

## FOOTNOTES

MAY 2005

VictoriaDanceSeries.com

BY FASTRAC

*You have to be either hopelessly passionate or very stupid.*

– Twyla Tharp, dancer and choreographer

## DANCING TO OL' BLUE EYES

by Stephen White

Twyla Tharp grew up in Southern California in the 1940s and '50s. Her father owned a construction company and a Ford dealership. Her mother taught piano. Tharp herself began piano lessons at age two and dance classes when she was four. She studied ballet, tap, jazz, and modern dance; and because her mother was determined that her daughter be accomplished in many areas, she also learned the baton, drums, violin and viola and took classes in painting, shorthand and French.

As a young adult, Tharp was expelled from Pomona College for making out with her boyfriend in the college chapel, so she transferred to Barnard College in New York City. Here she studied Art History, but she continued dancing in classes off campus at the American Ballet Theatre School and in master classes with Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham and Paul Taylor.

After she completed her degree, Tharp joined the Paul Taylor Dance Company in 1963, but a couple years later she left to form Twyla Tharp Dance. For the first three years, the company was composed of five women. Two men were added in 1969.

Tharp's early dances were small, highly conceptual works. For example in 1966 she created a dance in four sections entitled *Re-Moves* (meaning both "to do over" and "to take away") which was a reaction to American involvement in Viet Nam. For the work, Tharp established a movement vocabulary that was repeated at length so that the gestures purposely lost sense. The dance was performed without music and the first section was danced in a rectangular space with audience seated on three sides. The second was danced under a balcony so that the



Photo by Richard Avedon

audience's view of the dancer was obscured. The third section was only partially visible, performed mostly behind a wooden box and the last piece was danced inside the box so that the audience did not see the movement, but instead heard the exertion of the dancer. Tharp was interested in responding to what she considered to be government betrayal. A critic at the time said that Tharp "exhibited the stubborn point of view that dance should be a conceptual rather than a physical matter...."

These smaller conceptual works gave way to larger, freer investigations into pure movement. In 1969, Tharp created a work entitled *Medley* that was danced in the Great Meadow at Central Park in New York. Her company had expanded to six members, and this new piece was a deliberate reaction to her earlier oeuvre of tightly controlled, detailed choreography. *Medley* also incorporated 40 supplementary dancers who took their cues from the principal dancers. The movement was based on walking, skipping and jumping and it

continues >



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**Footnotes** is prepared by Executive Producer Stephen White. This issue was proofed by Robert Moyes

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## DANCING TO OL' BLUE EYES > continued

culminated in a protracted adagio at dusk. Tharp described the work as “plotted chaos.”

*Medley* seems to have marked an important transition in Tharp's development. In ensuing years she would begin to create dances in unusual formats. *Dancing in the Streets* was performed in a museum space, with the audience encouraged to interact with performers spread through the building. Another work, *The One Hundreds*, invited spectators to join dancers onstage and perform sections of simple choreography.

In the early 1970s her sensibility shifted again, and she became more interested in dance that was inspired by music. The first example of this new approach was her famous work entitled *Eight Jelly Rolls*, where six company members stretched the definitions of jazz dance to perform the work of jazz legend Jelly Roll Morton. More music-inspired work followed, culminating in the mid-1970s production of *Deuce Coupe* that used the music of the Beach Boys in a playful investigation of teenager fun. Choreographed for the Joffrey Ballet, the work is regarded as one of the first crossover ballets incorporating popular 1960s dances (the monkey, the jerk and more) with classical ballet. Other crossover works followed – most notably a collaboration with Baryshnikov entitled *Push Comes to Shove* in 1976.

Also in 1976, Tharp developed a short piece for the American Ballet Theatre originally intended as a one-off showcase of two dancers for a gala evening. The piece was entitled *Once More Frank* and it featured work set to three Sinatra songs: “Something Stupid,” “That's Life” and “One More for the Road.” Tharp's choreography focused on double-work and simultaneous solos for a male and female dancer. Her investigation of “the void between,” a lifelong interest of Tharp, was pointed up in the last piece (“Road”) where the two dancers melt into one another.

Thus, the stage was set for *Nine Sinatra Songs*, which came some six years later and was originally created for her own company, Twyla Tharp Dance. The piece borrowed from her earlier work but was also inspired in part by her own research into social dancing, particularly ballroom, as she prepared to choreograph the movie *Ragtime*. *Nine Songs* is comprised

of seven duets and two company pieces, each with its own character. The duets mirror the traditional male/female ballroom unit, but in Tharp's hands the female becomes more of a full participant in the choreography. The opening piece, “Softly As I Leave You,” plays with infatuation. The second, set to “Strangers in the Night,” is a bastardized tango. The rest alternate between comic and showy – with at least one danced like a ballroom competition piece. The final swell of “My Way” is performed with all sixteen dancers. *Nine Sinatra Songs* is considered a Twyla Tharp classic that provides for virtuosic dancing in a very accessible format.

Tharp continues to produce new work at a prolific rate. She has choreographed more than 125 dance works, five movies and two Broadway shows. Her latest, *Moving Out*, is set to the music of Billy Joel and won her a Tony. The show began a US tour a year ago. She has been celebrated with 17 honorary doctorates and numerous other awards. Tharp is one of those rare talents in the dance world who can take something recognizable and twist it so that an audience sees it in a new way. She is a visionary artist who has advanced the form while staying very connected to a contemporary audience. **FN**

*Nine Sinatra Songs* will be performed at the Royal Theatre by Ballet BC on May 4 & 5th, 2005.



## ALSO ON THE BALLET BC PROGRAM

# THE RITE OF SPRING

*The Rite of Spring* is a new one-act ballet for 14 dancers with original choreography by Ballet British Columbia Artistic Director, John Alleyne, that is set to the rarely performed piano reduction of Igor Stravinsky's provocative 1913 orchestral score (one piano, four hands). While building on his signature choreography, Alleyne's creation incorporates video, lighting, dance and music with the technology of pre-recorded and live visual projections to further amplify the emotional and physical intensity of this powerful work.



The work will receive its world premiere at the Vancouver's Queen Elizabeth Theatre on April 21, 2005 and then tours the Island the following week, performing in Victoria, Nanaimo, and Courtenay before returning to the mainland for performances in Coquitlam.

For many years, Alleyne has been fascinated with Stravinsky's score and its artistic potential — combining original choreography, multi-media visual arrangements, and with well-known music. This work reflects his growing interest in breaking away from the construction of duet ballets and focusing instead on the challenge of creating multiple solo works as part of an ensemble. Alleyne also explores ideas of "the tribe" versus "the individual" and the conflict created when the needs of the tribe are greater than those of the individual.

The artistic collaborators on this project include artists and

crafts people of the highest professional calibre and creativity. Included is video designer Jamie Griffiths, who is a UK-born new-media visual artist currently based in Vancouver. Griffiths has an established history as a still photographer, internationally exhibited gallery artist and video director. Combining her experience as a commercial photographer and video director with the conceptual approach of a visual artist, Griffiths is currently developing live new-media performances in collaboration with orchestra, dance, opera and live electronic music projects.

Her work includes experimental techniques like the custom use of interactive audio-responsive visual software, keyboard-driven live visual performances, and research into "New Performance Technologies," including motion capture techniques. Griffiths has exhibited in galleries in Toronto, Vancouver, Seattle, San Francisco, New York and Paris. SoHo Galleries in San Francisco has published and distributed her images worldwide as posters and postcards. Griffiths has been interviewed and profiled on MuchMusic & City TV's Fashion TV. Her new media performance work, an innovative collaboration with Kokoro Dance & Standing Wave, was featured in November 2002 on a CBC TV documentary.

## LIKE YOU

The third piece on the program is a North American premiere, originally created for the Royal Ballet of Flanders by choreographer Nicolo Fonte.

Fonte is an American who trained at the Joffrey School, the School of the American Ballet Theatre and Alvin Ailey. He danced with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens where he met choreographer Nacho Duato. Duato and Fonte moved from Montreal to Madrid where they lived for six years. During that time, Fonte choreographed for the Royal Ballet of Flanders, Gothenburg (Sweden), Stuttgart Ballet (Stuttgart, Germany) and Pacific Northwest Ballet (Seattle, WA). This is his first work in the Ballet British Columbia repertoire.

*Like You* is contemporary ballet that is technically challenging for the dancers. The piece will be danced by the whole company on pointe. Fonte uses ballet training and technical expertise as a means to enhance expression. He emphasizes that although the movement may seem "modern" it is in fact deconstructed classical ballet and requires an extremely high level of classically trained virtuosity to execute. He has described his method of choreography as collaborative with the dancers: he brings movement ideas to rehearsal in the studio to observe their execution. He is inspired by each dancer's particular movement quality, which in turn contributes to the finished work. *Like You* is divided into five sections and is about 25 minutes long.

The original score for *Like You* was created by Italian composer Dieglo Dall'Osto. **FN**

# SINATRA ON SINATRA

by **Nancy Sinatra**, August, 1995

Honesty. If you were to ask me what I believe Frank Sinatra's most outstanding quality is, I would say, without hesitation, honesty. Honesty that comes through in the lyrics, in the music – in everything that he does.

It's this honesty that's heard in the sound of the Columbia recordings, made at a time when both Dad and the American public was spoiled with the best possible songs, and a time when he really felt the songs at his core. Antonio Carlos Jobim once said that Frank Sinatra was like Mount Everest for a songwriter: if you got Frank to do one of your songs, it was done right. That feeling is what enables Dad to take, for example, a Sammy Cahn lyric – with Sammy's deepest, most profound feelings – and make them understood by everybody. That's the mark of a great communicator, and not many people are able to do that sort of thing in the honest way that he does!

The Columbia era is my favorite period of Dad's career. Recently, I've been playing songs and listening to the music from this era, for a book project I'm working on. Of course, I was only around six or seven when they were made (I was barely four when "Nancy" was recorded), but I remember that I was old enough to know the music. I may not have specific memories of these songs, but I certainly remember feeling them! Going through these recordings, I've discovered songs that I didn't think I knew, only to find that I was feeling them all over again. I know my parents and I played them constantly at the house, and of course, I would hear them on the radio.

The war years were key for my father. He represented something for so many young women, whose fathers or brothers or husbands were away. There weren't a whole lot of guys around! I love "Someone To Watch Over Me" because it's the perfect example of the vulnerability he had that made young women just want to take care of him: be with him, hold him, nurture him. He had the uncanny ability to come across as a strong guy, but one who was also needful. I think the arrangements helped with that a lot, too.

During that time, he earned great respect, and wielded powerful influence. He had enough power to sway votes – without television! Did he do it by getting on the telephone, and calling people and telling them to vote? No, he did it with influence.

He was able to help President Roosevelt. He was able to move people away from intolerance – a remarkable feat, considering that we're still fighting it in the '90s. Dad was a public person who cared, and who was interested in social issues.

This influence extended to his work, as well. When Dad would walk in to a session, the respect for him was obvious. He had earned the esteem of everybody in the room. He was an instrument in the orchestra, and he knew the ensemble inside and out. He was part of the team, and that was always reflected in his music.

We were fortunate that Dad was a part of a time that was undoubtedly the best period in American music. Without these

records, he wouldn't have become known! If I had my 'druthers, I'd listen to only ballads from the Columbia years. The up-tempo numbers are great, but I like to listen to them separately. Once I



get started listening, I don't want anything to interfere with those sweet, beautiful classic songs!

Among my personal favorites are the songs from the films, especially "I Couldn't Sleep A Wink Last Night" and "I Fall In Love Too Easily." He sang "She's Funny That Way" for my Mother, and he's told me that he still thinks of her whenever he sings it. "The

House I Live In” was doubly important, of course, because of the Oscar it earned him and his public stand against intolerance.

“Dream” is a landmark American song and “Ol’ Man River” is the song that attracted Louis B. Mayer to Frank, and brought him to M-G-M. “If You Are But A Dream” and “The Things We Did Last Summer” are both very important to me, personally.

There are two songs that stand out and bear special mention: “Hello, Young Lovers” is absolutely fabulous – one of the best recordings he’s made in his whole life, because it’s so beautiful. You really believe him when he tells you about the story and the emotions of the song. And “Birth Of The Blues,” of course, is the bridge. That one song was enough to segue between Columbia and Capitol for Dad: all he needed was Nelson Riddle and Billy May to “punch up the sound,” as my brother Frank Jr. likes to say.

Each generation has their own music, and their own identity. Each group of kids that comes along needs something new. Dad just took his whole generation, and swept them away – literally swept them ‘way up into this wonderful cloud of lyrics and violins. I can imagine the romance that was in the air when this music was playing! He’s transcended these last 50 years, because every generation seems to find something in Sinatra to like – something they can identify with. They understand, and they appreciate the truth. And there’s no one more truthful than Frank, there just isn’t anyone in the world.

Leo Rosten once said “...the purpose in life is to matter – to count, to have it make some difference that we lived at all.” If you use this as a guideline – as a way to live your life, it mattered that Frank Sinatra lived. It mattered a great deal, and not even so much for the music as for the influence. In many ways, my dad is my hero. At the core of this man is an honesty, and an innocence (a trait that comes

through especially clearly in the Columbia recordings) that I will see as long as I live. Those qualities will always live on, in the great music that he has given us. **FN**

*This article is reproduced courtesy of Columbia Records.*

## The Nine Songs

### *Softly As I Leave You*

Recorded: July 17, 1964

(composed by: Hal Shaper/Antonio DeVito/Giorgio Calabrese)

### *Strangers in the Night*

Recorded: April 11, 1966

(Bert Kaempfert/Charles Singleton/Eddie Snyder)

### *One for My Baby (and One for the Road)*

Recorded: June 24, 1958

(composed by: Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer)

### *My Way (repeated in the choreography)*

Recorded: December 30, 1968

(Paul Anka/Jacques Revaux/Gilles Thibault/Claude Francois)

### *Somethin’ Stupid (with Nancy Sinatra)*

Recorded: February 1, 1967

(Carson C Parks)

### *All the Way*

Recorded: August 13, 1957 (from the film *The Joker is Wild*)

(J. van Heusen/S. Cahn)

### *Forget Domani*

Recorded: May 6, 1965

(Norman Newell/Riz Ortotini)

### *That’s Life*

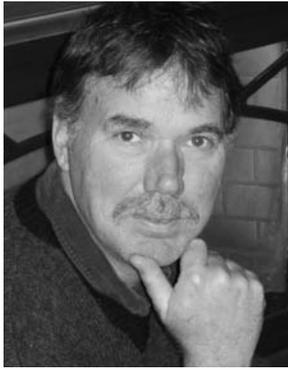
Recorded: October 18, 1966

(Dean Kay Thompson/Kelly Gordon)

## His Way

- Born: Francis Albert Sinatra, Dec. 12, 1915 – Hoboken, New Jersey, son of Italian immigrants Anthony Martin and Natalie Della “Dolly”
- 1935, won first prize in a radio talent show with a group called the Hoboken Four
- Big break was being picked up by trumpeter Harry James at a restaurant in New Jersey where Sinatra worked as a singing waiter
- Seven months later he signed with Tommy Dorsey’s Swing Band
- 1951, divorced his wife Nancy for Ava Gardner
- 1952, at age 37 Sinatra was dropped by Universal, CBS-TV, Columbia Records and his agent
- 1953, with pressure from Ava Gardner, Sinatra was hired to play the character of Angelo Maggio in *From Here to Eternity*. He offered to play the role for \$8,000 instead of his usual fee of \$100,000 and took home the Best Supporting Actor Oscar. He signed with Capitol Records and his career was again on the ascendancy. His comeback career would actually eclipse his first decade of fame.
- 1955 Humphrey Bogart forms the drinking/social group The Rat Pack which included Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Peter Lawford, Joey Bishop and Sinatra. Over the years this group would perform, party heartily and make movies
- May 14, 1998 Frank Sinatra died of a heart attack

## DANCE SEEN



Stephen White. Photo by Stuart Copeland

### Snapshots from a very busy month:

Vivien Love, subscriber, donor, supporter (and a woman whose opinion I respect) – at the bar during the intermission of DJD’s *¡Bulla!* “So, Stephen, how are you going to top this season?” I say, “Good question”. I don’t tell her that it’s this question that wakes me up in the middle of the night – that makes me tentative about including one company next season and reticent about another. This has been a pretty stellar season. It has had real diversity and depth – it has challenged and it has entertained – but mostly, I’m proud that it has offered the best of a broad range of dance practice in Canada. Where do you go from here? I don’t mean to unsettle you. I believe very strongly in the choices I have made for next season. I tell my colleagues that when I look at work with the idea that I might bring it to Victoria, I am the audience’s most conservative eye and their most adventurous. The idea is that the work lands firmly between the two. I know that most folks are not going to be like me – with two screwy eyes in their heads. But I am gratified that there are a number of subscribers who like it all – the whole breadth of expression.

During the second night at Holy Body Tattoo, after the first 20 minutes, I got tired of standing at the back of the house (there were no seats) so I made my way to the lobby where I sat on one of the sofas. A few minutes later, a woman came down the staircase from the balcony. She was recovering from a bad flu and had a cough that made her feel self-conscious sitting in the auditorium. She didn’t want to spoil the show for her friend and those seated around her. We struck up a conversation. I introduced myself and she told me about her situation. She’s a former nurse, now a single mom and full-time student. Subscribing to the Dance Series is her one annual indulgence. She can only afford the cheapest tickets so she is up in what we call the “nose-bleeds,” but the subscription means that she is out seeing dance six times a year and she has become a devoted fan. She said some

very kind things about the programming and her experience at various shows and my work – all very nice. But the most compelling thing she spoke about was an experience she had at Royal Winnipeg Ballet’s *A Cinderella Story*. She asked me if I had noticed that moment when the audience had a collective gasp of awe. I told her I hadn’t. She went on: When the audience first came into the hall she was very aware of the women taking their seats in the gallery, decked to the nines, in their expensive dresses and jewelry, and the men who accompanied them with an aura of



satisfying an obligation to their wife or indulging a feminine whim. They took their seats, glancing around the auditorium, checking to see who was at the show and how they were dressed. The lights dimmed. The pre-show concluded and the performance began and there was that moment when the jazz really connected with the dance, when there was a spectacular lift, and – my

lobby friend said – the entire audience gasped in unison. And in that quick intake of air – the pretense, the tension and the gulf between the husband and wife, rich and poor evaporated. Everyone in the hall was simultaneously drawn out of themselves and pulled into the show. This was the best moment of the season for her.

It sounded pretty fine to me, too.

I hope you enjoyed this season. I know you’re going to love the Ballet BC pieces. It seems appropriate somehow that Frank Sinatra is going to sing us out this season – *One for My Baby* and *One More for the Road*... I’ll have subscription renewal forms in the mail by the end of May. **FN**

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](http://www3.telus.net/victoriacondo) or phone 381-5581.

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**This April the Victoria Dance Series launches:  
Two new community workshops!**

**We invite people of all ages and skill levels to create dance pieces for public performances. The workshops are innovative, somewhat wacky — and promise to be lots of fun ;)**

**Stopping Traffic**

Led by dance professional Annemarie Cabri, this workshop is for all ages and abilities. Together, participants will build a piece to be danced in the five corners intersection in James Bay on Saturday May 7, 2005 as part of **Community Arts Awareness Week**.

Mondays, April 18, 25 & May 2 • 9:30 am – 12:30 pm  
Wednesdays, April 20, 27 & May 4 • Noon – 2 pm  
Saturdays, April 23 & 30 • 10 am – 1 pm

**Saturday, May 7 = Performance** 10 am - 11:30am

All sessions are FREE to participants and held at:  
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You can sign up for one, two or all three weekly sessions.

**Dance of the Wild Salmon**

This is a creative dance workshop for all ages and all abilities led by Lori Hamar that explores the hero's journey of the salmon. The final presentation will be in the **Victoria Day Parade**, Saturday May 23, 2005. No experience required.

Mondays (April 25, May 2, 9, 16) James Bay Com Centre  
Tuesdays (April 26, May 3, 10, 17) Quadra Arts Centre  
Wednesdays (April 27, May 4, 11, 18) James Bay Com Centre

**NOTE:** all above sessions will be held 6:30 – 7:30pm  
Saturdays, May 14 & 21 @ 11 am – 2 pm will be the final rehearsals, with live drumming

**Saturday, May 23 = Performance**

**...register online at [www.VictoriaDanceSeries.com](http://www.VictoriaDanceSeries.com) for both workshops.**

*These workshops are part of a larger project we are embarking on, led by Paula Jardine\*, that will take place over the next 24 months. \*Paula was profiled in the last Footnotes.*



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Due to a last-minute cancellation, two seats for the Big Apple Dance Tour have opened up!

Stephen White is hosting a five-day excursion to New York complete with tickets to see the New York City Ballet and the opening night gala of American Theatre Ballet.

Tour dates are **May 19th to the 24th**

Among other things, the trip includes a tour of Harlem, daily breakfasts and three lunches as well as two city walking tours.

For complete details contact Bill at Blaney's Travel: 477-3550 or [bill@blaneystravel.com](mailto:bill@blaneystravel.com).

Need more details? go to [www.blaneystravel.com](http://www.blaneystravel.com)

## Reading the Audience

It's been a couple years since we have surveyed the audience to understand what it is that you like about the Victoria Dance Series and what you think could use some improvement. This year we will be introducing a new on-line survey that will be accessible from our website at [www.VictoriaDanceSeries.com](http://www.VictoriaDanceSeries.com). One lucky survey respondent will win two tickets to Pacific Opera's beautiful, opulent production of the Tchaikovsky opera Eugene Onegin in the fall of 2006.

We want to make sure you've seen all of the productions before we launch the questionnaire so you'll have to wait until Friday May 6 before the survey goes up on our website. Your answers will help us understand who you are and what your preferences are.

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