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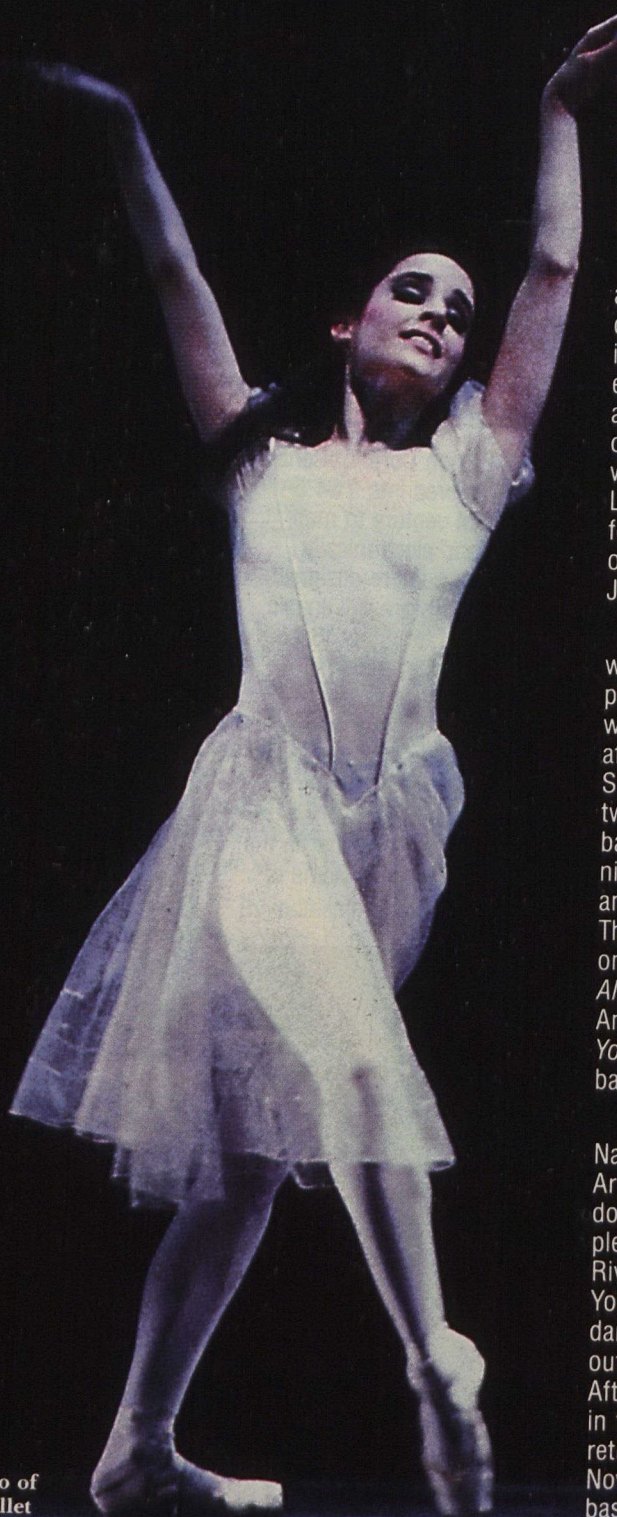
The National Ballet of Canada celebrates its 35th anniversary this year. Fittingly enough, this critically acclaimed company is enjoying one of its most successful seasons. Attendance for its three-week Toronto run last February averaged 93 per cent of the theatre's capacity, and a major tour is planned for the latter part of the year.

The February performances peaked with an anniversary gala planned by the National Ballet's founder and former artistic director, Celia Franca.

Much of the repertoire for the retrospective was, of course, Canadian. "Right from the start, in our very first performance on November 12, 1952, we had a Canadian work on the program," recalled Ms. Franca, who came from Britain to found the company that year. Some of the original dancers and many of the accomplished performers who studied at the company's school returned for the evening, which would have been incomplete without Rudolf Nureyev soaring across the stage. Mr. Nureyev's tours with the National Ballet in the 1970s helped publicize the company and build its professional experience.

The company followed up the gala event with a major tour of the United States — the first in nearly a decade. From March 13 to April 5, the National Ballet performed in Minneapolis, Chicago, Miami, Clearwater and West Palm Beach, before closing with a week-long engagement at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Kimberly Glasco of the National Ballet of Canada in Glen Tetley's *Alice*.



Enthusiastic audiences packed sold-out houses at every stop.

A spectacular new addition to the repertoire was Ronald Hynd's production of *The Merry Widow*, which was heralded by rave reviews at its North American premiere last November. Nureyev returned for a guest performance in Miami, and also danced the leading role opposite Karen Kain in *Coppelia*, choreographed by the company's late artistic director, Erik Bruhn.

American audiences were also treated to a preview of two pieces that were included in a prestigious engagement in England. After an eight-year absence, the company returned to the world's showcase of ballet, London, to present six performances during the height of the season, June 30 to July 4.

The program opened with the renowned masterpiece, *Serenade*, the first work Balanchine created after arriving in the United States in the 1930s. Now a twentieth-century classic, the ballet requires precise technique, startling endurance, and impeccable virtuosity. The other neoclassical work on the program, Glen Tetley's *Alice*, has been described by Anna Kisselgoff of the *New York Times* as "Tetley's best ballet."

Later in the summer, the National Ballet will perform at Artpark, the multi-million-dollar theatre and arts complex overlooking the Niagara River gorge at Lewiston, New York. The company will also dance at Ontario Place, an outdoor theatre near Toronto. After touring western Canada in the fall, the dancers will return to open the season November 3 in their home base, Toronto.