

## Financial storm fallout brings show to Island

### *National Ballet's top stars to dance on Victoria and Nanaimo stages*

By Grania Litwin, Times Colonist September 24, 2009 6:29 AM



Nanaimo-born dancer Jillian Vanstone is in the National Ballet's show coming to Victoria and Nanaimo. *Photograph by: National Ballet of Canada, Times Colonist*

What: National Ballet of Canada Special Performance

When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Royal Theatre

Tickets: Starting at \$51.50; call  
250-386-6121

Note: Also at the Port Theatre in Nanaimo, Monday at 7:30 p.m.

Just because there's a world financial slump doesn't mean the news is all bad.

In fact, the global meltdown means Victoria ballet fans will have a chance to see 10 of The National Ballet's best dancers -- principals and first soloists -- performing for one night in a program of favourite works chosen by artistic director Karen Kain.

"We got hit by the financial tsunami and had to cancel our entire Western Canada tour of *Sleeping Beauty*," Kain explained from Toronto. But Dance Victoria's dogged director Stephen White was so insistent they come anyway, they agreed to mount a unique show for Victoria and Nanaimo.

It would have cost \$1 million to tour *Sleeping Beauty* with its more than 100 dancers, musicians, crew, wardrobe people and staff. This show is leaner, but the best of the best and "we are delighted to bring something extremely special and intimate to Victoria and Nanaimo," said Kain, a former principal dancer with the company and frequent partner of Rudolf Nureyev.

Victoria's show, featuring six principal dancers and four first soloists, opens with "the absolutely exquisite" *Musings* set to a Mozart clarinet quintet.

"I had to choose works that didn't require many dancers. I had to mix and match the pieces, pick things we've done, that we have music for, that fit on the Victoria stage, and spread out the workload, because we don't want to kill anyone."

The second piece, called *Apollo*, is one of George Balanchine's earliest works. "It's brilliant, so contemporary, spare and beautiful." The ballet portrays the young god being visited by three muses, and stars Nanaimo native Jillian Vanstone as the muse of poetry.

Kain said the current economic turbulence requires arts groups to adapt, hence the major tour cancellation. But she is also concerned about ticket and subscription sales in Toronto. "Usually we spread out the blockbusters, but we're putting on both *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty* in Toronto, hoping to entice people."

Yet she is optimistic about the future. "Call me a Pollyanna, but I think the economy is turning around and we know our country is doing better than most. We also have a lot of loyal support, especially in Victoria. We're so happy and grateful to be coming."

White said last year there was a lot of uncertainty, but this year he feels more hopeful. He has invited eight groups to perform in the *Dance Victoria* series, compared to seven last year, but four productions will be one night only. Last year he brought many new acts to the city, but this season he is playing it safe with companies such as Alberta Ballet, *Decidedly Jazz* Danceworks and Royal Winnipeg Ballet -- all tried and true winners with Victoria audiences.

The two-hour National Ballet show is close to selling out.