

by Nicola Savarese

Ulysses, far from Ithaca, did not suffer from nostalgia. The word *nostalgia*, even though deriving from Greek (*nostos*, 'return', and *algos*, 'pain') was first used in the eighteenth century, by a Dutch doctor. He coined the term to define that particular illness which afflicts people who are forced to live away from their homeland for long periods of time. The first to be diagnosed as suffering from *nostalgia* were Swiss immigrants who had left their mountain homes in search of work.

Until the end of the last century, the word *nostalgia* was used exclusively in a medical context. It then was borrowed from the world of medicine and became part of the vocabulary of the aesthetes of European decadence, taking on the meaning of 'a vague desire', 'melancholy', which meaning it kept when it entered common speech.

We will use the word *nostalgia* here in its original sense - a passion for a return - and will enrich it with a subtle nuance which the Italian poet Niccolò Tommaseo introduced in his famous dictionary of the Italian language, in which he defined the term as 'the noble privilege of poor nations'. In this sense, *nostalgia* is a characteristic of the artistic activity of the twentieth century and is particularly germane when used with respect to the theatre.

The study of performers of the past or of other cultures, the study of their scenic behaviour and their techniques, dates from the beginning of this century, when theatre practitioners, faced with the rise of mass communication media, began to search for new forms of theatrical language and a new identity for the theatre.

Actors, dancers, and directors looked to heritages which were historically and geographically distant from the European tradition. These were heritages which could inspire a viable alternative to the theatre of the nineteenth century, provide arguments for a new cultural strategy and, above all, more diversified and richer means for the performer's language.

And thus the myths of Commedia dell'Arte, ancient Greek theatre and Oriental theatres were born.

It was natural that these extremely diverse origins, far distant in time and space (whence their mythical and legendary character) inspired nostalgia in the artists' imaginations. In a time of change, they saw these distant sources as 'golden ages' of the theatre. It was less the eternal desire for a return to origins than technical research for a point of departure; less a vague nostalgia for the infinite than a search beyond the limits and borders of one's own culture.

NOSTALGIA OR THE PASSION FOR A RETURN



Menaka Thakkar and Claudia Moore in *Duality*, in a cross-cultural collaborative work performed in 1997 at Toronto's Premiere Dance Theatre. Photo: Cylla von Tiedemann.

Not only were the Commedia dell'Arte, ancient Greek theatres and Oriental theatres rediscovered, studied and reinvented, but also more popular performance forms such as circus and cabaret. All these discoveries enriched the doctrines and practices

of theatrical art and had a decisive influence on Occidental performance.

These theatre forms had certain characteristics in common which could be used both to oppose the bourgeois theatre of the nineteenth century and to



OPENING REMARKS

We cross nearly 100 years of thinking in this issue of *The Magazine* - "Nostalgia or the Passion for a Return" by Nicola Savarese provides an interesting scenario for the contemporary fascination with the exotic. In the light of the startling similarities between the late 19th and the late 20th centuries, are we suffering from nostalgia? The influential Victorians and the Baby Boomers (Neo-Victorians?) were/are driven by similar aspirations - they certainly both "shopped til they dropped." It was, and still is, a material world.

The artist's reaction early in this century, as Savarese suggests, was to seek the exotic, the foreign, in hopes of a return. The question is, a return to what? Could the following be clues?

A group of Czech writers recently complained that since the democracy movement took hold in their country, they have nothing to write about.

Globalization - an industrial term - is driving everybody mad. As Marshall McLuhan said, "business is a way of exporting culture", which by default appears to be a "mono" culture of blue jeans, rock 'n roll and Cola wars.

Perhaps the artist's struggle to understand today's world is reflected in efforts to return to the basics - Shakespeare's plays are being performed in growing numbers - as if seeking out "language" and the basic elements of drama.

Kaija Pepper's article on "Trying Out A World", takes us inside a fascinating rationale for watching a dance performance. As Gweneth Lloyd said, "It doesn't matter why they come...as long as they come."

The Theatre tabloids from Winnipeg are a perfect example of the work still to be done on Canada's history, always keeping in mind what Nick Laidlaw said: "How do you know what's there unless you look!"

This is going to be a "big" year for DCD, we have many irons in the fire. Watch us.

Lawrence and Miriam Adams

Pat Richards, 1946-1998



Patricia Richards was a remarkable choreographer, dancer, teacher, and a tireless advocate for the arts. The dance community is in mourning with the passing of one of its most cherished souls.

Pat was a modern dancer and choreographer who trained at the Laban Centre in England, before emigrating to Canada with her husband Anthony. As a choreographer Pat exerted a significant influence on young dancers, encouraging them to create their own work. Among the dancers who came under her influence were a young Randy Glynn, and Ruth Ellen Kroll who is currently dancing with the David Parsons Dance Company. Her own work was profoundly influenced by visual art, especially the work of Georgia O'Keefe.

Pat was a leading expert in historical dance, specializing in the Baroque Period and was called upon to set dances for film, television, theatre and historical animations such as *Fortress Louisbourg*.

Pat was on the Board of the Dance in Canada Association during some of its most trying years. She was a founding director of the Association of Dance in Universities and Colleges in Canada, a member of the Board of the Canadian Association of Professional Dance Organizations, and served

on juries for the Canada Council for the Arts.

Pat Richards worked for the cause of arts education in Nova Scotia, sitting as a member of the Education Minister's Advisory Committee on Arts Education and as part of the work group that created Dance 11, the province's first discreet dance curriculum. She was on the founding Board of the Nova Scotia Arts Council and served for many years as both a Board and jury member for the Nova Scotia Talent Trust. In 1996 she was presented with the DANCE Award, Nova Scotia's highest dance award, for outstanding contribution to the development of dance in the province.

Involved in Halifax Dance from its earliest days, she fulfilled many roles as a teacher, choreographer, administrator, board member and most recently as chair of Halifax Dance's major fundraising event, *Black Tie with a Twist*. Pat was a regular guest choreographer for the Halifax Dance Young Company. In 1996 the Pat Richards Choreographic Award was created and endowed by Margaret and David Fountain and is presented annually to the Halifax Dance student who shows the most promise as a choreographer.

As a member of the faculty of Leisure Studies at Dalhousie University, Pat created and taught courses on Arts and Leisure and Arts Administration. She taught the courses in such a way that many students, who had never attended a live performance or visited a gallery, experienced a life change through art. She was responsible for introducing dance classes into the Physical Education and Theatre curricula and taught a History of Dance course in the Music Department.

Pat was possessed of a natural gentility and generosity which permeated every aspect of her life. She never undertook anything without a full and honourable commitment. Because of her work, structures and policies are in place that will make things better for Nova Scotia's artists and children. And she left behind a legacy of dance works that are rich in imagery and meaning.

Pat Richards was among the most respected of Nova Scotia's artists and certainly the most loved.

Contributed by Dianne Milligan

Amy Bowring joins DCD

DCD welcomes Amy Bowring as the Research Co-ordinator. She will perform a number of duties including the organization of new portfolios which come into the Collection. Highly qualified for the task, Amy's interest in Canada's dance story began as a student at York University where her organizational abilities emerged while working on publication projects in the Department of Dance at York.

Armed with a degree in Journalism from the University of Western Ontario, Amy has, over the past two years, developed course and teaching materials particularly oriented to high schools students and focussing on the Canadian Ballet Festivals of the late 1940's and early 50's, plus the second wave of festivals in the 1970's.

Having additional hands will permit DCD to keep up with the myriad of tasks involved in daily operations. Next year it is hoped that sufficient funds will permit Amy to work on a full-time basis.

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New in the Archives



Frank Richards' photo of Michael Conway.

Photographer Frank Richards has donated his complete collection of photographic negatives to the DCD Archives. The collection also includes prints and posters.

Richards has photographed many of Canada's best known modern dancers, several from the Toronto Dance Theatre, Dance-makers and Desrosiers Dance Theatre, as well as the work of choreographers Anna Blewchamp, Paula Ravitz and Judy Jarvis, to name a few. His photos trigger memories of dancers Grace Miyagawa, Chuck Flanders, Susan Macpherson, Judy Miller, Helen Jones and many more.

For more than a decade hundreds of his photos were seen in newspapers, magazines, advertising materials and on posters.

Toronto-based, Richards is originally from Vancouver. He did not begin his involvement in photography until the 1970's, creating much of his work in his downtown Toronto loft, once a warehouse space. Richards says that for him the dancer is more important than the choreography; working in his studio he finds that he is not recording something left over from a performance, but creating a whole new performance in itself. "The magic of photography", he says, "is to comment on the elusive beauty of real life."

DCD considers this collection to be an important image bank of the 1970's and 80's dance boom and the images will grow in stature as a record of the remarkable performers of this period.

Richard's over-generous attitude to his work has meant that many of his negatives have become scattered among individuals and dance companies. DCD will now begin working to bring this significant collection back together.

Dear Friends...

Fundraising time is upon us again.

Firstly, we would like to thank all those individual supporters whose contributions continue to assist Dance Collection Danse and who have helped to make the organization the success which it has become.

Dance Collection Danse depends on you to carry out its numerous activities. This past year has been extremely productive with the release of several new publications; the receipt of organizational and personal materials to the archives; ongoing research and oral history programmes -- all of which have further confirmed a rich and intriguing Canadian theatrical dance story!

After DCD's 15 years of intensive work, it is now possible to acknowledge and celebrate many of the personalities who have laid the groundwork for dance in Canada to become the flourishing art form that it has. The dance community is growing to encompass more and more dancers, choreographers and teachers who can build on this past as they become part of the continuum of the dance legacy.

We want each individual to know that your donation helps DCD, and dance, significantly. Every additional dollar yields an important result. The contribution you make in support of the organization demonstrates faith in DCD's activities and enhances recognition from other individuals, government agencies and foundations. We are always grateful to receive a contribution, however small, confirming your belief in Dance Collection Danse's work.

Dance Collection Danse, registered as Arts Inter-Media Canada, is a non-profit charitable organization, No. 12417 4046 RR0001. Enclosed please find a donor's card and return envelope. Cheques can be made payable to Dance Collection Danse.

Thanking you in advance.

**Lawrence Adams, Miriam Adams
Co-Directors**

Photo: Jean Wood, dancer, Madame Hylde Davies Dance Group, Cow Bay, Nova Scotia, 1928.

NOSTALGIA, Continued from Page 1

revitalise the then current tradition of the performer's language. It was first of all a question of refusing a certain naturalism in favour of an aesthetic based not on mimesis but on a system of signs; secondly, the elimination of the barrier between performer and spectator - the famous 'fourth wall' - in order to discover new possible relationships between the performers and their audience; and finally, the rupture of the dramatic unities by means of a montage of symbolic spatial and temporal sequences.

Actors and directors, dancers and everyone involved in performance, thus found themselves confronted with new examples of theatrical communication from which they could draw a certain freedom: they were culturally prestigious examples, technically perfect and yet so sufficiently foreign that they could be taken up and reversed, even invented, without the anxieties which more familiar models induce.

The Commedia dell'Arte and the Oriental theatres in particular proposed a performer's art which seemed free of all psychological conditioning. In addition, they were based on a meticulous body technique which was the performer's only element and instrument, able moreover to represent emotions. The Commedia dell'Arte tradition was interrupted in the eighteenth century, but Oriental performers were still incarnating their most ancient traditions, and one can readily understand how they could become the only models which were not only different but also *living* and therefore directly exportable.

Obviously, this nostalgia was not without its risks and pitfalls: fads, the temptation of the exotic and novel, and superficial interpretation were also facets of a Utopia of total theatre which dreamed of a symbiosis with its audience. These phenomena were often the origins of more or less fertile misunderstandings, many of which have influenced recent theatre history. But we must not lose sight of the essential fact that direct contact with distant theatre cultures helped theatre artists to discover that the performer's art is the keystone of performance, and that the theatre exists only because performers exist. This was the beginning of a process which directed theatre research in the Occident towards performer pedagogy free of the demands of production and the market.

The Occidental performer, who up until that time had been classified into different genres - mime, dancer, singer, actor - dreamed of unity and artistic dignity.

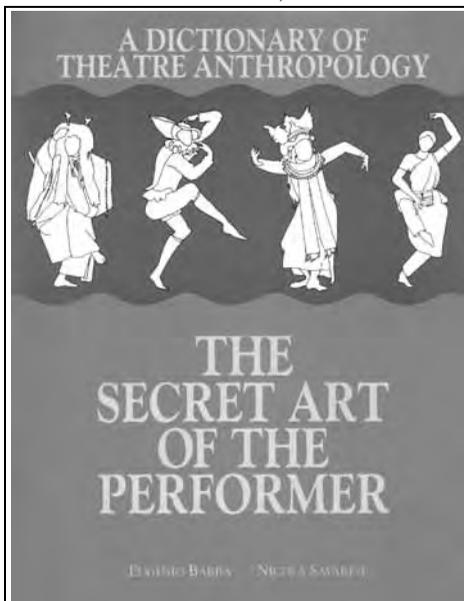
This was one of the first historical results of *nostalgia*: provided that the premise, or point of departure, is always accepted as being the actor, who beyond being someone who feels, is solely someone who appears on stage; a body in action. Then we can better explain the surprising analogies between position and gesture of actors, distant in space and time, which would never be corroborated were it not for what is contained within these pages. Nostalgia

for integrity led the 'individual' actor to become known etymologically as the 'indivisible' actor.

The second possible result of nostalgia took longer to become apparent. It was the need to rediscover the origins of European Theatre, and the rough historiographical research, to find out when the split between dancer and actor actually happened.

Recent studies confirm that the division occurred in the XVII century, when ballet and dance professionally separated the actor from the dancer. In the Renaissance period, and above all in the performances of the Commedia dell'Arte, the performers sang, danced, recited, as did the actors of the Kabuki and the Peking Opera.

Commedia dell'Arte was to a great extent based on the actor's dance, so it is rather



Nostalgia or the Passion for a Return is a Chapter in the book *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* written by Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese and published by Routledge, 1991.

We are unable to include the many photographs accompanying this Chapter of the book.

"Nostalgia" is reprinted with the permission of the author, Nicola Savarese.

surprising that this has been so little considered in dance specialists' investigations and even less by literary critics.

The process of making performance was based on collective devising of the story, the text and movement composition, and concentrated on the contribution and the particular conventions of each character, of each mask. However the essential ingredients were dance and acrobatics, and 'energetic language' of action and movement. So the actor not only had to speak, sing and play at least one musical instrument, but also had to be a dancer and acrobat. They made death defying leaps, and some walked the tight rope whilst reciting some exciting and mercurial text. They certainly executed feats of great difficulty which demanded great agility and their spectacular nature brought fame to many actors and

groups of Commedia dell'Arte. And then, as if eight acts were not enough, the performance always ended with a musical set and dances.

The result of this specialisation in the Commedia dell'Arte can be summarised, after considering recent studies, as being the need of professional artists for competition, the need to perform before different audiences, different, that is, in terms of caste and language (many artists emigrated to Europe particularly to France) and in the incidental necessity to compensate for dim lighting, and because of the mask, for the reduced expressivity of the face, by using the full potential of the body in action. Of course their dances were not conventional, like a *minuet* or a *saraband*, but personal, in a style closely linked to the character and above all to the actor.

From the professional standpoint, this way of composing particular actions for each character which transformed their ways of moving into a dance, can not have been so far removed from the methods used by the actors of Kabuki and Peking Opera who create character according to their multisectional traditions.

The dance of the actor came to France with the Commedia dell'Arte and entered the court in the ballet-comedies of Molière and Lully. Molière had been a student of the Italian actors and was well acquainted with the technicalities as well as the dramatic and spectacular importance of the dance element. This aspect of Molière's interest has not been sufficiently investigated. He was an actor, a mime, and he knew the songs and dances as well as the Italians that he was very familiar with. We could say that he served an apprenticeship on how to move on stage. We know that his company also danced short ballets in the intervals, whilst touring the provinces, and often his name appeared on the list of those dancing. This aspect of Molière's work culminated in the ballet comedies which, with the collaboration of Lully, became well known. This style, or better, genre, was considered of secondary importance to the so-called superior dramaturgical aspect of production. Both the historiographers and the literary critics have over emphasised this second aspect. Théophile Gautier, however, back in the XIX century, had complained that the works of Molière were not represented with the flavour they once had had; to him they had lost their artifice, their decorative and surprising 'side dishes', as for example in *Le Malade Imaginaire* (The Hypochondriac).

There is a close resemblance between the compositional methods of the Commedia dell'Arte and ballet. In the early stages of modern theatre, dance and theatre were not considered separately, the only distinction was based on the hierarchy of skill that an actor or group of actors had. This original unity bore some importance on the practice of Occidental Theatre and can be summarised in two parts.

Firstly: if it is true that there was originally no clear distinction between actor-dancer in Occidental Theatre, then the idea that there is a resemblance (notwithstanding basic cultural differences) between the methods and practice of the Occidental actors-dancers and the Oriental actors-dancers is consequently affirmed. Even the occidental actors-dancers had to learn 'extra-daily' techniques in order to create a discipline and a way of scoring codified action, steps and movement.

The performance was in fact the fruit of all the previously investigated elements, combined and composed into a story which could, from time to time, change according to the demands of the actors, the audience, or the producer.

Secondly: this initial perspective on modern Occidental Theatre was not a result of theatrical historiography. The history of Occidental Theatre had given priority not to an idea and conception of theatre which was based on the original creative and productive process of the actor, but to an image of theatre at the height of a moment in which its historical premises were being investigated. By dealing with the works of the XIX century, pride of place was given naturally to the dramaturgical and ideological quality of the work rather than to the art of the actor.

Continuing on this line, theatre history has chosen to ignore the treatise of Domenico da Piacenza (*Sull'Arte de Ballare e Danzare*, 1435), by for example relegating it to the history of ballet. For the first time in the

Occident this work considered the basis of dance as an autonomous art and affirmed the methods of composing scenic movement as forming the foundation of the actor-dancer profession.

Apart from these important assertions - the need for techniques, for set movements, for full extension of movement in the performance space - Domenico da Piacenza suggested two fundamentally different types of dance step: the 'natural' and the 'accidental'. The first grew from natural movements whilst the second was a product of artificial and artistic investigation.

From the point of view of theatre anthropology it is not difficult to recognise in these definitions the distinction between 'daily' and 'extra-daily' movements. In fact, Domenico da Piacenza, with his definition, tended to establish both the difference between the popular improvised dance and the more refined, noble dance of the courts, as well as the profession of the dancer, who by learning set steps - extra-daily - could place them in a sequence, in a personal and distinct choreography, thereby creating new interpretations.

His students, Antonio Cornazano and Guglielmo Ebreo, followed in his footsteps and were above all concerned with the 'fabricated' dance, which was constructed not on a simple reorganisation of the steps, but from the basis of a tale, a story.

So what were the basic characteristics of these first dance performances in the Occident? Music, actors, scenic movement, and story; together these formed a unique

whole, which could be repeated without loss of the original creation and with all the advantages of the actor-dancer's professionalism, the audience and the producer. In



fact the set and learnt movements could change and be combined to make new stories and new performances, without having to go back to a clean page and find totally new steps each time. In all, it was a method, an economic and professional compositional technique, very similar to that adopted later by the *Commedia dell'Arte* players, and which was at the root of the theatre profession of the Oriental actor-dancers.

Madeleine Boss Lasserre, 1901 - 1998

Madeleine Boss Lasserre, who introduced Dalcroze Eurhythmics in Canada, was a remarkable fount of wisdom and delightful friend who encouraged me in my long-term project to study the Dalcroze method's history. In our many conversations since I met her in 1979, she more than anyone else helped me understand the core teaching practices, the personalities, the politics and the significance of this work.

Born in Neuchatel, Switzerland on October 5, 1901, she trained in Geneva with Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, the originator of this teaching which explores the connections of music and movement. In 1924 she moved to Canada, where she met and married Henri Lasserre, a fellow Swiss who taught French at the University of Toronto. The Margaret Eaton School announced in October 1925 that she would offer separate classes for adults and children of different ages in a method for the development of muscular control, rhythmic sense, musical feeling and self expression.



She immediately earned the support of one of her first students, Duncan McKenzie, then Director of Music for the Toronto schools. Soon she joined the Toronto Conservatory of Music which later became the Royal Conservatory of Music, where she taught for some fifty years. With her students she presented annual demonstrations in venues such as Convocation Hall and Hart House, occasionally including guests from the Dalcroze School in New York where she sent several of her best students for professional training. Her groups also appeared in programs for the Women's Art Association and other organizations.

Conductor Sir Ernest MacMillan, pianist Norah Drewett de Kresz and composer Healey Willan were among the many prominent Toronto musicians who endorsed Madame Lasserre's work. Hector Charlesworth, Augustus Bridle and others wrote articles and reviews.

By her retirement in the mid-1970's, she had taught several generations of students. Donald Himes was one who went on to study at the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva before pursuing a multi-faceted career in music and dance as well as Dalcroze and Feldenkrais work. Donna Wood was another who continued her teaching at the Conservatory and became a leader in the field of early childhood music education.

Her interest in music and dance continued right to the end of her life. The last time I saw her in June she handed me, as usual, a little pile of newspaper clippings, this time about the Canada Dance Festival.

Madeleine Boss Lasserre died in Toronto on August 17 at the age of 96.

The Theatre

WINNIPEG, OCT. 10, 1902.

Not many years ago, two Canadian writers made a dastardly mistake. In their respective writing they identified Winnipeg as a "cultural wasteland" and a "cultural backwater".

Even the honourable Gweneth Lloyd and Betty Farrally were often heard commenting on the scarcity of performing events in Winnipeg.

Six small tabloid sized double sheet newspapers have come into the Collection, found at our friendly neighbourhood flea market. Titled *The Theatre*, they are dated: October 10, 1902; February 13, 1904; March 7-8, 1904; April 26-27, 1904; February 15-16, 1906; and March 5-6-7, 1906, published in Winnipeg by the Red River Valley Circuit, under the Management of C.P. Walker. Can we presume that there were perhaps other copies printed in '03, and '05?

For those who would like to continue to scoff at this possibility that nothing happened in Winnipeg, culture-wise, before

THE RED RIVER VALLEY CIRCUIT
C. P. Walker, Manager . . Winnipeg.

WINNIPEG THEATRE.
Winnipeg, Man.

METROPOLITAN THEATRE.
Grand Forks, N. D.

FARGO OPERA HOUSE.
Fargo, N. D.

CROOKSTON OPERA HOUSE.
Crookston, Minn.

BRAINERD OPERA HOUSE.
Brainerd, Minn.

WINNIPEG THEATRE.
Chas. C. Lindsay . . . Resident Manager
S. L. Barrowclough . . . Musical Director
Clarence Spence . . . Stage Manager

the Winnipeg Ballet and the Manitoba Theatre Centre, DCD has selected various pieces from the publications as evidence that the time has come to re-think.

As the musicologist Carl Morey recently pointed out, where there was a train station a travelling theatre company would play the attached town. From reports which DCD Archives has on file, attendance was always good.

If the items displayed here are not sufficiently convincing, then perhaps a list of productions listed in the papers will help: On Tuesday October 14, 1902, a novelty *Liquid Air* (compressed carbon dioxide) demonstration; on Friday and Saturday, *Haverly's Mastodon and Haverly's Minstrels*; the following week a matinee and

THE THEATRE

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MONDAY EVENING, MARCH 5th.
Overture at 8 p.m.

"LOHENGRIN"
Grand Opera in Four Acts, by Richard Wagner.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.
Lohengrin, Knight of the Holy Grail Mr. Francis Maclean
Henry L. King of Germany Mr. Robert Kent Parker
Frederick Teiramund, a Noble of Brabant Mr. Winfred Goff
Herald Mr. Thomas D. Richards
Elsa of Brabant Miss Gertrude Rennyson
Ortrud, wife of Teiramund Miss Rita Newman
Gottfried, Elsa's brother Miss Blanche Chase
Conductor Mr. Schenek
Chorus of Counts and Nobles of Saxon Arriereban and of Brabant, Nobles, Pages and Attendants.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES.
Act I.—A Meadow on the Banks of the Scheldt, near Antwerp.
Act II.—Palace and Fortress at Antwerp, with the Kermite on the left and the Cathedral on the right.
Act III.—Tapestry Chamber in the Palace.
Act IV.—Same as Act I.



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evening of *A Poor Relation*, a play starring Mr. Horace Lewis. The week prior, *A Little Outcast* had been presented at the Grand Opera House. An additional note announces that the 1890 Boston production of *Robin Hood* will be in Winnipeg in June.

We also find in this same issue an advertisement for Prof. A.A. Zimmerman's Academy of Music and Dancing, claiming "Scientific Instruction...", resonating with a recent "Scientific" dance programme featured at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School.

For the February 13, 1904, edition, the front page advertises "The Eminent Canadian Actor, Mr. Harold Nelson and his Company in An Elaborate Scenic Production of the Great Historical Religious Play", *Quo Vadis* for two nights, followed by a "Double Comedy" bill. Next



MONDAY EVENING, MAY 2.

Mme.
Schumann-Heink

The World's Greatest
Contralto

Seats ready Saturday at 9 a.m.
PRICES: . \$2.00, \$1.50, \$1.00.

Winnipeg College of Music

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FRANK HOTCHKISS OSBORN—Musical Director.

SPECIAL SUMMER COURSE—Arrangements are being concluded for a special summer term of ten weeks during July and August, and several of our leading teachers will be retained for this course. We are also arranging for a
SPECIAL TEACHERS' COURSE for teachers living outside of the city. Full information given on application.

JOSEPH M. TEES, Business Manager.

Special Announcement

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 16

—and—

Thanksgiving Day

Matinee and Night.

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MR. HORACE LEWIS
As "Noah Vale."

Supported by a carefully selected Company.

Sale of seats for all performances opens Tuesday morning.

Prices \$1.00, 75c, 50c.

comes The Rose Cecilia Shay Grand Opera Company in *Bohemian Girl* for a Saturday matinee, followed in the evening by *Faust*. Mid-week, Marie Wainright performs in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Also an announcement states that "Ben Hendricks, the well-known Swedish dialect singer and comedian will appear in *Erik of Sweden* on the 19th, 20th.

In March 7 and 8 of 1904, Edward Morgan and a cast of twenty-nine, plus Guards,

Cardineers, Singers and Choristers, etc., play *The Eternal City* and then Alberta Gallatin, on an American tour gives Ibsen's *Ghosts* for two nights, followed by *The Mummy and the Humming Bird* with Paul Gilmore. A side bar informs readers that "The Greatest Thing in the World" will soon be playing at the Winnipeg Theatre.

April of 1904 plays were only a build up to the arrival of Mme. Schumann-Heink, one of the great contraltos of the day. The plays for the month were, the English musical "adapted to American audiences", *The Silver Slipper*, and a dramatization of Leo Tolstoy's *Resurrection*.

For February 19 and 20, 1906, the George M. Cohan play, *Little Johnny Jones* plays for two nights, "Direct from Broadway"; on the 15th Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's five act play, *Richelieu* will star Louis James, supported by Norman Hackett. The same company plays two nights later with *Virginus*, "A Tragedy in Six Acts" by Sheridan Knowles. Starting on the 21st there are four nights of *Piff Paff Pouf*, "The Peer of all Musical Productions."

March of 1906 was opera month. *Lohengrin* on the 5th, *La Boheme* on the 6th and then *Rigoletto*. On the 12th to 14th Miss Nance O'Neil appeared in four plays. More music for the month found Beatrice Langley, violinist, Stanley Adams, baritone and Myrtle Meggy, pianist in a concert of Mendelssohn, Hubay, Tschaiikowsky and Frank.

Ah, but you say, where were the modern dance companies? Modern dance was only just being invented at that time.

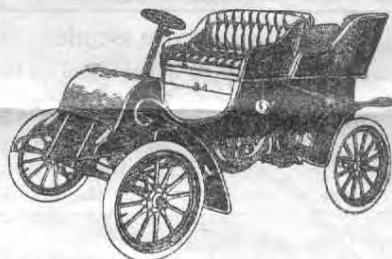
MISS WHITE'S RECITAL

The programme in preparation for the recital of Miss Marie Rheo White promises to be one of unusual interest, most of the numbers being new to Winnipeg audiences. Selected stanzas from Rubayyat should make a delightful reading and it would be hard to find a drama more skilled with expressional possibilities than Victor Hugo's *Lucretia Borgia*, which will be Miss White's heaviest number. This selection requires tremendous dramatic force, intellectual grasp and keen poetic insight and these Miss White possesses together with a pleasing stage presence and a musical sympathetic voice and her studies of elocution and of the best literature have gone hand in hand.

"THE SILVER SLIPPER"

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Advertising occupies about 50% of each paper. Things don't seem that different in this department: hair loss always seemed to be a concern, as was the kind of car you drove and the cafés you were seen in.

As the train tracks extended east and west of Winnipeg, is it possible these travelling players entertained as far as both coasts?

A conversation with ballet

by Kaija Pepper



Romeo and Juliet Trying Out A World

Last week at the ballet, the world which was presented on the stage of Vancouver's Queen Elizabeth Theatre proceeded in the kind of orderly and meaningful way I confess my life does not. Even philosophy and religion haven't been able to help there; in fact, they've confirmed the shifting grounds of reality rather than confirming reality, as I'd hoped! Through the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's *Romeo and Juliet*, however, I was able to experience, for at least a few hours, life in an ordered universe that was unchanging, deeply symbolic and thoroughly connected, and the enjoyment this gave is what I want to explore here. I've seen the ballet a number of times and heard the Prokofiev music at least as often as I've seen Shakespeare's version of the story, but rather than finding this familiarity tedious, knowing what was happening meant that each moment was enriched with what came before and what was yet to come, so that the whole was always present. "Not the intense moment/ Isolated, with no before and after,/ But a lifetime burning in every moment" writes T.S. Eliot in *Four Quartets*. Experienced during the manageable "lifetime" of a single ballet, that burning moment can be comprehended as it can't be during the rambling and thankfully still incomplete nature of my own life.

Romeo and Juliet dares to create its own universe, its own mode of being, and then exists confident and comfortable in that creation. In the three performances I saw during the RWB's February 1998 visit to Vancouver, the ballet unfolded "as it should," and I basked in this unfolding. The only rules were those of its creation as a work of art, which I knew and could follow, as I can't know and follow anything in daily living. Of course, the rules are the man-made ones of ballet, which are often criticised for being unnatural and physically damaging to the women and men who must embody them. A passionate individual like Isadora Duncan deplored ballet for the parameters she saw as unhealthy and restricting.

I like Rayner Heppenstall's response to Isadora Duncan in his 1936 essay *The Sexual Idiom*: "In the Theatre, the theatrical - and only the theatrical - is natural. If you

wish to reject the theatrical, then you must reject the Theatre".

The unnaturalness of ballet is hardly worth bothering about, from my point of view. Think of nature itself: take a daisy, tall and gangly in the sun, bright yellow core surrounded by shiny white petals, anchored to the earth. Who would ever have thought up such a mode of being? Yet it's natural, if that's any consolation for the daisy stranded in the middle of a patch of insatiable ivy. Think of your own body, the abundance of hair sprouting here and there, the oddity of a nose, the shocking depths of a large, open pore, the vulnerability of an eye.

Is the body a miraculous wonder, or a weird construction? The shifting grounds of our imagination, make judgment difficult. Beauty is a particularly elusive call, but in ballet, after you've made the leap to accept the rules, it's simply found in the full and fecund deployment of those rules. A person can find, or not find, beauty in ballet without a whole lot of angst.

Enough of the bigger picture: now to Rudi van Dantzig's sprawling three act ballet. Van Dantzig's rules begin with pointe shoes and the classical vocabulary of arabesques and pirouettes, and continue with the particularities of his choreography. I'm going to discuss *Romeo and Juliet* from memory: from the three recent performances, and a bit from three performances back in 1993, which I reviewed for *Dance International* and which thus became somewhat set in my mind. I might remember badly, of course, but there's a kind of truth in false memories, too; it's a subjective truth, it's how I connected the ballet and how things appeared to me. When there's a video record, it's possible to "correct" memories and learn other things, but what I experience during the brief flash of an actual performance is also important. That's how it seemed to me to be, that's how it was in my play space of experiencing the ballet. I'll do my best to ground what I say



in specifics to prevent things from getting out of hand, as all writers must, but I don't have individual moments to refer back to and my reach, like the extreme vocabulary that takes bodies up and through space, is outward.

It's easier to talk about van Dantzig's choreography through the actuality of a performance; what I remember most is someone doing this or that, and so I'll begin with this year's opening night cast of

Suzanne Rubio, a petite and lively dancer, and her Romeo, Wim Broeckx, a young Dutch guest artist. What they brought out of the choreography came mostly in the first act, when their amorous connection was almost palpable: it seemed as if there was some kind of invisible thread literally connecting their spirits, and their dancing never let go of that intangible connection. Both were forthright and Broeckx was particularly openhearted. There's one kiss in the moonlight that he makes as passionate and real as it would be in the movies. The hot kiss was well and good - it sent more than just my heart aflutter - although engaging in all the moods and subtleties of the choreography is needed to sustain a ballet of this size.

Nonetheless, the "yes" of their dance was compelling. Even the occasional "no" of Juliet seems to me, in relation to Romeo, to always mean "yes"; the devouring nature of her "yes" is a great part of what the ballet is about. This may cross the thorny contemporary path of "no means no" but this is the "no means yes" of mutual attraction, of equal physical heat, and I mean it only in that perfectly reciprocated sense; without that reciprocation, it would be pathological. It's the clarity of her "yes" that makes Juliet's actions enviably certain, and that makes the ballet proceed with a radiant inevitability. Juliet attends the ball in Act I as a young girl, who we'd earlier seen playing about with her Nurse; she's encouraged to dance with the other maidens, and the "no" of her shy retreat is easily overcome. Picking her way through the pretty, precise steps of their dance, she's soon quite at home. Once she sees Romeo, however, her "no" is as passionate as her "yes," but while it may take her away from him physically, for instance in the series of quick little pas couru that move her backwards across the stage while facing Romeo, so real do Rubio and Broeckx (and, later, Evelyn Hart and Steven Hyde) make the attraction, her retreat changes nothing: space is quite conquered by that palpable link connecting them. Together they create a potential space that crackles and burns with sexual invitation and that still connects them as Juliet scurries away - on pointe, light as a spirit.

Now, on a physical level, what's to understand? The premise of the story is that Juliet and Romeo, who are very, very young, find themselves drawn to exploring the overwhelming thing that happens when they are together. Swoon and be done with it. Yet it's how their physical attraction connects with our own ideas and experiences of desire which keeps us riveted in our seats. Evan Alderson, referring to another of the big ballets, *Giselle*, which he saw performed by Hart and the RWB, pinpoints the desire that hooks him in the second act of that ballet as being about "the unity of longing, purity, beauty and death". I wouldn't be at all surprised if it wasn't a similar 19th

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...Romeo and Juliet

century unity that hooked me here; although *Romeo and Juliet* was choreographed as recently as 1967, this generally traditional ballet is created from the same balletic building blocks of elusive ideals and ethereal eroticism. I'm not sure I want to step outside *Romeo and Juliet's* universe to perform the ideological and aesthetic unmasking Alderson does for *Giselle*, yet his unity is a compelling one.



More precisely in terms of *Romeo and Juliet*, I'd substitute love for beauty. It's the very real duality of love and death that left me hooked and gasping here: in addition to the "yes" of their love, or desire, there's always a resounding "no" never far away. This dark, unchanging "no" figures throughout; early on, for instance, an actual Death figure appears in the happy street scenes, towering above the cavorting crowd, who mostly ignore him, although Death has been busy going about his business from the start, when a seller in the market is stabbed. It's the overwhelming "no" of Juliet's cousin, Tybalt - his antagonism and aggression toward Romeo and the Montague clan - that causes much of the bloodshed; his character is as clearly "no" as Juliet's is "yes." His plié keeps him low to the ground, despite his high social standing; even his leaps are low, with the extended leg aiming like a dagger towards the earth. A key turn in the plot is when Tybalt kills Mercutio in a sword fight. At least as it was played in 1993 by both Alexei Ratmanski and Gino di Marco, Mercutio's moments of dying resound with the love - and "longing, purity, beauty" - that are found in the whole ballet. Although he's been fatally stabbed, Mercutio simply pretends he isn't, and kisses a girl and strums his sword as if it were a mandolin, refusing to attend to the overwhelming singularity of actual death, although, mere flesh, he has no choice but to do so in the end.

When Romeo is driven to fight Tybalt to revenge his friend, the moment of death

happens when Romeo pulls Tybalt to him in an embrace, the better to stab him with his dagger. Love and death, again. Later, when Romeo enters the chapel for his wedding, the woman widowed at the beginning of the ballet and her child are leaving. If only death were always so symbolically displayed in life, perhaps we'd understand it better. Not that Romeo notices it, of course, any more than we do as actors in our own lives. Did such a scene take place before my own wedding? Who else was in the church? I have no idea; I didn't notice. Being able to contemplate death as symbolic within the lifetime of a ballet reminds me of how Nietzsche describes art as "a redeeming, healing enchantress," who can create both the sublime and the comedic. That's in his first, enthusiastic book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, dedicated to Wagner, no less. He defines the sublime as the taming of horror through art, and on that account, *Romeo and Juliet* is deeply sublime, turning the horror of death into the companion of love.

In the same book, Nietzsche says "that art is the supreme task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life", and I want to use this idea to introduce Evelyn Hart, who performed twice with Steven Hyde. Even if we only accept Nietzsche's statement for now, to understand Hart and the ballet as I'd like them to be understood, it's worth quoting. The point I want to make about Hart is that she is surely the embodiment of Nietzsche's quote, as she spends her life struggling to express all the subtleties of time and space and being through her physical art. Even now, past 40, her body can delight in the spirit of the child, Juliet; more



than that, she shows us in tangible form the spirit of the child-woman, thus making the physical boundedness of our lives, at least temporarily, a simple non-truth. Though her overly thin and straining body never alters its outward form, Hart transcends her own reality; the anorexia she battles is also

transcended. It can sometimes be difficult to watch her and not let this disease become the reality through which one views her dance, but if one watches deeply, the fact of her illness, of whatever demons in daily living beset her, becomes an illusion to be avoided through being there for the more real moment of her dance. The moment of her dance becomes the reality, and that is the metaphysical meditation Hart offers us.

Hyde is, like Hart, a mature dancer. His gentlemanly Romeo is ardent within the bounds of good form, and this restraint builds a compelling tension. There's a range of emotion, nonetheless, in his dance; for example, the sweep of his arms and torso when he's with his friends, Mercutio and Benvolio, is more free and easy than in any of his pas de deux with Juliet. After his marriage, when Romeo attempts to stop Tybalt and Mercutio from fighting, the manliness of Hyde's approach is less easy to define: the warmth and directness with which he gestures to the two men is somehow more infused with his newly acquired, although still secret, position of "husband". "Manliness" sounds very old-fashioned, but this ballet isn't about gender: it's about sex.

What was most striking about the partnership of Hart and Hyde was how committed both were to the dance: Hart performed as much for the music as the plot, and Hyde's sensuality was fully responsive to the music. This made the choreography a joy to watch for its own sake and yet, paradoxically, it made the plot all the easier to follow because it's the dance, of course, that's designed to tell the story. All the lilting expression of Hart's arms in her many arabesques, particularly the ones she performs alone, are there for the music as much as for Romeo, and yet the music is there for her and the story, and so the ballet becomes one organic whole.

I know I've only given an impression of a huge ballet that's over two hours long and much is left unsaid; I haven't meant to ignore the contributions made by the set, lighting, costumes, orchestra and so on, but other things loomed larger and demanded to be followed: the form of ballet itself; Juliet's "yes" next to Death's, and Tybalt's, "no"; Hart's metaphysical arabesques. What I've tried to do is put a little order to the sprawl of my experience of this whole world, mapping it out so that when the ballet returns I can go on other, perhaps deeper, darker, excursions. Armed with childlike enthusiasm and hopefully adult intellect, I'm always happy to go and play for a few hours within ballet's highly theatrical game. Which isn't to say that another day I won't take a long walk up a mountain or through a forest, pondering daisies. And now I'll end the present ramble by returning to the beginning: it's an amazing experience to exist within a world that's under control and proceeding according to plan.

Photos: David Cooper, Paul Martens, courtesy Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Dance Collection Danse

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No one seems to be exactly clear on what the World Wide Web really is. Some argue it's the "information" highway, some say it's entertainment and others see it as way of doing business. Maybe it's all of the above and more.

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In the box were newspaper clippings, souvenir programmes (autographed), and a playbill and flyer from the first NBC performance at Eaton Auditorium in November of 1951. Among all this "stuff" was a "Golden Jubilee 1904 - 1954" pamphlet from the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

In one of those unexplained moments, I opened the pamphlet at page 7, and looked at 1926. There, one sentence leapt off the page, confirming what has been suspected for several years now, that the Cecchetti Society had a presence in Canada, long before its re-birth in the 1950's.

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