

# Morris' stunning Paukenschlag Grands Ballet highlight

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by Riccardo Sala

Montreal's Les Grands recently gave the world premier of Mark Morris' stunning "Paukenschlag" at the O'Keefe Center. It was a fascinating, jarring work on many levels.

"Paukenschlag" was one of four works staged by the Montreal group, the others being George Balanchine's "Valse Fantaisie," Nacho Duato's "Jardi Tancat" and "The Gilded Bat" by Peter Anastos.

These diverse dances, ranging from the elegant, simple classicism of Balanchine to Anastos' overstated movement, displayed Les Grands' masterful ability to switch chameleon-like according to the demands of the varying works.

"Paukenschlag" was brilliant, Morris moving his dancers to the strains of Haydn's symphony no. 94 in G major. Designer Robert Bordo's simple white screen with baroque chandelier-style motifs accentuated the classical score and restrained movement of the piece. Irony lay in the transposing of this restraint of movement with the dancers' costumes, tights which suggested athletic abandon and aggression.

Balanchine's "Valse Fantaisie," like the other works, with the exception of "The Gilded Bat," was a simple piece which gave the Montreal dancers the opportunity to display their classical skills, moving to Mikhail Glinka's Valse Fantaisie in B minor. A blue screen backed up the six dancers, complementing their oyster white costumes.

"Jardi Tancat" was based on Catalan folk tales collected and sung by Maria del Mar Bonet. The

## DANCE

**Jardi Tancat and other works**  
Les Grands Ballet Canadiens  
The O'Keefe Centre  
Sunday, March 15

three couples in "Tancat" dance against a backdrop of withered trees, peasants tied to the earth at the mercy of a fickle and at times cruel nature.

Like the music, a passionate guitar accompanied by the soulful wailing of Bonet, the dancing in "Tancat" was intense, but disciplined.

"The Gilded Bat" — based on Edward Gorey's delightfully disturbing comic strip — which closed the show, is a hilarious parody of ballet. Focusing on the fictional life of ballerina Maud Splaytoes, danced by Anik Bissonette, the narrator, played by Quebec's Jean Leclerc, describes

the misadventures of a mal-adroit ballet hopeful.

Sadly, Splaytoes is killed in a plane crash just before her big break in the "Chauve Souris Doree," literally Gilded Bat. There is a performance in her honour, with a spotlight dancing where Splaytoes would have been, one of the many comic touches throughout the work that hit the right chords with the audience.

Going from the intensity of "Tancat" to the gaiety of "Bat" was quite a jump, one which Les Grands Ballets handled extremely well. The program was a success, the Montreal troupe proving adroit in dealing with a wide range of topics and themes.



Giocanda Barbuto and Andrea Boardman in Nacho Duato's contribution to an evening of dance with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, *Jardi Tancat*. Based on a collection of Catalan folk tales, *Jardi Tancat* means "Closed Garden." The dancing was intense but disciplined. • photo by David Cooper

## Apted's anthropological investigation continues

by Lilac Cane

### FILM

**35 Up**  
directed and produced by Michael Apted  
starring several British citizens

A valid and necessary lifelong anthropological investigation of British culture? Or just another futile exercise at defining any group of people? If anything, Michael Apted's *35 Up* left me with a taste of the mixture that is "contemporary Britain," hardly Neapolitan, potpourri or melting pot, but definitely and decidedly Apted-esque.

*35 Up* is the latest manifestation of an idea started 28 years ago in a Granada Television feature called *Seven Up*. A group of engaging young tykes — all seven years of age — from widely differing backgrounds had their thoughts, mannerisms and

aspirations revealed through filmed interviews. Why? To get a glimpse of life in England, of course — the old cross-section display treatment.

Subsequent films at seven-year intervals followed; the same kids were trailed at the age of 14, 21, 28.

Shown from a none-too-detached angle of interviewer-slash-social commentator, this latest documentary almost proves how predetermined a person's character can be,

from conception to adulthood and beyond. Social status (read: class) and gender certainly do much to affect this ongoing soap opera as well.

At times, I was tempted to view the narrative as too comically close to resembling shows like Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom*. (Lines like "See Jane play wife" and "Look at the young upwardly mobile prep schooler in his natural habitat" crept into my

head). *35 Up* just seems at times to be too staged to be taken seriously as fact.

Entertaining and touching (especially the treatment of Neil, the lone wolf/iconoclast of the group), *35 Up* nevertheless manages to convey a sense of hope and growth. Its protagonists, the English people, continue to defy unwritten definitions in their individual expressions of living.

## Mike MacDonald: My House, My Rules, my cliches

by Anthony Pizzari

*My House, My Rules*, stand-up comedian Mike MacDonald (*Mosquito Lake*)'s routine, taped for the CBC from a performance at the Elgin Winter Garden Theatre, is very safe. Although the word "fucking" is no longer taboo, for example, the network censored it anyway.

Perhaps they were trying to give the show the appearance of being risqué.

The show is about MacDonald's memories of his childhood. His relationship with his father is the basis for his exaggerated humour.

The routine touches all the familiar bases: dad's antics during the family's vacation car trip; mom trying to navigate and not quite being able to do it; his *big party* while his parents are away; turning 19 and thinking he is a man; etc. He punctuates his jokes with slapstick which I found funny only the first or second time.

Each segment is introduced with MacDonald on a boat in the middle of a lake, no doubt to give us a sense we're in Canada, sharing an "intimate" moment with the comedian. At one point, he gives us one solution to his family problems: "Break the cycle." Gee, thanks.

Despite the clichés, the routine occasionally touches on shared memories which are funny. Almost everyone has gotten drunk with their friends, for instance, and got home way too late only to face a stupid lecture and a slap.

Sadly, these moments are few and far between. Although MacDonald was obviously very affected by his teenage years, his routine isn't really insightful or funny. *My House, My Rules* comes off more like a cross between *The Beachcombers* and a less sarcastic version of *Married... With*

### TELEVISION

**My House, My Rules**  
starring Mike MacDonald  
CBC  
Friday, March 20, 9 pm.

*Children.*

The most interesting thing about *My House, My Rules* is that it demonstrates how big the generation gap really is. The humour does not deal with drugs or abortion, for instance, things that most teenage university

students today have seen or dealt with.

Cutaways to the audience reveal the show's target viewers: people 30 and over, couples in retirement, grandparents. They're yuppies (if I can still use that term) who graduated from high school in the '70s and still think Led Zeppelin is the greatest rock band.

*My House, My Rules* is a typical CBC production, but at least it's in the right time slot. Who but parents would be at home Friday at 9?



Three of the subjects of Michael Apted's series of documentaries, the latest of which, *35 Up*, has just begun a commercial release. Starting when they were seven, Apted filmed a number of people with varying backgrounds every seven years to see whether or not their expectations of life were fulfilled.

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