



newsletter

*May/June 2017*

**S**INCE OUR MARCH/APRIL newsletter we have had two very enjoyable meetings, as well as our annual visit to The Royal Ballet School and visits to *An American in Paris* and to shoe makers, Freed.

At our April meeting, we were very pleased to welcome two First Artists, David Donnelly and Anna Rose O'Sullivan as our guests. They spoke about their training, which in Anna Rose's case had been interrupted by periods on the West End Stage as Cosette in *Les Misérables* and in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, as well as dancing the lead role of Sara Crewe in *A Little Princess* for London Children's Ballet. David's training had involved long journeys after school each day to Northern Cincinnati Youth Ballet, before joining the Royal Ballet School after success in the Youth America Grand Prix. Highlights in Anna Rose's career so far have included dancing Clara in *Nutcracker* and a variety of soloist roles in *Sleeping Beauty*. For David, the highlight was dancing the Girl's Cousin in the revival of *The Invitation* at the end of last season and most recently dancing in Liam Scarlett's *Symphonic Dances*. Anna Rose and David gave us a very entertaining evening comparing and contrasting their experiences in training and since joining the Company.

At our May meeting, we were delighted to welcome Royal Ballet Soloist Thomas Whitehead as our guest. Tom started by talking about his "feminine side", having come from rehearsals of *The Dream*, where he dances on pointe as Bottom. He then spoke at length about the challenges of dancing "frock" roles, Widow Simone, a stepsister and the Duchess in *Alice*. In total contrast, he has performed nastier characters, such as the Man in *The Invitation*, and Monsieur GM and the Gaoler in *Manon*. This season, he has worked with Javier de Frutos in *Les Enfants Terribles* and is greatly looking forward to working with Arthur Pita on *The Wind*, where once again he is a rapist. Tom then spoke of his work with the Education Department, including staging a performance of *The Rite of Spring* for Chance to Dance. He also talked of his time out, when he toured in Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*. Tom gave us a very interesting and entertaining evening.

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 have a change of guest at our last meeting before The Royal Ballet goes off on tour to Brisbane, Australia. The Company has now scheduled a stage call for the first cast of the Ashton programme, which involves First Soloist Bennet Gartside, on that evening. We are very grateful to Benn, who asked around for a volunteer to replace him. Now, he will come and talk to us towards the start of next season.

We are delighted to announce that our guest on Thursday 1 June will now be First Soloist Tierney Heap. We are extremely grateful to Tierney for agreeing to talk at such short notice. She last spoke to us, alongside Claudia Dean, shortly after she joined the Company. Trained first in Manchester and then at Elmhurst School for Dance, Tierney joined the Royal Ballet Upper School at the age of 15. Since joining the Company in 2012, she has danced a variety of roles and was promoted to First Artist in 2016 and Soloist at the end of the same season. Recently seen dancing in William Forsythe's *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude*, Tierney's roles include Carmen, Lilac Fairy, Florestan's Sister, Myrthe and *Rubies*. Next season she will create a role in Twyla Tharp's *The Illustrated "Farewell."* We can expect a very lively and entertaining evening and we hope that many members will make the effort to attend.

We apologise to those of you who receive your newsletters by post, that notification of change of speaker will reach you after the event. Sadly, with the Bank Holiday in the way there was no way of getting the newsletter to you in time. We hope that most of you heard about the change through word of mouth.

At our first meeting of next season on Thursday 24 August we are very pleased to welcome Principal Alexander Campbell as our guest. Alexander last spoke to us four and a half years ago, fairly soon after his move from Birmingham Royal Ballet. Born in Australia, he trained at Academy Ballet before joining the Royal Ballet School. In 2003, he won Silver at the Genée competition and was a Prix de Lausanne Finalist. In 2005, he joined Birmingham Royal Ballet and was promoted to First Soloist in 2009. He joined The Royal Ballet in 2011 as a Soloist, was promoted to First Soloist the following year and to Principal in 2016. Soon to be seen as Oberon in *The Dream*, Alexander's roles have included the Prince in both *Sleeping Beauty* and *Nutcracker*, Colas, Basilio, The Mad Hatter and White Rabbit, the Young Man in *Two Pigeons*, Jack in *Sweet Violets* and, most recently, Bratfisch and the man in *Tarantella*. He created the role of Henry Clerval in *Frankenstein*. We can expect Alexander to give us an interesting start to the season.

Provisional dates for meetings next season are: Wednesday 6 September, Thursday 21 September, Thursday 5 October, Thursday 12 October, Wednesday 25 October, Thursday 2 November, Wednesday 15 November, Friday 24 November, Friday 8 December, Wednesday 13 December, Thursday 4 January, Thursday 18 January, Wednesday 25 January, Wednesday 14 February, Thursday 22 February, Thursday 8 March, Thursday 22 March, Thursday 12 April, Friday 20 April, Thursday 10 May, Thursday 24 May, Thursday 7 June.

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

It is with sadness that we announce the death of our member Lynn Smith, following a stroke three weeks ago. Relatively new members, Lynn and her husband Simon travelled regularly from their home in the north of England to watch Royal Ballet performances and to attend some of our events.

The 11th June is the 90th birthday of Dame Beryl Grey. Oberon Books will be publishing her autobiography during June and we hope to arrange a talk and book-signing, with discounted copies of her book, in the near future. In the meantime, we are sure all members will wish to send Dame Beryl birthday greetings.

## Visit to the Royal Ballet Upper School

About 130 Ballet Association and London Ballet Circle members attended another successful joint visit to The Royal Ballet Upper School, where they watched classes taught by Rodolfo Castellanos and Daria Klimentova and a rehearsal of Jonathan Watkins' new ballet for the First Years. In total £2000 was raised for the School.

## Annual Dinner, March 2017

Photographs from our Annual Dinner will be available at our August and September meetings and our website. You can order copies at the meetings. We apologise for the delay in producing these photos.

## Visit to BRB and Elmhurst Ballet School, June 22

Those members attending this visit are reminded that most of us are meeting for a late lunch at 2.30 at the Milano Restaurant. This will be followed by a talk by Birmingham Royal Ballet Dancer(s) at 5.30 – 6.30pm. Please note that this talk will be held in Studio 5 which is easily accessible through the Thorpe Street entrance to the Hippodrome. We will know who the speaker is once casting is announced and you will be informed over lunch. We are then attending a performance of Birmingham Royal Ballet's *Three Short Story Ballets*.

We have one spare ticket for the performance as one member has had to drop out following an accident. Please contact our Chairman if you would like the ticket.

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