

The 2009/10 season is presented by: **CTV** **THE GLOBE AND MAIL** 

Friday, June 4 at 7:30 pm

Saturday, June 5 at 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm

Sunday, June 6 at 2:00 pm

Wednesday, June 9 at 7:30 pm

Thursday, June 10 at 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm

Friday, June 11 at 7:30 pm

Saturday, June 12 at 7:30 pm

Sunday, June 13 at 2:00 pm

Conductor: **David Briskin**, Music Director and Principal Conductor

## Pur ti Miro

### World Premiere

Choreography: **Jorma Elo**

Assistant to Mr. Elo: **Nancy Euverink**

Music: **Ludwig van Beethoven**, *Consecration of the House Overture*,

*Op. 124* and *Violin Concerto in D, Op. 61: III. Rondo. Allegro*

**Claudio Monteverdi**, *L'Incoronazione di Poppea; Pur ti Miro*

Violin Soloist: **Benjamin Bowman**

Vocal Soloists: **Kathleen Brett**, **Teiya Kasahara**

Costume Design: **Holly Hynes**

Lighting Design: **John Cuff**

Repetiteur: **Mandy-Jayne Richardson**

*Pur ti Miro* is a gift from

THE VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE, THE NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA.

**Sonia Rodriguez** or **Tanya Howard**, **Heather Ogden** or **Chelsy Meiss**,  
**Jenna Savella** or **Jordana Daumec**, **Stephanie Hutchison** or **Lise-Marie Jourdain**,  
**Elena Lobsanova** or **Sarah Elena Wolff**

**Patrick Lavoie** or **Jiří Jelinek**, **Noah Long** or **Jonathan Renna**, **Naoya Ebe** or **James Shee**,  
**McGee Maddox** or **Keiichi Hirano**, **Robert Stephen** or **Brett van Sickle**

### Intermission



Jorma Elo with Elena Lobsanova in rehearsal for *Pur ti Miro*.

Photo by Aleksandar Antonijevic.

# Notes on the Ballets

## A Conversation with Jorma Elo

When I spoke with Finnish choreographer Jorma (pronounced YORma) Elo in March, I was at a distinct disadvantage: except for a few tantalizing clips on YouTube, I hadn't seen any of his ballets. I knew he was a rising star in the contemporary dance scene noted for the wild athleticism, break-neck speed, quirky gestures and unpredictability of his style and that he was extraordinarily prolific (from 2006 to 2007 alone, he created seven new ballets). He'd been praised by the likes of Anna Kisselgoff of *The New York Times* and had a string of major choreographic awards to his credit. He is Resident Choreographer at Boston Ballet. It's less well known that he came to dance as a teenaged hockey goalie who tried modern dance to improve his flexibility. Here are excerpts from our conversation.

**PRD:** You came to dance via hockey. Are there any connections between that early passion and your choreography?

**JE:** Probably. I enjoyed hockey a lot and maybe that experience influenced the speed of my choreography. I liked all that high-speed action when I was young.

**PRD:** Were you a good dancer?

**JE:** [with Scandinavian modesty] Fantastic! Actually, I was okay. I liked to do classical work. I started in a classical company, the Finnish National Ballet, and for a year I went to the Vaganova Academy [the associate school of the Kirov Ballet] in Russia but my classical technique was never at the level where I could pull off the great principal roles. The Vaganova was very focused on the idea that there was only one way to dance. They didn't look at the qualities of individual bodies, how you could use the particular shapes and individual movement characteristics. That wasn't my idea. But of course it was a great school and I



Jorma Elo.  
Photo by Eric Antoniou.

was very excited to be there, to perform with the Kirov and soak in all the history. I was a huge fan of Mikhail Baryshnikov, who studied there. Seeing him in *The Turning Point* in 1977 made me want to be a dancer.

**PRD:** You had compulsory military service in Finland.

**JE:** Yes, for a year when I was 22. It came just when I was establishing myself as a dancer. Then I joined the Cullberg Ballet in 1984 where I worked with Mats Ek and then in 1990, Nederlands Dans Theater with Jiří Kylián. It's a fantastic company. I'm really glad I landed there.

**PRD:** Did Kylián and Ek influence you?

**JE:** I spent most of my career working with one or the other of those guys as a dancer and later as a choreographer. It was such a treat to be surrounded by so much creativity, learning how to see dance and create it. Especially with Mats, it was about making theatre, making a

dramatic connection to dance, telling a story and creating something that was not there before. I thought that was fabulous.

**PRD:** You did a version of *Carmen* for Boston Ballet. Did Ek's version intimidate you in any way?

**JE:** It could have been terrifying but when you see that one person has made a good ballet with a certain score, that indicates that there are possibilities; there can be more than one ballet for any story or any score.

**PRD:** In 2008, you choreographed a ballet using Mozart's *Requiem* as score and narrative and it was a rather amazing collaboration. Is collaboration an important element in your creative process?

**JE:** Of course – I love to collaborate with other artists, to share ideas. It's not always the easiest way to create a ballet, especially because who has the last verdict? But still I think it's fabulous to be influenced by the visions of other artists.

**PRD:** Tell me about your process.

**JE:** I'm totally dependent on collaboration with the dancers; in the studio we ruminate together how we connect with each other, the audience and the music. I may make some sort of outline and have some basic ideas but it's the most fun and the biggest adventure to be with the dancers in the studio. That's how I fell in love with ballet, making creations with choreographers and that's how I still like to do it.

**PRD:** How do you decide what music to choose?

**JE:** I listen to as much music as I can. What I look for is something that gives me goose bumps the first time I hear it. You really have to love the music because you're going to hear it a lot when you're working on the ballet! I prefer

working with existing scores, though I've done some ballets with commissioned scores. A new score is more of a challenge and I'd love to do it again.

**PRD:** Your titles are notoriously enigmatic – *Brake the Eyes*, *Bitter Suite*, *Sharp Side of Dark*, *Plan to B*. It takes nerve to write puns in a second language.

**JE:** I really don't like titles – they're the last thing I do. I make a long list of titles that are somehow connected to the piece, show it to my girlfriend, Nederlands Dans Theater's Nancy Euverink, and try to find something that sounds right to me.

**PRD:** Tell me about your new work for The National Ballet of Canada.

**JE:** It's a non-narrative ballet with ten dancers. Holly Hynes, with whom I've collaborated many times, will do the costumes. They'll be fairly traditional – tutus and pointe shoes. I love pointe and the National Ballet dancers have such strong pointe technique.

The music is mostly Beethoven but also some Monteverdi, the last duet in *L'Incoronazione di Poppaea* (1642).

**PRD:** What are you most looking forward to in working with The National Ballet of Canada?

**JE:** When I was a dancer I read *Dance Magazine* and was impressed by the repertoire and I knew about Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn. It was kind of a dream company for me. I love to work with new companies. It inspires me to be in a new atmosphere. It would be very difficult to create as many new works as I do if I were working with the same people all the time. Since I work so closely with the dancers, creating in the studio all the time, meeting new people and new dancers gives me new ideas.

– Penelope Reed Doob