

The Royal Ballet 75th Anniversary



Personal memories from the Ballet Association



Peter Howard

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY PERFORMANCE OF THE SLEEPING BEAUTY, 1996



theballetassociation

patron	Monica Mason, Director, The Royal Ballet
presidents	Jonathan Cope, The Royal Ballet Christopher Saunders, The Royal Ballet Desmond Kelly, Birmingham Royal Ballet Jay Jolley, The Royal Ballet School
founder patron	Sir Anthony Dowell, The Royal Ballet
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The Royal Ballet 75th Anniversary

As Chairman of the Ballet Association, I have pleasure in welcoming you to our modest contribution to the Royal Ballet's 75th Anniversary. I hope you find our mix of reminiscences and photographs enjoyable. We now have about 450 members and the contents of this collection reflect some of the memories of a few of them, from the earliest days of the Company to the present day.

Not only are we celebrating the 75 years of the Company, its wonderful dancers, choreographers, etc. but also the regular members of the audience, who help make The Royal Ballet very special. We thank all who contributed to these pages and especially Sylvia Tyler, one of the founders of the Association who has edited them.

All in the Ballet Association are enormously grateful to everyone in the Royal Ballet for the enormous pleasure they give us. The special relationship that we have with the Company is treasured by us all. The time given to speak at our meetings and to attend our dinners is very special to us. We wish all connected to the Royal Ballet a wonderful 75th Anniversary. We cherish all in the Company, but give especial thanks to our Patron Monica Mason, Founder Patron Sir Anthony Dowell, Founder President David Drew and our other Presidents, Jonathan Cope, Jay Jolley, Desmond Kelly and Christopher Saunders for the support they give us.

David M Bain

Chairman

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MEMOIR

I have been a lifelong follower of both ballet and opera, visiting the Royal Opera House aged four for ballet when I saw Pavlova. I was eight years old for my first opera. I was quite a veteran by the age of fifteen when I first remember seeing Ninette de Valois dance. Oddly enough it was through an opera production. My parents and I were friends of the singer Mary Jarrod for whom Lilian Baylis mounted Gluck's *Orfeo* at both the Old Vic on the 18 January 1934 and Sadler's Wells 1933-1934. At the performance I attended on 10th February 1934 Ninette de Valois danced the death of Euridice in front of the curtain at the beginning of the opera. Some of her dancers performed in the opera, the beautiful *Dance of the Blessed Spirits*. I seem to remember that Beatrice Appleyard and Ursula Moreton were two of the dancers.

I also remember seeing Beatrice Appleyard and Ursula Moreton as part of the original cast of *The Haunted Ballroom* although I have forgotten the date. Other performances I saw were the Vic Wells Ballet in a matinée at the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre which included *The Lord of Burleigh* with – I think – the lovely Pearl Argyle.

Earlier performances in June 1932 at the Savoy Theatre were billed as The Camago Society in conjunction with the Vic Wells Ballet and the Ballet Club. I do have a list of the ballets and dancers but not the dates.

Earlier still I remember the matinée at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith by the Camago Society staged by Marie Rambert. Harold Turner danced *Le Spectre de la rose* with Tamara Karsavina. Marie Rambert had coaxed her out of retirement to show off her protégé Harold Turner.

I remember performances of *The Rake's Progress*, *The Prospect Before Us*, *Facade* and *Rio Grande*, but not the dates or dancers.

Towards the end of World War II when I was in the WAAF and stationed close enough to London to be able to visit theatres I took advantage of free seats to service personnel to see the Sadler's Wells Ballet at the New Theatre. I saw *Coppélia*, *Le Festin de l'araignée* amongst others. In those days of paper shortage we had tiny programmes that nevertheless seemed perfectly adequate with information of casts and storyline.

Shortly after the war I took my two young daughters to see Moira Shearer in *Cinderella*. Amongst my favourite ballets is *Symphonic Variations* which I saw with the original cast.

I still manage to attend some performances of both ballet and opera at my beloved spiritual home, the Royal Opera House.

Charmian Morgan, aged 87



MICHAEL SOMES

Photos: Valerie Termini, 1950



MOIRA SHEARER



NINETTE DE VALOIS

MEMOIR

Wednesday, January 24th 1940. An ordinary day, turned memorable when I felt like Alice, and found a wonderful new world at Sadler's Wells. Young and new to theatre going, I discovered the then Sadler's Wells Ballet and those dancers whose names were to become so familiar. One most especially to become my idol, Margot Fonteyn.

The ballet of my introduction was *The Sleeping Princess*, slightly the poor relation to the beautiful, polished Oliver Messel *Sleeping Beauty* which opened Covent Garden in 1946, but to me then a transformation to a world of undreamed fantasy, the magic of which lingered on long after. I spent my days seeing rosy visions. The Prologue fairies included some of our most well loved dancers, Pamela May, Mary Honor, Julia Farron (I loved the Breadcrumbs Fairy) and June Brae as the Lilac Fairy.

Act I presented the faithful Leslie Edwards as King Florestan, Joy Newton his Queen. The four princes were no less than Harold Turner, Frederick Ashton. William Chappell and Robert Helpmann. But the crowning moment was that breathtaking entrance of Margot Fonteyn, my very first sighting of her, when the music becomes expectant, the atmosphere rises to a crescendo, a pinnacle of excitement, like a bird on the wing. I was captivated for ever.

Act III had some treasures too. The Bluebirds were Pamela May and Michael Somes, the loveliest of pas de deux. Frederick Ashton was Puss in Boots to Mavis Jackson's White Cat, Claude Newman the Wolf to Margaret Dale's Red Riding Hood. The programme was full of now famous names. Margot Fonteyn gave me another very special experience, twenty-two years later, when that charismatic partnership began with Rudolf Nureyev, and they danced a *Giselle* of a quality and poignancy that gave a whole new dimension to the ballet, like seeing it with new eyes.

Marjorie Taylor

SADLER'S WELLS

(Reopened by Lilian Baylis January 6th, 1931)

Director and Licensee: Tyrone Guthrie

Director of the Ballet: Ninette de Valois

BALLET

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24th, 1940
AT 7.0 P.M.



Programme: Price Threepence

The Sleeping Princess

Music by Tchaikovsky.

Costumes and Scenery designed by Nadia Benois.

Produced by Nicolai Sergueeff after the choreography by Marius Petipa.

Prologue. The Christening.

King Florestan XXIV	LESLIE EDWARDS
The Queen	JOY NEWTON
Cattalabutte (Master of Ceremonies)	CAROL BERTRAM
The Camelia Fairy	OLIVE DEACON
Her Cavalier	JOHN HART
The Rose Fairy	PAMELA MAY
Her Cavalier	RICHARD ELLIS
The Violet Fairy	MARY HONER
Her Cavalier	WILLIAM CHAPPELL
The Fairy of the Song Birds	JILL GREGORY
Her Cavalier	LEO YOUNG
The Bread Crumb Fairy	JULIA FARRON
Her Cavalier	ALAN CARTER
The Lilac Fairy	JUNE BRAE
Her Cavalier	MICHAEL SOMES
Carobosse (The Wicked Fairy)	JOHN GREENWOOD
Her Pages	DOMINI CALLAGHAN, BARBARA STRONG
Her Mice	JOAN BOYD, BETTY BUTLER
The King's Herald	STANLEY HALL
Maids of Honour—	
	GUINEVERE PARRY, MAVIS JACKSON, PATRICIA GARNETT, JEAN BEDELLS, ELIZABETH KENNEDY, JOAN PHILLIPS, PALMA NYE, MARGARET DALE

Act I. The Spell.

King Florestan XXIV	LESLIE EDWARDS
The Queen	JOY NEWTON
The Princess Aurora	MARGOT FONTEYN
The Lilac Fairy	JUNE BRAE
Cattalabutte (Master of Ceremonies)	CAROL BERTRAM
The First Prince	HAROLD TURNER
The Second Prince	FREDERICK ASHTON
The Third Prince	WILLIAM CHAPPELL
The Fourth Prince	ROBERT HELPMANN
Princess Aurora's Friends—	
	JULIA FARRON, PALMA NYE, ELIZABETH KENNEDY, JEAN BEDELLS, JILL GREGORY, PATRICIA GARNETT, MAVIS JACKSON, GUINEVERE PARRY
Carobosse	JOHN GREENWOOD
Village Maidens—	
	ANNE SPICER, ANNABEL FARJEON, JOAN PHILLIPS, JOAN LEAMAN, MOYRA FRASER, MARGARET WILLIAMS, JOAN ROSS, OLIVE DEACON, DOMINI CALLAGHAN, FLORENCE LAMBERT
Village Youths—	
	RICHARD ELLIS, MICHAEL SOMES, ALAN CARTER, PAUL REYMOND, STANLEY HALL, CLAUDE NEWMAN, DERYK MENDEL, LEO YOUNG, JOHN HART, JOHN FIELD

INTERVAL

Act II. The Vision.

Countess	URSULA MORETON
Prince Charming	ROBERT HELPMANN
Gallison (The Prince's Tutor)	CLAUDE NEWMAN
Duchesses	JOY NEWTON, JOAN LEAMAN
Duke	WILLIAM CHAPPELL

Marchionesses ANNE SPICER, JOAN TAYLOR, ANNABEL FARJEON,
MARGARET WILLIAMS
Marquisses RICHARD ELLIS, MICHAEL SOMES, ALAN CARTER,
LESLIE EDWARDS
Village Maidens—
ENID MARTIN, FLORENCE LAMBERT, JUNE CAREY, JOAN KEBBELL,
BARBARA STRONG, MARGARET INNES
Village Youths—
PAUL REYMOND, STANLEY HALL, DERYK MENDEL, JOHN HART,
LEO YONG, JOHN FIELD
A Vision of the Princess Aurora MARGOT FONTEYN
The Lilac Fairy JUNE BRAE
Nymphs—JULIA FARRON, ANNE SPICER, JOAN LEAMAN, JILL GREGORY,
ELIZABETH KENNEDY, MAVIS JACKSON, PALMA NYE, PATRICIA
GARNETT, GUINEVERE PARRY, JOAN PHILLIPS, DOMINI
CALLAGHAN, JOAN ROSS, MOYRA FRASER, JEAN BEDELLS,
MARGARET WILLIAMS, MARGARET DALE

Symphonic Entracte "The Princess Asleep"

Finale. The Awakening.

King Florestan XXIV LESLIE EDWARDS
The Queen JOY NEWTON
Cattalabutte (Master of Ceremonies) CAROL BERTRAM
The Princess Aurora MARGOT FONTEYN
Prince Charming ROBERT HELPMANN
The Lilac Fairy JUNE BRAE

INTERVAL

Act III. The Wedding.

King Florestan XXIV LESLIE EDWARDS
Cattalabutte (Master of Ceremonies) CAROL BERTRAM
The Queen JOY NEWTON
The Princess Aurora MARGOT FONTEYN
Prince Charming ROBERT HELPMANN
Carobosse JOHN GREENWOOD
The Lilac Fairy JUNE BRAE

Polonaise.

Goldy Locks MARGARET WILLIAMS
Her Prince WILLIAM CHAPPELL
Princess Peau d'Ane JOAN LEAMAN
Prince Avenant ALAN CARTER
Beauty MOYRA FRASER
The Beast PAUL REYMOND

Courtiers—

ANNE SPICER, ANNABEL FARJEON, JOAN KEBBELL, PALMA NYE,
OLIVE DEACON, PATRICIA GARNETT
RICHARD ELLIS, MICHAEL SOMES, LEO YONG, DERYK MENDEL,
STANLEY HALL, JOHN FIELD

Divertissements:

The Diamond Fairy (Variation) MARY HONER
The Fairy Gold JILL GREGORY
The Fairy Silver ELIZABETH KENNEDY
The Fairy Sapphire JULIA FARRON
Puss in Boots FREDERICK ASHTON
The White Cat MAVIS JACKSON
The Blue Birds PAMELA MAY and MICHAEL SOMES
Red Riding Hood MARGARET DALE
The Wolf CLAUDE NEWMAN
Cinderella URSULA MORETON
Prince Fortune JOHN HART
Pas de deux MARGOT FONTEYN and ROBERT HELPMANN
Mazurka Finale FULL COMPANY



Valerie Termini

KENNETH MACMILLAN

MEMOIR

2006 is a very special year for me. Not only is it the 75th anniversary of the Royal Ballet but also my 75th birthday is at the end of the season. My first visit to the Opera House was in 1947 and I have been a regular ever since. I have been privileged to have seen so many great Royal Ballet dancers, guest artists, choreographers and productions over the years.

My first evening included Massine's *Mamzelle Angot* with Margot Fonteyn and Alexander Grant as the Barber. I saw Margot Fonteyn in all her roles with her special partners. Frederick Ashton's ballets *Scènes de ballet*, *Cinderella*, *Daphnis and Chloe*, *Sylvia*, *Marguerite and Armand*, she excelled in them all.

Frederick Ashton's *La Fille mal gardée* on the 28th January 1960 was a very happy evening to be in the audience, a ballet which continues to bring joy.

Kenneth MacMillan's great ballets full of drama and emotions still hold audiences spellbound. But there have been so many wonderful highlights over the years, too numerous to mention.

Thank to Dame Ninette de Valois the Royal Ballet at 75 celebrates a wonderful past and I am sure a great future.

Violetta Hanington

MEMOIR

Late in 1945 Ninette de Valois arranged for expensive seats to be kept back for us lucky members of the then Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet for the reopening of the Royal Opera House when *The Sleeping Beauty* would be performed.

She also arranged a 2s 6d (12.5p) place for me in the Gallery with its wooden bench seats in case I wanted to sit amongst my old mates, which of course I did. The intervals on that great night were as much fun for us as the performance. Nadia Nerina and Pauline Wadsworth had to sell their expensive tickets because they had been cast at the last moment as the cradle attendants.

Ninette de Valois' very considerate action, at what must have been one of the most hectic times in her life, showed how fond she had become of what Lilian Baylis called 'my people', which was the way she referred to the Gallery where I had been sitting since 1931.

The Sleeping Beauty ran for six weeks with several casts while in the day time the dancers were rehearsing *Adam Zero* and *Symphonic Variations*. At Sadler's Wells *Assembly Ball* and *Khadra* which meant the cradle attendants had to be at two theatres.

I remember Ninette de Valois as a workaholic although she would relax in the bar while *Rake's Progress* was being performed in what she considered to be too large a theatre.

Leo Kersley



Peter Howard

MERLE PARK AND DESMOND KELLY AFTER THEIR DEBUT IN SWAN LAKE (NOT COPPÉLIA!)

MEMORIES OF THE ROYAL BALLET

I am privileged to have been a ballet ‘regular’ for nearly 64 years, and a devoted follower of The Royal Ballet at Covent Garden since the Company opened there with its magical production of *Sleeping Beauty* in 1946.

Many of my memories are inextricably linked with Elmhurst Ballet School through my long involvement as both pupil and teacher. As a young student I saw my very first ballet in 1942: Fonteyn in *Sylphides*, no less. Since the War a constant stream of Elmhurst dancers went to the RBS and on into the Company, and I have followed their fortunes over the years – from ‘spotting’ the new ones in the back row of the corps to rejoicing at the success of those that made it to the top.

The 1950s: Meriel Evans, Mary Drage, Susan Alexander – at 21 the youngest dancer to take the role of *Giselle* at Covent Garden - and of course Merle Park who, not yet a soloist, danced Fonteyn’s role in *Birthday Offering* and went on to rise through the ranks at thrilling speed. The 1960s: Hilary Cartwright and Diana Vere – who early on unexpectedly took over the role of *Giselle* from an injured Antoinette Sibley; while in the 1970s Jennifer Jackson danced Lise at the RBS matinée before graduating into the Company. More recently we have had Isobel McMeekan.

But for everyone connected with Elmhurst in its early days, one of the most special memories has to be Merle Park’s debut in *Coppélia* at Covent Garden in 1958. The *Dancing Times* described the scene: ‘Those who saw Merle Park dance her first Swanilda must have noticed the shrill cries of “Merle” among the applause when she took her last curtain calls. Helen Fischer, Ballet Mistress at Elmhurst, was there with her senior girls, but the news had spread and the Opera House was full of “Old Elms”.’ (Me included, and I still remember the excitement.)

Happy Birthday, Royal Ballet – and ‘Thanks For The Memory.’

Jennifer Rice, Historian & Archivist for Elmhurst (Student 1938-42/Music Staff 1952-2004)

MEMOIR: VE NIGHT, MAY 8TH, 1945

From 1942 until 1946 I was in the WAAF, stationed at HQ Fighter Command in Stanmore. After the revelation of seeing Margot Fonteyn and Robert Helpmann in *Swan Lake* in 1943, I went to the ballet as often as my 'watch' duties would allow, particularly as my night duties in the operations room did not start until midnight. Plenty of time to get back to Stanmore after a performance.

The Sadler's Wells Ballet was then performing at the New Theatre, now the Albery, in St Martin's Lane. Quite by chance I had booked, of course weeks before, a ticket for a triple bill on May 8th 1945. Sixty years later subsequent events have driven the originally scheduled ballets from my mind.

When I arrived in St Martin's Lane the atmosphere of sheer happiness throughout London was wonderful – lights could now shine out everywhere.

The programme that evening had been changed to *Coppélia*, what a happy idea. It was danced by Margot Fonteyn, Alexis Rassiné and the incomparable Robert Helpmann as Dr Coppélius. I had a good seat in the stalls, very cheap with the services reductions.

Constant Lambert was the conductor that evening. When the curtain went up after the overture we saw Robert Helpmann putting the flags of all the allied nations through the bars of the doll's balcony. The roar that went up must have been heard outside the theatre and of course Robert Helpmann, the complete man of the theatre reacted to it without once stepping outside his character.

The fun continued all evening. After such a long time I cannot remember many details but once during the third act when a firework exploded outside the theatre Margot Fonteyn dashed round the stage firing at the audience like a Hollywood gangster. Very different from the previous summer of 1944 when she and Robert Helpmann carried on dancing the Black Swan pas de deux during the distinctive sound of a V1 bomb and then the ominous silence that came before it crashed. When the bang came, obviously a few streets away, Margot turned to the audience and gave one of her brilliant smiles We all adored her, she shared our dangers.

After the performance of *Coppélia* I returned to Stanmore to share the euphoria of that night with other friends.

I actually found myself acting as the relief pianist, because the regular one had celebrated too much, with the resident Skyrockets dance band until 2 am.

A most unconventional VE night.

Joan Seaman



NADIA NERINA

Photos: Valerie Termini, 1950



ANNE HEATON



ALEXANDER GRANT

MEMOIR

Unlike many of our members, I was not taken to see ballet as a child. Although I was heavily into drama and operettas at college and went to theatre, opera and contemporary dance when I first came to London, it wasn't until the early 1980s that I started to watch ballet, gradually becoming more obsessive. I am often asked what first got me hooked. It was a combination of two things. First, no surprise to those who know me, it was three young ballerinas, Alessandra Ferri, Deborah Bull and, from Festival Ballet, Trinidad Sevellano. First it was Alessandra as Mary Vetsera, Juliet and all her other MacMillan roles. I can remember being distraught in 1984 when she went to ABT. But I had already spotted Deborah Bull and Trinidad soon arrived and was another Juliet in Ashton's version to fall in love with. It was their friendship and that of many at the stage door, where I had started to wait, that probably cemented my passion for ballet. I remember one hectic week in the summer of 1990 which started in Miami Beach to see Deborah Bull's debut as Odette/Odile, after which I rushed back to London to see BRB at the Opera House for one evening before flying to Madrid to see Trinidad in *Giselle* and *Etudes* with Boston Ballet. Trinidad was later to guest with The Royal as Chloe, the last performances she gave on a London stage.

The second contribution to my love of ballet was the works themselves. Quite eclectic in taste, in the early days it was MacMillan's *Mayerling*, *Manon*, *Valley of Shadows*, *Requiem*, *Different Drummer*, *Anastasia*, Kylian's *Return to the Strange Land*, Ashton's *Scènes de ballet*, Cranko's *Onegin* (Festival Ballet) and everything by Balanchine. More recently, outside the Opera House, it has been new work, particularly by European choreographers. I was one of the many who were delighted when Mats Ek's *Carmen* joined the repertoire and will never forget Tamara Rojo as *Carmen*.

It has been a delight, over the last 25 years watching new dancers develop. Sometimes spotting them in the School, as with Sarah Wildor, Gemma Sykes and Marianela Nuñez, to name but three of many, but also when they join the Company from elsewhere. As I have said many times, I believe the Company has been strengthened enormously by taking dancers from a range of backgrounds. I am often asked, 'how can you go night after night?' In the early days, I went to one performance of each production, choosing where I could those with Ferri, then Bull. Now there is a veritable alphabet of dancers I want to see, however small the role – Ansanelli, Bond, Cojocarú, Diuana Yuhui, Zenaida (some in my list are male, just in case you wonder!)

David Bain

MEMOIR

A friend of mine, who is an amputee, was walking up Wimpole Street on her crutches when a woman accosted her. ‘Beautiful carriage, such elegance, such grace, such movement...’ and went on her way.

The next day my friend saw a photograph of the woman in the newspaper – Dame Ninette!

Carol Rentoul



Photos: Peter Howard

NINETTE DE VALOIS



NINETTE DE VALOIS



Peter Howard

DEBORAH BULL



Peter Howard

WAYNE EAGLING

MEMOIR

There was one occasion when it was announced from the Covent Garden stage that the scheduled dancer was unable to dance and her place would be taken by Margot Fonteyn to great applause because she was at the height of her career. I imagine a very rare occurrence.

Peter Mahrer

MEMOIR

I was taken to the Royal Opera House for the first time at the age of four. The performance was *Swan Lake* with Beryl Grey as Odette/Odile. I was entranced. As a child further visits to the ballet were a great treat. I remember every occasion and which dancers I saw. I was Odette, Aurora, Giselle and although I never possessed the physical attributes to be a ballerina, I danced the parts in my bedroom every night.

Now forty years plus on. I am lucky enough to be able to attend Royal Ballet performances on a much more frequent basis. I am thrilled to be a 'Friend' with the privileges that brings. I walk over Waterloo Bridge from my office to the wonderful surroundings of Covent Garden as often as I can justify to myself and my bank balance.

The one thing that I wish to say about the Royal Ballet/Royal Opera House experience is that it always makes me happy. Often it makes me ecstatic, but it always makes me happy. Whatever has happened in the office that day, once I walk through those doors, the magic begins and the pressures or the day fade away. The very ambience of the place has an immediate effect.

Recently I have discovered Ballet Association meetings, Royal Ballet masterclasses and insight days. These events have provided a superb inside view into the Royal Ballet and make me feel I know the dancers more intimately as I look for them on stage. It gives me pleasure to notice the dancers of the corps whom I have seen interviewed and to view the finished performance of a pas de deux that I have seen being rehearsed.

The best partnership for me has to be Jonathan Cope and Sylvie Guillem. I have not been privileged to see some of the other famous partnerships of the past, but for me Sylvie and Jonathan are the ultimate. Jonathan spoke recently about having a 'connection' with ballerinas on stage and never is that more apparent than when viewing his performances with Sylvie Guillem. The spark and excitement radiates from them both and the magic is complete. I took a friend with me to see what turned out to be their last performance of *Marguerite and Armand* together. She was in tears at the end, such was the emotion generated on the stage. For me *Manon* is their best ballet with the pas de deux sending me into spine tingling raptures. But then there are also *Romeo and Juliet*, *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*.

My favourite choreographer is Kenneth MacMillan, although Frederick Ashton follows a close second. It is the overall power of the MacMillan ballets that make them so great to me, along with the superbly dramatic choreography. So again I would like to thank the Royal Ballet particularly for *Manon*, *Mayerling*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Judas Tree*.

I have also been excited by other special performances: Irek Mukhamedov in *Mayerling*, Carlos Acosta and Tamara Rojo in *Swan Lake*, Darcey Bussell in *Manon* and now Marianela Nuñez and Thiago Soares, two really exciting young dancers.

So, this is a personal thank you to the Royal Ballet on their 75th birthday. Please do not underestimate the pleasure and joy that you bring to people's lives.

Jenny Taylor

MEMOIR

By the time I was eleven years old I considered myself a fully fledged balletomane, the Sadler's Wells Ballet being 'my company'. Going to performances depended on when my mother could take me which meant I did a great deal of nagging.

It changed when I was fourteen. I had reasonable pocket money with which to buy my tickets. Girls then had more freedom to travel around London alone because so many left school to go to work at the official leaving age which had just been raised to fifteen, that it was accepted they had to travel alone by public transport.

Getting my tickets for Covent Garden was the problem, which I solved with an audacity that now astounds me. I could not queue for a queue ticket because I had to go to school so could not guarantee getting back to the box office at the allotted time.

As soon as school was over I would go to the Opera House and approach a likely looking person to see if they were going to buy the full twelve tickets they were entitled to. Mostly that late in the day they were not because they were hoping to book for Moira Shearer. I was always successful in finding a lady (I never approached men!) who would agree to get me the tickets I wanted, of course after I handed the money over. I wasn't bothered if they were bad slips as at that time you were allowed to stand at the back of the gallery if you had a bad one.

Things improved when I was sixteen, I acquired a boyfriend who did queue all night. We would buy the performances we knew would be much on demand with his queue ticket which would be for ten o'clock. I would arrive at the queue about six thirty in the morning and get a queue ticket for four o'clock which I could use after school. With that one I bought the performances that were less in demand.

Sylvia Tyler



Photos: Shane & Sylvia Tyler

ROWENA JACKSON AND PHILIP CHATFIELD, PRINCIPALS OF THE ROYAL BALLET (THEN SADLER'S WELLS BALLET) IN THE 1950S, IN THE PRESENT DAY AT THEIR HOME ON THE GOLD COAST OF AUSTRALIA.



Shane Tyler

David Drew, President of the Ballet Association, kindly agreed to meet Olivia backstage after a matinée of *Cinderella*. She was absolutely overcome at meeting him, and having her book (which contained pictures from the ballet) autographed.

MEMOIR

When Floral Hall meant Flowers

David Blair's farewell performance, 25th June 1973

What my boyfriend and I did on that occasion would not be possible today. Then, fruit, vegetables and flowers were the Royal Opera House's co-residents in Covent Garden and Floral Hall described what actually happened there, wholesale flower selling. This proved handy that night.

My boss, knowing of my ballet passion but lacking any interest himself, very kindly suggested I take the two seats in a box which he had been offered – corporate entertainment, then as now. The tickets were for David Blair's last performance, as Colas in *La Fille mal gardée* with Merle Park as Lise, Stanley Holden as Widow Simone and Alexander Grant as Alain. Happily for me, for my boss this occasion and its cast meant nothing.

When we arrived, we found that the box was one of those closest to the stage. This was too good an opportunity to miss. On the spur of the moment, my poor boyfriend received instructions to dash out in the interval to buy a box of flowers from the wholesalers in the Floral Hall. He had never done it before and we had no idea even if it could be done. He found a way, but it took a while.

When he raced back to the Opera House bearing his large cargo he turned down a corridor and panting along it realised he was lost. At that point a man in full evening dress appeared and looking bemusedly at what looked like an escaped porter from the Floral Hall, politely asked, 'Can I help you?' It was Anthony Twiner, the conductor, on his way to the pit. He redirected embarrassed boyfriend and, as the music started, he and flowers arrived in the box to the astonishment of the other guests who, like my boss, hadn't known why the performance that night was of any particular significance. They joined in the flower-throw with great enthusiasm though.

Today, flower throws are rare. And there are no flower wholesalers in the Floral Hall to provision such spontaneous displays of appreciation.

Belinda Taylor



Photos: Peter Howard

DAVID BLAIR

MEMOIR

I can't go back seventy five years but I can do fifty. It all started with Vivien Matthews, whom I met on the floor of the Albert Hall at a Prom. We became friends, and one day she said, 'would you like to come to the ballet? So, to the ballet I went. Fifty years later... Incidentally, the ticket cost 4s 6d (23p).

This was back in the 1950s and it was comparatively simple to get tickets. You got on the mailing list, turned up on the first day of the new booking period and got them. As far as I can remember the box office consisted of Dorothy Cole in a small cubbyhole in Floral Street. Then everything changed drastically. The Box Office doubled in size, the Fonteyn and Nureyev phenomenon was underway and the queue ticket system became a way of life for us all. It sounded complicated, but it worked. It helped that in those days there must have been two or three hundred of us, we all understood the system, and we were all in it together.

The queue ticket system. To put it simply, the tickets were handed out at eight o'clock in the morning, fifteen per quarter hour until everyone in the queue got one. Each ticket had a number and the time on it, so for example if yours was number eight for ten o'clock, you were likely to get served at about ten past ten. It took about two minutes to get your tickets and pay for them, and off you went. Incidentally I should mention that of course tickets were rationed, I think it was twenty each, no more than four per Fonteyn performance. I hear you cry, all this at ten o'clock in the morning? Yes. What you did was shift your lunch hour. Or you took a morning off, or got someone else to go back and get your tickets for you. It could always be done. I well remember someone called Hymie whom I just about knew by sight, coming up to me and saying, 'Can you pick my tickets up for me?', thrusting a fistful of notes at me, and making off. 'But how will I get them to you,' I asked having no idea where he worked or anything about him. 'I'll ring you, what's your number?' he said casually. It turned out to be a cunning ploy to get me to go out with him, but I got out of that one.

But by this time the queue had become something rather more than turning up at eight o'clock. Not only had Fonteyn and Nureyev become the hottest ticket in the world, but the Royal Ballet was arguably in the most wonderful shape it has ever been before or since. Sibley, Dowell, Park, Seymour, Beriosova, MacLeary, Nerina, Blair, the unforgettable Stanley Holden. And coming along Mason, Bergsma, Parkinson, Jenner, Penney. How lucky we were to be there.

Not that luck had much to do with it. By now the simple queue ticket system had escalated into the overnight queue system. It soon became obvious that first thing in the morning on the day was too late! Five-thirty the night before was more like it. The queue list made its debut. The evening before booking the first person to arrive started the numbered list. After putting your name on the list you were free to go to a show as long as you were back by midnight when there was a final roll call. And there you stayed, all night.

Sleeping bags, lilos, blankets littered Floral Street. You were allowed to sleep in a car as long as you stayed in it, put on your honour not to drive away. To the best of my knowledge no-one ever cheated. The system had its little problems and dramas. Mrs O. lived in Lewisham and always turned up first thing in the morning. On one occasion there had been rain and severe flooding in Lewisham with transport disrupted. Seven o'clock came, by eight o'clock still no Mrs O. We were all making panic arrangements to let her have some of our ticket ration when she strolled up. 'How did you get here,'

we asked. 'Well. I took a bus to where the floods were, walked through the water, got another bus, and here I am.' We should not have asked!

The great character of those days was Mr Marshall – Alec, but no one would have dared to use it. He looked and behaved exactly like Mr Khrushchev. 'Will you be quiet please,' was his constant request, scaring everyone around him. There was also Sergeant Martin in his cloak and top hat, always polite, always on the side of the queuers. An unknown woman tried to gate crash when he loomed up behind her. 'I've already explained the system to madam in the front of house queue,' he boomed, and madam melted away. On one occasion when Vivien and I were sleeping in her car there was a bang on the door. 'Queue tickets in ten minutes.' Apparently the management had decided to catch us all on the hop. Needless to say in ten minutes we were all lined up to receive them.

A vintage queue was for the Drury Lane season while repairs were being made to the Opera House. The booking system had been explained to the staff there, but when they began dishing out the queue tickets they were for the days ahead. It was going to take a week for them to sell us our tickets. The Drury Lane staff did not honour the queue tickets and sold to all corners ahead of those who had queued for them. We organised a rota of volunteers to ensure that only holders of queue tickets got served. The season was worth it all.

They were great days, we had fun, friendships were made, gossip and news were exchanged. The performances made everything worth while. I couldn't go back to it now but I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

Pat Cowley



QUEUEING FOR A PROM



ANTOINETTE SIBLEY AFTER A TALK WITH JOAN SEAMAN,
VIVIAN MATTHEWS AND PAT COWLEY



SIR PETER WRIGHT AND DAVID DREW, CHRISTMAS DINNER



MONICA MASON, FIONA CHADWICK, GARRY GRANT – A BREAK IN A PAS DE DEUX DEMONSTRATION

The Members of the Ballet Association,
Flat 7,
19-24, Wynyatt Street,
London, EC1.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

The Private Secretary is
commanded to convey, to you and
those on whose behalf you wrote,
the warm thanks of The Queen for
your kind message of good wishes
on the occasion of her Silver
Jubilee which Her Majesty much
appreciates.

12th July 1977



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

6th June, 1978

To:
The Members of the Ballet Association,
c/o Flat 7,
19/24 Wynyatt Street,
London E.C. 1

I am commanded by The Queen to write and thank you all for your kind message on the occasion of the Twenty Fifth Anniversary of Her Majesty's Coronation.

The Queen thought it was very nice of you all to remember her at this time and I am to tell you how much Her Majesty appreciates your good wishes.

Henriette Abel Smith

Lady-in-Waiting

MEMOIR

One of the treasured days of our lives. The Dame, Ninette de Valois, was to celebrate her eightieth birthday and the Ballet Association wanted to mark the occasion with a special gift.

Once the members knew we were collecting for a present they were very generous with their donations. By the time that the collection closed we knew that we would be able to afford a special gift.

Wanting to get something she really wanted we asked our president David Drew what he thought Madam would like. After a little thought he decided that some crystal wine glasses would be ideal.

I went to Selfridge and after walking through the glass section in the basement about three times trying to make my mind up bought a set of Waterford crystal glasses.

David was very helpful and arranged that we would go and call at Madam's house in Barnes around lunch time on her birthday which was providentially for us a Sunday.

Feeling decidedly nervous Joan and myself rang the door bell of Madam's house. We need not have worried. She was very hospitable. We were invited in to sit in her garden where she served us wine and a generous supply of nibbles.

At twelve o'clock an interview she had recorded was being broadcast on the radio which we all listened to. Madam really endeared herself to us then, this lady whom we had always thought so fierce turned to Arthur her husband anxious to know if she sounded alright, was he really sure. He reassured her and we realised that he had probably been the one person that she had shared her doubts and worries with over all the years.

Joan Seaman and Sylvia Tyler

The Last Time I Met

"Oodfellows Magazine"
Feb. 2005

(C)

Rudolf Nureyev

It was in February 1985 at the Opera Comique (Salle Fevert), Paris. Rudi, as he was always known was then Director of the Paris Opera Ballet. He directed a week's festival at the Opera Comique of the ballets of Anthony Tudor, the London born choreographer, performed by fine dancers of the Paris Opera Ballet

Rudi was billed to appear with Margot Fonteyn with the Royal Ballet Company at the old Opera House, with orchestra ready, the curtain didn't rise at 7.30pm. After some minutes and with a rising crescendo of slow handclaps, a house manager parted the curtains and explained that Mr Rudolf

Nureyev was delayed, and had telephoned from Heathrow Airport to confirm his arrival from Paris, had rented a car and was 'on his way'. Curtain rose at 7.55pm to much applause. With many, many, other balletomanes, I was at the stage door afterwards and the great man signed my earlier photograph of him. After nearly an hour he stepped into Floral Street and called, 'Peoples, I have lost my car, please help me to find it, the number is 'written on his wrist'. And it was duly found, with a crocodile following Rudi to it. He drove off calling, 'Thank

you, thank you,' to a crowd of around 50 fans. This is the only time I remember Rudi failing to turn up on time.

His early death at only 51 years in January 1993 was so very sad. He gave much pleasure with his dancing, a masculine bravura approach, and always displayed great warmth to his devoted public.

SHANE TAYLER
TYLER



My photos.



NB: my photo of Rudi, signature Company.

I took many photographs at the dress rehearsal that afternoon of 18 February 1985. One is of Rudi with Joan Sידdefi, who mounted one of the ballets. Another, shows him on stage with the late Maud Lloyd, former ballerina of the Ballet Rambert Company, now called Rambert Dance: She and her husband, the late Nigel Gosling, gave Rudi a London home after his defection and he was devoted to them. Sadly, she died on 27 November 2004 at 96 years.

At a performance of 'Romeo and Juliet'.

MEMOIR

For various reasons I had the unusual and wonderful opportunity to watch a rehearsal of the *Swan Lake pas de deux* at the Royal Ballet school in Barons Court in about 1961 (possibly 1962). It was at the time when Margot Fonteyn was looking to find a new partner after Michael Somes. She was rehearsing with David Blair. There were only four of us in the studio. Fonteyn, David Blair, the pianist and myself. Her attention to detail, her musicality, the use of her upper body, face and eyes, and of course her line was striking. It was an unique and wonderful experience of an exceptional artist.

In about 1961 or 1962 I was privileged, as a ballet student, to be at a rehearsal at the Royal Opera House when Ninette de Valois was rehearsing the wonderful Lynn Seymour on stage, with the orchestra – I think. There were only a few other people on stage as far as I can remember but all were in rehearsal clothes and Lynn had a tutu skirt on. She was rehearsing a solo with a lot of pirouettes in it. She was experiencing difficulty with the turns on this occasion. De Valois came from the stalls to give advice to Lynn then returned to her seat and conferred with Sir Frederick Ashton. It was very exciting to see all these wonderful people at work in the Royal Ballet at the Opera House.

Diana McGuinness



CRICKET MATCH, 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROYAL BALLET
ROBERT JUDE, DAVID DREW, PETER WRIGHT, GUY NIBLETT



MEMOIR

My love of ballet began, as happens so often, at the age of four when I started taking classes. But, by the age of eight, piano and horses had intervened, and it was not until the early 1970s that a trip to Covent Garden reignited my interest in the ballet and my love of dance was revived. Sadly, though, by that time I was traveling extensively abroad and had little time to attend many performances.

However, I chanced to be back in the country in the summer of 1980, and a friend and I were fortunate enough to secure tickets for the Royal Ballet's tribute to HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother on the occasion of her 80th birthday on 4th August that year.

My seat was N21 in the Amphitheatre and cost £5. The excitement was palpable, not only because of the expectation of a wonderful triple bill (the tried and trusted *Mam'zelle Angot*, *A Month in the Country* and the world premiere of *Rhapsody*) but also, in that earlier age, because of the respect and affection in which the Royal Family, and particularly the Queen Mother, were held, all of which added to the thrill.

For me it proved to be a magical evening. The greeting for the royal party on their arrival was tremendous. Although I had seen before, and loved, *A Month in the Country*, *Mam'zelle Angot* was new to me and proved a delight. But the icing on the cake was *Rhapsody*, which was dedicated by Sir Frederick Ashton to the Queen Mother in honour of her birthday. It was so exciting to see Baryshnikov at the height of his powers dancing with our own Lesley Collier, and what a pairing it was! The applause was thunderous and went on and on.

I went home that evening on Cloud Nine and remember thinking that if I died that night I should die very happy.

Looking back at the programme now, in 2006, it's wonderful to see the names of old favourites in the cast, most of whom we no longer see performing. But there in the cast list of *Rhapsody* is Genesia Rosato who still delights us with her on stage performances, and of course Philip Gammon who played for that first performance of *Rhapsody* and just about every performance since.

Good luck for the next 75 years.

Liz Bouttell

MEMOIR

Watching the Royal Ballet for the past thirty-five years has given me a wealth of memories, most of them good. There have been many truly great performances but the feelings, the insight, left by a great ballet performance defeat words.

So here's a funny moment. I attended a Friends' rehearsal of *Four Schumann Pieces*, revived after a long interval. At one point Anthony Dowell did a leap which ended in a slide to the edge of the stage and I thought, 'only Anthony Dowell could do a step like that.' Then I realised that he had in fact fallen. Beautiful, like all his movements.

Viuu Menning



Peter Howard

ANTHONY DOWELL

MEMOIR

I have been fortunate enough to see the Company dance, during overseas tours on several occasions. There is something special about seeing *your* company dancing on tour; and especially in New York. From a host of memories I recall two.

It was during the height of the IRA Bobbie Sands hunger strikes, and there was a great deal of anti-British feeling amongst the Irish community in New York. The opening night of the season was to be *Beauty* and Prince Charles and Nancy Reagan were to attend the gala performance.

All day we watched on television as the news reports showed the growing demonstration outside the Met. We were not cheered by reports that Irish members of New York's 'finest' were going off duty and joining the demonstration. However as we were staying a couple of blocks directly behind the Met we were comforted by the thought that we could bypass the demonstration by entering the plaza from the rear.

Not to be. The police had not only cordoned off the rear entrance but also those on the side. There was no alternative but to enter by the front and face the demonstrators. Just to make things a little more unpleasant, instead of keeping the demonstrators to one side of the access way, they had instead created an alley between two blocks of the demonstrators and you were literally obliged to run the gauntlet. Clutching one another Lori and I held our heads up, thought of England and set off. On a number of occasions people ducked under the pickets and took our photos. Convinced we were now on some IRA file, we crossed the plaza.

In the foyer instead of security checks there was complete pandemonium and we joked that had we wanted to we could have smuggled in a sub-machine gun with little difficulty. We made our way into the Stalls.

The Prologue began; waves of pride flowing from us to the stage. Suddenly, a woman was running down the centre aisle, throwing leaflets and shouting. The Company danced on. Two security guards who had been placed either side of the stage started to run to the back of the theatre, across the back and down the centre aisle. Not a step missed, not a gesture changed, the Company danced on. The woman turned and directly facing Prince Charles and Nancy Reagan screamed abuse at them. Had she had any sort of gun she would have had all the time in the world to fire. Finally the guards reached her and dragged her screaming from the auditorium.

The variations were in progress and the Company continued as if nothing untoward had occurred. Suddenly from the body of the audience there was a man in the aisle shouting. He was dragged out. Then, a man almost immediately behind us stood up and started shouting. He was literally hauled over the back wall of the theatre and out. We in the audience were now in a state of some anxiety wondering what was going to happen next, while the Company danced serenely on to the end of the Prologue. Without meaning any disrespect to Jennifer Penney, the Aurora that night, I do not really recall much else about the performance.

My next memory is much happier, the first performance of *Rhapsody* in New York. Whilst it has now taken its place in the Ashton canon, at its premiere in London the critics largely regarded it as a *pièce d'occasion* which would disappear once Baryshnikov had gone. Of course, history has shown that it

has been Lesley Collier who has been the harder star to replace.

Sitting in the theatre, willing the piece to succeed, the first audience reaction was immediately as the curtain opened to reveal Anthony Dowell in his self-designed gold costume. The audience audibly gasped at this god-like figure and really from that moment on we were home and hosed.

Lesley's coloratura feet did their magic, Anthony whipped the audience into a frenzy and the audience broke into spontaneous applause at every opportunity. The pas de deux took on a true Ashtonian quality for the first time. By the time we reached the 19th variation you could see Genesis Rosato, Bryony Brind, Gail Taphouse *et al* looking from one to another and clearly the thought going through their heads was 'We've got a hit on our hands!'

The performance just built and built and when the boys tossed Anthony into the air the audience was at fever pitch. You have to have been at the Met to understand what it is like to feel the wave of noise when that audience roars. As I was sitting in the front row of the stalls it hit me a nanosecond before it hit the dancers on stage and I couldn't have been prouder had I been up there with them.

Michael Foreman



TARA-BRIGITTE BHAVNANI & SARAH LAMB

MEMOIR

During my formative years I was raised in North Wales. The only time I saw a ballet was when *Swan Lake* came to town, and I decided that it definitely was not for me.

Then television arrived and I had moved south. I began to watch the South Bank Show and my first feelings of interest in ballet were kindled by a biographical programme on Sylvie Guillem. I was very attracted by the bedroom pas de deux from *Manon*, which she danced with Zoltan Solymosi.

When subsequently I read that Sylvie was going to appear in the farewell gala before the Opera House closed for refurbishment, I immediately hoped that she would be dancing the pas de deux. In hopeful expectation I set my video to record the programme and was overjoyed when my hopes were fulfilled. I thought I had never seen anything so beautiful on TV, especially with Sylvie being partnered by Jonathan Cope.

But imagine my despair when I checked my recording and found that the video machine had stopped recording immediately before the *Manon* extract! I spent most of the next two days ringing friends and acquaintances in the hope that somebody had recorded the programme, but nobody had. One had recorded the first part but had fallen asleep during the *Vicar of Dibley* and had not woken up to record the second part.

In desperation I rang the BBC, where they commiserated with me and subsequently sent me a copy of their recording with a time signature appearing in the top left hand corner. I was so grateful and became determined to see Sylvie and Jonathan in the ballet if and when it appeared on the programme of the refurbished house. To achieve this I became a Friend which eventually led to my becoming a member of the Ballet Association.

However, there is also another little story associated with those turbulent times. When I was watching the South Bank Show programme on Sylvie I was puzzled by the fact that the various participants pronounced Sylvie's name differently. In fact Melvyn Bragg started one way and finished the other. So I wrote to Sylvie asking her which way was correct, to which she replied 'both are.' It is a Spanish name, because her grandfather was Spanish. In Spain you say Gee-em, but in France it is said Geelem, voilà. You just have to decide with your friends each time if you are going to speak Spanish or French this particular evening.

I will forever be grateful to Sylvie and Jonathan for revealing a whole new world to me and turning me into a balletomane almost overnight.

Derek Gould

MEMOIR

Long before I became a serious fan of the Royal Ballet I came every two or three years to see *Romeo and Juliet*. I loved the music and the choreography told the story so very well. My one reservation was the three harlots, their hair annoyed me intensely and I really did not think that a nice young man should be too much in sympathy with a harlot, even on the stage.

All that changed in 1999 when I was one of those fortunate people able to support the Royal Ballet tour to China. On arriving at a party following the first night of *Romeo and Juliet* in Beijing I was greeted by three pretty girls in little black dresses, as sweet and demure as they come. 'We are the three harlots,' they said in unison. What a way to break the ice.

At the first four *Romeo and Juliets* out of five the harlots were danced by Vanessa Palmer, Laura Morera and Leire Ortueta. From that moment to this day I have just loved the harlots and all of them over the years have been added to my list of favourite dancers.

Geoffrey Griffiths

MEMOIR

'My brother is in this!'

Discovered the art form of ballet very late in life. With the Royal Festival Hall concerts becoming less interesting to me I thought I would explore the Royal Opera House music. I knew various suites, but not complete works. The Royal Opera House orchestra was known to be very good. I felt I could just look upon the stage performances as a bonus.

I think the turning point was on an early occasion when a tense and very intent young man who was earnestly following every movement on stage, turned, almost apologising, to say 'my brother is in this.' Then followed a real insight into the world of the classical dancer. His brother was waiting for acceptance, or not, into the ballet company. A very tense and worrying time.

There is a lot more to this art form than people realise. This was a new world, and I was getting hooked. Insight days and evenings as well as masterclasses followed, together with membership of the supporting Ballet Association, all succeeding in encouraging understanding and appreciation of this high art form. I had been warned that it would become an addiction and after only five years it is.

One evening in the amphitheatre a French lady told me that having discovered the Royal Ballet company with its great programmes she comes once a month on the Eurostar to see as many performances as possible. She said 'you do not know how lucky you are to have such a great company.'

I hope in the future to see some of the heritage 'back catalogue' of works which so many of us have never seen. There is so much to discover and at 75 years old a truly world class company to perform them. If only we could all be around to enjoy the next seventy-five years.

Brian Don



Photos: Karen Terry

ALINA COJOCARU & JOHAN KOBORG AT THE STAGE DOOR



ALINA COJOCARU

MEMOIR

From the stage door:

- * David Drew writing in my programme when I was about ten years old. ‘To giggly for the umpteenth time.’ Fair enough, after all I was always asking for his autograph.
- * After a performance of *Coppélia* a fan gushed up to Johan Kobborg who had been dancing Franz and said ‘you remind me of Nureyev.’ Johan’s response was ‘when he was young or when he was old?’ Everyone in the vicinity who heard the exchange fell about laughing.

At performances:

- * When Stuart Cassidy was dancing Romeo he threw off his cloak in the tomb scene, showing he was still wearing his track suit bottoms.
- * Matthew Hart’s last performance with the Royal Ballet. He went on as one of the peasant girls in Anthony Dowell’s production of *Swan Lake*. Michael Nunn who was playing the drunken cadet kept trying to get Matthew to sit on his knee.
- * Leana Palmer’s last performance which was in *La Fille mal gardée*. We got to the harvest scene, where the farmers and Lise’s friends do their dance with the flute boy. On this particular night, Martin Harvey was meant to dance the role. He went back to get the flute but someone else jumped forward. I wondered who on earth it was. When I looked through my binoculars again I realised it was Leana Palmer, dressed as the farm hand ready to do the dance. Very well she did it too if I remember rightly. You could hear the dancers cheering from the wings when she finished.
- * Fiona Chadwick’s last run of performances were really memorable. The support she received was incredible, as was the strength of feeling her departure seemed to create.
- * Matthew Hart’s debut in *Danses Concertantes* was terrific. He was so outrageous that my friends and I who were standing together spent most of the performance shaking with laughter. Mind you, he was usually enthusiastic whatever he did, for instance, I can still see him as one of Carabosse’s attendants in the Anthony Dowell production of *Sleeping Beauty* jumping on the table, playing with the cutlery and food.
- * Sarah Wildor and Bruce Sansom in *La Fille mal gardée* at the Royal Festival Hall, as they brought such a sense of fun and rapport that really projected to the audience.

Flower throws:

- * Having organised several flower throws for various debuts and retirements I can testify they are very tiring, but great fun to do. The response to them is usually terrific. Throws I particularly remember include those for Lesley Collier, Bruce Sansom, Anthony Dowell and Irek Mukhamedov. I am now looking forward to Jonathan Cope’s farewell throw.

General:

- * Given the difficulties of the closure period, it was wonderful to see the company come back to the redeveloped Royal Opera House in one piece, performing as well as ever.

Rachel Holland

MEMOIR

In July 1976 my husband joined the University of Toronto and we moved to Canada. We were fortunate to have part of the Royal Ballet accompany us.

Living in York we had taken every opportunity to watch Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet when they visited the north and became firm fans of Stephen Jefferies. How wonderful that he chose to join the National Ballet of Canada at the time of our move and he was an evident inspiration to the company. Shortly afterwards Alexander Grant became Director of the National Ballet of Canada bringing with him some favourites from the Royal Ballet's repertoire. He enriched the repertoire of the National Ballet and seemed to energise the company. To have such a company so far from home was a joy. Stephen Jefferies and Vanessa Harwood's interpretation of *Elite Syncopations* was worth seeing.

How fortunate to return to England and find Stephen Jefferies back with the Royal Ballet.

Patricia and David Chapman



Peter Howard

STEPHEN JEFFRIES



Peter Howard

DAME NINETTE DE VALOIS, AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY PERFORMANCE, FEBRUARY 1996