

FOOTNOTES

NOVEMBER 2003

VictoriaDanceSeries.com

BY FASTRAC

Sandrine Castan and Edmond Kijpatrick in *Carmen*. Photo by David Cooper.

CARMEN'S BEGINNINGS

Carmen was a novel by Prosper Merimee and a ballet even before it was an opera. Marius Petipa choreographed a ballet version called *Carmen et son Toréro* in 1846, three decades before Georges Bizet's opera.

The opera *Carmen* premiered on March 3, 1875 at the Paris Opera Comique. The first choice for the role, Maria Roze, turned down the part because of the character's frivolous nature and the tragic ending. Rehearsal and production had been delayed for about a year while Bizet hurried to complete the score.

In the end, Celestine Galli-Marie premiered the role of Carmen. She was the darling of the moment in the Parisian opera world.

Bizet added numbers for the principals in the rehearsal, fitting them to each singer's capabilities. Public response to the opera was cool at first and the critical notices were particularly harsh. Bizet died at 38 three months later – but *Carmen* continued to play in Paris and gain in popularity. It was after the libretto was translated into Italian that it gained international popularity and now, of course, *Carmen* is among the top ten favourite operas and according to one survey, the Toreador's Song is the most widely known piece of music theatre composition.



Sandrine Casini and Edmond Kilpatrick in *Carmen*. Photo by David Cooper.

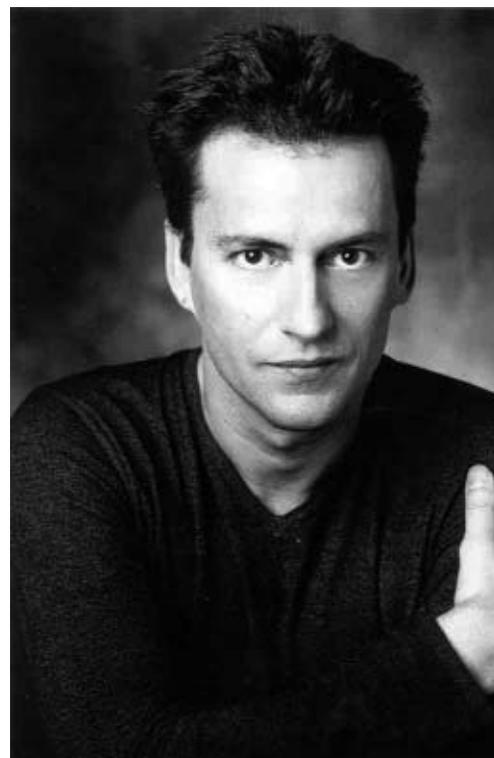
Jean Grand-Maître Choreographer, *Carmen*

Jean Grand-Maître assumed the artistic leadership of Alberta Ballet in 2002, after working internationally for 12 years as an independent choreographer. During the 2002-03 season he choreographed a world premiere version of *Carmen* for the Alberta Ballet company. In the fall of 2003, he was invited to re-vision this original choreography and set the piece on Ballet BC. In fact, the two *Carmens* will have some significant differences, as the Ballet BC version has been tailored to fit the size of the company and has undergone a complete re-design.

Born in Hull, Quebec, Mr. Grand-Maître began his dance training at York University, Toronto and continued at Montreal's L'École supérieure de danse du Québec (1983-86), where he presented his earliest ballets in performances. He danced with the Theatre Ballet of Canada (1987-89), les Ballets de Montreal Eddy Toussaint (1990) and Ballet BC (1991), developing his choreographic talents by participating in creative workshops with Ballet BC, Ballet Jorgen, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens and the National Ballet of Canada.

Since the success of *Frames of Mind*, created during the National Ballet of Canada's 1993 choreographic workshop and nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award, Mr. Grand-Maître's dancemaking has been in constant demand internationally. By the age of 36 his repertoire already included more than 30 ballets, four of them full-length. He has been commissioned by the most prestigious companies in the world, and has been invited as Artist-in-Residence by the Bayerisches Staatsballett (1998-99) and the Norwegian National Ballet (1999-2000).

Mr. Grand-Maître's ballets are notable for their theatricality. He collaborates closely with composers and lighting, costume and set designers to create stage environments that both complement and amplify the poetic and emotional implications of the choreography. As critic Paula Lefebvre observed, "Often floating within dream-like atmospheres, Jean Grand-Maître's ballets search for that indisputable truth that can only be found deep within the subconscious".



The **Victoria Dance Series** is a non-profit organization dedicated to dance presentation and education. Our mission is to enhance the appreciation of dance in the Capital Region by presenting and developing professional dance and engaging the community in outreach programs.

The Victoria Dance Series is governed by a Board of Directors that includes:

Robert Milne, President
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Nancy Glerup, Director
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Our staff is:

Stephen White, Executive Producer
Douglas D Durand,
Community Outreach Director
Ian Rye, Production Manager,
Technical Consultant

If you would like to be involved with the Series, please call us: (250) 595-1829 or email: vicdanceseries@shaw.ca

More information at: www.victoriadanceseries.com

Footnotes is prepared by Executive Producer Stephen White. Anne Moone volunteers to read the text.

If you would like to help us save on postage and printing by receiving your newsletter via ecologically friendly email (confidentiality ensured) please let us know!

An Evening with Ballet BC

All the publicity has focused on *Carmen*, but in actual fact, there are two other dances on the program. These are Serge Bennathan's *In and around Kozla Street (Warsaw)* and John Clifford's *Dvorak Serenade*. Bennathan has been Artistic Director of Toronto's Dancemakers since 1990. Born in France and trained in Paris, Serge directed his own company in Cannes for four years before immigrating to Canada. On this side of the Atlantic, Bennathan has won many awards for his work (principally with Dancemakers) and has been commissioned by companies in Argentina, Japan, France and of course, Canada.

In and around Kozla Street (Warsaw) was inspired by the events leading to the concentration of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto under Nazi occupation.

The other piece on the program is *Dvorak Serenade*, choreographed by John Clifford. Clifford was a principal dancer and choreographer for the New York City Ballet under the direction of George Balanchine. In 1974, he founded the Los Angeles Ballet which toured national in the US and was met with critical success. Under the auspices of the Balanchine Trust, Clifford has set the master's works on every major repertoire company in the world.

In *Serenade*, Clifford has concentrated on creating a lyrical ballet that reflects the moods of the Dvorak score.

Bizet Buzz

The composer of *Carmen* was a child prodigy whose works were embraced by the public only after his death.

Alexandre-Cesar-Leopold (Georges) Bizet was born to musical parents in Paris on October 25, 1838. His father was a singing teacher and his mother was a pianist. Georges was considered a child prodigy and was enrolled in the Paris

Conservatory at 9 years old. Over his years of study, Bizet developed into a brilliant pianist and at 19 he won the prestigious Prix de Rome, which provided for further study in Rome over the next three years. Many small songs and compositions are extant from Bizet's Conservatory years, the most celebrated is his *Symphony in C* (1855).

When he returned to Paris from Rome in 1860, he concentrated on composing, rejecting all teaching offers and opportunities to perform as a concert pianist. In 1863, Bizet's opera *Les pecheurs de perles (The Pearl Fishers)* received a luke-

warm response when it premiered, although critics hailed the score.

In 1865, while traveling on a train from Paris to the small village of Le Vésinet, Bizet met a woman whom many credit as the inspiration for *Carmen*. Celeste was a prostitute, dance hall escort, writer, stage director and equestrian. As the two talked they came to understand that they were to be neighbours. In the ensuing months, Bizet persuaded Celeste to purchase a piano so that he could compose at

her home in peace. The relationship was platonic, but Celeste's new occupation, as a café singer, would also influence the opera *Carmen*. Bizet was so impressed by a little song called Chiquita by Sebastian Yradier, which was part of Celeste's repertoire, that he borrowed from another piece by Yradier for the Habanera in *Carmen*.

Although recognized for his brilliance by his peers, Bizet did not achieve the kind of success during his lifetime that came to him posthumously. His one-act opera *Djamileh* was not particularly successful when it premiered in 1872, but it did make enough of an impression on Camille du Loche, the co-director of the Opera Comique to commission Bizet and his librettists to write *Carmen*.

Bizet suffered from bouts of depression and other health problems in his adult life. He died from a heart attack in 1875, three months after *Carmen's* premiere.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

Parkland Secondary School students at the battery opera workshop. Photo by Douglas D. Durand.



By Doug Durand, Community Outreach Director Building Partnerships

In mid-October, the Victoria Dance Series put the two principals from battery opera, David McIntosh and Lee Su-Feh, in residence for a week at Parkland Secondary School in Sidney. It was a memorable week.

I've been thinking about the various partnerships that the Victoria Dance Series (VDS) is building. Our work in this area is a collaborative effort between the VDS, artists, funding agencies and host organizations. The core value of our Community Outreach Program is to nurture community partnerships with schools, community groups, social service agencies and other arts organizations

During the week at Parkland Secondary School in Sidney, David and Su-Feh taught two daily dance classes to almost 60 students, using their own unique approach to dance. It was a great opportunity for these dance students to experience something totally new with these award-winning artists and the feedback we received from students and teachers confirmed our belief that they appreciated this.

On the Sunday, following the school residency, McIntosh and Lee led an intensive dance workshop at Lynda Raino's studio. This workshop used martial arts as a starting point to explore ideas about movement and was accessible to both dancers and non-dancers alike. There was a great response to this workshop, which drew almost 25 participants.

Of course, these kinds of projects just don't happen by themselves but are the result of meetings, introductions and the inevitable grant applications. But I would like to extend my thanks to Parkland Secondary dance teachers Elise Hoepfner and Leanne Harrington, Tony Goodman (Saanich School District # 63), and of course, the students who were keen to try new approaches to dance. David and Su-Feh kept the material challenging and, a professional ethic in the approach to the work. The project's financial supporters were the Canada Council, the Department of Canadian Heritage, ArtSmarts, and Parkland's PAC.

We'd also like to thank Kim Breiland from Stages for hosting the Master Class with Rex Harrington; Lynda Raino for providing her studio for the battery

opera workshop; Maureen Eastick at Pacific Dance Centre for hosting the upcoming Master Class with Sylvain Senez; as well as Marlene Abney and Gail Neuman from Excalibre Dance for offering their fully accessible studios for the People Moving workshops in February.

Doug Durand at DanceWorks AGM

November 11, 2 pm
Room B028
UVic Student Union Building
Admission FREE
721-4578 to confirm

I will speak at the Greater Victoria DanceWorks AGM about future projects at VDS. Learn more about our plans and DanceWorks programs.

Victoria Dance Series FREE Youth Pass

Open to any student registered in grade 8 through 12 in a Greater Victoria school, Youth Pass holders can purchase rush seats to most performances for \$7.50—that's less than the price of a movie! Visit www.victoriadanceseries.com to learn more and register on line.

Pre-Show Chats

Friday Nov 21 & Saturday Nov 22, 7:20 pm
Performance evenings
Royal Theatre Lobby

DANCE SERIES NEWS

Ballet BC Master Class

Sylvain Senez, Ballet Master, Ballet BC

Thursday Nov 20, 8 pm

Pacific Dance Centre

2580 Maynard

\$16 /14 for Youth Pass Holders

477-6114 to register. Space is limited

Born and trained in Montreal, Sylvain was a soloist with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens for nine years. He has choreographed for Vancouver Opera and the Dancing on the Edge Festival. Over the years, Mr. Senez has made an invaluable contribution to Ballet BC as a dancer, teacher and, most recently, ballet master. His elegant performing style and his emotional maturity as an artist have elicited praise from dance critics and devoted fans across the country.

Sylvain will be teaching a classical technique class to senior and advanced dance students.

UK Connection

Finally, In February 2004, we are bringing two exceptional dance artists from the UK to Victoria and Vancouver to lead a series of workshops that focus on bringing dance training to those individuals that may not have had access to dance before, including the disabled. These workshops have been supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage, Canada Council, the British Council and CRD Arts and we ask that you visit our website in the new year to learn more.

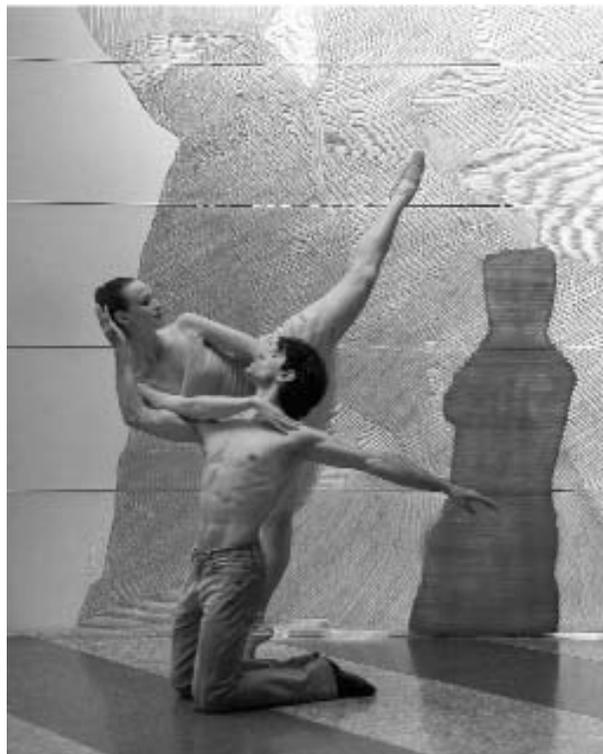
If you'd like more information on these or any of our upcoming Community Outreach projects, go to www.victoriadanceseries.com



Alberta Ballet's *The Nutcracker*. Photo by Mary Solt.

Nutcracker 2004

The Victoria Dance Series is teaming with the Victoria Symphony to present the Alberta Ballet/Ballet BC production of *The Nutcracker* in November, 2004. I know it's a year away, but we are very excited to be bringing this wonderful, opulently staged production to town, complete with 40 of our Symphony musicians in the pit. And it's programmed before Christmas! Finally, we are getting a *Nutcracker* our community deserves. In addition to four planned public performances, we will be offering a school matinee at a greatly reduced rate. Watch for more information in the new year.



The RWB's *Magic Flute*

Choreographed by Mark Godden

There has been a spate of press about the recent Winnipeg premiere of the new Mark Godden piece. My colleagues on the wintry plain tell me there were standing ovations and many curtain calls on opening night. And it looks as if the critics agree with the excitement. *The National Post* said "...witty, provocative and puzzling – and certainly never dull". CBC Radio weighed in with, "I think this is absolutely wonderful dance to watch," And finally the *Winnipeg Free Press* said "(Mark Godden) has managed to meld the profound with the pro-

Michelle Lock and Reynolds Reyes in *The Magic Flute*. Photo by Bruce Monk.

DANCE SERIES NEWS foundly silly into a truly beautiful contemporary ballet...Mozart would have loved it."

Pite/Raino News

There are moments in my role as Executive Producer when everything comes together and I think, "This is why I do what I do" and one of those happened just a few weeks ago. Crystal Pite came into town on crutches, nursing a broken toe that forced the cancellation of some of her national tour, but in typical Crystal fashion, she took it all in stride (augmented by crutches). She, Lynda Raino, our Production Manager the very bright, very talented Julie-Anne Saroyan and I started talking about the April premiere of the Pite/Raino collaboration. Later, other members of the team—videographers and lighting designers, showed up at our table and there were lots of waving arms and pointing and sketching ideas with a finger on a table top and at one point, I pulled back from the table to watch. I smiled to myself. The Dance Series is making this happen—a whole big new work by two of the city's most beloved dance artists—and it's going to premiere on April 2 and 3. It was certainly one of those moments!

Office closed in December

The Dance Series office will be closed for the entire month of December while my partner and I travel to Brazil for a month. I'll bring back impressions of Brazilian dance practice to share with you.

If you have any questions, or are in need of anything, make sure you call in November. The office will reopen in early January 2004.



Jane Tice: photo by Bonnie Light

Meet Jane Tice

This season we are introducing you to the members of the Victoria Dance Series Board of Directors. These folks volunteer their time developing policies, providing advice and stewardship to our young organization.

Jane Tice, the keeper of the minutes at our monthly board meetings, was born in England but raised in Montreal and dreamed of being a ballerina—but by 12, Jane was 5'11" and in those days, her height was an impediment. She was thrust into baton twirling, which she loathed.

After school, Jane entered the world of retail, and a trend began that would follow her through the next 20 years. In no time flat, she was made manager of a small kitchen boutique. She spent some years as an assistant buyer at the Hudson Bay Company before becoming production manager for a children's clothing line. When her father died and her mother and three sisters began moving to the west coast, Jane followed. In Victoria, Jane has managed a women's clothing store, managed Murchie's for 9 years and then, became general manager of Chintz and Co. Just two years ago, she walked away from it all to return to school and get her certification as a gardener. Nowadays, Jane has a growing number of clients who hire her to get her hands in the muck, and she spends a good portion of the day outdoors, far from the demands of retail management. Ms. Tice is also currently organizing the office at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific.

As a young girl, Jane remembers, an aunt in Britain would send the Tice girls copies of *Ballet for Girls* every Christmas, chock-full of fairy princess dancers and the princes that partnered them. Later in life, she imagined herself a Bob Fosse dancer, sharp and angular, timed to a fraction, precise and direct. She admits her involvement on the board allows her to live the dancer's life—vicariously.

When she revealed her dance fantasy to me, I was not surprised by the allusion to Fosse, because I know Jane as a pragmatist, with a vivid sense of humour, whose minutes of each meeting are so distilled they are themselves an exercise in precision. She's also a wonderful resource when I need advice on pruning!

Tale of Two Carmens

Victoria will see two very different interpretations of Carmen this year—one dance and one opera. Pacific Opera Victoria's production of Carmen will run April 22 through May 1, 2004.

I invited François Racine, the director of the POV production, to give us some insight about how he will approach his production. Mr. Racine is a Canadian opera director. He has directed operas for the Los Angeles Opera, the Canadian Opera Company, l'Opéra de Montreal, as well as for the Edinburgh Festival, the Hong Kong Arts Festival, and the Melbourne Festival. Last year, Mr. Racine directed Puccini's La Bohème for Pacific Opera Victoria. Here's what he had to say:

Anticipating Carmen

By François Racine

When I mention to people that I will be directing this opera, they look at me with a peculiar interest in their eyes: 'Oh Carmen! I love it!' And then they start humming parts of La Seguidilla, sketching flamenco movements with their arms. The most extroverted will even include a hip gyration to show that the music really moves them. Naturally, those situations always occur in a public place, and I surprise myself, wishing that my art form was mime instead of opera. And then, inevitably, they ask THE question: 'What is your concept for the show?'

My first impulse is to answer: I don't have a concept! Then I wonder: What is a concept for a director? Roughly sketched, this is how I describe the term.

Often, in opera, the term 'concept' is used to describe the way directors visualize a dramatic context, and how they actualize the narratives in order to enhance some specific aspects of the opera. It is also a way to generate historic concordance between distant periods of time. In that manner, a concept is used as a link to recreate a coherent perspective that resets the past in modern preoccupation.

Conceptualization is the organization of imagery following the visualization of an intuition. It emerges from the inner debate of argumentation: it is the will to build a narrative pretext to maintain or enhance that visualization. It is a process directly linked to rationality. It is putting into a form, into an abstract box which is limited by the boundaries of pre-determined ideas, something that is, by nature, fluid. On the other hand, emotions, expression, passion, and musical evocation are all spontaneous emanations of our irrationality.

Facing the conceptualization of an opera, the director tries to emancipate himself from the rigid structures of preconceived ideas in order to connect with inspiration.

Yes, there is a logic in the narrative of an opera, but for *Carmen*, it is the logic of irrationality: 'I love you today, but maybe not tomorrow,' and that's that. That is the basic confrontation between José and Carmen: He is a character of logic, of procedures; she is a character of irrationality and process. It is the confrontation between two visions of life: Following the law or following the natural instinct, or, I would rather say, intuition.

Carmen is not only a character, she is a lifestyle, a philosophy of life, a vision of the potential freedom that lies in and around us.

That would be my concept.

I want to follow what Carmen fights for. I want to get involved in this production fully inspired by that character: So, I will not formulate a show ahead of time, but let music and love and passion and liberty nourish my directions. In rehearsals, I will try to create an ambience of confidence and freedom, so that the singers will be the incarnation of their sense of freedom. It could be risky, but that is the whole point. To create momentum in a show, you need to feel that everything is at risk. You dive in, and God oh God, you just hope that you are right.

For more information about POV's Carmen, visit www.pov.bc.ca. or phone 385-0222. Subscription tickets now on sale. Single tickets for Carmen go on sale February 23, 2004



We are proud to support the passion, athleticism and the beauty of the Victoria Dance Series, and we thank all of you for the privilege of your business over the years.


Dañny Sitnam

President and CEO Helijet International



DANCING ON THE ISLAND

Footnotes brings you the latest information from dance companies and organizations on Vancouver Island

A reminder that both the Cowichan Theatre (Duncan) and The Port Theatre (Nanaimo) are offering discounted admissions to Victoria Dance Series Dance Card holders for their upcoming presentations of Ballet jazz de Montreal.

BJM plays Nanaimo on November 18 and Duncan on the 20th.

You can book your tickets over the phone, but be sure to mention you are a Victoria Dance Series Subscriber and to take your dance card with you when you pick your tickets up.

For more details:

Cowichan Community Centre (Duncan)
Phone: (250) 748-7529

The Port Theatre (Nanaimo)
Phone: (250) 754-8550

Also at the Cowichan Theatre:

The Nutcracker performed by The Royal City Youth Ballet. December 14 at 2 pm

A Suddenly Dance Theatre Fundraiser THE ART OF ALE

Friday, November 14, 2003, 6 - 8 pm
Laurel Point Inn, 680 Montreal Street
Tickets: \$25

Available at the Vancouver Island Brewery Beer Store, 2330 Government Street
Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 6 pm
To reserve: 361-0005. Limited tickets available.



A Victoria Condo has been home to Dance Series artists while they work in Victoria. The comfortable and welcoming, one bedroom suite overlooks Beacon Hill Park and is steps from the downtown Inner Harbour, Dallas Road waterfront, and Cook Street Village. Consider A Victoria Condo for your out-of-town friends and family. Find pictures and details at www3.telus.net/victoriacondo or phone 381-5581.

The Victoria Dance series is grateful to have the support of "A Victoria Condo"

