



newsletter

August 2015

AS BOTH ROYAL Ballet Companies return from their summer holidays, we started the new season with a lively evening with the Royal Ballet's Artist Gina Storm-Jensen and First Artist Donald Thom as our guests. They spoke of their training in Norway and Canada respectively and at the Royal Ballet School and their first years in the Company. For Donald, these have been very busy, with lead roles in *Alice*, *Onegin* and *Hansel and Grettel*. Unfortunately Gina had two injuries at the end of her first season and start of her second. Both dancers have been in *Wolf Works*, and spoke of Wayne McGregor's way of choreographing, comparing this with that of others. They then spoke about the Company's successful tour to America, including an entertaining account of their sight-seeing as well as performances. After a short break, Donald joined Natalia Osipova for performances of her show in London, Moscow, St Petersburg and New York. Back in the studio for just over a week, they have started rehearsing *Viscera* and *Raven Girl*.

Members are reminded that interviews should not be recorded or filmed and that photographs should only be taken at the end of the meeting. We welcome dancers speaking freely when they come to meetings. Sometimes they say things that do not wish to see in print and edit this out of the official reports. Therefore, please do not post your own reports of meetings on social media, other than to say you attended, enjoyed, etc., a meeting.

Future meetings

At our next meeting on Wednesday 26 August it is a privilege to welcome former Royal Ballet Principal Alina Cojocar. Born in Bucharest, where she trained until joining the Kiev Ballet School, Alina competed at Prix de Lausanne in 1997 at the age of 15 and won a scholarship to the Royal Ballet School. She stayed for six months before joining Kiev ballet as a Principal. She joined the Royal Ballet in November 1999 and was promoted to principal in 2001. She left the Royal Ballet at the end of the 2012-13 season and joined English National Ballet as Lead Principal and performs with many companies around the world, including Hamburg Ballet and Opera National Bucharest, where her partner Johan Kobborg is now

Director. In Hamburg, she created the lead role of Julie in John Neumeier's *Liliom*. Alina organises galas for her charity *Hospices of Hope* and has won many international awards. Alina last spoke to the Association in October 2009, so we can expect a fascinating account of the last six years.

On Wednesday 9 September we will have a special joint meeting with the British Friends of Ballet Nacional de Cuba. We are delighted to welcome the Royal Ballet's Guest Principal Dancer Carlos Acosta as our guest at the start of his final season with the Company and a few weeks before the premiere of his production of *Carmen*. Whilst the interview will cover many aspects of Carlos's career, we will concentrate on recent years, covering *Don Quixote*, *Cubanía*, *Carmen* and his writing and film work. We will spend part of the meeting talking about The Carlos Acosta International Dance Foundation. Through the creation of Carlos Acosta Arts Centres around the world, the Foundation aims to create a legacy of dance for future generations. With the help of architect Lord Foster, a derelict ballet school in Havana will be the first of these centres, with a school and small company. Carlos is very keen that British Ballet fans hear about this project.

We can expect a fascinating evening, with Carlos talking about his exciting plans for the future as well as his amazing career. Because this is a joint meeting with the British Friends of BNC, entry will be by donation. We suggest a minimum donation of £10 per person. Donations will be shared between The Ballet Association, the British Friends of Ballet Nacional de Cuba and The Carlos Acosta International Dance Foundation. There will be an opportunity to make additional donations towards the Foundation after the meeting. Both the British Friends and the Foundation are registered UK charities.

Provisionally, the dates for next season are Thursday 15 October, Friday 30 October, Tuesday 10 November, Thursday 26 November, Thursday 3 December, Wednesday 27 January, Thursday 4 February, Thursday 18 February, Wednesday 9 March, Thursday 24 March, Thursday 7 April, Friday 22 April, Thursday 5 May, Thursday 19 May, Wednesday 8 June.

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

Birmingham Royal Ballet, Director's Appeal

As in previous years, the Association has made a donation toward David Bintley's Director's Appeal towards new choreography. This entitles the Association to two seats for the on-stage working rehearsals prior to the opening nights. If you, or you and a guest, would be interested in attending any of these rehearsals, please let our Chairman know. We will hold a ballot if necessary to allocate places. As Gold Barre supporters, you will have reserved seating in the auditorium and refreshments in the Wragge room from 6.00pm. All rehearsals start at 7.00pm.

Variations Triple Bill: Theme and Variations, Kin, Enigma Variations – Wed 7 October 2015
The Nutcracker – Thurs 26 November
Ashton Double Bill: The Dream, Month in the Country – Tues 16 February 2016
The Taming of the Shrew: Wed 15 June
Shakespeare Triple Bill: The Sonnets, The Moor's Pavane, The Shakespeare Suite – Tues 21 June

Royal Ballet School Awards

We have received end of year reports on our 2014 Royal Ballet School Award winners.

Kiely Groenewegen: Kiely has had another excellent year at The Royal Ballet School and was described by her ballet teacher, Daria Klimentová, as a disciplined and hardworking student. She danced a lovely variation from *Le Corsaire* in the Solos Evenings in May, an energetic and demanding piece which suited her personality and style. Kiely was cast in a number of pieces for The Royal Ballet School Summer Performances this year, but unfortunately sustained a minor injury towards the end of term which prevented her from doing so. She did however dance in David Bintley's *Swan Lake Waltz*. She has now returned to her family in Australia for the summer holidays and in September will enter her third and final year at The Royal Ballet School.

Grace Robinson: Grace was an excellent student throughout her time at The Royal Ballet School and was fortunate enough to

be seconded to Birmingham Royal Ballet for their *Nutcracker* season this year which she loved and was a wonderful experience and insight into professional company life. Grace danced beautifully on the Graduate Tour to New York in April and was chosen to dance in Jiří Kylián's *Sechs Tänze*, and Christopher Wheeldon's *Rush* for the Royal Opera House Summer Performances in July. Grace will be joining Northern Ballet as an apprentice and will begin rehearsing with them shortly.

Harry Churches: Harry was fortunate enough to be taught by Jay Jolley in his final year who described him as an intelligent and hardworking young man. He danced the lead in Liam Scarlett's *Classical Symphony* when the Graduate Year toured to New York earlier in April and received much admiration. He also danced extremely well in Jiří Kylián's *Sechs Tänze* and Christopher Wheeldon's *Rush* in the School's Summer Performances and is delighted to be joining The Royal Ballet on the Aud Jebsen Young Dancers' Programme.

We have also received a card from the three students:

Dear Ballet Association.

Thank you for your generous support this year. It has been a challenging but very rewarding year and hard to believe we will be graduating! Unfortunately I only have one week holiday before I start at Northern Ballet, so won't be going home to Australia. I hope you enjoy the end of year show and thank you again for your support. Grace xxx

It has been an incredible final year at the Royal Ballet School and I can't thank you enough for your support over this year of training. I will start with the Royal Ballet on August 5th which allows me three weeks in Australia. Thank you very much for your generosity and it will be good to meet at the graduation. Harry Churches

Thank you for your continued support throughout this year. It has been another term of incredible learning and has been especially exciting in the lead up to the end of the year shows. Unfortunately this term hasn't been without setbacks. Three weeks before the end of term I injured my toe which meant that I couldn't dance for two weeks. Because it was such an important time, it has been quite a sad end to such a wonderful year. Luckily I am still

managing to perform some smaller roles in the end of year show! I am now looking forward to going back home to Australia to see my family for summer. Thank you once again for your support! Kiely xxx.

We wish Grace and Harry great success as they start out on their professional careers and Kiely in her final year at the School. On our website you can see a [picture of our 2015 winners](#), second year Gabrielle Beach from the USA, and first years Joshua Junker from Holland and Yuki Sugiura from Japan with our Chairman at their end of year Assembly.

News

Members may have heard that The Royal Ballet Principal Rupert Pennefather has announced that he is to leave at the start of this season after 16 years with the Company. We will be sending Rupert a present from the Association and wish him every success in the next stage of his life.

Carlos Acosta performs *A Classical Selection* at the London Coliseum from 8-13 December with Marianela Nunez, Zenaida Yanowsky, Yuhui Choe, Tierney Heap, Anna Rose O'Sullivan, Thiago Soares, Valeri Hristov and Nehemiah Kish.

Earlier this month, the BBC showed a lengthy interview of former Royal Ballet Guest Artist Sylvie Guillem by former Principal Deborah Bull, where Sylvie reflects on her life and career. The interview is available on BBC iPlayer until the end of the month.

During August Steven McRae, Sarah Lamb, Vadim Muntagirov and former Principals Alina Cojocaru, Johan Kobborg and Tamara Rojo have been performing in the triennial World Ballet Festival 2015 in Tokyo.

At the beginning of October Steven McRae will be performing *Czardas* in the Fall for Dance Festival at the New York City Centre.

The Royal Ballet Soloist Fernando Montaña has organised a gala of music and dance, *Save the Day*, at 6.30pm on 20 September at the Royal College of Music's Britten Theatre in aid of charities *Playing for Change* and *Children of the Andes*, including Paris Opera Ballet's Etoile Isabelle Ciaravola. Tickets are now on sale – [box office link](#).

Members in the north of England may be interested in the Royal Academy of Dance event on Friday 4 September from 12.30-2.30pm, *Billy Comes Home, Afternoon Tea with an RAD success story* at the Thistle Newcastle City Centre, The County Hotel, Neville Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 5DF. The tea features an interview with Harris Beattie, winner of the Genée Dance Challenge in 2010, and former star of *Billy Eliot* in the West End. The venue is just a

few miles from the setting of the musical, which this year celebrates its 10th anniversary. Entry fee: £20; limited places available. Book online with [this link](#).

During August members were invited to attend a talk at the Australian Embassy by Queensland Ballet Director Li Cunxin. We apologise to those of you who receive your newsletter by post that you didn't receive the invitation, but the invite came too late to include in the previous newsletter. On occasions like this we can only notify members who receive newsletters by email. Another reason for doing so if you can.

Visit to BRB & Elmhurst – a report by Solveig Morris
Committee member, Brian Don, organised another very successful visit to Birmingham. This is now the sixth visit and this year 39 members attended.

On the Tuesday, prior to the visit, members were given the opportunity to see a dress rehearsal of *Sylvia* as guests of BRB. On the Wednesday, the official start of the trip, everyone met at Le Truc restaurant and enjoyed a relaxing lunch. This year's talk by a BRB dancer, chaired by Terry Gibson, BRB Giving Manager and Friends' representative, took on another dimension. Lachlan Monaghan (Artist) accompanied by Jeanette Wong gave a demonstration and talk about the structure of the daily class. Lachlan was a former Ballet Association Award Winner. His ability to demonstrate, talk and explain all at the same time was an amazing feat! After his demonstration, members then had the opportunity to ask questions to both Lachlan and Jeannette. Members then attended the opening night of David Bintley's production of *Sylvia*.

The next day, members visited Elmhurst School for Dance where they were given a warm welcome by Robert Parker, the school's Artistic Director and our President.

In the morning members watched David Yow teach a mixed Year 11 class. Then the Association's 2015 Award was given to Kirica Takahasi who danced Act 3 Aurora's variation from *The Sleeping Beauty* at a special showing to members. After which Elmhurst once again provided a substantial lunch and members had opportunities to talk informally with Robert Parker and Principal Jessica Wheeler.

After lunch members had an opportunity to watch students rehearse for their summer show. This included James French and Clementine Rowsell, children of Association members. At the end of the day a cheque for £1,100, generously donated by members during the visit (beating all previous records) was made and thanks must go to all for their generosity. Robert Parker expressed his gratitude and was still answering members' questions with great enthusiasm at 4.15 pm (well after the close of play).

The Ballet Lover's Companion – Zoë Anderson

Members may have seen that Zoë Anderson has produced a guide to the most successful and loved ballets seen on stage today. Published by Yale University Press, it is available to Association members at the discounted price of £19 (RRP £25), if you quote the promo code Y1489, until 1 October. A leaflet was enclosed in the July newsletter for those who receive their newsletter by post. Alternatively it can be [ordered online](#) quoting the code or by post from Yale University Press, Direct Mail Department, 47 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP or telephone 020 7079 4900.

Membership

It is the time of year when we ask you to renew your membership. Please return the attached renewal form to Liz Atkins, Membership Secretary, as soon as possible, but not later than the end of October. If you joined the Association, as a new member, after the start of April 2015, your membership covers this coming season. Your membership card will have indicated this. If you have an email address, please consider receiving the newsletter by email in future. If you would prefer to pay by electronic transfer, please indicate on the form and Liz will get in touch with you with our bank details, but please still send a copy of the form to her by post with a stamped addressed envelope for return of your membership card.

If you have a friend who you think might be interested in joining the Association, please give them a copy of the form.

As announced in a previous newsletter, the Association has donated £5,000 towards the revival of the original sets and costumes, with some minor alterations, for the Royal Ballet's production of Frederick Ashton's *Rhapsody*. We presented the cheque to our Patron Kevin O'Hare at our Annual Dinner. We hope that this will be the first of what will become a regular donation to the Company, possibly every two years. To enable us to do this, we ask that all members consider adding a donation to their renewal fee. Those of you who have attended the Open Rehearsals over the last two years have experienced a wonderful opportunity to observe the Company at work without charge. Making a donation to the Association enables members to contribute in a small way towards future revivals, etc.

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