

THE  
NATIONAL  
**Ballet**  
OF CANADA

Karen Kain  
Artistic Director

# Ballet Notes

24 Preludes by Chopin &  
A Suite of Dances &  
The Four Seasons

March 3 – 7, 2010

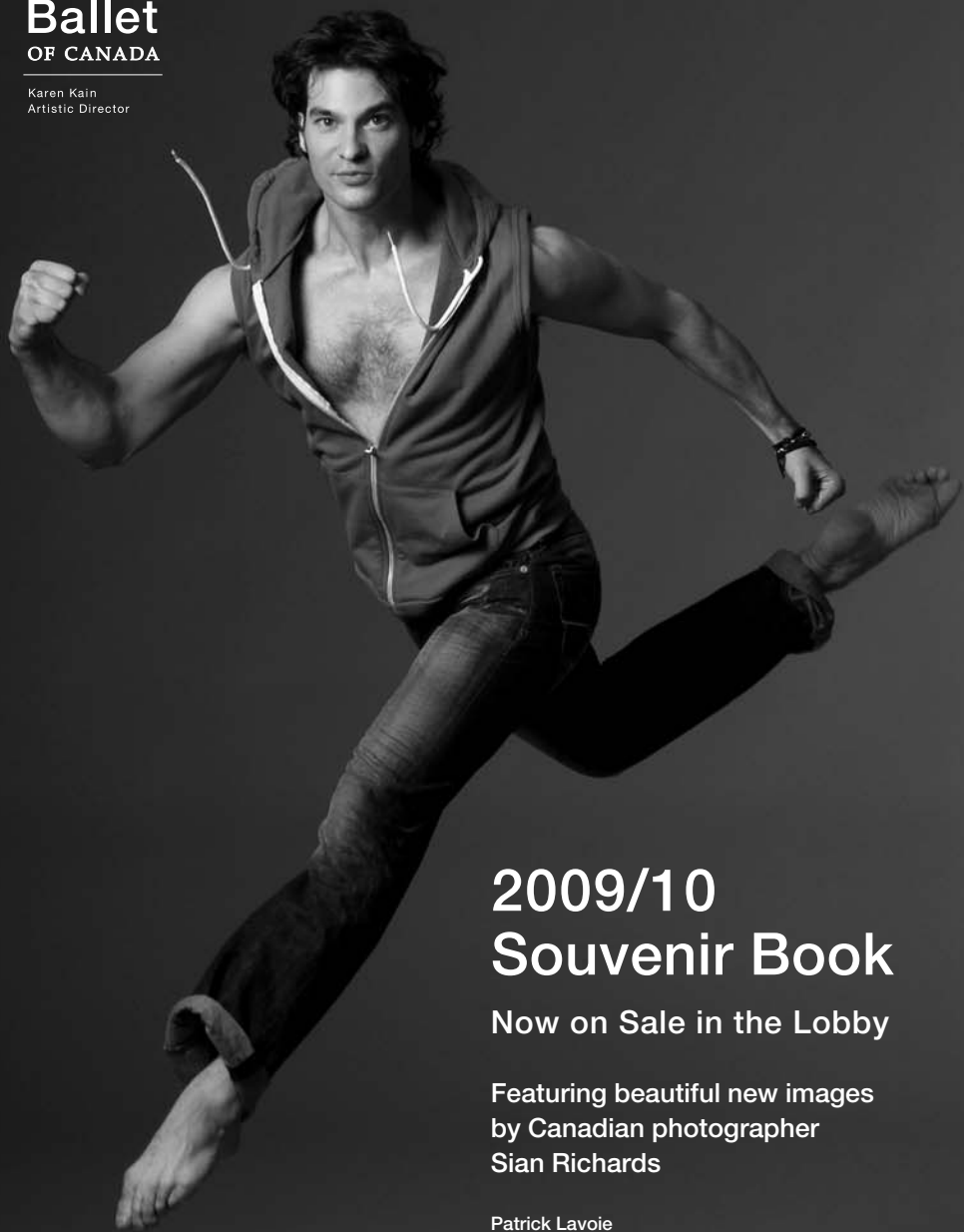


Aleksandar Antonijevic in *The Four Seasons*.

Photo by Cylla von Tiedemann.

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**2009/10**  
**Souvenir Book**

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Sian Richards

Patrick Lavoie  
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THE  
NATIONAL  
**Ballet**  
OF CANADA

Karen Kain  
Artistic Director

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**Karen Kain, C.C.**  
Artistic Director

**Kevin Garland**  
Executive Director

**David Briskin**  
Music Director and  
Principal Conductor

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Artist-in-Residence

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**Lindsay Fischer**  
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**Peter Ottmann**  
Senior Ballet Master

**Mandy-Jayne  
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Greta Hodgkinson\*, Jiří Jelinek,  
Zdenek Konvalina, Heather Ogden,  
Sonia Rodriguez, Piotr Stanczyk, Xiao Nan Yu,  
Bridgett Zehr

Victoria Bertram, Kevin D. Bowles,  
Lorna Geddes, Tomas Schramek,  
Hazaros Surmeyan\*

Keiichi Hirano, Tanya Howard, Stephanie Hutchison,  
Richard Landry, Etienne Lavigne, Patrick Lavoie,  
Stacey Shiori Minagawa, Tina Pereira,  
Jonathan Renna, Rebekah Rimsay, Jillian Vanstone

Alexandra Golden, Elena Lobsanova, Noah Long,  
Alejandra Perez-Gomez\*, Lisa Robinson, Jenna Savella,  
Robert Stephen, Brett van Sickle

Ryan Booth, Wei Chen, Jordana Daumec, Krista Dowson,  
Nadine Drouin, Naoya Ebe, Selene Guerrero-Trujillo,  
Grace Hanley, Juri Hiraoka, Kathryn Hosier, Klara Houdet,  
Tamara Jones, Lise-Marie Jourdain, James Leja,  
Alexandra MacDonald, McGee Maddox, Catherine Maitland,  
Elizabeth Marrable, Antonella Martinelli, Chelsy Meiss,  
Shino Mori, Tiffany Mosher, Amber Munro, Andreea Olteanu,  
Marissa Parzei, Brendan Saye, James Shee, Christopher Stalzer,  
Nan Wang, Aarik Wells, Sarah Elena Wolf

RBC Apprentice Programme / YOU dance: Jessica Burrows,  
Skylar Campbell, Jackson Carroll, Esabelle Chen, Shaila D'Onofrio,  
Giorgio Galli, Alexandra Inculiet, Jaclyn Oakley, Julia Sedwick,  
Thomas Snee, Dylan Tedaldi

**Lorna Geddes**  
Pointe Shoe Manager/  
Assistant Ballet Mistress

**Tomas Schramek**  
Assistant Ballet Master

**Joysanne Sidimus**  
Guest Répétiteur

**Ernest Abugov**  
**Jeff Morris**  
Stage Managers

**Gillian Lewis**  
Stage Manager, YOU dance

\*Guest Artist-in-Residence  
\*On maternity leave

## Orchestra

### Violins

Lynn Kuo,  
Acting Concertmaster  
Csaba Koczó, Acting  
Assistant Concertmaster  
Dominique Laplante,  
Principal Second Violin  
James Aylesworth  
Jennie Baccante  
• Sheldon Grabke  
Xiao Grabke  
Nancy Kershaw  
Sonia Klimasko-Leheniuk  
Yakov Lerner  
Jayne Maddison  
Ron Mah  
Aya Miyagawa  
Wendy Rogers  
Filip Tomov  
Joanna Zabrowarna  
Paul Zevenhuizen

### Violas

Angela Rudden, Principal  
Theresa Rudolph Koczó,  
Assistant Principal  
Valerie Kuinka  
Johann Lotter  
Beverley Spotton  
• Larry Toman

### Cellos

Maurizio Baccante,  
Principal  
Olga Laktionova  
Andrew McIntosh  
Marianne Pack  
Elaine Thompson  
Paul Widner

### Basses

Hans J.F. Preuss, Principal  
Paul Langley  
Robert Speer  
Cary Takagaki

### Flutes

Leslie J. Allt, Principal  
Maria Pelletier  
Shelley Brown, Piccolo

### Oboes

Mark Rogers, Principal  
Karen Rotenberg  
Lesley Young,  
English Horn

### Clarinets

Max Christie, Principal  
Emily Marlow  
Gary Kidd, Bass Clarinet

### Bassoons

Stephen Mosher, Principal  
Jerry Robinson  
Elizabeth Gowen,  
Contra Bassoon

### Horns

Gary Pattison, Principal  
Vincent Barbee  
Derek Conrad  
Scott Wevers

### Trumpets

Richard Sandals, Principal  
• Mark Dharmaratnam  
Raymond Tizzard

### Trombones

David Archer, Principal  
Robert Ferguson  
David Pell,  
Bass Trombone

### Tuba

Sasha Johnson

### Harp

Lucie Parent, Principal

### Timpany

Michael Perry, Principal

### Percussion

Robert Comber, Principal  
Mark Mazur

### Orchestra Personnel Manager and Music Administrator

Jean Verch

### Assistant Orchestra Personnel Manager

Raymond Tizzard

### Library Assistant

Lucie Parent

### Extra Players

Anne Armstrong, *Violin*  
Mia King, *Violin*  
Renee London, *Violin*  
Sonia Vizante, *Violin*  
Rebekah Wolkstein, *Violin*  
Josh Greenlaw, *Viola*  
Nicholaos Papadakis,  
*Viola*  
Jill Vitols, *Cello*  
Kevin O'Donnell, *Piccolo*  
Colleen Cook, *Clarinet*  
Diane Doig, *Horn*  
Brendan Cassin, *Trumpet*  
Anita McAlister, *Trumpet*  
Kris Maddigan, *Percussion*  
John Wong, *Percussion*  
Janis Neilson, *Keyboards*

• On Leave of Absence



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The 2009/10 season is presented by: **CTV** **THE GLOBE AND MAIL** 

Wednesday, March 3 at 7:30 pm

Thursday, March 4 at 7:30 pm

Friday, March 5 at 7:30 pm

Saturday, March 6 at 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm

Sunday, March 7 at 2:00 pm

Conductor: David Briskin, Music Director and Principal Conductor

## 24 Preludes by Chopin

Choreography: **Marie Chouinard, O.C.**

Staged by: **Martha Carter**

Music: **Frédéric Chopin**

Piano Soloist: **Edward Connell**

Costume Design: **Vandal**

Make-up Design: **Jacques-Lee Pelletier**

Lighting Design: **Axel Morgenthaler**

Repetiteur: **Peter Ottmann**

*24 Preludes by Chopin* is a gift from THE VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE,  
THE NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA.

Premiere: Compagnie Marie Chouinard, TanzWochen Wien Festival, Austria, July 30, 1999

The National Ballet of Canada Premiere: March 8, 2008

Jordana Daumec, Tanya Howard, Stephanie Hutchison, Patrick Lavoie, James Leja, Noah Long, Stacey Shiori Minagawa, Tiffany Mosher, Matjash Mrozewski\*, Andreea Olteanu, Marissa Parzei, Jonathan Renna, Rebekah Rimsay, Sonia Rodriguez, Christopher Stalzer, Robert Stephen, Brett van Sickle

\*Guest artist

**Marie Chouinard with Artists of the Ballet  
in rehearsal for *24 Preludes by Chopin*.**

Photo by Sian Richards.

### Intermission





Sonia Rodriguez with Artists of the Ballet in *24 Preludes by Chopin*.  
Photo by Bruce Zinger.

## A Suite of Dances

### Company Premiere

Choreography: Jerome Robbins

Staged by: Jean-Pierre Frohlich

Music: Johann Sebastian Bach

6 Suites for Unaccompanied Cello

*Prelude & Gigue* (from Suite I in G Major, BWV 1007), *Sarabande*

(from Suite V in C Minor, BWV 1011), *Prelude* (from Suite VI in D Major, BWV 1012)

Cello Soloist: Winona Zelenka

Costume Design: Santo Loquasto

Lighting Design: Jennifer Tipton, recreated by Nicole Pearce

Repetiteur: Lindsay Fischer

*A Suite of Dances* is a gift from The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation.

Premiere: White Oak Dance Project, March 3, 1994

Zdenek Konvalina (March 3, 4, 6 mat, 7)

Guillaume Côté (March 5, 6 eve)

### Pause

# The Four Seasons

Choreography: James Kudelka, O.C.

Music: Antonio Vivaldi

Violin Soloist: Mayumi Seiler

Costume Design: TRAC Costume, Carmen Alie and Denis Lavoie

Lighting Design: David Finn

Projections and Scenic Effects: Chris Wise

Repetiteurs: Peter Ottmann, Rex Harrington

*The Four Seasons* is a gift from THE VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE,  
THE NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA.

Premiere: The National Ballet of Canada, February 12, 1997

## A Man

Aleksandar Antonijevic (March 3, 6 eve)

Guillaume Côté\* (March 4, 7)

Patrick Lavoie\* (March 5)

Noah Long\* (March 6 mat)

## Spring

Stacey Shiori Minagawa (March 3, 6 eve)

Tina Pereira (March 4, 7)

Chelsy Meiss\* (March 5)

Jillian Vanstone (March 6 mat)

Jordana Daumec and Lise-Marie Jourdain

Marissa Parzei or Shino Mori, Klara Houdet or Antonella Martinelli,  
Andreea Olteanu or Selene Guerrero-Trujillo, Elena Lobsanova or Tiffany Mosher,  
Alexandra MacDonald or Sarah Elena Wolff

Christopher Stalzer or Wei Chen, Naoya Ebe, James Leja or Robert Stephen,  
Brett van Sickle or James Shee



Artists of the Ballet  
in *The Four Seasons*.  
Photo by Bruce Zinger.

## **Summer**

Sonia Rodriguez (March 3, 6 eve)  
Heather Ogden (March 4, 7)  
Stacey Shiori Minagawa (March 5)  
Tanya Howard (March 6 mat)

Tiffany Mosher and Tanya Howard (March 3, 5, 6 eve)  
Andreea Olteanu and Lisa Robinson (March 4, 6 mat, 7)

Elena Lobsanova or Tiffany Mosher, Juri Hiraoka or Chelsy Meiss,  
Krista Dowson or Alexandra Golden

Naoya Ebe, James Leja or Robert Stephen, Brett van Sickle or James Shee,  
Ryan Booth or Brendan Saye, Nan Wang or Aarik Wells

## **Autumn**

Rebekah Rimsay (March 3, 6 eve)  
Stephanie Hutchison (March 4, 7)  
Xiao Nan Yu (March 5)  
Jenna Savella (March 6 mat)

Juri Hiraoka and Krista Dowson (March 3, 5, 6 eve)  
Chelsy Meiss and Alexandra Golden (March 4, 6 mat, 7)

Noah Long and Kevin D. Bowles (March 3, 6 eve)  
Etienne Lavigne and Jonathan Renna (March 4, 7)  
McGee Maddox and Aarik Wells (March 5, 6 mat)

Christopher Stalzer or Wei Chen, Naoya Ebe, James Leja or Robert Stephen,  
Brett van Sickle or James Shee, Ryan Booth or Brendan Saye, Nan Wang or Aarik Wells,  
Tomas Schramek, Hazaros Surmeyan or Kevin D. Bowles

## **Winter**

Victoria Bertram (March 3, 4, 6 eve, 7)  
Stephanie Hutchison\* (March 5)  
Xiao Nan Yu\* (March 6 mat)

Keiichi Hirano (March 3, 6 eve)  
Richard Landry (March 4, 7)  
James Leja (March 5, 6 mat)

Lorna Geddes  
Tomas Schramek  
Hazaros Surmeyan and Ensemble

\* Debuts

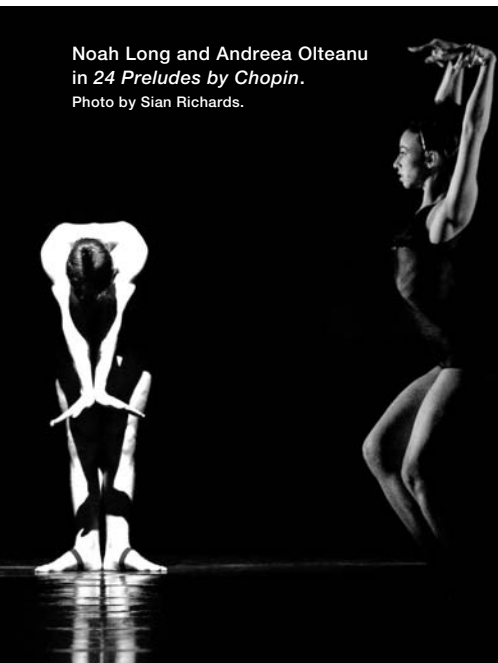
## 24 Preludes by Chopin

Like those great founders of modern dance, Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham, and like Québec's other great innovator, Edouard Lock, Marie Chouinard came to dance late. Perhaps postponing until well past childhood one's submission to the arduous discipline of dance frees the imagination and broadens one's choreographic vocabulary. In any case, Chouinard started performing at 23, quickly discovered she could be as avant garde an artist in Montréal as in New York, and began to make solo dances in 1978, forming her own small company in 1990.

Strikingly contemporary as Chouinard's work may seem, it has significant links to the past. Her oeuvre might well take as its intellectual centre from the 19th century American poet Walt Whitman's famous words "I sing the body electric," for despite the shock value of some of her work – has anyone else

ever drunk a glass of water on stage, only to squat over a bucket and urinate? – she celebrates, albeit rather perversely to some tastes, all aspects of human physicality, even the physically challenged (see her *body REMIX/gOLDBERG vARIATIONS*, in which the dancing body is constrained by pointe shoes, crutches and wheeled chairs). As visual precedent, there's also her inspiration by the staggeringly original works of Vaslav Nijinsky for Diaghilev, most importantly his *Afternoon of a Faun* and *Rite of Spring*, scores – and ballets – Chouinard has reinterpreted. It's probably not coincidental that Whitman, Nijinsky and Chouinard have all been accused of indecency – most particularly, for both Chouinard and Nijinsky, in the guise of onstage masturbation. As *Village Voice* critic Deborah Jowitt puts it, "Chouinard builds powerful art from the tension between transgressiveness and artful structures."

*24 Preludes by Chopin* (1999) is not particularly transgressive but it does combine musical structure with grotesque but oddly beautiful movements and punkgoth costumes that are about as far from traditional Chopin ballets as they can be. Archetypal romantic piano compositions, Chopin's works seem naturally to evoke translucent visions of sylphides, though they are also apt for dramatic interpretation (see James Kudelka's *The Actress*, made for Karen Kain) and even for comedy (Jerome Robbins' *The Concert*, also in the National Ballet's repertoire). Chouinard's contrarian approach to Chopin involves 17 dancers in semi-transparent leotards with strategically placed bits of shiny black tape and she deploys her cast in mercurial style with whip-lashing torsos, twitching hands and windmill arms. Yet there is always perfect, if sometimes offbeat, logic in Chouinard's marriage of music and movement,



Noah Long and Andreea Olteanu  
in *24 Preludes by Chopin*.  
Photo by Sian Richards.

and the steps, non-balletic and unpredictable as they may be, clearly illuminate possibilities inherent in the score. Her choreography has that “Aha!” factor as the square pegs of her dances fit magically into the round holes of the score, with the ballet as a whole allowing us to perceive things in both music and dance that we wouldn’t otherwise have imagined.

Musicologists reference the Chopin preludes by number and key but Chouinard is less abstract, more visual and far wittier in her descriptive unofficial working titles for each section. (Because they’re unofficial, you won’t see them in the programme.) Prelude #3 is “Conductor Solo and Soccer,” and it indeed presents a gesticulating, high-leaping maestro surrounded by oblivious dancers booting a legitimate soccer ball. #9 is “Cathedral Duet,” with two women joining hands to form a pointed Gothic arch while adopting aggressive gargoyle-like postures as passersby pay no attention whatsoever.

One expects in-jokes and bizarre complications in Chouinard’s work and so too here. Don’t try to keep count of the numbers.

Lest following the normal score, 1 to 24, prove too obvious, Chouinard begins with an unnumbered silent pre-prelude and later interpolates #14 1/2, entitled “La Si Do and Bison.” This variation has no music but it does have sound – one distraught and intermittently highjacked dancer tries desperately to deliver a passionate monologue consisting of the common French names for musical notes – do, re, mi, etc. Chopin’s #17 is completely omitted and instead Chopin’s #18 gives us a hair-pulling duet in which a woman manipulates her man with sadistic glee, rather like Dilliah’s foreplay with Samson – and when she strides off at the end, he follows eagerly, panting for more.

The ballet ends with Chouinard’s #23, “Finale,” set to Chopin’s #24. This finale recapitulates many of the work’s movement themes but they’re performed chaotically, seemingly at random. Thus, the work has either 23 preludes (set to Chopin) or 24 (performance sections). Confusing, mesmerizing, audacious, witty, endlessly surprising – this isn’t pretty but it’s vintage Chouinard.

## A Suite of Dances

If ballet gave awards for versatility, one choreographer and one dancer would come at the top of the list. The choreographer is New York native Jerome Robbins, arguably the finest creator of dance in musical comedy on Broadway and in film (*Peter Pan*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *West Side Story*, to name but three). At the same time, Robbins was the craftsman of wildly diverse ballets for New York City Ballet, from *The Cage*, a grotesque depiction of predatory insect-women, to *Watermill*, a slow-paced butoh-like study of the seasons of life, with Asian, perhaps Buddhist, overtones. Among the ballets we’ve been lucky enough

to see in Toronto are *Afternoon of a Faun*, *Opus 19/The Dreamer*, *West Side Story Suite*, *Glass Pieces*, the comic masterpiece *The Concert*, and so on, each a gem glowing with its own distinctive individuality.

The most versatile dancer? Consider the claims of Mikhail Baryshnikov, an improbably exquisite *danseur noble* in the classics as well as a jazzy showman in Twyla Tharp’s repertory and a superb character artist in his signature piece, *Vestris*. Add to that his ability to transition seamlessly into film and television (*The Turning Point* and *Sex and the City*) and he’s a strong contender for the prize.

Put these two extraordinary men together in the early 1990s, one suffering from Parkinson's disease and nearing the end of his life, the other in his 40s, past a dancer's classical prime but with ever increasing presence, and what do you get?

As it happens, you get the last of three masterpieces of collaboration between Robbins and Baryshnikov. The first two had come much earlier: *Other Dances*, a Chopin duet with Natalia Makarova (1976) and *Opus 19/The Dreamer* (1979). Finally, in 1994, came a 14-minute solo for Baryshnikov, *A Suite of Dances*, to selections from Bach's suites for unaccompanied cello. This would be one of Robbins' last works, three out of four of them set to Bach.

How this ballet came to be makes a curious story, confirmed by Robbins' recent biographers, Deborah Jowitt (2004) and Amanda Vaill (2006). During a chat with the choreographer, Baryshnikov, who had always enjoyed working with Robbins, offered his services if ever Robbins wanted to play around with some choreographic ideas in the studio. A few weeks later, Robbins called Baryshnikov: had he really meant the offer? Indeed he had, so the two worked together intermittently on this short ballet for well over a year before *A Suite of Dances* was ready. The ballet debuted in March 1994 as a commission by Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project (a company showcasing older dancers), followed in May by the New York City Ballet premiere.

One problem was finding a cellist capable of playing Bach at the breakneck speed of Yo Yo Ma, whose interpretation had impressed Robbins greatly. As it happened, they found a very attractive and capable young woman, Wendy Sutter, who played onstage as Baryshnikov danced, giving the piece nuances of a somewhat flirtatious, easy-going friendship. The solo thus subtly

becomes an implicit pas de deux between music and dance, musician and dancer.

Bach's six unaccompanied cello suites follow the common baroque pattern, with two pairs of short dances, one slow and one fast – a saraband and a gigue, for instance, as in Robbins' suite. Suites were, in essence, dance music.

*A Suite of Dances* begins with a prelude as the man, in loose practice clothes, sits lazily on the floor, gazing at the cellist. As she walks towards her chair with her instrument and sits, the man rises and takes his position centre stage. As the prelude progresses, the man begins to mark some steps, sketching out what they might look like when fully expressed. Gradually, prompted by the music, he adds layer after layer to the bare bones of the first steps. We realize that what we're witnessing is not so much a dance as an illustration of how a dance is made, responding to music, partner, space and memory. The process feels improvisatory, casual yet serious. It's intimate, focused on the artistry, not the audience. There's no bravura, no flashiness. We share a privileged moment in which art, sometimes serenely and sometimes hesitantly, comes into being.

The following dances – gigue, saraband, another prelude – are similarly simple, unpretentious. There's humour, as when the man hauls himself upright by pulling on his shirt or does not one but three somersaults or turns a cartwheel. There are chains of effortless jumps. The last section is a theme and variations on the idea of the man's walking to the front of the stage and then back, again and again, with a swagger or turned in legs or even jumping jacks. It's the joyous dancing a five-year-old kid might do.

The ballet as a whole is beyond technique. It's about clarity, concentration, innocence, simplicity. It's about art.

# The Four Seasons

James Kudelka's *The Four Seasons* (1997) was the first work he created for The National Ballet of Canada as Artistic Director. Wanting a new challenge for the company and striving to produce a ballet with significant audience appeal, Kudelka chose Vivaldi's much-loved *The Four Seasons* as his score. He created the ballet for Rex Harrington, one of the most distinguished figures in Canadian dance, placing him firmly at its centre, onstage for almost the full 48 minutes of music.

The ballet, hailed as a masterpiece at its opening on February 12, 1997, traces the seasons in the life of everyman, from spring through winter. Each section is constructed around a pas de deux between the lead Man and a woman representing that season. Spring, or youth, begins with the innocent and thoroughly enraptured young Man dancing with a woman while bird-like flights of exuberant

Tanya Howard in  
*The Four Seasons*.  
Photo by Bruce Zinger.



young men and women dart past. Summer is alternately fast and languid, passionate and acrobatic, its bursts of frantic energy broken by sultry pauses until the sexual tension erupts again in the complex and risky lifts.

By Autumn, the season of work and harvest, the Man has reached high middle age, enjoying comradeship rather than serving primarily as a romantic figure. The Autumn woman is left shivering at the end as if a cold front had descended without warning. In Winter, the Man is suddenly vulnerable, tormented first by one, then by three, young bullies before joining a stately and quietly ominous dance with four elderly people.

In the pas de deux with the Winter woman, we slowly become aware that she is the harbinger of death, watching with compassion as the Man dances a final solo embodying the physical infirmities of old age. He dies in her arms as the other seasons' ladies bid farewell.

It was in *The Four Seasons* that Harrington made his final performance as a Principal Dancer with the company in May 2004. Kudelka's and Harrington's joint masterpiece is preserved in the glorious 1999 film created by Rhombus Media and Veronica Tennant Productions.

— Penelope Reed Doob

Greta Hodgkinson and  
Aleksandar Antonijevic  
in *The Four Seasons*.

Photo by Sian Richards.

