

Arts & Entertainment

New director for RWB

interview by Boris Zvonkovic

"Ballet, dance, is not a highbrow art form with pretty girls and weird boys. It is an art form where people work very hard; behind each artist is a real, hard-working human being," explains Dutch-born Henny Jurriens, who is the amiable new artistic director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet Company (RWB). The 39-year-old Jurriens was appointed in December of 1987, by unanimous vote of the board of directors of the RWB, to succeed Mr. Arnold Spohr as artistic director of the internationally renowned company.

Jurriens plans to apply his strong work ethic, along with some new ideas, to maintain the Winnipeg company's position as one of the best and most unique ballet companies in the world. "My struggle is to prove to everybody, even in our own organization, that we are up there, that we belong there and that our goal should be to remain there," he says.

Jurriens brings to the RWB years of experience, both on and off stage, that have made him a respected member of the international ballet community. He was a dancer, soloist, and principal dancer with the Dutch National Ballet for 17 years and has performed as guest artist with ballet companies throughout the world. He was also a guest artist with the RWB, and partnered Evelyn Hart in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Giselle*, and *Moments Shared*. Together they made many guest appearances in major cultural centres throughout the world.

Jurriens has been presented with numerous awards, including the Dutch Dancers Lifetime Achievement Award and the Knight of Achievement Award, for his dancing accomplishments. Off stage, Jurriens has been a teacher, ballet master, and assistant artistic director with the Dutch National Ballet and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Jurriens has successfully made the transition from world class dancer to dance administrator, and is now anxious to take on the delicate task of directing one of the world's pre-eminent ballet companies and attempting to make it even better. In his new position as artistic director of the RWB, Jurriens has final say over all

aspects of the ballet company.

According to him, "an artistic director should give the company an artistic profile. He is able to do that by hiring a certain type of dancer, by choosing the repertoire, by choosing the artistic staff, by working directly with the artists... working with people, working with personalities and characters, getting people together to create something incredible, this is what I am doing and this is what I enjoy doing."

The artistic director, according to Jurriens, is also responsible, along with the company's general manager, for establishing the long-term goals of the company. In the case of the RWB, Jurriens would like to establish the company, in the eyes of his dancers and in the eyes of the world, as an undeniably world class act. He will do this by "initiating joint ventures, by going to the bigger theatres in the bigger cultural centres in Europe, instead of playing it safe in the smaller theatres."

He also plans to make more changes to the repertoire of the RWB, which is the main distinguishing characteristic of a ballet company: "I want to keep the repertoire very diverse, which it is now, but I want to add our own product... hire choreographers to work in-house and create together with the dancers... to add our own unique product to our repertoire."

According to Jurriens, the RWB has already established itself as a superb ballet company with excellent talent. "My ex-boss from the Dutch National Ballet said to me 'Henny, its amazing the people you have in your company, and the way they work and the personality they have... instead of being studio dancers they are performers, they come on stage and go beyond themselves.'" Jurriens' goal is to maintain the high standard the RWB has achieved, and gradually improve it further.

Another of Jurriens' goals for the RWB is to keep it a uniquely Canadian touring company. "We want to be a touring company... it is our mandate to give to all Canadians, or as many as we can get in contact with, world class dance. That's what we want to do, and that's what we must keep on doing." During their present Western Canadian tour, the RWB will be performing in smaller centres such as Red Deer, Fort McMurray, Banff and Grande



Clive Oshty

Henny Jurriens, the new artistic director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, brings his dancing troops to Edmonton next Tuesday and Wednesday.

Prairie along with cities such as Edmonton and Calgary. The company will display its versatility by performing classical ballets, such as Balanchine's "Concerto Barocco" along with lighter, more humorous numbers, such as "Gaité Parisienne."

Jurriens hopes that many people will come out to see the RWB, and "allow themselves to look at dance as an experience, instead of trying to understand exactly what is happening... simply sit down and absorb the atmosphere."

Cockburn doesn't say goodnight

Bruce Cockburn
Jubilee Auditorium
Monday, April 3

review by Ron Kuipers

It was a mellow, laid-back Bruce Cockburn who graced the stage of the Jubilee Auditorium Monday night. Fans of all types, sizes, and ages came together to view their perennial favourite in a different sort of concert than usual. Accompanied by just two other musicians, Fergus Marsh on stick and Mike Sloski on drums, Cockburn delivered a tight, crowd-pleasing performance.

Cockburn came to Edmonton minus the large entourage that he usually surrounds himself with. While this limited the possibilities for creating the range of different sounds his audience has become accustomed to, it also focused more attention on the songs as a whole, and on Cockburn himself. Combine this sharper focus with the versatility and wide-ranging sounds of the stick, and all the songs remained full-sounding.

Cockburn kicked out two sets of music plus an encore, and even after 2½ hours of music, the audience still wanted to hear more. Still, the show started off quite slowly, with many pauses and no real sense of building. He even forgot a few words to "Lovers in a Dangerous Time." Yet he maintained his composure throughout, a tribute to his performing experience. After the song, he laughed at the blunder saying, "One of these days I'm gonna learn all of those words."

Midway through the first set, however, things started to come together. He spiced up the show with a funny piece about looking on the brighter side of life. In typical fashion and accompanied with a little whistle, Cockburn cheerfully sang, "Life's a piece of shit when you really look at it." The audience appreciated the sardonic humour that was characteristic of

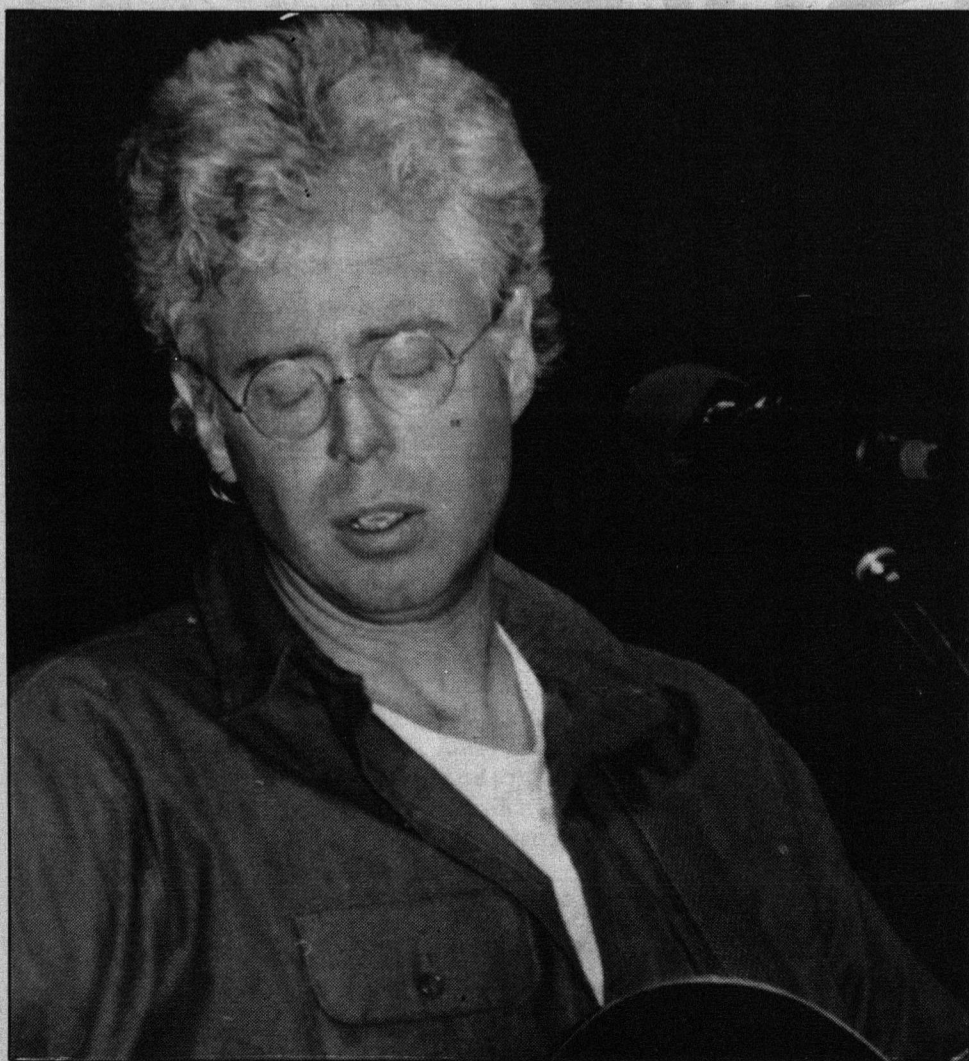
the greater part of his quips and commentary on this night.

After the comic interlude, Cockburn did a great job performing some crowd favourites. Notable songs in the first set included "The Trouble With Normal," an energized version of "Maybe The Poet," and the searing "If I Had A Rocket Launcher." He ended the first set with "Tibetan Side of Town," a song which really showcased the strong musicianship of both Cockburn and Marsh.

The second set was even better than the first. The audience and Cockburn really seemed to connect here — no small feat for a concert at the Jube. Cockburn showed his ability to stand alone and captivate an audience. This was never more clear than during the song "Stolen Land." The show became even more minimalistic at this point, as Cockburn sang acappella, accompanied only by the eerie pulsating of a bodhran. Here he revealed a strength and urgency in his voice that is often less evident in his fuller arrangements.

In the end, Monday night was characterized by positive energy. This was so even despite the seaming gloominess of Cockburn's well-known political stances. The songs "Wondering Where The Lions Are" and "Down Here Tonight" seemed to especially stand out in this positive sense. Throughout the rest of the evening, Cockburn showed his range and versatility as a musician, and he made sure that the music remained the focus for the entire night.

Cockburn closed the show singing, "I don't want to say goodnight." It was obvious that he enjoyed playing here, and the crowd, though not exactly jumping up and down, let him know he was appreciated. Cockburn left this last song hanging with the words "I don't want to say..." and exited with a wave. He didn't say goodnight.



Ron Sears

Bruce Cockburn, international ambassador and veteran folk-rocker, brought his fine-tuned musical and political sensibilities to the Jube Monday night.