

# Behind the Scenes

Wellington Branch Newsletter

September 2009

## President's pointe



### Dear Friends

The past year for Wellington Friends has been so exciting. Thank you for your wonderful generosity in supporting your very own ballet company. Wellington Branch has handed over \$18,000 to help with "Keeping the dancers on their toes."

It's now time to raise our heads high above the "doom and gloom" mindset surrounding the financial recession and move on to our next fantastic ballet season, *Peter Pan*. After all, we are all children at heart! What better way is there than to celebrate the joys of spring with memories of our very own childhood fairy tale! Your committee has organised a "celebration morning", for you, our members, on 17 October, to honour our distinguished guest, Russell Kerr QSM, ONZM and his wife, June. The starting time for the day, in the Royal New Zealand Ballet Green Room, is 10.30am and we conclude with a Celebration Lunch at 12.00 noon. Of course, there will be plenty of stories told about *Peter Pan*, which was a new production, commissioned especially for the Royal New Zealand Ballet by Russell and first performed in 1999. Please come along and spend time with Russell, our most distinguished Dance Icon and by all means, bring a non-member with you - after all, what better way is there to introduce them to a most distinguished dancer, artistic director and choreographer?

I would now like to draw your attention to the following information about upcoming events, including some major changes, as follows:

**Ticket prices** - don't forget, when booking your tickets to a performance, that you are entitled to 15% discount.

**InterAct with Friends** - we look forward to seeing you, for a catch-up chat, in our special area on the ground floor. Don't forget to pre-order your drinks and have them delivered to our InterAct area which is located under the stairs on the ground floor, behind our sales table.. This not only saves you time in the first interval, but you can also invite your non-member friends to join us.

**International Friends** - If you know of people living overseas, who are interested in the RNZB, please talk to me about our International Friends members club and what we have to offer them.

**Te Papa - "A Day in the Life of a Dancer"** will take place on 11 October at 12 noon in the Marae on Level 4. Do come and introduce yourselves to us. We will be handing out Friends and Young Friends membership forms.

And yes, there are more exciting events happening in 2010 - in fact it looks like being an exceptional year! Look out for our Diary to be published in the Christmas newsletter issue. I am confident that this coming season will whet your appetite, and you may soon be dreaming of Tinkerbell, or Peter Pan - after all, Neverland is a wonderful place to be, when it is our very own ballet company!

Ingrid Witkowski

President

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**Our website** [wn-friends.org](http://wn-friends.org)

## 2009 Events programme

### “Behind the Scenes” Forum

Royal New Zealand Ballet, Green Room,  
Level 2, St James Theatre

Saturday 17 October, 11 am to 12 noon

Russell Kerr (Choreographer), Kenneth Young  
(Conductor, Vector Wellington Orchestra) and Gary  
Harris (Artistic Director, RNZB) will be speaking.

**RNZB Friends tea/coffee** 10:30 am to 11:00 am

**Lunch with Russell Kerr and Young Friends**  
12 noon (after Forum) Cost: \$5.00.

**See booking form enclosed**

### Peter Pan season

Friday 30 October – 7 November, St James  
Theatre, Wellington

**Theatre tour** - Thursday 5 November, 6:00 pm,  
free but requires registration at  
nzballet.org.nz/education

**InterAct** - Saturday 31 October, Friday 6  
November & Saturday 7 November  
see article about InterAct later in this newsletter.

**Q & A** in the St James Theatre.- Saturday 7  
November, 5.00 pm. approx (following the  
matinee)

**Ballet for Boys** - Saturday 7 November – For  
boys aged 10 and over, cost \$15.00  
(Young Friends cost \$5.00 only if booked through  
Wellington Friends.)

### Dress Rehearsal

Thursday 29 October

**Gather at 7:00 pm, first floor, for a 7:30 pm start.**

For a number of years in the past, there was a  
requirement that, for every two persons wishing to  
purchase tickets for a Dress Rehearsal, one person  
had to have purchased a performance ticket.

From next season's performance onwards, this  
requirement will now become effective again. This  
will enable us to show essential support for the  
Royal New Zealand Ballet's general ticket sales.

Strictly speaking, a Dress Rehearsal is not a public  
performance e.g. there may be interruptions by the  
choreographer or the orchestra; the lighting might  
go on and off; the dancers may not be in full  
costume. In reality, we are privileged to be invited  
to attend these much more private rehearsals and  
also to be able to bring along a non-member. We  
encourage you to show your support for the Royal  
New Zealand Ballet in this way.

We look forward to seeing you at the *Peter Pan*  
Dress Rehearsal and don't forget to use your  
Friends membership to obtain your 15% discount  
on your performance ticket!

### Book review

by Jennifer Shennan

This is the first of a series of regular book reviews for  
the Friends Newsletter. A dance writer receives copies  
of books from publishers and feels morally obliged to  
review them – but to date it has proved challenging to  
find any suitable publication outlet within New Zealand  
interested to feature such reviews. The Newsletter is  
thus taking an important and appreciated step in  
commissioning this Dance Books feature.

Not all the books reviewed will necessarily be new, but  
I promise (hope) they will all be of interest. It is hoped  
that readers will occasionally feel motivated to locate a  
title, either at the bookshop, or perhaps via an  
acquisition request to your local library?

**Edwin Denby – Dance Writings**  
**edited by Robert Cornfield & William Mackay**  
**(University Press of Florida. 1986)**

This generous volume contains collected writings -  
reviews and essays - by Edwin Denby, one of  
America's most prolific and stimulating dance writers.  
Although they span the years 1930 – 1983 there is yet  
no sense that the writings are past their “best by” date.  
Many interesting notions are discussed in essays that  
have proved timeless in their relevance: *Learning by*  
*Watching Class ... On Meaning in Dance ... Against*  
*Meaning in Dance ... Notes on Nijinsky Photographs*  
*... Danish Ballet Style ... Dancers, Buildings and*  
*People in the Streets.*

I rank Antony Tudor as one of the most outstanding  
choreographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century so was thrilled to  
discover how many times Denby probed his works for  
their psychological and thematic depth. It is worth  
noting how well Tudor's choreographic vision submits  
to verbal discussion, not necessarily a feature of all  
choreographies. The Denby-on-Tudor pieces alone  
are worth the effort of tracking down the volume, but  
there are plenty of other pages of treasure – on  
*Balanchine, Limon, Tudor, Jooss, Graham, Ashton,*  
*Nijinsky, Nijinska, Massine* - as well as detailed  
accounts of performances by *Markova, Alonso,*  
*Ulanova.* He is not always a devotee, but he is always  
clear and insightful in his thinking. In the particularly  
lively introductions by Cornfield & Mackay a portrait is  
drawn of Denby as dance writing enduring words about  
an ephemeral art. His best pieces ensure that the  
memory of it need not be so ephemeral.

Aged 80, Denby's infirmities meant he could no longer  
attend the ballet as he would wish. He went into his  
study and took an overdose of sleeping pills. Dance  
Writings is his monument.

Book review ... continued

Readers of this newsletter are invited to send any research enquiries concerning dance books, periodicals and archival materials held in New Zealand libraries, to Keith McEwing in The Music Room at the National Library, keith.mcewing@natlib.govt.nz

## Film evening

Friday 12 March 2010  
(early notice!!!)  
7:00 pm for a 7:30 pm start  
(includes light supper).

### Venue:

Time Cinema, 191  
Sutherland Rd, Lyall Bay.

### Film: Oklahoma!

First ever musical by Rodgers & Hammerstein, opened in 1943 on Broadway. We will be watching the award winning film produced in 1955 starring Gordon MacRae, Gloria Grahame and Shirley Jones.



## Film nights at the cinema

The film nights at Time Cinema in Lyall Bay are proving to be very popular! This month's session was booked out very quickly. Remember that the film nights are open to everyone - not just Friends – so bring along your family, friends and all and sundry!

The main feature is usually accompanied by a newsreel of the same year and an old cartoon (e.g. Bugs Bunny) - just like visits to the movies in the old days!

Apart from enjoying the movie, browse amongst the wonderful collection of movie memorabilia, which goes back to the early days of cinema. Enjoy a good supper too. And don't forget to **book early**, since seating is limited!

## Raffle ticket winners

Forum raffle - Reg Harris

RNZB Open Day raffle - Nikki Brewer-Mann

**Congratulations to the winners, and many thanks to all those who supported us by purchasing a ticket!**

## Letter to the editor

Dear Ingrid,

I would like to thank you and the Committee for the wonderful 'La Sylphide' Forum on 17 July.

It was a really special evening. The lecture given by Matz Skoog and Charles brought the whole ballet into focus and gave everyone an insight of how the story evolved and became a performance. To have the added enjoyment of seeing an actual scene performed was a fitting highlight to a magical night.

The dress rehearsal was fantastic.

Many, many thanks

Dorothy Niven.

## InterAct – new event to replace Coffee & Conversation



In response to wondering about how we can help the Royal New Zealand Ballet reach out to their audience and supporters, we have decided to expand the former Coffee & Conversation to include the general public. We want people of all ages to feel excited about being involved with the Royal New Zealand Ballet!

An area in the ground floor foyer, next to the Friends sales table, will be cordoned off for our use, in the first interval of the 7.30pm performances in the *Peter Pan* season, on Saturday 31 October, Friday 6 November and Saturday 7 November. Members of Friends will be able to pre-order and pre-pay for alcoholic drinks, tea, filter coffee and ice creams from the Jimmy Bar and Café, when they arrive at the theatre. This will save you time queueing for drinks in the first interval. Dockets will be issued and will be needed to collect your pre-paid order from the St James staff member on duty in our InterAct area. When ordering, please tell the bar staff that you wish to collect your order from the Friends InterAct area at the first interval. There will be a sign in front of the area, inviting everyone in for a chat, whether they are Friends or not.

There will also be signs on the bar, encouraging non-Friends to join us with their drinks. We will have a display board with information about what Friends are all about. Please come along and support this new event and encourage your bystanders to do the same – don't be shy! Wellington Friends of the Royal New Zealand Ballet would like to thank the St James Theatre for their support in this event.

## Sales table

Don't forget to check out our sales table during the *Peter Pan* season on the ground floor of the St. James Theatre – look for the Friends banner.

Bring along your gold coins for the raffle and the dancing sheep!

There will also be ballet-related Christmas cards for sale at \$2 each and \$10 for six (envelopes included in the price).

There are two new designs for 2009, so get in early for overseas posting!



If you wish to order either the Pohutukawa Tutu Christmas card or the Christmas Arabesque card, send a cheque and add \$3.00 for post and packaging) to PO Box 14-495, Kilbirnie, Wellington 6241. Don't forget your own name and address!!!

## Special invitation from the Royal New Zealand Ballet



### ROYAL NEW ZEALAND BALLET

We are delighted to invite you to join us for a springtime luncheon in association with Logan Brown and Champagne Perriet-Jouët

#### Lunch with the Royal New Zealand Ballet

Friday 16 October, 12:00pm – 2:00pm

#### Logan Brown Restaurant & Bar

Meet RNZB Artistic Director, Gary Harris and our gorgeous dancers whilst enjoying a truly memorable dining experience

#### Tickets

**\$125 per person**

includes champagne, canapés, two-course lunch with matched wines and complimentary gift bag (valued at over \$140) which includes an A-Reserve ticket to our 2010 Triple Bill season.

Go in the draw to win a fabulous "Night at the Ballet" prize package: two tickets to a performance of *Peter Pan*, pre-performance dinner at Logan Brown and one night's accommodation at the Museum Hotel

Bookings – Kat Sprowell  
ph 04 381 9013 or email [kat@nzballet.org.nz](mailto:kat@nzballet.org.nz)

## Committee members 2009/2010

Office	Name	Phone (Hm)	Email
President, events, Tutus on Tour	Ingrid Witkowski	(04) 387 3994	<a href="mailto:ingridw@xtra.co.nz">ingridw@xtra.co.nz</a>
Newsletters, webmaster, forums, National Committee	Peter Cowley	(04) 934 6224 022-6102-910	<a href="mailto:pcowley@paradise.net.nz">pcowley@paradise.net.nz</a>
Treasurer	John Bolland	(04) 232 6125	<a href="mailto:bolly@ihug.co.nz">bolly@ihug.co.nz</a>
Minute Secretary, raffles, sales table	Valerie Hellberg	(04) 478 3799	<a href="mailto:valeriehel@xtra.co.nz">valeriehel@xtra.co.nz</a>
Young Friends membership	Pam Reader	(04) 389 8637	<a href="mailto:pam.reader@xtra.co.nz">pam.reader@xtra.co.nz</a>
Membership renewals	Glenda West	(04) 385 4803	<a href="mailto:walden@actrix.co.nz">walden@actrix.co.nz</a>
Artwork, events	Angela de Bres	(04) 383 7851	<a href="mailto:angela.debres@xtra.co.nz">angela.debres@xtra.co.nz</a>
Young Friends events, InterAct	Lindy Siegert	(04) 380 1564	<a href="mailto:lesiegert@xtra.co.nz">lesiegert@xtra.co.nz</a>
Masterclasses, ballet schools contact	Helena Easter	027 275 1737	<a href="mailto:the5easters@xtra.co.nz">the5easters@xtra.co.nz</a>
Young Friends book reviews, articles	Sheryl Brown	(04) 527 3919	<a href="mailto:brown.family@paradise.net.nz">brown.family@paradise.net.nz</a>