

Behind the Scenes

Wellington Branch Newsletter

September 2011

President's pointe



Dear Friends

2011 is moving along very quickly indeed, even though the RNZB is overseas showing the world that we are a great little dance company, we here at home have been and continue to be very busy with our events.

We held our branch AGM recently and a group of friends took the opportunity to watch the dancers in class, listened to the creators of the pieces in Stravinsky Selection at the Behind the Scenes Forum and toured the wardrobe to get an idea of the amount of work that goes on there.

Due to Ingrid's ill health, she has stepped down as president and I have been elected to take her place – she has left big shoes to fill but fortunately she is close by if I need help. The great news is that the last report from her oncologist says she is clear of the cancer. So we are all sure she will be back with her indomitable energy and spirit soon.

Just a few weeks ago we held our annual Dance All Weekend for students and Young Friends. This was again very well received and the children all expressed how much fun they had and how much they had learned.

Pete Cowley, President

Wellington Branch history A-Z

E – Events (continued) – 1998

Please note, I have only listed dance seasons and events where Wellington Branch was involved.

The "Big Move" to a new home

Sunday 8th February was the official opening of the new Royal New Zealand Ballet home in the beautifully-refurbished St James Theatre, in Courtenay Place, Wellington.

Friends of the RNZB, Wellington Branch, are very proud of the fact that furnishings were presented to fill the Green Room.



Jon Trimmer with Mr & Mrs Arrowsmith. Photo: Ingrid Witkowski

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



The official hand over of the Green Room furnishings from the Friends. Jon Trimmer (right) hands the plaque of recognition to Ingrid Witkowski. On the left is Mr Blackburn from the RNZB. Photo: Ingrid Witkowski

There were also subtle layers of interest for those theatergoers who want an evening-length ballet to steer clear of clichés. All the familiar divertissements are gone, replaced by a corps of dramatically convincing courtiers superbly attired by designer Craig Givens”.

Luncheon with Gareth and Friends

This event was hosted by The Hon Robyn McDonald MP and consisted of talks based on *Three Percussionists*, as part of the Triple Bill, and choreographic work by Shona McCullagh MNZM, whom, it appeared, had been at school with Robyn McDonald. Lunch was held in the Parliamentary Members’ dining area, on the third floor of the Beehive building, which overlooked the city and harbour. Gareth entertained everyone with his wonderful sense of fun. With a stretch here and there, he showed how one has to have near-acrobatic skills, as well as musical skills, to be a percussionist, his antics bringing the house down!

Dance and Banquet.

Zou Ying, wife of Ou Lu MNZM (who was a leading soloist with the RNZB at that time) presented to 90 Friends her Chinese Classical Dance students in an evening of dance, followed by a 7-course Chinese banquet. It was held at the Chinese Anglican Centre in Wellington and was a wonderful night filled with multi-coloured lanterns, fans, ribbons and costumes. The dance pieces were beautifully presented and well performed.

Sleeping Beauty

Adrienne Matheson (a former RNZB dancer) and her daughter returned from Denmark, to stage *Sleeping Beauty* for the RNZB. Adrienne led a seminar on the ballet with choreographer, Kim Brandstrup and designer, Craig Givens.

From a review at the time “The Royal New Zealand Ballet's new production of *The Sleeping Beauty* by Danish choreographer Kim Brandstrup pleased the followers of ballet tradition by retaining much of Petipa's grand pas for the soloists.



Adrienne Matheson & daughter. Photo: Ingrid Witkowski



Adrienne with Kim Brandstrup, choreographer. Photo: Ingrid Witkowski



Craig Givens, Designer. Photo: Ingrid Witkowski



Scene from the Dance Banquet. Photo: Ingrid Witkowski



Scene from the Dance Banquet. Photo: Ingrid Witkowski



Russell Kerr with some of the costumes for Peter Pan. Photo: Ingrid Witkowski



Scene from the Dance Banquet. Photo: Ingrid Witkowski

Raymonda/Soldatenmis/Allegro Brillante

His Excellency, the America Ambassador, Mr Josiah Beeman and his wife Susan, kindly hosted an afternoon seminar at the American embassy for the Raymonda/ Soldatenmis/ Allegro Brillante season. The speakers were Patricia Neary and Patricia Rianne, who came to NZ to assist the restaging of Allegro Brillante and Raymonda. Afternoon tea followed, in the beautiful Embassy gardens.

Royal New Zealand Ballet 45th Anniversary

A Christmas treat to remember was held at Premier House, the home of the Prime Minister at the time, The Right Hon Jenny Shipley DCNZM and hosted, for Wellington Friends, by the Hon Marie Hasler, Minister of Cultural Affairs.

The Wellington Floral Art Club Inc displayed beautiful, dance-themed, floral art displays for all to view. What a wonderful way to finish off the year, being able to spend a lovely December evening in the beautiful, Victorian-style grounds!

1999

Peter Pan

Choreographed by Russell Kerr ONZM QSM this wonderful children's story book ballet especially choreographed for the RNZB. What an exciting time it was for the dancers, children and adults alike!

The Brilliant Parade of Ballet Costumes Through the Years

180 guests attended The Brilliant Parade of Ballet Costumes throughout the years and it sure was a night for Wellington Friends to remember!

It was held at Government House and hosted by the then Governor General, Sir Michael Hardie Boyes GNZM, GCMG, GCVO, DBE, QSO and Lady Hardie Boys. This was the very first time that the RNZB had allowed the public to



Two of a series of photos taken by of the Dominion photographer, Martin Hunter, of the event.

view dancers' costumes up close. The compere for the night was Bobbi Gibbons with Sir Jon Trimmer KNZM MBE reading historical notes about each costume.



Two of a series of photos taken by of the Dominion photographer, Martin Hunter, of the event.

The RNZB stage crew certainly had their work cut out, what with collecting the catwalk, donated by Kirkcaldie and Stains, and setting it up in the in the ballroom, and also with trucking loads of wonderful dance costumes to be put on the many racks in the loggia area.

The dancers who paraded the costumes on the night were; Julie Aldridge, Prue Behan, Sonya Behrnes, Catherine Chisholm, Hannah McNeill, Jane Turner, Nadine Tyson, Trevor Duggan, Gennadi Kouchin, Andrew Obst, Ou Lu, and Geordan Wilcox. The accompanying music was performed by Nicholas Giles-Palmer, the RNZB pianist. The evening finished with a wonderful menu from the kitchen of Government House, which is worth a mention - assorted Californian sushi rolls, camembert beignets, with prosciutto, tomato, mushroom and bocconcini quiche, new season's asparagus and spinach crepes, finger sandwiches, smoked chicken and almond

croissants, beef tenderloin kebabs with bernaise dipping sauce, caponata tartlets with feta, and sweet morsels of panforte, biscotti, and chocolate brownie, served with tea and coffee. Wellington Friends were very proud to see this event take over the front page of the 23rd August edition of The Dominion!

Coming Events

There is a separate diary page with the events that are coming up and also details for booking and payment. Please read carefully

Why You Are You

Kapiti Branch of the NZ Society of Genealogists is pleased to announce its 2011 "Why You Are You (YURU) Guest is Sir Jon Trimmer.

A research team is working with him on his family history. Sir Jon, a 5th generation Kiwi, will be telling his story to audiences as part of national Family History Month in August. His Kapiti presentation will be a matinee and evening show on Thursday August 18 at Southwards, Paraparaumu. He will also be present at the Family History Fair in Hamilton on Saturday August 27.

Details of ticket sales for these performances will be announced shortly by the various hosts.

Sir Jon has a relative in the South Island and a sister in Hamilton helping the production team with the family story.

Clive Palmer

YURU Coordinator

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