
INSIDE OUT

JBA NEWSLETTER
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APPEARS 2X EACH YEAR



JUNIOR
BALLET
ANTWERP

PREFACE



Fully charged after a much-needed summer break, we are eager and ready to tackle a new chapter with enthusiasm and inspiration.

In this autumn edition of INSIDE OUT, we'll have plenty to tell you on **how the first generation of dancers have fared** after their JBA experience as well as a preview of the fresh faces joining us.

We take stock of the beautiful finale to last season - **the performance of MINIATUREN**, in July in the Handelsbeurs, give you a glimpse into the studio at the work of ballet legend **Monique Loudières** and choreographer **Nicolo Fonte** and we hear what **Irma Swijnen**, co-founder of Junior Ballet Antwerp, has to say in our talk with her.

Follow JBA on social media - discover, experience, admire and enjoy all we have to offer.

Enjoy the issue!

Alain Honorez

Miniaturen:

review by Judith Delmé

MINIATUREN; a small pearl of a production was born of necessity, the necessity to give the JBA dancers something they were so longing for, **to perform once again for an audience**. This after all is the essential air which they breathe and the nourishment which feeds their artistry. But after the months of lockdown and a diet of virtual screenings, it was the public as well who were hungry for live performance.

The JBA dancers had been training non-stop with their teachers and coaches; all the young people had the same important goal: to achieve the best form possible to prepare for the filming of their individual solos (both classical and modern) which would then be used for **online auditions**. After two intense years, fraught with Covid anxiety, these budding artists were now more than ready to commence their professional careers.

The leadership team, Alain Honorez and Altea Nuñez, finally decided to organise several viewings of these audition pieces for an accepted, very limited amount of onlookers. Taking place in their own studio, the viewings served to bring dancers and public back into contact again and so the initial mini-Miniatures emerged.

With variations culled from the important classical repertoire plus a series of modern solos and duets adapted by Nuñez from her own choreography, the small program contained something for every taste and demonstrated how wonderfully the dancers had improved over their two-year JBA period.

But these Miniatures turned out to be **the kernel of a larger, even more beautiful creation**.

When performances once again became the order of the day, JBA took to the stage in a unique Antwerp space, one which seems to fit them like the proverbial glove.

JBA had already savored the flavor of the Handelsbeurs (the interior is an architectural masterpiece in baroque style) when Nomad, an artistic commercial was filmed there in January 2021. Both the JBA & the Handelsbeurs had forged a strong connection in that both partners felt that the ballet and the spacious, beautiful building complimented each other artistically.

The opening ballet of **Miniatures'** quadruple bill, Yannick Boquin's **Concerto Con Brio** with music by Dmitri Shostakovich, is an intricately choreographed work of which the second and third part (which was danced here) were specifically created for JBA. Starting with a duet filled with delicate nuances (Anna Yeh and Rin Isomura) and ending with all the 'brio' of the title, the group tackled the sparkling classical steps with ease.

In Altea Nuñez' **Claroscuro**, the dancers play personages who emerge from a baroque painting and who each flesh out a different character and personality. Against the old architectural decor the ballet lived and breathed a period of artistic history when the highlights were light, shade and physical form: in contrast Nuñez' idiosyncratic modern style and the atmospheric contemporary soundscape by Hector Gonzalez Sanchez, Philip Glass & Clint Mansell amongst others projected the ballet effortlessly into the world of today.

It's not for nothing that David Dawson has taken his place amongst the list of past and present great choreographers. And so it was a real honor that he should create a ballet on and for a youthful junior company, JBA. The 5 part work **Metamorphosis** (of which JBA danced parts 1&2) is set on the eponymous Philip Glass music. As Emi Morishita, seated at the piano, struck the crystalline opening bars and Anna Yeh and Rin Isomura, in pure white leotards stood motionless on stage, the audience remained silent as if aware they were about to see something very special. And special it is and was. Metamorphosis exudes a sense of melancholy, a yearning for understanding in the face of turmoil and change. The duet is long: 7 to 8 minutes but so tender, so moving and so full of unspoken narrative that it finishes before one has time to absorb it all. Yeh and Isomura dance it with all the feeling it demands.

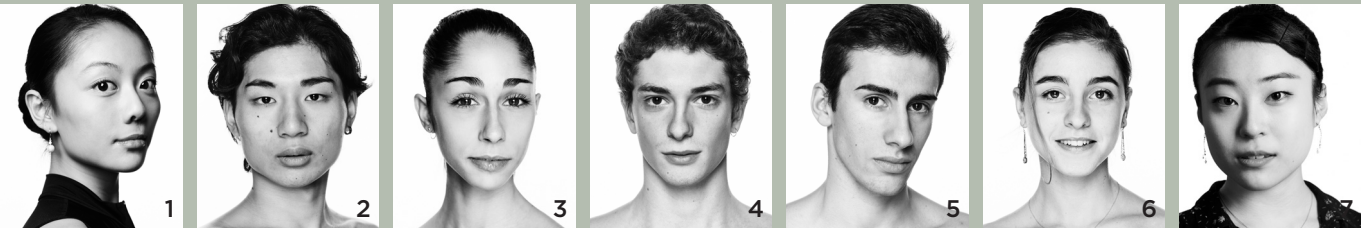
Part two brings on the company; there is ebb and flow to the formations they make, stillness contrasted with glorious body extensions and arms and hands which carve space. The young dancers were superb - maybe not yet ripe technically but fully aware of this masterwork they were dancing.

The evening concluded with another piece by JBA's in-house choreographer Altea Nuñez: **Summer**, part of JBA's very first hit-performance **SEASONS 4.0**. As the summer played its course, its perfume and sensuous warmth were depicted in the flirtatious dance with golden oranges as well as in the sunlit colors of the ladies' airy dresses.

The Miniatures performance will tour to Kapellen & Knokke in 2022 and will be seen in Antwerp once again in May in hetpaleis. Please note that a different version of the performance is envisioned for each different theatre. Information and play dates are to be found on www.juniorballetantwerp.be

The JBA generation 1: where are they now?

The past two years were determined in the light of Corona - the world was at a standstill as were the ballet auditions. Even so JBA did its utmost to fulfill its Mission pledge, which was to guide young artists toward their professional paths. The success of this succeeded all expectations; 14 out of the 18 dancers landed contracts in a short space of time. A guide as to who landed where:



© Filip Van Roe

Anna Yeh (1) and **Rin Isomura** (2), This couple who will always be remembered for their tender and gracious performances in *Metamorphosis*, were awarded contracts with the National Ballet of Brno, Czech Republic.

Maria Mazzotti (3) now dances with the Mecklenburg State Theatre, Schwerin, Germany, led by Xenia Wiest. Maria's first premiere there was entitled *Nacht ohne Morgen*, choreographed by Wiest herself to set music by Philip Glass, Camille Saint-Saëns and Patrick Soluri. Adjacent to this they were rehearsing *Rendezvous* which premiered on 19 November 2021. A demanding schedule!

Marco Ticozzelli (4) sought work in more southern climes and is now dancing with the National Ballet of Portugal. Italian-born Marco acclimatised easily to sunny Lisbon.

Manuel Cirbian (5), **Julia Pagès** (6) and **Yukino Tamai** (7) all landed contracts with the Poznan Opera Ballet in Poland. After finishing at JBA Julia had two weeks to find a place to live, organise her move and settle in to her new work environment where little English is spoken - quite a challenge. She is so grateful that due to her training at JBA she became more confident and thus more versatile and flexible. This has stood her in good stead in her new environment. Yukino more or less concludes with Julia regarding JBA. The variety of styles she learnt during that training has served her well and made it easier for her to fit into a professional company. After a well-appreciated holiday in homeland Japan, she found a place to live in the Poznan Opera itself.

Kana Imagawa (8) was offered a contract with Theatre Hof, GmbH in the town of Hof in Beieren. Thanks to her training at JBA, she was able to strengthen her point technique in both classical and modern- she thus became more self-assured and prepared for work in a professional company.

Laura Orsi (9) saw her youthful dream materialize when she signed a contract with the Bayerische Staatsballett, Munich, Germany. There is a large contrast between JBA's family atmosphere and that of a big professional company but she soon adapted and now enjoys exploring Munich. While at JBA she not only gained more confidence but also refined her technique in both neo-classical and modern dance - according to her the perfect way to bridge the gap between school and a professional career.

Florian Carer (10) returned to his home country, the South of France, to dance with the Delattre Dance Company.

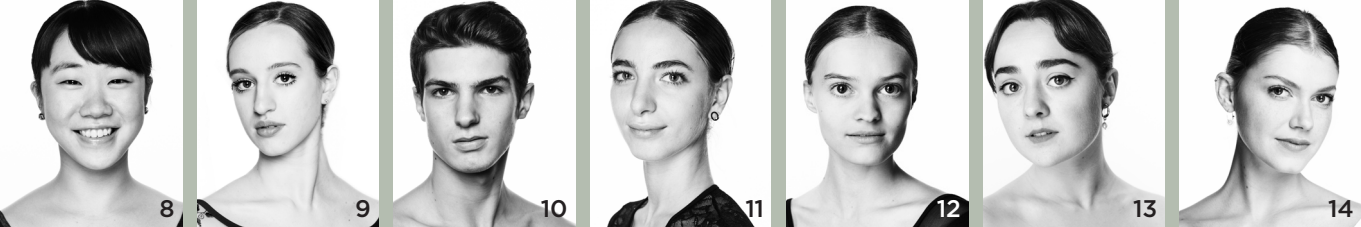
Cecilia Dosio (11) is starting her professional career with the Hungarian National Ballet in Budapest.

Temporary contracts:

Lara Wolter (12) was performing with Opera Ballet Flanders between August and November. She danced in Akram Kahn's acclaimed version of *Giselle* in Antwerp and Ghent, after which she returned to JBA.

Amélie Huc (13) too was offered a short-term contract with Ballet Flanders for *Giselle* but unfortunately never got the chance to shine on stage due to a severe injury.

Amelia Coleman (14) has a short-term contract with the Tivoli Ballet Theatre in Copenhagen, Denmark to dance in their production *The Snow Queen*. She recognizes that her time at JBA taught her to take self-responsibility and allowed time for personal growth. The plus point was that there were always people to count on for trust and support.



To sum up, the importance of their JBA experience for all these young artists is as follows:

Knowing themselves better as a dancer and as a person; gaining more confidence; improving and deepening their dance technique in a broad variety of styles in collaboration with highly qualified teachers and coaches; facing and meeting challenges - the highs and lows of a dance career. All of this in a family atmosphere which provided a unique bonding between friends and colleagues. A never-to-forget-experience which will forever remain in their hearts.

The JBA team wishes them all success in their new careers!

Linda Berghen - translated by Judith Delmé

The next generation:



Retrospective: looking back at an **amazing** late summer

As suddenly as the severe lockdown took place, so did the lifting of the ban; as a result at the beginning of June, Junior Ballet Antwerp moved forward once again at full throttle!

© Nicha Rodboon



Inge Heylen, JBA's dynamic supporter and benefactress, arranged a series of **gastronomic dinners**, the courses interspersed with performance interludes and taking place in Antwerp's select **eatery JEROM**. This had been planned initially for the autumn of 2020 but finally the event was able to take place and proved to be another delicious (in every way) evening of culinary and artistic pleasures, with the JBA dancers, here close up and personal in the limited space, looking and moving exquisitely.

Barely a week later, JBA received green light for **two performances at the Opera**. It was at far too short notice to create sufficient publicity in order to attract full houses but it was an excellent chance to enable the dancers to return to the stage. The main course was **SEASONS 4.0**, JBA's wildly successful four-part ballet set to music by Richter and Vivaldi and revealing four very different choreographic styles. Preceding it came an unexpected premiere: **METAMORPHOSIS 1**, the opening duet out of JBA artistic patron David Dawson's ballet (music by Philip Glass) which had been created partly on and for the company. The dancers really rose to the occasion and showed how they had missed doing what they love best: to perform for a live audience. This program was repeated at CC De Herbakker in Eeklo on June 23 and a Corona-time packed house gave it a standing ovation.

But the best was still to come: on July 7&8, in conjunction with Antwerp's Handelsbeurs, team JBA organized - again at short notice - another reception cum performance. **Miniaturen**, a brand new show, containing choreographic works by Yannick Boquin, Altea Nuñez and David Dawson was finally presented in the way it was scheduled back in 2020.

As that was not enough, JBA took part in the Kortrijk schouwburg's **CUBO** summer program on July 10&11 where JBA presented Dawson's Metamorphosis duo as well as Nuñez' vibrant Summer section out of SEASONS 4.0. This was a teaser to JBA's full SEASONS 4.0 performance to be presented June 2, 2022 in Kortrijk.

Two fine teachers, two different styles

During the final week before the summer break, **Jesse Callaert** (ex KBA graduate and a member of NDT2 for several years) came to conduct a workshop for JBA. He taught the repertoire of Romanian choreographer **Edward Clug**, a piece entitled Mutual Comfort which as Callaert explained he is closely associated with, having learnt it as a stagiaire and performed it recently as first cast.

For all his youth Jesse is a born teacher, using imagery (from his own experience) and able to explain with great clarity. Mutual Comfort, set for four dancers (2 men and 2 women) has a groovy playfulness to it which the JBA dancers took to immediately. In fact it is a piece one felt could fit beautifully into the company's repertoire. Callaert was struck by the professionalism of the group. According to him the many different styles which our dancers have to assimilate during their two-year training benefits them greatly; in fact he said he wished that he had had the same opportunity in his time. He felt it really prepared the young for a professional life in a company. Jesse is now moving on to join the Hannover Dance Company under **Marco Goecke**. We wish him every success and hope very much that he'll be back to teach for JBA in the future.



And to start the new season 21/22 with a flourish JBA welcomed someone very special. A star dancer in her own right, a wonderful teacher and coach, **Monique Loudières** came to spend a week teaching and coaching JBA's second generation who were commencing their two-year program. Loudières was an étoile of the Paris Opera, one of their finest who was plucked from the corps by none other than **Rudolph Nureyev**, to dance the lead in his version of Don Quichotte.

When she turned to teaching she drew on all the accumulated knowledge of her great heritage as well as from luminaries such as Violette Verdy with her Balanchine background and of course the Russian schooling from Nureyev himself.

The manner Loudières passes this on in class is in itself a revelation. She hones in on every aspect of technique, artistry and musicality and does it with such warmth and generosity of spirit that one has the impression that she is extracting by sheer willpower, every ounce of talent possible. Not only the dancers but Alain and Altea themselves drew such inspiration from this lovely lady and would love nothing better than for her to return to JBA not just once but many times.





Prospective: connecting Nicola Fonte & JBA



Even before **Nicola Fonte** arrived to work with JBA in October of this year, there was an artistic affinity between the choreographer and the group's leadership.. Alain Honorez and Altea Nuñez, while principal and first soloist respectively with Ballet of Flanders had featured in his ballets for the company - Alain created the central role in the riveting **Made Man** while Altea shone in the ballet **Cornered**. Their admiration for his creativity and work ethos meant that they were delighted when Fonte accepted an invitation to create with their junior group.

American-born and trained, Nicola Fonte has choreographed for major companies around the world and is resident choreographer for **Arizona's Ballet West** and until recently for **Oregon Ballet Theatre**. Not only extremely inventive movement-wise, his intelligence illuminates his work. For young dancers, the experience of working with a person of his calibre is truly the chance of a lifetime.

For the uninitiated to become involved in a creation is in Fonte's opinion, of the utmost importance. And this is of course one of the tenets of the nurturing JBA platform. Fonte explained that as a choreographer what he looks for in a dancer is not so much for physical perfection as for 200% motivation, for artistic intelligence and instinctive assimilation of a new dance style.. A dancer will stand a real chance of being noticed by directors as well as choreographers if they can demonstrate not only talent but total commitment and input.

Seeing Fonte work with the JBA group was to see him put all this into practice although as he said himself he does approach the young differently from the professionals. To the latter he will say 'give me more' and they know immediately what he means, whereas with the former he has to use imagery to illustrate his point. Fonte coaxed, pushed and teased as he worked but never hesitated to get angry when he felt the attention was insufficient or that there was a lack of commitment.



'Classically adjacent' was how he described his style, telling the dancers that there was so much more to an arabesque, a port de bras or a tendu. There were innumerable shapes and curves to be discovered and used; but **above all what he was searching for was connection**. This to him is a major problem today, not only dance wise but in society at large. In his opinion (rightly so) the i-phone is the source of the problem; Looking at it from a dance perspective, he believed that today, people don't know how to dance with each other. They don't dare to look each other in the eye, to breathe in unison and to take chances in order to do so. Plus the fact - and this was said with a broad smile - where are the jumps, the exhilaration of soaring thought the air- it hardly exists today.

This why the creation for JBA is all about connection; this is the central thread running through the ballet. The solos which spark group formations; limbs which reach out and, with or without touching, initiate a movement which flows from one dancer to the next; and importantly in the eyes and hands which search for contact.

Not only will this creation for JBA be a fine addition to their repertoire, the two-week creative workshop with Nicola Fonte will have made an indelible, invaluable impression on the development and formation of the young dancers.

Nicola Fonte's creation will premiere 11/5/22 at hetpaleis, Antwerpen. www.juniorballetantwerp.be



Irma Swijnen, JBA's co-Founder

From the beginning, one of the pillars of Junior Ballet Antwerp has been its cofounder, Irma Swijnen who is also a highly influential voice on the dancescene in Flanders. For many years director of Dansstudio Arabesque (her resumé is to be found on the JBA website), Irma's knowledge, drive and passion for dance is boundless.

Starting with a short introduction, here are excerpts from a heart-to-heart we had together.

I trained at the Royal Ballet School of Antwerp with lessons in ballet from Jeanne, Jos and Annie Brabants and occasionally from a guest teacher. I quickly realised that I didn't want to be *on* stage but *behind it*, helping children to realise their dreams.

However I only wanted to do this if I could do it well. In Belgium at that time there was no higher education for teaching dance: when this was instituted in 1975, I enrolled immediately. It was all very new and quite honestly, didn't live up to my expectations. I saw that many teachers felt the same way. That was when I decided to set up Dansstudio Arabesque, to create a center where I could invite teachers and dance pedagogues from abroad for those who hungered for the necessary means to improve.

I invited Martin Puttke and Hans J. Tappendorff and I myself followed a course of classical ballet for several weeks at the Vaganova Institute in St. Petersburg. I found this very interesting, learning so much I had never been aware of.

Who were your mentors, both those who were your examples as well as those who supported you?

Among my mentors was of course Jeanne Brabants - she used imagery to such good effect and had a wonderful sense of humor. As far as depth of knowledge and teaching was concerned I counted on Martin Puttke, Hans J. Tappendorff and later on, Jan Nuyts.

What is your driving force, what you set out to bring about in dance and what are you really passionate about?

My motivating force is to realise young dancers' dreams. The world of dance is an unknown world to many people, also for the parents of future dancers who start training at a very young age. I wish to be there for them and that gives me drive and energy.

Why did you chose to support JBA,- what attracted you to the vision of Alain and Altea?

The dance scene has changed so much in the last years, young dancers have to follow in-depth training in both classical as modern dance. This is almost impossible within the normal training scheme; the time span is too short for students to perfect everything. Financially it is also not always possible. Then when young dancers leave school they often have little to no experience. No contract means no training and no training results in no opportunity to grow. You have to pay to follow extra study and often there isn't enough financial support. Because of this vicious circle, the young dancer's dreams often go up in smoke. I am really happy that we have taken steps to change the situation. Of course, JBA is still in a starting phase, a fee-paying initiative as well, because we simply don't have the necessary means. It was not easy to launch JBA - certainly not in the corona period - but at least we are off to a start.

How do you see the dance scene in Flanders today? One has the impression that ballet is being pushed aside and that the 'powers that be' would like to see it quietly disappear. What effect would that have on the art form, not just for the dancers but for the public as well?

I am convinced that people wish to see something beautiful when they go to the theatre, be it classical or modern. Take Akram Khan's Giselle by Opera Ballet Flanders; the choreography, the dynamic of the dancers and the enthusiasm of the general public speak for themselves, as do the performances of JBA.

Everywhere in Flanders there is a great interest in ballet; there are many ballet schools both private and professional - a lot of interest therefore from the younger generation. How can we stimulate them to attend performances, has the word 'ballet' a negative connotation perhaps?

There should be no problem with the word 'ballet' for someone who shows a talent for, and therefore enjoys classical dance. Someone who maybe shows less talent will favour the description 'dance' and will choose to see a contemporary performance. To my mind, it is less dependent on the word itself but rather on what the spectator wishes to see.

What is the advantage of ballet technique today when many other traininhg methods do exist?

The advantage of ballet technique is this; even though there are many other methods of training, ballet demands the right body, turnout, suppleness and 'beautiful feet'. Contemporary dance places less demands on the body which is also a good thing because everyone should be able to achieve their dream.

I (this of course is my opinion) feel that modern dancers should be very careful - when I see some dance performances it makes me wonder in what state their bodies will be in the future.

How do you see JBA's place in all this: is the idea for it to become a multi-faceted Junior company and a valuable addition not only to the Flemish dance scene but to the whole of Belgium and possibly abroad?

As I said earlier, JBA gives dancers a chance when otherwise they could land up in that vicious circle. Naturally it's a shame that after two years, when they have developed into real artists, that they should spread their wings - but that is the purpose of the program. I don't know if the ambition for JBA is to become a real junior company. At the present we say 'JBA is a two-year pre-professional platform taking the form of a junior company'. We can't foretell the future; the dance scene changes constantly, as does society, at an increasing pace. Therefore we must wait and see what the future will bring.

I would say 'Give it all some time!'

JBA Programm 2021/2022

4-9/10	Legendary ballerina and ex-étoile of the Paris Opera MONIQUE LOUDIÈRES shares her expertise and experience with our dancers.
18-30/10	With an eye on a May '22 premiere, American choreographer NICOLO FONTE creates a brand new ballet for our next generation of JBA artists.
1-5/11	Our dancers gain insight into the choreographic language of MEDHI WALERSKI during a workshop conducted by RALITZA MALEHOUNOVA .
22/11-3/12	Freelance ballet coach CHRISTIANE MARCHANT is once more JBA's guest.
9-22/12	David Dawson's assistant REBECCA GLADSTONE works on Metamorphosis.
16/12	JBA participates in the 'museum nocturne', a collaboration with DIVA, museum for diamonds, jewellery and silver.
5/2	MINIATUREN Zaal Lux, Kapellen. Tickets: webshopkapellen.recreatex.be/Tickets/Detail (Keep your ID at hand to create a login)
14-19/2	VÉRONIQUE JEAN conducts a workshop around the choreographic language of MAURO BIGONZETTI
11/3	MINIATUREN cc Scharpoord, Knokke-Heist
27/4	SEASONS 4.0 De Grote Post, Ostend
11-12/5	MINIATUREN hetpaleis, Antwerpen
2/6	SEASONS 4.0 Schouwburg, Kortrijk
7-8/7	METAMORPHOSIS Opera, Antwerpen

For information: www.juniorballetantwerp.be or info@juniorballetantwerp.be

Due to any unforeseen developments regarding the Covid-19 virus, all of the above data is subject to change.

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We would be happy to answer your questions or make an appointment.

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