

A triumph for York music professor

Dynamic Canadian Dancers thrive on a varied diet

W. Hurst
A York University music teacher and a Montreal choreographer have created the most exciting dance ever shown by a Canadian ballet company at the O'Keefe Centre.

The work, *Tellurian*, was commissioned by Les Grands Ballets Canadiens and highlighted the company's Toronto appearances last week.

Composer Phillip Werren has collaborated so well with Linda Rabin that his electronic score meshes completely with Rabin's modern choreography.

When a wedge of men and women invade the stage, the shape dissolves in response to the dissolution of the musical phrase--the music has inspired the movement. Elsewhere in the piece, the score is the aural

completion of three waves of bodies. These bodies emanate a pulsating flow that seems translated into the score.

Relaxing their bodies the dancers roll and arch in a constant flow. *Tellurian* moves like steady, healthy breathing. Rabin's choreography seems to continue even when the dancers have exited. Werren's score has the same unending quality--the steady pulse doesn't stop; it only escapes attention for a short time.

The ballet fundamentalism of *Scherzo Capriccioso* followed *Tellurian*, displaying more than just a contrast in styles. *Scherzo* exemplifies how clumsy conventional ballet can be.

Choreographer Ronald Hynd has a ballerina, complete with tiara, tossed between two attendant men.



Les Grands Ballets Canadiens perform *Concerto Barocco* at the O'Keefe

Annette Av Paul salvaged her smile but not her poise. Hynd has another ballerina wake up nine men, strewn about the stage. She meanders from man to man, tapping them on the shoulder.

As if they are uncomfortable, the dancers miss cues and ignore the rhythms of the score.

Conversely, *Concerto Barocco*, on the same programme, is excellent ballet, with simple but not simple-minded choreography by George Balanchine. The performance was accurate but not stale, although the dance is more than 40 years old.

The company showed two pro-

grammes in Toronto. Of eight dances, five were Toronto premieres. The dancers provide most works with great energy and an acute sense of style.

Unfortunately, Jerilyn Dana, in a lead role, danced with efficiency but she held her body with disdain rather than distinction. The other lead, Andrea Davidson, provided more than technical bravura. At ease with the finite movement, Davidson projected a pleasurable commitment to performance. This is a quality most dancers of Les Grands share.

Given the proper, spare lyricism, *Soaring* becomes more than a 40-

year-old curiosity. Even when the choreography is poor, the performance is usually excellent. Brian Macdonald's *Etapes*, a structure without substance, gets the requisite raw power, especially from Rey Dizon. Dizon moves so dynamically that the dance is almost exciting.

Les Grands adds to their repertory constantly. James Kudelka's *Genesis* is the most interesting after *Tellurian*.

Perhaps this constant change of repertory is what keeps Les Grands Ballets Canadiens so unique among the large ballet companies in Canada. They are certainly the most exciting.

Rocky and the Good Ole Boys

First Blood needs more than muscle

Marshall Golden
Many major movie actors have a close-up clause in their contract. For a certain percentage of screen time, this guarantees that the audience will be blessed with the pearly whites and baby blues that are four stories high. Sylvester Stallone must have a "bicep clause" in his *First Blood*, which opens Oct. 22, is just another in a series of Stallone 'flesh' movies, heavy on pectorals, and manly

sweat, but ridiculously light on plot. It is amazing that Stallone has managed to rewrite the same character into the same boxing movie three times, but this adaptation of 'Tricep man meets the forces of evil' is even more amazing. This time it's 'Rocky in the Forest' and a film that may challenge *Bullit* for moviedom's longest-chase-scene-ever.

In *First Blood*, Stallone plays John Rambo, a green beret Vietnam vet who's "the best there is". Rambo, fresh out of Napalm city, is wandering aimlessly around the mountainous countryside for reasons that are never clarified. He happens across the small town of Hope U.S.A. where he is politely escorted out of town by Hope's small town police chief (who, weighing in at 260 lbs. isn't small at all) he is told that "his type just ain't welcome round here." And what does our causeless rebel do but turn around and head right back for some fun. He is promptly arrested for vagrancy and when the good ole boys down at the station decide to have some good ole smalltown fun at his expense, he decides he's back in 'Nam and punches the good ole lights out of six skulls at once. Rambo next makes his break for freedom (I was making my break for more popcorn) and it just never stops. The bruised and angry cops chase him on motorcycle, through water and into the forest where Rambo is "in his element." Believing that he is back in the jungle Rambo takes on the entire police force,

National Guard and Army Reserves with some old-fashioned guerilla warfare. They chase and he kills, they chase and he hides, they chase some more and he kills some more. Stallone has only 5 minutes of dialogue in the entire film--but who needs to talk when you have his physique, right? Wrong.

The film's ending is just as shallow and typically Hollywood as the rest of the film; not much to say, but lots of ways in which to say it. *First Blood* was directed by Ted Kotcheff, who is continuing his slide down the scale of filmic quality. He was at his best with his first film, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. His next project, the fairly humorous *Fun with Dick and Jane* was followed by the not-at-all humorous *North Dallas Forty*. Kotcheff, born in Toronto, is not a bad director, it's just that the standard for the scripts he accepts is steadily declining.

The fact that Kotcheff is a Canadian is representative of one final disturbing aspect of *First Blood*. Canadian cinema is selling out to Hollywood. No acknowledgement is given to Canada in this film at all; although it was directed by a Canadian and filmed entirely in Canada. Once again for the cameras, smalltown Canada is transformed into smalltown U.S.A. Why does Hollywood and its Canadian proteges continually ignore the existence of Canada? On second thought, however, let Hollywood take credit for *First Blood*--it would be credit where credit is due.



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