



newsletter

July 2012

**W**E FINISHED THE season with three very entertaining meetings, with **Beatriz Stix-Brunell**, **Yuhui Choe** and **Valentino Zucchetti**. The timing of Beatriz's meeting was fortunate, only a few days after her debut as Princess Rose in *Prince of the Pagodas*. Consequently, she was able to speak in detail about that experience and her other principal roles during the season in *Alice* and *Polyphonia*. Beatriz also talked about her training in both America and Paris and her time with Christopher Wheeldon's company *Morphoses*. She provided us with a fascinating evening. Yuhui had last talked, quite early in her career, with another dancer. Both had joined as Prix de Lausanne apprentices. At that time, this route into the Company was rare. Yuhui also spoke of her training in Japan and Paris, before giving a very entertaining account of her career in the Company. She showed herself to be an extraordinarily good mimic when relating important meetings during her career. Valentino, like the other two, displayed his determination to succeed. The only one of the three to have attended the Royal Ballet School, he did not initially receive a contract with the Company, spending three years in Zurich and Norwegian Ballet Companies first. A lively speaker, he regaled us with many amusing anecdotes. These three young dancers provided us with a great end to the season and we look forward to following their careers over the next few years.

#### Future meetings

We have a very exciting start to the new season on Wednesday 5 September when, at our first meeting, we are delighted to welcome Principal dancer **Marianela Nuñez** as our guest. Marianela, who needs no introduction, last spoke to us nearly four years ago. The last few years have been very busy, including her marriage to fellow Principal **Thiago Soares**. The end of the season has seen her performances in *Prince of the Pagodas*, *Ballo della regina*, *Birthday Offering* and *Diana and Actaeon*. Whilst concentrating on the last four years, if time permits, we will briefly look back at her earlier experiences in Argentina, the Royal Ballet School and the Company. We can expect a very entertaining evening, so rush back from your holidays!

At our second meeting in the month, on Thursday

20 September, we are very privileged to welcome as our guest, **Olga Evreinoff**, Guest Teacher with The Royal Ballet. After graduating from the Vaganova Ballet Academy, St Petersburg, she danced in Prague and Oslo, and was a guest artist with the National Ballet of Canada under Erik Bruhn. As a teacher and coach she has worked worldwide with major ballet companies and closely with Nureyev and Baryshnikov, amongst many others. Since 1989 she has staged Natalia Makarova's production of *La Bayadère* throughout the world and will be staging it again on the Royal Ballet later in the season. We can expect a very fascinating evening.

Provisional dates for the rest of the season are: Thursday 4 October, Friday 19 October, Tuesday 20 November, Friday 7 December, Thursday 10 January, Friday 18 January, Wednesday 6 February, Thursday 14 February, Thursday 28 February, Wednesday 6 March, Wednesday 13 March, Wednesday 20 March, Friday 22 March, Thursday 4 April, Wednesday 10 April, Thursday 18 April, Thursday 16 May, Thursday 23 May, Friday 31 May, Friday 7 June, Friday 14 June, Wednesday 19 June. All dates are subject to change. We have removed Friday 16 November, Thursday 6 December, Thursday 24 January, Wednesday 20 February from the list given in the last newsletter.

Meetings, unless otherwise stated, begin at 7.30 p.m. and are at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church at the eastern end of Shaftesbury Avenue, opposite the Shaftesbury Theatre. From Covent Garden you walk up Endell Street and cross over Shaftesbury Avenue. If you walk past the opticians you will see the church. Doors open at 6.45 p.m. unless otherwise stated. Entrance is £4 for members, £3 for concessions, £8 for guests.

#### Dame Monica Mason

Our Patron, **Dame Monica Mason** chose to end her decade as Director of The Royal Ballet by commissioning of programme of new work, *Metamorphosis: Titian 2012*. The idea sprung from a meeting with one of our members, Minna Moore Ede, a curator from the National Gallery, who proposed a creative collaboration between the two institutions. With three contemporary artists, three composers and seven

choreographers, this was an epic enterprise. Feedback from members suggests it had something for everyone, with many different views on the contrasting merits of *Machina*, *Trespass* and *Diana and Actaeon*. The final performance was followed by a film tribute to Monica, introduced light heartedly from the stage by David Attenborough. In front of the Company, Michael Berkeley, Chairman of the Governors of the Royal Ballet Companies presented Monica with their Gold Medal. Following a tribute from Lord Hall, and Monica's gracious response, she was presented with flowers from those on stage and a flower throw from the stage boxes. The large floral arrangement that was placed in front of her by Carlos Acosta and Ed Watson was from the Ballet Association. All members, who were present, will remember this very special evening. Writing to our Chairman, Monica wrote:

A VERY big thank you to you and the Ballet Association for the magnificent and beautiful basket of flowers. My love to everyone, Monica.

#### **Exits, entrances and promotions**

The Royal Ballet has announced the following promotions:

**To First Soloist:** Alexander Campbell, Ryoichi Hirano

**To Soloist:** Beatriz Stix-Brunell, Claire Calvert

James Hay, Dawid Trzensimiech, Valentino Zucchetti

**To First Artist:** Meaghan Grace-Hinkis, Fumi Kaneko, Yasmine Naghdi

Leavers:

Principal Tamara Rojo, First Soloist José Martin, Artists Celisa Diuana, Aaron Smyth, Ballet Mistress Ursula Hageli and Physiotherapist Daryl Martin left at the end of the season.

Francesca Filpi, David Makhateli and Sergei Polunin left during the season.

Joiners:

Tierney Heap, Mayara Magri and Donald Thom from The Royal Ballet School, Nicol Edmonds from the Finnish National Ballet, and formerly Elmhurst School for Dance, join as Artists from the start of next season.

We sent flowers to Tamara, Ursula and Celisa and a bottle of wine to Aaron at the end of the season. As Tamara and José have been with the Company for more than ten years, we also present them with a more substantial gift. We hope that Tamara will come to talk to the Association during next season, which will give us an opportunity to present our gift to her. We are already in discussion with her about what she would like. We have given José a cheque and asked him to choose a gift. He has written to the Chairman:

I wanted to thank you and the rest of the Ballet Association, not just for this present but for all the support and care that you all have towards ballet. Sorry for my late reply, is crazy change time but terribly exciting!!!! I will send you a picture of what I buy, I think you would like it. Looking forward to seeing all of you at ENB, Sincerely José Martin."

Since the end of the season we have heard from **Ursula Hageli** and **Celisa Diuana**. Ursula wrote:

Thank you so much for the lovely flowers you left for me at the stage door from the Ballet Association, it was such a lovely surprise. I am preparing for a series of three lectures that I have been asked to put together for the Insight Evenings next season. The subject will be the history of ballet, the first one being on 19th September on the subject of The Ballerina, the second will focus on the male dancer and the third on pas de deux work. I will also be coming in to do some coaching as well as doing a couple of character roles. So not really leaving completely! Thank you to you all again for the lovely flowers. All the best Ursula.

Celisa sent a text:

Thank you so much for the lovely bright flowers. Thank you from all my heart to you and the Ballet Association. Celisa.

Birmingham Royal Ballet has also announced its promotions, following the end of its season in Granada:

**To Principal:** Jenna Roberts

**To First Soloist:** Angela Paul, Laetitia Lo Sarda, Tzu-Chao Chou, Matthias Dingman

**To Soloist:** Arancha Baselga, Laura Purkiss, James Barton, Jonathan Caguioa, Tom Rogers

**To First Artist:** Laura-Jane Gibson, Yvette Knight, Delia Matthews, Callie Roberts, William Bracewell, Oliver Till.

Leaving the Company are Principals Robert Parker, who takes up the role of Artistic Director of Elmhurst School for Dance, and Gaylene Cummerfield, who leaves to become a full-time mother. During the season Lei Zhao, Robert Gravenor, Aonghus Hoole and Max Westwell also left the Company.

Joining BRB are Momoko Hirata, who returns as a First Soloist after 18 months with Angel Corellá's Company in Spain and, joining as Artists: Miki Mizutani from Japan, a graduate of ENB School, Alys Shee from Canada, a graduate of the Academy of Ballet and Jazz School for the Canadian Ballet Theatre and a former dancer with ABT II, Lachlan Monaghan

from Australia, a graduate of The Royal Ballet School, and Ana Albutashvili, a soloist from the State Ballet of Georgia. During the season, graduates of the Royal Ballet School, Laura Day from England and Reina Fuchigami from Japan, as well as Anna Monleon from Spain and Elmhurst School for Dance and Max Maslen from England and Central School of Ballet joined as Artists.

### Visit to Elmhurst School for Dance and Birmingham Royal Ballet

Once again, we had a very enjoyable time on our annual visit to Birmingham. This year over 30 members attended. The visit was ably arranged by committee member Brian Don, with great support from BRB Friends' Co-ordinator **Sheila Hitchman** and our President **Desmond Kelly** and the staff at Elmhurst.

On the first morning we gathered in a BRB studio to watch Ballet Master **Dominic Antonucci** take a men's class. Whilst we waited for class to begin, we were privileged to have a brief talk with the Company's Director **David Bintley**. Interviewed by our Chairman, he spoke about *Far from the Madding Crowd*, his new ballet *Faster*, which premiered the following week, and his production of *Prince of the Pagodas* which had premiered during the season with his Japanese Company. After a very entertaining and energetic male class, members relaxed over lunch in a local restaurant.

After lunch the sun shone and a few members got sunburnt as they caught up with news from former BRB dancer **Sylvia Jimenez**, wife of Principal **Iain Mackay**. After a relaxing afternoon, we gathered again in a studio where our Chairman interviewed Artist **William Bracewell**. Will proved a very amusing speaker with many anecdotes about his training and short career. Only in his first season with the Company he has danced the *Don Quijote pas de deux* on the mid-scale tour and Oberon in *The Dream*. Members then moved to the theatre for the opening night of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, a long overdue revival of one of David's great narrative ballets.

After the visit, **David Bintley** wrote:

Just a brief note to thank you and the Ballet Association for your continued support of Birmingham Royal Ballet. We really do appreciate your endorsement, not only with your very generous cheque, but also your enthusiasm for the Company and its associated School, Elmhurst. It is a delight for us to welcome you annually, and to sense that we still have such a loyal group of champions that are London based and still continue to spread the good news about our work up here in Birmingham. I do hope that you enjoyed your two days with us,

your various activities and the performance of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and we very much look forward to welcoming you once again next season. My very best wishes David B.

The next morning we gathered at Elmhurst School for Dance, where we were warmly welcomed by our President, Artistic Director **Desmond Kelly**, Principal **Jessica Ward** and other staff. After refreshments we moved to the School's theatre to watch teachers **Samira Saidi** and **Errol Pickford** rehearse Upper School students in Ashton's *Les Rendezvous* for their School performance. After this rehearsal, we were delighted to watch Lower School girls perform Samira's new ballet *Les Jeunes Filles*, which was partly funded through our leaving present (from BRB) for Desmond. We wish Samira great success in her new role as Director of English National Ballet School from the start of next term.

As always, we were then treated to a substantial lunch, where members were able to talk informally with Elmhurst staff. During lunch our Chairman presented the 2012 Ballet Association Award to second year sixth Japanese student **Eri Nishibara**. We had been very impressed by Eri's dancing in the lead role in *Les Rendezvous* and look forward to following her progress in the future. After lunch, we watched a lively mixed Year 11 class taught by **Lee Robinson**, formally of ENB. After this very long class, we had an opportunity to ask questions during tea, where we met again last year's award winner **Nastazia Phillipou** and wished Desmond success in his new role (not retirement!). We also presented the School with the results of a collection held during lunch.

Following the visit, Eri wrote:

I am writing to thank you for choosing me for this award. I would like to express my profound gratitude. When I was told about the award, I was really excited and appreciated it. I am very glad and proud, and I was really happy to dance for you. I think it will be of great value to me. I am going to keep practising hard and try to improve the quality of my dance. I hope to dance for you in the future. Yours sincerely Eri Nishibara."

We have also received two letters from Desmond and one from **Anna Hainsworth**, Fundraising and Development Officer of the School acknowledging our donations. Desmond wrote:

Once again it is my pleasant duty to write a short note of thanks to you all. We all at Elmhurst love and look forward to your visits each year and this last one was no exception, wonderfully organised by Brian Don. I think that you all can

feel the warmth with which you are greeted by everyone at Elmhurst. This is entirely due to your obvious love of dance, which we share, and your clearly demonstrated enthusiasm for the School. I hope you enjoyed watching Eri dance and approve of my selection. She hasn't stopped smiling since the cheque hand over! The "whip round" collection was quite overwhelming – I am quite in awe of your generosity. Thank you from us all. Desmond.

After the School performances, he wrote:

Just to let you know that the Association's wonderful gift to me was used to costume Samira's *Les Jeunes Filles* and to help pay for the summer show lighting design. I hope some of the members were able to see Sami's delightful piece. Thanks to the Association this year's lighting was excellent and looked truly professional in spite of our limited equipment. A huge thank you to all. Regards Desmond.

Members will be pleased to know that Desmond will continue his links with the Association in the future.

Many of those who attended this year's trip to Birmingham were on our previous visits. If you have not yet joined us on these visits, we thoroughly recommend them. We have pencilled in next year's visit for June 19 & 20, where the BRB performance will be David Bintley's *Giselle*. Put it in your diary now!

### Visit to Royal Opera House Exhibition

18 members met on June 25th for a private tour of the season's last exhibition at the Royal Opera House, *Monica Mason: A Life with The Royal Ballet*, given by the curator of the exhibition, Cristina Franchi, who works for the ROH Collections. It was a fascinating tour of the exhibition, which comprised costumes, press cuttings and photographs, as well as a short film based around the *Rite of Spring*. Cristina was able to give us great insight into the reasons that items had been chosen for inclusion as well as fascinating detail about the items themselves. We also had an added bonus of spending some time looking at a few Pavlova items that were on display for the recent Pavlova celebrations that had been organised by Ivy House. The money paid by members for the tour was supplemented by Association funds to make a donation of £250 to the work of the Collections.

### Royal Ballet School Performances and Graduation

Earlier this month saw The Royal Ballet School performances in the Linbury Theatre and on the main stage at The Royal Opera House. We are sure that members were impressed by both the quality of dance

and the variety in the programmes. Association members will have also enjoyed spotting performances by our Award winners from both the last two years. Of these, **Lachlan Monaghan** from Australia joins BRB and **Nina Tonoli** from Belgium joins The Vienna State Opera Ballet.

After the performance in the Opera House, our Chairman attended the School's Graduation Ceremony where he presented the Ballet Association's Royal Ballet School Awards 2012. We are delighted to announce that two of last year's recipients, **Marcelino Sambé** from Portugal and **Yaoqian Shang** from China, received the awards again this year. Members will have been very impressed by their performances in **Alastair Marriott's** *Simple Symphony* and **John Neumeier's** *Yonderling*. We look forward to following their progress next season in their graduate year.

Our other Award recipient this year is First Year Upper School student **Annette Buvoli** from the USA. Annette also performed in *Yonderling* and is moving straight from the First to the Third Year. We congratulate all three, as very deserving winners of our awards. Early in the Spring term we will welcome all three students to one of our meetings, alongside one of their teachers, and look forward to observing them in class and rehearsals on our annual visit to the Upper School which is pencilled in for Wednesday 24 April.

### Royal Ballet to Hollywood?

Post Production has just wrapped up on a new film called *Love Tomorrow*, which features two dancers from the ballet world in lead roles. **Cindy Jourdain**, ex Royal Ballet, and **Arionel Vargas** (Principal, English National Ballet), spent months rehearsing for the screen and then shooting what the producers call a 'modern love story' based around a chance encounter between two dancers. **Begona Cao** (ENB) and **Miguel Altunaga** (Rambert) also feature in acting roles alongside Max Brown (*Spooks*, *The Tudors*) and Samuel Barnett (*The History Boys*). The Ballet Boyz, **Michael Nunn** and **William Trevitt** take co-producer credits and also choreographed two of the film's dance sequences.

There are no story details as yet but the producers stressed that they wanted real dancers for the lead roles to preserve the authenticity of the story and of course the dancing. Locations in the film include Sadler's Wells Theatre and Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in Greenwich. The producers plan to debut the film on the festival circuit later in the year. For more information, go to the *Love Tomorrow* facebook page and click 'LIKE', if you want to keep up with screenings and festival news. Our Chairman was fortunate to attend an early screening and highly recommends the film, so keep a look out for it.

## News

We congratulate those connected to dance who received awards in the Queen's Birthday Honours. These include OBEs for **Brenda Last**, **Michael Nunn** and **Billy Trevitt**.

Members will be interested to hear that **Loipa Araujo**, Guest Teacher with the Royal Ballet and formerly one of the 'Jewels' of Cuban Ballet, will be joining **Tamara Rojo** at English National Ballet as Associate Director from the start of next season.

*Ninette de Valois: Adventurous Traditionalist*, an expanded record of the Royal Ballet School's 2011 Conference has been published, including a dvd with rare archive footage.

Look out for Royal Ballet dancers past and present in the Closing Ceremony of the Olympic Games and in the National Theatre's production of *Timon of Athens*.

It has been announced that **David Bintley** will step down in September 2014 from his position as Artistic Director of the National Ballet of Japan. He will be replaced by Noriko Ohara.

Members will be saddened to hear of the death on 3rd July of former dancer and long-term Association member **Leo Kersley** at the age of 91.

At the request of the Royal Opera House Collections, we have donated our *The Royal Ballet 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Personal Memories from the Ballet Association* to them. Erica Donaghy, Assistant Archivist, writes:

I have now accessioned the folder, where it has been permanently recorded that this was received as a donation from the Ballet Association. It is now housed with the Collections, where it will be kept to archival standards. The document will be used for historical research, exhibition and display purposes. We are extremely grateful to the Ballet Association for donating the item to the Royal Opera House Collections, and it provides a fascinating and wonderful addition to the Collections. Thank you for your kind donation.

Members will have heard that the Royal Ballet has announced performances by three Guest Artists next season. Principal of the Mikhailovsky Ballet, and formally the Bolshoi, **Natalia Osipova**, will make her Royal Ballet debut in *Swan Lake*, dancing with Principal Guest Artist **Carlos Acosta** on 10, 13 and 25 October.

Former Royal Ballet Principals **Tamara Rojo** and **Sergei Polunin** will return for three performances *Marguerite and Armand* on 12, 15 and 21 February 2013. These will be Tamara's farewell performances in a ballet which they danced to critical acclaim in 2011.

## Pavlova Season at the BFI: August 2012

BFI Southbank is launching a season of films featuring the ballet legend **Anna Pavlova**. The season is curated by Jane Pritchard author of a new book *Pavlova: Twentieth Century Ballerina*. To book tickets visit the website: [www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk) or telephone 020 7928 3232.

11 August: **The Dumb Girl of Portici** (3.50 pm NFT2)

15 & 25 August: **Pavlova: A Woman for All Time** (6 pm NFT3 & 3.20pm NFT2).

17 & 31 August: **The Immortal Swan** (6.10 pm & 6.20 pm NFT2).

18 August: **Omnibus: Pavlova + The Dying Swan** (6.00 pm NFT2).

23 August: **Madam and The Dying Swan** (6.15pm NFT1) followed by Q&A with the film makers Candida Brady and Titus Ogilvy and Marguerite Porter, who was taught the role of the Swan by Dame Ninette de Valois.

24 August: **Pavlova and her Contemporaries on Screen** (6.00pm NFT2).

## A Focus on Style

The Royal Ballet School is presenting "a landmark series of lectures and masterclasses exploring the European and Russian ballet schools, their influence on Ninette de Valois and the development of an 'English' style." The venue is The Royal Ballet Upper School 10.30am - 3.45pm. To watch, each day costs £75, or £250 for the entire series of five days. Each day, as well as lectures, includes a masterclass for students. Delegate tickets available online only at [www.ticket-source.co.uk/focusonstyle](http://www.ticket-source.co.uk/focusonstyle).

For further information contact: Laurajane Lavender, Outreach Events Coordinator, The Royal Ballet School, 46 Floral Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9DA. Tel: +44 (0)20 7845 7064, Email: [tlink@royalballetschool.co.uk](mailto:tlink@royalballetschool.co.uk).

*The French School* – Sunday 30 September 2012, Elizabeth Platel, Director of Paris Opera Ballet School

*The Italian School* – Sunday 21 October 2012, Dr Giannandrea Poesio, Reader, University of Bedfordshire

*The Danish School* – Sunday 2 December 2012, Thomas Lund, Director, Royal Danish Ballet School

*The Russian School* – Sunday 3 February 2013, Altnai Asylmuratova, Artistic Director, The Vaganova Ballet Academy

*The English School* – Sunday 17 March 2013, Gailene Stock, Director of The Royal Ballet School.

**David Bain** (Chairman)