

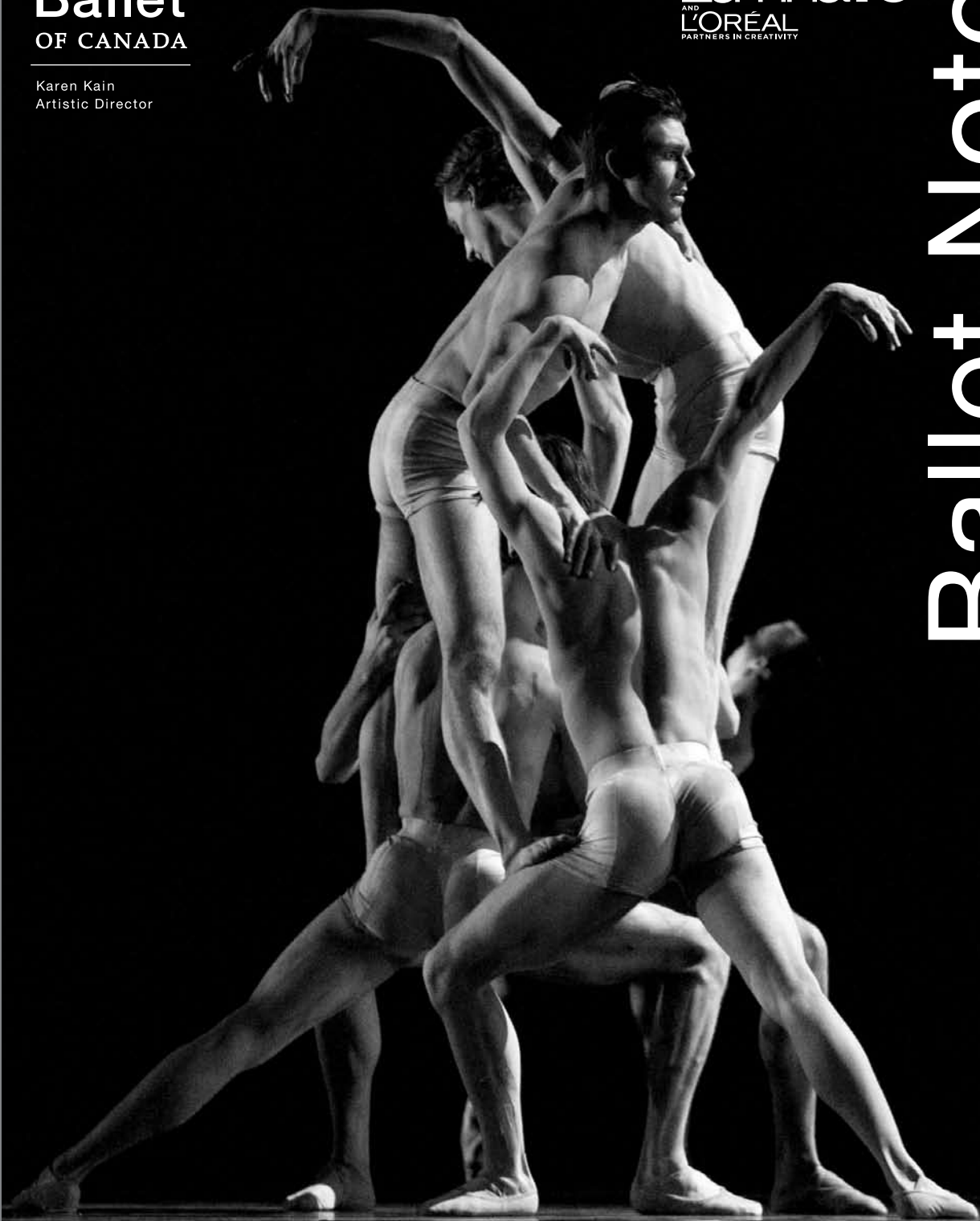
THE  
NATIONAL  
**Ballet**  
OF CANADA

Karen Kain  
Artistic Director

*The Fiddle and The Drum* is  
presented in partnership with:  
toronto festival of arts + creativity 2008

**Luminato**  
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**Ballet Notes**



**The Fiddle and The Drum** performed by Alberta Ballet  
& the second detail & Five Brahms Waltzes  
in the Manner of Isadora Duncan & Etudes

June 2008

June 13 to 22, 2008

## the second detail

Choreography: William Forsythe

Staged by: Jill Johnson

Music: Thom Willems

Costume, Set and Lighting Design: William Forsythe

White dress: Issey Miyake

The National Ballet of Canada Premiere: February 20, 1991, Toronto

*the second detail* is a gift from THE VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE,  
THE NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA.

## Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan

### **Company Premiere**

Choreography: Sir Frederick Ashton

Staged by: Lynn Seymour

Music: Johannes Brahms, *Waltzes, Opus 39 Nos. 1, 2, 8, 10, 13, 15*

Original Costume Design: David Deane

Lighting Design: Christopher Dennis

Piano Soloist: Edward Connell

Premiere: Ballet Rambert, 50th Birthday Performance,

Sadler's Wells Theatre, June 15, 1976, London

Sandra & Jim Pitblado have generously supported this special  
presentation of *Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan*.

## Etudes

Choreography and Staging: Harald Lander

Music: Carl Czerny

Arranged and Orchestrated by: Knudåge Riisager

By arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.,  
publisher and copyright owner

Costume Design: James Ronaldson

Set Design: Georg Schlogl

Lighting Design: Harald Lander

Premiere: Royal Danish Ballet, January 18, 1948, Copenhagen

The National Ballet of Canada Premiere: February 27, 1980, Toronto

*Etudes* is a gift from THE VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE,  
THE NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA.

# The Fiddle and The Drum

## Performed by Alberta Ballet

Music and Visual Design: Joni Mitchell

Choreography: Jean Grand-Maître

Lighting Design: Pierre Lavoie

Costume Design: Pamela Kaye after Jean Grand-Maître

Make-up Design: Bryon Callaghan

Film Editor: Robert Ivison

3-D Water Footage: Solid Green

Earth and moon photos/composites courtesy of NASA Photos

Cloud footage by Gotfootage.com

### Music Credits:

*The Fiddle and The Drum, Sex Kills, Passion Play, The Three Great Stimulants, For the Roses, Slouching Towards Bethlehem, The Beat of Black Wings, If I had a heart I'd cry and If* by permission of Crazy Crow Music – Sony/ATV Music Publishing Canada

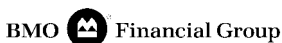
Audio Visual Master *The Beat of Black Wings* and other songs courtesy of Geffen Records, under license from Universal Music Canada

*The Fiddle and The Drum, Sex Kills* and *For the Roses* courtesy of Warner Music Canada

Premiere: Alberta Ballet, February 8, 2007, Calgary



Presented by:



Additional support from:



# the second detail

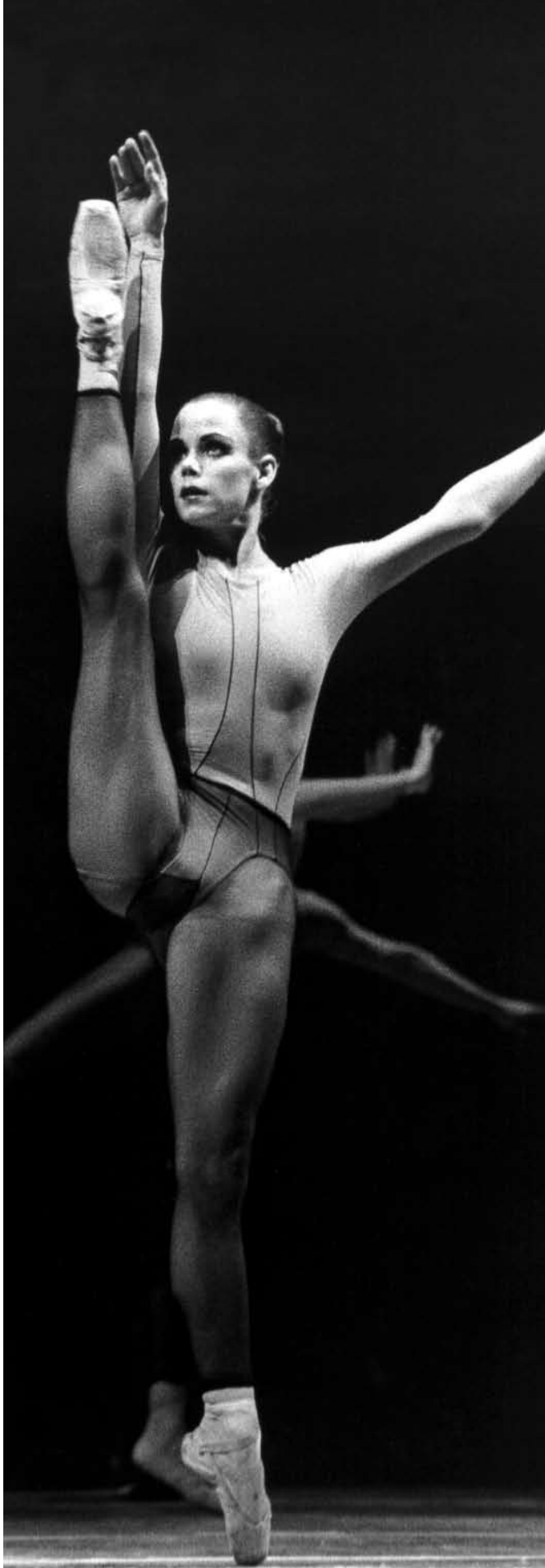
On February 20, 1991, The National Ballet of Canada unveiled the world premiere of William Forsythe's *the second detail*. The much-heralded premiere was the first Canadian commission for the globetrotting choreographer. One of the most sought-after of contemporary ballet choreographers, Forsythe has broken through the barriers of ballet, challenging traditions and establishing new paradigms.

Forsythe began creating *the second detail* on the dancers of the National Ballet in late November 1990, using segments of music specially composed by his long-time collaborator Thom Willems. Each day over a three-week period, tape recordings of new sections of music were flown into Toronto after transatlantic conferences between choreographer and composer. As the movement unfolded in Toronto, so did the composition in Frankfurt.

Forsythe first organized movement thematically, and this was distilled by the dancers into solos, duets and group dances. Familiarity with the vocabulary prompted new movement sequences that were developed by the dancers through improvisational interactions. In one rehearsal, a female dancer was asked to execute a set solo while a male dancer partnered her. The resulting sequence became both a struggle and argument of movement as well as a dazzling new duet. The result on stage varies each time the ballet is performed, giving an added edge to its live performance.

Though an original work, *the second detail*, like much of Forsythe's choreography, finds its origins in an earlier creation, *The Loss of Small Detail*. That work was lost in a fire that destroyed the Frankfurt Opera House in the mid-1980s. In 1991, *The Loss of Small Detail* was reconstructed with *the second detail* as its final movement. Since its premiere in 1991, *the second detail* has evolved and Forsythe has woven portions of the original ballet into his later creations.

Reviewing the world premiere of *the second detail* in *The Globe and Mail*, Penelope Reed Doob noted, "dance combinations are half-stated and then abandoned, like an equation that makes no sense. All this is going on full tilt all over the stage, all at once, with no focus, no obvious pattern. It's like a madly undisciplined dance class or a warm-up on the ice before the pairs competition in figure skating, with people showing fragments of great beauty while



Jennifer Fournier in *the second detail* (1996).

something equally glorious is going on in 10 other places. There's no front, no back, no presentation to the audience, in this brilliant cacophony of creativity. But neither is there any clutter, for all the movement is in itself polished, virtuosic, finely honed."

## Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan

*Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan*, choreographed by Sir Frederick Ashton, is an evocation of the dances of the American-born Isadora Duncan (1877 – 1927), one of the great pioneers of modern dance, whom Ashton described as a dancer of "grace and power".

The solos are "Dedicated to Marie Rambert who shared my admiration for Isadora Duncan" and it was Ashton's last work for Ballet Rambert. Created for that company's 50th Anniversary Gala on June 15, 1976, the work expanded on the brief solo – the final dance with the streaming rose petals – that had been choreographed the previous year for Lynn Seymour.

Within the complete ballet each solo represents a different facet of Duncan's dance and personality and it shows the young dancer maturing into the tragic woman whose children were drowned and who danced for the Bolshevik revolutionaries in Russia. In the first she is reclining and playful, she is then contemplative, in the third she is light, lyrical "like the breeze" – skipping with a scarf, in the fourth she is heroic, even vengeful. Finally we see 'Isadora' with her trail of rose petals that Ashton recalled from a piece he saw Duncan perform in London in 1921.

Any reconstructing of Duncan dancing is a risky business; Ashton, himself, was aware that in creating this work he was "treading a tightrope between the sublime and the ridiculous". The need to make the dances appear spontaneous (as Duncan did) increased the challenge. But Ashton succeeded in creating a real gem, in which dancer and pianist triumph on stage together. Indeed *Five Brahms Waltzes* successfully encapsulates what Marie Rambert described as Duncan's achievement – that her dances "perfectly

translated the music in the movement...Music made visible".

Principal Dancer Jennifer Fournier performs *Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan* for the entire June 2008 run. Lynn Seymour, for whom Ashton originally choreographed the work, taught her the piece earlier this year. This will be Ms. Fournier's farewell performance. She retires at the end of the National Ballet's Summer Season.

– This note features excerpts from an article by Jane Pritchard, dance historian and former Rambert Dance Company Archivist. The article first appeared in Rambert Dance Company's magazine *Meeting Point*, spring 2004. [www.rambert.org.uk](http://www.rambert.org.uk)

## Etudes

*Etudes* is an elegant and exciting work that traces the development of a ballet class. Beginning with a simple warm-up, the dancers perform a progressively more complex and technically difficult series of exercises. A veritable encyclopedia of ballet technique, each movement, turn, jump, and even foot position in *Etudes* is carefully revealed for the audience. From dazzling *adagio* (slow) and pas de deux to the sheer dynamism and virtuosity of *allegro* (brisk), the ballet culminates in a riveting finale with the entire company on stage.

Created by the Danish choreographer Harald Lander for the Royal Danish Ballet, *Etudes* was premiered at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen on January 18, 1948 starring Principal Dancers Margot Lander, Hans Brenaa and Svend Erik Jensen. The ballet was originally performed under the title *Etude*, rather than the plural form by which it is known today. Though now performed on a bare stage decorated only by chandeliers and simple columns on the sides of the stage, *Etudes* originally had decor by Erik Nordgreen. Today it is the lighting that is all-important in decorating and setting the mood for the ballet.

*Etudes* is a celebration of the classical ballet dancers' training and technique. Every day of their student and professional lives, dancers must participate in ballet class. A ballet class warms their muscles, centres their bodies and keeps their technique in top form. Thus

it is appropriate that Lander set his ballet in the dancers' most familiar setting, the ballet studio, a world often unseen by audience members. But rather than showing the gruelling work of the class, Lander shows its development through beautifully choreographed sequences that mount with excitement and showcase technique, culminating in a dazzling display of pure virtuosity. As technique builds, so does the individuality and aplomb of each dancer. Personality and brio come shining to centre stage and the dancers prove worthy of their position, every member a potential star.

The class exercises begin with pliés at the barre. Subsequent sections develop according to the quick rhythms and dramatic energy of Carl Czerny's music. As the music reaches a blazing climax toward the end, so does the dancing; the dancers perform darting diagonals of split-jetés and virtuoso pirouettes.

*Etudes* was staged for The National Ballet of Canada during the 1979/80 season by Toni and Lise Lander (Toni Lander was Harald Lander's second wife, Lise his third). It was Toni Lander, above all, who became singularly identified with the leading role in *Etudes* during her career, beginning with her debut in 1949. It was premiered by The National Ballet of Canada at Toronto's O'Keefe Centre (now the Sony Centre) on February 27, 1980, with Karen Kain, David Nixon and Tomas Schramek in the leading roles.

## The Fiddle and The Drum

Performed by Alberta Ballet

*The Fiddle and The Drum* is probably Jean Grand-Maître's most important creation to date. Not only did his collaboration with Joni Mitchell inspire him deeply, but it also provided him with a new platform from which to create.

"Artistic creation must preserve its integrity and artists must work for the arts and do what they believe in, no matter what other people say. This is one of the great things that Joni taught me in the process," says Jean Grand-Maître.

When Grand-Maître first approached Joni Mitchell two years ago, he wanted the ballet to be a retrospective piece about her life, a proposal that she declined. Rather, she wanted the ballet to speak about her pre-occupations of war and environmental neglect, which are reflected in her music and her latest visual artwork. "Some people tell me that I am a pessimist, but I see myself as a realist. There are too many public individuals out there playing the ostrich and choosing not to see the reality of it all," says Mitchell. She adds, "politicians are mostly short sighted and don't have a real



Left: Artist of the Ballet in *Etudes*. Right: Anthony Pina and Alberta Ballet Company Artists in *The Fiddle and The Drum*.

vision. We are on this spaceship that is accelerating, the fuselage is coming apart and our leaders can only think of going even faster.” With two decades of creating ballets, from the narrative to the abstract, Artistic Director of Alberta Ballet Jean Grand-Maître has choreographed to music of all genres, from the greatest classical composers to the latest modern compositions – but this is the first time in his career that he has so closely collaborated with the composer of his stage-creation.

“At the beginning of the process, Joni selected songs that would blend well with her artwork. She started by sending me 15 songs and from there we selected nine of them for the ballet. She then sequenced the songs in an order that would provide a cohesive and dramatic narrative,” explains Grand-Maître.

While Grand-Maître started choreographing powerful and athletic dance sequences to the chosen songs, Mitchell started her own choreography of synchronizing 40 images from her artwork to the lyrics of her music; these images are projected on stage during the 48-minute performance.

“The creation of this ballet has forced me to reflect on my work in different ways. You see patterns that you never realized, but that you somehow knew were there. For instance, I often come back to the image of the Earth in my paintings and music, this fragile ball we live on as it floats through space,” says Mitchell. The selection of the music for the ballet covers four decades of Mitchell’s work. “Joni’s music is so powerful that you can basically have athletic bodies on stage and have the dancers interpreting the emotions of the music,” says Grand-Maître. “I am pushing the dancers to stretch and jump higher and do everything to the maximum.”

His goal is to have the dancers move beyond the physicality of the ballet. He hopes that when they hit “that wall of exhaustion” that they come through it with a sense of physical honesty. “If you push them enough they get tired and then the real breathing comes in,” says Grand-Maître. “I want people to see the physical effort but not to the point that you are detached from the humanity of it.”

*The Fiddle and The Drum* is all about the delicate state in which humanity finds itself, the struggle for survival, and the increasing destruction and annihilation of various life forms around the globe. “The chemicals in the air are forcing trees and plants to close their pores, releasing less oxygen. And polar bears are cannibalizing

one another,” says Mitchell. “I fear that our problems are truly beginning to seem unsolvable. Living things are dying everywhere, this is a red alert.”

In the process of creating the ballet, Mitchell helped Grand-Maître understand the layers within her music, which he has visually transposed onto the stage. “I wanted to include all of the dimensions of her music in the choreography. For instance, in some pieces, I have three dancers who are the voice, and then in the back I have an ensemble of duets who are dancing to the groove, which is often in contrast to the lyrics being sung,” says Grand-Maître.

This fusion ballet has the feel of a rock show with smoke effects, intricate lighting, exposed metallic fixtures, and multimedia screens projecting Joni Mitchell’s artwork around and above the dancers.

“If I did this well, then all of the various art forms will complement one another, rather than compete with one another. It should speak to the audience at various levels, to their intellect and their instinct,” says Grand-Maître.

“I realize that the ballet’s theme can be described as pessimistic, but what can we really be optimistic about?” says Mitchell. “As an artist creating today, quite frankly, I can see no other subject matter that is of more importance now. We need more people to awaken to our reality.”

“Would I prefer creating something more optimistic and positive? Absolutely. But I simply cannot,” says Mitchell. “I simply want to do my share in raising awareness about our fate.”

— This article was written by Natalie St. Denis.



Front cover: Alberta Ballet Company Artists in *The Fiddle and The Drum*. Above: Jennifer Fournier in rehearsal for *Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan*.

Photography: Brian D. Campbell, David Street, Charles Hope and Bruce Zinger.

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