

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Ballet Association

16 November 2005

6.30pm, Royal Ballet School

The Chairman, David Bain, welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the 2004 annual general meeting were taken as read and adopted.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Report

The Chairman had tabled his report for 2004/2005, but he drew attention to the salient points.

During the previous season the Royal Ballet Companies had celebrated the centenary of the birth of Sir Frederick Ashton. For many members this saw the return to the repertoire of favourite ballets, whilst newer dance enthusiasts were introduced to some of Ashton's great works. Christopher Newton's production of *Sylvia*, a great success in the previous season, was returning to the Royal Opera House stage this week.

Membership had risen yet again to a record level, 420. This in turn had led to improved attendances at meetings (an average of 74 per meeting) and to healthy finances. Membership badges had been produced and were on sale for £1 each.

The Association was keen to support the development of young choreographers and had donated £500 to the Royal Ballet's First Drafts in the Clore Studio in February 2005. Similar donations will be made to First Drafts in November 2005 and March 2006. In June, two of the First Drafts choreographers and one from Inspired by Ashton had spoken about the choreographic process at an Association meeting.

The Association was delighted that one of its Presidents, Desmond Kelly, Assistant Director of the Birmingham Royal Ballet, had been awarded the OBE in the New Year's Honours.

The Association continued to receive invitations from time to time to rehearsals at Sadler's Wells Theatre and notices of other events in London and at the Wales Millennium Centre. Where invitations are received at short notice, they can only be notified to members with an e-mail address.

The Association had been saddened to learn in the final week on the Royal Ballet's 2004-05 London season of the deaths of Pamela May, former principal ballerina of the Royal Ballet, who had made her debut in 1934, and of Ross Stretton, Director of the Royal Ballet 2001-02, at the age of 53. The Chairman paid tribute to both of them and referred to the legacy of their influence on the company.

The Association had marked the retirement of principal pianist, Philip Gammon, who had spoken at the final meeting of the season. All present had enjoyed the occasion very much.

One of the Association's members, Anat Rosenberg, was killed on the No. 30 Bus at Tavistock Square, during the London bombings. Her boyfriend had written: "I recall how she would tell me, in great detail, about meetings and I know she really enjoyed the dinner. The Association meant a lot to her and she would be pleased and proud if she could know she was in your thoughts."

Monica Mason, the Association's Patron, had suggested that the Association put together a book of reminiscences of members, to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Company. The Chairman set out some of the practicalities of collecting reminiscences and publishing them.

The Chairman set out the list of speakers during the previous year: Wendy Ellis Somes, Christopher Saunders, Romany Pajdak, Henry St. Clair, Ludovic Ondiviela, Michael Stojko, James Wilkie, Marianela Nunez, Darcey Bussell, Alastair Macaulay, Lauren Cuthbertson, Federico Bonelli, Nao Sakuma, Kosuke Yamamoto, Vanessa Fenton, Ernst Meisner, Peter Quanz and Philip Gammon.

The Chairman expressed regret that some members had been turned away from the Darcey Bussell meeting, because the Swedenborg Hall had unexpectedly reduced its capacity to 100 as a response to new fire regulations. For the forthcoming year, popular meetings were planned for the Royal Ballet School and the Clore Studio at the Royal Opera House. Admission prices had to be increased by £1 for the Clore Studio, to cover the extra costs of hire. It was hoped to hold some practical events in the new venues.

All meetings included the popular raffle and the Chairman thanked artist, Phil Bremner, for providing some of the prizes for tonight's raffle.

28 guests and 138 members had attended the Annual Dinner at the Rubens Hotel. The guests were Monica Mason, Jeanetta Laurence, Kevin O'Hare, Gail Taphouse, Philip Mosley, Leanne Benjamin, Federico Bonelli, Roberta Marquez, Tamara Rojo, Viacheslav Samodurov, Zenaida Yanowsky, Belinda Hatley, Sarah Lamb, Jose Martin, Yohei Sasaki, Cindy Jourdain, Hikaru Kobayashi, Kenta Kura, Emily Low, Ernst Meisner, Andrej Uspenski, Tara-Brigitte Bhavnani, Yuhui Choe, Celisa Diuana, Ryoichi Hirano, Paul Kay, Ludovic Ondiviela and Henry St. Clair. The Chairman had spoken at the dinner and Monica Mason had replied.

The Chairman thanked Melanie Shipton, the Treasurer, and Peter Mahrer, the Auditor. He also thanked the other members of the committee, Liz Bouttell, Geoffrey Griffiths, Rachel Holland, Mandy Kent, Kenneth Leadbeater, Joan Seaman, Belinda Taylor and Sylvia Tyler, for their work during the year.

The Chairman made reference to the Association's surpluses of £2,347 in 2003-04 and £2,610 in 2004-05. The Committee were recommending that The Ballet Association become a member of the Royal Ballet's 75th Anniversary Syndicate, with a donation of £2,500 to the Royal Ballet in each of the 2005-06 and 2006-07 seasons. Members resolved accordingly and unanimously, by a show of hands.

David Bain told the meeting that it was a privilege being Chairman of The Ballet Association and he thanked those who had made positive comments about the Association during the year.

Members can choose whether to receive the newsletter by e-mail or hard copy. Some members wished to received communications through both media, to ensure that they received short notice of invitations to rehearsals and events elsewhere. In response to questioning, the Chairman agreed to implement this arrangement for those who wished it.

Kenneth Leadbeater paid tribute to the leadership and hard work provided by David Bain in his role as Chairman and the meeting made appropriate acknowledgement.

5. Financial Report

The Financial Statements had been tabled and were put to the meeting and adopted nem con. No questions were raised.

6. Election of Committee

Mandy Kent, who had been co-opted on to the committee in 2004, had stepped down due to other commitments. The remaining nine members of the committee had expressed a willingness to continue in office. No further nominations had been received.

Accordingly David Bain, Kenneth Leadbeater Joan Seaman, Melanie Shipton were elected unopposed respectively as Organising Secretary, Meetings Secretary, Membership Secretary and Hon. Treasurer. Liz Bouttell, Geoffrey Griffiths, Rachel Holland, Belinda Taylor and Sylvia Tyler were elected unopposed to the Committee.

The Committee will elect the Chairman and Deputy Chairman at its next meeting.

8. Any Other Business

The Chairman agreed to post the constitution of The Ballet Association and his Chairman's Annual Report on the website. The draft minutes of this meeting will be posted, when available.

The meeting acknowledged that Michael Broderick, Chairman of the London Ballet Circle, was stepping down after 40 years in office. The Chairman undertook to write appropriately to him.

It was reported that Fernando Bujones, one of the finest male dancers of the 20th century, former principal dancer of American Ballet Theater and lately artistic director of the Orlando Ballet, Florida, had passed away on 10 November 2005 at the early age of 50, following a very brief and unexpected battle with malignant melanoma.

It was noted that speakers may or may not stay after the meeting for photographs, according to their own wishes.

The meeting closed at 7.24 pm.

Kenneth Leadbeater
18 November 2005