



newsletter

May / June 2018

SINCE OUR LAST newsletter we have had two excellent meetings. At our March meeting, we welcomed newly promoted Principal Yasmine Naghdi as our guest and were delighted that her parents were able to join us at this very entertaining evening. Whilst we covered many aspects of Yasmine's career, we started by discussing how she learnt about her promotion and then the subsequent Australian tour. After a brief account of her training, we concentrated on roles that Yasmine had performed this season, such as *Giselle*, *Elite Syncopations* and *The Illustrated "Farewell"*, as well as looking in detail at how she prepares for dramatic roles. We also looked forward and heard about her preparation for dancing Lescaut's *Mistress* and *Odette/Odile* as well as discussing her experiences working with the Company's various choreographers.

In April, we had our regular meeting with our Patron and Company Director Kevin O'Hare. Rather than just looking back over the last two years, we concentrated on discussing particular programmes in the current season and briefly looking forward to next season. We started by discussing Twyla Tharp's *The Illustrated "Farewell"*, to which the Association had made a donation, and then discussed the MacMillan Anniversary programmes involving all the major UK companies. We touched on possible celebrations of upcoming anniversaries such as Ashton and Fonteyn, before moving on to discuss the variety of new work performed by the Company recently, as well as looking forward to Wayne McGregor's next full-length work in collaboration with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Our Chairman challenged Kevin on the enormous percentage rises in the cost of some restricted view tickets both for *Swan Lake* and some programmes next season. Kevin had been unaware of these and promised to bring this up within the Opera House management. In a fascinating interview, Kevin reflected on how he had changed as Director over the last six years and felt he was constantly learning. Prompted by audience members, we concluded by discussing 20th Century ballets that had not been seen recently, including, amongst others, the Diaghilev ballets and choreographers such as Ashley Page. We are extremely grateful to Kevin for the additional links

he has developed with the Association. Kevin provided a very entertaining evening. We are pleased to report that we received positive feedback on improved sound within the church at both this and the previous meeting.

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 the guest at our meeting on Thursday 24 May will be former Royal Ballet and Bolshoi Principal Irek Mukhamedov. Irek will return next season to help coach Principals in *Mayerling* as well as performing with English National Ballet, where he is Guest Principal Ballet Master, as Diego Rivera in Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Broken Wings*. He joined the Royal Ballet in 1990 and Kenneth MacMillan created *Winter Dreams* and *The Judas Tree* for him. His partnership with Viviana Durante became legendary in such roles as Crown Prince Rudolf and Des Grieux. He also danced Solor in Makarova's *La Bayadère* and in ballets across the repertoire including creating roles in Twyla Tharp's *Mr Worldly Wise* and Ashley Page's *Fearful Symmetries*. For nine years prior to this he was the Bolshoi's leading Principal, dancing in ballets such as *Spartacus* and *The Golden Age*. Since leaving the Royal Ballet in 2001, Irek has been busy teaching around the world. A larger than life character, who is remembered by Association members with great affection, Irek will provide us with a very entertaining evening.

At our meeting on Thursday 7 June we are delighted to welcome Soloist William Bracewell at the end of his

first season with the Royal Ballet. Born in Swansea, William trained at the Pamela Miller Ballet School and from age 11 at The Royal Ballet School. While a student, William won the Young British Dancer Competition in 2007 and the grand prix at Youth America Grand Prix in 2010. He joined Birmingham Royal Ballet in 2010 and was promoted to First Artist in 2012 and Soloist in 2014. Whilst there he danced principal roles across the repertoire, including Romeo, Oberon, the Prince in both *Nutcracker* and *Cinderella*, the Salamander Prince in *Prince of the Pagodas* and the First Seminarian in *Carmina Burana*. He also created Le Roi Soleil in David Bintley's *The King Dances* and roles in Alexander Whitley's *Kin* and Jessica Lang's *Lyric Pieces*.

Most recently with The Royal he has danced Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale* and roles in *Yugen*, *Corybantic Games*, *Obsidian Tear* and *Elite Syncopations*. He won Outstanding Male Performance (Classical) in 2015 at the Critics' Circle National Dance Awards. A couple of weeks before this meeting, William will make his debut as Siegfried in the Company's new *Swan Lake*. We can expect a very interesting evening.

Provisional dates for meetings next season are: Thursday 30 August, Wednesday 19 September, Wednesday 26 September, Wednesday 3 October, Wednesday 7 November, Friday 30 November, Wednesday 5 December, Friday 14 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.

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. Please note, that cost of entrance will rise by £1 from the start of next season.

General Data Protection Regulations

Many of you will have received requests from various organisations to update your contact information because of new EU data protection laws that come into force on 25 May 2018. This requires organisations to be given explicit permission to send you information.

You have already given this to The Ballet Association when you completed your application form or your last renewal form. We only use your personal data to send out newsletters and will not disclose your data to a third party without your explicit permission. As the July/August newsletter will include a renewal form, we are not requesting you to complete any additional proformas. We will adjust the renewal form to comply with the GDPR regulations.

News

We send our congratulations to Crystal Pite whose *Flight Pattern* for The Royal Ballet won the 2018 Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production.

As indicated in the last newsletter, we sent a present to Laura McCulloch to mark her retirement from dancing. Laura wrote to thank us and gave us a card at our Annual Dinner.

To All in the Ballet Association, Thank you all for all the support you have shown me over the years both on and off stage. I have enjoyed the most amazing career in the best work place I know and will cherish those memories forever. Thank you also for the generous gift. I haven't had a chance to think what I might like to have but I'll be sure to make it special and will let you know. My two little girls are keeping me very busy and I believe I have found a job I love as much as dancing. Being a Mum. Best wishes to all, Laura McCulloch x.

Members will be sorry to hear that Nao Sakuma, Jenna Roberts and Chi Cao have announced that they are leaving Birmingham Royal Ballet at the end of the season. Nao and Chi will be giving their final performance together as Juliet and Romeo on 30th June and Jenna her final performance on 29th June. Nao's last performance with the Company will be on the 7th July as Lise. In contrast, Alina Cojocaru will be dancing Aurora with the Company during its May tour of Japan alongside Mathias Dingman.

After the last *Swan Lake* of the season and before their brief tour to Madrid in July, The Royal Ballet will be travelling to Budapest to film *Romeo and Juliet* for broadcast by the BBC on Christmas Day 2019. As well as transporting dancers, costumes and sets, the Company will be hiring a state of the art sound stage and a skilled technical crew at the Korda Film Studios at Etyek about 45 minutes from the centre of Budapest. The film is a collaboration between The Royal Ballet and the BalletBoyz.

Members will be sad to hear of the death of dance historian Ivor Guest. Born in 1920. He died on 30

March at St Mary's Hospital in London aged 97. A renowned expert on 19th Century ballet and the works of Paris Opera Ballet, he is credited with discovering the violin arrangement for a pas de deux that Fanny Elssler had added to the music of *La Fille mal gardée* in the 1830s, when Frederick Ashton was looking for music for the pas de deux in his production. His wife, Ann Hutchinson-Guest, worked on the reconstruction of Nijinsky's *Jeux*, which was performed by The Royal Ballet in 2000.

Natalia Osipova is presenting a programme at Sadler's Wells on the 12th-16th September which will include Anthony Tudor's *The Leaves are Fading*.

Carlos Acosta - A Celebration featuring dancers from his company Acosta Danza will be performed at the Royal Albert Hall from 2nd-5th October.

The Bolshoi Ballet will be returning to The Royal Opera House from 25th July – 17th August 2019.

Class on stage – The Royal Ballet

Just over 80 members attended the Open Class on Stage in April. A very entertaining class was taught by guest teacher Andrey Klemm, with Principal Character Artist Kristen McNally giving a brief introduction to each section of class. We are very grateful to Kevin O'Hare for providing the Association with tickets. When he talked to us the week before, he indicated that he hoped to be able to invite us to a studio rehearsal next season once the building works in the house have been completed. Many thanks to those who attended for contributing towards our next sponsorship of a Royal Ballet work.

Visit to the Royal Ballet Upper School

Once again, we had an excellent visit to the Upper School in Floral Street. During the morning, after being welcomed by Jessica Clarke, we watched Anita Young teach 3rd Year Girls and Valeri Hristov the

2nd Year Boys. In the afternoon Nicola Tranah joined Valeri to work with the 1st years on two pieces of the repertoire for the School performances, August Bournonville's *Dances from Napoli* and a new work by British choreographer Andrew McNicol. We raised £1,900 from the visit which we presented to the School.

Annual Dinner, April 2018

After 22 years at The Rubens Hotel, our Annual Dinner this year was at The Chesterfield Mayfair Hotel. It was almost universally agreed that this was a good move. We have received a lot of very positive feedback about the drinks reception, the food and the professionalism of the staff. So, hopefully, we will return there next year. We used the opportunity to present flowers to Laura McCulloch who retired from dancing after her performance as Myrthe in March. Photographs from the dinner will be available at the next two meetings.

The final guest list was: Kevin O'Hare, Dame Monica Mason, Christopher Powney, Robert Parker, Christopher Saunders, Sir Peter Wright, Jeanetta Laurence, Daria Klimentova, Federico Bonelli, Vadim Muntagiurov, Yasmine Naghdi, Gary Avis, Elizabeth McGorian, Claire Calvert, Melissa Hamilton, Beatriz Stix-Brunell, William Bracewell, Tristan Dyer, Mayara Magri, Laura McCulloch, David Donnelly, Isabella Gasparini, Anna Rose O'Sullivan, Gina Storm-Jensen, Giacomo Rovero, Francisco Serrano and Charlotte Tonkinson.

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