

Behind the scenes

Volume 3, Issue 2

MAY 05

Dancer Spotlight

Sylvia Bastianon just loves our shoes!



Sylvia Bastianon in Esquisses. Photo: Maarten Holl

Unlike many of our dancers who have been dancing from an early age, Sylvia did not begin to learn ballet until she was 15. It was sheer chance that got her started – a ballet studio opened near her home on the Gold Coast of Australia and she signed up for lessons. Soon she was skipping grades and was hooked! She graduated from the New Zealand School of Dance in 2003.

From there she joined the Singapore Dance Theatre where she was one of only 3 western female dancers in the company - the rest of the company were of Chinese or Japanese descent.

Continued over

Sylvia really appreciates the ready access to pointe shoes at the Royal New Zealand Ballet where she can sometimes use 2-3 pairs in a week – in Singapore, not only did the pointe shoes deteriorate rapidly in the heat, but the dancers were limited to 2 pairs a month. Last year the Friends of the Ballet donated \$70,000 towards the cost of our dancers' shoes.

Enchanting night from newcomers

This was the headline as Bernadette Rae, reviewing New Zealand Post Tutus on Tour in the Auckland Herald, enthused about both the captivating programme and the way the tour allowed room for new talent to emerge as less experienced dancers were pushed to the fore.

She noted "...the dazzling emergence of some new stars. **Rowan Cann**, who has been in the company for two years - playing the role of Michael in Peter Pan but otherwise a bit of a back-row boy - sashayed into the limelight in *Si Supieras*, displaying an eye-catching elegance of style and convincing technique. He shone again in *Verge*, adapting to the contemporary vocabulary with touching empathy, intelligence and unflagging energy. His duet with talented newcomer Lucy Wells, was a highlight of the evening."

Rowan Cann is the dancer partnered by the Friends of the Ballet for the past year. He toured with the North Island group, and is one of the lucky ones chosen to tour with the company to San Francisco and Sydney in June.

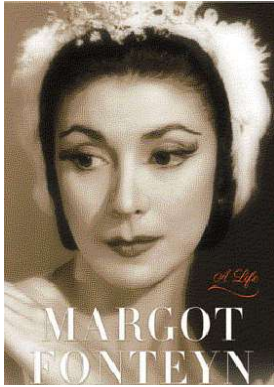
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www.nzballet.org.nz

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Fonteyn

by Meredith Daneman

The Legend of Margot Fonteyn (1919-1991)

In this stunning new biography Meredith Daneman, a novelist and herself a dancer, tells the fascinating story of Peggy Hookham with feet like “butter pats”, who ate only baked beans on toast and who grew up to become Dame Margot Fonteyn, a national icon and the epitome of physical symmetry and English beauty.

Fonteyn was shaped by her mother, a forceful and ambitious woman known as the Black Queen, and the fearsome Ninette de Valois, founder of Sadlers Wells Ballet, who saw in the 14 year old the hope for emerging British ballet.

She danced Odette at 16 and Giselle at 17, redefining these classical roles. She became the muse to Frederick Ashton, and while preserving her virginal image on stage, conducted many tumultuous affairs with lovers including Robert Helpmann and Graham Greene. In 1961 just as her career as prima ballerina was beginning to decline, she began a passionate relationship both on and off stage with the wild young Nureyev 20 years her junior – truly the stuff of legend.

Daneman has also captured the heartbreak behind the faultless line captured on stage: her marriage to the Panamanian playboy politician, Tito de Arias, was tragic (he cared neither for the ballet, nor for fidelity), but she was devoted to him, and her ashes are interred at the foot of his grave in an ill-kempt cemetery outside Panama City.

Daneman has, over 10 years, persuaded old friends, lovers and fellow artists to share their stories and has also had unprecedented access to Fonteyn’s and her mother’s diaries and letters. She has produced a riveting biography that is highly readable – 600 pages long - but a fascinating read for anyone, not just the balletomane.

Stop Press

Website Update www.nzballet.org.nz

By the time *A Million Kisses to My Skin* opens in Wellington on 13 May, the new look Royal New Zealand Ballet website will be up and running.

Friends will be able to log on and read the Season Spotlight as well as expanded dancer profiles with current photos.

Injuries take their toll

Always an occupational hazard for dancers, injuries will prevent two of the company’s dancers from taking part in the coming season. Neither Rosemary Martin, with a recurrence to the knee injury sustained last year, nor Alice Topp will be dancing this season.

Kirov Coup for David Dawson

The coming RNZB season borrows its name from Dawson's passionately titled ballet *A Million Kisses to My Skin*. An elegant display of free-flowing classical technique, the work shows the qualities that earlier this year earned its creator a rare commission for Russia's legendary Mariinsky Ballet Company, better known to New Zealanders by its old Soviet name The Kirov.

The 33-year-old Englishman is only the third foreign, and first British, choreographer to be invited to create a new work for the Kirov in its 250-year history. The Mariinsky Ballet Company is a huge organization with 300 dancers and a supporting staff of 3000. They commissioned this new work to expand their repertoire, which is overwhelmingly traditional classical ballet.

The work, *Reverence*, a 25 minute piece for 6 dancers set to music by Gavin Briar, opened in March after an intensive 4 week choreographic marathon. Dawson said that the dancers worked extraordinarily hard, 12 hours a day with no breaks or days off during that time. He found working through an interpreter all the time was another challenge.

Says, RNZB Artistic Director, Gary Harris: "David is a major choreographic talent. He has a deep reverence of ballet's traditions, which he uses to create works with a modern energy."

Wellington Friends

We have an action packed season for you:

Dracula Full Technical Dress Rehearsal

Thursday 14 July – 7 pm

For just \$20.00 you can have a preview of the show as well as bring friends who are new to the ballet. **Collect your tickets upstairs at the St. James Theatre.**

Dracula Revisited and A.G.M.

Saturday 16 July – 11:00 am

- 11:00 Our AGM will start the proceedings
- 12:00 A light Lunch
- 1:00 Viewing of the Company Dancers in class.
- 1:50 **Michael Pink**, the choreographer of this Dracula production, will tell us about the history of this ballet and if he has done anything to it for this season.

A full day of fun, friendship and dance for only \$10.00

Count, Coffee & Conversation

Friday 22 July – 6:30 pm

We are also holding our new regular pre-show event, Count, Coffee & Conversation at 6:30 in the Dennis Adams suite next to the Ticketek Kiosk. Our last one for a Million Kisses was enjoyed very much by all who attended.

World of Wearable Art Show

2 October 2005

Your committee has managed to obtain some great seats for the first Wearable Arts Awards to be held here in Wellington. Tickets are \$110 each and the price includes pre-show drinks and a light snack at the Loaded Hogg (just next door to the venue).

This fabulous show has gone from strength to strength so much that it has outgrown its home in Nelson.

Venue: Wellington Events Centre

Price \$110.00 per person

Start time: 4:30 (meet at the Loaded Hog)

Annual General Meeting

Date: 16 July 2005

Time: 11:00

Venue: Dennis Adams Suite,
(entrance on right of Box Office)
St. James Theatre
Courtney Place

Agenda:

- Welcome
- Apologies
- Minutes of the previous AGM
- Financial report
- Presidents report
- Election of Officers
 - President
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Committee
- General Business
 - New fundraising ideas

Your present committee encourages you to attend the AGM to assist us with the work we do in supporting the Ballet Company. As most of you will know, Friends contribute to keeping the dancers in shoes and we need good ideas to help us raise the money needed.

Everyone welcome

Dance company stripped bare

The Sydney Dance Company is in emergency negotiations to save the positions of half its ensemble and its world-renowned choreographer, Graeme Murphy.

The company could face insolvency, with a current deficit of more than \$600,000 on an annual budget of only \$1.56 million. Unless new funding arrangements are secured in the next two weeks, its board, led by M&C Saatchi's executive chairman, Tim Dery, will be unable to sign off on the 2004 audited accounts to confirm the company is a going concern.

The federal arts funding body, the Australia Council, confirmed it was in discussions "to shape a financial package" to help the company "secure its financial future". The Herald understands a downgraded company could not afford Murphy and as many as half of its 18 dancers. It could also be forced out of its venue, The Wharf Studios at Walsh Bay.

DANZ has moved to a new home

On 28 April DANZ's national office moved to the new Wellington Arts Centre on Abel Smith Street near the corner of Cuba Street.

The Arts Centre, a project initiated by Wellington City Council, includes 28 artist studio spaces, meeting and workshop rooms and a performance/rehearsal and exhibition space. The centre will also be home to several small and large cultural organisations, event managers, and arts-based producers. For further information visit <http://tbi.co.nz/tbi/article/2632>

We are really looking forward to being in a busy, creative place with artists and other arts organisations as neighbours. Please come visit us in our new space, to find information, ask our advice, use a computer, read international dance magazines or view our dance videos.

Our new physical address will be:

Ground Floor, Wellington Arts Centre
65 - 69 Abel Smith Street, Wellington

Staying the same:

Postal address: PO Box 9885, Wellington
Phone: (04) 801 9885, Fax: (04) 801 9883
Email: danz@danz.org.nz

Nutcracker Season starts in October

Thu 27 September Full Technical Dress Rehearsal

20 October - 5 November The Nutcracker

Friday 4 November 6:30 Crackers, Coffee & Conversation

The Peugeot season of A million Kisses to my skin

NZ Herald

20 May 2005

Reviewer: **Raewyn Whyte**



Versatility and stamina are the watchwords in this demanding triple bill from the Royal New Zealand Ballet. And last, the exuberant post-classical *A Million Kisses to My Skin* by David Dawson, set to Bach's Concerto No 1 in D minor. Clearly influenced by the

master choreographer William Forsythe, the choreography is an expansive, extravagantly free-flowing movement which sets aside the classical proprieties. Arms and legs are hyper-extended by both men and women, and asymmetry, off-centre turns, and broken line are emphasised. Bodies are flung in the air and swept into lifts, and the dancers relish this opportunity to dance full-out in a continuously changing torrent.

Douglas Wright's reading of Ghost Dance

Replay Radio can supply a 3 CD set of "Ghost Dance" read by Douglas Wright as heard on Radio New Zealand earlier this year. The cost of this set of 3 CDs is \$50.00 (all inclusive).

To order, please use our 'Secure Order Form' on our website <http://www.radionz.co.nz/> (click on Replay Radio) or phone 0800-737-529 during office hours with a Visa/MasterCard or send a cheque to Replay Radio, P O Box 123, Wellington.

Please make cheques payable to Radio NZ Ltd.

Delivery will take 7 - 14 days.

Ballet Binoculars \$20 + P&P

These high quality binoculars come in a smart soft black case (9.5 x 7 x 4 cm) perfect for a close up view at the ballet, opera or sports and fit easily into purse or pocket. These great NorWest binoculars are 8 x 21 and can be ordered from Susie Clark, Friends Administrator, Email:Susie@nzballet.org.nz or Phone 382-9009

