of our 150th anniversary," said Hassall. "Since its opening, this extraordinary venue has borne witness to, and played a central part in, seismic cultural and social change. The interests, manners and social mores

of the people may have changed, but this beautiful building and what it represents remains the same a century-and-a-half later: a meeting place, a reflection of contemporary Britain, and a home for exhilarating live performance and events of international significance."

The Hall was opened by Queen Victoria in 1871, and named in memory of her husband, Prince Albert, whose founding vision was for a venue that would both democratise and promote the arts and sciences. Selected programme highlights include a special birthday concert on March 29, 2021, and Matthew Bourne bringing his company New Adventures to the venue for the first time to create a new staging of *The Car Man*, his take on Bizet's opera,

*Carmen*, from June 17 to 27. The Hall's anniversary book is titled *A Celebration in 150 Unforgettable Moments*, and published by Ebury.



Matthew Bourne's *The Car Man*.

# Unlimited festival goes digital



THE SOUTHBANK CENTRE'S FIRST digital *Unlimited* festival programme features five days of dance, performance, comedy, film, talks, workshops and art, celebrating the artistic vision of disabled artists from January 13 to 17, 2021. Alongside the digital programme, there will be an outdoor exhibition onsite at the Southbank Centre, *Unseen* by artist Suzie Larke.

Dance highlights, all of which are free to watch, include a broadcast of the powerful dance duet *111* (January 13–15), featuring Joel Brown of Candoco Dance Company and Eve Mutso, former principal dancer with Scottish Ballet, as they explore their different strengths and vulnerabilities. The title takes its name from the number of vertebrae Joel and Eve have between them.

*Artificial Things*, from January 15 to 17, winner of a dancescreenaward, is choreographed by Lucy Bennett and directed by Sophie Fiennes. Filmed

Joel Brown and Eve Mutso in *111*.

on location in a derelict suburban shopping mall, featuring an ensemble of disabled and non-disabled dancers, the film explores human interdependence, strength and vulnerability. Dancers Amy Butler, Laura Jones, Chris Pavia, David Willdrige and Dave Toole, who recently died (see *Dancing Times*, December

## Theatre for one pound

A NEW FUND, LAUNCHED by the mother of a young dance student, aims to raise money for UK theatres by asking everyone for just £1. "I launched #theatrefor1pound to help the arts, in particular Northern Ballet and Leeds Playhouse, following the COVID-19 pandemic," said Victoria Smith. "Theatre is for everyone and I wanted to encourage as many people as possible to help in a small way. The idea was that if everyone gave £1 it would make a collective difference and the aim is to hopefully help other dance companies and theatres too. I am conscious we are all struggling and each individual and every industry has been affected by this situation, so wanted people to feel comfortable to donate £1." The link for donations is [uk.virginmoneygiving.com/VictoriaSmith123](https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/VictoriaSmith123).

2020), devised the original piece and all appear in the film. The work will be accompanied by a live Q&A with the creative team.

Sonny Nwachukwu gives an interactive insight into his choreopoem in *Saturn Returns* on January 17, a live dance and spoken word performance which explores the psychospiritual clashes produced in Black people by the weight of history. *Here / Not Here*, from January 14 to 17, is a new hip hop film exploring British Sign Language, krump street dance, football and Visual Vernacular – the choreographed and poetic

form of sign language.

This drama sees three rival groups clash over who should use an abandoned warehouse space. The film, directed by award-winning film-maker and deaf artist Bim Ajadi and written by Jonzi D, artistic director of *Breakin' Convention*, is a collaboration with the film's professional and non-professional, deaf and hearing cast. The music is composed and produced by Torben Lars Sylvest. For more information on *Unlimited* events, go to [southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/festivals-series/unlimited](https://southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/festivals-series/unlimited).

### WIN! Romeo and Juliet DVDs

★ Courtesy of **Opus Arte**, we have five copies of *Romeo and Juliet: Beyond Words* on DVD to give away as competition prizes. The film stars Royal Ballet principal Francesca Hayward as Juliet and first soloist William Bracewell as Romeo, making his much-anticipated debut in the role. Directed and produced by Michael Nunn and William Trevitt of the BalletBoyz, this interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* showcases Kenneth MacMillan's ballet in a fresh and dynamic way. Fusing The Royal Ballet's heritage with the BalletBoyz' signature style, and filmed on location at the Korda Studios in Budapest, *Romeo and Juliet: Beyond Words* was screened in cinemas in November 2019. This DVD and Blu-ray release also includes exclusive extra features, including *The Making of Romeo and Juliet*, as well as a cast and crew Q&A, offering viewers a unique glimpse behind the camera. To win a copy, simply send us the answer to the following question by February 1, 2021: **Who composed the music to Kenneth MacMillan's *Romeo and Juliet*?** Entries can be sent by email to [competitions@dancing-times.co.uk](mailto:competitions@dancing-times.co.uk), or by post to our usual address on page 6.





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Emily Loumba

Disney's Beauty and the Beast Movie

*photo by Spyros Chatziagelakis*



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## Help needed for DPhil on elite dancers

Dear Editor — I write to ask for help. I'm a dancer, ballet master, choreographer, director and teacher, and have worked all over the world for nearly six decades. Some of my companies have been small, some huge, most of them middle-sized. For several years, my wife and I also ran our own school. I've lived in beautiful places, worked with amazing people and chalked up remarkable experiences — I've also acquired half a dozen European languages and an MSc in Dance Science along the way.

Time passes, and I'm now 73, with a degenerative spinal condition that will end my dancing. Fortunately, I've been given a scholarship to Oxford University to write a DPhil on elite dancers when, at the top of their career, a life-changing event happens, and dance leaves them. Living that bit is not fun, but it is fascinating, raising issues of identity, coping strategies, the nature of healing, biopsychosocial perspectives, patient-doctor dialogue and a lot more.

The emphasis of my DPhil will be on recording and analysing the narratives of dancers who've had to face this; I hope to interview between 20 to 30 participants. I'm looking for people who were very good at what they did, but who became unable to dance or teach, effectively deserted by their proud, wonderful vocation.

I know many ex-dancers. Some have already agreed to help, but I'd love it if

more would volunteer. For ethical reasons, participants would be anonymous and unidentifiable, and I certainly would not invade anyone's privacy.

I realise this is a big ask from a complete stranger, but I think the study could be important for dancers who are damaged, who survive as best we can. Anyone reading this who would be willing to talk, please email me at: [jeremy.leslie-spinks@phc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:jeremy.leslie-spinks@phc.ox.ac.uk). Thank you.

— Yours sincerely,

*Jeremy Leslie-Spinks*

*By email*

## The future of performance and the performing arts?

Dear Editor — COVID-19 has made me scared and tired, but there might be some positive aspects to the pandemic in relation to dance and the performing arts. We are in a war against an invisible opponent; an opponent we cannot see or feel, but that can kill within a few days. The coronavirus leaves us with little or no control, and it is frightening. As a choreographer and dancer, I am facing a time when online dance classes, live-streamed performances, and projects created over Zoom have become part of my everyday life. However, performance and the performing arts are at stake because of the pandemic. When will it be over? Will it be over?

This war forces us to rethink our art form. Performances, which often happen when people meet together indoors, now happen through a screen. It forces us to revise what

we have practised over a lifetime. Rethink space. Rethink meeting. Rethink live. Rethink experience. It's a difficult adjustment to make over a couple of weeks. Will this new online reality continue to be part of our life after all this is over?

I am at war within myself. As a person constantly hunting for new things to explore, one part of me wants to indulge in this new online reality and make the best out of it, while another part is devastated that the "live" aspect of the art form I love is slipping away through my fingers.

I think the future of performance and the performing arts is going to look different. We will realise that the online reality has its positive aspects, and that a new branch of the art form will grow. We can choose to resist it, but, eventually, it will grow on us, and maybe not in a bad way.

What if now is the time to indulge in this online reality of performing? What if we can use this time to learn something about the future of it? What if it can bring our art form to new audiences? These are questions I ask myself because, if I don't, I will

stay behind the reality, and that is something I cannot afford to do right now.

This is a difficult adjustment — and there is nothing I long for more than to go and watch a live dance performance — but we have time to make something positive. The "live" aspect of our art form will come back, but the online aspect will also stay and that might be OK. The upcoming generation of choreographers, dancers, performance artists, actors, directors, musicians and circus artists cannot afford to resist it. We have the chance to make this transition into something concrete, real and great, so let's do it. — Yours sincerely,

*Gabriella Engdahl*  
*London*

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# Talking Point

Views on the world of dance

Northern Ballet's **Gavin McCaig** thinks outreach must take centre stage in the dance sector's recovery

**W**e know that in every walk of life exposure or involvement in a pursuit leads to an appreciation of it. I was never a keen footballer, but through the many early Sunday mornings fighting for a goal in what felt like sub-zero temperatures, I built up a great sense of respect for the sport and its professionals.

Of the many who have not been able to engage with the dance sector and its endless possibilities since March, I fear for a generation who have missed out on the access and exposure needed to spark a passion for the creative arts. My thoughts in the past few months have fallen directly on those who don't necessarily have access to electronic devices or a level of connectivity to the internet in order to consume dance, theatre or even Netflix at home. For many, particularly those from underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds, their only exposure to dance – or other branches of the culture sector – is through schools or community groups. This is typically in collaboration with arts organisations. It concerns me

that a generation of could-be-artists will slip through the cracks the coronavirus pandemic has chipped out of the delivery of the work that we, as a sector, do to attract and develop new talent, not to mention new audiences. With the Black Lives Matter movement shifting the focus more than ever before on to diversity and inclusion, it is worrying that for so many from less-affluent backgrounds access to dance and culture since the beginning of the pandemic has been almost solely dependent on the use of expensive technology.

"At a grassroots level, which is where so much of our energy goes, the ongoing challenge is a digital divide," explains Leanne Kirkham, who heads up Learning and Outreach at Northern Ballet. "Kids from deprived backgrounds don't have the digital access in the same way as those from more affluent backgrounds. We can make as much digital content as we want, but reaching a broad range of demographics is the challenge. The programmes we run in schools across Yorkshire engage everyone, no matter their background."

**"It concerns me that a generation of could-be-artists will slip through the cracks the coronavirus pandemic has chipped out of the delivery of the work that we, as a sector, do to attract and develop new talent, not to mention new audiences"**

Northern Ballet alone aimed to reach thousands of young people through its huge outreach and learning programmes, some of which were shifted to be delivered remotely at a lesser extent, or otherwise postponed until 2021. At the heart of these programmes is the ability to drive skill-building and show individuals the creative pathways available to them. "Other companies across the country have been in the same situation," Kirkham explains, "so I think we'll miss a portion of kids because of social and economic factors."

**E**ven before the pandemic tore through the cultural sector, STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) were being pushed heavily in schools, whilst the arts and the humanities have been sidelined and their importance diminished through the mistaken belief they lessened job opportunities in the future. With these studies being driven from school curriculums across the UK, and the pandemic causing further divides in the tiers of society, I believe that all of us in the arts must put outreach at the heart of the sector's blueprints for 2021 and beyond. We must play the long game – a strategic choice many now wish they had been playing a decade or more ago – when looking at the widespread lack of representation on our stages and in our governance structures.

At primary stages of development for children and young adults, it is vitally important we intervene

and deliver experiences that feed into who they are and who they want to be. The arts are key to this. When we involve young people in creative pursuits, we are not necessarily pushing them towards a career in the cultural sector, but offering skills that can help with problem-solving, creative thinking, empathy, communication and collaboration – attributes that can underpin much of what they might experience later in life. More than ever, we have seen recently that it is new ways of doing things that will push us towards progress.

Let's be prescient: sow the seeds of creativity now in the minds of tomorrow's change-makers. Go five-fold in the distribution of engagement, and demonstrate that outreach to all is of profound importance. It is crucial we make the case for the benefits engagement with the arts can bring. Let's pilot young people towards being an open-eyed, multi-faceted generation of creative thinkers and doers by letting them experience the arts. ■

**HAVE YOUR SAY:** We should very much like to hear your views on the subjects discussed here, on any of our other articles or reviews, or indeed on anything else dance-related that you feel strongly about. Please email [letters@dancing-times.co.uk](mailto:letters@dancing-times.co.uk) or post your letters to the address on page 6. Please note: the opinions expressed in this column are the author's own and are not necessarily shared by *Dancing Times*.



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# Step forward



Deborah Weiss finds out about Audition Educator, a new online programme created by Rebecca Haw

**R**ebecca Haw is an extraordinary woman, and not just because she is a dancer with the Semperoper Ballett in Dresden. She's an entrepreneur, proactive, resilient, highly intelligent and great fun. She did, however, find it very difficult to get her first contract with a ballet company, and therefore has huge experience in taking auditions.

Haw started ballet at the age of two, simply because she could skip. "It was a coordination test," she tells me. "If you couldn't, you had to wait until you were three! By five, I had added lessons in ballroom, jazz, tap and modern. I started doing classes in neighbouring cities and, by the age of 12 had joined The Royal Ballet School Mid-Associates."

After three years at Elmhurst Ballet School, Haw completed her training with KS Dance, graduating with a diploma. "I had been auditioning most of my graduate year, starting at the end of October. I did a substantial number of audition tours without success. My

first was an audition call in France and there were only about 20 of us attending. By the time I got to Germany they were getting bigger, a couple of hundred. I was getting cut [told she was no longer required] at the barre.

"They weren't 'cattle calls' as such, because there was a pre-selection process, but sometimes there were hundreds of people at an audition. I ended up going to San Francisco for the summer because one of my coaches was a principal there and was able to get me into company class."

On her return from California, Haw admits to feeling slightly defeated. "I'd graduated and there were no such things as post-graduate programmes as there are now. I needed to work to earn some money. I was given the keys to my first dancing school [Elizabeth Corney's School of Dance in Lydney, Gloucestershire] so that I could train whenever I was able. I worked as a waitress, at a nightclub on weekends, in a boutique clothes store and as a lifeguard at two different leisure centres.

"During that year I had four or five different jobs because I was paying off my student loan. I tried to keep

training but wasn't in the best of shape. I would sometimes take the bus to London and do two Pineapple Dance classes in one day, and then get the bus back. I learned so much during this period. At the time it was tough, but I wouldn't pass it up for anything now. I was doing about one audition a month and by the January things were hotting up. By March, I'd had my first audition at the Semperoper."

Unsuccessful that time, Haw was looking for ways to do more work. "I was lucky to live ten minutes up the road from Ballet Cymru. I had known Darius James [the director] since I was very small, so I contacted him and asked if I could take company class. He agreed and said I could stay for rehearsals too if I just wanted to get some hours in. By then, I had started to get comments at auditions like, 'your quads are a bit big' or 'you're not what we're looking for', and was being cut from the barre more frequently. As soon as you hear those sorts of things, you think, 'OK, it's a body thing – I'm just not in good shape.' Darius did not have a contract for me, but I went in as much as I could." ➤

Rebecca Haw working in the studio.



**A**fter three weeks with Ballet Cymru, Haw was invited to audition for a new musical and, the day after, flew to Bucharest to audition for the Romanian National Ballet. "The musical wasn't exactly what I was looking for, but it was getting on for two years of auditioning and I just had to be realistic. I actually got to the end of that audition but was told I was too small. The only time in my life that I wasn't too tall!

"The audition in Bucharest was a company class and I think it helped I had been in that environment in the weeks before. The director called me into his office and offered me a contract. After an uncomfortable conversation when he asked me about my height and weight, which I'd put on my CV, he did some calculations and said I had to lose two kilos by the time I started. The time frame was awkward. It was Thursday and I was due to start on Tuesday!" Auditioning can be brutal, and this, she adds, was not the worst one – this was successful. Haw reveals she got food poisoning on the flight home, which we agree – laughing – will have inadvertently aided her rapid weight loss.

She flew back to Bucharest after three days, and I asked her what her pointe shoe situation was, given she was about to embark on a two-month run of *Swan Lake*. "I had the pairs I had been buying with my waitressing earnings. We were given one pair of Gaynor Minden shoes per season, but I'm a Bloch girl. Ballet Cymru, because they had been in a creative period, were so grateful for my input they actually paid me (unexpectedly) a most generous amount and that helped fund my shoes."

**T**he contracts with the Romanian National Ballet were never more than six months, but Haw was asked back and stayed with the company for almost four years. Holidays and injuries were unpaid, and when she was laid off for up to three months over the summer she went back to waitressing to pay for the pointe shoes for the next season. Johan Kobborg took over as director of the company after he mounted *La Sylphide*, but unfortunately his tenure was short. "There were some politics; there was a new intendant and it went all the way up to the ministry [of culture], so

it was difficult for foreigners working there. We all just wanted to get out. It was June, very late to be auditioning, but we did pretty well. The repertoire Johan had brought into the company caught people's attention. Within a few weeks Aaron [Watkin] saw me for the second time here in Dresden; Scottish Ballet and the Royal Danish Ballet saw me, too. I had to decide whether to go back to another new director in Bucharest or stay in London, waitress and do classes. I decided a job was better than no job, but I wasn't liked by the new director at all, and only got on stage a handful of times.

"I was demoted back to the corps de ballet and got some of my best insults during that period! Thank God it was that bad because, by December, I had the balls to resign. The best one I received was that I was 'aesthetically unpleasing to



look at', which I see as a kind of trophy. He basically set me free."

After a couple of weeks working in Estonia, Haw came back to Dresden where she slept on her brother's couch (he is a dancer with the company). She had been in Berlin for an audition where 500 dancers turned up, and in Prague where she was cut after the barre. However, within three weeks she was offered a contract to dance with the Semperoper.

**A**s a direct result of all this auditioning, Haw decided to set up her Audition Educator programme. "I felt there had been a need for it for a very long time, and I had the lightbulb moment during the summer, fresh out of lockdown. I seemed to be a magnet for people asking me to look at their CVs or videos, dancers who I'd taught at summer schools. I've written a blog for years, and contributed to a dance magazine. If you're going to start



Above left and opposite: Haw working in the studio. Above right: Haw outside the Semperoper.

something up, you need to be passionate about it, not get bored, and be able to talk about it for days – and I can!

"I started experimenting in digital media way back, but began a web design company two years ago. I've been doing graphic design and product design for years as a hobby, and also for clients. I like all that sort of thing. I had to move to an e-commerce website for the Audition Educator programme, honing it for a huge members' area and filling out the infrastructure. I've done this sort of thing before, so I just had to get the social media marketing going.

"The main part of the programme is the Audition Educator Live Course, which is six weekly sessions on Zoom. I try to keep them to an hour, starting with applications, and people can ask me questions. We go through everything: corresponding with companies and directors; how to film a video so that a director will actually watch it; how to package your application so they're not frustrated at the other end. We then move into sourcing auditions and booking them. There is a lot about keeping your travel costs low, what to wear, what to pack, what an audition day entails, what auditioning is like in a company class as opposed to a 'cattle call' or an invited audition. It goes all

the way up to contracts. Each time I do it, I get asked more questions, so I'm constantly updating to make sure I'm not missing anything.

"I do love it. An entrepreneur is generally someone who fixes a problem – whether it's product based or coaching – and anyone who's worked in this industry has so much to pass on to the next generation. We need to be inventive. There's always room for improvement, but if a business or company is not evolving, it will be left behind. Our industry is the prime example of that.

"The Audition Educator programme was launched during the pandemic

and it was both a blessing and a curse! The graduating students from this academic year need more help than ever. Equally, we've had more time to pursue hobbies, reflect on things and find new skills. Most of the preparation is done before you fly to an audition, so now is the time to do it. Auditions have already started to go virtual. Hirings are happening. It will be great when we can get back to the point of having physical auditions again, but we are in a different scenario at the moment. I've run a trial course, and now I'm in the midst of the second course. My third series of dates will be released in December to start in January, but if the *Nutcracker* schedule in Dresden goes ahead, I can't really fit in anything more. People have been downloading the e-books and the databases, so I offer an application bundle because most people feel they need all three.

"The main reason for doing this is because of personal experience – doing masses of research and finding there's not much information available out there. I also want to say how important Matz Skoog has been during this process. I contacted him to pick his brains and he has ended up being my coach! I've collected statistics and polled dancers – 85 per cent said they hadn't received enough information about auditions in the past. The stats are all on my website.

"Right now I'm working on a programme I call a 'mid-twenties move'. It's very different standing in a room full of graduates after three or four years of professional experience. That's in the works." ■

For further information, visit [theworldbybecca.com/courses](https://theworldbybecca.com/courses) or look at @auditioneducator on Instagram. Rebecca Haw can also be contacted by email at [theworldbybecca@hotmail.com](mailto:theworldbybecca@hotmail.com).

**"I had been auditioning most of my graduate year, starting at the end of October. I did a substantial number of audition tours without success"**



# Kschessinska versus Nijinsky

**Andrew Foster** concludes his article asking if the prima ballerina assoluta of the Imperial Russian Ballet was the hidden hand in Nijinsky's dismissal?

In 1911, Mathilde Kschessinska, prima ballerina assoluta, was no longer a member of the Imperial Russian Ballet, having retired from the company some seven years earlier. She still reigned supreme as a permanent guest artist though, able to choose not only which roles she wanted to dance and when to dance them, but also commanding a huge fee. A ballerina with a prodigious and still undimmed classical technique, she was an intelligent and generally kind woman, ready to help and offer support to young dancers as they embarked on their careers.

At the same time, however, she was jealously protective of her position as a prima ballerina, and ruthless whenever she felt the chill of competition. Her extraordinary relationship with the Imperial family – previously a mistress of Tsar Nicholas II before his marriage and currently the lover of Grand Duke Sergei – gave her considerable power within the Imperial Ballet.

The previous year, 1910, had seen a depletion in the number of ballerinas at the Maryinsky – both Anna Pavlova and Olga Preobrajenska had left on extended foreign tours and Vera Trefilova had retired. That same year, though, had seen the stellar rise of the young Tamara Karsavina; not only had she taken Paris by storm alongside Vaslav Nijinsky in the productions staged by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, but while still a soloist at the Maryinsky she had been handed most of Pavlova's roles. Several of these leading parts were outside Kschessinska's repertoire, but Karsavina was now also being acclaimed in those very ballets that had been strongly associated

with the assoluta – *Harlequinade*, *La Bayadère* and *Swan Lake*.

Vladimir Teliakovsky, director of the Imperial Theatres, writes in his diaries of a particular altercation occurring one month before Nijinsky's dismissal. It was a matinée performance of *Swan Lake* that Kschessinska had declined to dance. "When the ballet was given instead to Karsavina," he wryly notes,



**Mathilde Kschessinska, prima ballerina assoluta.**



Vladimir Teliakovsky,  
director of the Imperial Theatres.



“the fun began.” Teliakovsky describes how, having first persuaded leading dancer Nikolai Legat not to partner Karsavina, Kschessinska next turned her attention to the only other cavalier then available, Samuil Andrianov. In order to prevent him rehearsing with Karsavina, she started demanding him at her own rehearsals for a later performance.

“What she wants is clear... she does not tolerate competition.” Teliakovsky went further: “Preobrajenska has left, Pavlova is in America, Sedova is without talent and harmless – there remains only Karsavina whom, one way or another, she must destroy.”

When the director took a firm line and insisted that Karsavina’s rehearsal took precedence, the response was immediate – Grand Duke Sergei telephoned to say that Kschessinska was in a terrible state of nerves and had been crying all night, concluding: “If you take Andrianov away from her, she will refuse all further appearances. I’m sure the Directorate will not force her to carry out this decision.”

Teliakovsky summed up: “Of course it’s possible to replace even Andrianov, but this is not about him, it’s about Karsavina.” Despite the threats, *Swan Lake* went ahead with Andrianov, and Karsavina once more had a notable success. Karsavina was now clearly an irritation to Kschessinska and, one month later, the prospect of yet another

triumph alongside Nijinsky in *Giselle* – the one ballet outside the assoluta’s own abilities – must have been galling.

### The cover-up

Normally a woman oblivious to personal attacks (and there had been many over the years), Kschessinska acted quickly to deflect any responsibility for Nijinsky’s dismissal. She suspected the dancer Ludmila Schollar for the stories being spread within the ballet company and she immediately called Schollar into her dressing room to upbraid her: “If I had even 1/100th of the power attributed to me, I would have you thrown out of the company this very day.” Clearly, a nerve had been touched.

Just three weeks later, a special benefit performance was to be given in the presence of the Emperor and Empress, celebrating Kschessinska’s 20 years on the Maryinsky stage. The assoluta had full artistic control over the programme and Teliakovsky’s diary entry of February 11, 1911, clearly shows the extent of her power and influence: “Today took place the rehearsal of the ballet for Kschessinska’s jubilee. To all the participants was served breakfast and a sea of champagne on draught, so that many artists got drunk, moreover, each one of the participants received an expensive gift from Kschessinska, up to and including a gold cigarette case. Probably these gifts cost several tens of thousands of roubles... Those refusing gifts were [Bronislava] Nijinska (believing that Kschessinska was responsible for her brother’s dismissal) and Schollar (a personal enemy of Kschessinska), the rest all bathed in the golden trough... A true celebration of art!!! How convenient for the Directorate to have in its service a non-serving guest artist, who in addition to the influence of her own position, can bribe the whole troupe.”

On the evening of the performance, a particularly strange incident occurred when Act III of *Paquita* was presented. Kschessinska had arranged at the last minute for an extra number to be inserted for the character dancer Evgenia Edouardova. According to Teliakovsky, the dance was performed badly, with the orchestra sight-reading a totally unrelated piece of music and Edouardova wearing a “disgusting” ➤



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Tamara Karsavina and Vaslav Nijinsky  
rehearsing for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes  
in Monte Carlo, April 1911.



(obscene) costume. The Emperor and Empress expressed their displeasure and Teliakovsky was left to explain to them that he had known nothing about it. He later noted in his diary, "It turns out that Kschessinska came up with all this, not having asked permission."

In mirroring the Nijinsky incident, Kschessinska's message seemed to be clear: If something offensive appears on the Maryinsky stage, the responsibility is borne by the Directorate and no one else.

Another unexpected deviation occurred at the end of the evening when, instead of Nikolai Legat, who had partnered her in all three ballets, the assoluta chose Karsavina to lead her out for her final curtain call. It was an unusual honour and one that Karsavina was always to remember with gratitude. It also strongly suggests Kschessinska's determination to deflect attention from both the *Giselle* debacle itself and her recent attempts to sabotage Karsavina.

## The aftermath

Within weeks of Nijinsky's dismissal, Diaghilev had formally created his own company, and by April its first rehearsals were under way in Monte Carlo. History shows that Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, headed by Nijinsky and Karsavina, went on to a huge success that summer of 1911, culminating in a triumphant Coronation season at London's Royal Opera House. A second Covent Garden season was then

arranged for that same autumn, during which London saw Nijinsky partner both Kschessinska and Karsavina. Once again, the assoluta's competitive streak bubbled to the surface.

At one performance, Kschessinska danced her signature *Swan Lake* and was warmly received. Next on the programme, Karsavina – by now a firm London favourite – danced *Le Spectre de la rose* and the audience roared its approval. The curtain was raised and lowered time and time again, delaying the start of the third ballet, and a huge basket of roses was presented to "la Rose de Russie".

Karsavina herself, writing a letter home a few days later, described what happened afterwards: "After the first performance, when we appeared together, she [Kschessinska] wept the whole night and as a result they split us up... And so, instead of four times I danced only twice... The worst thing is, it's terribly difficult to breathe in her presence. All the time I could feel some kind of heavy weight... There's no knowing what will happen next... I am writing to

you too much about her, because here she has become my nightmare." Karsavina apparently never knew about Kschessinska's intrigues against her at the Maryinsky and, in later years, she remembered only the help and kindness she had received from the assoluta at the beginning of her career.

As for the part that Kschessinska may have played in Nijinsky's dismissal, dance historians have spent decades poring over the rumours and examining conflicting accounts of the incident. Richard Buckle made some headway unpicking fact from fiction in his 1971 biography of Nijinsky, and Roland John Wiley published two in-depth articles in *Dancing Times* in 1979 and 1980, but no one has gleaned a motive for Kschessinska to sabotage Nijinsky.

The recent Russian publication of Teliakovsky's complete diaries has added important details to our understanding of the complex web of machinations within the Imperial Ballet and given us some important clues in this ongoing mystery. In the words of Teliakovsky: "It's about Karsavina." ■



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*2019 graduate Louis Fukuhara, now with Matthew Bourne's New Adventures  
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# POSITIVE

A photograph of two men in a boxing ring. On the left, a man with a beard and tattoos (Cy Tunnicliff) is wearing a black tank top and a black cap, and is boxing with the man on the right. On the right, a man with a shaved head (Dominic Antonucci) is wearing a black t-shirt and red and black boxing gloves, and is in a boxing stance. The background is a blurred boxing ring.

**Dominic Antonucci**, ballet master with Birmingham Royal Ballet, explains how he took up boxing to help get back in shape

Dominic Antonucci (right) pictured with boxing trainer Cy Tunnicliff.

# CHANGES

**I**n 2009 I was appointed ballet master at Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB), making a direct transition from my previous position there as principal dancer. Of the many challenges I would navigate in my new role, the greatest, somewhat surprisingly, ended up being a physical one.

As a dancer I trained my body relentlessly. I concentrated completely on my diet, classes, rehearsals, workouts and performances. Literally overnight all of this changed. My focus shifted entirely to the dancers of BRB, their training and condition rather than my own. As I endeavoured to adjust, I allowed my own fitness to suffer and gradually fade. So it was that by December 2018 my weight had risen from the 75kg I had been as a dancer to an unhappy 98 kg – more than 15 stone. After failing to fit into my “Father”

costume for *The Nutcracker*, I resolved to make some positive changes.

First on the list was to set aside my fondness for chocolate chip cookies. I quickly got a handle on my eating habits and settled into a sensible plan. This involved consuming healthy foods, but was not overly restrictive or based on a faddy diet. I then started exercising again several times a week, experimenting with different types of workouts before discovering that High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) seemed to suit my goals the best. The results of my efforts were immediate. I instantly started to feel better physically, and my self-esteem improved. My *Nutcracker* costume started to fit me more comfortably and I could feel my muscles were beginning to reawaken.

During my dancing career, I had incorporated elements of boxing

training to great effect. I felt this type of physical exercise helped me with my stamina and strength for performing. It kept me in good shape aesthetically and I had always enjoyed it. From my youth I held a conflicted fascination for boxing. Conflicted because I detest violence and its consequences, but on the other hand I was drawn to boxing’s raw physicality, its drama and romance. The single-minded focus of training for boxing reminded me of my own experience with ballet.

The physical shape of certain boxers was also something that I wished I could attain for myself. Heavyweights like Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali would hardly remind anyone of a ballet dancer, although Ali always proclaimed he would “Dance! Dance!” in the ring. Instead I was looking at fighters such as the great “Sugar” Ray Robinson, who had a beautiful dancer’s body and an ➤



## Boxing and ballet

*Below Dominic Antonucci in the ring with opponent Brad Wishart. Opposite top "Sugar" Ray Robinson. Opposite bottom Dominic Antonucci during his boxing training.*



elegant movement quality. In fact, as his career as a boxer came to an end, Robinson toured extensively as a dancer.

**A**s I regained my physical fitness, my interest in boxing was also rekindled and, by chance, I came across an advertisement for Ultra White Collar Boxing (UWCB). UWCB involves amateur participants boxing at a black-tie charity event in aid of Cancer Research UK. Although I had used boxing training extensively, I had never actually put any of those skills to a real test. Being well past the age of 40 I figured it was now or never. Signing up for the event would give my training a definite purpose and direction, not to mention that it was all

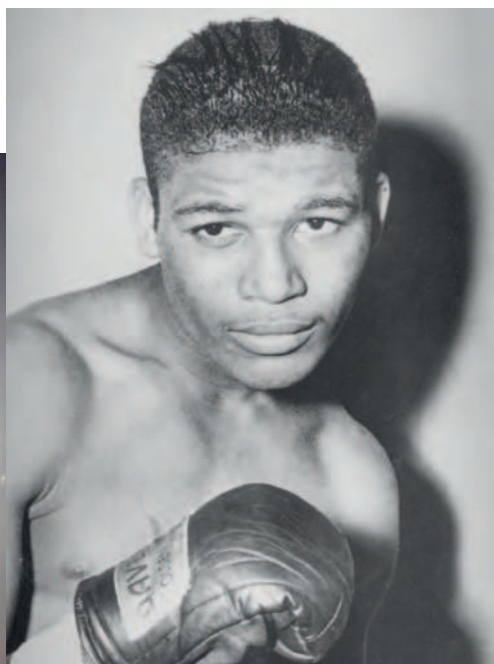
for a worthy cause. I was very excited by the idea but would need the blessing and permission of my superiors at BRB, and also my family, in order to proceed.

I'm sure everyone thought I was completely mad. My father was understandably worried but reluctantly gave me his support. BRB also agreed to let me participate, but the company must have been considering referring me for psychiatric evaluation instead. My friends, and the BRB dancers, were thrilled about the news though and got behind me with full enthusiasm. It seemed a crazy idea but I was determined to make it a reality. I signed up and started training immediately.

I was tremendously lucky to have a connection, through one of BRB's

donors, to the best boxing trainers in Birmingham. Eastside Gym trains the highest level of boxers in the west Midlands and I was generously invited to prepare there alongside world-ranked fighters.

A professional boxing gym is an intimidating place for anyone, let alone someone coming from a background in ballet, but I put on a brave face and commenced the hard work. I was initially greeted by some questioning glances from the boxers as they tried to figure out what to make of me. Soon, though, when they saw me gamely hanging in with them for their workouts, and realising I wasn't going to quit, I gained their acceptance and valuable advice.



The training was gruelling and sometimes totally discouraging. As I made little pitter-pat sounds while hitting the punch bags, the professional boxers shook the entire gym with their powerful impacts. I felt far out of my depth at times, and it reminded me of moving to ballet school in New York from my home in Ohio. The boys already in the school were executing clean double tours en l'air and multiple pirouettes, whereas I was still struggling with the basic mechanics of those movements. With boxing, as with ballet, my only choices were to rise to the challenge and improve or to give up and go home. I refused to consider the latter.

One advantage I had was my feet. There is something very choreographic about boxing footwork and my balance seemed to be pretty good as a result of my ballet background. I thought this connection between the two worlds would serve me well when it came time to fight. In training, I sparred in the ring with professional boxers who, of course, took it easy on me, but it was still an extremely tough experience. Nothing in ballet had prepared me for being punched on the nose. Many times I came home from the gym sore, bruised and exhausted, but I drew on some of the mental toughness and discipline I had gained from ballet and persevered.

After three months of training, fight night was approaching. I had been matched with an opponent who was 14 years younger, slightly taller and heavier than me. Despite the advantages my opponent held, I was most concerned with the fact that I liked him very much. We had gotten along so well during training sessions and now I was going to have to compete against him. This played on my mind, but I was confident of all of the hard work I had put in.

A large group of colleagues from BRB had purchased tickets for my big night, and I had also received an outstanding number of donations for Cancer Research UK. At the beginning of the evening I received an award for being the top fundraiser, for which I was very proud. With an audience full of friends, family and workmates I naturally felt the pressure of the occasion. I once again drew on my experience of performing in an attempt to remain calm and not let my nerves get the better of me.

I made my entrance to the ring in front of my screaming supporters to the music of Carl Orff's *Carmina burana*, which was a nod to my BRB roots and also to David Bintley, my former director, who was in attendance.

*Carmina* was one of the first ballets I worked on with David, and it held a special significance. When the bell rang to start the fight I was overloaded with adrenaline and went straight for my opponent. I gave the fight everything I had and left nothing behind. Three rounds went by in a flash, and I can honestly say that for all of the hard punches I received I didn't feel any pain, due to the adrenaline pumping through my system.

At the end of the match I had no idea if I had won or lost, but the announcer proclaimed I had won a unanimous decision and the referee raised my hand, signifying victory. What a rush!

It was such a proud moment, and stands alongside some of the best memories of my dancing career. I felt a huge amount of respect for my opponent, Brad Wishart, who had pushed me to my absolute limit and given me an exciting and close fight. We have become good friends and I was delighted to have him as my guest to watch a BRB performance following our fight. The bruises and exhaustion faded, but what I gained was several new friends, a higher level of fitness, and an unforgettable memory of a thrilling experience. ■





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# KICKING THE

Nicola Rayner hears from  
*Strictly Come Dancing*  
professional Oti Mabuse ➤

# DOOR

# DOWN



Is there anything Oti Mabuse can't do? The former *Strictly Come Dancing* champion is a favourite on the show with the audience and judges alike. She choreographs musicals on the side, is a judge on *The Greatest Dancer*, has just opened her own studio with her husband and dance partner, Marius Iepure, and is shortly to present a documentary about South Africa, as well as embark on a tour, *I Am Here*, later this year.

On *Strictly*, her 2020 partnership with Bill Bailey made us fall in love with her all over again. As a comedian of a certain age, Bailey so easily could have gone down the dancing-for-laughs route. Instead, the pair performed crisply delivered unforgettable routines that, it's true, have made us smile, but also reflect their many hours spent in the rehearsal room. Mabuse always seems to bring out the best in her partners. What is her secret?

"I don't think it's a secret," she laughs. "In my head, my job is to create a routine that matches them but also that I think everybody at home will enjoy. Sometimes, when you get different types of celebs, people like to connect to them in a different way. So they like to see Graeme [Swann] slightly different to Danny [Mac] slightly different to Kelvin [Fletcher], and I think about all those things. I think about how long it'll take Bill to learn, and I want to put basic elements in and to get the technique right too."

What do their days look like? "We work from 9.30 in the morning until 9.30 in the evening." Such long hours! "We have a lot to do. I mean, you're competing and trying to perform at a high level, because, in my head, I'm trying to create a show for Bill, you know. If you have people who are amazing like HRVY, who's incredible week after week, you feel you have to put in the hours."

So far, at the time of writing, Bailey has held his own. What dances is he best at? "Anything where he gets to be a strong protagonist in our story; when it's lively and he's the lead role, he understands it, he connects to it and he can hear it in the music. So something like the foxtrot, although it was beautiful, you could still see he was thinking a lot and being careful. When you look at 'Rapper's Delight' [their Couple's Choice dance], he

could become the character and he wasn't just a person dancing a million steps. With every dance, there is something behind it, there's always a reason behind the steps – a purpose, a story, something to connect to."

Mabuse's strengths as a choreographer must help him. "I like to tell a story," she says modestly. "I like to disappear inside something and I've been really lucky to have six years where I know that that's something I enjoy doing. It's taken

six years to be like, 'OK, this is what we need and this is who we are. Now I think I'm able to express it with a little bit of confidence.'"

Does she think her experience choreographing musical theatre, in productions such as *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *Kiss Me, Kate*, has helped? "It's working at a different level with a different type of creativity. When you're creating a musical, you want people to leave and go, 'Oh, my goodness, that was amazing. The



choreography was really well thought out.' It shouldn't just be dancing with no purpose and no point. I've been really lucky that the people I've worked with – the producers, singers, actors and dancers – have been really open to my way of thinking."

One of the things that has stood out about Bailey is the amount of research he puts into each dance. "He really thinks about the details, so this week, we had the jive," she begins. "Everybody knows the jive is from New York, and it's about kicks and flicks, but he went on to do a little bit more research... He found out that, actually, when jive came to the UK, it was forbidden. They didn't want it in the church and dancehalls, so he formulates these ideas, and gets the whole picture about a dance... For 'Rapper's Delight', he watched the evolution of hip hop from the beginning. He's always doing a little bit extra; he's not just waking up and coming to rehearsals. It's the extra that the people at home don't get to see – the research, the attention to detail."

Below: Oti Mabuse with Bill Bailey, her 2020 *Strictly Come Dancing* partner.



Mabuse has formed a bubble with Bailey and his family. His wife, Kristin, cooks lunch and supper for the pair every day. "She started making both of us food and just taking care of us; because he's on the road so much she understands how it can be. She's very, very supportive and anything he needs – emotional support, mental support, physical support – she's really there. Honestly, it's so nice that it extends to me; she's so sweet and kind to me as well."

Does she miss Marius? "Absolutely. My husband is my emotional support, but he's still there for me; we FaceTime as much as we can. I lean on him for everything. We've made it work. It means I'll be excited to see him at Christmas." The pair have recently opened a dance school together in north London. "It's always been a dream of ours," she explains. "We want a high-quality competitive school where kids and adults and non-dancers can come and learn – not just Latin and ballroom, but also street dance, Charleston and contemporary. From *The Greatest Dancer* I really got the inspiration and the push to be able to do that. We were going to open it earlier on [in 2020], but obviously we couldn't and so we opened it as soon as the lockdown restrictions eased."

"My husband loves it – it's his passion – he would sleep at the studio, if he could," she laughs. The pair will teach advanced ballroom and Latin, heading up a team of six teachers, including Michael and Jovita, Mabuse's protégés, who won *The Greatest Dancer* last year and performed on *Strictly* in November.

"It was really nice because the studio became this place where people, after dancing with us for so many months online, were able to come and dance with us in person," she muses. Mabuse learned a lot during lockdown, she says. "It was a real eye-opener for me and my husband, because I'm quite energetic: I have to do something. My heart really went out to all the parents who had to home-school. I spoke to my neighbours who were saying, 'It's going to be a struggle.' They'd never had to do it before. I kept saying, 'Oh, let's just do something, you know, "over the gate", some classes.' I started to do the online teaching and then I did it with Karen [Hauer] and Marius and it went really well."

"My husband and I had never spent that much time together, working on a project and having a routine, so, for us, it was great. It was really great for our marriage, our friendship and our companionship. We helped our friends who were in need and those who needed food to be delivered to them. Yeah, that was really nice – and then *Strictly* happened."

Speaking of *Strictly*, how had she found the most recent series?

"Everybody's really, really careful and really, really alert. To a very high level, you know? They really watch that we're two metres apart. If they see you in the corridor without a mask, there's a box that pops out of nowhere, and they make sure that everyone is OK, with all of us being tested. The only thing that really feels different is with the audience not being there, which means we're all really rooting for each other, because we understand that we need to keep it going; we need to keep it uplifted. In my opinion, it's really brought everyone together."

What's it like being judged on *Strictly* by her sister Motsi? "Well, we've done it now for such a long time and we've done it [on *Let's Dance*] in Germany too. I think everybody understands that it's more about the celebs. Obviously, I have to work hard to make sure that it stays that way – I just focus on Bill and hope I make him proud."

There's a third Mabuse sister, too – Phemelo, in between Motsi, the oldest, and Oti, the youngest. "She's a chemical engineer," notes Oti. "Hopefully we'll see her soon. We did *Gogglebox* [on Channel 4], the three of us. That was really nice." Where do they get their drive? "We're all fire signs," she laughs, "so there's a lot of fire in our family. I just honestly think it's being South African; it's being raised in an environment where you have to be driven. That drive and passion, lust for life, and laughing and fun and lightness and caring – it's in our bones. Our parents are incredible human beings and they wanted to raise strong girls. The dance community also requires you to be driven and goal-orientated too, and mum and dad – I can't give them enough credit, because they're amazing – are still very supportive and still push us." ➤



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In the pipeline for 2021 is a one-off BBC documentary about South Africa for which Mabuse, according to a press statement, “will travel across the country starting at the nostalgic and familiar landscape of her childhood in Mabopane near Pretoria. She will follow roads she has travelled with her family, meet old and new friends, and complete a road trip full of surprises.” “I’ll be doing that soon,” she reflects. “It was delayed because of lockdown, so that’s going to be fun and I hope people fall in love with South Africa as much as I do.”

Dancing to “Pata Pata” by South African singer Miriam Makeba on *Strictly* must have meant a lot. “It was such an honour,” she enthuses. “I would never have even suggested it – that’s how much I thought I’d never be given that opportunity. Just being able to dance to all these songs by strong women is amazing. It’s like with Kelvin when we danced to a Celia Cruz song [‘La Vida Es Un Carnaval’] and with Danny Mac we danced to Etta James’ ‘At Last’. You know, these songs by strong women who you feel such a connection to and hope you do them justice.”

**D**id the death of George Floyd over the summer and the Black Lives Matter protests that followed cause her to think about whether the ballroom world has a problem with race? “Well, I grew up in that world,” she says, “and for me, being from South Africa, where race has always been a strong thing, our goal in life was always to succeed with our talents. That’s what my mum always fought for, and we were always the first to do everything, you know: the first Black family to be at a South African Championship; the first Black family to dance at Blackpool; the first Black family to do *Strictly*, so it wasn’t new.”

“For us, it was never something that we saw as a problem – not to take

that away from other people – but it was always about us trying to kick the door down, to make it accessible and open for everyone. Whether it is a problem, I don’t think at the moment, *that’s* the issue – the problem for now is that it is quite an expensive sport. I’m just speaking from my experience in South Africa – it was really difficult: you have to pay for

hard. She worked more than one job so that she could support us and have enough money to fly us to Europe, to get us visas, so I don’t think race was something that we were thinking about; for us, it was literally just competing and trying to be the first to do things and to get to places we never dreamed of.

“I think a lot of the time people, when you talk about racism, they just assume it’s Black and White, but there are other races that [dance and] are there,” she points out. As for the people who haven’t made it into the ballroom world, she adds, “It’s nobody’s fault they’re not there. It is tough for everyone, but I don’t think it’s a place where that becomes the issue.”

Looking ahead to this year, what projects does she have in the pipeline? “I don’t know!” she laughs despairingly. “We thought COVID would be done by last June – I don’t think there’s anything I can talk about at the moment.” However, one thing that has been confirmed is her tour with Marius – *I Am Here*. “We’re doing it with my great friend James Bennett,” she says. “It’s my first time choreographing a tour and I’ll be choreographing other big and little shows but nothing I can talk about at the moment.”

As for *Strictly*, when we talked in late November, lots of people were hoping it would be a third final for Oti. Does she have any thoughts about that? “No,” she says.

“Honestly, I just came from rehearsals and

everyone, every single one of them, is so good and everyone is just as popular as each other, so you don’t know. I just want to keep ourselves focused and prepared for everything.” ■

**Tickets for Oti Mabuse’s *I Am Here* UK tour, which is scheduled to open in April, are available now from [otimabuse.com](http://otimabuse.com).**



lessons; you have to pay for travel. It is tough for a lot of families, especially when you come from developing countries. I think once people can have food to eat at home and education and clothes on their back, then they can enjoy luxuries like competitive ballroom and Latin dancing.

“It’s just something that we have to do,” she continues. “My mum fought for it; she really, really fought

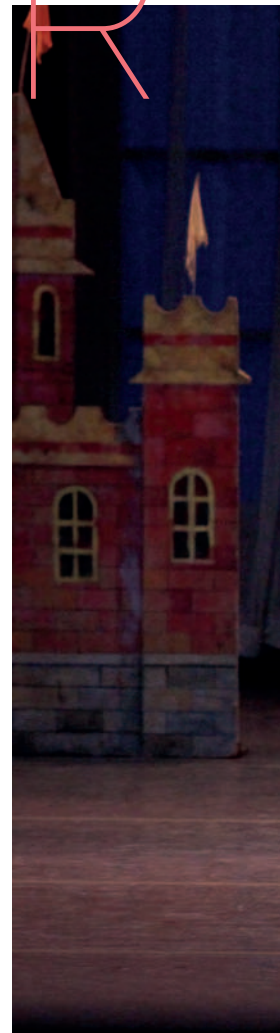


# STRONGER TOGETHER

Sarasota Ballet's **Daniel Pratt** offers a view of how dance companies in the US have been coping with the coronavirus pandemic

**T**he writer and former dancer Jennifer Homans posed two questions on ballet in an interview for the podcast *Conversations on Dance* in 2018: what is this art form to us today, and how do we make it good? The ongoing disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has given dancers everywhere an unusual opportunity to reflect on these ideas, and it has seemed especially pertinent here in the US.

The past months have been full of tidal changes. The public health crisis exposed deep divisions that can be summed up by distinctions such as “red and blue”; “mask or no mask”; “black and white”. The conclusion of the presidential election in November 2020 revealed a nation cracked in half. If there is anything that can be taken



away from all of this, it's that collective ideas and actions which engender a sense of community – like voting or taking a unified approach to health precautions – are how we will navigate the coming year. Having a moment on a stage in an empty auditorium with that social mood as a backdrop made me think about why the arts are important. They are our cultural identity, and what we leave behind us. We have a responsibility for them that runs deeper than their consumption for pleasure.

“Pivot” was the keyword for arts organisations in the US as summer disappeared and autumn unfolded in a similar fashion, with widespread cancellations of live performances. In August, Pacific Northwest Ballet confirmed its entire 2020–2021 season

Bottom left: Sarasota Ballet's assistant director Margaret Barbieri rehearsing, from left to right, Yuri Marques, Janae Korte and Daniel Pratt in Frederick Ashton's *Monotones*. Left: Daniel Pratt. Right: New York City Ballet's Erica Pereira and Daniel Ulbricht in George Balanchine's *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* shown online in Autumn 2020.



would occur digitally, commencing with a programme of solos and socially distanced gems from the repertoire. Though New York City Ballet (NYCB) was providing admirable digital provisions from its archives, NYCB's announcement in October that it wouldn't perform live at its home venue until September 2021 felt like a critical moment. What amplified this feeling in the air was that loss of revenue meant this revered institution couldn't adequately support its dancers through to the year's close. With ingenuity, the ensemble created its own fund, Dancers of NYCB, producing innovative ventures to help raise donations in support of dancers until their return to the stage.

How the pandemic affected arts organisations seemed to be based on

an aggregate of luck derived from a company's operational flexibility and local government regulations. In this way, I was incredibly fortunate to return to rehearsals and the stage at Sarasota Ballet in September to dance in three intelligently devised programmes that would be screened online over the last months of 2020. Dance is experiential, so I wondered what might get lost when an audience member consumes dance at home rather than in the theatre. More personally, I mused on how the act of dancing would feel without anyone watching.

**E**ach day felt like an exploratory process, leading to some revelations. I'll never take a studio space for granted again, and having

a designated space in which to work made me reflect on the energising quality this gives. The stage and the studio became reverential in the same way that going to the theatre is for audiences. During the first lockdown, I simply didn't feel as beautiful hanging on to my kitchen work-top whilst trying to keep my technique and body in step with one another. These feelings suggest something pertinent about ballet and the intentional harmonising of your body with others, all to music. The coming-back-together, albeit in a strict pod system respecting social-distancing policies, felt poetic. It's disheartening to be reminded that health protocols dictate that studio space remains single occupancy at some ballet companies in the US.

A key feature of my "new normal" was dancing whilst wearing a mask. I had to have a stock of 12 masks, two for each dancing day of my week, because they would become sodden with sweat as the rehearsals progressed. Masks were only removed when we filmed for performance. Snatching moments of a colleagues' final rehearsal, I realised how important the face is to dance; how the animation in someone's features lights more connections in a spectator's mind than what limbs alone can do. This reinstatement of the face was not without difficulty. I questioned every look I made on stage, unprepared for the dislocated feelings I had when performing maskless.

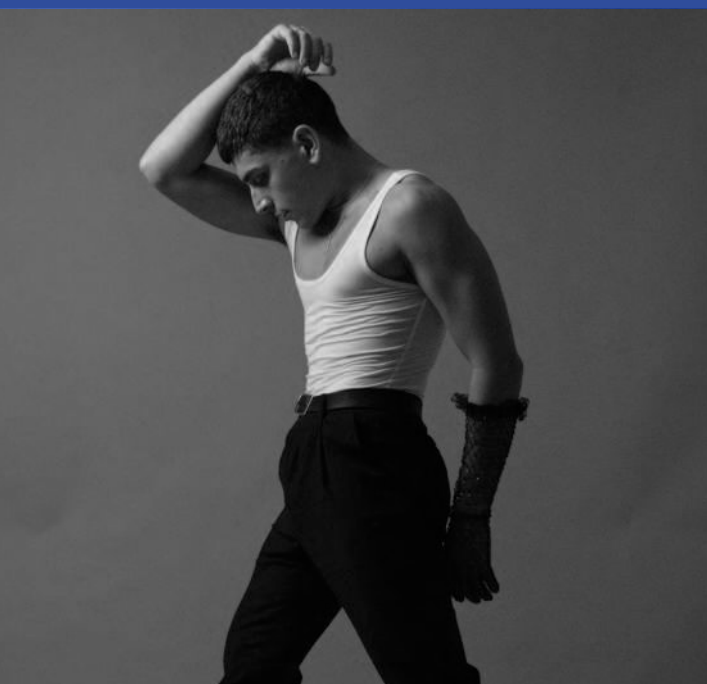
Focus of another kind also had to be considered: do you dance unaware of the camera, or do you involve it in your performance? One of the thrilling aspects of live performance is that there is only one moment for a dance to unfold – you can't obsess about it, and learning to live with those choices as they occur is liberating. Filming, however, enables the possibility of re-takes; I suddenly had time to worry fussily about every angle of every body part. I quickly learnt that adopting that particular outlook was frustrating for dance. It's better to let the performance be what it was – a snapshot of one moment in time. This made me think about the mythology of ballet. Is one enthralling part of our world the fact that our most valued dance moments exist in our memory, free to embellish themselves unencumbered by evidence of what actually unfolded? ➤



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Mark Samaras, dancer with Matthew Bourne's New Adventures. Image: Darren Black



Aitor Viscarolasaga, guest dancer at English National Ballet. Image: ASH Photography

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It's ironic that with so many impositions, I've actually had more opportunities to broaden my horizons over the last few months. Though we've all experienced Zoom fatigue, the video conferencing interface has put me in closer contact with more people than I could ever have expected. I've logged in to free lectures from New York's Columbia University, had coaching during my working days from staggers in other countries, and I've felt proud to be part of thoughtful discussions with dancers from across the US who have come together to exchange ideas in



Top and middle right: Sarasota Ballet filming an online performance during lockdown. Above left: New York City Ballet in Justin Peck's *Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes* during its digital season. Below right: Daniel Pratt and Ellen Overstreet in Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments*.

initiatives set up by the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) to ensure we all get back to performing safely. Though testing, the space to reimagine our world offers worthy discoveries. Alicia Graf Mack, head of the Dance Division at the Julliard School, spoke about how auditioning students on Zoom – as opposed to expensive trips to New York – was removing barriers that previously inhibited opportunity.

As a dance observer, I applaud New York City Center's offerings over the past months. It's "Studio 5 Great American Ballerinas" series, curated by dance critic Alastair Macaulay, was insightful and the digital iteration of the annual *Fall for Dance Festival* felt timely. Christopher Wheeldon's *The Two of Us*, though nothing at all to do with the coronavirus, caught the mood of the day in a comforting way. In the same programme, the resident

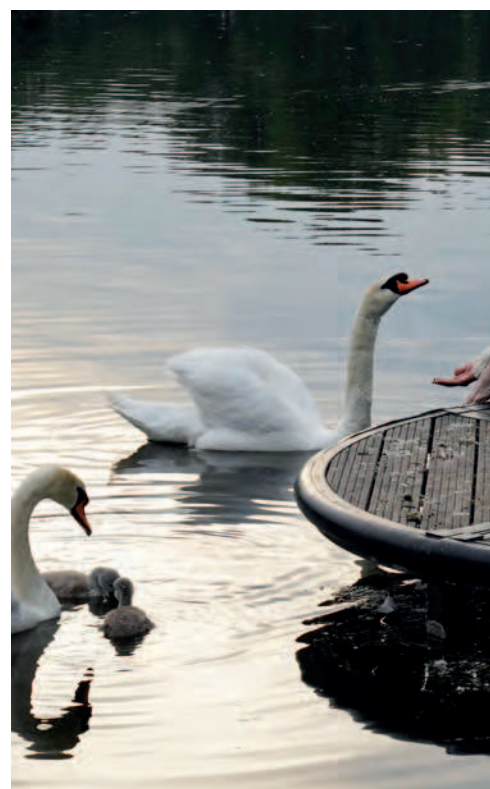
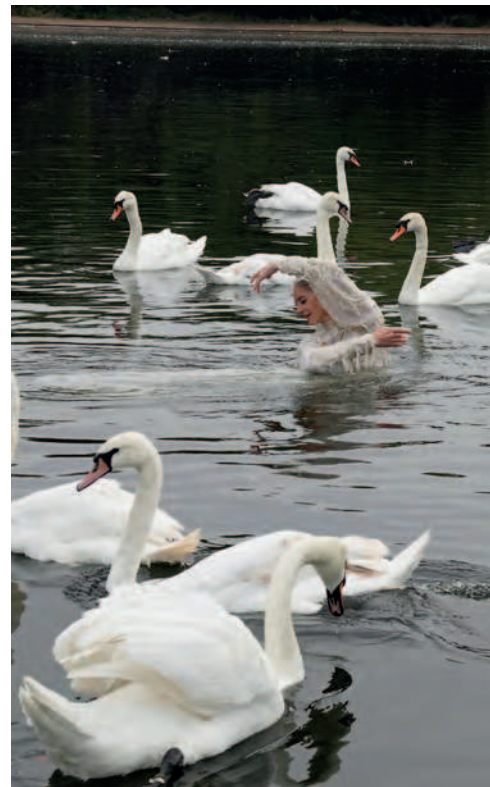


choreographer of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Jamar Roberts' *Morani/Mungu (Black Warrior/Black God)* made me reflect on events in the US following the killing of George Floyd. Engaging in its mix of power and delicacy, the solo spoke about what it is to be a Black male dancer right now. Representation is one part of addressing systemic racism. Though it's imperative to see dance pieces that reflect all people's cultural life, having people of all colours in key roles in the ballet canon

should be the norm. President-elect Joe Biden said in his victory speech on November 7, 2020, that he wanted his campaign to "represent and look like America". It's an urgent requirement for the performing arts in the US too.

It sometimes seems that human culture at large increasingly focuses on efficiency and "multi-use": ballet in a studio and on a stage can feel like an extreme investment in time and energy. I'm hoping the hiatus from assembling in theatres won't dampen our desire for theatre dance, despite the innovations we've adopted to get by. Months ago I felt that complaining about not dancing during a pandemic was distasteful, but after my experiences of 2020 – and when the UK government has been so laconic in its support of dance – I'm feeling emboldened. Our culture needs this classical art. What is vital, and too rarely stated about ballet, is its interweaving of bodily, visual and audial art: dance, design, music. It's criminal to forget the collaborative nature of the genre, and it's a lesson pertinent to our world today. We are all stronger together. ■





# Swans by a lake

A photographic essay by **Kristyna Kashvili**





During the first UK lockdown Elizabeth McGorian, principal character artist with The Royal Ballet, started a series of stories on social media about the swans she was feeding in Hyde Park. Over the weeks her Facebook friends learned about the various families, the nest-building, egg-hatching and finally

the cygnets taking to the water. I asked if I might join her one early morning and take some photographs.

Elizabeth moved this project several bars higher by wearing a beautiful vintage haute couture evening gown by Mme Carven of Paris. To complete a magical morning, Elizabeth went swimming in her dress and the

swans completely surrounded her. Joining in or just being curious, we are not sure. It was Act IV of *Swan Lake* re-enacted on the Serpentine! Elizabeth has a strong affinity with swans, and having performed the role of The Queen Mother in *Swan Lake* many times, we joked that Odette's future mother-in-law had arrived. ■



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Former Birmingham Royal Ballet principal Iain McKay. Photograph: Tim Cross





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42 - The Royal Danish Ballet in *La Sylphide*



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Copenhagen –  
October 24-25, 2020

THERE CAN BE NO doubt that staging August Bournonville's 1836 romantic ballet, *La Sylphide*, is haunting Nikolai Hübbe. In 2003, whilst still performing as a principal with New York City Ballet, Hübbe produced an inspired version of the work for the Royal Danish Ballet in Mikael Melbye's ultra-Scottish traditional sets and costumes, with authentic tartans and the freedom to escape into the green woodlands in Act II. This was all true to the Bournonville tradition, the only novelty being

that James was portrayed as insane and therefore the only human who could see the Sylphide.

Following Hübbe's appointment as artistic director of the Royal Danish Ballet in 2008, he did not include *La Sylphide* in the repertoire for some years. However, in 2014 Hübbe surprisingly chose to restage the ballet in a radical new version. With his own dancing career behind him, Hübbe apparently felt the need to cast himself in the role of Madge, newly re-interpreted as a homoerotic dandy, so that he had the opportunity to kill James at the end of the ballet with a kiss. Theatre designer Bente Lykke Møller, famous for her black and white

palette, created the tartans in gloomy shades of dark grey, which contrasted with the world of the sylphs, all in deathly white as if they were the inhabitants of a mental asylum. Bournonville's choreography was relatively well preserved, but much of the mime was altered to fit the new slant of the story, with James still insane and once again the only person able to see the sylphide.

Last autumn, Hübbe staged a third version of *La Sylphide* in Copenhagen. In fact, it is more or less a replica of his first, with James still mad. This time, however, the wrapping

is different. For this new production, Hübbe asked the designers Anja Vang Kragh and Mia Stensgaard to go all in for the romantic dream, which means colour is back. The different clans each have their own tartan patterns, with James in melancholic blue. Nature seems to have taken over James' house, swagging the hall completely in layer-upon-layer of tapestries and







draperies decorated with the imprints of leaves.

In contrast to James' blue tartan, the feminine woodland of the sylphs is coloured in shades and patterns of schoolgirl pink. It was too sweet and sugar-coated for my taste, but I do prefer this twee pink nightmare to black and white version.

What struck me, however, is the consistency of the

choreography. Bournonville really knew how to portray a sylph deeply in love with a young farmer daydreaming in his chair, and who lures him into the wood on his wedding day. Icelandic-born Jón Axel Fransson made his debut in the role of James, a true dreamer flying high in his jumps and trying to capture Ida Praetorius' beautiful, enticing, wistful Sylphide. In the second cast, the sensitive

Andreas Kaas acted out a whole range of feelings as James – from naïve artlessness to thoughtless greed and then heavy guilt at the moment of the Sylphide's death. The Argentine Wilma Giglio was his fluttering enchantress.

Both casts had magnificent witches. Kizzy Matiakis was an intriguingly sly and cunning Madge in the first cast. In the second, Esther Lee Wilkinson was more a faded beauty turned into an old hag, and who perhaps was unconsciously bewitched by James and unexpectedly shattered by the deadly result of her revenge. At the end she suddenly looked like a dead tree with her upraised, empty arms. Outstanding.

The only peculiar thing about this production of *La Sylphide* is the fact that Hübbe is credited in the programme for

the choreography – after Bournonville. To speak true, I could only see Bournonville's choreography on the stage of the Royal Theatre, for which I am very happy. It isn't very fair of Hübbe to take all the credit for Bournonville's dances, but he is rightfully responsible for the staging of the ballet – which is very fine and has kept the traditional mime intact – together with his competent assistants: Sorella Englund, Anne Marie Vessel Schlüter, Ann Kolvig and Oliver Starpov. ■

**MAJBRIT HJELMSBO**

The Royal Danish Ballet's new production of *La Sylphide*. *Opposite top* Wilma Giglio as the Sylphide and Andreas Kaas as James. *Opposite bottom* Ida Praetorius as the Sylphide and Jón Axel Fransson as James. *Above* Ida Praetorius. *Below* Maria Bernholdt as Anna, Jón Axel Fransson as James and Stephanie Chen Gundorph as Effie.





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# FRANCE/dance

By Laura Cappelle

**A**s 2020 drew to a close, the situation did not seem as dramatic for dance artists in France as it has been in other countries. The pandemic has shown that generous public funding for the arts is a key factor in allowing companies and theatres to keep their doors open in between waves of infections: with France's high levels of state support, even with very few patrons, paying the bills is still an option. No company or venue has announced mass layoffs similar to those in the UK. When vaccines are widely available, might French dance actually bounce back?

Not so fast. One of the long-term effects of the level of disruption the industry experienced in 2020 is likely to be a widening of the gap between those benefiting most from the funding and those who don't, for various reasons. The intermittents du spectacle (performing arts freelancers) may have a generous unemployment scheme of their own in France, but the situation is especially worrying for them, because the benefits they receive are based on the number of hours they work every year.

So far, the government has extended those benefits for all intermittents through to August 2021, but in November, a street demonstration brought the issues they face into relief. So many performances have been cancelled, and continue to be cancelled, that many worry they will never make the required number of hours by next summer,

and they warned in the French newspaper *Libération* that the performing arts sector would face "disaster for years to come".

The crisis may also accentuate the contrast between independent companies and artists who go down the institutional path by applying to be a director, for instance, of one of the 19 National Choreographic Centres. Not every artist is suited to the mix of creative work, management and programming they require; some major choreographers, including Gisèle Vienne, have opted to work outside that system, but dance funding is geared towards it. For emerging artists and smaller companies who have yet to make it onto the institutional ladder, too, 2020 brought far more challenges than the previous generation ever faced. Without specific plans, a number of them may drop off programmers' radar entirely.

**T**heatres face a different kind of reckoning, with long-term pain rather than the threat of immediate closure. Lyon's Maison de la danse, for instance, has already fallen victim to the changing

financial priorities of a new mayoral team (elected last spring): in early October, the Maison's director, Dominique Hervieu, was abruptly told that plans to renovate Lyon's disaffected Guimet Museum to create a new stage and additional studios for dancers would be shelved entirely.

The project dates back to 2015, and was already a replacement for a brand-new theatre that had long been promised, since the current Maison wasn't originally designed for dance and has very little rehearsal space. The decision, this time, seems especially short-sighted, given the amount of money that has been invested in the Guimet Museum for the past five years. The city of Lyon has promised to find a new space near the Maison de la danse; between the prestige the Guimet held and the likely budget constraints ahead, it's bound to be a less ambitious solution.

**A**mid the bad news everywhere, the French culture ministry's generous treatment of the Paris Opéra hasn't gone down particularly well. After the Opéra lost €4 million

to a pension strike and €45 million to COVID-19 cancellations last year, the new culture minister, Roselyne Bachelot, who is a keen opera and music aficionado, found room in the latest arts package for an €81 million boost to the great Parisian behemoth.

A press conference in November, ostensibly called by Alexander Neef to discuss the Paris Opéra's new streaming platform, started with a lengthy, chart-heavy defence of the move. We learned that €20 million was actually set aside for a small additional stage at the Opéra Bastille that was meant to be finished at last, three decades after the house opened. The remaining €61 million, spread over three years, actually covers "only" 82 per cent of the losses for 2020, 75 per cent of projected losses in 2021 and 50 per cent of projected losses in 2022. (How the Paris Opéra knows how much money it will lose in 2022 is unclear.)

It will come as little comfort to artists and institutions working to mitigate short-term losses elsewhere. As a gesture of goodwill, perhaps the Opéra's new streaming platform – separate from the much-vaunted Third Stage launched under Stéphane Lissner and Benjamin Millepied – could be shared with other opera houses around France that don't necessarily have the budget or the brand to sustain their own. Under the circumstances, a little solidarity would go a long way. ■

**"For emerging artists and smaller companies who have yet to make it onto the institutional ladder, 2020 has brought far more challenges than the previous generation ever faced. Without specific plans, a number of them may drop off programmers' radar entirely"**





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Two major companies rejoiced in being up-to-date and even a bit forward-looking in online galas. *ABT Today: The Future Starts Now* is what American Ballet Theatre (ABT) named its offering, whereas the Paul Taylor Dance Company (PTDC) contributed *Modern Is Now: Stories of Our Future*. Neither attraction was totally successful, but both radiated such heartwarming optimism that it was good to have them at this political, artistic and fundraising time of the year. It was also good to note that two of ABT's premieres were by women, and two were by men. The emotional weather did seem to be warming up.

ABT's works were made by dancers and choreographers working (safely, one hopes) in "ballet bubbles" outside New York City; three of them at small cultural centres; the fourth on the premises of what is now considered a modern architectural landmark, the Glass House built by architect Philip Johnson in New Canaan, Connecticut. This was the site of *David*, a solo for David Hallberg by Pam Tanowitz and Jeremy Jacob to music by Lawrence Baldwin and Boccherini. *David* began indoors with Hallberg contemplating illustrations in a book about Renaissance art. When the action moved outdoors to a pavilion rising from a pool of water, into which Hallberg eventually stepped, it became clear that the title had a double meaning: David referred both to Hallberg and to Michelangelo's statue of David, in Florence. The solo thereby simultaneously honoured both the classical

dignity of the sculpture and Hallberg's striking presence. Yet *David*, though visually striking, actually revealed little about these figures beyond their obvious physical beauty. Or maybe that was enough.

For me, the most satisfying ABT premiere was Christopher Rudd's *Touché*, to music by Woodkid, a duet for Calvin Royal III and João Menegussi that was both similar to and different from many male duets of recent seasons. Like them, it celebrated male physicality, but it did so boldly and without attempting to disguise the fact it was a love duet. It began with then men approaching each other warily, then growing increasingly passionate, hesitantly withdrawing, but always reuniting until they, gradually, yet inevitably, removed their clothes. Affection and embraces triumphed. A candid duet like this might not have been possible all that long ago, when puritans and prudes could have accused it – mistakenly – of being salacious.

The other premieres – Gemma Bond's *Convivium* (to music by John Harbison) and Darrell Grand Moultrie's *Indestructible Light*, to a jazz medley – were chipper, without being particularly memorable. Nevertheless, it was a pleasure to see all four works.

It was also a pleasure to watch the PTDC gala which, to the participants' obvious delight, reached the programme's fundraising goal. The event, directed by Jessica Ryan, was simple in format. Reminiscences and



pleas for contributions by past and present Taylor dancers and other entertainment luminaries alternated with scenes from dances. Longtime Taylor associates, Bettie de Jong and Carolyn Adams, were also singled out for special honours.

Tanowitz, a choreographer who seems everywhere nowadays, set the mood for the occasion with dancers performing her kinetically cheery *All at Once*. The emphasis, however, was on Taylor's own dances, including such a comparatively little-known piece as *Also Playing*, a parody of silent films; its jokes were obvious, but funny nonetheless.

Many of the gala's speakers rightly praised Taylor's eclecticism, which

Above: American Ballet Theatre's Calvin Royal III and João Menegussi in Christopher Rudd's *Touché*.

was evident in the excerpts from his works that were shown. The smug and belligerent male quartet from *Cloven Kingdom* demonstrated how beastly human beings can be; the fact that they were all in masks made them appear especially ominous. The blissed-out looks of the cast in *A Field of Grass* suggested why some audiences have interpreted this dance as an expression of the pleasures of pot-smoking. *Esplanade* made ordinary movements extraordinary; and the mysterious, craggy rituals of *Runes* were reminders that, as Taylor apparently always knew, life itself is mysterious. ■



# Letter from St Petersburg

By Igor Stupnikov

**T**he 11th International Festival of Arts "Diaghilev P S"

opened on the stage of St Petersburg's Alexandrinsky Theatre in November, but this time, alas, it was not an international event due to the coronavirus. In her opening speech, Natalia Metelitsa, artistic director of the festival, said she had done her best to preserve Angelin Preljocaj's *Swan Lake* in the schedule but had to postpone the visit of his famous company until 2021.

The only production shown to Petersburg's ballet fans was *Modanse*, a programme consisting of two works – Mauro Bigonzetti's *Come un Respiro* to music by Handel, and Yuri Possokhov's *Gabrielle Chanel* danced to a score by Ilya Demutsky. Both ballets had the Bolshoi's star ballerina Svetlana Zakharova in the leading role. The auditorium was packed to capacity with fans, who remembered her first steps on the stage of the Maryinsky Theatre.

The premiere of Bigonzetti's ballet took place at La Scala, Milan, in 2017, with Zakharova and Roberto Bolle, although a new version was later seen in 2019. The choreography is an endless series of solos, duets and trios, all with high lifts, hyperextensions and agonised floor work. Some moments were reminiscent of exercises at the ballet barre.

Zakharova charmed with her instinctive musical feeling and brought to the work qualities that are entirely her own: upper-body glamour, effortless balances, easy virtuosity

and stylistic radiance. The audience enjoyed both the beautiful, well-drilled corps de ballet and the amazing soloists – Ana Tuzarashvili's lines, Denis Savin's jumps, Viacheslav Lopatin's tours en l'air, Jacopo Tissi's coruscating spins...

The dance kept going and going, without anything apparently happening, and it seemed possible to leave the auditorium and return later, only to find nothing had changed. Too much repetition for a 20-minute ballet? *Come un Respiro* looked like an hors d'oeuvre for the main dish.

**F**or *Gabrielle Chanel*, Demutsky and Possokhov, together with the librettist Alexei Frandetti, created a bright, expressive novella based on the life and career of the great fashion designer. Thirteen episodes, separated by Coco Chanel's aphorisms, show how the small, fragile, yet powerful woman went on, finally, to change the world of fashion. Zakharova prepared for the role seriously: she read Chanel's memoirs and perused her photographs; when in Paris, the ballerina visited Chanel's studio and apartment – every minute detail of the designer's life was important.

The stage is at first seen in semi-darkness. To the left, an elderly woman in a white jacket and a matching white, broad-brimmed hat, sits on a white settee watching a stream of images projected onto a large screen-mirror: Chanel sees herself

at various stages of her life – girl, teenager, woman.

In the next scene, the Rotunda cabaret is full of people, and a performance is taking place on a small stage. The audience's attention is riveted on two young dancers – Chanel (Zakharova) and her sister (Turazashvili) – who charm with their impetuous passion and sparkling joy. Among the frequenters is Etienne Balsan (Mikhail Lobukhin), a rich industrialist and horse trainer, who courts Gabrielle. His solo, full of high jumps and whirlwind turns, reveals much explosive power and virility. At first his advances and embraces are rejected but, at last, Etienne's passion conquers Gabrielle. In their duet, Zakharova showed a delicate mastery of intricacy, as well as the difficult balance between love and a keen awareness of the difference between her and Etienne's worlds.

An episode at the "Hippodrome" presents high society: mesdames in long, voluminous dresses and enormous hats; messieurs in black suits and top hats. Gabrielle, in her modest checked dress, feels uncomfortable among the glamorous beau monde. Here, Zakharova's dances were permeated with shifts of subtle emotional nuance.

The visit to the Hippodrome was a significant moment in Chanel's life: it was there that she met and fell in love with Arthur Capel (Tissi), a rich Englishman. Their duet is full of spectacular lifts and throws, perhaps symbolic of the spontaneity of love's first excitement. Tissi was revealed as a performer of force, finesse and distinction, dancing with delicacy and a legato sweep. Handsome, tall, ardent and perfect in style, he partnered excellently and brought a



**"Zakharova prepared for the role seriously: she read Chanel's memoirs and perused her photographs; when in Paris, the ballerina visited Chanel's studio and apartment – every minute detail of the designer's life was important"**

marvellous range of detailed inflections to his role.

Zakharova completely found her own way into Chanel's alarmingly ardent devotion to love. Musically acute, she was the absolute mistress of the choreography. With her riveting, elegant technique, and sparkingly precise legs and feet, she switched effortlessly from sustained adagio to scintillating presto. Her sweet responsiveness to Tissi's Arthur was touching and the feelings that she used to infuse the scene – jubilant, romantic, intimately dramatic – helped deepen the stage picture.

"In order to be indispensable one has to be flexible," wrote Chanel. She was certainly flexible about the opening of her atelier. The scene is full of seamstresses cutting fabric and making silhouettes, and is reminiscent of a beehive – the corps de ballet dance with ardour, without any loss of lightness, fun and charm. When society women appear, dressed in long, elaborate gowns and huge hats, Chanel tears them off and offers them her new models instead.

A meeting with Serge Diaghilev changes Chanel's life, and she plunges into the world of ballet. She watches a class given by Serge Lifar (Lopatin), who coaches dancers in George Balanchine's *Apollo* and Bronislava Nijinska's *Le Train bleu*, for which Chanel created the costumes. A Mediterranean beach is populated by chic society. Dressed à la Chanel in striped sailor tops, with bathing caps or colourful kerchiefs on their heads or around their necks, the characters enjoy life playing golf or swimming in the sea.

Tragedy unexpectedly bursts into Chanel's life



This page and opposite: Svetlana Zakharova as Coco Chanel in Yuri Possokhov's *Gabrielle Chanel* at the Alexandrinsky Theatre. With her below is Jacopo Tissi as Arthur Capel.

when Capel is killed in an automobile accident. Here, Zakharova's solo is full of grief and despair. Though feelings of solitude often overpower her, she

continues with her new creations in various spheres, perfumery included. Five male dancers, all clad in black suits and headed by a Perfumier (Savin), hold scent bottles in their hands. In weightless jumps they encircle the stage, as if offering their goods, and then approach Chanel. She checks each bottle, one

after another, rejecting the first four and approving the fifth – Chanel Number Five, a scent for a new age.

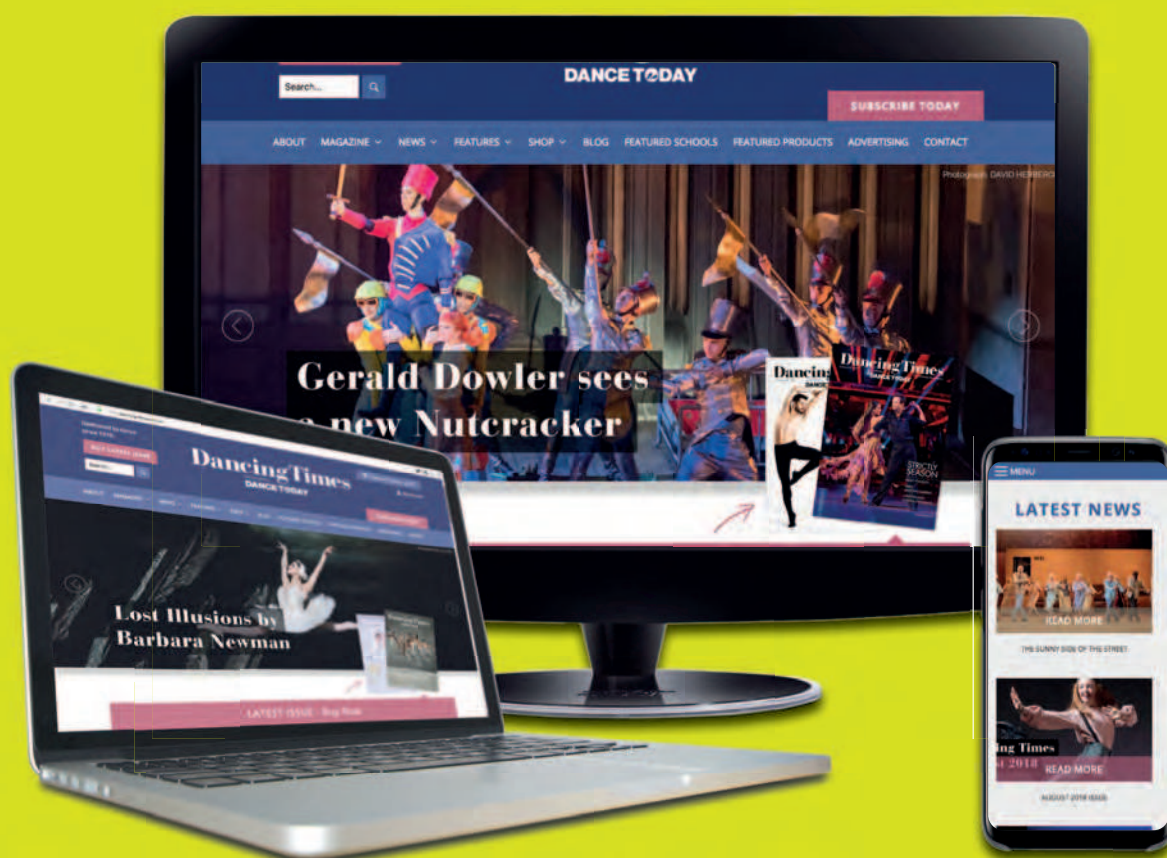
The ballet is cleverly rounded up: the elderly Chanel watches her creations in a defilé of models projected onto a screen. The scene is a triumph for the great woman – a hymn to her talent and energy. ■





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# DANCE TODAY

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# Strictly speaking



**Marianka Swain** rounds up an unusual series of *Strictly Come Dancing*.

Photographs by **Guy Levy**, courtesy of the **BBC**

**I**t was a *Strictly* like no other. This shorter, pandemic-restricted version of our favourite ballroom show featured bubbling, social distancing, studio performances without a live audience – and a few unplanned dramas, too. However, we also had a satisfyingly varied cast of characters, and some sparkly escapism at a time when the nation sorely needed it.

Last June, we got the good news that the show would be back on our screens, albeit with the run starting in October rather than September, and with a reduced cast of 12. Halloween Week was out, since it fell too early in the series, and there would be no trip up to Blackpool.

The professional dancers bubbled together at a hotel in order to film all their performances pre-series. Instead of a studio audience, we had our cast making plenty of noise, and interviews in the Clauditorium were one at a time – meaning we got the amusing sight of a polite queue on the steps.

None of which affected the atmosphere of the show too badly. As with everything last year, we soon adjusted to this “new normal” – although there were some annoyances, such as the overuse of Zoom chats with family in the midst of scoring. Yes, there was added poignancy because we’ve all been separated from family members in this difficult time, but it became forced.

The shortened series did alter the rhythm of the show. There was less time for celebrities to establish themselves, or to grow. DJ Clara Amfo came into the competition with bags of potential, but, other than a fabulous flapper Charleston, it never quite clicked; in another year, she might have had a week or two extra



Top: The 2020 *Strictly* line-up. Above: The *Strictly* pros perform a drag routine in week seven.





## Best in Series

**Best performance:** Bill Bailey and Oti Mabuse's Couple's Choice. Much as I abhor CC, it's irresistible – detailed, musical and emblematic of this great partnership.

**Best costume:** Johannes Radebe living his best life as a *Priscilla* drag queen in Musicals Week. A male celeb ringer for Johannes next series, please!

**Best move:** Claudia Winkleman diving into the glitterballs when an excited Bill Bailey forgot about social distancing. Very 2020.

**Best line:** Craig Revel Horwood pulling out the yooof term "GOAT" ... to deathly silence. Stay in your lane, darling.

to find her way. Politician Jacqui Smith only had a couple of shows in which to be amusingly terrible, while singer Max George got unlucky with his swift, mid-series exit – a far cry from The Wanted bandmate Jay McGuiness' winning run. Having fewer weeks also made the Couple's Choice category even more egregious. It over-dominated, skewing the leaderboard, while proper styles, such as the rumba, vanished. It was also less defined than ever; instead of street, jazz or contemporary, celebs could do some vague mixture, or not even declare a genre. In response, the judges gave them a free pass.

One aspect that was business as usual was the debate over "ringers", and whether the female celebs got a tougher time of it than the men. *EastEnders* actress Maisie Smith was unfairly dumped into several dance-offs, despite her obvious talent and the ambitious routines from partner Gorka Marquez. Yet social media star HRVY, of a similar age and pre-*Strictly* skill level, didn't seem to attract nearly the same amount of viewer vitriol. Worse, prejudice extended into the judging. Male contestants were consistently given an easier ride, praised for recovering from mistakes or for their natural understatement, while the women were castigated for technical errors or not taking enough risks. The bias became something of an embarrassment – particularly the constant propping up of soldier JJ Chalmers, who was seemingly marked for the surrounding sentiment, rather than what he actually delivered on the dance floor.

The judging panel also had a few shake-ups, with Bruno Tonioli in the US, and Motsi Mabuse quarantining after an emergency trip to Germany, which meant Anton du Beke finally got his shot. The long-time pro was a bland if fairly harmless presence, aping Brucie and Len, but didn't convince as a necessary addition. He mainly spouted flowery compliments or listed steps, and his scores were over-generous. On the pro side, "Ginger" Neil Jones wound up back on the subs' bench, and firecracker Nancy Xu still hasn't made it onto the main show. Luba Mushtuk remained in the core cast, but had only a brief stint with American footballer Jason Bell. All deserve a proper chance to impress.

At least fan favourite pro Johannes Radebe had an enjoyable – if truncated – run with actress Caroline Quentin, whose ballet background made her an early standout, but ultimately impeded her *Strictly* progress. Sometimes, ignorance is bliss. That's certainly the case for reality star Jamie Laing. Awkward initially, he grew with partner Karen Hauer, winning over fans with enthusiastic antics, and occasionally impressing on the ballroom side too.

Yet perhaps the biggest surprises were TV presenter Ranvir Singh and comedian Bill Bailey. The former looked likely to depart after a wedding-disco Latin or two. Instead, she and Giovanni Pernice became a smouldering pair, adept at passionate storytelling. It was very rewarding to watch Singh grow in confidence, too: this year's "J word" contestant. Similarly, Bailey seemed like classic dad-dancing comedy act casting, but then wowed everyone with his charming, twinkled-toed performances. The fact that he's an accomplished musician certainly helped, but it was his eagerness to learn, and real respect for teacher Oti Mabuse, that fuelled his success.

Series 18 made history for reasons other than COVID-19, with *Strictly* finally casting a same-sex partnership. Boxer Nicola Adams requested a female pro and was duly paired up with Katya Jones. Their time on the show was sadly cut short when Jones tested positive for coronavirus. However, thanks to their warm public reception, the BBC will hopefully give us another same-sex pair in the 2021 series. One thing is for sure: we'll be welcoming *Strictly* back, thankful for this glittery oasis in difficult times. Keeeep dancing! ■



Top: Bill Bailey and Oti Mabuse perform their Couple's Choice dance to "Rapper's Delight".



# Tips on technique

## New Year's jive

**James Whitehead** shares some cheering jive tips to get 2021 started with a swing

**L**et's not beat about the bush – we all need cheering up! Time to reach for some vibrant tunes and have some fun jiving together. However, what ingredients should we put into our ideal New Year's party jive recipe? Before you all shout, "Riccardo and Yulia", let us look closer to home at some festive ingredients we might like to include.

Perhaps number one for me might be to feel mobile and responsive enough to "play", and by that, I mean to have my weight in the right place throughout and to use techniques that might help control the transfer of weight, even at speed. A good starting point here is to ensure we carry the weight towards the balls of our feet. You need to feel able to shift your body weight freely. To try that, just stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and pretend Andy Murray is firing a serve at you over the net – knees soft, slightly veered in, springy weight transfers from foot to foot. You've no idea whether the serve will go right or left but you will be poised to move either way (in this case probably as far away from the firing line as possible, but you get the idea). Try to feel the use of a sideways roll in the feet, using the inside edges of the balls of the feet rather than a

flatter placement. My three little girls are excellent at keeping me over the balls of my feet at the moment, so I am expecting fabulous practice over the New Year period with them.

James and Joanna Whitehead will be jiving their way into 2021.

Just as Father Christmas took care walking over all those frosty roofs, there is also the feeling of split weight in jive. With exceptions in specific actions, we aim to place the feet in a manner that helps us transfer weight over the foot; the foot must be placed in advance of the weight being placed anywhere. In doing so, we have a sense of timing the body between the feet rather than on the feet. If we therefore aim to get the music on and time our body rhythm to it, it will mean we have to place our feet faster

in order to be used fully to support our (obviously amazing) body action.

As anyone, like me, who enjoys preparing Christmas dinner can tell you, the secret is always in the timing, and surprise, surprise, the same is also true for our jive. Without a sense of clear timing and how to achieve it, jive can look quite flat and lethargic – fine for straight after said Christmas dinner, but definitely not for the swinging New Year's Eve party. For example, in the chassé, if we split the actions over eight equal



counts, the first action takes the first three counts, the second action just count four, and the last action of the chassé takes the remaining four counts. Danced with precision the classic three-quarter, quarter, one rhythm gives the look of driving the beat with an accent and aligns with the dropped bounce action to the floor. Regardless of the rhythm being danced, just make sure you are abundantly clear and dance whichever it is in a way that is unambiguous; if you are clear, your partner will likely be clear, and for anyone else watching all of the actions appear so much more switched on.

Speaking of your partner, you may or may not be with someone to bring in the New Year. Regardless of that, at 10am on New Year's Day we will be leading the charge for some party dancing fun in our house, so please, if you feel that way, get the music on and have some fun. We'll be dancing at the same time as you, and thinking about you too. If you are fortunate enough to have someone under the same roof with you, then great, but ensure you make the most of the opportunity.

Make the most of the connection by reacting to each other in a two-way process. With our own body weights feeling forward from the outset, we can maintain that feeling of "towards each other". The arm connections should never feel unduly physical, but rather cooperative and malleable. Keep those arm connections shorter to aid the compact feeling. The overall aim is not to feel as though you are in a Zorb ball, but that you have a small ball inside you – your centre. It is through the use of that centre, keeping it bound and compact

## +technique clinic

### Our Dance Doctor, Phil Meacham, looks back on the benefits of dancing solo during lockdown

One of the positive outcomes of the coronavirus pandemic is that people are now dancing solo more, rather than always in couples or being partnered by teachers. I'm not, for one second, taking away the importance of being able to dance as couples or being led through the actions, styling and routine by a teacher. However, the fact is that, in many cases, dancers have lost the ability to quite literally stand on their own two feet.

I've often said that dancing is the ability for two people to move together in harmony as a four-legged creature, but this four-legged creature is made up of a pair of two-legged creatures, obviously! It is vital that both people in the partnership are able to support their own weight and propel and project their movement in the right directions at the right speed, and with the right amount of balance. Then, when fitted together, we create the four-legged creature scenario.

All too often you see one person lugging the other person around the floor. Dancing, by definition, is primarily a couple sport or pastime, and there should be an equal amount of investment in the movement and shaping of the dance between the two partners.

Balance is vital, and that is created by a good understanding and reaction within the leg and foot muscles to any changes in the stance of the body. This becomes more acute when on the move, but ultimately, we are responsible for our own

balance. There are many examples when one person's balance is transferred to the other for the purpose of maybe enhancing a turn or spin, but ultimately we can't get away from the fact that we must be balanced over the top of our own feet.

Dancing solo has made us think long and hard about how to improve the balance over our own feet, and a simple exercise can reveal just how much of an improvement this study can be.

First, stand upright with the weight of the body held forward over the balls of both feet, and then incline the body forward as far as possible without the heels coming off the floor. Think about the angle of the body leaning forward and make a mental measurement of where the body is. Now tilt the body backwards over the heels of both feet, again as far as you can without losing balance or falling over. Once again measure where the position of the body is in relation to your feet and you will find a wedge shape between the two positions. It's often quite surprising how much of a wedge is created through these positions, and that should show you immediately just how much balance can be gained or lost by leaning backwards or forwards. The problem is magnified when on the move, and the muscles must react immediately to take up any slack and cater for any change in balance.

When you're dancing with a partner, it is far too easy to just hang on or use their body as a resting place or a lever to stay on your feet. So, use this opportunity that we have at the moment when solo dancing to generate better control and understanding of where our centre of balance is. Maybe there are some positives to a pandemic after all? ■

To consult our Dance Doctor, Phil Meacham, email [nicola@dancing-times.co.uk](mailto:nicola@dancing-times.co.uk).

there, that all of the other ingredients will fit and make sense together.

The past year has been the most challenging for maintaining momentum with your dancing. My wife, Joanna, and I have had to adapt or we would not have got through 2020

and I know many other dancers have had to do likewise. Some have tried and been unable to, facing the toughest of challenges.

Through 2021, the battered and bruised dance industry will start to be able to get into the swing of things again and

I cannot wait to be present for it all again. Please, please steal a moment of madness at home; turn up the cheesy music for as many days into 2021 as possible and just have a bit of spontaneous fun with some jive. You all deserve it. Happy New Year! ■



# Simon's guide to *Swing*

## Simon Selmon introduces his Five-a-day Swing practice

**I**t's a new year – 2021. Finally, the end to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions is in sight and I'm looking forward to things getting back to normal, although I suspect that normal may change irreversibly for some people. During the last few months, to keep the flame alive, I have come up with a practice for myself, which I call Five-a-day Swing. I'd like to share it with you.

So what is Five-a-day Swing? It's how I like to start my day to give myself a boost, a shot of energy and put a spring in my step. As the name suggests, it comprises five elements. The first two may surprise you as they are not particularly dance-related, but they're essential ingredients to keep me on the right path.

I start my morning routine standing, sitting or lying down in a comfortable position for some breathing exercises. I have picked one I can share with you right now. It's called the five-five. You take a breath in for a slow count of five, then out for a slow count of five. That's it. Visualise the breath flowing deep into your belly, don't force it, breathe in through the nose for five seconds, then out without pausing.

As you breathe in, feel your belly and chest rise and, as you breath out, feel how they gently fall. Apart from the physical act of filling your body with oxygen, the real secret is to try and keep your focus on

the breath – if your mind wanders that's OK, but pull it back to the visualisation of the breath flowing in and out. I normally do this for one or two minutes.

The next stage is my mindset meditation. In this age of computers, never-ending emails and mobile phones always by our side, it feels like there are constant distractions and sometimes we forget the importance of just being still with our thoughts. I have come up with a morning regime of ten questions or mental tasks that are pertinent to me. I revisit the same ten items every day, although I will usually pick one or two on the list to explore a little bit more in depth that day.

The first question I ask myself is something that you all know to do but which we often forget. It's gratitude. I used to laugh when I saw an old movie with a family, before a meal, sitting around the table being thankful for what they've got, but that's exactly what I'm going to suggest to you now. It might just be as simple as thinking about three things that happened yesterday that you're truly thankful for. They don't have to be big things, but when you're grateful every day, you begin to build what is known as an "abundance

mindset" and it's hard to be depressed in that state.

Next up are footwork drills! Now I'm ready to start dancing, and like a musician who practises their scales or a ballet dancer who starts at the barre, practising basics over and over again, preferably daily, is what will make a good dancer become a great dancer. I try and set myself a small routine of basics that I have done a thousand times before – the steps that you would learn in a beginners' class – but focus on the excellence and quality of the movement, such as completely rolling through the foot or making sure I have the correct alignment or posture throughout the body. A typical sequence could be practising classic six or eight-count patterns, mixed with some Charleston footwork, with a transition step to change sides. I practise for a minimum of one three-minute song.

**A**fter that, I begin movement therapy – my favourite part. I will put on one, two or three songs, and then just dance to the music. Sometimes, I put my playlist on random and challenge myself to dance to whatever music is selected (there can be some really weird tracks as I have an eclectic playlist!). Other

times, I will set myself a task such as focusing on footwork or freezes. As I normally dance as a leader, I might practise the follower's footwork or maybe give myself a theme, such as dancing in a particular character or playing with changes in height.

Finally, I'll do some stretching. This will often be more dynamic stretching or just simple warm-up exercises. Ultimately, it will depend on whether I'm finishing my practice here or if it's the beginning of a longer session. Typically, I spend from five to ten minutes stretching. If you're looking for some fresh ideas, my recommendation would be to go to YouTube and look up warm-up exercises from different disciplines, such as running, cardio, martial arts, yoga and so on, to get lots of variety.

These exercises can be done in any amount of time between ten minutes or an hour, but I recommend keeping them short so that they can become a regular habit. It can be a great addition to your regular dancing practice or something for those days when you're not dancing and just want a great way to start your day.

Personally, I'm a morning person, but maybe you prefer a lunchtime break or something to bring your day to a close. I know this has helped me get through the lockdown, and I hope it might become part of your journey to dancing your way to a better life.

If you would like the support of a video, a sample of these Five-a-day Swing practices is freely available on [YouTube.com/SwingdanceUK](https://www.youtube.com/SwingdanceUK), or you can find them all (and more!) in our Members' Area at [swingdanceuk.com](https://www.swingdanceuk.com). ■





# Stepping Out

The same-sex ballroom and Latin dance scene

**Marianka Swain**  
reflects on an  
extraordinary year,  
and previews 2021

Same-sex dancers experienced huge disruption to their activities in 2020 – as, of course, we all did. The year began with another wonderful Pink Jukebox Trophy (PJT) at London's Rivoli Ballroom, featuring leading international dancers and new homegrown stars in the form of a Welsh contingent. We saw UK winners, with Jonathan Morrison and Shane Seal closing holding off another pair from the UK, Darren Whitby and Vishesh Mehta, in the A Latin, and attention was also on the German-British partnership of Jan Himme and Henri T, who raised discussion about gender identity through the slogans on their clothes: "Goodbye Gender" and "Embrace all identities". In fact, the UK Same-sex Dance Council rebranded as the UK Equality Dance Council in 2020, in order to be more inclusive.

Same-sex dancer Charles Chan was delighted to take on the role of assistant chairman at last year's PJT. He fondly recalls the competition's afterparty at Bishopsgate Institute, where "organisers, volunteers, competitors and spectators had a chance to relax and socialise. Dancers from everywhere switched off their 'work' or 'competition' mode to enjoy chatting and dancing with each other. I also got to DJ for a couple of hours and had the best

view of a packed dance floor of the Great Hall. It was my last major event before it all stopped, but the fabulous memory has kept me going and dreaming of the next occasion like this."

As Chan observes, we sadly haven't seen much competition action since the PJT due to the pandemic, with numerous events having to be cancelled – including the ESSDA European Championships in Dusseldorf and the UK Equality Open. However, that doesn't mean everyone's been sitting idle. Far from it: the ingenious responses have been truly inspiring, with many taking to the web in order to keep classes going and the same-sex dance family together – at a time when many needed it more than ever.

Pete Meager started holding free online classes on Facebook, choreographing new line dances that people could do at home. Dancers from all over the world joined in,

including many who had never tried ballroom before. One silver lining to the grim year has been digital projects reaching new audiences, and the same-sex dance community has expanded accordingly. The ISTD joined in with their new #BoxDance syllabus, creating dances that could be done in a small space. Anyone who has been crashing into the furniture while following an online class will appreciate the necessity of that initiative.

The Pink Jukebox's Ralf Schiller posted daily song recommendations for ballroom dances on Facebook, and Jacky Logan shared teaching videos from her garden. The London Dance Studio's Roswitha Wetschka moved her classes onto Zoom, and included welcome social aspects like post-dance chat. While we all hope for more in-person dance classes and events in 2021, the pandemic

Jonathan Morrison and Shane Seal  
at the Pink Jukebox Trophy.



permitting, some of these successful digital avenues may well continue too.

There was cheering representation in 2020, including the triumphant appearance of Ezekiel Vargas and Carl Terenz Belarmino on *Britain's Got Talent* back in May, and the long overdue casting of a same-sex pair on *Strictly Come Dancing* (read more about the latter in next month's issue of *Dancing Times*). Plus, Jacky Logan was honoured with a Medal of the Order of the British Empire for Services to Same-sex Ballroom Dancing in the 2020 New Year Honours List. The messages she received were "amazingly emotional", Jacky says, showing how happy everyone was to see same-sex dance recognised in such a significant way.

This, she believes, is an honour for all the "amazing teachers, campaigners and dancers who have stood firm over the years, working to get the terms 'leader' and 'follower' used more widely, and to break down the limits imposed by the traditional man/lady partnership rules." There were lovely sentiments expressed, such as those by same-sex dancer Daniel Hernandez Antonio, who travels from Spain to attend Jacky's events at the Rivoli Ballroom whenever he can. "Thank you for creating a place to let us be ourselves dancing."

We certainly hope that same-sex dance can persevere in 2021. The next PJT will be virtual, a format other events might follow – pandemic depending. In theory, we also have another UK Equality Open in November. What's certainly clear from 2020 is that the community will stick together, no matter what, ensuring that no dancer is left behind. ■



# Memories from the dance floor

**M**y dream was always to create a record of Classical/Old Time demonstrations, which has recently come true in the form of the DVD *Classical Ballroom Dances* – advanced contemporary sequences, choreographed and developed from the professional demonstrations of Sheila Buckley and myself when we were British Classical Professional Ballroom Champions, from 1964 to 1966. The dances are demonstrated by Mark Patton and Jackie Davies, also former British Classical Ballroom Champions.

I have written about my experience as a Classical ballroom dancer elsewhere. I don't wish to repeat myself too much here, but Sheila and I had a long and successful career and I'm sad not to see young Classical professionals of today enjoying the same popularity that we had. We were kept very busy with demonstrations at dance school presentation nights, dinner-dances, sequence dance club events, Masonic ladies' evenings, private celebrations and, of course, championships.

When our partnership came to an end, I became involved in other branches of dance, concentrating more on teaching and adjudicating than performing. I never lost interest in Classical/Old Time dance, however, which had occupied such a large and successful part of my life. I continued to watch with interest, like a spectator on the touchline,

saddened at seeing the decline of public interest in this wonderful branch of ballroom dancing.

Sadly over the past decades it has been slowly pushed out of the mainstream by other dance styles, such as rock 'n' roll, disco and country and western. Even Modern and Latin sequence have attracted the public interest. Despite this, the music, choreography and traditions of Classical/Old Time still manage to attract a devoted and active following.

In early 1983, a defining moment came for me when I got fired up at a regular meeting of the UKA Dance board of directors (in those days known as the UKA executive

council). The discussion was about lectures for the June conference.

The question was: who was going to be invited to deliver the Old Time lecture that year? A long silence was followed by an assortment of negative comments. One councillor, who happened to be a leading light in sequence, claimed succinctly: "What new things can you say about Old Time? It's dead." I promptly offered to give the lecture and the council agreed.

The congress was held at the Norbreck Castle Hotel in Blackpool. My moment arrived. Wayne and Wendy Packard, leading classical professionals, assisted me with the lecture and, as it progressed, the interest from the audience became more intense. At the end, I received a standing

ovation. Jack Briggs, who officiated as chair and compère, said to me: "Why didn't I think of that?"

I stressed that the Classical/Old Time ballroom dance genre has three distinct divisions: social (local dances and ceilidhs), competitive (dance-school trained medallists and competitors) and professional (MCs, floor leaders, demonstrators, and qualified adjudicators). My observation was that while Classical/Old Time had been established for decades, signs of erosion of interest from the general dancing public were in evidence. Cracks were beginning to appear in the structure, as I noted in the following ways...

Classical/Old Time featured in the television programme *Come Dancing*. However, this programme had been taken off air never to return – *Strictly Come Dancing*, in contrast, has never shown any interest in Classical/Old Time. Similarly, the BBC used

Derek Young and Sheila Buckley.



to have a regular radio programme, *Those were the Days*, presented by A J Latimer, which is no longer with us. The number of entries to championship events has been gradually falling. In May 1949, 92 couples entered the British Amateur Championship. However, the British Professional Classical Championship between 2002 and 2017 was not held on seven occasions due to lack of entries.

Once sponsored by Mecca and televised by the BBC, the Carl Alan Awards have changed over the years. Sheila and I received our award from HRH Princess Margaret. The awards were reintroduced by the IDTA with great success for five years and then they withdrew their sponsorship. They are now run separately by the Ballroom and Theatre faculties but with much reduced publicity.

Classical demonstrations by professional couples seem to have disappeared off the cabaret scene, and dance associations do not tend to feature Classical demonstrations at their annual presidents' dinners. On the other hand, Juvenile and Junior sections are very well supported, but these young dancers do not appear to continue when they move up into senior ranks.

Inventive dance competitions are very popular, but the main purpose is to select a 16-bar dance suitable for the average social dancer. In this they do very well and provide a good service, but the competitive and exhibition aspects of Classical ballroom dancing have been ignored and left to stagnate – it has gradually lost its “shop window”.

“I never lost interest in Classical/Old Time dance, which had occupied such a large and successful part of my life. I continued to watch with interest, like a spectator on the touchline, saddened at seeing the decline of public interest in this wonderful branch of ballroom dancing”

Classical ballroom dancing is rich in the choice of music and rhythms developed over two centuries from gavottes, through the Strauss period of waltzes, marches, polkas and mazurkas, followed by habanera tangos, schottisches, swings, blues and saunters. In the early days there were no set lengths of a dance: 32-bar dances were common. In 1954, Sheila and I won our first adult novice event at the Floral Hall in Southport, dancing the then popular Destiny Waltz, which was 32 bars long and included the “linear waltz walk”.

Currently Classical dances are locked into the 16-bar construction, which has served the social dancer very well over the past decades. However, it has been too restrictive for the championship and professional competitors; it does not encourage the development of the show and cabaret aspect of the style. As a result, the general public often view Classical as verging on boring. The Britannia Saunter and Premier Two Step were not the product of an inventive dance competition; these dances were arranged by a committee – the Sequence

Advisory Committee of the Official Board (now the British Dance Council). The specific aim was to provide newer challenging choreography for competitions and high-grade dance tests. For the same reason, the Midnight Tango (arranged by Gilbert Daniels), with its extended movements, was also added to the official list.

Eric Stonehouse, my teacher, was a member of the Sequence Advisory Committee and, along with Macclesfield dance teacher Jean Rowbotham, spent many hours deliberating over new choreography. Sheila and I were privileged to be invited to dance the prototype combinations of movements. These were exciting times.

As I pointed out in the lecture, if any art form does not experiment or innovate, it will die, or lose its attraction with the public. I presented two 32-bar dances in waltz and two step, the basis of which was developed from the choreography Sheila and I used in our demonstrations. The content was specifically crafted to develop the entertainment value rather than social.

Meeting up with Mark Patton and Jackie Davies (British Professional Classical Champions

1990–91) was another defining moment in my quest. They assisted me in my lectures with great enthusiasm. Following the initial presentation at the UK Dance Congress, I received invitations to give the same lecture around the country. As a result, I increased it to include five rhythms, which are demonstrated on the DVD: the gavotte, the Viennese waltz, the two step, the waltz and the tango.

It must be stressed that this choreography is meant to be for competition and show dance. It should never be performed on a crowded dance floor – to do so would be considered antisocial. I travelled with Mark and Jackie extensively when they performed this show, and paid particular attention to the audience reaction. One significant moment occurred when they demonstrated at Pontins Festival in Ainsdale, near Southport. The audience appreciation was ecstatic. Mark and Jackie went backstage to change, and when they returned to the ballroom, everyone stopped dancing and gave them more rousing applause. I then realised I had just lived through my dream.

All of this would not have been possible to achieve without the enthusiastic support of Mark and Jackie. I sincerely hope you enjoy watching them dance on the DVD, but it will be a long time before you see Classical ballroom dancing being performed again at this high standard. Their dance agility and musical interpretation brought my choreography to life on the DVD and made my dream come true. ■

DEREK YOUNG



# Somewhere in time

Ballroom's golden age

**Jack Reavely  
remembers  
Josephine Bradley**

**W**hat seems not too long ago to me, but was, in fact, a considerable number of years ago, I was invited by the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) to their two-day annual congress to report upon proceedings. I was, of course, delighted to accept the invitation, as I knew many of the top exponents and coaches would be there, and the entire proceedings would be like smoke furling up a chimney from the result of logs burning fiercely in a magnificent fireplace. I was not disappointed – imagine my great pleasure when I was invited to join the table on stage and the person sitting beside me was none other than the great Josephine Bradley.

She was simply the Queen of the Ballroom and tales of her unrivalled expertise spread around the world of dance. It was Alex Warren, the chairman of the judges at Blackpool for many years, who had first called Bradley the Queen of the Ballroom and she, of course, was delighted with this title.

In Edinburgh at that time, I had been visiting a blind physiotherapist for treatment on my back. During our many conversations, he mentioned to me that he had lost his sight during World War I, and that he had later been fortunate enough to have attended dance classes led by a Miss Bradley. When he

told me this, my ears pricked up and I asked him for more details. He told me all about it and said how very much the attendees to those classes had enjoyed them.

Sitting next to Josephine that day, I asked her if she was the same Miss Bradley. She replied: "Was he an officer?" I told her that he was and she said, "Well, yes, I did at a St Dunstan's venue." She did this as part of her assistance to the war effort and, of course, developed a marvellous way of teaching blind officers how to create step patterns and lead their partners with elegance and sophistication.

Can you imagine the scene? Bradley, undoubtedly teaching in the most fashionable clothes, perhaps with a lovely silk scarf around her neck and small white gloves on her hands.

As we continued to talk, my ears went red as they tried to take in and remember everything she spoke of. Her words were ambrosia to me indeed. She explained that, in the invention of the foxtrot as a dance, they knew that it crossed the musical phrase, but she felt it that way and had taught like that and, as her pupils always seemed to win competitions, she said, "Why should I change?"

As a matter of interest, she said that, for example, the first right foot forward of a feather step should be taken as a preparatory step, and then the foxtrot would start on the left foot toe step, timed as a quick, which followed the slow, so they



Josephine Bradley.

would think of the count as being quick, quick with a following slow. This would be the case on the third step of reverse turn or on the final step of a feather finish to the reverse turn, which at that time included the left foot forward slow step, and then the three step would start on a quick. Today's technique has changed in the written word, as it was, of course, found to be much easier to teach slow foxtrot as slow, quick, quick over three steps and that is the norm at present. I often wonder what Josephine would have said in connection to these changes.

**D**uring the ISTD congress, I found that Josephine was full of that indefinable charisma which seems to surround people of her immense capabilities, be it dance or any other art form.

In her small studio in London, there was a piano and, of course, a pianist who entertained the ears with her use of the keys. Josephine was very involved in London's "high society", coaching the young daughters of the famous. Each year, there was a "coming out" ball at the beginning of the season, at which the young women were resplendently dressed in the best and most expensive way. They had to learn, prior to the first ball, how to walk beautifully and curtsy when they were presented to royalty. It was spiffing to see them. On the run-up to the big day, Josephine had them walking around the studio with the pianist accompanying them and books balanced on their heads to help with their posture. In this way, they were taught to glide around and not step with ungainly actions or shockingly awkward foot placements.

Our top dance teachers once had such prestige in high society. I so wish it was the same today and that dance prowess would be fervently desired by everyone on earth. ■

"It was Alex Warren, the chairman of the judges at Blackpool for many years, who had first called Bradley the Queen of the Ballroom and she, of course, was delighted with this title"

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# Dancer of the month

Interviewed by Margaret Willis

## David Donnelly



**BORN:**  
June 1995

**COMPANY:**  
The Royal Ballet

**STUDIED/TRAINED:**  
Academy of  
Cincinnati Ballet,  
Northern Cincinnati  
Youth Ballet, The  
Royal Ballet School

**MAJOR  
PERFORMANCES:**  
Lensky in *Onegin*,  
The Cousin in  
*The Invitation*,  
*Monotones II*, *Within  
the Golden Hour*



Above: David Donnelly and Olivia Cowley rehearsing *The Invitation*.

**D**avid Donnelly was a hard man to catch. First there was lockdown and furlough. Then, when he came back to the studios of The Royal Ballet, he was very busy with rehearsals. Finally, we met up for our chat on Skype – and it was well worth waiting for.

David is a charming young man. Born in the US, he is very friendly and outgoing. We chatted for nearly two hours with a break in between when

he went to rehearse the adapted, isolated version of *The Nutcracker*, where the dancers, other than principals, do not touch each other. “It’s very different,” he commented, “especially the Waltz of the Flowers, which is all about partnering.” He was also rehearsing the role of King Rat, remarking, “Step-wise it isn’t hard, until you put on the huge head and tail! Then you have to re-find your balance while trying to see out of the mesh at the front.”

David has been living in London for eight years now but was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on June 19, 1995.

He was the second of four children in a family that had no previous history of dance. “When I was six and in kindergarten, we had a class of creative movement which started with a few ballet exercises. I had so much fun that I went home and asked my mom if I could go to ballet school. She said we needed to ask dad when he came home. I did, and

was told he’d think about it. Dad was an architect, and mom, a primary school teacher, and while both had grown up around music, neither knew anything about ballet. I held my breath until he came back with the answer, ‘Yes, you can take ballet lessons, but academic work must always come first.’ Today, my dad is my biggest fan, and he ➤



and mom come to see me dance whenever they can.

"They were there for my greatest moment so far – my debut as Lensky in *Onegin* just before the first lockdown. It was also Thiago's [Soares] last performance, so there was a lot of emotion. The evening will stand out as a definitive moment in my life – one of incredible feeling, like a coming of age. I felt the moment throughout my body and was so grateful for a job that gave me such emotions and opportunities. My mom was thrilled and excited in the wings, waiting for me to come off stage. My dad was in tears!"

David continued his training at the Academy of Cincinnati Ballet with Catherine Batchelor (a former principal with Birmingham Royal Ballet) until he was 16, then joined Northern Cincinnati Youth Ballet (NCYB) whilst also taking private lessons with Oliver Arana, who was originally from Peru. He had

a punishing schedule to fulfil his dream, but felt then, and now, that it was all worth it.

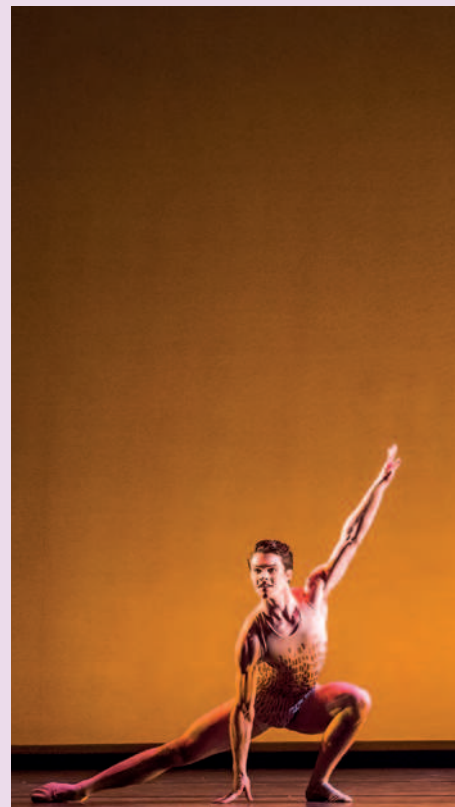
"I attended Walnut Hill High School from 7.30am until 2.30pm, then drove to NCYB where I took class and lessons until 9.30pm. Then the drive home, where three hours of homework awaited me. I was in the college preparation programme at school, so it was very important – especially for my parents – that I worked hard academically. If I had not become a dancer, I would have gone to medical school, so I obviously had to get good grades. I was, in fact, offered places at Harvard and Stamford universities.

"Being one of two boys in my ballet class, I obviously needed more training. So I would go to some of the summer intensive schools held around the US. My favourites were those organised by Boston Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet and San Francisco Ballet, where I was offered a traineeship.

I was very tempted to accept it, as I loved the city and its diverse culture and felt at home there. Actually, it was there that, for the first time, I really saw a future in dance. I also went to the National Ballet of Canada's summer school and thought that perhaps I could train there as it was close to home."

However, in 2012, David entered the Youth America Grand Prix and not only received the Outstanding Contemporary Dancer award, but an invitation from the then-director of The Royal Ballet School (RBS), Gailene Stock, to go to London to continue his studies. "I was invited to take some classes," remembered David chuckling, "so my father and I came over for my 17th birthday. We landed at Heathrow and took the Tube to Holborn Station where we crawled into our hotel beds after midnight. The next day I was in class in the RBS Upper School alongside Anna Rose [O'Sullivan], Marcelino [Sambé], Matthew [Ball] and others. It was incredible – like a dream come true.

Needless to say, I quickly realised this was the place I wanted to be. I spent four days in London but returned later in the year after I received a scholarship from the sculptor, Richard McDonald. I was put into Year Three with those other lovely students and there was never a feeling of not having come up through the RBS system with them. Instead, they were so supportive of me. There's a saying, 'The best dancers and the best artists are the most human,' and this is being proved today as my classmates are making names for themselves on stage.



Above: David with Téo Dubreuil (right) in *Within the Golden Hour*.  
Below: David as Lensky in *Onegin*.





I wasn't needed for the matinée, I went home to have a nap before returning to the theatre, and found I had missed a call from Gailene Stock. My body froze, afraid I was in terrible trouble. I'm not a rule-breaker, but I had let some RBS students into the empty dorm for the night. I immediately thought, 'She knows,' and feared I would be chucked out of school. It was with great trepidation that I called her back.

"In an unexpected, kindly voice, she asked me what my plans were and I told her I was flying to Vienna the next day for a company audition. Her reply was, 'I don't think you need to go. You already have a job here with The Royal Ballet.' I was speechless!"

on stage the first time, and Natalie Harrison saying, 'Davey' (she always calls me that), 'take a deep breath because no one gets it completely right'. It was nerve-racking, but I did manage to get through it, though I was exhausted both mentally and physically with the concentration and effort."

David is often paired up with another exuberant dancer, Téo Dubreuil, and they mirror-image each other to perfection. In a recent live online performance of Christopher Wheeldon's *Within the Golden Hour*, they performed the speedy, athletic male duet with joyous fluidity. "The orchestra was isolated in the stalls area, playing super-fast which was exhilarating but exhausting," David laughingly remarked.

Working with Reid Anderson (who retains the rights to John Cranko's *Onegin*) on the role of Lensky still holds warm memories for David. "I really worked on building my character with much thought and reading, and Reid helped so much. It was a humbling and fulfilling experience, and I'm grateful to Meaghan [Grace Hinkis], who was so incredibly giving in her performances as Olga. I dream of *Onegin* coming back into the repertoire again."

David was made a first artist in 2016. During the first lockdown, which, he said, gave him time to be quiet and reflect on his love of dancing and colleagues, he qualified as a yoga teacher. He gives classes whenever he has spare time – something he can but dream about given his present schedule. He loves the outdoors, hiking, climbing, camping and concluded smiling, "I'm addicted to all exercise. I'm happiest when I'm exhausted!" ■



Above: David (left) with Gina Storm-Jensen and Téo Dubreuil in *Monotones II*.

healthy fun, and we would egg each other on. I also had to complete my final year of high school online, which kept me busy when I got back to the dormitory.

"Christmas came and I couldn't go home as some students, including me, were

dancing with The Royal Ballet in *The Nutcracker*. On January 2, I came to the 11.30am class in the Ashton studio (oh, I'm nostalgic now, thinking of us all being packed together in there). When we were in the centre, Kevin [O'Hare, director of The Royal Ballet] came in to watch and I told myself to 'just do well and concentrate'. Discovering

That was in 2013. "When I first joined the company, I was thrown in, head first, into *The Rite of Spring* – I still get goosebumps just thinking about the music. There is so much concentration needed, with the constant fear that you'll be the one who counts wrongly, standing up when everyone else is still in a huddle! I remember going



# Obituaries

## Patricia Beatty

**P**atricia Beatty, the Canadian dancer, teacher and choreographer (pictured right in *Lessons in Another Language*, 1980), has died at the age of 84.

In 1967, Beatty was a priestess in search of a following. Having fallen under the spell of the modern dance luminary Martha Graham, back home in Toronto after a lengthy sojourn in New York, Beatty was on a mission to recruit fresh converts. First she began to teach. Then she assembled a small company, the New Dance Group of Canada, and put on a concert. The group included two guest artists: fellow Torontonian David Earle and Peter Randazzo, a former member of the Graham company. They too had proselytising ambitions. Beatty put ego aside in the cause of a greater good and suggested they work together. Thus, in 1968, the trio co-founded what was to become Canada's internationally best-known contemporary dance troupe, Toronto Dance Theatre (TDT). Simultaneously, they established a school that is now acknowledged as one of Canada's leading professional contemporary dance training institutions.

Beatty was a woman of many parts: dancer, choreographer, artistic director, teacher, poet and author. "Trish was a giant in Canadian dance," says former TDT artistic director Christopher House. "She was a true pioneer whose teaching has impacted on thousands of Canadian dancers."

"This is a huge loss," adds Patricia Fraser, artistic director of The School of Toronto Dance Theatre. "Trish was a true artist to the very depths of her soul."

Typically for someone of her era and class, Beatty was subjected to ballet as a girl. However, it was only as a student at the progressive, arts-oriented Bennington College in Vermont that Beatty discovered her inner dancer – a modern dancer. After graduating in 1959 she studied at the Graham school before joining the company of former Graham acolyte, Pearl Lang. It proved to be a thorough apprenticeship.

Beatty was an impressive dancer, and not just because of her statuesque physique. "I will always remember the luminous dignity of her presence, her phrasing, and her command of the stage space," says House.



Beatty choreographed 24 works for TDT as well as others for independent projects. She eschewed showy display. For her, technical virtuosity was merely the vehicle for conveying a deeper, spiritual meaning. As Beatty's work evolved it increasingly aligned with her sense of connection to nature and belief in the power of what she called "the sacred feminine".

Notably, as a fervent advocate of cross-disciplinary collaboration, she produced and choreographed an ambitious project called *Painters and The Dance* in 1983. Several of her choreographies are

still performed thanks to another company Beatty co-founded, Toronto Heritage Dance, as well as by students of the TDT school. In 1985, Beatty wrote and produced the short but influential *Form Without Formula: Concise Guide to the Choreographic Process*, now in its sixth printing.

Beatty was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 2004. In March 2019, Dance Collection Danse, the Canadian heritage preservation society, inducted Beatty into its Encore! Dance Hall of Fame.

**MICHAEL CRABB**

*Patricia Beatty, born May 13, 1936; died November 20, 2020.*

## Diana Payne-Myers

**I** first met Diana Payne-Myers at Saturday morning classes given by Richard Glasstone for the Cecchetti Centre at London's West Street Studios. This

was in 1986 and neither she nor I were working. I was called upon by Richard to demonstrate Maestro Cecchetti's demanding material and this took

concentration. I nevertheless began to form an awareness of a delighted, crochet-clad bundle of abstruse energy regularly present. When the class series ended, this figure

addressed me with a fizz of enthusiasm. I was able to interject about a show I had by now put together for a short run of performances at The Place. Hence she would

be there in the bar afterward, regaling cast members with a jangle of whimsical admiration before trotting off, leaving us wanting more.

Diana had retired from a career in ballet, variety and musical theatre in 1959. She had also performed in satirical reviews written by her husband, Peter Myers, whilst raising their two children, Saffron and Japheth, both of whom would work in the theatre. I found her in semi-retirement, caring for her father and initiating a sequence of dance-related projects; some with admirable intellectual basis and others more connected to wish-fulfilment. She invited me to meet Anna Ivanova, her former teacher who had herself been a student of Cecchetti and later a soloist with Anna Pavlova's troupe.

Diana attempted to explain her latest enterprises and my potential role to her trusted teacher. To her great credit Ivanova (née Nancy Hanley) saw through the well-meant muddle, counselling instead that Diana was essentially a dancer and should rather focus on this. Many would become glad of this change of perspective. Pertinently, Diana's first reliable professional engagement – a touring "sister act" on the bill with horses, dogs, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis et al – had also been Ivanova's idea.

Steered by her mentor's assessment Diana began retraining with my contemporary group and, in 1988, *Percy Circus* was the first of our productions in which Diana danced. In assimilating my choreography and its systems she began to identify strategies she could readily bring from her past into her present, whilst

shedding a few burdens and masks. Her movement became noticeably authentic as she got into the arena of focus and concentration. Marie Rambert had continually stressed the importance of clear sculptural line in dance technique and performance throughout Diana's studenthood and apprenticeship as an occasional member of Ballet Rambert's corps de ballet. Diana's evocation of Rambert's rightness would lend an abiding graphic impact to her subsequent dancing, whether as a founder member of the Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet, a street busker/skiffle exponent, a participant in post-modern dance pieces or a riveting player in innovative works at the National Theatre.

Diana had achieved her comeback with us on the stage of the Hackney Empire at the age of 60 and Ivanova looked on contented. Confidence returned and with it a sense of personal mission. Diana's grit would emerge amid exposure in the work of DV8 choreographer Lloyd Newson, whose physical-theatre procedures were cogent, giving her a stable platform, backed by public demand and a decent logistical set-up.

From there, Diana went on to work with choreographers and directors such as Philippe Decouflé, Daniel Kramer, Ian Spink, Stephen Daldry, Arthur Pita, Quinny Sacks, Wayne McGregor and Natasha Gilmore. From the 1990s until recently, she played the "mute" role of Edna in *An Inspector Calls* in the West End and on tour. Coupled with this bout of mainstream success, Diana's MBE in 2002 honoured her services to dance, underlining how her contribution influenced new

consideration of the long-serving dance performer.

What never wavered was the actuality of the underlying dancer. Diana was dear to Louis Spence, who sponsored her life-membership at Pineapple Studios and declared her a fashion icon. Thereafter she would continue to take classes with Joan Hewson, Ian Knowles and Pat Norman. An opportunity arose for Diana and I to put together a full-length two-hander. This was the well-received *Matthew and Diana on Manoeuvres* that we toured through 1994. We collaborated again on *Muscular Memory Lane* (2007), a duet she commissioned with funds from Arts Council England, with a brief to

revisit a zone of focus and concentration in our process. We performed the piece in Edinburgh (winning a Herald Angel Award) then in London, Budapest and Stornoway – revisiting the scene of her cherished childhood holidays. We were in Stornoway again (and all over Scotland) in Natasha Gilmore's inter-generational work *A Conversation With Carmel* (2009 to 2011). In this, Diana shed a year or two to play an octogenarian protagonist and I "aged up" to play her middle-aged son. Manoeuvres indeed – and a vital legacy. ■

MATTHEW HAWKINS

*Diana Payne-Myers,  
born March 13, 1928;  
died November 7, 2020.*

## Susan Robinson

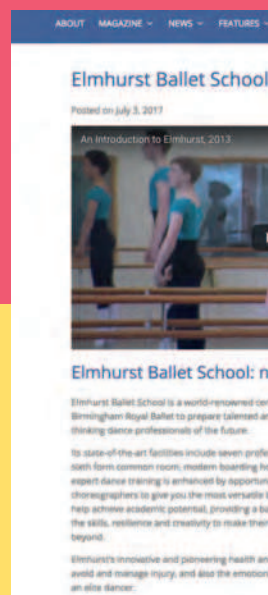
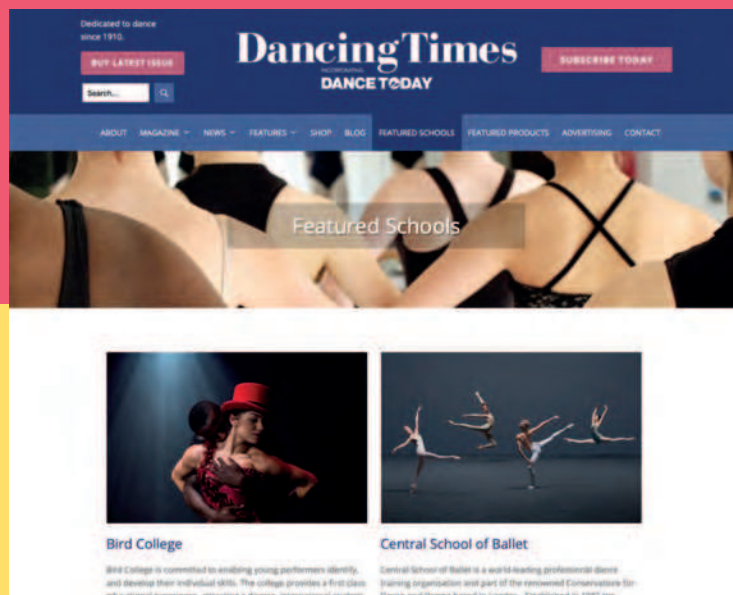
**S**usan Robinson, the former dancer who was best known for the highly successful school she ran in Surrey for more than 45 years, died on October 18, 2020. As a child, she won a scholarship to attend the Elmhurst Ballet School, and subsequently went on to train at The Royal Ballet School where her teachers included Ninette de Valois. After graduating, Robinson danced professionally for a number of years on the Continent, including opera houses in Germany and The Netherlands, and also with the Wuppertal Ballet. She had to cut her dancing career short for family reasons, but on returning to the UK began to teach, at first with professional dancers at the London Dance Centre, and then from 1975, after obtaining the Royal Academy of Dance's (RAD) Advanced Teaching Diploma, at the Susan Robinson School of Ballet, based in Byfleet and Woking. The following year she was appointed an examiner for the RAD.

Robinson's pupils were often seen performing in professional stage productions, including regular appearances at the London seasons of the Bolshoi or Maryinsky Ballets, whenever the companies needed child dancers for works such as *The Sleeping Beauty*. The school also featured in the annual *Dance Proms* at the Royal Albert Hall, and a number of former pupils went on to have highly successful stage careers, including Hannah Bateman, Tracy Brown, Natalie Dodd, Oliver Hindle, Pietra Mello-Pitman and Laurretta Summerscales. In July 2019, Robinson received the Fellowship of the RAD – its highest honour – from the president, Darcey Bussell.



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## Vogel's art box

**FRIEDEMANN VOGEL, THE PRINCIPAL DANCER** with Stuttgart Ballet (pictured right) who was recently awarded an Outstanding Performer Award by the German Dance Prize, has collaborated with photographer Oliver Kröning and Galerie Kernweine to create *Physical Conversation*, a limited-edition art box. The box comprises 23 images of Vogel taken at unlikely locations by Kröning. The idea behind it is that "everyone can curate their own narrative by arranging the prints in certain variations."

The portfolio has been created to raise funds for the Olgäle Foundation for the Sick Child, founded in Stuttgart in November 1997 to help sick children and their parents at the Olgahospital Children's Hospital. Photographed during lockdown, Kröning said, "It was a lot of fun working with Friedemann on the project. Bringing our ideas from different perspectives together and developing a form of a conversation – the 'Physical Conversation' – that we captured in a playful way. Also, I really like the idea that everyone can curate their own exhibition at



home by playing with the prints – placing them in different orders and creating various and individual choreographies."

"For a dancer, there is always a story to tell in every movement," added Vogel. "By capturing the

emotion of the movement, each still becomes a fragment of a story that is open for interpretation."

The art box, published by Galerie Kernweine GmbH, costs €48, and can be ordered online from [shop.galerie-kernweine.com](http://shop.galerie-kernweine.com).

## New on CD

**FROM THE VOLTA MUSIC CORPORATION** comes a real rarity – a double CD recording of music by Dimitri Tiomkin titled *Paris Under The Stars: Ballet Music for Albertina Rasch*. The album is a selection of music that the Ukrainian-born Tiomkin wrote for his first wife, the Viennese dancer and choreographer

Albertina Rasch. Best known for the Oscar-winning scores he composed during



Hollywood's golden age – including *High Noon*, *Dial M for Murder*, *It's A Wonderful Life* and *The Alamo* – Tiomkin also wrote music for the Albertina Rasch Dancers in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

A pioneer in the early days of modern dance in the US, Rasch and her dance company appeared on Broadway and on film, performing in vaudeville productions by Ziegfeld

and in *George White's Scandals*. Rasch also danced alongside Josephine Baker. Before travelling to Hollywood, Rasch created a dance version of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* in 1925, and later developed her choreography into what was then known as "American Ballet", a combination of classical ballet, jazz and popular dance. Tiomkin, who was a ➤



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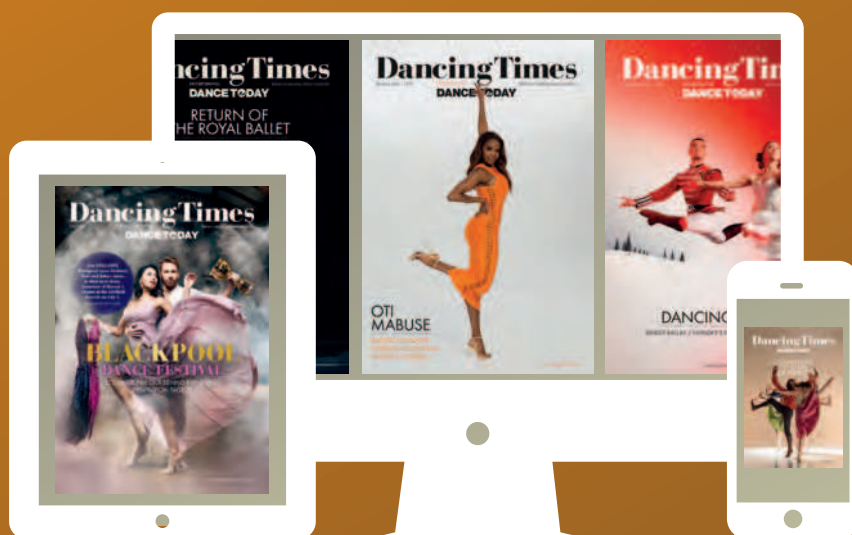
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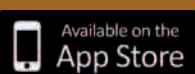
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pianist with the company, composed a number of these works for her, some of which receive their world premiere recordings here, played by the Slovak National Symphony Orchestra conducted by William Stromberg. The couple worked together at the Hollywood Bowl, the

Moulin Rouge, the Ravinia Festival and New York's Lewisham Stadium, often with audiences of over 18,000. They later created music and dances for a series of short films for MGM.

Lovingly reconstructed by Patrick Russ, many from original manuscripts, the music on these discs dates

from 1927 to 1932, and includes the "Snow Ballet", originally intended for the 1930 MGM musical revue *The March of Time*; a four-movement *Choreographic Suite* also from 1930; *Fiesta Suite*; and *Paris Under the Stars*, written in 1927 for a musical revue at the Moulin Rouge in Paris.

## New on DVD and Blu-ray disc

**THE NEW YEAR BRINGS** more new dance releases on DVD and Blu-ray disc. Celebrating its 25th anniversary, *Riverdance 25* is a reinvention and reimagination of the highly successful Irish dance show that brought world-wide fame to Michael Flatley and Jean Butler. Released on the **Wienerworld** label, and recorded live in Dublin prior to lockdown in February 2020, the film offers a new cast of young dancers, interviews with composer Bill Whelan, dancers Bobby Hodges and Amy-Mae Dolan and musician Tara Howley, and a behind-the-scenes look at the show.

Another new recording of a popular work on DVD and Blu-ray disc comes from the **C Major** label with the Ballet of La Scala, Milan, in Rudolf Nureyev's version of *The Sleeping Beauty*. Recorded live in 2019, the film stars Polina Semionova as Princess Aurora and



Timofej Andrijashenko as Prince Désiré, and although neither of them are ideally cast in the roles, they do give strong performances. Sadly, Nureyev's production manages to be both fussy and ponderous at the same time, and it seems extraordinary that La Scala recently decided to favour this version over the thrilling one Alexei Ratmansky staged on the company a few years ago. The release is not helped by some odd editing choices made by the video

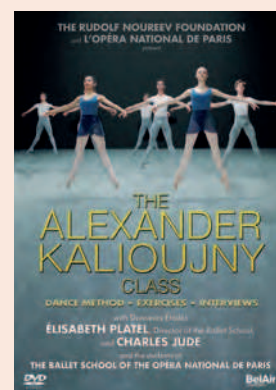
director Arnalda Canali, who appears to favour facial reactions from supporting cast members over the soloist who is dancing.

If you were looking for a DVD or Blu-ray recording of Marius Petipa's *La Bayadère*, I wouldn't select the production now released on the **BelAir Classiques** label by Nacho Duato for the Mikhailovsky Ballet, in which whole sections of the work have been pointlessly re-choreographed. Only the "Kingdom of the Shades" scene emerges unscathed, although there is some good dancing from Angelina Voronysova as Nikiya and Victor Lebedev as Solor.

Finally, also from the **C Major** label, comes Edward Clug's version of *Peer Gynt* danced to the music of Edvard Grieg by the Vienna State Ballet. Available in both formats, the production stars Jakob Feyferlink and Alice Firenze. ■

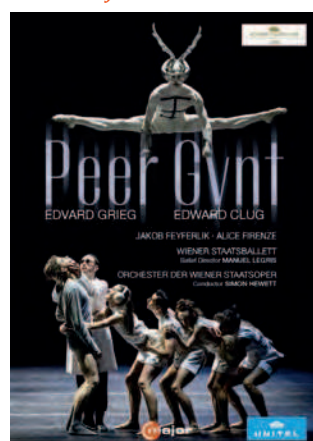
**JONATHAN GRAY**

## Other releases



### ★ The Alexander Kalioujny Class

Now available from **BelAir Classiques** is a DVD featuring dancers from the Paris Opéra Ballet School in a recording of the ballet exercises devised by the Czech-born étoile Alexander ("Sasha") Kalioujny. Following a brilliant career at the Paris Opéra under Serge Lifar, Kalioujny became a teacher in Nice, but in 1970 he was asked to return to the French capital to teach ballet classes there. He devised a training programme at the Opéra that focused on technique, strength and mastery of movement. This new film, directed by Denis Snegurev and led by the former Paris Opéra étoiles Elisabeth Platel (now director of the Paris Opéra Ballet School) and Charles Jude, sees the students working through a dance lesson that follows the Kalioujny method. The programme includes pliés, dégagés, ronds de jambes, tours, ballottés, pointe exercises and balances. The disc also contains interviews with Platel, Jude, Noëlla Pontois, Attilio Labis and Gil Isoart. **JG**







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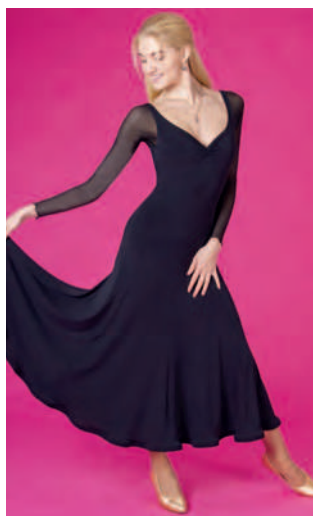
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## The Rumpf Zuma 1567

The Rumpf Zuma 1567 is the ultimate dance and exercise sneaker, suitable for multiple dance styles, including jazz, hip hop, salsa and Latin. With a breathable high-tech mesh upper, the polyurethane

split sole contains a "spin spot" that allows you to turn effortlessly and at the same time retain a lot of grip on the dance floor. The shoe is available in navy, white, black, grey and khaki at [rumpf.net](http://rumpf.net).

## Darn and Darn

Darn and Dance specialises in edge and full platform darning services, sewing of ribbons and elastics, with a fast and efficient postal service (see page 44). You can find the company on Instagram ([Darn\\_and\\_Dance](https://www.instagram.com/Darn_and_Dance)). For more, visit [darnanddance.co.uk](http://darnanddance.co.uk), or call 0808 155 6358.



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# Education

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## Prix de Lausanne

The Prix de Lausanne, the international ballet competition based in Switzerland, has announced that, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the 2021 Prix will now be a video edition, to be held from January 31 to February 7, 2021.

The event will require only the nine members of the jury to be present in Switzerland, and every selected candidate will be able to “demonstrate their talent and compete for a scholarship or apprenticeship via video submission and not in person in Switzerland. Classical and contemporary variations, as well as a ballet class, will be evaluated and marked separately.”

Twenty finalists will be selected and judged at the end of the week, before the announcement of the winners during the Finals on February 6. The team at the Prix de Lausanne is also working on coordinating online classes for the candidates before the competition begins. In 2021, 399 applicants from 43 countries will take part in an attempt to win one of the world’s most prestigious ballet competitions.

## ISTD appointment

Chris Hocking, the principal of ArtsEd, has been appointed the new chair to the board of trustees of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance (ISTD). He was elected to the position by the Council after the society’s 2020 AGM on November 18.

Hocking trained at the Nesta Brooking School of Ballet, and had a successful performing and choreographic career in West



End shows such as *Chicago*, *Carousel*, *The King and I*, and *The Rocky Horror Show*. He has also directed and choreographed numerous pantomimes, which led to him being awarded an MA in Choreography from Middlesex University. In addition to this, Hocking has been head of Performing Arts at Centro Internazionale de Danza in Cosenza, Italy, and head of Dance at Mountview Academy of Performing Arts from 1993 to 1999. He joined ArtsEd as director of Musical Theatre and head of Dance, and was appointed principal in 2017.

## Elmhurst audition applications move online

With the city of Birmingham moving into Tier 3 of lockdown on December 2, 2020, Elmhurst Ballet School has announced it will not be holding any in-person preliminary auditions for its full-time training programmes to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus infection. This will include all audition locations – Birmingham, London, Dublin and Edinburgh. Instead, the school invites

all applicants to submit a video link as part of their application. This relates to any dancer who might already have applied, or are about to apply, for one of Elmhurst’s full-time programmes. Those who have already submitted an online application form will be contacted directly by the registrar with details of how to send a video link.

To help with this process, the deadline for video submission has been extended until 4pm on Friday, January 8, 2021. Further details of how to submit a video link, as well as the photo requirements, can be found under the apply section on Elmhurst’s website, [elmhurstballetschool.org](http://elmhurstballetschool.org).

## Fonteyn footage discovered

The Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) has discovered never before seen footage of former president Dame Margot Fonteyn, which is now available to view as part of a free display at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum marking the academy’s centenary. *On Point: Royal*

*Academy of Dance at 100* (see *Dancing Times*, April 2020), will be on display at the museum until September 19.

The footage, filmed in 1972 by Fonteyn’s brother Felix, is a demonstration of a ballet syllabus for children, which Dame Margot helped to create with a group of RAD teachers during her time as president. In the film, she is shown introducing the demonstration and explaining the principles behind the syllabus (pictured above). She is also heard encouraging the children in the video to “dance nicely”.

The footage remained hidden in the RAD’s archives until it was discovered recently by Eleanor Fitzpatrick, archives and records manager. The set of canisters containing reels of 16mm film were simply labelled “Children’s Syllabus”. The film would have been used as a training tool for teachers to prepare their students for the syllabus. However, due to financial reasons at the time, the RAD was never able to release the film, which explains how it remained unseen for so long. ■



## Supporting act

This month, we consider why the hip is such an essential part of the body and look at some of the issues faced by dancers striving to maintain the integrity and health of this joint

### How the hip is constructed

The hip is formed where the thighbone (femur) meets the three fused bones that make up the pelvis: ilium, pubis and ischium. This joint consists of a ball (femoral head) at the top of the thighbone, which fits into a rounded socket (acetabulum), sometimes referred to as “the cup”, in the pelvis. Women have a much broader pelvic bone than men, while the male pelvis is generally taller and narrower and the acetabulum is oriented more laterally.

In a healthy individual, the ball and socket are covered with a smooth layer of cartilage, allowing the ball to glide easily inside the socket and providing a cushion for the hip joint. The muscles and ligaments holding the joint in place are very strong, and in combination with thickened joint capsules provide a large degree of stability.

One of the most important aspects of the hip joint

structure is its articulation with the hip end of the femur, where it acts as a connector between the vertebral column and legs. The unique anatomy of the hip allows it to be extremely strong and flexible, enabling the joint to bear weight and allow for a greater range of movement than almost all other joints.

### Common hip injuries

Developing the ability to turn out at the hip is fundamental in ballet and other forms of dance. As young students’ turnout increases, so does the level of stress on the front structures of the hip; not all dancers have full turnout and some force their hips into external rotation, which may injure soft tissue.

Hip pain tends to be more common in dancers who are increasing their skills and extending their hours of practice in preparation for performances or

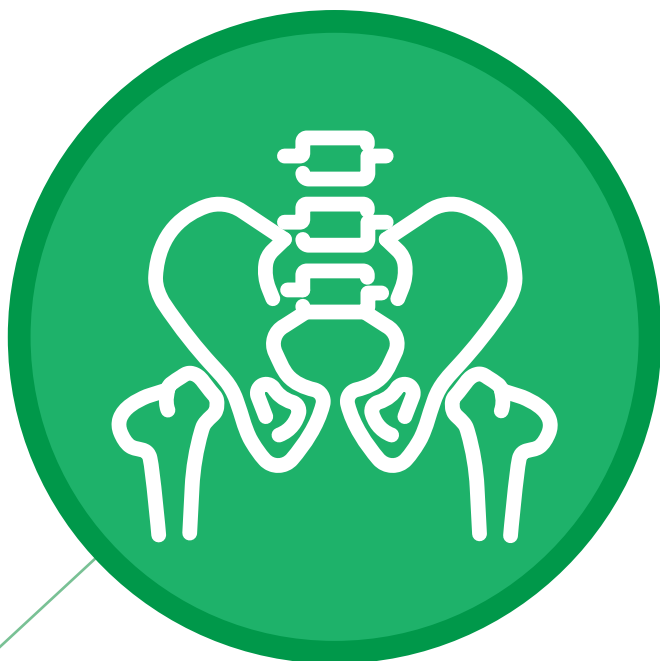
competitions. Many dancers experience muscle imbalances because they are repeatedly using the same movements and muscles. This can lead to tightness in certain muscle groups and consequently the individual becomes susceptible to injury, since they have a limited range of motion.

The most common hip injuries found in dancers often stem from muscle strains, tendonitis and bursitis. Four main muscles in dancers can cause hip pain: the rectus femoris is one of the four quadriceps muscles; the sartorius muscle runs across the front of each thigh from the hip bone to the inside of the leg below the knee; the psoas muscle located in the lower lumbar region of the spine extends through the pelvis to the femur; and the iliacus muscle, which is located in the front of the hips.

If any of these are injured or damaged they may go into spasm, affecting the biomechanics of the hip joint and possibly resulting in decreased flexibility. When this occurs there could be stiffness in the lower back and knee pain on the side of the injured hip.

Dancers may experience a number of hip injuries including: snapping hip syndrome, labral tears, hip impingement, hip flexor tendonitis, hip bursitis and sacroiliac joint dysfunction. Hip dislocations are





rare due to the joint's heavy musculature and robust architecture.

### Snapping hip syndrome

Clicking and snapping of the hips is a common complaint for many dancers. Palpable and occasionally audible, the symptoms are usually provoked during flexion or extension of the hip. Individuals can experience decreased range of motion in the hip and a painful click directly inside the joint. There may not be any pain initially, but painful clicks or chronic pain can develop if the issue is not dealt with. Early treatment helps a faster recovery, with less risk of the injury becoming problematic in the long term.

The problem can occur in three ways. Internal snapping hip takes place when the iliopsoas tendon catches on the femoral head (iliopectineal eminence) during hip flexion. This can be caused by inflammation of the bursa that lies between the front of the hip joint and the iliopsoas muscle. External snapping hip presents when the gluteus maximus tendon catches on the greater

trochanter (bony hip prominence) during flexion.

Snapping hip syndrome is often the result of an imbalance of the muscles, and dancers may present with muscles tight in one area and weak in another. Treatment is likely to involve stretching, strengthening weak muscles and correcting postural dysfunction. In most cases a conservative rehabilitation programme is sufficient to treat the problem; corticosteroid injections or surgery are alternative approaches.

### Labral tears

A labral tear involves the ring of cartilage (labrum) that follows the outside rim of the hip joint socket. Besides cushioning the hip joint, the labrum acts like a rubber seal to help hold the ball at the top of the thighbone securely within the hip socket. The injury may cause hip and groin pain, as well as other symptoms including hip locking and instability, depending on the severity and location of the tear. Research suggests the tears are more often found in women.

Labral tears located at the front of the hip are the most common. Hip joint stress, such as repetitive pivoting and poor vascular supply to the hip joint can both contribute to the development of these tears. Posterior labral tears located at the back of the hip occur less regularly and are associated with movements that put stress on the back of the hip joint, such as squatting.

This problem may result following repetitive use from high impact activity or a one-time trauma. Repetitive micro traumas are small, unnoticeable injuries that build up over time and can cause labral tearing in dancers.

Treatment involves over-the-counter pain medication for the relief of inflammation, physiotherapy or steroid injections to ease symptoms. Surgery is sometimes required to repair or remove torn labral tissue.

### Hip bursitis

Bursae are tiny fluid-filled sacs that help prevent and reduce friction at joints where body parts are constantly moving against each other. Hip bursitis, or trochanteric bursitis, is an inflammation of the bursa that lies over the prominent bone on the side of the hip. The greater trochanter of the femur is a large, flat section of bone anchoring several muscles at the outer hip.

Repetitive stress on the hip causes the bursa to become inflamed, which is aggravated by any activity involving nearby muscles. Symptoms build gradually in some instances and at other times they develop suddenly. This is a common problem in dancers who experience pain when lying down or if pressure is applied to the area. Pain

increases during activity and is especially noticeable when walking up stairs.

It may not always be clear what has caused this condition – sometimes it occurs in dancers as a result of direct trauma, perhaps from a fall onto the side of the hip, irritating the bursa sac and causing inflammation. Stretching and strengthening can help correct structural or mechanical imbalances if present. Surgery is rare.

### Tendonitis

Tendonitis refers to the irritation and inflammation of any of the tendons connecting the muscles at the hip joint. It presents as pain around the joint and develops gradually; initially the pain lessens, or even disappears when the dancer is moving, but it increases afterwards. Eventually it becomes constant and radiates to the knee and/or lower back. The individual feels stiff and tight in the morning and, after dancing, finds it uncomfortable to move or stretch.

This is usually caused by muscular imbalances and alignment issues, which place stress on certain areas of the hip. When exercises are repeated while the body is misaligned, the tendons become irritated and inflamed. A physiotherapist can determine the cause and work on correcting alignment issues. They may also suggest cross-training exercises to help with imbalances so the tendonitis does not recur.

### Hip impingement

Hip impingement occurs when the ball of the hip (femoral head) is pushed up against the cup of the hip (acetabulum), potentially damaging the cartilage surrounding the acetabulum. ➤



Consequently, the bones of the hip joint sometimes start to build up (spurring) or the cartilage between the joints might tear.

Femoroacetabular Impingement (FAI) is the most common form of hip impingement, referring to a change in hip shape around the ball and socket joint. There are three types of FAI. Cam lesions occur where a change in shape of the femoral head leads to the development of a bump around the femoral neck, when the femoral head bone no longer rotates smoothly within the joint. Pincer lesions occur when extra bone growth extends over the acetabular rim, the socket that meets the femoral head in the hip joint. Combined lesions are a combination of both forms of FAI.

Symptoms include deep aching pain in the groin, discomfort when moving the hip into certain positions, stiffness of the joint, difficulty walking and climbing stairs, night pain, clicking and the legs “giving way”. The injury appears differently in dancers, compared to other athletes, which may be due to the increased range of motion and stress placed on the joint. The hip is particularly vulnerable to impingement when forcing certain movements common to dance such as turnout or the splits. The condition can limit a dancer’s career if left untreated.

Treatment initially includes rest, anti-inflammatory medications and physiotherapy to improve the range of motion and reduce muscular tensions. Surgery may be an option if the pain does not improve; this would involve repairing or removing damaged tissue and also correcting

or improving any abnormal shape of the hip joint.

### Sacroiliac joint dysfunction

Sacroiliac joint dysfunction is thought to be one of the more common causes of low back pain in dancers. Symptoms present as sharp or stabbing pain in the back, buttock, hip and leg extending down the posterior thigh as far as the knee, with limitation of movement specific to dance. Injury to the sacroiliac joint may be due to a combination of overuse factors including repetitive micro trauma, a single traumatic incident or emotional stress. Treatment aims to relieve pain, restore the function of the sacroiliac joint and return the dancer to full function.<sup>1</sup>

### The physiotherapist’s view

**Shirley Hancock** is a physiotherapist with considerable experience of working with dancers’ hip problems. “I always pay a lot of attention to the support leg; when it is weak, this can be the cause of many hip issues.

“Where dancers are repeatedly using the quadriceps, rather than the hamstring or gluteal group of muscles, the front of the leg will become overloaded and nothing happens at the back, potentially leading to the start of hip problems. The adductor muscle has a great influence in the working of the hip and turnout, additionally placing the leg correctly underneath you. Should this

become tight it is weakened, in turn affecting the hip.

“Weight is usually back if turnout is forced, and this stops the gluteus maximus, hamstrings and adductors working efficiently. In this situation the gluteus medius and minimus and tensor fascia lata are used strongly and these are internal rotators.”

### First aid

Initially use RICE (Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation) to help deal with any hip pain. Apply an ice pack to the area where you are feeling pain to reduce inflammation, using this several times a day if necessary. Wrap a thick bandage around the pelvis and hip area. Lying down with your feet up, elevating the legs and hips can reduce swelling and relieve pain.

Contact your GP or physiotherapist so they can assess any problem and arrange a programme of rehabilitation. Your practitioner may suggest

that you rest for a few days to avoid any activities causing the issue. On your return to class, warm up carefully, start slowly and avoid over-practising. ■

### CONTACT

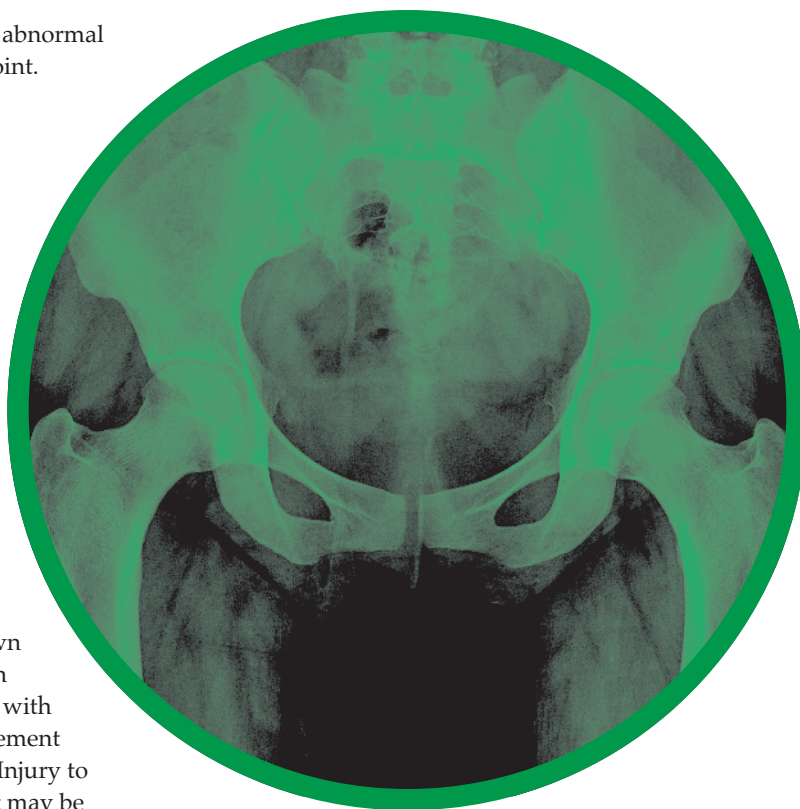
**The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP).** Visit [csp.org.uk](http://csp.org.uk), or telephone 020 7306 6666. To find a private physiotherapist use the Physio2u directory on the Society’s website.

**The British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM).** Visit [bapam.org.uk](http://bapam.org.uk), email [info@bapam.org.uk](mailto:info@bapam.org.uk), or telephone the clinic on 020 7404 8444.

**The National Institute of Dance Medicine and Science (NIDMS).** Visit [nidms.co.uk](http://nidms.co.uk), email [manager@nidms.co.uk](mailto:manager@nidms.co.uk) or telephone 020 7940 9804.

### NOTE

1. L E DeMann Jr in *Musculoskeletal Science and Practice*, February 1997.



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# Calendar

On stage this month

**NOTE:** Performances may be cancelled at short notice due to restrictions placed on companies and theatres because of the coronavirus

These listings are made as comprehensive as possible but inclusion does not necessarily mean recommendation.

**Copy deadline** for possible entries is always the 1st of the preceding month. Please send to [editorial@dancing-times.co.uk](mailto:editorial@dancing-times.co.uk) or post to the usual address. Entry subject to space available.

**Inclusion of dates is dependent upon information received** In addition, we have details of some advance programmes from overseas/UK companies and UK tours. For more details (subject to availability) email as above.

All programmes, casts and information subject to change

## UNITED KINGDOM

### COMPANIES

#### Birmingham Royal Ballet

[www.brb.org.uk](http://www.brb.org.uk)  
Tour of *Cinderella* (ch: Bintlley).  
Bookings can be made via the website

#### FEBRUARY

18-20: SOUTHAMPTON,  
Mayflower Theatre

#### MARCH

3-6: SALFORD, The Lowry  
10-13: PLYMOUTH, Theatre Royal  
31-Apr 10: BIRMINGHAM  
HIPPODROME

#### English National Ballet

[www.ballet.org.uk](http://www.ballet.org.uk)  
Christmas season of  
*Nutcracker Delights* (ch: Eagling)  
JANUARY  
Until Jan 3: LONDON COLISEUM  
Tel: 020 7845 9300

#### Northern Ballet

[www.northernballet.com](http://www.northernballet.com)  
Tour of *Swan Lake* (prod: Nixon)  
MARCH

4-13: LEEDS, Grand Theatre  
Tel: 0844 848 2700  
MAY

5-8: SALFORD, The Lowry  
Tel: 0343 208 6011

Tour of *The Great Gatsby* (ch: Nixon)  
MARCH

18-20: EDINBURGH,  
Festival Theatre  
Tel: 0131 529 6000  
APRIL

27-May 1: NOTTINGHAM,  
Theatre Royal  
Tel: 0115 989 5555

#### The Royal Ballet

[www.roh.org.uk](http://www.roh.org.uk)  
LONDON, Royal Opera House  
Tel: 020 7304 4000  
JANUARY 2021  
1M,2M: *The Nutcracker* (prod: Wright)

### EVENTS

#### Michael Clark: Cosmic Dancer

[www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)  
Barbican Art Gallery, London EC2

Tel: 0845 120 7500

Exhibition celebrating the life and work of the dancer and choreographer Michael Clark, including archive films, costumes and art works by a number of Clark's collaborators. Closes January 3

#### On Pointe: Royal Academy of Dance at 100

[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London SW7  
Tel: 020 7942 2000  
Exhibition exploring the 100-year history of the Royal Academy of Dance. Includes costume, designs, film and other unique material

### LONDON MUSICALS

#### Anything Goes

[www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)  
BARBICAN THEATRE, London EC1  
Tel: 020 7638 8891  
ch: Marshall  
Limited season – May 8 to August 22

#### The Book of Mormon

[www.bookofmormonlondon.com](http://www.bookofmormonlondon.com)  
PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE,  
London W1  
Tel: 0844 482 5110  
ch: Nicholaw  
Reopens January 4

#### Come From Away

[www.comefromawaylondon.co.uk](http://www.comefromawaylondon.co.uk)  
PHOENIX THEATRE, London WC2  
Tel: 0844 871 7615  
dir: Ashley  
Reopens January 18

#### Everybody's Talking About Jamie

[www.everybodystalkingaboutjamie.co.uk](http://www.everybodystalkingaboutjamie.co.uk)  
APOLLO THEATRE, London W1  
Tel: 0330 333 4809  
ch: Prince

#### Here Come the Boys

[www.herecometheboysshow.com](http://www.herecometheboysshow.com)  
GARRICK THEATRE, London WC2  
Tel: 0330 333 4811  
ch: Walker  
Limited season –  
January 27 to May 15

#### Mamma Mia!

[www.mamma-mia.com](http://www.mamma-mia.com)  
NOVELLO THEATRE, London WC2  
Tel: 0844 482 5155  
ch: Van Laast  
Reopens March 8

#### Matilda The Musical

[www.matildathemusical.com](http://www.matildathemusical.com)  
CAMBRIDGE THEATRE,  
London WC2  
Tel: 0844 412 4652  
ch: Darling  
Reopens February 2

#### Les Misérables

[www.lesmis.com](http://www.lesmis.com)  
QUEENS THEATRE, London W1  
Tel: 0870 890 1110  
Note: Staged concert version

#### Pretty Woman: The Musical

[www.prettywomanthemusical.com](http://www.prettywomanthemusical.com)  
PICCADILLY THEATRE,  
London W1  
Tel: 0844 412 6666  
ch: Mitchell  
Reopens January 18

#### The Prince of Egypt

[www.theprinceofegyptmusical.com](http://www.theprinceofegyptmusical.com)  
DOMINION THEATRE,  
London W1  
Tel: 0345 200 7982  
ch: Cheesman  
Reopens February 11

#### Six

[www.sixthemusical.com](http://www.sixthemusical.com)  
LYRIC THEATRE, London W1  
Tel: 0330 333 4812  
ch: Ingrouille

#### Tina: The Musical

[www.tinathemusical.com](http://www.tinathemusical.com)  
ALDWYCH THEATRE,  
London WC2  
Tel: 0845 200 7981  
ch: Van Laast  
Reopens February 1

#### Wicked

[www.wickedthemusical.com](http://www.wickedthemusical.com)  
APOLLO VICTORIA THEATRE,  
London SW1  
Tel: 0870 400 0889  
Reopens January 18

## OVERSEAS

### AUSTRIA

#### Vienna State Ballet

[www.wiener-staatsoper.at](http://www.wiener-staatsoper.at)  
VIENNA, Staatsoper  
JANUARY  
4,8: Live (ch: Van Manen),  
4 (ch: Schlöpfer)  
18,21,29: *La Fille mal  
gardée* (ch: Ashton)  
FEBRUARY  
2,8,13,15: *La Fille mal gardée*  
27-28: *Giselle* (prod: Tchernichova)

### CZECH REPUBLIC

#### Czech National Ballet

[www.narodni-divadlo.cz](http://www.narodni-divadlo.cz)

PRAGUE, National Theatre (NT),  
State Opera (SO)  
JANUARY  
9,13-14: *The Nutcracker* –  
A Christmas Carol (ch: Vámos) (NT)  
16M&E,22,27,28,30M&E:  
*Onegin* (ch: Cranko) (NT)  
FEBRUARY  
4,6M&E,13M: *New Works* by  
Douglas Lee, Alejandro Cerrudo  
and Cayetano Soto (NT)  
25-26,28M&E: *The Sleeping  
Beauty* (prod: Haydée) (SO)

### DENMARK

#### Royal Danish Ballet

[www.kglteater.dk](http://www.kglteater.dk)  
COPENHAGEN,  
Royal Theatre Old Stage (OS),  
Opera House (OH)  
JANUARY  
6,9,16: *Dans2Go* (OS)  
13-15,16M&E: *Two Lions and  
a Castle* (ch: Assaf) (OH)  
21M&E,22: *Romeo and Juliet*  
(ch: Neumeier) (OS)  
FEBRUARY  
5-6: *Hübberiet 1* (OS)  
10,26-27: *Romeo and Juliet* (OS)  
12-13,18-20: *Dans2Go* (OS)

### FINLAND

#### Finnish National Ballet

[www.opera.fi](http://www.opera.fi)  
HELSINKI, Opera House  
JANUARY  
16M&E,20-21,23,26,28,30: *Pippi  
Longstocking* (ch: Isberg)  
FEBRUARY  
2,5,6M&E: *Pippi Longstocking*  
26,27M: *Swan Lake*  
(prod: McAllister)

### FRANCE

#### Paris Opéra Ballet

[www.operadeparis.fr](http://www.operadeparis.fr)  
PARIS, Palais Garnier  
JANUARY  
6-10: *Peeping Tom in Diptych*  
(ch: Chartier, Carriso) (PG)  
FEBRUARY  
3-4,6,7M&E,8,10-11,13,14M,15-16,  
18-19,20M&E,23-26,27M&E:  
*Sadeh21* (ch: Naharin) (PG)

#### Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

[www.theatrechampselysees.fr](http://www.theatrechampselysees.fr)  
PARIS, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées  
JANUARY  
Until Jan 8: Latvian National Ballet  
in *The Sleeping Beauty* (ch: Petipa)  
MARCH  
29-31: Malpas Dance Company

### GERMANY

#### Bavarian State Ballet

[www.staatsballett.de](http://www.staatsballett.de)  
MUNICH, National Theatre  
JANUARY  
2,4,6M&E,9: *Cinderella*  
(ch: Wheeldon)  
14-15,18: *The Nutcracker*  
(ch: Neumeier)  
23-24,30: *Giselle* (prod: Wright)  
FEBRUARY  
8,15: *Swan Lake* (prod: Barra)

**Hamburg Ballet**

www.hamburgballett.de

HAMBURG, Opera House

**JANUARY**

2-3: Beethoven 9

6-7,14-15: All Our Yesterdays

(ch: Neumeier)

10M&amp;E: The Nutcracker (ch: Neumeier)

17M&amp;E,22,25,28-29: The Glass

Menagerie (ch: Neumeier)

**FEBRUARY**

10,12,16,18-19,21M&amp;E:

Hamlet (ch: Neumeier)

26-27: Death in Venice (ch: Neumeier)

**Semperoper Ballet**

www.semperoper.de

DRESDEN, Sächsische

Staatsoper, Semperoper

**JANUARY**

10,16,17M&amp;E: The Nutcracker

(ch: Watkin, Beechey)

**FEBRUARY**

16,18,20-22,28: Swan Lake (ch: Watkin)

**Stuttgart Ballet**

www.stuttgart-ballet.de

**JANUARY**

16-17,20-24,27-31: The Lady of

the Camellias (ch: Neumeier)

**HOLLAND****Dutch National Ballet**

www.het-nationale-ballet.nl

AMSTERDAM, Het Muziektheater

**JANUARY**

1-2: The Nutcracker and the Mouse

King (ch: Eagling, Van Schayk)

**FEBRUARY**

9,11-13,16,18-19,21,24,28:

Onegin (ch: Cranko)

**HONG KONG****Hong Kong Ballet**

www.hkballet.com

HONG KONG, The Box

**JANUARY**

29-30: Le Grand Pas de Deux (ch:

Spuck), Somberrissimo (ch: Lopez

Ochoa), Flames of Paris pas de

deux (ch: Vainonen), Paquita Grand

Pas (ch: Petipa), Flower Festival in

Genzano (ch: Bournonville),

The Fairy Queen (ch: Webre),

Le Corsaire pas de deux (ch: Petipa)

30-31: Ballet Classics for Children:

Cinderella (ch: Webre)

**FEBRUARY**

5-6: The Four Seasons

(ch: Ricky, Shropshire)

6-7: Ballet Classics for Children:

Cinderella

**ITALY****Ballet of Teatro di San Carlo**

www.teatrosancarlo.it

NAPLES, Teatro di San Carlo

**JANUARY**

Until Jan 3: The Nutcracker (ch: Picone)

**RUSSIA****Bolshoi Ballet**

www.bolshoi.ru

MOSCOW, Bolshoi Theatre

**JANUARY**

2,3M&amp;E,4M&amp;E,5M&amp;E,6M&amp;E:

The Nutcracker (ch: Grigorovich)

9M&amp;E,10: La Bayadère

(prod: Grigorovich)

12-14: Onegin (ch: Cranko)

16M&amp;E,17: The Taming of

the Shrew (ch: Maillot)

20-24: Nureyev (ch: Possokhov)

27-28: Coppélia (prod: Vikharev)

30M&amp;E,31M: Symphony in C

(ch: Balanchine),

Gaîté Parisienne (ch: Béjart)

**Maryinsky Ballet**

www.mariinsky.ru

ST PETERSBURG,

Maryinsky Theatre

**FEBRUARY**

4-6: La Bayadère (ch: Petipa)

**SPAIN****Compañía Nacional de Danza**

www.cndanza.mcu.es

SEVILLE, Teatro de la Maestranza

**JANUARY**

13-16: Giselle (prod: De Luz)

**SWEDEN****Royal Swedish Ballet**

www.operan.se

STOCKHOLM, Royal Opera House

**JANUARY**

3M,6,8,11-12,14-15,18-19: Swan

Lake (prod: Nureyev)

**FEBRUARY**

19,20M,22,25: Riptide (ch:

Hjálmarsóttir), Glacial Decoy

(ch: Brown), Minus 16 (ch: Naharin)

**SWITZERLAND****Zürich Ballet**

www.zuercherballett.ch

**JANUARY**

16-17,20,22,24,27,29-30,31M: New

Stømgren Work, New Stiens Work,

O Balcão de Amor (ch: Galili)

**FEBRUARY**

5: New Stømgren Work, New

Stiens Work, O Balcão de Amor

13,19-20,21M,28:

Winterreise (ch: Spuck)

**USA****Ballet West**

www.balletwest.org

SALT LAKE CITY, Janet Quinney

Lawson Capitol Theatre

**FEBRUARY**

12-20: Romeo and Juliet (ch: Smuin)

**Houston Ballet**

www.houstonballet.org

HOUSTON, Wortham Center

**FEBRUARY**

25-Mar 7: La Bayadère (prod: Welch)

**MARCH**

11-21: Heatscape (ch: Peck), Rooster

(ch: Bruce), Divergence (ch: Welch)

**John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**

www.kennedy-center.org

WASHINGTON, DC

**FEBRUARY**

2-7: Alvin Ailey American

Dance Theater

24-27: Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo

in Cinderella (ch: Maillot)

**MARCH**

23-28: New York City Ballet

in A Midsummer Night's

Dream (ch: Balanchine)

**Pennsylvania Ballet**

www.paballet.org

PHILADELPHIA, Academy of Music

**FEBRUARY**

25-Mar 7: Swan Lake (prod: Corella)

**MARCH**

11-14: Stars and Stripes,

Ballet Imperial,

Symphony in C (all ch: Balanchine)

**San Francisco Ballet**

www.sfballet.org

SAN FRANCISCO,

War Memorial Opera House

**JANUARY**

19-20,22,24M,28,30M&amp;E: new

Thatcher work, new Rowe work

21,23M&amp;E,26-27,29,31M: 7 for Eight

(ch: Tomasson), new Morris work,

Anima Animus (ch: Dawson)

**FEBRUARY**

16-19,20M&amp;E,21M: Let's Begin

at the End (ch: Rhoden),

Mrs Robinson (ch: Marston),

The Seasons (ch: Ratmansky)

**Tulsa Ballet**

www.tulsaballet.com

TULSA, Performing Arts Center

**FEBRUARY**

18-21: Swan Lake (prod: Angelini)

**MARCH**

25-28: Vendetta, a Mafia

Story (ch: Lopez Ochoa)

**The Washinton Ballet**

www.washingtonballet.org

WASHINGTON DC,

John F Kennedy Center for

the Performing Arts

**MAY**

6-16: Swan Lake (prod: Kent, Barbee)

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## Royal Ballet at Covent Garden

By Mary Clarke

THE FIRST BALLET ON this triple bill [which also included Glen Tetley's *Dances of Albion* and Antony Tudor's *Dark Elegies*] had been *The Firebird* in which Monica Mason is glorious. The production is shabby and very badly lit, but it was to bring, on November 20, an unexpected delight. Mason was suffering injury so her role went to Fiona Chadwick, age 20, the youngest debutante in a major role for many a long day. She has been noticed, of course, from student days and Royal Ballet



School performances and she did a useful stint with Ballet for All. Nevertheless, it was an extraordinarily accomplished debut. There was every evidence of careful coaching and she

fully justified the faith of her teachers. Quite simply, she can do it. She has a lovely strong, high jump, eloquent arms and big, expressive eyes. She has, moreover, stamina. There was no flagging and every sign of happy confidence...

Chadwick's chance... was a surprise. Pippa Wylde had been scheduled for just one performance of *Swan Lake*, at the matinée on November 22, which seemed idiotic but in fact, again due to injury, she got three. The first showed that she had all the potential, for the qualities of classic line and technique she has already demonstrated as the Lilac Fairy, and her command of the stage both in this role in *Sleeping Beauty* and as the Queen of the Wilis in *Giselle*, are those required for Odette/Odile. It was another auspicious

debut. Pippa Wylde is tall but beautifully proportioned; lovely legs and feet; expressive arms; and a noble walk... Her dancing was at its best and most assured in the two great pas de deux. She had not, at that first matinée, found the nuances of shading that characterise the two big solos and the second act was a little muted. But she shone in the ballroom and was tragic at the end...

Saturday matinées, even when they begin at 1.30pm, are nearly always a delight because they bring forward young dancers and usually (for ticket price reasons) bring in young audiences. There was a feel of spring in the air inside the Royal Opera House, although it was late November outside.

JANUARY 1981

Pictured: The cover of the January 1981 issue of *Dancing Times*, with Pippa Wylde as Odette in The Royal Ballet's production of *Swan Lake*. Photograph by Leslie E Spatt.

## Night of 100 Stars

By Jeffrey and Beth Genné Cohen

GROWING UP IN THE United States, ballroom dancing, to us, meant Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers – a form of dancing only done in the movies... We had heard that England was one of the centres of ballroom dance (Arlene Croce, the American dance critic, has written that England is to ballroom dancing in the 20th century, what St Petersburg was to ballet in the late 19th century). And we had also heard (and caught glimpses on television) of the legendary Gleaves. But never, until the "Night of 100 Stars",

had we seen a full evening of live ballroom dancing, and it was with some curiosity and considerable excitement that we set off for Hammersmith Palais.

The unpretentious exterior of the Palais in no way prepared us for the scene inside. We had never seen a dance floor quite that large... let alone one completely filled with dancing couples and a live band. But perhaps the strongest early impression of the evening was that this was very much a family event, with children of all ages running between tables and, inevitably, being the first on the floor for "free" dance periods. From the

practised routines of these younger dancers, it was clear to us that there were ballroom families with skills being passed from one generation to the next – and that one need not fear for the future of the form. Not only the very young, but the

elderly were also much in evidence, and we were most impressed and delighted by one couple, clearly well past retirement, who danced in every style (even disco), and put our rather rusty "jive" to shame. ■

JANUARY 1981

### Phyllida goes dancing

I'VE BEEN AT CLIFTONVILLE... dancing every night at the dear old Queen's, where you know all social Margate meets, and where it is always possible to enjoy coolth and calmth and high-class dancing. Here Miss Mary Best is the reigning goddess, and she certainly has one of the most luxurious ballrooms I have ever seen both in and out of London.



JULY 1920

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