



newsletter

March/April 2017

SINCE OUR FEBRUARY newsletter we have had two excellent meetings. At our second meeting in February, we welcomed Royal Ballet First Soloist Beatriz Stix-Brunell as our guest. After talking about her various roles in *Sleeping Beauty*, which included a demonstration of some of the mime, Beatriz spoke at length about her roles in Wayne McGregor's ballets, in particular *Wolf Works* and *The Raven Girl*. After giving us considerable insight into these ballets, Beatriz moved on to talk about the very special place Christopher Wheeldon has played in her career from dancing in his company Morphoses when only 14 to creating roles in his many works in the Royal's repertoire. Speaking of Ashton and MacMillan works, highlights have included *The Two Pigeons* this season and *Prince of the Pagodas* early in her career. Another highlight this season was dancing the Sugar Plum Fairy in Sir Peter Wright's *Nutcracker*. Beatriz gave us a very interesting and entertaining evening.

At our March meeting, we were delighted to welcome Principal Zenaida Yanowsky, who retires from the Royal Ballet at the end of this season. Zenaida talked in detail about her work over the last couple of years, including *Les Enfants Terribles* and *Elizabeth* in the Barbican and the Linbury respectively and *The Invitation*. She also spoke about the ballets she will be performing during the rest of the season, including Empress Elizabeth in *Mayerling*, Liam Scarlett's new *Symphonic Dances*, *Marguerite and Armand*, and finally in Australia, Christopher Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale*. Partnered by Carlos Acosta in *Elizabeth*, Zen spoke about working with him on various versions of *Cubania*, which coincided with her pregnancies. She also touched on her plans for the future, which members await with anticipation. Members were delighted that Zen was able to speak to us towards the end of her career with the Royal Ballet.

A summary report is available on our website once the report has been checked by the guest speaker/s. If you do not have access to the internet and would like a copy of a report, please send an A5 stamped, addressed envelope to Roger Handley, 12 Pinewood, Willow Grove, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 5BT. 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 they 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.

Future meetings

At our meeting on Thursday 27 April we are very pleased to welcome two First Artists, David Donnelly and Anna Rose O'Sullivan as our guests. Born in Harrow, Anna Rose joined The Royal Ballet School at White Lodge. Early roles included the lead role in *A Little Princess* for London Children's Ballet and in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* on the West End stage. At School, she danced the lead role in Alastair Marriott's *A Simple Symphony* and a pas de deux at La Fenice in Venice and at Buckingham Palace. After success in various competitions, Anna Rose joined The Royal Ballet in 2012 and was promoted to First Artist in 2016. Recent roles have included Clara and the Fairy of the Golden Vine and dancing in *The Human Seasons* and *After the Rain*, two ballets which also included David Donnelly. American, David trained at Northern Cincinnati Youth Ballet and in 2012 reached the finals of the Youth America Grand Prix, where he was awarded the Outstanding Contemporary Dancer Award. Aged 16 he was awarded a scholarship to join The Royal Ballet Upper School by American sculptor Richard MacDonald. He joined The Royal Ballet in 2013 after dancing The Man in Mark Annear's *La Destinée* in the School's annual matinée. Since joining, roles have included the Girl's Cousin in *The Invitation*, Florestan in *The Sleeping Beauty*, and the Bartender in *The Age of Anxiety*.

At the next meeting on Friday 26 May we are delighted to welcome Royal Ballet Soloist Thomas Whitehead as our guest. Born in West Yorkshire, Tom trained locally and then at Arts Educational before joining The Royal Ballet Upper School. On graduation in 1994, he joined The Royal Ballet and was promoted to Soloist in 2002. His enormous repertoire has included, in recent years, the Man in *The Invitation*, Drosselmeyer, Stepsister in *Cinderella*, Widow Simone, Monsieur GM and the Gaoler in *Manon*, and The Husband in *Anastasia*. This winter he created one

of the roles of the Brother in *Les Enfants Terribles*. In 2009 he was nominated for awards for his role in the *Goldberg: The Brandstrup – Rojo Project*. He has also regularly collaborated with the ROH's Learning and Participation department and in 2013 staged a performance of *The Rite of Spring* for Chance to Dance. In 2006, he toured in Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* and in 2010 in Richard Eyre's workshop production of *Truly, Madly, Deeply* with Viviana Durante. We can expect a very entertaining evening. Tom last spoke to the Association ten years ago, long before his "frock" roles.

At our last meeting before The Royal Ballet goes off on tour we welcome, on Thursday 1 June, First Soloist Bennet Gartside. Bennet last spoke to the Association in 2010, before he danced a number of principal roles. Most noticeably these have included Prince Rudolf in *Mayerling*, Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, the Husband in *The Concert* and Widow Simone in *La Fille mal gardée*. His role creations include Walter Sickert in *Sweet Violets*, the Father in *Hansel and Gretel*, Alphonse in *Frankenstein* and Antigonus in *The Winter's Tale*. Bennet joined The Royal Ballet in 1995, after dancing in the School performance of *Two Pigeons*. He was promoted to First Soloist in 2007. He is also a film-maker and ballet teacher and maintains The Royal Ballet's video archive. We can expect a fascinating evening.

Provisional dates for meetings during the rest of the season and beginning of next are: Thursday 24 August, Wednesday 6 September, Thursday 21 September. Meetings 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, 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.

Open Rehearsal – The Royal Ballet, Friday 3 March

Once again, Ballet Association members were invited to a rehearsal by The Royal Ballet. This year, because building work restricted access to the studios, we were invited to the first stage call of Christopher Wheeldon's *After the Rain*. For nearly two and a half hours, over 100 members watched our President, Christopher Saunders, rehearse all three casts of the ballet, including Marianela Nunez and Thiago Soares, Zenaida Yanowsky and Reece Clarke, and Beatriz Stix-Brunell and Eric Underwood as the lead couples. We are very grateful to all involved for giving us this privileged access to the Company at work, and especially to Kevin, Chris and the dancers and to Artistic Scheduling Manager, Philip Mosley, who

made the arrangements for us.

Robert Parker, Artistic Director, Elmhurst Ballet School, London Marathon

Our President, Robert Parker, has written:

Dear all, I just wanted to thank you all for your continued support of Elmhurst and it was wonderful to spend time with you at the annual dinner, albeit very briefly before dashing off to catch my train. Just to let you know, I am once again giving myself a challenge, this time in the shape of the London Marathon on the 23rd April where I will be pushing my body to its physical limits and hopefully surviving to tell the tale! I am doing this for the MS Society and will hopefully help to improve the lives of people living with this crippling disorder. So far I have managed to raise £1500 of the £2000 pledge which is absolutely wonderful! Please consider making a small donation to this very worthy cause using the Just Giving link below and help to make a difference, no matter how small. Thank you for your generous support! <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/robertparker-elmhurst> Bob. x

Visit to the Royal Ballet Upper School, Wednesday 3rd May at 9.00am-3.30pm

As announced in the last newsletter, once again, we have arranged a visit to the Upper School in Floral Street to watch three classes. This is a joint visit with London Ballet Circle.

There are a few places left. If you would like to attend, or bring a guest, please send your name, address and contact details (preferably an email address) to David Bain, Chairman, The Ballet Association, 23 Capstan Square, Stewart Street, London E14 3EU. The cost of the visit will be £15 or £20 for guests. Please enclose a cheque made payable to The Ballet Association. If you have no email address, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. All monies collected will be donated to The Royal Ballet School to provide additional funds for students.

We will not be issuing tickets. Places will be confirmed by email (or post) on 26th April. Those who have already applied have had their ticket numbers confirmed. Please quote these numbers on arrival.

Annual Dinner Monday 27th March 2017

Once again, we had an excellent Annual Dinner at the Rubens Hotel. Despite the increase in price, we had a good attendance and, from the feedback we've received, all seem to have had an enjoyable time. As always, we had a very exciting guest list:- our Patron

Kevin O'Hare (Director of The Royal Ballet); our Presidents Jonathan Cope (Répétiteur), Dame Monica Mason (Former Director of The Royal Ballet), Robert Parker (Artistic Director, Elmhurst Ballet School and former Principal, BRB) and Christopher Saunders (Senior Ballet Master and Principal Character Artist); Sir Peter Wright (Director Laureate, Birmingham Royal Ballet); Jeanetta Laurence (former Associate Director, The Royal Ballet); Elyse Borne (Répétiteur for the George Balanchine Trust); Christopher Powney (Director of The Royal Ballet School); Amanda Maxwell (Character Dance Teacher, The Royal Ballet School); Principals Alexander Campbell, Francesca Hayward and Ryoichi Hirano; First Soloists Bennet Gartside, Itziar Mendizabal and Johannes Stepanek; Soloists Matthew Ball, Meaghan Grace Hinkis and Thomas Whitehead; First Artist Romany Pajdak; Artists Lukas Bjørneboe Brændsrød, Mica Bradbury, Harry Churches, Leticia Dias, Leo Dixon, Isabel Lubach, Julia Roscoe and Joseph Sissens. Unfortunately, our President Marion Tait had to cancel at the last moment due to family illness.

Principal Zenaida Yanowsky, unfortunately, had a prior engagement that evening but came to the drinks reception to thank members "for all their wonderful support during her time with the Company" and to describe the present she had bought with the Association's gift; a framed photograph of a work of art made from her old shoes. We also made a presentation to First Soloist, Johannes Stepanek, who retires at the end of the season. Johannes has used his gift to buy two cut-glass martini glasses. Members will be delighted to know that he will be continuing his role as an Assistant Director for The Royal Opera. We also presented chocolates to our member Sally Firth who is in her 85th year.

Ballet Association visit to Birmingham Royal Ballet & Elmhurst Ballet School

Around 40 members are attending this visit on 22-23 June. Most are meeting for a late lunch at 2.30 at the Milano Restaurant. This will be followed by a talk by Birmingham Royal Ballet Dancers at 5.30 – 6.30pm.

Please note that this talk will be held in Studio 5 which is easily accessible through the Thorpe Street entrance to the Hippodrome. Members will then attend a performance of Birmingham Royal Ballet's *Three Short Story Ballets*. The programme contains *Arcadia*, the first commissioned piece by Birmingham Royal Ballet's Ruth Brill to a new score composed by renowned saxophonist John Harle; Michael Corder's beautiful interpretation of the Hans Christian Anderson tale where a boy's life is marked from the moment a fairy saves his life in the snow in *Le Baiser de la fée*; and, finally, the timeless choreography of John Cranko's light-hearted *Pineapple Poll*.

The following day will be spent at Elmhurst Ballet School watching class and rehearsals. Whilst our hotel and theatre tickets have now been confirmed, members can still join us for the pre-performance talk and visit to Elmhurst and make their own hotel and theatre bookings. If you would like to do this, please send a cheque payable to The Ballet Association for £15, which will go towards our donation to BRB, to our Chairman at the address below.

Draft Works, 5 & 7 April

The Association gives an annual donation of £500 towards the Royal Ballet's Draft Works programme. We gave £1,000 this year as we had neglected to donate last year. The Association was allocated 20 tickets for the upcoming performances. Unfortunately, we were only able to advertise these to those who receive their newsletters by email and to those who attended our meeting on 22 March. A Ballot was held on 23 March with over 70 applying for the 20 tickets.

CHAIRMAN: David Bain, 23 Capstan Square,
Stewart Street, London E14 3EU
Tel: 020 7515 1254 Mobile: 07855 823921
Email: baindavid23@talktalk.net or
baindavid@rocketmail.com