



newsletter

*March/April 2018*

SINCE OUR LAST newsletter we have had two excellent meetings. At our second in January, we had our annual meeting with our Royal Ballet School Association Award winners, **Victoria Norris** from Australia, **Davi Ramos** from Brazil and **Gearoid Solan** from Ireland. Victoria and Davi are now in their second year and Gearoid in his graduate year. They were escorted by former English National Ballet Lead Principal **Daria Klimentová**, who now teaches second year Upper School students. They gave us a very entertaining evening describing their training in their respective home countries, their time at the Royal Ballet School and, in Daria's case, talking about her illustrious career as a Principal Dancer. Daria also spoke about the Prague International Ballet Masterclasses, which she has directed since 2003. Davi had attended last summer and spoke enthusiastically about his experiences there, which he hopes to repeat this year. It is always a pleasure to meet our award winners and look forward to following their careers. Gearoid is currently auditioning for companies in Europe and had an audition with Zurich Ballet a few days after the talk.

At our February meeting, on Valentine's Day, we were delighted to welcome Royal Ballet Principal, **Sarah Lamb**. Perched on stools, so the audience could see us in the Forum Hall, Sarah gave us an entertaining account of aspects of her career. Talking initially of the experience of working with Twyla Tharp on the new pas de deux for *An Illustrated 'Farewell'*, Sarah spoke of other work this season and her injury at the end of last season before moving on to talk about her collaboration with Wayne McGregor and other aspects of her career. This included speaking about the film ([Dreams of Giverny](#)) that had been made of her in Monet's garden in Giverny. Those present indicated that the acoustic in this hall is good and they heard everything. The capacity isn't as great, but we will look to book this room for some meetings next season.

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

We are delighted to welcome newly promoted Principal **Yasmine Naghdi** as our guest on Thursday 22 March. We had asked her immediately after her promotion but Yasmine felt it more appropriate to talk after her performances as *Giselle*. Born in London of Belgian and Iranian parents, Yasmine last spoke to the Association in 2011. She graduated into The Royal Ballet in 2010 from The Royal Ballet School, where in 2009 she won the Young British Dancer of the Year Competition. During her time at the School she took part in an exchange programme with the Vaganova Academy in St Petersburg.

Her roles in The Royal Ballet have included Juliet, Sugar Plum Fairy, Aurora, Olga in *Onegin* and The Girl in *The Invitation*. As well as making her debut as *Giselle* this season, she will also dance Lescaut's Mistress in *Manon*. Yasmine is a keen musician, singing, playing the piano and composing and we can expect her to give us a very entertaining evening.

The following month, on Thursday 12 April, we are very pleased to welcome our Patron, Royal Ballet Director **Kevin O'Hare** as our guest. Since becoming Director, Kevin has followed the precedent set by his predecessor and has come to talk to us every other season. As previously, Kevin will look back over this and last season and look forward to the new *Swan Lake* and the plans for next season, as well as talking about changes in the Company that he has introduced and other plans for the future. We can expect, as always, a very interesting meeting. We are very grateful to Kevin for the support he has given the Association since becoming Director, in particular for inviting us to a rehearsal or class each year. We can expect a very interesting evening.

Provisional dates for meetings are: Thursday 10 May, Thursday 24 May, Thursday 7 June. Please note

that the meeting scheduled for Thursday 10 May and Friday 20 April have been cancelled as they clash with other Royal Ballet related events.

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.

## News

Members will have heard recently, that Birmingham Royal Ballet has announced that **David Bintley** is stepping down as its Director at the end of next season after 24 years. He first joined as a boy 42 years ago and has choreographed more than 22 works for the Company including 10 full length works. He plans to pursue increasing requests to choreograph new works and to stage his ballets. We hope to invite David to talk to us during next season.

Many members will have been present for the performance of *Giselle* on Thursday 1 February, which celebrated **Marianela Nuñez's** 20th season with the Company. It was a very special evening, with a massive flower throw and a tribute from Company Director Kevin O'Hare.



In the last newsletter, we announced the death of long-standing member **Violetta Hannington**. Around 20 Association members attended her Funeral in January, with members of her family and her Italian friends. (See above, with her favourite dancer, Jonathan Cope) Jonathan is currently on a year's sabbatical from the Company and is not in London, but sent a message, concluding "She was a special lady who will be thought of often." The following week, Kevin O'Hare came on stage before the General Rehearsal of *Giselle* and spoke about Violetta and dedicated the performance

to her memory.

On a happier note, on the 10th February, our long-term Membership Secretary and founder member **Joan Seaman** celebrated her 95th birthday. We sent flowers to Joan to mark this special birthday. Whilst she is unable to attend meetings any longer, Joan still manages to come to some Royal Ballet performances and is always pleased to greet members. (Below, a few years ago at an Annual Dinner with Dame Monica Mason).



In the last newsletter we also congratulated **Roberta Marquez** on the birth of her son, Alexander who was born on 27 November 2017.

As announced previously, we sent a present to **Valeri Hristov** when he left The Royal Ballet to join The Royal Ballet School at the start of this season. Valeri writes:

Dear David, Thank you and the Association for your generous gift and your kind words. I really appreciate it. After a long search I found something memorable as well as useful to remind me of everyone at the Ballet Association, a JQUEEN Automatic Watch Winder storage box. Many, many thanks!! Valeri Hristov

We are very grateful to The Frederick Ashton Foundation which gifted The Ballet Association two tickets for its recent Ashton Rediscovered masterclass with our President Dame Monica Mason. We raffled these tickets at our meeting with Daria and the Royal Ballet School students.

Members may be interested in news of live performances of the Bolshoi Ballet which will be screened at some cinemas in the UK. On 8 April, former Royal Ballet Principal Sergei Polunin will dance Albrecht in their production of *Giselle* and on 10 June they will perform *Coppélia*. More information can be found at [www.bolshoiballetincinema.com](http://www.bolshoiballetincinema.com).

Members will be pleased to hear that amongst the nominees for the 2018 Olivier Awards are for Best New Dance Production, Cristal Pite for *Flight Pattern* for The Royal Ballet; for Outstanding Achievement

in Dance, Zenaida Yanowsky for her performances in Liam Scarlett's *Symphonic Dances*; and for Best Theatre Choreography, Christopher Wheeldon for *An American in Paris*. The Award Ceremony is held at the Royal Albert Hall at 5.45pm on Sunday 8 April and Mastercard holders can apply for tickets.

### **The Royal Ballet in class**

Tuesday 17 April 10.25 a.m.

In recent years, The Royal Ballet has invited Ballet Association members to attend an open rehearsal either in the Clore Studio or, as last year, on stage. As an alternative this season, we are delighted to announce that The Royal Ballet has allocated the Association 100 tickets for members to watch dancers take class on the Royal Opera House stage at 10.25am – 12pm on Tuesday 17 April.

If you would like to attend, please apply to our Chairman, David Bain, 23 Capstan Square, Stewart Street, London E14 3EU, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for return of your ticket.

There is no charge for this event. However, you will remember that at the start of this season we asked all members to make a donation to the Association so that we can sponsor another Royal Ballet production, as we did this season with Twyla Tharp's *An Illustrated Farewell* and two years ago with *Rhapsody*. We hope to sponsor a piece every other year. Therefore, we would ask you to enclose a small donation with your application for this event, making the cheque payable to The Ballet Association.

### **Visit to the Royal Ballet Upper School**

Wednesday 2nd May at 9.00am-3.30pm

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 and initially will only be open to members of the BA or LBC.

If you would like to attend, please send your name, address and contact details (preferably an e-mail address) to David Bain, Chairman, The Ballet Association, 23 Capstan Square, Stewart Street, London E14 3EU. The cost of the visit will be £15. Please indicate whether you belong to the BA or LBC or both, so that we can allocate places fairly. Please enclose a cheque made payable to The Ballet Association. If you have no e-mail address, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. All monies collected will be donated to The Royal Ballet School to provide additional funds for students. Please apply before 15th April. If you would like to bring a guest, at a cost of £20, please indicate this in your letter, but do not include them in your cheque. We will contact you after 15 April to confirm whether or not any guest places are available.

We will not be issuing tickets. Places will be confirmed by email (or post). Your name will be placed on a list, which will be held at the door. If a 9 am start is too early for you, it will be possible to join us at morning break around 10.30am. Please indicate in your letter if you will be a late arrival. There will be a one hour lunch break before the afternoon session. The School politely requests that you leave the premises during this break as they do not have the space to allow you to eat lunch on site. However, if you have any mobility issues, please indicate this in your letter and provision will be made for you to stay on site during the break and seating will be reserved for you in the theatre.

### **Annual Dinner**

Tuesday 24th April 2018, The Chesterfield, Mayfair

As advertised in our last newsletter, we are delighted to announce that this year's Annual Dinner will be on Tuesday 24th April at The Chesterfield, Mayfair. The hotel is in Charles Street, about five minutes walk from Green Park Station. and close to Berkeley Square and like The Rubens, is a member of the Red Carnation group of hotels. Dinner at 8pm will be held in the hotel's Restaurant and Conservatory. It will be preceded by drinks in the Royal Suite on the first floor, which can be accessed by lift. We have kept the cost at £49.50, the same as last year. However, this will not include tea or coffee. If you wish to order tea or coffee and biscuits to finish the meal, these can be booked at an additional £5.

There are still some places left, so if you are interested in attending, please complete the application form which was attached to the last newsletter and send it with your cheque and a stamped addressed envelope to Melanie Shipton, The Ballet Association, 7 Dutch Gardens, Kingston, Surrey, KT2 7TT. If you need another application form, please contact our Chairman. Please note, if you fail to send a stamped addressed envelope you will not receive your ticket and may lose your place if we are over-subscribed. If you wish to pay by electronic transfer, please send the form and include an email address so that Mel can send you our bank details. Please then forward her evidence of the transfer.

### **Draft Works**

Many members managed to attend this season's performances of Draft Works in January which took place in the Royal Ballet School. As usual, the Association contributed towards these performances. Kevin O'Hare wrote:

The very kind gift of £500 from The Ballet Association to support our developing and

expanding Draft Works initiative is enormously appreciated. Thank you. I am so pleased that you were able to be there last night to see the first performance of this Season's Draft Works. It is a vital platform and one that is helping to develop an even richer culture of new ideas by offering the dancers an opportunity to experiment in an unpressurised environment. It is particularly satisfying to see some dancers taking up the challenge for the first time and others using this opportunity to extend and finesse work that has been part of earlier Draft Works Seasons. Thank you again David for your ongoing support, it is wonderful to have.

### **Critics' Circle National Dance Awards**

Once again, the Ballet Association sponsored the National Dance Award for Best Classical Choreography. In the absence of our Chairman, who was en route to Havana, Committee member and former Deputy Chairman Chris Scott presented the award to Akram Khan for Akram Khan's *Giselle* for English National Ballet.

Other winners included Zenaida Yanowsky as Best Female Dancer, Marcelino Sambé as Colas in *La Fille mal gardée* for Outstanding Male Performance

(Classical) and Alina Cojocaru for Outstanding Female Performance (Classical) as Giselle in Akram Khan's *Giselle*.

### **Annual Visit to Elmhurst Ballet School & BRB**

21-22 June 2018

There are still places available for our annual visit to Elmhurst Ballet School and Birmingham Royal Ballet. If you are interested in attending, please complete the form attached to our last newsletter and return it to the Chairman along with a cheque for the deposit of £15 per person. This deposit will cover transport to Elmhurst on the Friday morning and our donation to BRB. Please return the form as soon as possible. These visits to Birmingham are always very enjoyable, so if you haven't been before, do consider joining us. If you need another application form, please contact our Chairman.

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