

Edmonton to learn from the troupe, and to teach it some of the old ways.

Like the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers, Les Ballets Jazz was delighted by the packed halls and the standing ovations on its inaugural four-week tour of the Soviet Union this spring. Modern jazz dance is in its infancy there because of years of strict state control of culture, and so the innovative Ballets Jazz company was received with excitement. General Manager Caroline Salbaing says that in many venues the Montreal, Quebec-based troupe was the first foreign company to ever perform. The dancers were particularly impressed, she said, with the audience's custom of coming up on stage during the encores and singling out their favourite performers with bouquets of flowers.

Vancouver, British Columbia-based actress Daphne Goldrick's abiding interest in Eastern Europe began with her first visit to Moscow in 1984 as a member of Canadian Actors' Equity and the Federation Internationale des Acteurs (FIA). Since then, she has returned to the U.S.S.R. three times. Last fall she travelled to Bulgaria as part of an FIA delegation.

Help from Western Colleagues

The lifting of strict state control over culture has created serious problems for performers, according to Goldrick, because many state financial subsidies have ended as well. It has left performers ill-equipped for the economics of the marketplace and looking to their Western colleagues for help in adapting.

"There was one Russian theatre company in Tashkent," she recounts, "which was having its subsidy cut from 100 per cent that season to 50 per cent the next season to 30 per cent the season after that and finally to no subsidy altogether. They didn't have a clue. So

we started trying to explain to them how the season ticket thing works, how subscriptions work, that you get your money up front from your audience first. They said, 'We wish you could stay and help us.' It was really quite upsetting to see how really cut adrift they were."

In some cases, Canadians offer moral support and advice: in others, they offer more. In Sofia, Bulgaria, Goldrick says, it was a shock to see how poorly equipped the local actors' union offices were. "They have one ancient Olivetti typewriter, two ancient telephones and that's it. So the three Canadian unions have agreed to provide them the money for a computer, word processor and fax."

The author, whose works were banned by the previous regime, has since been awarded the country's highest honour, the Order of the White Lion, by his former colleague Vaclav Havel, now President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. An adaptation of one of Skvorecky's novels, *The Tank Battalion*, written after he immigrated to Canada in 1968, is set to become the first privately produced feature film to be made in Eastern Europe in 45 years. Bonton, a film company in Prague formed by a group of independent filmmakers, is producing this humorous take-off on the Communist system.

promote the international use of the state-owned Barrandov Studio — one of the most important film studios in Europe. Barrandov Director Vaclav Marhoul explained the Canadian choice by saying that Canadians have both the business experience and the cultural climate that his country could understand.

Venturing into a New Europe

With the barriers lowered, Canadians in increasing numbers are expressing interest in a Europe previously denied them. For some, it is old, once-familiar ground; for



Ian Westbury

Les Ballets Jazz: delighted by packed halls and standing ovations.

Highest Honour Awarded

For Canadian author Josef Skvorecky, the lifting of restrictions in his country of origin, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, has resulted in official recognition and accolades where before there was only underground recognition.

Once completed, the distribution of the film may be facilitated by another group of Canadians: Filmline Group Inc. has been working with the Czech and Slovak government to draft new communications laws covering film classification, co-production and distribution in a market economy. The Montreal, Quebec-based company has also signed an agreement to revitalize and

others, it is brand new territory. The venture into the Soviet Union, acknowledged Caroline Salbaing of Les Ballets Jazz, could open new markets for companies such as hers. She added, however, that its value was not only in the realm of business. Beyond that, she said, it was an experience that enriched all those involved. Daphne Goldrick concurs: "You always learn from each other. Right? You always learn." ♦