



newsletter

February/March 2019

SINCE OUR LAST newsletter we have had four very different meetings. Our first meeting of the New Year was sadly poorly attended but, from the feedback we received afterwards, was a great success. Unfortunately, two of our scheduled guests, 2018 Royal Ballet School Association Award winners Ginevra Zambon and Jordan Martinez were unable to attend, the former because of illness and the latter through extended leave in the USA. However, we were delighted to welcome graduate year student Australian Freya Wilkinson who attended with our third award winner American William Boswell and Samira Saidi, Head of Intensive Courses and International Relations at the Royal Ballet School. They provided us with a very entertaining evening.

Whilst the students spoke about their training in their respective countries, competitions and their time in London, Samira gave us a fascinating account of her career with Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, the move to Birmingham and her subsequent time choreographing and teaching, including at Elmhurst Ballet School and English National Ballet School. Samira then described the various aspects of her new role. Freya and Liam talked of performing, both with the School and the Royal Ballet companies. We look forward to seeing them and Ginevra in the School's summer shows. We have since heard that Jordan Martinez has decided not to return to the School but to pursue his ballet career from the USA instead.

At our second meeting in January we were delighted to welcome Royal Ballet Principal Matthew Ball, who last spoke to the Association four years ago when he was still an Artist. We started by talking about the performances of *Giselle* where he replaced David Hallberg partnering Natalia Osipova, before moving onto the two productions of *Swan Lake* he had danced last year; Liam Scarlett's production for The Royal Ballet and Matthew Bourne's for New Adventures. Matthew then spoke about his promotion and dancing in *Mayerling*, *La Bayadere* and Alastair Marriott's *The Unknown Soldier*. He gave us some fascinating insights into preparing for his roles. Matthew also spoke about his involvement in Wayne McGregor's ballets, particularly *Infra*, *Obsidian Tear* and *Multiverse*. Members experienced an entertaining

evening which concentrated mostly on the last year of Matthew's career.

At our February meeting we welcomed Royal Ballet Principal Lauren Cuthbertson as our guest. After a slightly late start, Lauren spoke about her pas de deux in *New Work, New Music* and about dancing with Vadim Muntagirov in *Two Pigeons*. Lauren then gave us an interesting account of how her performances with the Mariinsky came about. As this newsletter is being written she has returned to St. Petersburg to rehearse *The Sleeping Beauty* with Xander Parish after the success of *Sylvia* in the Autumn. Lauren also spoke about some of her other guest performances, including partnering former Royal Ballet Principal Iñaki Urlezaga in his farewell performance in Buenos Aires and, partnered by Vadim Muntagirov, dancing with Shanghai Ballet in Naples. After talking about other pieces she had performed this season, Lauren spoke about working on new choreography with Christopher Wheeldon and Wayne McGregor, in particular Chris's *The Winter's Tale*.

At our March meeting, we were very pleased to welcome Alex Beard, Chief Executive of The Royal Opera House, as our guest. Alex started with a short account of his career, before explaining why he had applied for his current role. He then outlined what he does as Chief Executive, the management structure and the role of the Board before talking about the initial challenges he faced taking on the role. Our Chairman had asked members to submit questions in advance and had grouped these in a number of areas: the rationale, implementation and issues related to "Open Up"; the House's Marketing Strategy, in particular the disproportionate rise in the cost of some restricted view seats; issues related to booking, resale and exchange of tickets, including ticket agencies. There was also some discussion of how best to inform the audience of cast changes. Whilst Alex's answers will not always have pleased members, his willingness to listen to concerns was apparent and he clearly stated that The Opera House and The Royal Ballet value their regular audience. We are very grateful to Alex for coming to a meeting and look forward to future discussion with him over members' concerns.

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 Wednesday April 17 we are delighted to welcome Royal Ballet Principal Marianela Nuñez as our guest. Marianela celebrated 20 years dancing with the Company at the end of last season and we look forward to discussing some of the highlights of her long career during the meeting. Born in Buenos Aires, Marianela joined the Teatro Colón company aged 14, touring widely with Maximiliano Guerra. She joined the Royal Ballet School in 1997 and the Company a year later, becoming a Principal in 2002, aged 20. Marianela has won many awards, including Best Female Dancer at the 2005, 2012 and 2018 National Dance Awards and the 2013 Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance. She has performed most of the leading roles in the Company's classical, dramatic and contemporary repertory and appeared as a guest artist with companies and in galas around the world. Her performances during the rest of the season include Juliet, Natasha in *A Month in the Country*, and *Symphony in C*, as well as dancing some of Ronald Hynd's *Merry Widow* in the Tribute to Annette Page in the Linbury. Marianela last spoke to us in 2012 so we have a lot to catch up on!

Prior to our meeting on Friday May 10, we will celebrate the centenary of Dame Margot Fonteyn's birth with a display of photographs and a painting, which are part of the extensive collection of Margot Fonteyn memorabilia collected by our member Jennie Bissett. We are grateful to Jennie for agreeing to share some of her collection with us. The exhibition will be available from 6.45pm.

At our meeting, following this, we are very pleased to welcome Royal Ballet First Soloist Claire Calvert as our guest. Born in Bath, Claire trained at The Royal Ballet School where in her graduation year she danced lead roles in *Raymonda Act III* and *Jabala*. Claire joined the Company in 2007 and was promoted to First Soloist in 2016. She made her Principal role debut as the Lilac Fairy in 2009 while still an Artist. More recently her roles have included Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, Sugar Plum Fairy, Gamzatti,

Gypsy Girl in *Two Pigeons*, Mitzi Caspar, Lescaut's Mistress, and Mercedes in *Don Quixote*. In the season's last programme, Claire dances the Tsarevna in *The Firebird*. Like Marianela, Claire last spoke to the Association seven years ago. With our exhibition and Claire's talk, we can expect a very interesting evening. Our meeting scheduled for June 3, has been moved because of a lack of availability at the Church and will now probably be on Friday May 24. We will confirm speakers in our next newsletter.

Provisional dates for meetings the rest of this season and next will be in the next newsletter. 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. Note that some Wednesday meetings will be preceded by a free concert at 6pm organised by the Church. Members are welcome to attend and concert dates can be found on the Church website.

News

Members will be saddened to hear the news that photographer and long-time member John Ross died unexpectedly on 21 January.

Congratulations to former Royal Ballet Principal Lynn Seymour who celebrated her 80th birthday on the 8th of March and our member Jeanette White who celebrated her 90th on the 14th of March.

Members will have heard that former Royal Ballet Principal Guest Artist Carlos Acosta has been appointed Artistic Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet from the start of 2020. He will remain as Director General of AcostaDanza School and Company in Havana. We send our congratulations to Carlos and look forward to welcoming him to Association events in the future. Members may also have heard that former Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet Principal Miyako Yoshida has announced her retirement from dancing. She will take up the role of Artistic Director of the National Ballet of Japan from September 2020.

Former Royal Ballet Principal Viviana Durante has once again formed her Company to perform a neglected work of Sir Kenneth MacMillan. They will perform his *7 Deadly Sins* at Wilton's Music Hall on May 8-18. Performers will include Weimar Specialist Meow Meow and The Royal Ballet's Laura Morera, Melissa Hamilton and Thiago Soares.

Royal Ballet Soloist Emma Maguire retired from the Company after her last performance as Clara in January. We have sent her a present from the

Association. Members will have heard that Ballet Master Ricardo Cervera will be leaving The Royal Ballet at the end of the Season and will be joining The Royal Ballet Upper School as a Teacher at the start of next season. Hikaru Kobayashi, who left the Company in the Autumn, used her gift from the Association to buy an apple tree for her garden. She is sending a letter to be read out at the Annual Dinner and we will print it in the next newsletter.

We send our congratulations to Principal Character Artist and Choreographer Alastair Marriott who was nominated for an Olivier Award in the New Dance Category for his *The Unknown Soldier* and to John Macfarlane who was nominated for the Outstanding Achievement in Dance Award for his designs for The Royal Ballet's new production of *Swan Lake*.

As well as Lauren Cuthbertson dancing Aurora with the Mariinsky Ballet soon, Yasmine Naghdi has performed Aurora with San Francisco Ballet in March and Celine Gittens recently guested with Australian Ballet as the Queen of Hearts in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Natalia Osipova performed in Arthur Pita's *The Mother* in Edinburgh in December. Members may be interested to know that she repeats her role in performances of the work at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on June 20 & 21.

At our first Committee meeting of the year, David Bain was re-elected as Chairman and Ann Dawson and Liz Atkins as Joint Deputy Chairmen.

National Dance Awards, Critics' Circle

At the National Dance Awards ceremony at the Barbican in February, our Chairman presented the Award for Best Classical Choreography to Cathy Marston for *The Suit* for Ballet Black. Royal Ballet Principals Marianela Nuñez and Vadim Muntagirov won the Tendu Award for Best Female Dancer and the Dancing Times Award for Best Male Dancer respectively, whilst former Royal Ballet Principal Alina Cojocaru won the Award for Outstanding Female classical Performance as Princess Aurora in ENB's production of *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Annual Dinner

As announced in the last newsletter, our Annual Dinner is on April 8 at The Chesterfield, Mayfair Hotel in Charles Street, close to Green Park underground station. Drinks are from 7.00pm followed by dinner at 8.00pm. There are a few places left. The cost of the dinner is £50 excluding tea or coffee which can be booked for an additional £6.

We are delighted to announce that guests will include BRB's Director David Bintley and Royal Ballet's Ballet Master Ricardo Cervera, who leave their respective posts at the end of the season.

As always, we will not be announcing the full guest list until 10 days or so before the event. You will then have an opportunity to let us know which dancers you would like to sit near. Those who receive the newsletter electronically will be emailed the guest list, those who receive it by post should ring our Chairman from April 1 if you wish to know.

Visit to Elmhurst Ballet School & BRB

There are a few places left for our annual visit to Birmingham on June 20-21, which was advertised in the last newsletter, but places need to be finalised by the end of the month. If you are interested in the visit which includes lunch, a pre-performance talk by BRB dancers and performance of *Hobson's Choice* on June 20 and a day at Elmhurst Ballet School on the 21st, please return an application form to our Chairman. If you have lost the form, please ask for another copy of the last newsletter.

Visit to the Royal Ballet Upper School

Friday May 10, 9.00am-3.45pm

Once again, we have arranged a visit to the Upper School in Floral Street to watch three classes. This is a joint visit for the Ballet Association and London Ballet Circle. Please see the programme for the day below. It is slightly different from previous years.

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 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. Please apply before April 15.

If you would like to bring a guest, at a cost of £20, please enclose a separate cheque for them. Based on numbers attending over the last couple of years, we expect there to be places for some guests. These places will not be confirmed until after April 15.

We will not be issuing tickets. Places will be confirmed by email (or post) after April 15. Your name will be placed on a list, which will be held at the door. If a 9.00 am start is too early for you, it will be possible to join us at 10.30am or 11.30am or 2.15pm. Please indicate in your letter if you will be a late arrival. (Please try not to trickle in in the middle of a class.) The School politely requests that you leave the premises during the lunch 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 studio.

The provisional programme for the day is:

9.00-10.30	Ballet Class, 3rd year boys
10.30-11.30	Ballet Class, 3rd year ladies
11.30-11.45	Break
11.45-13.15	Ballet Class, 2nd year ladies
13.15-14.15	Lunch
14.15-15.15/15.45	Contemporary Dance, 1st year combined class

At the end of the day there will be an opportunity for those who wish to watch two short films (5 mins & 3 mins) about the School's healthcare programme and legacy gifts.

Outings

Since the last newsletter members have been on the following visits:

On January 11 a group of members went on a backstage tour of the Opera House lead by 'David' from the ROH's corps of guides. In the Ashton studio we saw soloist, Tristan Dyer and First Artist David Yudes rehearsing *Uncanny Valley*, choreographed by Alexander Whitely as part of the *New Work New Music* programme performed in the Linbury in February. Walking along corridors and emerging from lifts we saw Lesley Collier (twice!), the Queen of Spades and the *Asphodel Meadows*' costumes, Ryoichi Hirano and Character Artist Philip Mosley. We were reminded that Philip was the inspiration for *Billy Elliot*. We visited the lighting and props department though some members were disappointed not to be shown the costume department and the pointe shoes room. We will investigate if this is a possibility for future tours.



On February 6 a smaller group visited the Monica Collingwood Archive at the University of Roehampton at the invitation of Dr Geraldine Morris, part-time Professor of Dance and former dancer with the Royal Ballet. It turned out to be an excellent visit and offered far more than looking at dusty old scrapbooks. The scrapbooks were in beautiful condition and carefully

cared for by the Archivist, Kornelia Cepok whose enthusiasm for the collection was infectious. We could all have stayed much longer than time allowed. The collection provided a window into the social history of the day and the role that dancers had in society, together with miniscule war time programmes and a lot of photographs and articles about Margot Fonteyn among many others.



Finally, on March 6 nineteen members visited the Freed Shoe Factory. Always popular, this was enhanced by having the opportunity to see the ballroom and theatre shoe production as well as that of ballet shoes. Being a large group we were divided so everyone could see everything. One member said it was one of the best visits she'd been on anywhere and generally everyone was impressed with the passion the staff had for making the finely crafted shoes and the friendliness and time taken to explain the processes to us. Thanks to Tommy for Freed's warm hospitality. We are sure to be requesting a repeat visit!



'Kingmaker' Ray taking a break from making 40+ shoes a day to explain what is critical.



The production manager explaining the individual marks of makers.

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Ivan Putrov presents *Against the Stream*

A Gala Night Celebrating Ballet's Greatest Pioneers at The London Coliseum April 7 2019

On April 7th 2019, stars from the world's leading ballet companies will come together for *Against the Stream*, a one-off gala performance accompanied by a live orchestra at the London Coliseum. The star-studded international cast features principal dancers from Paris Opera Ballet, New York City Ballet, The Royal Ballet and English National Ballet in a dazzling celebration of some of ballet's greatest pioneers. The gala night – which is masterminded by dancer-turned-producer and former principal of The Royal Ballet, Ivan Putrov – champions the mavericks of the ballet world who broke with tradition, pushed against the boundaries of the art form, and established the foundations for the rich and varied world of dance we have today. The programme will include masterpieces by choreographers including Jerome Robbins, George Balanchine and Kenneth MacMillan. *Against the Stream* will be a spectacular celebration of the genius, vision and trailblazing talent these choreographers represent and the immense and powerful legacy they left behind.

“The evening will celebrate some of the remarkable choreographers who took ballet to new heights by daring to go against the stream. Great ballet is even more powerful when it is performed close to the original vision of its creator. For this reason I have invited dancers schooled in those companies where the works were originally performed.” Ivan Putrov

Dancers confirmed for the gala include Matthew Ball, Principal Dancer of The Royal Ballet, Mathieu Ganio and Hannah O'Neill of Paris Opera Ballet, Joaquin de Luz, Maria Kowroski and Tyler Angle, Principals of New York City Ballet, Marcelo Gomes, former American Ballet Theatre Principal, Dmitry Zagrebin, Principal of The Royal Swedish Ballet and Katja Khaniukova, Soloist with English National Ballet. Works confirmed for the evening's gala programme include *Diana and Actaeon Pas de deux* (Vaganova), *Cinderella duet* (Nureyev), *Suite en Blanc* (Lifar), *Diamonds* (Balanchine) and *In G Major Pas* (Robbins).