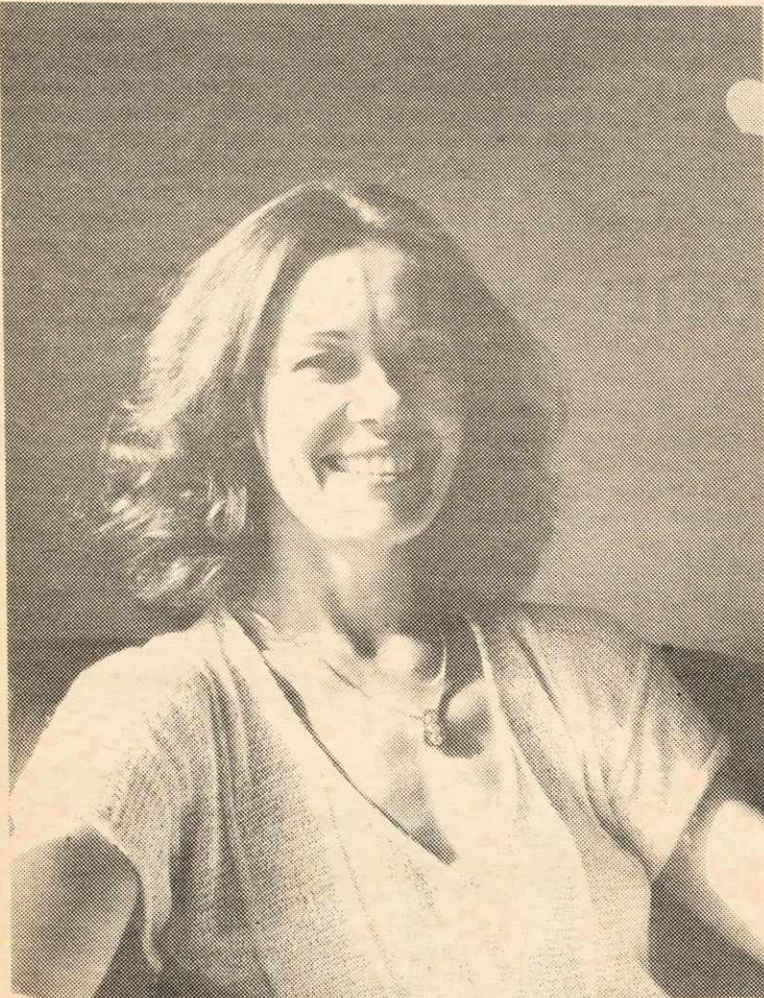


Reaching out in search of the ballet



have to reach out," she comments, "especially in a creative field...all the time you have to grow." This goes both for herself and the Ballet as a whole. "People are impatient—that seems to be forcing other changes, people are looking for other things faster and faster."

Recognition and acceptance of this makes great demands upon the artists concerned. Harwood herself takes part in an extensive variety of guest performances, aside from her work with the Canadian Company. On stage, she has been described as "something so totally unexpected and moving she transcends character".

The Dalhousie Arts Centre stop will be number four in the National Ballet's five-stop Maritime tour. To Vanessa Harwood, a Torontonion, one of the advantages of playing 'down east' is that "The rapport is better, but the stage area is smaller." Not that she hasn't performed on every form of stage and in every situation imaginable. Her first venture with the National Ballet was a "seven week, one-night-stand tour of the United States on a bus-coast to coast, North to South." She almost called it quits after that first ultra-frantic exposure. This sort of thing isn't happening this year, however. As Miss Harwood points out, touring is just "something you get used to".

Looking to the future in what she calls "a very volatile business" isn't easy. The early removal of the company's president artistic director, Alexander Grant, is perhaps an indication of this instability. Harwood thought Grant, a man of great ability and considerable history, "has done some very good things for the Ballet". Even so, the Company's Board of Directors have terminated his directorship

one year early. It is difficult to fully understand why.

Ballet is undoubtedly more popular now than ever before. Although it's usually a case of "either you enjoy it, or you don't," says Harwood, more people come out smiling these days. "Especially today, with people's awareness of their physicality and shape...they enjoy watching people do things which they cannot do," she said. Of course, the Ballet is also a mystical escape into an impossible world made possible by the super-human efforts of a rare few.

The fact that these 'few' are often graduates from the national Ballet School is irrelevant. The Canadian Government foots one-third of the company's 9 million dollar annual budget (a meagre contribution at that). This doesn't mean audiences are going to be subjected to a barrage of Canadian content. Fortunately, there are no laws as to how many beavers must swim around in Swan Lake. The Canadian dancers enjoy a freedom which is, as Harwood sees it, necessary. "We need input from all nationalities — all kinds of people. Actually, Canadians, when you really boil down to it, are made up of people from all over the world."

This doesn't mean that Canadian works are ignored, or that there is nothing good coming out of our artists' imaginations. The ballet "Newcomers", for instance, which will be performed Friday afternoon, is about as Canadian as you can get. This includes a Canadian score, choreography, and a story line which rests on our immigrant roots. The attitude is "to get the best of Canadian (work) we can, but not because it's Canadian: because it's good," said Harwood.

To sum up, any successful crea-

tive force "has to come from the world". Thus the old Russian Classical style of dance is being challenged by new, innovative choreography — one of the major reasons for the defection of Russian artists onto the Western stages. (A factor which incidentally has added to the allure of ballet in North America.)

On a larger scale, at the International Ballet competition in Moscow this summer, Canadians were second in awards only to the Russians themselves. At times, the Russian school can be seen as hiding smugly behind the 200 year heritage of the Bolshoi Theatre.

The Canadian School will be marking its 31st year this fall: a deceptive factor in judging the calibre of the company. "Yes, twenty years ago, because they (the Russian dancers) had 200 years under their belts, they were better," stated Harwood, "and we were just getting started...". But as she makes clear, "It's push push...the Western world has practically caught up 200 years in twenty years...in a way we're further ahead than they are now."

"I don't know where we're going to go from here," added Miss Harwood. "It's hard to know what's next - what's new." This may sound gloomy from a performer who was fostered as a pioneer in her field, a principal dancer at age 23 with very little experience to draw on. But it's inevitable a truly progressive art form (such as ballet) will always have its future in the dramatic fog of artistic speculation.

Vanessa Harwood is certain of this much, however, "You've got to keep dancing." Not a bad philosophy for a great many things, and coming from such an extraordinary lady, it is one we all might benefit from living.

by Ward McBurney

Canadian Ballet isn't a common conversation topic. But when it does crop up, you'll hear little except praise for its accomplishments. Vanessa Harwood, a principal dancer for the National Ballet of Canada, is one of the living reasons for those successes. She is in Halifax ahead of her fellow dancers who will be performing at the Dalhousie Arts Centre next week.

For those who still must struggle with vague misconceptions of ballet as a classically stuffy artform, this remarkable dancer would soon set matters straight. Having just returned from a packed-house standing ovation tour of the States with Alexander Gudunov, Miss Harwood, with seventeen years in the National Ballet behind her, is hardly one to sit atop a personal plateau of accomplishments. "You

Gray: Good

by Kenneth Newman

If you are reading this sometime before 8:00 on Thursday night, 23 September, you are in luck. While you are walking, running, riding or hailing a cab over to SMU's Art Gallery I'll tell you a bit about the concert over there this evening. Former Dalhousie music student made good, John Gray, is giving a performance with a musician named David Barteaux. The show is entitled, "NEW MUSIC: ELECTRONIC AND STEEL-STRUNG SOUND". Gray will be playing solos on piano and synthesizers, Barteaux will be playing electronics and at the end of the show they plan to play a duet together.

Now don't let the idea of "new" or electronic music scare you off. Those of us who know Gray from Halifax watering holes, from his work with the group Murphy's Law, from his latest recording work, from the soundtracks to the films *Perspectives* and *Atomic Dragons*, and from his performance with Floyd Gillis earlier this year, know better. Gray's music is melodic, relaxing, pretty and, dare I say it?, dreamy. His piano work reminds me of Mendelssohn or Mahler. It certainly evinces years of classical study and is deeply steeped in the Romantic tradition. His electronics remind me of Klaus Schulze of Tangerine Dream

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