

## Reminiscent of Kiwanis Festivals

**National Ballet opens dance Series with a dud**By NANCY AND  
ADRIAN HILL

The National Ballet of Canada opened the dance portion of York's Performing Arts Series with a rather disappointing offering of trivial attempts that would say little of any ballet company, let alone the National. Reminiscent of the senior Kiwanis Festivals, fear and near-terror showed in all but a few of the youthful performers' faces. The pieces were short and largely incongruent.

Most of the Company on hand were very young, the average age being less than 20. Often poorly developed balance and technique let the performers down so that falling, slipping and shaking were evident.

Fandango and Eh! were well received by the receptive audience as they provided a good bit of fun.

The opening three pieces, including interludes from Black Swan and Sleeping Beauty provided a good test of the Company's ability since these are standard choices for most companies. The technique was, for the most part, shaky and uncertain. Hampered by dull choreography, straight general lighting and uninspired music, the three came off as far less than professional works. Karen Kain, the principal dancer provided the most exciting moments of the evening

with her style, grace, technique and overall stage presence. Sergui Stefanski handled much of the leading male dancing. Although he showed traces of considerable ability, he was certainly not up to the task demanded of him. He often showed signs of strain, lacking the polish, fullness and strength needed by a principal dancer.



Karen Kain principal dancer

The dancers all suffered a disadvantage at Burton as the

audience looked down on them, rather than looking head on, as is the case in most theatres. The stage surface was filthy and badly scratched; the dancers complained that it was treacherously slippery making the dancing not only difficult but actually dangerous. This may

well account for some of the falls. Autumn Song, started off displaying lovely impressions of seasonal change. The music had a moving, subtle quality; movement came in soft pulses. The illusion quickly broke, however, as the pleasantness disappeared. The

music became overbearing and heavy-handed and the dancers tired quickly.

A more balanced program, including modern ballet works and greater than surface-level performance by the dancers would have left a better impression on all of us.

**Michael Cooney's goodness leads Founders Festival to success**

By Bob Martin

Sing Out's Israel Young once described Michael Cooney as "the ultimate goodness of the city folk music scene." Certainly the knowledgeable and versatile folk singer was largely responsible for the success of Founders College Festival '71 last weekend.

The Friday night concert began with Alan Jay Ryan, whose music would probably be considered folk-rock. For this observer, Ryan will be remembered as the too-slick performer singing about his late arthritic grandmother, Leapin' Lillie.

Tannis, a young lady from Manitoba, followed Ryan. Although she made a sincere attempt to communicate with her audience and

played the autoharp well, the response was polite; everyone was anxious to hear Michael Cooney.

Finally Cooney appeared — a bottle of Nu-Grape in his hand — singing an old commercial (unaccompanied.) On his guitar a message read, "We have met the enemy and they are us." Very few singers could have successfully made such an entrance — but Cooney's honest approach to his music made it all seem natural.

The scope of Cooney's repertoire is overwhelming; he sang traditional and old composed songs which originated everywhere from the British Isles to the southern States. Earlier in a brief interview, he discussed people who had influenced him: obscure non-professional singers, folklorists and people like the curator at the

Library of Congress. These people, plus his extensive travelling, reading and listening have all contributed to his development as a folk singer.

Cooney's versatility as an instrumentalist dazzled everyone at Saturday's informal workshops. With the able assistance of Eric and Marty Nagler, the workshops were both exciting and informative. The Naglers, who are the proprietors of the Toronto Folklore Centre, directed a fascinating workshop on unusual instruments, while Country Granola (South Happiness Street Society Skiffle Band) and Sweet Evening Breeze provided a humorous workshop on stringband, bluegrass and ragtime.

In the concert, Cooney expressed the notion that anyone can play folk music if they have the desire.

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