

Valerie Wilder mixes business and dance

interview by Elaine Ostry

"The Merry Widow", comments Valerie Wilder, "is a lot of fun. The music is recognizable to everyone, and it has a humorous storyline." *The Merry Widow* is the ballet (based on an operetta by Franz Lehár) which the National Ballet of Canada will perform from Oct. 5 to 7 at the Jubilee.

Wilder was named an associate artistic director, along with Lynn Wallis in 1986. This is the most recent step in a career in which she has parlayed both dancing and financial skills to the benefit of herself and others.

Wilder grew up in Japan, where the classical art forms are highly developed; as a result, she was exposed to world-class ballet at an early age. This exposure led to a desire to become a dancer. "I had to work hard to get training," says Wilder. At the age of sixteen she went to London to study at the Royal Ballet School for two years. She returned home to Japan briefly to finish high school, and then entered the Butler University in Indiana for two years, continuing her dance training as well. Wilder then trained at the National Ballet School and joined the company in 1970.

Wilder's early independence and travel gave her valuable experience. Because of it,

"I was quite capable of managing my life outside of dance."

"I was quite capable of managing my life outside of dance." However, many of her fellow dancers lacked this practical experience and the time to learn about finances,

so Wilder devoted herself to "helping others organize things like income tax forms and loans."

In 1972 Wilder was elected to represent the dancers to their union, speaking out about salaries and working conditions. She was on the committee for negotiating dancers' contracts of 1973 and 1976. Wilder then represented the dancers as a member of the National Ballet Board of Directors.

Wilder and her husband started a business in 1976 to manage other artists. Wilder com-

ments that "in most fields such as sports, just because there's more money involved, the player is taken care of. Whereas the dancers have to do that themselves." Wilder retired from the stage in 1978, and was invited by Erik Bruhn to join him in the position of Artistic Administrator for the company. Bruhn died in April 1986; Wilder and Lynn Wallis assumed his responsibilities as Associate Artistic Directors of the National Ballet of Canada.

There are a lot of responsibilities entailed in this new role. "We jointly make all the decisions as to what ballets we put on, we do the casting, decide where we're going to travel, how many ballets we do, hiring dancers, choreographers. We have the vision

for the company." Being an associate artistic director also involves a "process of looking ahead and deciding where the company should be going, also what would be stimulating to the dancers to help them grow. It's finding a balance between what the company needs artistically and what the audience should see."

One of the most important parts of Wilders' and Wallis' job is to decide which ballets to produce in the season. This season contains a mix of the old and the new. In the company's native city of Toronto, the company will perform the classics *Swan Lake*, *Don Quixote* and *Onegin*. New material will include the world premiere of Glen Tetley's *La Ronde*, the Canadian premiere of *Concerto* by Kenneth MacMather and the revival of Baleichine's *Concerto Borocco*. "We like to show as interesting a program as we

a six week tour of Europe in 1985, and this July performed in London. They have received, as Wilder comments "very, very good reviews. The tours have been very successful."

"The longer you've been at the touring game, the more successful you become. Things tend to go smoothly in the end."

In the future, the company is planning another spring tour of the U.S., and another summer visit to New York. "We must tour selectively," says Wilder, "because we're performing fifteen weeks of the year in Toronto to sell-out crowds."

Wilder describes a tour as "a logistical nightmare": travelling with full orchestras, seventy dancers, sixty other artists and helpers, sets and costumes is not easy. To keep the dancers from becoming too tired, Wilder arranges the tour so that there are days off after a rough trip, and by juggling the casting. "The longer you've been at the touring game, the more successful you become," says Wilder. "Things tend to go smoothly in the end."

It is a "very tight schedule: two hours after the dancers arrive they must go to class, and then a two — two and a half hour rehearsal to accustom themselves to the new stage, then another two hour break before performance."

Wilder is glad of the success the company is enjoying on their present tour of Canada, especially the evidence of "a healthy exchange between dance companies." For instance, the National Ballet is appearing on the Alberta Ballet Company's schedule.

"There is a lot of creativity in Canadian dance," comments Wilder.

In the future, she expects to see "more and more interesting ballets and very healthy dance companies in Canada, and hopefully more joint performing in each other's area."

THE NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA

can," says Wilder.

But aren't audiences getting tired of the perennial *Swan Lake*? Wilder disagrees. The National Ballet performs the classic every other year, and it always sells out. "It's a popular classic — like *Hamlet* is to the stage, or *Madame Butterfly* to the opera. It's a very difficult ballet, very very good for the dancers. It's a testing ground; part of becoming a major ballet company is being able to put on a really good *Swan Lake*."

From all accounts, the National Ballet of Canada is a major ballet company recognized in Europe as well as North America. The company toured the U.S. last spring and performed at New York's Metropolitan Opera House in July 1986. They also went on

INTERESTED IN A FOREIGN SERVICE CAREER?

Getting into Canada's diplomatic service is a challenge. Attend a **FREE LECTURE** on the intensive **PREP SEMINAR** which will improve your performance on the **1987 FOREIGN SERVICE COMPETITION**.

FREE LECTURES
Sunday, October 11
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
SUB 034

The 1-hour free session by former Foreign Service Officer Barry Yeates will show you:

- how the Competition really works
- what to expect in the Exam and Interview
- what Foreign Service Officers do
- the profile of successful candidates
- how *Canada's only Foreign Service prep seminar* can help you excel in the Competition

PAID SEMINAR*
Sunday, October 11
12:30 - 7:00 p.m.
SUB 034

Yeates' 6½-hour intensive training session and special briefing package will teach you

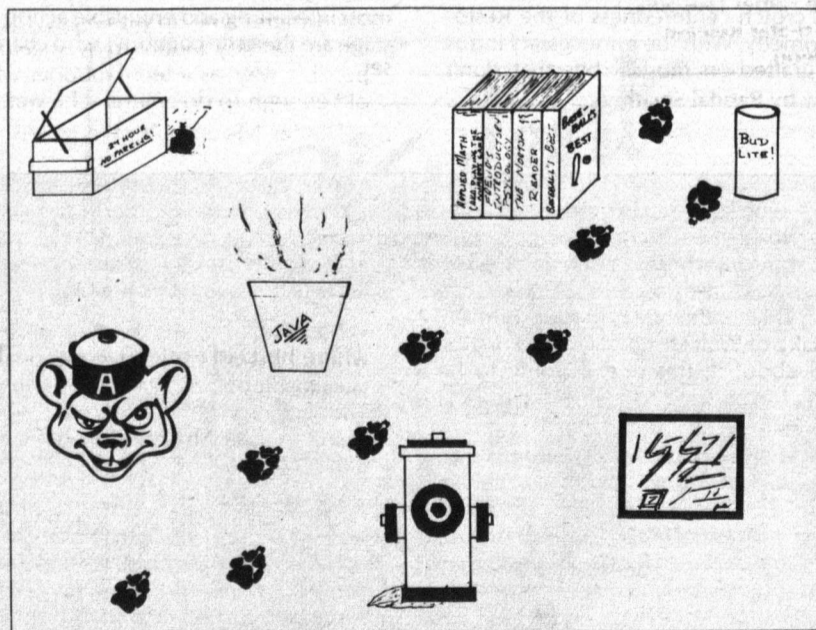
- to analyse sample Exam questions
- proven test-taking techniques
- the real issues and what you need to know about them
- to use key readings and stats in the briefing package
- shortcuts for the Exam
- strategies for the Interview

*Seminar Fees: Students from sponsoring universities \$85; students from non-sponsoring universities \$100. Non-students \$115 (tax-deductible). Seminar packages available separately for \$35.

*Sponsor: Students' Union

FOREIGN SERVICE EXAMINATION & CAREER COUNSELLING, INC. c 1983
508 - 404 Laurier East, Ottawa — K1N 6R2 (613) 232-3497

THE GREAT Spuds Mackenzie TREASURE HUNT



CLUE NO. 2

CONTEST RULES:

This is the second clue to the location of a coupon worth next year's tuition* (up to a maximum of one thousand and two hundred dollars — \$1200.00). The coupon is hidden somewhere easily accessible on or near the University of Alberta campus (so you don't have to dig, break or dismantle anything to discover it).

A new clue will be published every Tuesday (and Wednesday, October 14) in the Gateway until the coupon is found. A summary of the clues to date will be available DEWEY'S and R.A.T.T. every Tuesday evening (or on Wednesday, October 14 instead of October 13) so that you can review the clues while enjoying a cold Bud Light!

Eligibility is restricted to University of Alberta Undergraduate Students excluding employees of Labatt's Brewery, employees of the Students' Union, and members of the Gateway.

If you find the coupon, please call Doug Lavallee at 436-6060.

*If the student who finds the coupon is graduating in the 1987/88 academic year, that student will receive an equivalent prize value of \$1000.00

Sponsored by:

LABATT'S



THE STUDENTS' UNION