



newsletter

March/April 2009

SINCE OUR LAST newsletter we have had two very interesting and different meetings. In February we welcomed as our guest, **Barry Wordsworth**, Music Director of The Royal Ballet. Barry spoke about all aspects of his career, including how he became a conductor for ballet. He talked about the role of music director and gave us an insight in the work involved musically on mounting a ballet, from studio rehearsals to performance. He used *Ondine* this season as an example, before talking about the work involved in mounting the new production of *Isadora*. Barry wrote the next day to say how much he had enjoyed the evening and the 'lively interest of your members.' He sends everyone his best wishes and 'thanks for their interest in things musical!' Members will agree that he provided us with a fascinating evening.

At our March meeting we welcomed **Loipa Araujo** as our guest. Following an illustrious career as a principal with the Ballet Nacional de Cuba, Loipa now teaches both in Spain and Havana, and as a guest teacher with The Royal Ballet and many other companies, including the Royal Danish Ballet. Loipa provide us with a fascinating history of ballet in Cuba, including its role in the Revolution. She spoke of her career as a dancer in Cuba, Russia and with Roland Petit's company as well as giving us an insight into training in Cuba, including memories of the young José Manuel Carreno and other Cuban stars. Those who missed this meeting, missed a very special evening. We apologise that we forgot to announce that Fernando Montaña was unable to come with Loipa as he had a stage call that evening for *Isadora*.

For members unable to attend meetings, a summary is made available on our website once the report has been checked by the guest speaker. If you do not have access to the internet and would like a copy of a report, please send a large stamped, addressed envelope to Joan Seaman, our membership secretary, at 56 Turney Road, London SE21 8LU. We have recently posted a large number of reports of meetings from the last few seasons, including the interviews of **Barry Wordsworth**, **David Drew**, **Melissa Hamilton** and **Sergei Polunin** from this season.

Our website now contains a section where we hope to include various galleries of photographs. The

first gallery is of rehearsal photos taken by Jennie Walton over the last few years. The second is of photographs taken by Frederika Davis, who has been taking photographs of The Royal Ballet since the 1960s. It includes many of Margot Fonteyn with different partners. There are some wonderful photographs in both galleries, so it is well worth visiting the website just to see them. The site also contains reports of most of our meetings in recent years.

Future meetings

Please note that the date of our April meeting has been changed so as not to clash with BRB at the Coliseum. The meeting will now be on Friday 24 April at 7.30 p.m. At this meeting we welcome Artistic Administrator and Character Artist **Philip Mosley** as our guest. Philip needs no introduction. He joined the Company in 1986, became Artistic Co-ordinator in 2001 and Artistic Administrator in 2007. We can expect an interesting meeting on both aspects of his role, whether it be scheduling rehearsals or dancing *Widow Simone* or *Dr Coppelius*. We can expect a very enjoyable evening.

The following meeting will be on Friday 8 May at 7.30 p.m., when we welcome Principal Guest Artist **Miyako Yoshida** and Administrative Director **Kevin O'Hare** as our guests. We are delighted that Miyako and Kevin are once again able to renew a partnership that dates from Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet. When they last spoke to us Kevin had just started as Company Manager and soon after Miyako became Principal Guest Artist. We look forward to catching up on their many activities over the last few years. We will also be giving Miyako a present from the Association to mark her career with the Royal Ballet Companies. This is rather late, as it is our custom to give the present when a dancer ceases to be a full time member of the Company, but has been our first opportunity to arrange a date with Miyako.

Meetings, unless otherwise stated, begin at 7.30 p.m. Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church is at the eastern end of Shaftesbury Avenue, opposite the Shaftesbury Theatre. From Covent Garden you walk up Endell Street and cross over Shaftesbury Avenue. The church is then on your left. (Nearest tube

Tottenham Court Road). There is a map on the website. Doors open at 6.30 p.m.

Dates for the rest of the season

The dates of the last two meetings of this season will be confirmed in the next newsletter. Those originally announced, Wednesday 17 June, Wednesday 15 July, may change depending on commitments of speakers.

Congratulations, etc.

Members will probably have heard that First Soloist **Isabel McMeekan** retired from The Royal Ballet after her last performance in *Isadora*. If you didn't know, but were at the performance, you might have guessed from the number of bouquets she received. As a gift from the Association, we presented Isabel with vouchers for performances at the Royal Opera House (her choice). She wrote:

I would just like to say thank you so much for my very generous gift. I am very touched and hugely excited at the prospect of being part of an audience!!! What a novel idea. I have had a wonderful and hugely rewarding time at RB and know I will miss it greatly. Love to you all and thank you for all your support.

Best Wishes, Isabel x

We wish her a wonderful future, whatever she chooses to do.

Annual Dinner 2009

Our Annual Dinner takes place on Tuesday 5th May at the Rubens Hotel in Buckingham Palace Road. Dinner is at 8.00 p.m. A bar is available from 7.00 p.m. The dinner is now full, with a small number on a waiting list. If you have not received a ticket, it probably means you are on the waiting list, but it is worth checking with the Chairman, in case your ticket has got lost in the post. If you are on the waiting list, you will be allocated places as vacancies arise. There are always some cancellations because of illness or work. Some of these occur at the last minute. If you would be interested in coming at short notice to fill a cancellation, please contact David Bain (email address below). If you have a ticket and can't come, please let David

know, even if it is at the last moment, by contacting him on his mobile. If you just don't turn up, it leaves a space at a table.

This year's dinner celebrates our 35th Anniversary. To mark this occasion, we are delighted to announce an impressive guest list, including: Monica Mason, Desmond and Denise Kelly, Jonathan Cope, Christopher Saunders, Sir Peter Wright, Jeanetta Laurence, Kevin O'Hare, Ursula Hageli, Bruce Sansom, Roberta Marquez, Marianela Nunez, Rupert Pennefather, Slava Samodurov, Thiago Soares, Sergei Polunin, Tom Whitehead, Paul Kay, Sian Murphy, Lara Turk, Elizabeth Harrod, Henry St Clair, David Trzensimiech, Leanne Cope, Olivia Cowley. We are awaiting definite confirmation from about ten other guests.

An update will be given at the 24 April meeting or can be obtained from the Chairman (before 15 April). It will be emailed to all those who provided an email address. If you have a preference for whose table you would like to be on, please send it by email to David Bain at the address below by 27 April. We cannot guarantee to be able to meet everyone's requests. We will do our best, but only if you give us a number of alternatives. Each table will seat 10-16, including two or three invited guests. So you should be seated no more than one place away from a guest.

As usual, we will have photographs taken of the guests on each table, during the evening. These will be available for members to purchase at a future meeting and some will be placed on our website. In the past we have been happy to allow members to take their own photos at the end of the meal. Unfortunately, the age of digital cameras has increased the amount taken to an unacceptable level and spoil the evening for some dancers and members. If you bring a camera, please refrain from taking photos until after the speeches and only take photos of those members and dancers who were on your table. In that way, we can ensure that no dancer has to put up with excessive requests to be photographed and that opportunities to talk with dancers are not interrupted. As this is a private dinner, please do not post your photos of dancers on any website.

David Bain (Chairman)

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