



newsletter

June 2010

WE SEND OUR apologies to some of you who receive this newsletter by e-mail. I have been experiencing some difficulties sending e-mails, which has resulted in some of you receiving the last couple of newsletters more than once and some not at all. You will note that this e-mail has been sent from a new e-mail address, baindavid23@talktalk.net. I am using this address primarily for Ballet Association mail. To ensure this is now working properly, I would be grateful if you could respond to this address saying you have received this newsletter. If I don't hear from you I will be in contact to check whether you received it, whether it went to your spam folder or disappeared into the ether.

At our April meeting, Deputy Chairman Sylvia Tyler interviewed Royal Ballet Soloist **Johannes Stepanek**. A very enjoyable evening was had by all. Johannes spoke about his training and his work within the Company. He also spoke about Company tours, his family and future roles. He was asked a lot of questions about the meaning of Judas Tree. Although Kenneth MacMillan had kept this mostly to himself, Irek Mukhamedov had given some hints whilst rehearsing. He also spoke of the pleasure of working with Mats Ek, although he had not finally danced the role of Don José.

Our meeting in May saw our first with the Royal Ballet's new Company Manager, **Andrew Hurst**. He gave an interesting account of his training and career, both as a dancer and in management. Members spoke afterwards of remembering him dancing with Rambert. For the second half of the meeting he spoke of his current role as Company Manager. His initial responsibilities had been for the programme of New Works in the Linbury and the Company tour. He gave us an enjoyable account of his many faceted role within the Company. We look forward to welcoming him again in a few years to hear how the role has developed.

Future meetings

At our next meeting, on Thursday 24 June, we are very pleased to welcome First Artist **Vanessa Fenton**. Vanessa trained at the Royal Ballet School where she won many awards for choreography. She went on to

dance with BRB, Ballet National de Marseille, ENB and at The Place before joining The Royal Ballet in 1998. As well as dancing and choreographing, Vanessa has a BA in English Literature. Vanessa has regularly delighted members with her choreography in the programmes of new works in the Clore. She has choreographed work for the Royal Ballet School and many other companies. By the time you receive this newsletter she will have had her latest work *One Shade the More* premiered in the New Works in the Linbury.

To give you advance notice, so you don't book your holidays to clash, our guest at our first meeting of next season on Thursday 26 August will be another choreographer from the Linbury season, Soloist **Kristen McNally**. There will be more about this and the September meetings in the August newsletter.

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. unless otherwise stated. Entrance is £4 for members, £3 for concessions, £8 for guests.

The provisional dates for next season are Thursday 26 August, Wednesday 8 September, Friday 24 September, Monday 11 October, Thursday 18 November, Wednesday 8 December, Friday 7 January, Friday 21 January, Wednesday 2 February, Wednesday 16 February, Friday 4 March, Wednesday 30 March, Thursday 14 April, Wednesday 27 April, Wednesday 11 May, Wednesday 18 May, Friday 3 June. Some of these dates may change if they clash with other Royal Ballet events.

Coming, Going, etc

The Royal Ballet School has announced the contracts received by some of their graduates. Amongst these, **Sander Blommaert**, **James Butcher** and **Yasmine Nagdi** are joining The Royal Ballet and **William Bracewell** joins Birmingham Royal Ballet. **Angela Wood** who received one of the 2009 Ballet Association awards joins English National Ballet. We wish them, and all the other graduates, very successful

futures. Also joining The Royal Ballet are **Nehemiah Kish** from Royal Danish Ballet as Principal, **Itziar Mendizabal** from Leipzig Ballet as First Soloist. **Valentino Zucchetti**, a former graduate of the Royal Ballet School joins having worked in Zurich and Oslo.

Members will be saddened to hear that **Gemma Sykes** and **Viacheslav Samodurov** have left the Royal Ballet as a consequence of long term injuries. We know that members will miss both of them and have happy memories of their performances. Gemma got married during the mid-season break. We wish her and, her husband, Patrick a successful future. Slava is developing a career as a choreographer and had a work in the Linbury season and has another being performed by the Mikhailovsky during their London season. We presented him with a small present to mark his time with the Company.

Also leaving the Royal at the end of the London season is first artist **Ernst Meisner**. Ernst is joining Dutch National Ballet as a soloist. Both Gemma and Ernst have been with the Royal Ballet for over ten years. We have presented both of them with cheques and asked them to buy presents that will remind them of the Association and their time in the Company. We will let you know what they bought in a future newsletter.

Twitter

The Ballet Association is now on Twitter, at the following address: <http://twitter.com/BalletAssoc>

Why join Twitter? Registering on Twitter is a very efficient way of having access to the most up-to-date ballet information. Indeed, it allows you to follow the news from all of your favourite ballet websites (Ballet Association, ROH, BRB...) as well as messages posted by dancers themselves (such as Bennet Gartside or James Wilkie) on a single internet page. If you need further information about using Twitter, try exploring the Twitter website (<http://twitter.com>) or feel free to email committee member Nathalie Dantès on ndantes@hotmail.com.

Annual Dinner 2010

On Monday 17th May we had another very successful Annual Dinner at the Rubens Hotel. Numbers were slightly down on the last couple of years, with a few illnesses and injuries on the day, but over a 160 members and guests had a very enjoyable evening. All the feedback we have received has been very positive. We apologise that not all members received updated guest lists prior to the dinner. This was a combination of the Chairman being away, internet problems and late responses from some dancers.

The final list of guests who attended was: Dame Monica Mason, Kevin O'Hare, Jeanetta Laurence, Andrew Hurst, Lesley Collier, Jonathan Cope, Christopher Saunders, Henry Roche, Mara Galeazzi, Laura Morera, Ivan Putrov, Elizabeth McGorian, Brian Maloney, Bennet Gartside, Kristen McNally, James Wilkie, Tara-Brigitte Bhavnani, Pietra Mello-Pittman, Michael Stojko, Ruth Bailey, Celisa Diuana, Tristan Dyer, Hayley Forskitt, James Hay, Leticia Stock and Akane Takada.

We presented **Henry Roche** with a small gift to mark his retirement as Head of Music Staff at the end of this season. On behalf of the members, **Lesley Collier** presented **Joan Seaman** with a gift, vouchers for Opera House tickets, from the Association to mark her retirement as Membership Secretary after nearly 40 years on our committee. Akane and Celisa helped the Chairman present flowers to Joan, Lesley and, our Patron, **Dame Monica Mason**. Celebrating the Association, Monica challenged us to double our membership by 2020!

As usual, we had photographs taken of the guests on each table, during the evening. These will be available for members to purchase at future meetings and some will be placed on our website. Anyone who took additional photos which they would like to share should email them as attachments to the Chairman.

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