



newsletter

July / August 2018

SINCE OUR LAST newsletter we have had two excellent meetings. At our May meeting, we were delighted to welcome former Royal Ballet Principal Irek Mukhamedov. As might be expected, Irek provided us with a very entertaining evening. He started by updating us on his career since leaving the Royal, which included teaching at Elmhurst School for Dance, working with the Greek Ballet, initially with Lynn Seymour, and the Polish National Ballet, before joining English National Ballet as Ballet Master and now Guest Teacher. This included his return to the stage as Diego Rivera in Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Broken Wings*, which he will repeat next season, when he will also be coaching at the Royal for Winter Dreams. Irek then spoke about his time with the Royal Ballet, working with Sir Kenneth Macmillan and his partnerships with Viviana Durante and Darcey Bussell.

At the start of June, our guest was Soloist William Bracewell, who had just made his debut as Siegfried alongside Akane Takada in the Royal Ballet's new production of *Swan Lake*. Will spoke about how this had come about, the coaching and the pleasure of dancing with Akane. He then went on to talk about the decision to move from BRB and his first year with the Royal, which included dancing Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale* and in new works by Wayne McGregor and Chris Wheeldon, *Yugen* and *Corybantic Games*, as well as Wayne's *Obsidian Tear*. He then spoke about his training and his time at BRB, which included winning the National Dance Award for Outstanding Male Performance for *The King Dances*. William gave us a fascinating and very thoughtful account of the highlights of his career. Since the interview he has been promoted to First Soloist.

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 very pleased to announce that our guests at our first meeting of the new season on Thursday 30 August will be Royal Ballet Artists Charlotte Tonkinson and Francisco Serrano. As well as speaking about their contrasting training and first two years in the Company, they will tell us about the recent filming of *Romeo and Juliet* in Hungary and the Company's tour to Madrid. Both Charlotte and Francisco joined the Royal Ballet's Aud Jebsen Young Dancers Programme from the start of the 2016/17 Season and entered the Company as Artists at the start of last season. Both trained at The Royal Ballet Upper School. Born in Doncaster, Charlotte joined The Academy of Northern Ballet aged 11. She reached the final of Young British Dancer in 2014. Francisco was born in the USA and has a Cuban background. He trained at Sarasota Cuban Ballet School from age 14. In 2014 he won a scholarship from Youth America Grand Prix to train at The Royal Ballet School. In 2015 he won 2nd Prize in the Lynn Seymour Award for Expressive Dance. These meetings with young dancers early in their careers are always entertaining. If you haven't been to one before, we thoroughly recommend you come.

At the first of two September meetings, on Wednesday 19 September we are delighted to welcome one of our former Royal Ballet School Award winners in 2013, Soloist Reece Clarke. Scottish born Reece was the youngest of four brothers to train at The Royal Ballet School. He graduated into the Company in the 2013/14 Season and was promoted to First Artist in 2016 and Soloist in 2017. He won Young British Dancer of the Year in 2012 and Emerging Artist Award at the National Dance Awards in 2016. He came to prominence when he danced the lead male role in *Symphonic Variations* early in his career. Other Principal roles have included the Prince in *Nutcracker*, Aminta (*Sylvia*), Polixenes and Antigonus (*The Winter's Tale*) and *After the Rain*. Early next season he dances The Young Man in *The Two Pigeons*. Reece last spoke to us at the beginning of his second season in

the Company, since when his career has flourished, so we can expect a fascinating evening.

At our second meeting of the month, on Wednesday 26 September we are very privileged to have former Royal Ballet Guest Artist Natalia Makarova as our guest. Natasha is in London to oversee her production of *La Bayadere* which makes a welcome return to the repertoire. As well as interviewing Natasha about her career, we will show a short film about her that was shown at the Lincoln Center Dance Film Festival in 2016. Natasha feels the film, which includes excerpts showing some of her favourite roles, could be a reintroduction of her life and career, as her final full-length performance in London was in 1989 in *Romeo and Juliet* with Julio Bocca at the Royal Opera House. Natasha graduated into the Kirov Ballet in 1959 and stayed in the West after their tour to London in 1970, then joined ABT soon after. In 1983 she made her Broadway debut in *On Your Toes*. Recognised as one of the finest ballerinas of her generation, we know members will be keen to welcome her back to London.

Please note that some Wednesday meetings will be preceded by a free concert at 6.00pm organised by the Church. Members are welcome to attend these concerts. Concert dates can be found on the Church website. At the time of writing none are scheduled for September, but this may change. Please note, our AGM will be on Wednesday 5 December. There is no concert that day and the AGM will start at 6.45pm.

Provisional dates for meetings next season are: Wednesday 3 October, Wednesday 7 November, Wednesday 5 December, Wednesday 16 January, Wednesday 23 January, Wednesday 30 January, Wednesday 6 February, Monday 11 February, Wednesday 20 February, Wednesday 6 March, Wednesday 13 March, Wednesday 27 March, Tuesday 9 April, Wednesday 17 April, Wednesday 24 April, Tuesday 30 April, Friday 3 May, Monday 20 May, Wednesday 29 May, Monday 3 June, Wednesday 5 June. Obviously, we will cancel some of these dates where they clash with Insight events, etc. The meetings scheduled for 30 November and 14 December have been cancelled.

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 £5 for members, £4 for concessions, £9 for guests. Please note, that cost of entrance has risen by £1 from the start of the new season.

News

Members will have been saddened to hear of the deaths

of three former Royal Ballet dancers Dame Gillian Lynne, Diana Vere and Errol Pickford. A seminal influence on British dance and musical theatre, Dame Gillian started her career aged 16 in 1942 and two years later joined Sadler's Wells Ballet. Her many roles, in what became The Royal Ballet, included the Black Queen in *Checkmate*, the Lilac Fairy and Queen of the Willis. Best known for choreographing *Cats* and other musicals with Andrew Lloyd Webber, her ballets included *A Simple Man*, *Lipizzaner* and *The Brontes* for Northern Ballet, *Journey* for the Bolshoi, *Some You Win* for Irek Mukhamedov's Company and *Fool on the Hill* for Australian Ballet. Dame Gillian died on 1 July aged 92.

Born in Trinidad in 1942, Diana Vere trained at The Royal Ballet School from 1959 before joining The Royal Ballet in 1962. She was promoted to Principal in 1970. In 1971 she danced the role of Giselle at short notice when Antoinette Sibley fell ill. Her repertoire also included Swanilda and Lise. Married to colleague Gary Sherwood, she retired from the Company in 1974, the year after the birth of her daughter Melanie. She died aged 75.

Errol Pickford's life was very sadly cut short at the age of 51. Errol joined the Royal Ballet in 1984 and became a Principal in 1991. He was the first Western dancer to partner Bolshoi ballerina Nina Ananiashvili. He left The Royal Ballet in 1997 and became a Principal with Western Australian Ballet. On his retirement he trained as a teacher at the Royal Academy of Dance and set up the School for K Ballet in Japan, where he was director for 4 years. He then taught with many companies before he joined Elmhurst Ballet School in 2008 where he was Head of Graduate Placement and International Links.

On a happier note, we are delighted to report the marriage of Yuhui Choe and Nehemiah Kish in London on 3 July; the birth of George Crawford Oakley to Helen Crawford and her husband, Haydn, on Thursday 28 June at 3.10 a.m. weighing 7 lbs; the birth of Taye Cruz Fernandes-Gartside to Bennet Gartside and his wife Marcia on 13 July at 7.10pm weighing 4.8lb. Taye was 3 weeks premature and remained in hospital for 8 days, but is now at home and doted on by his parents.

In the Queen's Birthday Honours List, our Patron Kevin O'Hare was awarded a CBE and Principal Character Artist Gary Avis an MBE. Former Royal Ballet Principal Deborah Bull, who is currently Vice Principal and Vice President of King's College, London, has been made a Baroness and as a working peer, will sit on the cross-benches in the House of Lords. We have sent our congratulations to all of them.

Congratulations to the Royal Ballet on receiving an Olivier Award for Crystal Pite's *Flight Pattern*.

Members will also be interested to know that a new film, *Nureyev*, will be shown in cinemas across the UK from 25 September.

Promotions, leavers and joiners

The Royal Ballet has announced the following promotions: Matthew Ball to Principal; William Bracewell, Tierney Heap, Fumi Kaneko and Mayara Magri to First Soloist; Calvin Richardson to Soloist; and Téo Dubreuil and Joseph Sissens to First Artist.

Prix de Lausanne dancer Stanislaw Węgrzyn and Aud Jebsen Young Dancers Sae Maeda, Nadia Mullova-Barley, Joonhyuk Jun, Joshua Junker and Aiden O'Brien join as Artists. Harris Bell, Yu Hang, Harrison Lee, Taisuke Nakao, Katharina Nikelski and Amelia Townsend join as the 2018-19 Aud Jebsen Young Dancers from The Royal Ballet School and Lania Atkins from Dutch National Ballet Academy. Amelia Palmiero continues as an Aud Jebsen Young Dancer and Davide Loricchio joins as Prix de Lausanne dancer.

Former Royal Ballet School student Joseph Aumeer joins the Company as an Artist after two years with Paris Opera Ballet. As previously announced, Cesar Corrales joins as First Soloist from English National Ballet and Soloist Laura McCulloch left earlier in the year. Soloist Fernando Montano and First Artist Leticia Stock take leave of absence to undertake various projects and to dance with Joffrey Ballet respectively.

Birmingham Royal Ballet has announced the following promotions: Yasuo Atsuji to Principal, Yvette Knight, Brandon Lawrence, Maureya Lebowitz, Miki Mizutani and Yaoqian Shang to First Soloist; Karla Doorbar, Max Maslen and Lachlan Monaghan to Soloist; and Aitor Galende, Beatrice Parma, Brooke Ray, Edivaldo Souza da Silva and Daria Stanculescu to First Artist. Joining the Company as Artists are August Generalli from Boston Ballet II; Alexander Yap from Northern Ballet; Louis Cohen from English National Ballet School; Callum Findlay-White, Tori Forsyth-Hecken, Isabella Howard, Yu Kurihara, Lennart Steegen and Yuki Sugiura from the Royal Ballet School. Joseph Taylor from Elmhurst Ballet School joins as an Apprentice.

Royal Ballet School

Our Chairman attended the Royal Ballet Upper School's final assembly and presented the Ballet Association Awards to three second year students, Ginevra Zambon from Italy, and Jordan Martinez and William Boswell from the USA. At the School's Matinée at the Opera House, all three danced in Nacho Duato's *Bach, Multiplicity Forms of Silence and Emptiness* and Ginevra and Liam performed

the duet in Didy Veldman's *Toot*. During the year, Ginevra danced Sylvia, *Sylvia*, Act III for the Solos evening, Russian Seasons (Alexei Ratmansky) at the Lynn Seymour Award and in a winning piece *Ground Zero* (3rd) and one other piece in the Ursula Moreton Choreographic Award. Jordan danced 3rd variation, *Flower Festival in Genzano* at the Solos Evening, *Nocturnes* (Thierry Malandain) at the Lynn Seymour Award and in three pieces choreographed by other students in the Ursula Moreton Choreographic Competition. Liam danced James, *La Sylphide*, Act II at the Solos Evening, won 3rd Place at the Lynn Seymour Award with *The Jacket* (Viktor Plotnikov) and was part of the winning pieces *Introspection* (1st) and *Ground Zero* (3rd) and choreographed a piece himself at the Ursula Moreton Choreographic Award. We wish all three success during their graduate year and look forward hearing from them at a meeting during the new season. As you will have seen above, our previous award winners Harrison Lee and Yuki Sugiura are joining the Royal Ballet and BRB respectively and Gearoid Solan is joining Zurich Ballet Junior Company. We will follow their careers with interest.

Annual Visit to BRB and Elmhurst Ballet School

27 members attended some or all of this year's visit to Birmingham on 21/22 June 2018. Most had a tasty late lunch at Milano on Friday having only heard that morning that Jade Heusen and Kit Holder (with 10 and 18 years in the company respectively) would talk to us in the evening. They chatted easily and entertainingly with no interviewer and spoke about the current programme, their extremely busy season, the Ballet Now project, and Kit's choreography. Kit has particular admiration for Twyla Tharp and made a special study of her choreography for his Masters. Jade had very kindly come direct from the matinee of *In the Upper Room* and both she and Kit were in it that evening. The triple bill provoked interesting and varying comments from the BA members of the audience.

Elmhurst was great as ever and Bob Parker, as well as Siân Scholes and her colleague Sabina, very welcoming. Our visit started with coffee and an overview by Siân who told us she was heading the new Department of Relationships. Siân showed members new to Elmhurst round the school, having told us that the flooding affecting the Midlands last month had quite severely impacted on the school. The rest of us went to watch the graduate class doing a floor-based warm up exercise led by Billy Brooke, a recent graduate. Then Gordon Stevens (ex-NYCB dancer and a guest teacher) took the graduate year boys and girls for class, after which our award winner, Yuzu

Hikosako, performed a lovely solo for us. There was then a delicious and plentiful lunch with wine and soft drinks (served in the foyer) during which we presented Yuzu with her award. She is in the graduate year but still auditioning as had some niggling injuries which have hampered her a bit though now seems in good form. Then teacher Lei Zhao (ex-BRB dancer) took a rehearsal of one piece for the school performance. Desmond Kelly came in to oversee two of the graduating students dance *The Mirror Walkers* which they'll be performing for Sir Peter Wright. We were then joined in the theatre by the parents of Year 7 who were doing their take on *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers!*

After the visit we received letters from Siân Scholes and BRB Development Assistant Joe Palfrey.

Siân wrote:

On behalf of all at Elmhurst, I want to thank the Ballet Association for coming to visit us again this year. Your enthusiasm and knowledge of ballet is inspiring to those of us who can get caught up in the 'nitty gritty' of day to day life. Touring the school with your newcomers to Elmhurst and watching class with the members refocuses us on the skill, grace and sheer hard work that goes into making a professional dancer and we thoroughly enjoyed hosting the day.

We must also thank you so much for your support of Yuzu Hikosaka who danced so beautifully last Friday and for your very generous cash donation. We look forward to the Ballet Association's next visit.

Joe wrote:

Thank you for supporting Birmingham Royal Ballet. I hope that the visit to Birmingham to see Elmhurst and ourselves was enjoyed by all who made the journey up. The talk given by Kit Holder and Jade Heusen seemed to be well received. Thank you so much for making a donation of £450 to Birmingham Royal Ballet. As usual we will be putting this donation towards funding new work through the Director's Appeal.

In June at Sadler's Wells and then in Birmingham we performed *Embrace*, the first ballet commissioned through the Ballet Now process. Choreographer George Williamson, with music from Sarah Kirland Snider and designs by Madeleine Girling created a bold new piece which explores what it means to break free of expectations and become who we are truly meant to be.

This new production simply wouldn't have been possible without philanthropic support and the Director's Appeal, thank you again for giving opportunities to the emerging creative voices in ballet.

BA Events

Freed of London factory visit

We had hoped to arrange a September visit to Freed's shoe factory but because they have been overwhelmed with interest in their tours they are not able to confirm a date at the moment; though we hope this situation will change soon.

Royal Opera House, Bow Street Backstage Tour,
Friday 12 October at 2.30

We have arranged another exclusive tour for BA members so we expect (although no absolute guarantee) to have a custom-made tour with a ballet focus.

Thurrock Tour in the High House Production Park,
Purfleet, Friday 9 November at 1.30

Anyone wishing to bring a non-BA member friend to this outing is encouraged to do so. Please include their details on the booking form. This tour will give you the opportunity to see the production workshop and costume centre and to see in action and hear about some of the skills needed to produce the sets and scenery for ballet (and opera). You will be able to view the craftspeople at work from the viewing galleries. You will get an understanding and appreciation of what is involved in transporting the sets to Covent Garden and hopefully see one or two of the special costumes in the exhibition. There is an on-site café serving sandwiches, paninis and hot drinks and it is from here our tour will start. The tour itself is fully accessible. The site is a 15-minute walk from the nearest train station at Purfleet. There is a half hourly service (c2c) to Purfleet from Fenchurch Street and West Ham.

For all these events please see the booking form at the end of this newsletter. Please note that the cost includes an additional £1.50 (ROH)/£3.00 (Thurrock) for BA funds to support young dancers. The ROH has increased the cost of both these tours for the new season.

Any queries please contact Ann MacLennan by email ba.events.sec@gmail.com or 020 8941 1607

Membership

It is approaching the time of year when we ask you to renew your membership. Please return the renewal form to Liz Atkins, Membership Secretary,

no later than the end of October. If you joined the Association, as a new member, after the start of April 2018, your membership covers this coming season. Your membership card will have indicated this. To save on costs your committee has decided to only issue membership cards to new members on joining. If you have lost your card and need a replacement, please indicate this on your form, enclose a stamped addressed envelope and Liz will send you a new one. If you have a friend who you think might be interested in joining the Association, please give them a copy of the form marking it as an application. If you have an email address, please consider receiving the newsletter by email in future given the rising cost of postage.

If you would prefer to pay by electronic transfer, our bank details are given on the form. Please do not process the electronic transfer until after 1 September. If you are paying electronically, please send a copy of the form to Liz along with proof of your bank transfer.

As you will be aware, the Association made a second donation to the Royal Ballet towards a partial revival. For the 2015-16 season, we donated £5000 towards the revival of the original sets and costumes, with some minor alterations, for the Company's production of *Rhapsody*. For the 2017-18 season, we made a similar donation towards Twyla Tharp's *The Illustrated 'Farewell'*, a new ballet which expands her *As Time Goes By*. We presented the cheque to our Patron

Kevin O'Hare at our Annual Dinner in March 2017.

We hope that this 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 small donation to their renewal fee. Those of you who have attended the Open Rehearsals and class over the last five years have experienced a wonderful opportunity to observe the Company at work. Making a donation to the Association enables members to contribute in a small way towards future revivals and new work. We are very grateful to those members who have made donations over the last year.

We have made slight alterations to our renewal form to comply with General Data Protection Regulations. We will only use your personal data to provide you with newsletters and information relating to dance and will not disclose your data to a third party without your explicit permission. You can change your mind at any time about whether to receive information from us by writing to the Membership Secretary.

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