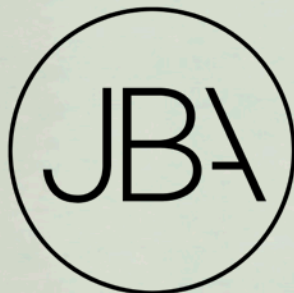

INSIDE OUT

JBA NEWSLETTER
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APPEARS 2X EACH YEAR



JUNIOR
BALLET
ANTWERP

PREFACE

SPRING HAS FINALLY SHOWN IT'S FACE!

After the somber winter of 21/22, smothered in it's dark Covid-mantel, we can at last live and breathe again! Beams of sunlight bring with them hope and give us the renewed energy we so badly need, in order to persevere and to continue dreaming.

In this spring edition of INSIDE OUT we take you back in time, to delve deeper into the creative process of METAMORPHOSIS by British choreographer and JBA artistic patron David Dawson. At the same time we look back at the past few months, with a glimpse at the several valuable workshops which inspired our dancers and I have a discussion with Linda Berghen, to take stock and to evaluate the passage of the last three years.

Last but not least , we unveil what JBA has in store come 2023!

We wish you enjoyable reading!

Alain Honorez.



JBA will shortly celebrate its 3rd birthday

A talk with Alain Honorez

Linda Berghen: We are 2.5 years on since JBA's launch - and this includes a 2 year Corona interruption...

What are your thoughts as you look back?

Alain Honorez: We started out full of enthusiasm, with no idea of what lay ahead. Altea, I and the entire JBA team were convinced that young dancers really need guidance in the period after they finish initial training and before starting out on a professional career. The reason for this is that the very high standard required of young dancers today- in a very changed dance landscape - demands a bridging of the gap between initial training and professional life.

The Covid period forced us to dig deep into our creative resources, in order to bring color 'outside the box' so to speak. Training live in the studio itself was forbidden which meant teaching and coaching all had to be done via zoom. Later on the dancers were allowed to work in 'bubbles' in the studio. During this time we made artistic videos in cooperation with the Handelsbeurs and BOB'IN, as well as with the DIVA museum.

Another difficulty we had to face is that JBA is regarded neither as a school nor as an established company which, for many, makes it rather impossible to categorise. But the whole picture was not entirely black: Listen, Covid enabled the dancers to form close bonds with JBA because of the struggle we all faced and because of the strong motivation and trust of all concerned.

LB: September 2021 witnessed the start of a 2nd generation of dancers. How did their auditions go - and was it possible to create complete productions with a constantly changing group?

AH: The first generation JBA dancers were chosen during live auditions here in Antwerp, selected during weekends of classes, workshops and interviews.

Last year things were very different! Because of the ban on travel, auditions had to be held online and the problems resulting out of this were hallucinating!

For instance we planned in 4 dancers per session; one however lived in Italy, one in the USA and one in Japan! Imagine the co-ordination of time zones the American girl having to audition at 4.00 a.m in the morning ! (10.00 a.m our time) But it does demonstrate the determination and motivation of these young people.

Despite problems the pandemic raised, 85% of the 1st generation had found work and their places needed to be filled, so there was no other option than to hold auditions online. It was not easy to evaluate any candidate's technique, personality and manner of picking up style by just looking at a small screen shot. Luckily the auditions this year could be held in a normal fashion. And it's not a given thing to organise productions with a continually changeable group like ours - each year around half of JBA dancers are new.

This makes it nigh impossible to create a performance program before the middle of the season, we need a minimum of 5 months after our start in September before anything is ready to go on stage. By this time most dance houses/theaters have completed their own planning, something which is usually done a year and a half in advance.

LB: This will certainly be the case with your planned production CINDERELLA - but we'll talk about that later.

AH: CINDERELLA is different because the choreography will be based on classical ballet technique which the dancers, those who join us, will have mastered. This is in contrast to the many other different styles they will be learning during their two years with us.

LB: How do you see the future and what do you think is necessary in order to evolve further?

AH: The priority is to continue to find the right talents who have the potential for us to mold.

Most importantly, we need to promote ourselves! To continue to build a reputation that speaks for itself so that dance programmers will book us sight unseen, knowing that we stand for real quality.

We do need to enlarge our dance premises; we work now in a fantastic and historic building in the heart of Antwerp but our space is very limited. We need 2-3 studios rather than just 1 in order to rehearse with several groups and coaches simultaneously. But Rome wasn't built in a day! Though we have support from the many 'Friends of JBA', on our wish list is a 'mecenas' or at least several big sponsors willing to support these young dancers on the threshold of their careers. In all branches, the demand is always for people with experience but that experience first needs to be gained! These young graduates need a space in which to grow and mature before they are ready to take the first big steps.

Ideally we need a structural subsidy, one on which we can count on yearly. This would be proof that the JBA program and what it stands for, is recognised here in Belgium. The fact that the majority of our dancers are in work after a mere 2 years with us speaks for itself.

LB: What is in the pipeline for next season?

AH: Season 22/23 looks to be extraordinary! We will continue providing workshops on an eclectic range of choreographic styles -see Seasons 4.0 and Miniatures and we look forward eagerly to the premiere of David Dawson's Metamorphosis. Next season we will put emphasis on the classical side in order to keep the dancers' techniques up to standard, and at the same time concentrating on the theatrical side of performance. Our full-length ballet Cinderella (now in preparation) will be a perfect vehicle for this. I am convinced that it will be a brilliant production, one which will include students from the Royal Ballet School of Antwerp. In this way we can send out a signal to children and grownups alike that classical ballet is alive and well and offers the chance to allow dreams to come true. There is far too little of that in our present digitalised time.

LB: Where do you wish to see JBA in say - 10 years?

AH: There is no magic crystal ball - however now that restrictions (Covid) have eased, I hope that the coming months will prove easier. I try to live in the present but with an eye to the future while holding firmly onto the direction we wish to follow. I have been told that it takes 3-5 years before a new organisation can talk of achieving a balance - lets say due to Corona, 5-7 years.

A strong financial basis would help enormously and to count on a team with the same insight and ambitions as Altea and myself, is crucial.

LB: What gives you joy, or equally stress?

AH: I can count myself very fortunate: I have a fantastic and creative wife, two healthy sons and I do feel blessed in my daily life - to guide and support young people in achieving their dream. I am a person who loves to plan and to dream - this makes me happy. The opposite is also true: if we have to remain dependant on decisions which are never forthcoming - yes this can get on my nerves.

To be surrounded by people who 'think along, dream along' while keeping the standard high.....! This was so with the start of JBA - from an idea a seed is planted which, with the right amount of determination and brainstorming grows and becomes a reality.... This is what we tell our young dancers; believe in yourselves and step by step, whatever this path holds, you work toward fulfilling your dream - which in today's world of instant gratification, is very hard to do.

Our next dream is in the works: A brand new ballet Cinderella, a modern-day fairy tale realized in a magical location at the start of 2023!

LB: Thank you Alain, and I would say, dream on further and until we meet at one of the performances of CINDERELLA!

Linda Berghen

Metamorphosis - A ballet is born

At the start of 2019 when the formation of Junior Ballet Antwerp was in the pipeline, it's designated artistic director, Alain Honorez broached **David Dawson** - renowned in the ballet world as one of it's most innovative dancemakers - about the possibility of becoming the young troupe's artistic patron. During his years as principal dancer of the Royal Ballet of Flanders, Honorez had worked closely with Dawson and he was thrilled when the choreographer answered his request in the affirmative. When JBA was launched in September of that year and as a christening gift, Dawson presented the group with something truly unique - a ballet created especially for them.

November 2019

David Dawson travelled to Antwerp accompanied by Rebecca 'Becky' Gladstone, one of his trusted repetiteurs. Both stayed for an intense two-week workshop; the dance material they introduced - various parts of which Dawson already had in petto - was eventually incorporated into the ballet called METAMORPHOSIS, set to the eponymously-titled music by the contemporary composer Philip Glass.

This meeting between a master choreographer - one accustomed to creating for the world's leading companies and their stars - and 20 raw and as yet unformed young dancers was perhaps a really testing moment. Generously Dawson was prepared not only to create a ballet on them but to mold them artistically which meant that first the dancers had to understand and absorb his technically demanding style.

David Dawson's own thoughts behind this creative process:

'I wanted to create a piece to help young dancers to grow and to develop into artists. This metamorphosis is a lesson we all have to learn; It's a revealing of what works and what doesn't, what is a new strength to discover. We have to learn new ways of how to keep dancing and not to give up'.

Maart 2020

Prophetic words! The Covid pandemic sent practically the entire world into lockdown. Everything ground to a halt over the Spring and Summer with dancers forced to home practice in severely reduced spaces. They had to find the strength and motivation if they wanted to continue on their professional paths.

September 2020

With an easing of restrictions, training could begin again; from Berlin another of Dawson's team travelled to Antwerp to continue helping the JBA dancers on their path forward. French-born Raphael Coumes-Marquet was David Dawson's muse, a tall, seemingly boneless dancer who knows the choreographer's style intimately. His firm but disarmingly humorous manner struck an immediate chord with the youngsters and very speedily the first parts of METAMORPHOSIS began to take shape.

Master teacher **Christiane Marchant** - another of Dawson's assistants and one who gave frequent excellent workshops at JBA - then joined the picture. Marchant knew from deep experience how to incorporate the choreographer's material into her classes and this became evident in the way the young dancers were now beginning to 'breathe' the choreography.

Globally, throughout all of 2020/21 (due entirely to the pandemic) live dance performances were forbidden. Companies all over the world were displaying ballet & dance productions digitally and so did Dutch National Ballet for whom David Dawson is resident artist. In need of a new ballet, to be premiered exclusively online, Dawson suggested to finish the missing movements from METAMORPHOSIS with the gorgeous dancers of the Amsterdam based company.

April 2021

The complete ballet was born and streamed from the Muziektheater, Amsterdam to much praise from the critics.

Honorez too had approached Dawson earlier in the season with the question: could part 2 of METAMORPHOSIS (set entirely on JBA in November 2019) be filmed for a future digital screening?

Honorez believed deeply in what his troupe could achieve and was also very interested in the filming of dance, which in his view and in this case could offer a unique 'third dimension' to an already beautiful piece of choreography. Accordingly he approached Antwerp-based filmmaker Sam Asaert with the idea of shooting METAMORPHOSIS in an original fashion.

Asaert's vision was to use the entire cast of 10 dancers in part 2 of the ballet, only not everyone simultaneously. Each dancer would be shot individually against a special 'green key' background and then Asaert would insert them into the frame at different times, thus creating a specially-designed whole.

Mei 2021

Filming in the LITES studio, Vilvoorde took place over a two-day period and proved really challenging for everyone involved. For a start the lighting stage had a cement floor - a dancer's nightmare! - and the many pairs of shredded dance slippers, all with lurid green markings were sure proof of how demanding it was. The results however were very encouraging and time will tell if this trial project will receive David Dawson's approval.

September 2021

No sooner had JBA's studio (situated in central Antwerp) opened its doors to a new generation of dancers than workshops began again in earnest.

November 2021

Christiane Marchant had returned - her work now was to accustom these new recruits to David Dawson's style and to lay the foundation for parts 3,4 and 5 of METAMORPHOSIS; it was a task she enjoyed and accomplished to perfection.

In her footsteps came Rebecca Gladstone, to set the ballet and to choose the casts. Gladstone is a wonderful coach - her in-depth experience with the choreography, her musical expertise and unfailing good humor were a joy to behold and an inspiration to the dancers. The interweaving of intricate formations which required spotless spatial juxtapositioning and timing had to be rehearsed tirelessly, without losing the nuances of mood called for in the movement. It was indeed a labour of love.

Structurally METAMORPHOSIS is completed; it remains to be polished, just like the finest of jewels so that when it is finally performed, the young company can and will do their artistic patron proud, justifying the confidence he has placed in them.

To finish in David Dawson's own words:

METAMORPHOSIS is my tribute to JBA for all it stands for; to Alain, Altea and the dancers for all their dedication and the hard work that they do every day'.



Retrospective



Judith Delmé

Our new generation of JBA dancers are extraordinarily lucky - the teachers they have encountered in these first few months have coached them in a truly varied menu of styles. Bewildering as this now may be, they will come to realize in the future how important eclecticism is to their individual artistic formation. Ralitza Malehounova and Véronique Jean gave the last two workshops - two wonderful and warm-hearted women coming from different backgrounds but with very similar ideas on what dance/ballet requires of the dancer of today. Both women have encountered a real diversity of dance during their own careers but in spite of this, both emphasize the need for a classically-based training; in their eyes and with their experience they realize it is the source which provides physical freedom to explore new techniques.

Ralitza Malehounova

This vibrant teacher and coach couldn't help but make dance her career - she is the daughter of Frieda Brys and Kiril Malehounov, both former leading dancers of the Royal Ballet of Flanders. After graduating from the Royal Ballet School of Antwerp Ralitza's path took her to the Stuttgart Ballet under the director at that time, Reid Anderson. Stuttgart has always proved a breeding ground for innovative choreographers - think ao William Forsythe & Jiri Kylian. So it was here that the young Ralitza was confronted by a dazzling array of cutting-edge dancemakers. Moving on to Scapino Ballet in the Netherlands under the artistic directorship of Ed Wubbe, her dance outlook broadened even further, and Ralitza described this as one of the most fruitful periods of her career. According to her, young dancers starting out today have to struggle much harder to make it - there is not nearly such an abundant choice of companies and opportunities therefore go to the cream of the crop. So moving on, Paul Lightfoot (then director of NDT) picked Ralitza out and invited her to join his company as ballet mistress. She came to work closely with creative talents such as Edward Clug, Marco Goecke and recently, with Medhi Walerski (now director of Ballet BC, Canada). The confidence these choreographers placed in her marked her out as a coach of the highest caliber.

It was Medhi Walerski's work Ralitza chose (together with Alain Honorez) to teach during her JBA workshop. His dance piece SOON was created for NDT 1 in 2017 and it is set to the songs of Benjamin Clementine. Clementine has an extraordinary voice, multi-nuanced and with a vast depth of theatricality. Walerski, who was a highly charismatic performer, creates his dance in a similar way; there is a huge variety in his movement language and it seems to evoke a dream-like state. This demands a deep commitment from dancers who have to dig deep within themselves to find the expression required. In other words, more than mere technique is required. Certainly not a given for young dancers accustomed to the pyrotechnics seen on social media. Naturally some of the JBA recruits succeeded, some have still to find their way but what an excellent experience it was for all of them.

As Ralitza Malehounova told them: 'To a choreographer, what stands out is the way a dancer expresses him/herself and how much they are willing to give of themselves'. An invaluable lesson coming from someone with such a rich dance background.

Véronique Jean

Let's start by stating that choreographer Mauro Bigonzetti, with whom Véronique Jean worked with as an artist dancer, has a unique style. In fact it's not difficult to connect it to his ancestry; the classism infused with the warmth and emotion so inherently Italian. Even in his choice of music and his sweeping visceral movement he doesn't hesitate to openly bare his feelings and his soul. Véronique Jean, who taught excerpts of Bigonzetti's repertoire during her recent pedagogical workshop for JBA, shares these attributes. Jean hails from a small city in western France, La Rochelle. She grew up wanting to dance, to such an extent that she joined as student the conservatoire of music and dance there. Here she was fortunate to come under the guidance of Colette Milner, closely connected with Maurice Béjart. This connection led the young Véronique intuitively away from the strictly classical balletic path, in order to search for a freer, more expressive form. She took it into her own hands to apply to join Les Ballets de Monte Carlo and was accepted under the direction of Jean-Yves Esquerre. When Jean-Christophe Maillot took the reins as director in Monte Carlo, Véronique danced in many of his creations. It was later that she chanced on and became enthralled with, the work of Mauro Bigonzetti, who was director of Aterballetto (based in Regio Emilia, Italy). After almost two stimulating and creative decades of performing her career took a natural direction in the study of dance pedagogy and she embarked for a master at the conservatoire Supérieur de Musique et danse de Lyon in 2005 and studied dance pedagogy. This took her to join the Dresden Palucca university of dance directed by Jason Beechey. The Bigonzetti repertoire was and is still, part of the required contemporary section of the prestigious Prix de Lausanne. Since 2018, Véronique was asked to coach the Bigonzetti's variations and it was here in 2019 that Alain Honorez, in Lausanne on behalf of his yet to be launched Junior Ballet Antwerp, encountered Véronique Jean. He decided then and there that he wanted to include this vital, knowledgeable teacher in his workshop roundup. The Covid conditions played havoc in Europe and it wasn't until February 2021 that Jean eventually managed to make it to Antwerp to give 5-day intensive. It was only a few months into the first season for a new group of JBA dancers, several of whom had yet to encounter much, if any, modern balletic styles. The emotionally driven Bigonzetti language therefore must have been a culture shock to many. On witnessing a third day of rehearsal my remark was 'JBA dancers let their hair down, literally and figuratively!'. There were these 16 dancers, hair loose, heads swinging engaged in a frenetic circular dance with their coach (Jean) pushing them on even further. Naturally the Neapolitan music was the perfect accompaniment. There followed two solos, both taught at the Lausanne competition: Furia Corporis set to a beautiful Beethoven adagio, (this for the men) and Rossini Cards (Rossini music) for the ladies. In both pieces one was aware of the classical base which took a seemingly improvised, deconstructed form. Very passionate and exhilarating to watch. It was Véronique Jean herself who drove the dancers along and this was obvious in her ballet class as well. It had momentum in the jumps, turns and batterie she included with constant reference to the great teachers she had worked with.

This slender, warm-hearted woman passes on her art with enormous passion and knowledge. I end on the apt words of Altea Nunez; 'Every dancer should at one time in her/his life, pass through the hands of Véronique Jean'.



© Alain Honorez

Retrospective: JBA auditions

The third and final auditions for JBA's 22/23 season were held at the premises of the Royal Ballet School Antwerp on 19&20 March. Out of a phenomenal 300+ applicants, 17 were chosen to take part in this final selection and they came from as far and diverse a field as Finland, America, UK, Australia and Japan.

During an unseasonal snowy weekend these young artists performed before an expert jury throughout ballet classes, modern workshops as well as during their chosen classical variations providing them a chance to show their artistry. It was a rewarding time for all with the dancers demonstrating not only strong technical facility but also drive and real enthusiasm and with the jury taking time to give each candidate in-depth feedback. After consideration of all held auditions, invitations to join JBA's platform were issued to 8 young dancers, each of whom displayed the potential, talent and character necessary for success in a professional career.

We look forward to welcoming them back in Antwerp at the end of the summer!



Prospective: Cinderella

Junior Ballet Antwerp has something exciting up it's sleeve; in the planning for spring 2023 is JBA's very first full-length production - a brand new version of the ballet Cinderella set to the glorious music of Sergei Prokofiev.

Charles Perrault's fairytale with its theme of a rags-to-riches dream which really does come true, has fascinated both young and old for centuries. This need to immerse ourselves in beauty, to dream of a brighter tomorrow is particularly relevant in today's somber climate.

The two JBA leaders/choreographic duo, Alain Honorez and Altea Nuñez and their creative team will project the age-old story right into the present day, allowing their versatile young dancers full scope to display their proven artistry and technical prowess. Junior Ballet Antwerp will give its public a chance to lose itself in an evening of ballet where dance, music, decor and costumes combine to create an enchanted and enchanting whole. Look out for more exciting news on CINDERELLA in the months to come!!

JBA Programm March - August 2022

14-18/3	Onze dansers worden ondergedompeld in de choreografische taal van JACOPO GODANI tijdens een workshop geleid door CLAUDIA PHILIPS
19-20/3	JBA auditions 2022/2023
4-8/4	Choreographer STÉPHEN DELATTRE creates a duo as part our JBA's new MINIATURES program.
11-15/4	Choreographer XENIA WIEST stages LIVE NOW, THINK LATER as part of JBA's new MINIATURES program.
25-26/4	DAVID DAWSON is te gast bij JBA en werkt verder aan Metamorphosis
27/4	SEASONS 4.0 in De Grote Post Oostende
11-12/5	MINIATURES in hetpaleis, Antwerpen
2/6	SEASONS 4.0 in de Schouwburg, Kortrijk
26/6	METAMORPHOSIS Handelsbeurs Antwerpen
juli	METAMORPHOSIS Antwerpen
22/8	Start season 2022/2023

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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