



newsletter

June/July 2019

SINCE OUR LAST newsletter we have had two very interesting meetings, where we welcomed two guests who last spoke to us seven years ago. At the first, it was a pleasure to welcome First Soloist Claire Calvert. She last spoke to us in 2012, the year she was promoted to Soloist, and before a serious injury which kept her off for about a year. Claire spoke in some detail about the injury and the process of recovery. She then spoke about different aspects of her career, including, in particular, some of ballet's most technical roles, such as the Lilac Fairy, Myrthe and Gamzatti, as well as lighter roles such as Lescaut's Mistress, Queen of Hearts, Mercedes, the Gypsy in *Two Pigeons*, and a variety of harlots. Claire also touched upon changes that had occurred whilst she had been in the Company. Currently many dancers are being given opportunities early in their careers, whilst most of Claire's generation had to wait longer before they were offered such roles. Claire provided us with a fascinating evening.

At this meeting, we also had an extensive display of photographs, artefacts and a painting of Dame Margot Fonteyn provided by our member Jennie Walton, from her extensive collection of Margot memorabilia. We are very grateful to Jennie for mounting this display to celebrate Dame Margot's centenary, her birthday being on the 18th of May.

At our second meeting in May, which was originally scheduled for June, we were delighted to welcome Ballet Master Ricardo Cervera, who leaves the Royal Ballet at the end of the season to join the staff of the Royal Ballet Upper School. Ricardo has been working part-time at the School this season with the graduate class, and has recently started the School's Teacher Training Course. Ricardo spoke about his transition from dancer to Assistant Ballet Master, his retirement from dancing and different aspects of his work as a Ballet Master. He went into considerable detail about the role, which had started as an Assistant when he had shadowed Lynn Wallis working on *Monotones* and as Ballet Master when he worked with Marcelino Sambé and Francesca Hayward in *La Fille mal gardée*. He also spoke of his role assisting Liam Scarlett, which has included remounting Liam's ballets both on the Company and abroad. This has included *Viscera* and,

most recently, *Frankenstein*.

Ricardo finished by giving a brief description of some of the highlights of his career, including his partnership with Laura Morera, and teaching on many programmes with Laura and her husband, Justin Meissner. Laura sent her sincere apologies for not coming to talk with Ricardo, but felt it was better for her to talk next season when she was back on stage. The recent cancellation of the Viviana Durante Company's production of *7 Deadly Sins*, left Laura with no current performances to speak about. We look forward to hearing from her next season and watching Ricardo teach at Royal Ballet School visits in future seasons.

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

There are no Association meetings in June or July, though in June there is the Open Rehearsal on 12th and trip to Birmingham on 20th/21st. In July there is a film show to which members are invited. See later.

Our first meeting of next season will be on Wednesday 28 August when we are delighted to welcome Royal Ballet Principal Francesca Hayward as our guest. Francesca last spoke to the Association in April 2014, the season in which she had been promoted to First Artist. Just over two years later she became a Principal. Whilst at the Royal Ballet School she won the Lynn Seymour Award for Expressive Dance, Young British Dancer and a Silver Medal and Audience Award at the Genée Competition. At the Critics' Circle National Dance Awards, she won Best

Emerging Dancer in 2014 and Best Female Dancer in 2016. Francesca has performed roles across The Royal Ballet's repertoire, including, more recently, Juliet, Princess Stephanie, Perdita, Manon and *Within the Golden Hour*. For much of the current season she has had leave of absence to participate in the filming of Tom Hooper's production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* as Victoria. So, Francesca has an enormous amount to talk about! We can expect a fascinating evening.

At our meeting on Wednesday 11 September, we have our annual meeting when two of the newer members of the Company talk about their training, their time in the Royal Ballet and the most recent Royal Ballet tour. This year, it is a pleasure to welcome Artists Sophie Allnatt and Aiden O'Brien as our guests. Both were Junior Associates, trained at the Royal Ballet School and danced with The Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet whilst students.

Born in Essex, Sophie graduated in 2011 and danced with Scottish Ballet and Magdeburg Ballet, where she performed soloist and principal roles. In 2018, she performed Summer in Jenna Lee's *The Four Seasons* with New English Ballet.

Aiden was born in Perth and was a Junior Associate of Scottish Ballet as well as The Royal Ballet School. In School performances he danced in *Les Rendezvous*, *La Bayadère*, *Concerto* and *Solo*. He joined The Royal Ballet on the Aud Jebsen Young Dancer Programme for the 2017/18 season. Both joined as Artists at the start of the 2018/19 season. These meetings with newer dancers are always very enjoyable and a good opportunity to meet them early in their Royal Ballet careers. This meeting will be held in the Friendship Centre, which is in the Church's basement. There is a lift for those who require it.

Provisional dates for meetings in the first half of next season are: Wednesday 25 September, Tuesday 8 October, Friday 18 October, Wednesday 30 October, Wednesday 27 November, Friday 6 December.

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.

Ballet Association donation to The Royal Ballet

As indicated in the last newsletter, at our Annual Dinner our Chairman presented a cheque for £5,000 to Royal Ballet Director, Kevin O'Hare. This was our third such donation. For the 2017-18 season we donated towards Twyla Tharp's *An Illustrated Farewell*

and, for the 2015-16 season, towards the revival of the sets and costumes for *Rhapsody*. As next season had yet to be announced, Kevin was unable to go into detail about the programme we are contributing towards when accepting the cheque, other than to say it was for a programme in the Linbury Theatre, which included a piece by Frederick Ashton.

We are now delighted to announce that we have given the donation towards the Merce Cunningham Centennial programme, which includes Cunningham's *Cross Currents*, a trio first seen in London in 1964, Frederick Ashton's *Monotones II* and a new commissioned work from American choreographer Pam Tanowitz. This short programme will be performed twice each evening, at 7.15pm and 9pm, on 10 and 11 October. We hope all members will try to see the programme, which includes works that reflect three of the aims of the Association – to encourage new commissions, support the heritage works of the Company and to bring the works of major choreographers into the repertoire. As a thank you for the Association's continued support, the Company has once again invited members to attend a studio rehearsal on 12 June. We are very grateful to Kevin and the Company's Artistic Scheduling Manager, Philip Mosley, for making this possible.

Film Show – Ballet Nacional de Cuba,

Wednesday 24 July 7.30-9pm

The British Friends of Ballet Nacional de Cuba are delighted to invite members of the Ballet Association to attend a film show of their last two commissions, Cathy Marston's *Próspera*, which received its premiere at the 2018 Festival in Havana and Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Oscuro*, which premiered at the 2016 Festival. For *Próspera*, as well as a film of the premiere, they hope to show excerpts of the three subsequent casts.

As Cathy Marston is choreographing a new work for the Royal Ballet next season, members may find it interesting to watch one of her more recent creations, alongside a work by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, who choreographed *Broken Wings* for English National Ballet and *A Streetcar Name Desire* for Scottish Ballet. The film show will be at our usual venue, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church. Entry is free, but we would ask all attending to make a donation towards the costs of the event and towards their choreographic commission for the 2020 Festival.

Some members have also expressed an interest in attending the next International Ballet Festival in Havana which will take place on 28th October to 6th November, 2020. The British Friends have commissioned a new ballet from former Royal Ballet Dancer, Gemma Bond, who has received critical acclaim for her creations in the United States. This

piece will receive its premiere during the Festival. Information about the British Friends of BNC can be obtained from David Bain or from their Membership Secretary, Janet Radenkovic at Radenks@aol.com.

News

We send our congratulations to Vadim Muntagirov and John Macfarlane who were declared Laureates of the 2019 Prix Benois de la Danse at a Gala in Moscow on 21 May for their respective roles in Liam Scarlett's *Swan Lake* as Prince Siegfried and as designer.

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the death of one of our early members, Ann Stroyan, on April 18th, aged 89. She was an 'Old Elm' and retained her link with Elmhurst, later serving on the Board. In her early days, she danced with the Vic-Wells Ballet. Our thoughts are with her family and friends.

The Royal Ballet has announced details of its two summer tours to Tokyo, 21-30 June, and Los Angeles, 5-13 July. During the former, they dance six performances of *Don Quixote* and two galas which will include *Symphony in C*, and excerpts in tribute to Margot Fonteyn. In Los Angeles there will be three performances of *Mayerling* and two in collaboration with Company Wayne McGregor, where the Royal will dance *Inferno*, Act 1 of *The Dante Project*.

As you will know, Royal Ballet Soloist, Fernando Montaña, has had a sabbatical year away from the Company. On Thursday 18th July he has a gala Fernando Montaña and Friends in the Susie Sainsbury Theatre at the Royal Academy of Music. The cast will include mezzo-soprano Justina Gringyte and pianist Reinis Zarins. Tickets are £48 and £55, with VIP passes for a post-show reception, £50. The gala is in aid of the Marine Conservation Society and its campaign against plastic pollution of the oceans. There will be a photographic exhibition related to this. Tickets can be obtained from the Royal Academy of Music.

Visit to the Royal Ballet Upper School

Friday 10th May

Once again we had a very interesting joint visit with LBC to the Royal Ballet Upper School. The morning started with an hour and a half 3rd Year Mens' class with Paul Lewis. This was followed by a short solos'

class for 3rd Year Ladies with Nicola Tranah, after which we received a short address from Artistic Director Christopher Powney and viewed a short film about the School's Legacy programme. After break we watched a 2nd Year Ladies class with Daria Klimentova.

After lunch we had a total contrast, watching a 1st Year combined contemporary class with Antonia Grove. As always, we are very grateful to the School, its teachers and students, for welcoming us and providing us with such an enjoyable and fascinating day.

Architectural Tour of the Royal Opera House

Monday 8 July at 11.30

In consultation with the Opera House we have arranged a special tour focussing on the architectural features of the 'Open Up' development. It will be lead by Rawden Pettitt, Associate Director of Stanton Williams, the architects commissioned by the ROH to help make their vision a reality.

The tour is expected to last about an hour and a half. It will not go backstage in the way our previous tours have done. We will hear about the architects' brief, the constraints they faced, compromises they had to make etc. We hope to include a visit to the Linbury theatre. There is no 100% guarantee of this but at the time the visit was fixed the theatre was free for the duration of our visit.

This kind of tour is not currently available to the public, though from September it will come under the public tours umbrella delivered by the ROH's own tour guides. Consequently the charge we are making will go to the BA's own funds for supporting the Company. We are very grateful to Rawden for freely agreeing to do this tour for us.

If wishing to attend please print and return the attached form.

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

Royal Opera House Architectural Tour

(Meet in Bow Street, at 11.30 on Monday 08 July 2019)

Name(s).....

Address

.....

Email

Phone

Please send a cheque made payable to Ballet Association for £15 per person and a stamped addressed envelope to Ann MacLennan, BA Events, 18 Wensleydale Road, Hampton TW12 2LW.