

FOOTNOTES

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OCT 2008

#25

Alonzo King's **LINES** Ballet With Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra

ROYAL THEATRE

October 1 + 2 • 8:00 pm

Running time (incl. intermission): 100 minutes.
Curbside by 9:45 pm

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Learning LINES

A conversation between Alonzo King and Stephen White

LINES Ballet, based in San Francisco, is now in its 26th year. The company performs fall and spring at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in downtown SF—often to sold-out houses. Artistic Director Alonzo King has an interest in collaboration, so in recent years he has worked with kung fu artists, a baroque chamber orchestra (*Irregular Pearl*), a master of the Indian tabla (drum) and soon, jazz legend Pharoah Sanders. Each collaboration stretches contemporary ballet in new directions.

In addition to its company of eight dancers, LINES operates the San Francisco Dance Center, a busy hub of recreational and professional level dance instruction, and in recent years has established a Bachelor of Fine Arts program in association with the Dominican University of California. Recently, I had a chance to ask Alonzo King about his practice.

Stephen White: In the articles I've read about your practice as a teacher and a choreographer, it's clear that you have a commitment to making it possible for the dancer to bring his/her own interpretation and expression to the movement.

Alonzo King: Part of our quest here is to solve the enigma of our own lives. Time is wasted in copying the lives of others. People who have begun the inquiry into who, and what they are, bring an unseen originality to their work, because they are dancing themselves. Character is one of the byproducts of honest introspection. On stage what we are observing is character, i.e., who is brave, compassionate, brilliant, humble, sincere and generous, or who is afraid, vain, hiding, etc. The mind is dancing the body, and a person's consciousness is visible when they are dancing. Interpretation and expression without understanding is dangerous. The dancers are more concerned with illuminating an idea rather than expressing their personal feelings. Because of the depth of their movement investigations, and the clarity of their understanding, they live in the moment and the work is theirs. They own it and it sometimes appears as though it wasn't choreographed.

Everything is a collaboration. Even the mental decision to move your own body needs all parts to cooperate. A choreographer wants to collaborate with a genius. It's great to work with someone who has developed a powerful internal vision, and also has the ability to drop it and follow with simple childlike trust. The painter says that you must become the horse before you paint the horse. It's the same in all art making. The essence of things must be known, what they are and how they operate, before they can be realized. Expression alone can be an indulgence. Artists are more prone to an obsession with accuracy.

SW: This seems in some ways to be in contrast to the control that the ballet form imposes on a dancer.

AK: In a sense all form is an imposition. Everything that exists

I asked LINES to come to Victoria because I was very impressed by the eight dancers in the company—their skill, their musicality, and the precision with which they execute the choreography. But there is another element in the work. It's tied to the deep investigation that Mr. King speaks about in the interview above. The dancer's commitment to the work, and the freedom they have been given to self-express, in my mind takes the dance to another level entirely. Often ballet can be all about the form—we can marvel at a dancer's line or extension, but when those skills are combined with a deep and personal dedication to the art form, it transcends.

John Michael Schmitt for Irregular Pearl. Photo: Mary Solt

DANCE VICTORIA

Presenting Excellence in Dance

Dance Victoria is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to dance presentation and education. Our Mission: To enhance the appreciation of dance in the Capital Region by presenting and developing excellent professional dance and engaging the community.

- Producer** Stephen White
- Development Manager** Tony Cheong
- Administrator** Bill Hamar

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

- President** Colleen Gibson
- Treasurer** John Shields
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Carlos MacDonald
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If you would like to be involved in Dance Victoria, call: 250-595-1829 or email: producer@dancevictoria.com. Address: 2236 Hampshire Tce., Victoria, BC V8S 3G9

Footnotes is written by Stephen White (unless otherwise noted) and proofed by Anne Moon.

is trying to escape its present form into more expansion. Good classical training doesn't impose control on a dancer, it enables control. It must be seen as a science of movement, and not a style. The absolute point of training, discipline and law, is to allow freedom. True control is internal and aligned with self mastery. What is being developed and strengthened is the mind, which controls the body.

SW: What is it about the ballet form that appeals to you?

AK: I am attracted to classical form because of its basis in nature and in its universal statement. The forms that we work with in what we call ballet have always existed. The Universe and the laws that govern it are replicated in classical form. Straight line and circle, magnetism, gravitational pull, balance, circumference, radius and nucleus are some of the sources of the form.

SW: Are you interested in the tension between emotional content and form?

AK: Yes, balance is the key word. It is a beautiful metaphor for how we live our lives, and a powerful way to show contrast. There is a constant struggle to balance logic and feeling. Too much logic and we have dry, calculated predictability; too much feeling, and there is chaotic, illegible indulgence. It's the balancing of the Adam and Eve inherent in each of us.

SW: Given the active role the dancer plays in the development of a choreography, do you see your role more as the steward or shaper of the work?

AK: Choreographer and dancer is like lyricist and singer. A lyricist needs a great singer, and a singer needs a great song. And in the making and doing that occupies the lives of us humans art is the knowledge of the best kinds of making and doing. Additionally creation is about discovery. Everything that will be invented or discovered or built already exists. We don't make anything, we discover.

SW: How do you start a work?

AK: You have to be turned on by some idea and you begin excavating. You dig. You watch and listen, and the work begins to reveal itself.

SW: How do you remain so prolific?

AK: There is this nudging knowing that it can all be so much more and better. So you keep on working.

SW: What feeds you creatively?

AK: Observing anything well done. Yoga. Nature. Introspection. The desire to give. Heroic lives. And the idea that love exists. **FN**

WELCOME

A very sincere welcome to Dance Victoria's 12th season of presenting excellence in dance. For those for you who have been with us for several years, thank you for your continued support—you're the reason we have been able to continue growing. And for those who are new subscribers, we are very happy to have you with us. The appetite for dance in this community continues to grow. It's very exciting to be involved in this organization.

Because some of you are new to Dance Victoria, let's take care of a little housekeeping:

1. Is your name or address incorrect? Please let us know ASAP at 250-595-1829 or administrator@dancevictoria.com and we will correct it.
2. As a subscriber you can buy additional tickets any time of the year at the subscriber discount (15-25% off regular prices) to any Dance Victoria presentation. Sometimes you'll have an unexpected house guest or you mention the ballet to a friend who is so intrigued that she wants to join you. To purchase discount tickets, call or visit the McPherson Box Office and tell them you want to buy tickets at the "Friend of Subscriber" rate. [The one exception to this policy in 2008/09 is Tara Cheyenne Performance where, because of the limited number of seats available and our high overheads, all tickets are priced at \$26.]
3. Lost your tickets? Call us and we'll print new ones for you. Please give us as much notice as possible.
4. Need to exchange your tickets for another night? Please call us as soon as you know about the change and we'll do our very best to find equivalent seats on the date you prefer. The more time you give us, the better the chances of securing an equivalent seat. Sometimes there is a small fee attached to the exchange.
5. Additional Newsletters: Did you buy the tickets for your group and now you'd like the others in your party to receive the newsletter too? Easy—send their name, address and postal code to administrator@dancevictoria.com and we'll add them to our list.

Anything else? Please call our office. We're happy to assist. **FN**

Pre-Show Chats

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There will be a pre-show chat at 7:20 pm on both performance evenings at LINES Ballet. Meet us in the west lobby of the Royal. These chats are developed to provide you with more insight into the work or the company you are about to see. At this point we have not determined which company member will speak, but we format these talks so there is ample time for your questions.

Because of the limitations of the venue at the Metro Studio and because there is only one company member and she's performing, there will be no Pre-Show Chat at any of the Tara Cheyenne performances.

Her Own Path

A conversation between Tara Cheyenne Friedenberg and Stephen White

When you meet Tara she's very personable: quick to smile and share a joke. She has a fine sense of irony, which is no surprise when you've seen her work. Usually her husband Marc Stewart is standing beside her. Together they are quite a team. Marc composes Tara's music and the Vancouver-based duo travel from show to show, packing their kit in a suitcase and hitting the road. The portability of Tara's repertoire has been one of its strengths. There are no big trucks hauling dance floors and sets and lights across the country, just a suitcase, some costumes and a lighting schematic by the team's brilliant lighting designer, James Proudfoot, which can be unfolded and presented to the technical director at the next venue.

Stephen White: I have seen most of your recent work and there is always an element of comedy. And yet you play with some big issues. Is the inclusion of comedy an intention from the beginning or is it something that happens organically in the process?

Tara Cheyenne Friedenberg: Well, one of my favourite quotations is "life is far too important to be taken seriously." I'm a big fan of comedy and I think it is one of the best ways to bring an audience in, especially when there might be challenging material. I think we laugh and make jokes in order to make sense of the really difficult things in life. "Tragedy plus time equals comedy" is another favourite quote. So it's pretty organic in the creation process. Sophie Yendole, my director and dramaturge, has a wicked sense of humour and we like to go as far as possible with the comedy and the characters. We look at things that have been painful in life and use comedy to get perspective and shine some light on the issues we're dealing with.

SW: Since 2000, you have been primarily focused on your own solo work. Do you ever dream of a bigger piece with more dancers?

TCF: I do think about pieces I'd like to do with a big mob of dancers, but that is almost another form in a way. I'm still very interested in what comes out of me in terms of solo material in the studio and pushing myself further as a performer. I'm lucky that I get the chance to work with groups when I choreograph for theatre which is great because it gives me another format and different challenges. I can definitely see myself creating with groups of performers in the future alongside my solo work, maybe a great big heavy metal dance explosion?

SW: You've built a strong team around you—a director, composer and lighting designer—who work with you on every piece. I'm sure there is great comfort in working with a group that has developed a shorthand and understands each other. Is there any danger the group will get stale? How do you counteract that?

TCF: We've been working together for a number of years and I think the work and our ability to collaborate is getting stronger. We always bring other folks into the studio to get different perspectives since we get very close to the work and that can sometimes cloud one's vision. We bring in other choreographers, theatre professionals, various people in our community and people who are outside of the performing arts. I like to get people looking at the work as it develops so I can get a sense of what people are seeing and be sensitive to that. I think everyone on the team is really keen to push each other and the work further, which is wonderful. We know each other well enough that no one can get away with phoning anything in.



SW: What’s the best part, the creation or the touring—and why?

TCF: That’s a tough one. I love the creative process even when it’s painful because I never know what is going to happen in the studio. It’s always a surprise even when I have a clear plan for a piece. Sophie and I have a screamingly good time in the studio.

On the other hand I absolutely love performance since I feel that the audience is the second character in my work. Every show is different because every audience, every individual out there, brings their own experience and energy, and that is a thrill. I enjoy the feeling of the characters living fully onstage and communicating with the audience.

SW: Your work defies easy definition. In our promotional material we describe you as “Half actor, half stand-up comic, 100% dancer.” Does the fact that your work is as much theatre as it is dance create barriers for you or does it open doors?

TCF: I think ultimately it opens doors. People I talk to who have never seen dance tell me that after seeing my work they are more likely to go see contemporary dance. However as a culture I think we really like to put things into categories. We want to know what we are going to see. We want to see the trailer before the movie, so to speak. It’s hard to explain to people that my work is in fact dance. This is because I talk during parts of the performance, I play characters and sometimes there is a story line along with comic elements. It’s a relatively recent movement that all the art forms have been separated. A hundred years ago it wasn’t that unusual to do be an actor/dancer/comedian *a la* vaudeville. I’m a glass half full person so I say it opens the doors that need to be opened.



Tara Cheyenne-Friedenberg in *Nick & Juanita*. Photo: Chris Morris

Tara Cheyenne Performance

Nick & Juanita: Livin’ in my Dreams

PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH SUDDENLY DANCE THEATRE’S 11TH ANNUAL ROMP! FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENT DANCE

Metro Studio (Quadra at Johnson Streets)

October 23 7 pm

October 24 + 25 9 pm

October 26 2 pm

RUNNING TIME: 75 MINUTES (INCL. 15 MINUTE INTERMISSION)

CURBSIDE: 1 HOUR 15 MINUTES AFTER SHOW TIME

SW: Talk about how the dance elements work in *Nick & Juanita*. What makes you suddenly need to dance a section in the work?

TCF: It’s like hand gestures gone way too far. Sometimes the emotions are too big for text and for the body of the character, they have to move. It’s like the notion that we communicate so much through our gestures, stance, facial expressions etc. I’ve always been a mover and there are so many feelings and experiences in our lives that we really don’t have the words for. I also like to explore all our contradictions. For example Nick might say things that sound pretty confident but his dance tells another story. Juanita might say she’s fine but her movement reveals her anxiety. It’s interesting and I think we all do this kind of thing. I just put it up there and make the anxiety or whatever into a big show biz ‘number’. **FN**

Producers Notebook

I’ve seen all of Tara’s work since 2000 and for me she continues to grow with each piece. In her earliest work the transitions between the dance sections and the spoken word sections could be jarring. As an audience member you weren’t at all sure why this part needed to be danced and that part spoken. But in *Nick & Juanita* the movement and the

theatre are integrated. They inform each other. As Tara says, most often the dance offers a glimpse inside the heart of the character and sometimes it’s in stark contrast to what has just been said, pointing up their vulnerability or their own sad misconception of who they are. I like *Nick & Juanita* because of the comedy. It’s seldom we get to laugh so heartily in a dance performance.

DANCE SEEN



Photo: Hélène Cyr

Looking back on the past six months (the time since I last wrote this column) I have actually seen quite a bit of dance. I spent ten days at the Canada Dance Festival in Ottawa in June and nipped over to Vancouver for the first few days of the 20th Anniversary of the Dancing on the Edge Festival.

It's been a challenging summer in some ways. I was not overly impressed by the dance I saw. It's not been too difficult to separate the

wheat from the chaff. In Canada, dance artists don't get enough time to think. It's hard to think these days—there's so much distraction, so much email, cell phone and text messaging—what's happened to good old fashioned contemplation? I miss it myself.

If dance artists had the luxury of contemplation time, I think their works would have a stronger central idea. The parts of the choreography would contribute to a whole. I think also, most works would be shorter and most importantly, from the first day in the studio, they would be created for the context within which they will be presented. By that I mean—don't create a piece that requires great costumes when you only have enough money for a quick run to Value Village. Don't develop a piece that demands fantastic lighting and then tour festivals, where you have less than an hour to set up and there are only 10 lighting instruments in the air. You ain't gonna get great lighting, the costumes will look hideous and the presentation will suffer. I recently saw a piece that included the projection of film elements on the back of the stage wall with the dancers moving downstage. The venue they were dancing in didn't have a screen. So, the film was projected on a black curtain instead. You couldn't make out a thing—it looked like mud rippling across a soggy blanket. What was the artist thinking? Why would they compromise their own vision like this?

Deep breath. Count to ten.

One piece I saw this summer really stands out for me. Ok, two. Number one was Wen Wei Wang's solo at the Canada Dance Festival called *One Man's*. Wen Wei was in Victoria in 2006 with that beautiful piece at the McPherson Playhouse called *Unbound* that had all the little red Chinese shoes onstage. Well, this piece is a deeply personal work. And Wen Wei was transcendent in his performance. It was like watching an elite athlete—his body was so ready, so physically tuned. He had incredible core strength, and he was able to maintain a line or a position for a seemingly endless length of time. He stopped on a dime—it was that precise. But, aside from his physical ability, the piece was emotionally powerful. An intimate, open telling of the story of his life—not in a literal, narrative sense, but through impressions created with strong, at times muscular, and at other times lyrical, movement. I get goose bumps remembering it. It's remarkable when someone opens themselves like that—it takes real courage.

And number two. It wasn't the whole piece that impressed me, just a duet that Crystal Pite created. Eighteen minutes long—two amazing dancers. Beautifully staged and very evocative. It was a really sophisticated work that can live on the international stage.

Crystal's recent contracts with Nederlands Dance Theatre, the National Ballet of Canada and Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet (NY), have broadened her range as an artist.

OK, and there was a third one, also at the Canada Dance Festival. It was an evening danced by Louise Lecavalier. Louise was for many years the muse of Edouard Lock, Artistic Director of Montreal's La La La Human Steps. Tall, lanky and now aged 49, she struck out on a solo career a few years ago and in Ottawa, she presented a work in three sections, each choreographed by a different Canadian artist. The pieces themselves had their strengths and weaknesses (mostly strengths) but the performance was all Louise, the interpretive artist. Each piece was so starkly different from the other and in each one you could easily have been fooled, it was a different dancer dancing. Amazing...

You know, I'm so glad I wrote this editorial. I started out so pessimistic about the state of dance in Canada but then I was reminded that while there is a lot of chaff, there is also some really fine wheat. In thinking about this further, I've decided that my responsibility as Producer of Dance Victoria is to be your chaff filter. Or, I guess you could say, diamond miner. I sit through some interminable, mind-numbing performances so you don't have to. You see the best. That makes me a nice guy, don't you think? **FN**

Dance Victoria is very pleased to welcome a number of returning sponsors to our 2008/09 season as well as a couple of brand new companies:

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DANCE FUTURES

This season Dance Victoria is embarking on an ambitious program of professional development for Victoria's dance community. We're bringing Vancouver choreographers to Victoria to work with local dancers, we're offering workshops and Master Classes to young dancers and we're also hosting a creation residency for Crystal Pite. Last season, Dance Victoria and the National Arts Centre (Ottawa) partnered to commission a new large scale work from Crystal for the 2010 Winter Olympics. She and her company of dancers will be in Victoria for two weeks in January to continue developing the piece. While she is in town, she'll open her morning class to local dancers so they can train with Crystal.

Dance Futures is our investment in our local community. To learn more about it, go to DanceVictoria.com

YOUTH PASS

Il Terrazzo
RISTORANTE

At DanceVictoria.com we're now accepting registrations for our very popular FREE Youth Pass. Open to youth registered in Grades 8 through 12, our Youth Pass entitles members to buy up to two rush seats to most performances for only \$10 each. You'll learn more about the program online. Once you've registered, we send your Youth Pass in the mail and then it's ready, set, go to some great performances for a fraction of the regular price.

Who We Are



Photos: Helene Cyr

Many of you are new to Dance Victoria and, while you have a fleeting sense of who we are, we thought we'd take this opportunity to introduce ourselves.

Dance Victoria is a non-profit Society with a volunteer Board of Directors composed of eight members and three staff.

Now in its 12th season, Dance Victoria (originally Victoria Dance Series) has grown to become a \$1.2-million operation. 2008/09 will be **Stephen White's** 9th year as Producer. Stephen has been active in the performing arts in Victoria for 25 years, as a playwright, theatre director, actor, teacher, television producer, journalist, grants officer, consultant and festival producer. In his off hours he's in the kitchen cooking a fabulous meal or rising early to run a 10k, swim or cycle.

Bill Hamar has been Dance Victoria's Administrator for four years now. He moonlights as a Travel Consultant at Blaney's Travel and is the person responsible for putting together our dance tours to cities like New York, San Francisco and, Chicago. In the office, his life is a little less glamorous, looking after the numbers and data entry among many other errands and tasks. He's the oil that keeps the machine running. Bill is an avid volleyball player and a bit of an overall sports nut.

The newest member of our team is **Tony Cheong**, our Development Manager. You can read all about Tony below.

Together with a very committed Board of Directors, we are the folks responsible for making Victoria a Dance City. And we've only just started!

New Developments



After two years with Dance Victoria, Yolanda Meijer, our Director of Development decided to take this past summer off, spend time with her four-year-old son and give herself the freedom to consider what she wanted to do next. Yolanda was a strong asset for our organization. With her assistance we developed a strong sponsor and individual donor campaigns and established an endowment fund. She also brought us *Stars on Stage*, our very own

fundraising event. We're certain she will do well with whatever she decides to put her hand to and we wish her the best.

In August 2008, Tony Cheong joined our team as Development Manager, assuming many of Yolanda's responsibilities as well as others. Some of you will know Tony from our trips to New York and Chicago. He's the nice guy with the smile who helped you with your luggage, or made sure you didn't get left behind as the group sallied forth.

Tony was born and raised in Duncan, BC, and graduated from Cowichan Senior Secondary School in 1983. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Geography from the University of Victoria in 1987 and completed a Master of Science degree at the University of British Columbia in 1992. After working for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Tony went to work for the BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks in 1995 as a habitat geomorphologist and was with the Provincial government until starting with Dance Victoria. Tony completed the Leadership Victoria program in 2004 which piqued his interest in working in the community. Tony enjoys volleyball, traveling and dim sum. He can often be found walking the streets with his two dogs Riley and Willow.

Please take a moment to welcome Tony when you see him at the theatre this fall. **FN**

Dance Tours

Every season Bill Hamar and Stephen White host tours to favourite cities where we see incredible dance and theatre, arrange guided walking tours and get backstage at world-renowned venues. In May 2009 we're taking a tour to Chicago and one to New York. Detailed information about both these tours is included in this envelope. Also in this month's Travel section of *Boulevard* Magazine you can read Robert Moyes' impressions of our tour to Chicago. If you have any questions about our tours contact Bill@BlaneysTravel.com

Nutcracker Kids

Every year we ask you to help us give local under-privileged kids the opportunity to see *Nutcracker*. We match every \$50 you donate so we can buy two tickets to the performance, which are then distributed to the less fortunate through Big Brothers/Big Sisters. After the show we invite the kids on stage where they meet the dancers and get up close to the costumes and sets. For many children, this is their first experience at a live performance. Please consider helping us give these kids a memory that will last a lifetime. **FN**

Please clip and mail in today!

YES! I want the kids from Big Brothers/Big Sisters to see *Nutcracker*. Enclosed is my donation of

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Fall 2008 Season

Tara Cheyenne Performance

October 23 • 7 pm

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Royal Theatre

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