

Behind the Scenes

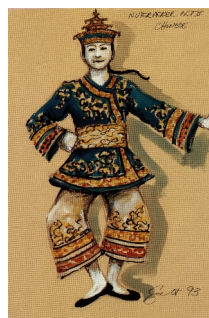
Wellington Branch Newsletter

February 2010

President's point



FRIENDS of the
ROYAL NEW ZEALAND BALLET



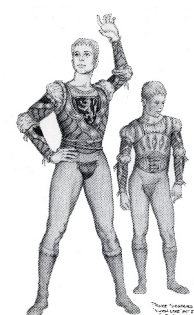
Chinese dancer
1995 *Nutcracker*
Design by Peter Cazalet



Baron von Rothbart
1996 *Swan Lake*
Design by
Kristian Fredrikson



Princess Odile
1996 *Swan Lake*
Design by Kristian
Fredrikson



Prince Siegfried
1996 *Swan Lake*
Design by
Kristian Fredrikson

Dear Friends

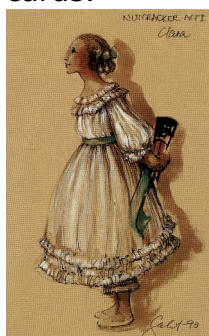
The Wellington Friends committee welcomes you all to an action packed 2010. Not only do we have an exciting year of events and dance, starting with the TOWER season of *From Here To There*, but we look forward to seeing you during the 1st interval at InterAct. The next exciting instalment of Wellington Branch's unique history continues below.

Ingrid Witkowski

Wellington Branch history

C) Cards

Since 1995 Wellington Branch has produced and sold gift and Christmas cards as part of our fundraising and over this time we have sold more than 4000 cards.



Clara
1995 *The Nutcracker*
Design by
Peter Cazalet



Anyone for pavlova?
2007 Christmas card
Design by Angela de Bres

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**Our website is wn-friends.org
or ... balletfriends.org**



Ugly step-sister
2007 *Cinderella*
Design by:
Angela de Bres

Ballerina
2007 Seasons Greetings
Design by Angela de Bres



Wellington Friends of
The Royal New Zealand Ballet



Pohutukawa Tutu
2008 Seasons Greetings
Designs by Angela de Bres



Christmas Arabesque
2009 Seasons Greetings
Design by:
Angela de Bres

following the death of the artist - the medallion will be presented to a successor at a subsequent Icon Award ceremony. The total Living Icons will number 20.

Wellington Friends of the Royal New Zealand Ballet have been very fortunate to have an association with two famous Dance Icons, Alexander Grant OBE 2005 and Russell Kerr QSM ONZM 2003.



Dance Icon - Alexander Grant, OBE.
Photo: Arts Foundation website

Keep an eye out for Wellington Friends special 2010 Christmas card edition which will be available from September.

C) Committee

Wellington Friends committee is a group of hard working volunteer dance enthusiasts who arrange special fundraising events for members and their friends. It is through our member's support that we are able to contribute financially and morally to our national ballet company

D) Dance Icons

Icons Awards, Whakamana Hiranga.

The Arts Foundation of New Zealand established this award to celebrate Living Icons. Ten Icons were appointed in 2003, and a further eleven in 2005/2007.

The Arts Foundation chose to celebrate writing, dance, theatre, design, visual art, opera, photography, sculpture and architecture.

Each person chosen received a medallion and pin, designed by stone sculptor John Edgar. The artist keeps the pin in perpetuity, while -

Dance Icon (2005) Alexander Grant

OBE, was born in Wellington in 1925, started ballet class aged 6 with Kathleen O'Brien, then for 12 years trained under Jeanne Horne. In 1944 he was awarded the RAD Scholarship (Royal Academy of Dancing) as it was then known, to study at the Sadler's Wells School. In 1945 he entered the ballet school, and after a few months was asked to join the newly formed Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet. He was recalled to Covent Garden to join the main company less than one year after his arrival in London. Grant was a soloist and performed his first Frederick Ashton role created especially for him "The boy who jumps through a hoop" in *Les Sirenes*.

He was given the title of the greatest character dancer ever produced by the British company.

In 1964 he returned to New Zealand as a guest of the Royal New Zealand Ballet, performed the leading role in Russell Kerr's production of *Petrouchka*. During his homecoming tour he was interviewed by radio and press - his personality was a bonus and everybody relished his style and gusto.

His performance of *Petrouchka* brought the house down with a standing ovation.

The Royal Ballet appointed Grant from 1971 to 1976 as director of "Ballet for All", in London .

In 1976 he took up the post as Director of the National Ballet of Canada, and in 1979 this was the first Canadian Ballet Company to perform in the Royal Opera House Covent Garden.

On the death of Sir Frederick Ashton he inherited the rights to *La Fille Mal Gardee* and *Facade*, which he now travels the world restaging.

It was in 1997 that the Royal New Zealand Ballet Artistic Director, Matz Skoog, invited him to stage *La Fille Mal Gardee*, and Wellington Friends had the opportunity to meet this very distinguished Dance Icon.

No doubt there will be many who remember the wonderful afternoon when Wellington Friends staged "An Afternoon with Alexander Grant" at the National Library Theatre in Thorndon, with radio announcer Liz Gunn as compere. Not only did we have Wellington Friends attending but people from all over New Zealand, and a very special surprise of old dance pals from way back when he was 6 years old. Grant was also fortunate to be given by Kerry Prendergast, deputy-Mayor of Wellington at that time, a plaque, reading "Absolutely, Positively Wellington Award, to our beautiful city."

Wellington Friends committee were very fortunate to have been lent, a wonderful collection of Grant's dance photographs for the public to view. These photographs, belonging to the Royal Ballet Covent Garden, were returned after a very successful and memorable day.

We still keep in touch with Alexander Grant as he is one of Wellington Branch's, International Friends of the Royal New Zealand Ballet.

Dance Icon (2003) Russell Kerr QSM ONZM was born in Auckland in 1930 and received a New Zealand government bursary that took him to study at the Sadler's Wells School in London in 1950. He also took Spanish dance studies with Elsa Brunelleschi, which led him to perform in the Jose Greco Spanish Company.



Dance Icon - Russell Kerr, QSM, ONZM
Photo: Arts Foundation website

He danced with Ballet Rambert and in 1952 joined London Festival Ballet.

Russell married June Greenhalgh, also a dancer with Festival Ballet, and returned to New Zealand in 1957. He went into partnership with Beryl Nettleton and Bettina Edwards in Auckland and taught ballet classes under the name of the Nettleton-Edwards-Kerr School of Ballet.

From 1962–1968 he was the Artistic Director of the Royal New Zealand Ballet, and it was during this time that Kerr choreographed or restaged the following ballets:

Peter and the Wolf, Kerr, 1962
Balesque, Kerr, 1963
Concerto, Kerr, 1963
Esmeralda, pas de deux, Perrot (Kerr), 1963
Form-free, Kerr, 1963
Mephisto, Kerr, 1964
Petrouchka, Fokine (Kerr), 1964
Aurora's Wedding, Petipa (Kerr), 1965
Swan Lake Act II, Ivano (Kerr), 1965
Prince Igor, Kerr, 1966

In total during his career he has choreographed more than 65 ballets, a wonderful achievement.

He was Director of the New Zealand Dance Centre in Auckland and later moved to Christchurch and became Director of Southern Ballet.

The wonderful association the Wellington Friends of the RNZB have had with Russell

Kerr began in 1996 with the season of *Swan Lake*. Don't you all just remember the breathtaking Swans, Fredrikson designs, and the dancers demonstrating every move at the Wellington Forum, while Kerr explained the mime scenes and demonstrated each movement for us.

1999 was the first season of *Peter Pan* and the excitement of a story book ballet coming to stage, the laughter from children who attended the Wellington Friends Forum and the antics of the dancers in full flight gave us a lot to remember of just how wonderful our ballet company is.

In 2001 *A Christmas Carol*, with once again Wellington Forum and costume display. And of course not to forget the one and only *Peter Pan*, restaged in 2003 and 2009. Wellington Friends welcomed with open arms Kerr's return to our ballet company and last year held a celebration lunch in his honour after the Forum so Wellington Friends could toast a remarkable Dance Icon.

I do hope you have enjoyed Part 2 of our A – Z Wellington Branch History.

Ingrid Witkowski

Diary & Trimmer event

Don't forget to note the dates of the upcoming events on the diary page included with this newsletter.

We would particularly like to see Friends support Sir Jon and Lady Trimmer's art exhibition on 7 and 14 February from 10am. St. art gallery, level 1, 174 Cuba Street, Wgtn (Apology, no wheelchair access available)

Obituary: Rigmor Gnatt



Photo: Ingrid Witkowski

Wellington Friends regret to advise members of the passing of Honorary Life Member, Rigmor Gnatt on 28 December 2009. Rigmor was the wife of the late Poul Gnatt who founded the New Zealand Ballet in 1953. We extend our condolences to the Gnatt family.

Fundraising Garage Sale

We are looking for good presentable and saleable items for our inaugural fundraising garage sale on 6 March, 9am-1pm. No clothes, white-ware, TV's or broken items please.

Please drop off any items to Pete at Unit 2, 56 Ira Street, Miramar. If you are unable to drop off then phone Pete on 934-6224 for collection.

Committee members 2009/2010

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