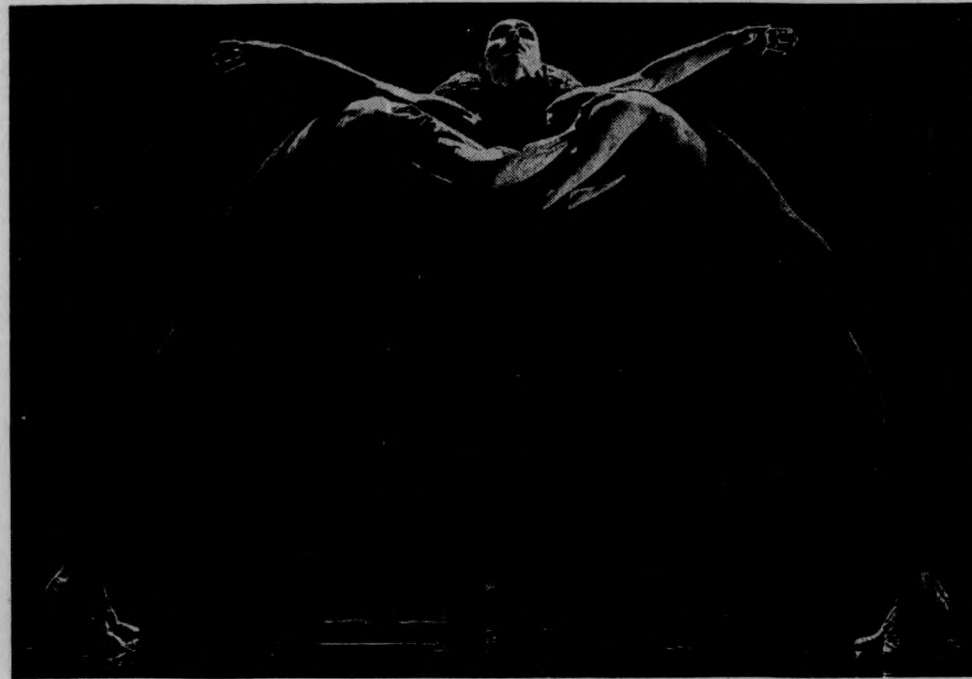


ENTERTAINMENT

...music...films...exhibitions...theatre...arts...

Royal Winnipeg Ballet a success Wild Strawberries

Onstage starts their season off on the right foot with a spectacular showing



LA VALLEE DES CLOCHES: Kaori Nakamura, Paul De Strooper and Olivier Wevers conclude *Miroirs*, the last act on the bill.

PETER J. CULLEN
THE BRUNSWICKAN

The art of dance has endured for ages, adopting varied styles throughout different regions over time. Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet incorporated many established techniques into their one-night-only performance of classic and contemporary ballet at The Playhouse on Tuesday night, pleasing a near-capacity crowd with its elegant showmanship and world-renowned virtuosity.

With 57 years of history and experience linked to its name, the RWB has established itself as one of the world's foremost cultural Companies throughout its long legacy. Their show in Fredericton demonstrated why that is true. The rigorous and complex patterns of dance, combined with impressive feats of strength, drew great applause throughout the evening. Most noteworthy, however, was the broad diversity of dance styles they displayed -- which was exactly what Artistic Director Andre Lewis set out to accomplish.

"I choose all the pieces we put on," he stated just before the evening's final play. "I like to keep a classic touch, although the middle plays are a bit more modern. *Miroirs* is very modern."

Lewis also decided to select rather short pieces for the RWB audiences, based on the venues the Company will be performing in. "I think [the Fredericton] theatre is wonderful for these shows," he commented, while gazing throughout the room. "It's not too big, and it has a very 'homey' feel to it."

The evening opened with an act from *Paquita*, a tale of a gypsy (Evelyn Hart) and her lover (Olivier Wevers). An esteemed Canadian ballerina, Hart has been the subject of a nationally televised film entitled *Moment of Light: The Dance of Evelyn Hart*, and in 1991 had a biography published about her. The audience fully appreciated her graceful and tireless dancing throughout the 25 minute scene.

Enacting classic technical manoeuvres, Hart ceaselessly tiptoed and traipsed around her

contemporaries to great applause. The lone male, Wevers, adorned in a matador-like costume, was restrained from much movement until his variation toward the end. His imposing physical stature and powerful leaps, combined with rapid, yet very lithe movements allowed him to steal the first act for himself.

After a brief intermission, the RWB returned with *Pas De Deux Romantique*, letting Elizabeth Olds and Nicholas Khan act and react off each other. While the dress and dance were simplistic in nature, the facial expressions and moderate musical tone made for a pleasant piece. However, it simply couldn't match the following selection, *Sentinel*.

A selection that Lewis described as "very special," it set a precedent the other dances could not equal. Four men, dressed explicitly in white, wove incredible and elaborate steps around each other in front of a sparse, black background. The music set an ominous tone, lending itself to a

theme that had each man constantly nearing, then backing away from his partner. In addition, as each artist performed his variation the others had their backs turned, emphasizing the extremely melancholic feel permeating the stark scene.

Tarantella proved the most vigorous, as Suzanne Rubio and David Lucas livened up the stage with their colourful attire and dramatic dance. The ancient folk-legend states that the poison of the spider bite must be sweated out of the body, therefore the pace of the performance gained momentum as Rubio and Lucas often held the spotlight individually, spiralling wildly around the stage, each keeping time to the spirited music with their tambourines.

To finish the night, the RWB switched from the standard ballet format to an arrangement bordering on modern dance. Featuring artists from the earlier performances, the five short pieces produced two outstanding segments. *Oiseaux Tristes (Sorrowful Birds)*, utilizing the artistry of CindyMarie Small and Zhang Wei-Qiang, conveyed feelings of great sadness and loss. Forlorn faces and slow, exaggerated movements established a sombre atmosphere, accompanied by heavy overtones supplied by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet Tour Orchestra.

Most remarkable of the five, though, was *Alborada Del Gracioso (Morning Song of the Jester)*, starring Jordan Morris. Performing by himself, Morris captivated the audience, an internal energy driving him to dance harder and more freely than the others had before him. He excelled in his theatrics, using a scroll and quill as props, and showed his true form as he danced with the scroll, holding it with his hand and foot, pirouetting flawlessly through his routine.

Lewis feels that the selections he has made for the Company are quite suitable for the venues the RWP is currently playing, and from the audience response at The Playhouse, the paying customers appear to agree.

"This isn't what you see on TV. This is the real McCoy," he laughed. How right he is.

PETER J. CULLEN
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Roberta Carter Harrison sounds just like your favourite aunt. Her upbeat personality and endless stream of laughter permeate the conversation, and constant refrains of "great" and "that's cool!" appear time and again in her speech. Plus she seems more interested in UNB's English curriculum than promoting the Wild Strawberries appearance at The Dock this Monday evening. "I would love to go to school someday and do [an English major]," she said. "I did go to school for physiotherapy but it was just totally sciences and statistics and stuff. It's just, ugh, y'know, such a waste." (laughs)

Yes, Roberta can boast a proficiency in physiology (the other half of the Strawberries -- and also her husband

bands, so it was really exciting when they agreed to take our song. Now the only thing is that I think the movie is probably going straight to video," she laughed.

A question frequently posed to the Wild Strawberries, since they don't have a permanent band, is their group status: Are they a duo or a band? "One of the most difficult things in the music business is keeping yourself intact as a band," she commented. "[This way] if we hire people to play, we can be more diverse. If a song calls for a string quartet, we can just go and hire a string quartet."

This arrangement enabled the couple to hand over the guitars to Sarah McLachlan for *Heroine's* first two tracks. "She was amazing to watch!" Roberta exclaimed. "She's just, like, totally this rock god. It's great! Just from listening to her

"Keep on vacuumin' in the free world."

Roberta Carter Harrison,
Wild Strawberries

-- Ken Harrison, graduated as a doctor) but the 29 year old can proclaim even more about the up-and-coming success of her musical machine, The Wild Strawberries.

After a hard night of partying with the MuchMusic Video Awards crowd, Roberta is "a little green around the gills" for the interview. However, the Toronto duo weren't up for anything themselves at the festivities this year. "Apparently we were on the priority list but we didn't quite make it," she said, "but maybe next year."

That's okay with Roberta, though. She is noticing a vast increase in the "audience pool," partially due to increased video exposure, and the Strawberries are starting to cultivate a veritable musical career with their latest album effort, *Heroine*. The album is loaded with great harmonies and intriguing lyrics, not to mention Roberta's remarkable vocals. However, *Heroine's* great dichotomy lies in the upbeat and soaring manner of music that the lyrics ultimately oppose. "That's exactly what we are going for," Roberta remarked. "It's like Emily Dickinson, where it seems sort of bright and lilted in terms of the meter of the poetry, but the lyrics are so dark."

Perhaps the true realization that they've risen through the ranks has been their inclusion on the soundtrack to the movie, *Foxfire*. "Network was pushing some of their

albums, when I saw her play guitar on our songs I was totally flabbergasted. Totally rocking!" (laughs)

The radio and video success that have ensued for the album have been wonderful for the Strawberries. But every band needs a gimmick or a theme, and *Heroine* presents that in the form of... a vacuum cleaner? The album cover captures this, and "Keep on vacuumin' in the free world" was the quote Roberta yelled to her crowd during the CBC RealTime broadcast last March. "We bought a vacuum night after that show and then I started using it all the time," she said. "We actually went to Costa Rica to shoot a video for the song 'Heroine.' We carted three vacuums down and the theme was vacuuming, and -- I'm so sad about this -- it never got released because Network didn't ... understand it." (laughs)

Roberta and Ken aren't settling with the success of *Heroine*, though -- a new album is in the works: "We both totally got into the Portishead-Massive Attack-Tricky thing a couple of years ago... [Ken's been into] all this sort of groove-oriented stuff and hip-hop. Not that the next Wild Strawberries album will be a hip-hop album! But that sort of stuff has been influencing us, in terms of what we're listening to... Ultimately the new album's going to be the same voice, but we're sort of cautious about ever making the same record twice."

"Good" stuff at UNB

ANTHONY S. DAVIS
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Matthew Good Band. One word: Wow. An unbelievably "Good" Canadian rock band, the "Good" news is that they are coming to The Cellar this Saturday night.

Matthew Good Band are a three piece rock outfit from Vancouver. To describe them one must try to picture the music of 1980s R.E.M. put to the vocals of Live.

The album really puts one in the position of having to ask if its Tragically Hip who are the best straight rock band in Canada right now. Matthew Good Band is definitely challenging for that title. Remember when the Watchmen were good (ie. *McLaren Furnace Room*)? Well, nothing against them, especially since that album is one of the top ever, but Matthew Good's disc is better. A lot better. So much better that one must wonder if perhaps they are the "next big thing" that everyone is searching for.

Songs on the album are all written with a sturdy intensity and they're pulling, drawing you in to listen to them one after another. The album kicks off with *Alabama White Walls*, an eerie, spooky song (the first single/video) which really gets the senses perking. Next is *Symbolistic White Walls*, a song of cheapness and artificial living.

Good states his influences as very mixed, including everything from Bob Dylan to Dead Kennedys to Billy Bragg. Matthew Good (guitar, vocals) says, "[My influences] range from everything... It's one of those things that I have never really aspired to sound like all my favourite bands. I've done my best to go the other way."

Looking at the Canadian music scene right now, one can see that the popular stuff is the intense rock, similar to that of Matthew Good Band. Many artists perform this kind of music, including The Watchmen, Moist, and the Tragically Hip. It is the latter to which one most quickly compares Good's singing on their *Last of the Ghetto Astronauts* album. The band doesn't feel comfortable with the way this album portrays their sound, but about the Gord Downie comparison Good states that "you are cursed if you are born with natural vibrato in your voice." However, their sound has become a lot heavier and he has "lost that inflection."

The band has a new EP which will be available in January, and Good feels that the sound on that item gives a much better representation of the band. "[*Last of the Ghetto Astronauts*] could have been done a hell of a lot better that it was," Good says. "And the new EP coming out in January is done a hell of a lot better than the last one."

So far the band has played across the country, and this is their first time east of Montreal. Notable on this current is the fact that they played three gigs in 24 hours, with an 800 kilometre drive inbetween gigs. (Edmonton to Saskatoon.)

If you are under 19, your chances of seeing Matthew Good this weekend are pretty slim. But hopefully they will be back later in the year to do an all ages show. However, if you are of age, then it should be worth your while to check them out in The Cellar. Opening act will be Ron Hawkins, ex-lead singer and song writer for the now defunct band, The Lowest of the Low.



Notable Quotes

"Now do you reach in with your finger and pull it out, or do you drink the juice and just pick the ring out after?"

- Matthew Good, guitarist/vocalist for Matthew Good Band, pondering what to do after dropping his ring into his glass of orange juice.



STRAWBERRY DELUXE: Ken Harrison and Roberta Carter Harrison bring their verve, vivacity and, hopefully, their vacuums to The Dock this Monday night.