

Brave little men in tights: beginner ballet

BY SOHRAB FARID

Over the tenure of my life, and the relationships with the many roommates I've had, I've managed to perform my fair share of actions that could be deemed ungentlemanly or ignoble. Playful exploits involving toothpaste, video cameras or Victoria Secret catalogues have given way to more devilish acts, like the time I started a rumour that one of my roommates was bisexual. Fortunately, I've managed to charm my way out of any serious trouble. Miraculously, I have yet to sustain any prolonged injury at the hands of my "friends". But I have apparently crossed the uncrossable line by committing my most reprehensible act yet: I knowingly deceived my red-blooded, rugby playing roommate Wesley in order to force him to participate in a trial ballet class with me at the DANSpace last Sunday.

Now it should be noted that there are few activities as unfairly maligned as the art of ballet. While dance in general often fails to demand the respect it deserves, ballet in particular is often wrongly associated with a lack of physical prowess. Being an art, its athleticism is often overlooked.

And then there is the plight of male dancers. Although many things considered "un-masculine" a generation ago have become more accepted as of late, ballet has been one of the rare "effeminate" constants.

Without question, many

misconceptions remain. Dancers have grace and conceal their exertions. Real men have power, and grunt loudly, or something like that.

So even as a voice within me pleaded that I reject the evil temptations of Nureyev and Malakhov, and embrace the holiness of Elway and Marino (it was in fact Sunday, and we all know that on the seventh day the Lord kicked back and watched football), I was busy coercing my roommate to enter the world of ballet with me.

"So there are no girls there, right? Just little brave men in tights?" asked my despondent roommate.

"Yes."

"And I have to go 'cause you have no one else, and I promised?"

"Yes."

"Even though you led me to believe we were watching a ballet?"

"Yes."

"And your writing an article on this?"

"Yes."

"Do you promise not to use the word 'homeroetic'?"

(long pause...)

"Why is it again, that Mulder has never tried to kill Cancer Man?"

"Sohrab! Don't change the subject. Promise me you won't."

"Wes! You're stifling my creativity!"

"Sohrab!"

"Fine."

So a-dancing we went. We were greeted with a bit of a surprise, as the only students to have hit puberty. One of the little boys had the 'pointe' shoes and tights, as well as previous dancing

experience. Wes and I both arbitrarily decided we didn't like the little punk. The other two kids were as inexperienced as Wes and I. We started by using the bar, where we did a few opening exercises. The definite highlight here was learning to rotate your feet using only the muscles in your buttocks. We progressed from position to position, from exercise to exercise. We even did pirouettes, which proved surprisingly difficult.

The little kid in tights was quite clearly the best, but Wes and I were in a close race for second. He had the technique, but I had grace. I tried to boast of my grace at the lesson. The kid with skills wouldn't talk to me (damn ingrate), the other two kids laughed nervously, and Wes just stared at me sternly with his fists clenched. As a matter of fact he held that pose for much of the afternoon.

I just kept prancing about, concentrating on my footwork and maintaining my grace. Wes pointed out later that a stumbling Persian wearing track pants and a ponytail was never his image of grace, but he was probably just jealous.

The conclusion of the lesson found both Wes and I a bit winded. I laughed at the two kids who couldn't dance, and we looked for the kid with the skills, who we were going to beat till we were tired, just cause he was better than us (damn ingrate). Alas, he was nowhere to be found.

"That wasn't so bad, was it Wes?"

"Don't talk to me."

"Oh my gosh Wesley...take it easy..."
"Listen...you have to promise me you won't ever tell anyone about this. And you won't mention me in the article. Promise?"

(long pause...)
"So what's the deal with Scully's cancer now, anyway?"
"Sohrab!"



Sohrab and Wes perfect their form. Out of macho pride they requested that their identities be concealed.

Filling the void: Playhouse a new home for live music

BY MICHAEL HOLLINGER

The Halifax university crowd has recently been buzzing about the possible closure of two more licensed establishments (the Blues Corner and the Grad House). Although two more drinking dens might seem insignificant to a casual observer, insiders understand that this is a topic likely to politicise the university population and spur action in the community. For this reason it is appropriate that I am writing about a new dance venue in the metro area. The Playhouse recently opened at 2248 Maitland St. and it is a dance

club with a major difference.

I went to the Playhouse on Saturday night to check the place out and to watch Plumtree, the Inbreds and Thrush Hermit. Accompanied by Tim, Emily, Amber and Cam, we hopped into Cam's car at twenty-to-seven so that we wouldn't miss the second opening band, Piggy.

From the outside, the Playhouse looks like any other North End warehouse. The only thing close to a sign is some graffiti announcing that 'Jimmy is king of the streets'.

Once inside, it was obvious that some work had been put into making the Playhouse concert-worthy.

The walls were freshly painted, the ceilings were low, and it appeared large enough to accommodate at least twice the estimated 300 people who were in attendance. I looked at Tim, who had expressed a keen interest in getting hammered, and he was looking disappointed that the closest thing they had to alcohol was Mountain Dew.

I surveyed the room, and found that I was probably the oldest person at the concert who did not come to supervise children. The Playhouse is not licensed, and therefore serves a younger crowd.

The average age of spectators was probably 16, excluding the handful of parents out to ensure that no illicit drinking was happening at the show.

To my surprise, many of the kids had dressed up. Some were dressed as cowboys and many others were dressed in the spirit of adolescent angst. It didn't bother me that there were so many kids, because there was less smoke than at any bar (most of the kids were not old enough to buy cigarettes), and the shortness of the spectators improved the sightlines.

Piggy was soon on stage playing some of their self-described calypso tunes. They energized the crowd, playing songs from their upcoming album, *Calypso Avalanche*, as well as older songs like "Spanish Flea"

and my favourite, "The Person Behind The Counter". I would describe Piggy as a hybrid of calypso, polka, and klezmer. They were a fun band to watch, with

Inbreds. I always enjoy seeing the Inbreds play, especially Mike O'Neill's innovative bass. This concert was more fun than the last time I saw the Inbreds play, when

someone puked on a table in front of me at the Birdland.

The funniest part of the set occurred when Inbreds drummer Dave Ullrich tossed rapper cards into the audience. The cards included stars like Vanilla Ice, LL Cool J, and Tone Loc.

Finally, Thrush Hermit went on stage.

Although I liked the first song, they didn't seem to have a great deal of ability after that.

Damon described Thrush Hermit's playing as follows: "The typical loud shit that you hear from any goof that can pick up a guitar and turn the volume up to 10! The songs have no energy." Then he covered his ears.

The show was promoted by Fast Forward, a group of high school girls described by Waye Mason from No Records as "the hottest promoters in Halifax". Although we didn't stay through Thrush Hermit's performance, I had a great time and a lot of credit is owed to Fast Forward for putting it on.

Although the Playhouse is in a crappy part of town and you can't drink there, it's a good, inexpensive club for anyone who doesn't mind dancing beside people in the Backstreet Boys' target age group.



The Inbreds tame the Playhouse on Saturday. Photo by Luke Dobek

The Headstones behave

The Headstones and the Gandharvas
Grawood Lounge
November, 7

BY GORD ROSS

An awesome night of music was held at the Grawood on Friday night.

The opening act was the Gandharvas. I knew what to expect due to my familiarity with their last album, *Inertia and a Soap Bubble*, which was popular a couple of summers ago.

Their set was energetic, but not very inspiring. Although I was not overly impressed, a lot of people seemed to be. In fact, the floor was packed for their entire set.

After the Gandharvas it was finally showtime. The

Headstones, lead by delinquent vocalist Hugh Dillon, rolled out and proceeded to wow the crowd with their flawless delivery. Amazingly enough, Dillon even behaved himself and actually seemed to be in an uncharacteristically good mood. In fact, there was none of the usual spitting and/or rudeness which has made one of Canada's most controversial artists.

The concert was spectacular. The Headstones' sets were littered with both old and new material played to perfection. The blend of songs was well thought out, despite the lack of evolution in the Headstones' sound.

Overall, the musical experience was excellent. The mood was created by the Gandharvas and emphasized by the Headstones. I, for one, can't wait to see them return.