

Behind the scenes

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Turid Revfeim

Peter Cowley from Wellington Friends talked with Turid Revfeim, Ballet Mistress, about her journey in dance.



What inspired your love of dance?

When I was five my grandmother suggested I learn ballet but in Taupo where I grew up, there were no classes at that time. But because there was interest, Audrey McRae started classes. She needed a ballet pianist and it just so happened that my mother was a pianist – a perfect match. Audrey would put on amazing performances at the end of the year and I loved being on stage – this was the magic that that gave me the love of dance. Because Audrey only taught up to pre-elementary three of us travelled to Auckland every weekend to continue our training with Bernice McGough. For four years our parents took it in turns to drive up to Auckland leaving at 5am and returning at 5pm that night.

When you trained at the National Ballet School in 1979/80, who were your significant mentors?

Significant mentors were Ann Rowse, Christine Gunn, Dorothy Daniels – there were so many really. To help support ourselves during that time a group of us from the school were employed as performers with Wellington City Council's SummerCity programme. Each year we worked with different choreographers such as Paul Jenden, Michael Parmenter, and Trish Hodgson. The different atmosphere and audiences made this a great way to spend our summer break, earn a little money and keep fit too.

On graduating in 1981 you spent 5 years with the Koblenzer Ballet in Germany. Can you tell us about this experience?

Living in Germany was amazing - being right in the middle of Europe gave me a great opportunity to travel. There was no touring as nearly every major city in Europe has its own ballet company. The Koblenzer Ballet had two major performances each year – one full-length ballet and one more contemporary season on the smaller stage. We were also required to dance in the operas and even in the musicals, which were great fun. These included Oklahoma, My Fair Lady and Westside Story – all sung in German, which was quite bizarre.

Do you have a favourite from the many roles you have danced?

I don't have a favourite role. What I do like about the Royal New Zealand Ballet is the encouragement to study and develop the characters that we are dancing.

You completed your BA in Dance at Queensland University in 1996. What were the highlights?

The Australian experience was great and although I was still dancing each day, it was not to the same extent as before. It was a refreshing break for my body, and the brain had its own workout at this time.

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You married Kim Broad, an ex company dancer. Where did you meet Kim?

Kim and I met here at the Royal New Zealand Ballet and we married in 1990. Our daughter Emma is now 7 years old and loves to dance. Whether she will carry on or not is up to her, we are just letting her follow her interest in dance as she wants to.

In 1998 you retired from dancing and took up the position of Artistic Coordinator and in January 2003 you were appointed Ballet Mistress. What changes did this involve for you?

In 1998 when I retired from dance I really stopped dancing completely. I now run to keep up my fitness. I enjoy taking company classes but it is not nearly the same as having to actually dance. I love working with our dancers and watching their progress during the years they are with us. I love watching dance and I get to see every performance, so in essence I have my dream job.

Included in this year's Road Tour is your own work, Si Supieras set to tango music by Jonathan Besser. How did you come to choose this music and how did it inspire the choreography?

I usually start with the music. Jonathan Besser who composed the music, toured with the company as a pianist in 2003 and he gave me a CD of his music (You Got Your Wish). There was a series of tangos and when Gary Harris asked if I would choreograph for the Otago Arts Festival, I knew they would be perfect. Having your own choreography on show is very stressful but the dancers are doing a wonderful job in performing the work!

Since he graduated in 2000, Eliot has been dancing all around the world. He has been with the Atlanta Ballet, English National Ballet, Béjart Ballet, Scottish Ballet, Baardar Norsk Dance, English National Opera, Israel Ballet, and England's Northern Ballet Theatre. Now at age 24 Eliot loves his experience with the Royal New Zealand Ballet – one of the main differences from the other companies he has danced with is the strong family atmosphere. Eliot says he has never felt so welcome and at home anywhere else. He also enjoys the way the dancers work so well as a team. Often politics and hierarchy can get in the way of the dancing but in the Royal New Zealand Ballet the dancers seem to be able to put these things aside and concentrate on the quality of the dance as a whole.

In his spare time Eliot loves reading, hoovering (!) and arranging parties and events – he was responsible for the dress up theme at the recent company Christmas party which was "Heroes and Villains".

Eliot said that at one time before going on stage he had a strict routine of eating at a certain time, sewing his shoes a particular way and listening to the same piece of music. But he has come to realise that even with the most careful preparation, things can still go wrong on stage or there can be a hiccup in the routine. He has learned to roll with the pre-show nerves and now avoids patterns and routine. Experience has taught him that every show is different and sometimes things just go wrong – a dancer is an artist not a robot! He even admits that sometimes a little panic can produce an unexpectedly good performance.

Eliot is really looking forward to touring by bus with New Zealand Post Tutus on Tour – it is a perfect opportunity to see more of New Zealand and the dramatic South Island scenery which is very different from the quaint Lancashire countryside he grew up in.

Another aspect he enjoys is that, because the dancers are living and travelling together, it is a very social time – lots of gatherings and after-parties rather than the dancers just packing up and heading home after a performance.

Dancer spotlight

We cast the spotlight on Eliot Rudolph who is touring the South Island with New Zealand Post Tutus on Tour.



Eliot Rudolph first started dancing at the age of nine in a small school in rural Lancashire – he says he was inspired to dance and driven to attend classes by his love of music and a lack of co-ordination – this drive led him to take lessons not only in ballet but tap, modern, and national dance as well!

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Wellington Friends

Subscriptions now due

Subs for the 2005 year are now due

A membership form is attached for this year's subscription (if you have paid through the subscription series ignore this) – your subscription helps keep the dancers on their feet as we help the company buy new pointe shoes.

Tutus on Tour

Don't miss this great opportunity to see the Wellington Friends present the Royal New Zealand Ballet performing "Tutus on Tour" at Lower Hutt's Little Theatre. This is an excellent program full of visual delights.

Program:

Si Supieras by our very own Turid Revfeim, set to the music of Bar Tango, Friday Tango & Friday Night Alone by Jonathan Besser.

The Sleeping Beauty (the famous wedding pas de deux) by Marius Petipa with Tchaikovsky's romantic orchestral score. Timeless beauty!

Verge by Shona McCullagh, is playful, youthful and exuberant and a hybrid of ballet and contemporary dance. Score by John Andrews

Esquisses by Christopher Hampson, creator of the RNZB's recent hit of Romeo & Juliet. Hampson's long time collaborator and RNZB Artistic Director, Gary Harris, designed the classic and sophisticated costumes. An elegant jet of green and blue tutus with diamond detailing fills the stage

For more detailed information on programme see November's Newsletter or on-line at wn-friends.org/newsletters

When and Where:

Lower Hutt Little Theatre, Queens Drive, Lower Hutt
Thursday **24th March 2005** at 7:30 pm

Wheel chair access.

Exciting and interesting purchases can be made from our sales table on the night.

Easter Basket Raffle.

Refreshments prior to performance and during interval.

Gold coin donation to view **company class** in the afternoon.

Enquiries: Ingrid Witkowski (04) 387-7025 or 387-7024 fax

Tutus on Tour Forum

We were very fortunate, to have all the people involved with the 2005 Road tour with us this month, Gary Harris, Artistic Director and costume designer for **Esquisses**, Turid Revfeim, Ballet Mistress and choreographer of **Si Supieras**, Christopher Hampson choreographer of **Esquisses** and Shona McCullagh, choreographer of **Verge**.



Left to right: Gary Harris, Artistic Director, Turid Revfeim, Ballet Mistress, Shona McCullagh, Choreographer and Mary Weddell, Wellington Friends President. Photo Peter Cowley

Shona McCullagh spoke about how she has reshaped **Verge** for the Company. With a larger number of dancers, and the beautiful Aquarius Suite score reworked by John Andrews, professor of Music at Canterbury University, the dancers are more able to express the dual layers of the work. The first layer is the suggestion of movement on the cusp which can be a symbol of greeting or departure. The second layer is a reflection of the Canterbury landscape, fresh, vibrant, rolling – long views.

The work is kinetic, athletic and needs split second timing – this can be challenging on smaller stages when touring.

Turid Revfeim said that Gary asked her about 18 months ago to do a piece for the Otago Festival. **Si Supieras** started with the music... Jonathan Besser was the company musician for 2003's road tour. He had produced a CD of some of his music and when she listened to it, she found the Tango pieces fantastic and they called her to put them to dance. Now reworked and expanded, the Tango steps include lunges and bigger steps and a lot of close partner work.

Christopher Hampson's **Esquisses** was originally created for the Graduation Season of the English National Ballet and was called **Double Concerto** – a large scale tutu work where he used the undergraduates to create a series of sketches of what could be. The work now comprises many pieces of music and these hold it all together and makes the work very readable. Chris considers it a way to pay homage to the 19th century classic ballet tradition.

Gary noted that the number of styles of the works presents a major challenge to the dancers. The design overall is one of a clean & fresh look at what is necessary for the tutu image. The tutu extends the line and the angles, which along with the legs and arms, can really make a pleasing silhouette. There is no set for these works; the mood is set totally by the lighting and the costumes.

Outstanding Female Artist (Modern)

The 2004 winner is **Amy Hollingsworth**

The nominations:

Amy Hollingsworth, Tanya Richam-Odoi, Jenny Tattersall



Amy Hollingsworth
Rambert Dance Company

Amy Hollingsworth was born in Australia and trained at the Australian Ballet School. She danced with the Royal New Zealand Ballet and with the company led by Peter Schaufuss before joining Rambert Dance Company in 2000. In her four years with the company she has proved herself a versatile and forceful dancer, qualities Rafael Bonachela showcased when he choreographed *Irony of Fate*, an exhausting solo dance for Hollingsworth and a lone violinist. She has choreographed two works for Rambert's workshop seasons and was rehearsal director to Kylie Minogue for her *Fever* world tour. She recently worked on *Muse*, a dance film by Bonachela.

<http://www.nationaldanceawards.com/index.htm>

Pirouetting PDA: Ballet puts on a public display of affection

Passion is palpable in the Royal New Zealand Ballet's triple bill, *The Peugeot Season of A Million Kisses to My Skin*.

The season tours the country during May and features the New Zealand premiere of Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Concerto* and David Dawson's *A Million Kisses to My Skin*.

Completing the line-up is Javier De Frutos' much-feted *Milagros*, which last toured nationally in 2003. De Frutos' international reputation has secured the RNZB invitations to perform his work in Sydney and at the prestigious San Francisco International Arts Festival following its New Zealand tour.

"All three works will appeal to the New Zealand sense of adventure," says Artistic Director Gary Harris.

"These ballets take a classical art form into challenging and exciting new territory – with fewer boundaries comes greater innovation," he says.

Company artist Rosemary Martin agrees: "Dancers love contemporary seasons. We show the audience what we can do. You take the classical technique you trained in and push it to its extremes.

There are no limits. The emotional scale is so much bigger when you don't play it safe. As an artist that's very rewarding. It's challenging, but people can relate to it. The music, the design, the dramatic themes – they're of our time," she says.

With its rise and shine charm, MacMillan's *Concerto* has become one of the legendary choreographer's most popular works. Revelling in the airy textures of Shostakovich's piano concerto, the performers put on a sparkling display of technical virtuosity.

Riveting and ritualistic, De Frutos' *Milagros* is set to Stravinsky's iconic Rite of Spring. The critical sensation of the Ballet's recent British tour, *Milagros* was declared a "brilliantly imagined, dazzling response to the score" by The Financial Times. The work received a 2005 Laurence Olivier Award nomination for Best New Dance Production and helped De Frutos secure the prize for Best Choreography (Modern) at Britain's 2004 Critics' Circle National Dance Awards.

Effortlessly elegant, sublimely beautiful, Dawson's *A Million Kisses to My Skin* is a lyrical extension of Bach's piano concerto. First performed by Dutch National Ballet in 2000, the work breathes free-flowing movement into classical ballet.

Dawson says his ballet owes its wonderfully evocative title to "the feeling an artist can achieve when everything comes together, a feeling that can be rare."

Wellington

Westpac St James Theatre
12-15 May 2005

San Francisco

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
In association with the San Francisco International Arts Festival
3-5 June 2005

Sydney

Sydney Theatre
9-12 June 2005

Creative team

Concerto

Choreography: Sir Kenneth MacMillan
Music: 2nd Piano Concerto by Dmitri Shostakovich
Original design: Jurgen Rose
Design for the RNZB: Gary Harris
Lighting design: Jason Morphet

Milagros

Choreography and design: Javier De Frutos
Music: The Rite of Spring by Igor Stravinsky
Lighting design: John Rayment

A Million Kisses to My Skin

Choreography and set design: David Dawson
Music: Piano Concerto No.1 by Johann Sebastian Bach
Costume design: Yumiko Takeshima
Lighting design: Bert Dalhuysen

The company will perform to a recording in all venues. Javier De Frutos' The Celebrated Soubrette replaces Concerto in the programme for the San Francisco and Sydney performances.



CAUSING A COMMOTION

Michael Parmenter's contribution to New Zealand contemporary dance will be celebrated come festival time in Auckland this coming summer.

COMMOTION, a retrospective of Parmenter's most popular and acclaimed works opened during the AK05 at the Sky City Theatre on March the 9th before heading on tour to Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

Regarded by many as one of New Zealand's leading artists Parmenter has created some the most important choreographic statements in New Zealand dance. Commotion will also be the capping event of Parmenter's recent 50th birthday celebrations.

His athletic and musical style has thrilled audiences and helped to create a generation of New Zealand dancers. COMMOTION will feature 16 of our finest dancers from within New Zealand and overseas in a stunning programme of Parmenter's most popular ensemble works.

Highlights include Parmenter's most significant achievement, The Dark Forest, signature works Tantra and Fields of Jeopardy and the recent critically acclaimed Svedebka set to Stravinsky's great score Les Noces. Parmenter has structured COMMOTION as a rich emotional journey culminating in The Golden Builders the sensational final movement of Jerusalem.

Named after the company that presented many of his works throughout the 90's, Parmenter says COMMOTION will demonstrate the energy and excitement that make our dancers unique as well being a celebration of the work he created for his company.

"I have chosen works that show the passion and dramatic qualities of the dancers, and the incredible vitality they generate when dancing as an ensemble. It will certainly be a night of COMMOTION and I suspect the energy will be infectious for the audience too."

Judging by audience response to the final movement of **Jerusalem**, culminating in 12 dancers attached to bungees leaping skywards, an image that captures a revelatory vision before an archetypal New Zealand landscape, **COMMOTION** will contain the sort of contemporary dance that New Zealander's love to see.

Appearing onstage will be a number of sensational New Zealand dancers currently working overseas, who will be returning especially to appear in this Parmenter retrospective - notably Sarah-Jayne Howard, Helaina Keeley, Claire O'Neil and Matthew Smith.

In addition **COMMOTION** will feature some of the finest dancers currently working in New Zealand, Taane Mete, Tai Royal, along with senior practitioners from an earlier generation, Chris Jannides, Lyne Pringle and Kilda Northcott; and will introduce Erica Viedma.

COMMOTION promises to be a glorious celebration of fine dancing and masterful choreographer.

Following on from the Auckland season **COMMOTION** will play in Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

Wellington Production Information:

March 16-19, St James Theatre
Bookings: Ticketek

Choreographer: Michael Parmenter
Producer: Michael Adams
Set Designer: John Verry
Lighting Designer: David Eversfield and Andrew Thomas
Costume Designers: Elizabeth Whiting and Tanya Carlson

RNZB Performances 2005

Wed 11 May	Full Technical Dress Rehearsal A million Kisses to my skin
12 -15 May	A Million Kisses to my Skin
Thu 14 July	Full Technical Dress Rehearsal Dracula
15 - 23 July	Dracula
Thu 27 Oct	Full Technical Dress Rehearsal Nutcracker
28 Oct - 5 Nov	The Nutcracker