

FOOTNOTES

SPRING 03

VictoriaDanceSeries.com

BY FASTRAC

PLEASE NOTE:

Tickets to O Vertigo's *LUNA* (Royal Theatre, March 4, 2003) were mailed to all subscribers on January 27, 2003. *LUNA* will replace the La La La Human Steps performances scheduled for mid-March. If you have not received your tickets please call Stephen White at 595-1829 ASAP. More information about *LUNA* is contained in this newsletter.

Evelyn Hart and Johnny W. Chang in *The Sleeping Beauty*, photo by David Cooper

A RALLYING RETURN: TCHAIKOVSKY AND *THE SLEEPING BEAUTY*

By staff of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet

In the astounding musical industry that drove Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), composing for ballet was only one region of activity. Of course, *Swan Lake* (introduced in 1877), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890) and *Nutcracker* (1892) are set inarguably in the ballet canon. Musicologists have no hesitation in speaking of those scores in favourable comparison to his symphonies, concerti and operas. Indeed, Tchaikovsky's genius in dance was to create music whose construction, muscle and grace were virtually symphonic. Yet the process of creating music for dancers was not without its difficulties for him.

Success never came to Tchaikovsky without dedicated work, ardent study and personal drama.

He was born in 1840 in Votkinsk, 600 miles east of Moscow, but eight years later the family moved to St. Petersburg. He was 10 when he was enrolled in a military boarding school, and just 14 when he his beloved mother died. He began his musical education at home as a child, finding solace in music. He claimed to have experienced an epiphany when hearing Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for the first time. His first career move was to law, however, and he entered the Ministry of Justice in St. Petersburg as a junior clerk.



Sleeping Beauty In the end, music won. At the age of 22 he quit the Ministry for the city's conservatory. Such was his progress that at 26 he was appointed Professor of Harmony at the conservatory in Moscow. A new era of Soviet nationalism had contemporaries such as Rimsky-Korsakov in its thrall, and Tchaikovsky followed for a while with a symphony known as "Little Russia." Yet his muse was too great for borders; while the premiere in 1875 of his *Piano Concerto No. 1* was his breakthrough, the greatest acclaim came from beyond Russia. In the final decade of his life, he toured Europe and the United States, and in 1891 conducted the debut performance in what would become Carnegie Hall.

Tchaikovsky undertook his first ballet, *Swan Lake*, with mixed feelings. By tradition, ballet music was mostly an incidental business—a springboard for a given dancer's virtuosity, crafted, like other aspects of the production, with little regard for continuity of effort. In his own words, Tchaikovsky accepted the job "partly because I need the money, and partly because I have long cherished the desire to try my hand at this kind of music."

Swan Lake's score is unquestioned now, but had a rough introduction to the world. A distressing combination of inadequate dancing, confused design and stodgy conducting conspired against the music, which was itself modified for the worse by Bolshoi Theatre balletmaster Julius Wenzel Reinsinger. It was 13 years before Tchaikovsky wrote again for ballet.

The composer's change of heart owed much to the new director of the Imperial Theatres in Russia. Ivan Vsevolozhsky held that ballet is a collaborative effort, best approached in the spirit of teamwork while recognizing personal excellence. So it was, for example, that after the retirement of Leon Minkus as resident ballet composer in 1886 Vsevolozhsky did away with that position, which freed the director to commission work from a variety of composers. Persuading Tchaikovsky to return to ballet music was a coup.

Vsevolozhsky commissioned the composer for a ballet to last. "Like *Giselle* and *Coppélia* it must live, and stay in the repertory to enchant our grandchildren as it enchanted us," he wrote. The director was taken by "La belle au bois dormant" ("The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood"), a tale found in Charles Perrault's 17th Century collection, *Histoire ou contes du temps passé*. In fact, there had already been at least three ballets set on *Beauty*, the earliest being a French production that opened in Paris in 1825.

The Russian version, its title translated as *Spiashchaia krasavitsa*, was the product of a creative troika. Choreography was entrusted to the great Marius Petipa. Tchaikovsky composed the music, and while it is remembered that he did so to Petipa's strict bar-by-bar requirements for the purposes of dance and drama, the composer brought his own ideas and alterations to the plan. "The subject is so poetic, so inspirational to composition, that I am captivated by it," he wrote to his benefactor, Nadezhda von Meck. Inspiration sped him; the three main periods of writing amounted to little more than a month. He had to leave such intense work temporarily for a tour conducting orchestras in Germany, Switzerland and England, but even then he found time to work on the score.

In music as in dance, the grace is to disguise the hard work behind the magic. For all the concentration behind its creation, the music for *The Sleeping Beauty* matches compositional rigour with a growing fascination for orchestral colour—a fascination encouraged by his experience in conducting the music of other composers. Within the flow of Tchaikovsky's score, two themes play against each other. The dark

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sway of the wicked fairy, Carabosse, is signaled by an ominous, turbulent melody, while much brighter music represents the powers of good embodied in the Lilac Fairy. These themes sound sometimes in subtle ways. When the heroine, Aurora, pricks her finger and so invites Carabosse's curse, the dark music spins back into life. Passages of almost oceanic serenity are countered by darker commentary; by the end, as biographer Edward Gordon wrote, the debate is not completely resolved: "A chill is cast over the blissful realm of fantasy after the general rejoicing in the final mazurka, when a sudden austere change to the minor mode serves to jerk us back from the rarefied fairy-tale atmosphere towards the very different world of real life."

The Sleeping Beauty had its premiere on January 15, 1890 in St. Petersburg, with the Italian ballerina, Carlotta Brianza, in the titular role of Aurora. Although it fared better than the ill-starred introduction of *Swan Lake*, the new ballet opened to mixed reviews. To some snipers, the music was too lush and too serious. The Tsar attended the gala rehearsal, which was staged the night before the formal opening, and his muted response seemed to sting most of all—"His majesty treated me with distant hauteur," Tchaikovsky wrote.

Nonetheless, by 1892 it had already been performed 50 times in Russia, anticipating the ballet's reception in the West, and Tchaikovsky, who felt he had composed "some of my best music" for *The Sleeping Beauty*, was presented with a crown by dancers on the Maryinski Theatre stage.



RWB Masterclass

With Royal Winnipeg Ballet's **JANICE GIBSON (Regisseur)**
Monday February 24, 4 pm – 5:30 pm
Stages Dance, #301—1551 Cedar Hill X Rd.
\$15 / Phone 384-3267 to register

Janice Gibson was born in Victoria, British Columbia, and began her earliest ballet training at the age of four. From 1983 to 1985, Janice studied with the National Ballet School of Canada. She continued her training at the Wynne Shaw Dance Studio in Victoria from 1985 to 1990, studying with Sheila MacKinnon, Christine Richardson and Sheila Kennedy.

In 1990, Janice joined the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School, Professional Division, where she continued her studies with David Moroni and Jacqueline Weber. In 1991, she made her professional debut with the Company in Sir Frederick Ashton's *The Dream*. She has also appeared in *Swan Lake*, John Neumeier's *Nutcracker*, Rudi van Dantzig's *Romeo and Juliet* and *La Bayadere*, Act II. Her favourite ballet in the RWB repertoire is George Balanchine's *Ballo Della Regina*.

Janice joined the Company as Apprentice in August, 1993 and was promoted to the corps de ballet in 1994. In 1998 during the creation of *Dracula*, she worked with Mark Godden as Assistant to the Choreographer. For the RWB's 1999/2000 season, Ms Gibson was named Ballet Mistress and in Fall of 2000 she was named Regisseur.

Janice will be teaching a class in classical technique for students at an intermediate level.

In the summer of the following year he completed his sixth symphony, which became known as the *Pathétique*. Writing to his publisher, he enthused, "I give you my word of honour that never in my life have I been so contented, so proud, so happy in the knowledge that I have written a good piece." The symphony had its premiere that October in St. Petersburg; scant days later he was dead from cholera, in circumstances that remain controversial.

The Sleeping Beauty
The Royal Winnipeg Ballet
Tuesday, February 25 & Wednesday, February 26 @ 8 pm
Wednesday February 26 @ 2 pm
Royal Theatre

Pre-Show Chats

Royal Theatre Lobby
7:20 pm prior to the Performance

February 25: Meet Royal Winnipeg Ballet's Artistic Director, Andre Lewis who will speak about remounting *The Sleeping Beauty*.

February 26: Tour Director, Gerard Roxburgh will talk about the logistics of putting a company as large as the Royal Winnipeg on tour.

The Allure of the Abyss: O Vertigo's LUNA



Anne Barry, Marie-Claude Rodrigue in *Luna*. Photo by Laurent S. Ziegler.

“My dance,” says choreographer Ginette Laurin, “is about vertigo, the allure of the abyss, exhilaration, free-falling emotion”.

Founded in 1984, Montreal's O Vertigo is dedicated to the development and presentation of dance works choreographed by Ginette Laurin. In its almost 20 year history, the company has toured to over 100 cities throughout Canada, the U.S., Europe, Brazil, Mexico, Israel and Japan. Ms. Laurin's work is celebrated as inventive, risky, loquacious and touched with remarkable theatricality. She began her training as a gymnast, studying dance when she was fifteen. After a notable freelance dance career, Ms. Laurin began working as a choreographer—a transition she describes by saying “it went really well, right at the beginning... so it was quite easy!”

Before even entering the studio, Laurin approaches a new work with a clear concept. She generally takes a year to research and develop the ideas for a work so that when she first works with dancers, the images for the new work are very clear. Her interest is to provide dancers with movement and physical direction to shape an emotion or feeling rather than direct by giving them an intention. A fine distinction, to be sure, but one that Laurin feels avoids the awkward “acted” intention.

LUNA was inspired by some of Karl Blossfeldt's photography, which magnified flowers to the point that they become unrecognizable. Laurin became interested in magnifying movement in a similar way. In order to do so, she brought large, round, freestanding magnifying glasses into the

rehearsal. In turn, the shape of these props evoked images of planets, which lead to ideas about the universe and the cosmos. As it evolved, *LUNA* became a metaphor for the seen and unseen, and Laurin's interest turned to the idea of using the work to play with themes that touch on revealing what is normally hidden.

An unlikely, but valuable, contributor to the development of *LUNA* was Claude Theoret, a PhD in astrophysics at McGill University. Theoret introduced the notion that in the universe relationships exist between the very big and the very small and that scientists study the small so that they can understand the big. This concept fed Laurin's process, and supported her earliest ideas inspired by the photographs. The end product is *LUNA*, a work that incorporates film, live sound and live projected images shot from remote cameras.

Laurin has been excited by the work she did with scientist Theoret in developing *LUNA* and will continue to research the intersection between science and art.

Check out www.overtigo.com for more information

Please Note: O Vertigo's LUNA replaces La La La Human Steps, who cancelled their tour of western Canada in 2003.

Luna

O Vertigo Danse

Tuesday, March 4 @ 8 pm

Royal Theatre

DANCE SERIES NEWS

Victoria Dance Series Commissions a New Work by Crystal Pite and Lynda Raino

When Crystal Pite arrived in Victoria back in November 2001 to premiere her new pieces choreographed for Les Ballets jazz de Montreal, she said to Executive Producer Stephen White, that one day she would love to work with Lynda Raino. White then set about making Pite's dream come true and the Victoria Dance Series for the first time in its history, decided to commission a new work. In a community the size of Victoria, there are very few (if any) opportunities for choreographers to have their work supported by a company with the resources to sustain the development process. Recognizing this, the Series' Board of Directors and Stephen have identified the commission and development of new work that is relevant to our community as one of the Victoria Dance Series priorities.

In March of this year Crystal will be resident in Victoria, and she and Lynda will begin developing this new piece for presentation as part of the Victoria Dance Series new Contemporary Series in spring 2004. We are very excited to be able to support these two artists and of course thrilled that Crystal will also be available to offer a Master Class in contemporary dance technique and a Lecture Demonstration on Choreography while she's here in March.

Conversational Dance #2

Crystal Pite Lecture Demonstration
Friday, March 7, 8:00 pm – 9:30 pm
Lynda Raino Dance, 715 Yates Street (3rd Floor)
Open to the general public / \$15

Crystal Pite will share her experiences of working with improvisation both as a performer and in the choreographic process. As a performer, she has used improvisation to achieve specific dynamic qualities and certain physical and mental states. As a creator, Ms. Pite is engaged in an ongoing process of developing and questioning the methodology she uses while choreographing.

In this lecture demonstration, she will outline several systems that she has utilized in recent pieces and demonstrate the properties of improvisation that are defining her work both as a creator and as a performer. The audience will also have an opportunity to ask questions of Ms. Pite.

Crystal Pite Masterclass

Friday March 14, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm
Lynda Raino Dance, 715 Yates Street
\$15 / Phone 595-1829 to reserve

Ms. Pite will be offering a class in contemporary technique to advanced students. Registration is limited.

Our Man in the UK

Dance Series founding Executive Producer Douglas Durand is currently completing a residency with East London Dance in Britain. The Series was successful in receiving funding support from the Canada Council to provide Doug with the resources he required to carry out research that will have a lasting impact on the future of our company.

East London Dance is recognized as a world leader in the development and delivery of innovative community outreach programs. For example, they have put professional dance practitioners in contact with the disabled or seniors and developed large and small scale community projects. Doug will return to Victoria in March 2003 and work with us to inaugurate some new projects for next season. Stay tuned!

I welcome your comments and feedback.

Stephen White, Executive Producer

Dance Card Update

Our subscribers continue to enjoy discounts at **Hugo's Grill** (623 Courtney St., in The Magnolia Hotel). Reservation recommended. Phone 920-4844

Another local company has joined our roster of local businesses offering subscriber discounts: **Silk Road Aromatherapy & Tea Co.** in Victoria's Chinatown (1624 Government St., Victoria BC, V8W 1Z3. Phone 704 2688 ext. 2, fax 382 0001, silkroad@silkroadtea.com, www.silkroadtea.com). Featuring premium quality loose teas, teapots, teaware, aromatherapy bath, body, skin & haircare. All natural products, made fresh in Victoria with premium quality ingredients. Natural day spa.

Silk Road offers Subscribers a 10% discount on all retail products upon presentation of your Dance Card. Unfortunately, because prices are already so reasonable, the discount does not extend to spa services.

DANCING ON THE ISLAND

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

Victoria

Suddenly Dance Theatre

Body Language
March 7 - 8 - 9, 2003
at 1818 Government Street
www.suddenlydance.ca

Body Language is a visual art show and fundraiser for Suddenly Dance Theatre. Thirteen artists interpret the body and its expression through movement, gesture, or repose. With David Ferguson, Heather Keenan, Vince Klassen, Miles Lowry, Brad Pasutti, Wayne Ryzak.

The show will also be the official launch of *A Dance in 500* CDROM, designed by Sandra Lockwood, based on the original 1998 installation by David Ferguson, Miles Lowry, Vince Klassen and Treena Stubel. Featuring 500 photographs, excerpts from the video documentary, animations, installation photos, text, soundscape and drawings.

ROMP! A Festival of Independent Dance

May 8 - 9 - 10, 2003
Belfry Arts Centre

ROMP! A Festival of Independent Dance is heading into its seventh production. The festival supports the work and development of the professional choreographer. The mixed program also features dance on film and video from across Canada.

Romp! 2003 premieres Constance Cooke's new full-length work *Salome*, and also Suddenly Dance Theatre's own original production *Trilogy*. In *Trilogy*, choreographer Lori Hamar joins designer Miles Lowry in a multimedia project exploring interactivity and the relationships between choreography, video, design, and music. With Rachel Anderson. Directed by David Ferguson.

Nanaimo

Crimson Coast Dance Society

presents Chick Snipper's dance company, DanStabat in *SLAB*
Saturday, March 29 at 8pm
Tickets: \$18/\$16/\$14
Malaspina University Theatre
For Tickets: 754-8550

This dance is based on the old anatomical drawings of Vesulius, Albinus and the wax artisans of Le Specola. It is accompanied with live music. An original score by John Korsurd, based on the early music of the anatomical artist's era.

Ballet Jorgen's *Romeo & Juliet*

March 4 & 5, 2003 - 7:30 pm
At Nanaimo's Port Theatre
Tickets: Members & Groups: \$31, Non-Members: \$35
Call: 250-754-8550

Created by award-winning choreographer, Bengt Jorgen, in collaboration with the Banff Centre for the Arts.

David Ferguson and Treena Stubel, in *A Dance in 500*. Photo by Vince Klassen

