



newsletter

April / May 2010

SINCE OUR LAST newsletter we have had three very enjoyable meetings. At our February meeting we welcomed Royal Ballet Principal **Rupert Pennefather** as our guest. This was the first time that Rupert had spoken to the Association and he entertained members with a detailed account of his very varied schooling and his time in the Company. He had so much to say that, despite running over time, we only touched on some aspects of his most recent career. This gives us ample excuse to invite Rupert back again in the not too distant future.

At our first meeting in March our guests were **Jay Jolley**, Assistant Director of The Royal Ballet School and the 2009 recipients of the Annual Ballet Associations Awards, **Imogen Chapman** and **Angela Wood**. Our intention had been to follow a similar pattern to the meeting we had with the previous year's recipients and **Gailene Stock**. However, Jay was needed at an event elsewhere later in the evening, so the meeting was split into two halves.

After Jay had given a brief account of his dancing career, he spoke about recent developments at the Royal Ballet School, including the new building and museum at White Lodge, and aspects of his role including the outreach work with primary and secondary schools. After a whirlwind half hour, he left. Imogen and Angela then spoke about their training in Australia and America, how they came to be at the Royal Ballet School and their experiences since they arrived. They gave a fascinating account of the teaching they had received and adapting to different teachers including, this year, both Gailene herself and a guest teacher from Venezuela. Members look forward to following their future careers.

At our second meeting in March we welcomed Royal Ballet Soloist **Laura McCulloch**. Laura had last talked to us early in her career at a meeting with three young dancers. Laura gave us a very interesting account of her schooling in Glasgow before joining the Royal Ballet Upper School. She then spoke entertainingly about her time at the Upper School and in The Royal Ballet. As well as speaking of her role in *Rubies* and as Lilac Fairy and Myrthe, Laura spoke of working with a variety of choreographers, most recently **Jonathan Watkins**, and of Royal Ballet tours. She pro-

vided a very enjoyable evening for members.

Future meetings

Our April meeting will be on Friday 16th. (Please note that there will be no meeting on 7 April.) We are delighted to welcome Soloist Johannes Stepanek as our guest. Born in Austria, he trained at the Vienna State Opera Ballet School. He was a semi-finalist at Prix de Lausanne before joining the Vienna State Opera Ballet in 1996. He joined The Royal Ballet in 2001 and was promoted to Soloist in 2005. His repertory includes Paris, Benvolio, Hilarion, Demetrius in *The Dream* and Lensky in *Onegin*, amongst many other roles. He created roles in *Three Songs – Two Voices* and *Fall of the House of Usher*. We can look forward to a very interesting meeting.

At our meeting on Thursday 27 May, we are extremely pleased to welcome The Royal Ballet's Company Manager, Andrew Hurst, as our guest. Andrew joined The Royal Ballet in April 2009, so has completed his first year in the post. He trained at The Royal Ballet School graduating in 1993, since when he has had a varied career, including dancing for Nederlands Dance Company and in management roles with Phoenix Dance Theatre and Rambert Dance Company. He has a BA in Business Studies from the OU and has studied for an MA in Cultural Policy and Management at City University. We can expect a very interesting evening hearing about Andrew's career and role with The Royal Ballet, including planning for the Company's tours. Please note that the other dates advertised for meetings in May are cancelled due to their proximity to the Annual Dinner.

Meetings, unless otherwise stated, begin at 7.30 p.m. and are at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church which 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, if you face East. (nearest tube Tottenham Court Road). Doors open at 6.30 p.m. except Wednesdays.

The provisional date for the June meeting is Thursday 24 June, however this may change due to availability of our prospective guest. The first three meetings for next season are provisionally Thursday

26 August, Wednesday 8 September and either Friday 17 or Friday 24 September.

Birmingham visit 16/17 June 2010

Accommodation payment deadline 30 April

Accommodation (Holiday Inn, Birmingham City, Smallbrook Queensway, Birmingham B5 4EW). By **30 April 2010** please ensure you contact **Susan Cox, group supervisor**, on **0121 634 6223** to confirm/pay in full your reservation. Thereafter rooms may not be held and penalty charges for cancellation will be incurred. N.B. this is a change to the requirement in November/December newsletter: members are now individually responsible for confirming their reservation and direct payment to the hotel of their accommodation bill, not the Ballet Association.

BRB's On Their Toes! Thank you to all participants for getting their cheques for tickets to Brian Don in time. We now have all the tickets requested.

Travel: We are currently in discussion with BRB and Elmhurst about details of our programme. As soon as they are confirmed, we will be in contact so that you can book best price train tickets well in advance. Also in advance, we will be issuing a full pack of information including the schedule, show tickets and map.

Thanks

Many members were present for the Royal Ballet's programme of Draft Works in the Clore in February. Every year we support young choreographers by donating £500 towards their work. Kevin O'Hare, Administrative Director of The Royal Ballet wrote: 'I just wanted to say thank you again to the Ballet Association for the cheque for £500 towards the Draft Works. We very much appreciate your continuing support which enables The Royal Ballet's new talent to express and develop themselves through their choreographic works.'

We have also received a letter of thanks from Yohei Sasaki who spoke to us in January. In thanking us for his leaving present he writes: 'The Association has been a great support for me throughout my career and please send my regards to absolutely everyone!'

Ballet Novel

We have been contacted by novelist Clemency Burton-Hill regarding a novel she is writing about dancers. She would like to interview a group of members who were watching ballet in Covent Garden in the late 1950s or the 1970s. The date she is suggesting to meet

is 26 April. She is looking to hear anecdotes of those times. If interested please contact Sylvia Tyler on 020 7837 4005 who will pass on your details.

Annual Dinner 2010

There are still a few places left for our Annual Dinner on **Monday 17th May** at the **Rubens Hotel** in **Buckingham Palace Road**. Dinner is at 8 p.m. A private bar is available from 7 p.m. Price £35. An application form was attached to the January newsletter. Because of this, we can now open the dinner up to members' guests. If you previously forgot to apply or wish to bring a guest please do so as soon as possible. If you are unlucky and don't get a place, don't despair, your name will be placed on a waiting list.

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. We have to confirm final numbers with the hotel by midday on Friday 14th. Any cancellations after that time will only be refunded if we fill the place.

Normally we announce which dancers will be attending in this newsletter so you can indicate a preference for who you wish to sit near. However, as this newsletter is being written early we are still waiting on replies from many of our invited guests. We will announce the guest list at our April meeting and will email the list to those who receive the newsletter that way around the same time. If you don't have email, feel free to ring the Chairman nearer the time to check on the guest list. If you have a preference for whose table you would like to be on, please send it in writing, post or email, to David Bain at the address below by 10 May. 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.

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. 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)