

THE
NATIONAL
Ballet
OF CANADA

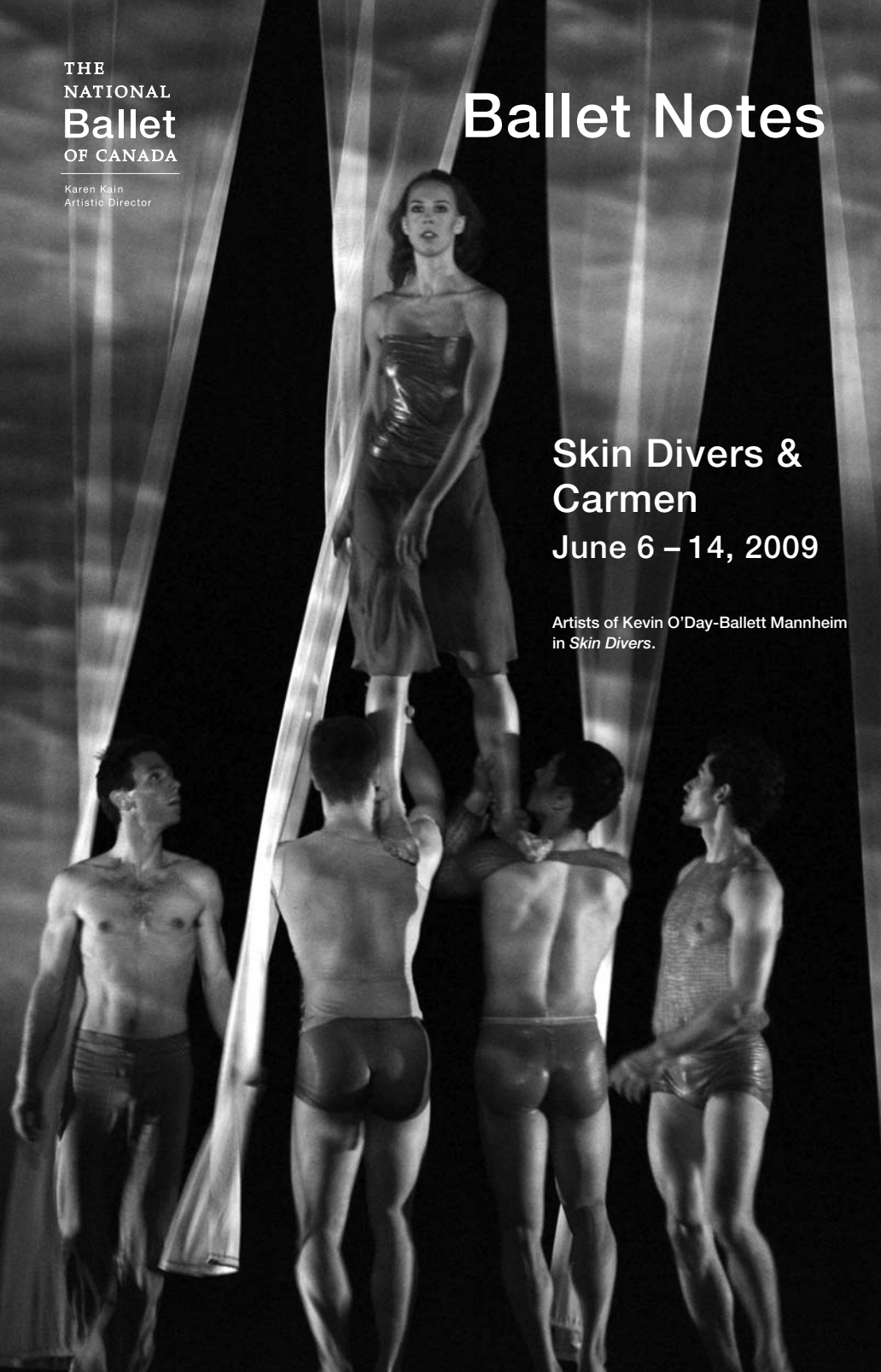
Karen Kain
Artistic Director

Ballet Notes

Skin Divers & Carmen

June 6 – 14, 2009

Artists of Kevin O'Day-Ballett Mannheim
in *Skin Divers*.



THE
NATIONAL
Ballet
OF CANADA

Karen Kain
Artistic Director

2008/09 Souvenir Book

On Sale Now in the Lobby

Featuring beautiful new images
by Canadian photographer
Sian Richards

Corps de Ballet member Lise-Marie Jourdain.
Photo by Sian Richards.



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THE
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• On Leave of Absence



The 2008/09 season is presented by: **CTV** **THE GLOBE AND MAIL** 

Saturday June 6, 2009 at 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm

Friday June 12, 2009 at 7:30 pm

Sunday June 7, 2009 at 2:00 pm

Saturday June 13, 2009 at 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm

Wednesday June 10, 2009 at 7:30 pm

Sunday June 14, 2009 at 2:00 pm

Thursday June 11, 2009 at 7:30 pm

Pre-show flamenco music by the Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company is presented as part of the third annual Luminato, Toronto Festival of Arts + Creativity.

Conductor: **David Briskin**, Music Director and Principal Conductor

Skin Divers

North American Premiere

Choreography: **Dominique Dumais**

Assistants to the Choreographer: **Maria Eugenia Fernández** and **Tyrel Larson**

Poetry: **Anne Michaels**, "Skin Divers" and "Last Night's Moon", read by **Anne Michaels**

From *Skin Divers* by Anne Michaels, published by McClelland & Stewart Ltd. (1999).

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Music: **Gavin Bryars**, *String Quartet No. 2*

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Canadian agent for Schott Music Limited, publisher and copyright owner.

Set and Costume Design: **Tatyana van Walsum**

Video: **Tatyana van Walsum**

Lighting Design: **Mark Stanley**

String Quartet: **Fujiko Imajishi**, First Violin; **Dominique Laplante**, Second Violin;

Angela Rudden, Viola, **Marianne Pack**, Cello

Premiere: **Berlin Ballett-Komische Oper**, October 18, 2003 – Berlin, Germany

Andreea Olteanu and **Noah Long** (June 6 mat, 7, 11, 13 mat, 14)

Jordana Daumec and **Keiichi Hirano** (June 6 eve, 10, 12, 13 eve)

Jillian Vanstone and **Robert Stephen** (June 6 mat, 7, 11, 13 mat, 14)

Jenna Savella and **Martin Lindinger** (June 6 eve, 10, 12, 13 eve)

Lise-Marie Jourdain and **Keiichi Hirano** (June 6 mat, 7, 11, 13 mat, 14)

Stephanie Hutchison and **Jonathan Renna** (June 6 eve, 10, 12, 13 eve)

Rebekah Rimsay and **Jonathan Renna** (June 6 mat, 7, 11, 13 mat, 14)

Alejandra Perez-Gomez and **Patrick Lavoie** (June 6 eve, 10, 12, 13 eve)

Dominique Dumais' reputation as one of Canadian choreography's most important voices is demonstrated beautifully in her work *Skin Divers*, inspired by Anne Michaels' remarkable book of poetry of the same name (McClelland & Stewart, 1999). Incorporating both spoken word and visual projections as complements to the choreography, *Skin Divers* explores the concept of "the body as a living archive of experience, or a museum of memory."

Intermission

Carmen

North American Premiere

Choreography: **Davide Bombana**

Assistant to the Choreographer: **Luca Masala**

Music: **Georges Bizet, Meredith Monk*, Rodion Shchedrin**, José Serebrier*** and Tambours du Bronx******

Décor, Costume and Lighting Design: **Dorin Gal**

Sound Editing: **Silvio Brambilla**

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Premiere: **Ballet du Capitole**, March 10, 2006 – Toulouse, France

Carmen is generously supported in part by Margaret Fleck & Jim Fleck, O.C. and Gretchen & Donald Ross.

The cigarettes used in *Carmen* are herbal with no tobacco content.

Carmen

Tina Pereira (June 6 mat, 12, 14)

Heather Ogden (June 6 eve, 10, 13 eve)

Bridgett Zehr (June 7, 11, 13 mat)

Don José

Piotr Stanczyk (June 6 mat, 12, 14)

Noah Long (June 6 eve, 10, 13 eve)

Aleksandar Antonijevic (June 7, 11, 13 mat)

Garcia, leader of the bandits

Keiichi Hirano (June 6 mat, 12, 14)

Robert Stephen (June 6 eve, 10, 13 eve)

Christopher Stalzer (June 7, 11, 13 mat)

Michaela

Xiao Nan Yu (June 6 mat, 12, 14)

Sonia Rodriguez (June 6 eve, 10, 13 eve)

Stephanie Hutchison (June 7, 11, 13 mat)

Escamillo

Kevin D. Bowles (June 6 mat, 12, 14)

Jonathan Renna (June 6 eve, 10, 13 eve)

Aarik Wells (June 7, 11, 13 mat)

Cigarette Girl, adversary of Carmen

Andreea Olteanu (June 6 mat, 12, 14)

Lise-Marie Jourdain (June 6 eve, 10, 13 eve)

Marissa Parzei (June 7, 11, 13 mat)

Toreadors

Kevin D. Bowles or Brett van Sickle, Avinoam Silverman or Patrick Lavoie,

Aarik Wells or James Leja or James Shee, Joseph Welbes or Etienne Lavigne or Nan Wang

Bandits

Martin Lindinger or Wei Chen or Naoya Ebe, Brett van Sickle or Richard Landry,

Etienne Lavigne or James Shee, Patrick Lavoie or James Leja, Wei Chen or Naoya Ebe

Cigarette Girls

Andreea Olteanu or Jenna Savella, Selene Guerrero-Trujillo or Elizabeth Marrable,

Klara Houdet, Krista Dowson or Tamara Jones, Elena Lobsanova, Marissa Parzei or

Chelsy Meiss, Catherine Maitland, Tiffany Mosher or Alexandra MacDonald,

Juri Hiraoka or Sarah Wolff, Alejandra Perez-Gomez or Nadine Drouin,

Jordana Daumec or Antonella Martinelli

Couples

Alejandra Perez-Gomez or Chelsy Meiss, Lise-Marie Jourdain or

Selene Guerrero-Trujillo, Jordana Daumec or Klara Houdet, Jenna Savella or

Krista Dowson, Andreea Olteanu or Marissa Parzei, Stacey Shiori Minagawa or

Juri Hiraoka, Jillian Vanstone or Tiffany Mosher

James Leja or Jonathan Renna, Brett van Sickle or Joseph Welbes, Christopher Stalzer or

Wei Chen, Etienne Lavigne or Aarik Wells, Patrick Lavoie or Kevin D. Bowles, Naoya Ebe,

Martin Lindinger or James Shee

There have been many ballet versions of the story of *Carmen*, but there has never been one like this groundbreaking, genre-bending re-conceptualization by the provocative Italian choreographer Davide Bombana.

While maintaining an allegiance to the basic narrative of the Bizet opera, Bombana dispenses with the inessentials and goes straight for the latent carnality and primal passions at work at the heart of the story.

“I find *Carmen*’s plot fascinating and very modern; everything is there: a sense of fate, the violence that dominates human relationships, love which devours and destroys everything and human isolation.” – Davide Bombana, Choreographer

All casting is subject to change.

Carmen

Scene 1: The love between José and his village sweetheart, Michaela, has grown cold. José finally summons up the courage to leave, his determination strengthened by a vision of the gypsy Carmen, all fire and sexual enticement in comparison to the gentle Michaela.

Scene 2: Carmen dances seductively with her official lover, the bandit chief Garcia, and his men. José is smitten as he watches the exotic Carmen with the cigarette girls who are Carmen's workday companions. Carmen gets into a fight with another woman.

Scene 3: Carmen and José are passionately attracted to each other, but it is his duty to arrest the gypsy.

Scene 4: José allows Carmen to escape; their passion for each other heats up, but she runs away.

Scene 5: Momentarily bereft, José despairs. Meanwhile, Michaela seeks him out and tries fruitlessly to woo him back to her. At the end, Michaela leaves, dejected.

Scene 6: To the music of savage drums, the habitués of Lilas Pastia's seedy bar, led by Carmen and Garcia, seek out casual partners for the night. José, lurking outside, spots Carmen and watches hungrily.

Scene 7: Left alone, Garcia and Carmen share some tender erotic moments. When Garcia leaves, José takes his place in Carmen's intimate embraces. They are alone together for the first time.

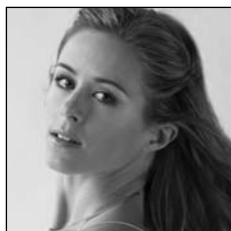
Scene 8: Garcia and his bandits enter as Carmen and José, momentarily sated, circle hand in hand, but she swiftly returns to her wanton ways and flirts audaciously with the bandits. Driven to distraction when Carmen tauntingly kisses Garcia, José stabs Garcia in the back.

Scene 9: José is tormented by jealousy and guilt.

Scene 10: A new figure appears: Escamillo. But he is not simply a man, but rather a bull, the personification of masculine power and the object of Carmen's desire. Wild and dissolute, he overwhelms Carmen, who abandons herself to him totally. The crowd cheers and Escamillo is carried off triumphantly. José, seeing all, is shattered.

Scene 11: Carmen and José confront each other once more and are involved in mortal combat. Carmen wants to leave José. Seeing that he can never possess the independent and highly sexual Carmen, José pulls his dagger. Active to the end, Carmen impales herself on it, preferring to die rather than lose her freedom. Horrified, José sinks into profound grief and despair.

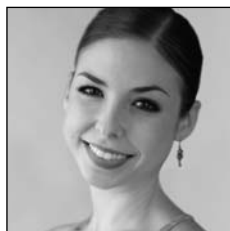
Carmen



Heather Ogden

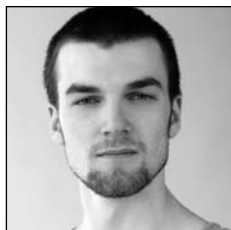


Tina Pereira

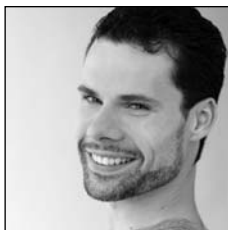


Bridgett Zehr

Don José



Noah Long



Piotr Stanczyk



Aleksandar Antonijevic

Garcia



Robert Stephen



Keiichi Hirano



Christopher Stalzer

Michaela



Sonia Rodriguez



Xiao Nan Yu



Stephanie Hutchison

Photos by Sian Richards and Cylla von Tiedemann.

Skin Divers

We roll over the edge into the deep field,
rise from under rain,
from our shapes in wet grass.
Night swimmers, skin divers.

Anne Michaels, *Skin Divers*

Canadian choreographer Dominique Dumais, currently Associate Director and Resident Choreographer of Kevin O'Day-Ballet Mannheim, has always had a passion for poetry — its images, its words, its rhythms, its potential for immediacy and transcendence. Poetry, whether her own or someone else's, is often the springboard to her ballets: "Words spark gestures; each gesture comes from a place of necessity and has its own kinetic logic. It's like watching a stream or seeing the wind blowing in the trees," Dumais explains.

It's therefore not surprising that Dumais should find inspiration in two extraordinary poems by Anne Michaels, award-winning Toronto poet: "Skin Divers" and "Last Night's Moon" (McClelland & Stewart, 1999). Dumais admires Michaels' ability to "go to the heart of what she's after and distil the essence in her words." When working with a text, Dumais also seeks that essence: "I dive in and read it and read it and read it — I even walk around with a headset — until finally I feel that it's inside me, in my very being, so that the most important things bubble up — the things I need to express in movement." As for Michaels' work, Dumais says, "I read two sentences and I'm blown away; it's such courageous work. She captures such profound intimacy." Michaels, a composer and former dance student as well as a poet and novelist, is in turn "thrilled at the idea of adapting my work to dance" and



Dominique Dumais

interested in "seeing how dancers work with the sound of words," especially because she finds that Dumais has "great acuity in the music of language, great sensitivity to the nuance of the words."

Finding choreographic inspiration and the distilled essence of poetry is one thing, but setting a ballet to the text of the poems — and, even more unusually, to the text as spoken by the poet — is a bold and intensely moving experiment. But Dumais' use of music in her work has always been unusual.

In general, Dumais begins creating movement without music, for she wants dance considerations — that kinetic logic, the rapturously organic sequence of phrases she shapes so well — to be paramount. She sees the choreographer's craft as independent, parallel but not subservient to the music. Frequently — especially in a commissioned score — the music is written *after* a dance

section is completed, and Dumais and the dancers then weave the strands into a tapestry juxtaposing movement and music in a flexible visual/aural counterpoint that moves from “rough collage” to a kind of marriage. This way of working, she believes, leads to far greater depth and subtlety than might have resulted from a process that paired dance and sound precisely from the start.

To find existing music for *Skin Divers*, Dumais read Michaels’ text aloud while playing various pieces of music, looking for a fit partner for the words and movement. The right piece in this case was British composer Gavin Bryars’ *String Quartet No. 2* (1990), which explores the unusual sounds of which violins, viola and cello are capable. On his website Bryars notes, for example, “devices

that I tried in an experimental way, such as the use of the ‘bottleneck’ to produce an extreme form of portamento [a gliding from one note to another] for an extended cello melody (playing in unison with the violins) in an extremely high register, giving an effect not unlike the sound of the Ondes Martinot.” A similarly eerie effect arises from Bryars’ frequent use of soft, shrill, otherworldly harmonics, as at the start of the quartet, or of an exaggerated vibrato towards the end. This through-composed work, evoking different moods but not divided into individual movements, draws on minimalist practice, seemingly repetitive yet continually varying, to create a shimmering, perpetual flow of pulsating sound, variously bittersweet, passionate, lush and rhapsodic.

Particularly fitting in Bryars’ quartet is his



Artists of Kevin O’Day-Ballett Mannheim in *Skin Divers*.

exploration of “the diverse pairing of instruments, the use of solo versus accompaniment in surprising ways.” This rich palette of colours and unusual combinations and emphases of the instrumental forces inform Dumais’ parallel exploration of unusual combinations of dancers, in which a pas de deux may appear simultaneously with a seemingly unrelated solo or trio.

Created for eight dancers, *Skin Divers* (2003) is structured around four fluid pas de deux interspersed with solos, trios, quartets, and quintets, each with different musical qualities, correspondingly different moods and specific source texts from Michaels. All, for Dumais, in some way reflect the desire for flight above humanity’s essential groundedness, a theme explicit in the poems and translated into a recurrent gesture of fluttering hands, as if the dancers, anchored to earth, were trying to rise against the pull of gravity with feeble wings — perhaps Michaels’ “Transparent ancient wings” (“*Skin Divers*”). Other texts embody a contrast between air and water (“sink into wet / firmament, learn to stay under, / breathing through our skin”). Another, accompanying the final section in which the dancers move from angular floor work to an upright stretch to the light, seems to allude to “the places left fallow when we’re born, / waiting for experience to find its way / into us” (“*Last Night’s Moon*”).

Perhaps most important for Dumais is another passage from the same poem, set for a quartet of women: “Try to keep everything and keep / standing.” Keep your memories — of your own life, your ancestors’, humankind’s — yet have the courage to move forward, even if you fall or seem to fail.

These strands — movement, poem, string quartet — are enhanced by yet another

element, projections (by set and costume designer Tatyana van Walsum) showing a naked form from varying distances, ending with a single watchful eye.

Dumais’ passionate investigation of what she sees as a many-layered aesthetic leaves us with a vibrant impression of the complex intertwinings and perpetually unfolding branches of artistry, which combine to create what Dumais calls “a foreign land — its tastes, its spices, its sounds, its languages.” She warns us that there is no “right” interpretation, but rather a plethora of overlapping sensations. “Don’t try to find meaning; just experience it, and expect that it will be different each time. Trust that what you need from the work will be caught in the net of your consciousness — or perhaps of your unconscious.” As the audience, we too are skin divers.

– Penelope Reed Doob

Penelope Reed Doob is a Professor of Dance and English at York University

Skin Divers

By Anne Michaels

Under the big-top
of stars, cows drift
from enclosures, bellies brushing
the high grass, ready for their heavy
festivities. Lowland gleams like mica
in the rain. Starlight
soaks our shoes.
The seaweed field begs, the same
burlap field that in winter cracks with frost,
is splashed by the black brush
of crows. Frozen sparklers of Queen Anne's lace.

Because the moon feels loved, she lets our eyes
follow her across the field, stepping
from her clothes, strewn silk
glinting in furrows. Feeling loved, the moon loves
to be looked at, swimming
all night across the river.

She calls through screens,
she fingers a white slip in the night hallway,
reaches across the table for a glass.
She holds the dream fort.
Like the moon, I want to touch places
just by looking. To tell
new things at three in the morning, when we're
awake with rain or any sadness, or slendering through
reeds of sleep, surfacing to skin. In this room
where so much has happened, where love
is the clink of buttons as your shirt slides
to the floor, the rolling sound of loose change;
a book half open, clothes
half open. Again we feel
how transparent the envelope
of the body, pushed through the door
of the world. To read what's inside
we hold each other

up to the light. We hold
the ones we love or long
to be free of, carry them
into every night field, sit with them
while cows slow as ships
barely move in the distance.
Rain dripping from the awning of stars.

Waterworn, the body remembers
like a floodplain, sentiment-laden,
reclaims itself with every tide.
Memory terraces, soft as green deltas.
Or reefs and cordilleras –
gathering the world to bone.

The moon touches everything
into meaning, under her blind fingers,
then returns us to cerulean
aluminum dawns. Night,
a road pointing east.
Her sister, memory, browses the closet
for clothes carrying someone's shape.
She wipes her hands on an apron
stained with childhood, familiar smells
in her hair; rattles pots and pans
in the circadian kitchen.
While in the bedroom of a night field,
the moon undresses; her abandoned peignoir
floats forever down.

Memory drags possessions out on the lawn,
moves slowly through wet grass, weighed down
by moments caught in her night net, in the glistening
ether of her skirt. The air alive,
memory lifts her head and I nearly
disappear. You lift your head, a look I feel
everywhere, a tongue of a glance,
and love's this dark field, our shadow web

of voices, the carbon-paper purple
rainy dark. Memory's heavy with the jewellery
of rain, her skirt heavy with buds of mercury
congealing to ice on embroidered branches –
as she walks we hear the clacking surf
of those beautiful bones. Already love
so far beyond the body, reached only
by way of the body. Time is the alembic
that turns what we know
into mystery. Into air,
into the purple stain of sweetness.
Laburnum, wild iris, birch forest so thick
it glows at night, smells that reach us
everywhere; the alchemy that keeps us
happy on the ground, even if our arms embrace
nothing, nothing: the withdrawing
trochee of birds. We'll never achieve escape
velocity, might as well sink into wet
firmament, learn to stay under,
breathing through our skin.
In silver lamella, in rivers
the colour of rain. Under water, under sky;
with transparent ancient wings.

Tonight the moon traipses in bare feet,
silk stockings left behind
like pieces of river.

Our legs and arms, summer-steeped,
slapped damp
with mud and weeds.

We roll over the edge into the deep field,
rise from under rain,
from our shapes in wet grass.
Night swimmers, skin divers.

"Skin Divers" from the poetry collection *Skin Divers* by Anne Michaels, published by McClelland & Stewart. Copyright © 1999 by Anne Michaels. Reproduced by permission of McClelland & Stewart. All rights reserved. No part of this poem may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of McClelland & Stewart.

Carmen

Few narratives have had the staying power of Prosper Merimée's novella *Carmen* (1845) despite repeated pious expressions of horror at its allegedly disgusting, if not positively obscene, content. The original leading characters of this Spanish tragedy were a condemned murderer (the Basque Don José), the promiscuous and mischievous gypsy Carmen (object of José's obsession), and her fierce husband/lover Garcia, chief of the bandits. When composer Georges Bizet decided to base an opera on the novella (1875), he and his librettists, Meilhac and Halévy, cleaned the story up, banished the pimp Garcia, turned José into the miserable victim of Carmen's wiles, added José's pure and courageous fiancée Michaela to embody the Good Woman, a counterpoint to the amoral Carmen, and created the dashing toreador Escamillo as Carmen's new love interest, a kind of justification for her perfidy.

The opera was initially a flop, its plot and characters, even in their comparatively sanitized condition, perceived as shockingly degenerate. Dejected, Bizet died a few months later, ironically just before *Carmen* was hailed as a masterpiece. The opera itself is so nearly perfect that it would take a bold composer to attempt to rival it. But with a change of genre from opera to ballet, the novella, bowdlerized libretto, characters and music continue to inspire ballet after ballet, the most distinctive and influential being Roland Petit's chic, sizzling 1949 version, Alberto Alonso's 1967 interpretation using Rodion Shchedrin's cheeky re-orchestration of Bizet, and Mats Ek's racy and explicit 1992 creation.

Italian choreographer Davide Bombana's



Davide Bombana

Carmen (2006) is one of the newest interpretations and one of the most interesting. Bombana sees the archetypal story as simultaneously universal in time and place and as particularly appropriate to contemporary life, thanks to the modernity of its presentation of sexuality, sensuality and human nature. In his version, Don José and Michaela are an unhappy couple. José is bored with domesticity and resolves to pursue Carmen, symbol of intense passion, imperiously flaunting her sexuality and its triumph over all men she encounters — and it seems she can, and does, easily take on all comers. Her first pas de deux with José, the most tender they ever have, nevertheless foreshadows violence: the dance suggests both energetic foreplay and an inescapable fight to the death. Michaela's attempt to woo

him back is fruitless, and her pas de deux with José bespeaks the anguish of entrapment in amatory apathy.

At Lilas Pastia's tavern, Carmen again dominates the scene, and José watches from outside as Carmen and her lover Garcia, chief of the bandit barflies, dance. After another very erotic pas de deux between Carmen and José, Garcia's bandits take turns as aspirants to Carmen's charms, but when Carmen, Garcia, and José are left alone and Carmen kisses Garcia deeply, tauntingly, José's temper flares; he murders Garcia and engages in an anguished solo of guilt at the murder and jealous longing for Carmen.

Bombana wisely interpolates some comic relief here. As the bullfight is about to start, four

transvestite toreadors in ruffled flamenco skirts and carrying huge fans cavort with great galumphing enthusiasm and occasional touches of mock femininity. It's all about men performing men who are performing women, and an ironic comment on gender roles, sexuality and Spanish machismo. Enter Escamillo to the familiar Toreador aria — but not as a toreador. Instead, he's a bull who crouches and lunges awkwardly, bellowing and threatening the toreadors, who themselves sing (off key) and whistle fragments of the song amidst general pandemonium.

When Carmen enters, she offers herself grotesquely to the bull as the drums echo and drive the savagery of the rituals of sex and

Paola Pagano and Jérôme Buttazzoni from Ballet du Capitole de Toulouse in *Carmen*.
Photo by Davide Herrero.



death in Carmen's and the bull's graphic coupling. As the crowd carries the bull off on their shoulders, Carmen writhes luxuriously on the ground in post-orgasmic bliss.

When José appears, he and Carmen engage in terminal combat. As the drums dominate, the former lovers confront each other, seemingly equal in their fight to the death. Finally Carmen, dominating to the last, impales herself on José's knife, and he mourns her death in a necrophiliac pas de deux as bells softly play the Habanera. As the ballet ends, he rocks the corpse like a grieving mother.

To house this archetypal tragedy, Bombana's designer, Dorin Gal, has built a transparent backdrop that, with varying lighting, evokes the inside of a cage, a prison, an ultra-modern atrium and a coppery arena. The costumes are simple, minimal, uniform, with the exception of Michaela's dowdy blue housedress, Carmen's torn finery, the transvestite toreadors' scarlet skirts, and Escamillo's bull's head.

Musically, Bombana's choices are eclectic and adventurous. Like most choreographers, he draws heavily on Shchedrin, whose idiosyncratic tongue-in-cheek score with its mocking orchestration was initially banned in Russia as insulting to Bizet. Bombana has chosen a pared-down set of pieces from this source, with particular focus on the Habanera, entr'actes and intermezzi, and Carmen's fatalistic aria in the opera's Card Scene. He also uses selections from Bizet's *Carmen Suite*.

The musical score is intriguing and effective, with its extracts from avant-garde composer/choreographer/filmmaker Meredith Monk's *Mercy*, the energetic percussion group Tambours du Bronx's *Silence* (actually,

anything but), and José Serebrier's arrangements of Bizet's *Carmen Suite*.

Monk's work, full of unintelligible whispers, shouting in imaginary languages, and mysterious synthesized sounds, creates a vaguely ominous otherworldly atmosphere; Tambours du Bronx accompany the most violently savage episodes; and the acoustic guitars offer deceptive moments of fleeting gentleness. The juxtapositions of these tonalities and textures may clash, but they do so very effectively, replicating the conflict between Carmen and José.

As Bombana says, "It's not a love story. There's not really a happy moment for them, because neither of them will compromise. Carmen is a force of nature, an independent woman, faithful only to herself. José wants to change her — and that leads to tragedy. José is attracted to her sexuality but in the end that terrifies him to the point of killing her."

– Penelope Reed Doob

Penelope Reed Doob is a Professor of Dance and English at York University

Visit national.ballet.ca to watch *Reinventing Carmen*, interviews with Davide Bombana.

Selected Biographies

Karen Kain, C.C., LL.D., D.Litt., O.Ont., Artistic Director

Acknowledged as one of the leading classical ballerinas of her time, Karen Kain is also one of Canada's foremost arts advocates, bringing the same passion and dedication she exemplified as a dancer to her roles as a spokesperson for Canadian culture and as the Artistic Director of The National Ballet of Canada. A native of Hamilton, Ontario, Ms. Kain studied at Canada's National Ballet School, graduating in 1969 when she joined The National Ballet of Canada. After quickly rising to the rank of Principal Dancer, she came to the attention of international audiences when she won the Silver Medal at the Moscow International Ballet Competition in 1973. This led to a highly successful career on stages throughout the world. Ms. Kain retired from dance in 1997 and shortly afterwards assumed the position of Artist-in-Residence with the National Ballet. In 1999, her role was expanded to that of Artistic Associate and in June

of 2005, she was appointed Artistic Director of the company. Ms. Kain has received numerous accolades and awards throughout her career. She is a Companion of the Order of Canada, the first Canadian recipient of the Cartier Lifetime Achievement Award and was named an Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters by the government of France. In 2002, she was honoured with a Governor General's Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement and from 2004 to 2008 was Chair of the Canada Council for the Arts. In 2007, she received the Barbara Hamilton Memorial Award for demonstrating excellence and professionalism in the performing arts.

Dominique Dumais Choreographer, *Skin Divers*

Dominique Dumais was born in Lac-Saint-Jean, Quebec and trained at Canada's National Ballet School in Toronto. Upon her graduation in 1986, she joined The National Ballet of Canada. In 1996, Karen Kain

commissioned Ms. Dumais to choreograph an original duet for herself and Robert Conn after having seen Ms. Dumais' choreography for the Toronto Fringe Festival. This duet, *Tides of Mind*, was performed in several venues around the world and entered the repertoire of The National Ballet of Canada in 1997. Ms. Dumais' first ensemble, piece *the weight of absence*, was commissioned in 1998 by then Artistic Director of The National Ballet of Canada James Kudelka. Since then, she has been invited to choreograph for such companies as Ballet British Columbia, Alberta Ballet, Toronto Dance Theatre, Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle, Stuttgart Ballet and the Komische Oper in Berlin. In 2002, Ms. Dumais accepted a position as in-house Choreographer and Associate Director for Kevin O'Day-Ballett Mannheim in Germany. In March 2009, she premiered *Woolf*, a new work commissioned by the Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam. Her works *the weight of absence*, *one*

hundred words for snow and *Fading Shadows/Returning Echoes* were nominated for Dora Mavor Moore Awards.

Anne Michaels

Poetry, *Skin Divers*

Anne Michaels is the author of three highly acclaimed poetry collections: *The Weight of Oranges* (1986), which won the Commonwealth Prize for the Americas; *Miner's Pond* (1991), which received the Canadian Authors Association Award and was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award and Trillium Award; and *Skin Divers* (1999). Her first novel, *Fugitive Pieces* (1996), is Anne Michaels' multi-award-winning, internationally bestselling first novel. In Canada, it was a #1 national bestseller and remained on the bestseller list for more than two years. The novel has garnered multiple literary prizes internationally including the Orange Prize for Fiction (UK), Trillium Book Award, Chapters/Books in Canada First Novel Award, Guardian Fiction Award (UK), Giuseppe Acerbi Prize (Italy),

Lannan Literary Award for Fiction (US) and was made into the critically acclaimed film of the same title in 2008. *The Winter Vault*, her second novel, was published internationally in the spring of 2009. Anne Michaels lives in Toronto.

Gavin Bryars

Composer, *Skin Divers*

Gavin Bryars was born in Yorkshire in 1943. He began his music career as a jazz bassist in the early 1960s working with improvisers Derek Bailey and Tony Oxley. In 1966, Mr. Bryars abandoned improvisation and moved to the US to work with John Cage. Subsequently, he collaborated closely with composers such as Cornelius Cardew and John White. From 1969 to 1978, he taught at Leicester Polytechnic and at Portsmouth College of Art, where he was instrumental in founding the legendary Portsmouth Sinfonia. Mr. Bryars' first major works as a composer were *The Sinking of the Titanic* (1969) and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (1971). Mr. Bryars has

composed prolifically for the theatre and dance as well as for the concert hall and has written three full-length operas. His first opera, *Medea*, was staged by director Robert Wilson for Opera de Lyon and Paris Opera in 1984. His second opera, *Doctor Ox's Experiment*, was staged by Canadian film director Atom Egoyan for English National Opera in 1998. His third opera, *G*, was commissioned by Mainz Opera and premiered in 2001 in the refurbished Mainz Opera House.

Tatyana van Walsum

Set and Costume Designer, Video, *Skin Divers*

Tatyana van Walsum was born in England in 1967. She earned a degree in costume design from Wimbledon School of Art in London in 1991 and later moved to Amsterdam where she now designs for theatre, ballet and opera. Ms. van Walsum has collaborated with acclaimed choreographers worldwide including Krzysztof Pastor and



Annabel Lopez of Dutch National Ballet, Dominique Dumais of Kevin O'Day-Ballett Mannheim and Martino Muller of Stuttgart Ballet. She has won many awards for her designs including the Benois de la Dance Award for Best Scenography in Ballet for *Le jour meme* designed for Lyon Opera Ballet in 1996, The Green Room Award for Best Design in Dance for Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* with Australian Ballet in 2007 and a Reumert Pris for Best Opera Production of the Year for *Così Fan Tutte*, performed at the Aarhus Opera Festival in Denmark. Ms. van Walsum also designs for various museum projects across Europe.

Mark Stanley
Lighting Designer,
Skin Divers

Mark Stanley is the Lighting Director for New York City Ballet, where he has designed over 100 of the company's premieres. He has worked with numerous choreographers including Peter Martins, Kevin O'Day, William Forsythe, Susan Marshall, Ulysses Dove, Lar Lubovitch and Laura Dean. His designs are in the

repertoires of the Royal Danish Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, Berlin Opera Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, Kirov Ballet, Frankfurt Ballet, The Donestk Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, The Joffrey Ballet, The National Ballet of Canada, Pennsylvania Ballet, Vienna Volks Oper, San Kai Juku and Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, among others. Mr. Stanley previously served as Resident Lighting Designer for New York City Opera. His designs have been seen on PBS in *Live from Lincoln Center* and *Great Performances*.

Davide Bombana
Choreographer, *Carmen*

Italian choreographer Davide Bombana was born in Milan where he studied at La Scala Ballet School, graduating in 1977. That same year, he joined La Scala Ballet and was promoted to Principal Dancer. Mr. Bombana pursued his dance career further with Pennsylvania Ballet, Scottish Ballet and London Festival Ballet, returning to guest with La Scala on several occasions. He was a Principal Dancer with the Bayerische Staatsballett in Munich from

1986 to 1991 and went on to hold the position of Choreographer from 1991 to 1998. His first works in Munich included pieces such as *Sonata*, *Parabel*, *Quatour pour la fin du temps* and *Okanagon*, as well as the two full-length ballets *Luigi Nono Project* and *Ein Traumspiel*, inspired by Strindberg. In 1998, Mr. Bombana was appointed Director of the company Maggio Danza in Florence. Mr. Bombana continues to choreograph internationally for companies such as the Paris Opera Ballet, Bayerisches Staatsballett in Munich, Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève, Bolshoi Ballet Academy, Aalto Theater Essen, Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse and Teatro Comunale di Firenze. Mr. Bombana has won several awards for his creations including the 1998 Prix Benois de la Danse in Moscow for *Strinberg's Dream Play* and the 1997 Bavarian Theatre Prize for the *Luigi Nono Project*.

Georges Bizet
Composer, *Carmen*

Georges Bizet was a French composer of the romantic era. A child prodigy, Mr.

Bizet entered the prestigious Paris Conservatory of Music at the age of nine. In 1857, he shared a prize offered by Jacques Offenbach for a setting of the one-act operetta *Le Docteur Miracle*. Later that year, he won the coveted Prix de Rome. As per the conditions of the scholarship, he studied in Rome for three years. There, his talent began to mature with such works as *Symphony in C* and the opera *Don Procopio*. Mr. Bizet's best-known work, *Carmen*, was based on an 1846 novel of the same name by Prosper Mérimée. It was not an immediate success and Mr. Bizet became despondent over the perceived failure, but praise came from such luminaries as Camille Saint-Saëns, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and Claude Debussy, who recognized its greatness. Their views were prophetic, as *Carmen* became one of the most popular works in operatic history. Just a few months after the opera's debut, Mr. Bizet died at the age of 36.

Meredith Monk

Composer, *Carmen*

Meredith Monk is a composer, singer, director/choreographer and a pioneer in what are now called extended vocal technique and interdisciplinary performance. Since graduating from Sarah Lawrence College in 1964, she has received numerous awards including the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in 1995, two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Brandeis Creative Arts Award, three Obie Awards, including an award for Sustained Achievement, two Villager Awards, two Bessie Awards for Sustained Creative Achievement, the 1986 National Music Theatre Award, the 1992 Dance Magazine Award and a 2005 ASCAP Concert Music Award. In 2006, she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and named a United States Artists Fellow. In 1978, she formed Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble. She has made more than a dozen recordings and her music has been performed by numerous soloists and groups including the San

Francisco Symphony Chorus, Musica Sacra, Pacific Mozart Ensemble, Double Edge, Björk and Bang on a Can All-Stars, among others. Ms. Monk's music has been heard in numerous films, including *La Nouvelle Vague* by Jean-Luc Godard and *The Big Lebowski* by Joel and Ethan Coen.

Rodion Shchedrin

Composer, *Carmen*

Rodion Shchedrin was born in 1932 into a musical family in Moscow. His father was a composer and a teacher of music theory. Mr. Shchedrin studied at the Moscow Choral School and in 1955, he graduated from the Moscow Conservatory where he studied composition and piano. After the collapse of the Soviet regime, Mr. Shchedrin was able to participate more fully in musical life worldwide. He now divides his time between Munich and Moscow. A virtuoso pianist, Mr. Shchedrin often performs his own works, which include five concertos for piano and orchestra, sonatas and 24 preludes and fugues for piano. For over a decade, he has headed the Union of

Composers of the Russian Federation – having succeeded its founder Dmitri Shostakovich at the request of Mr. Shostakovich. In 1992, then President Boris Yeltsin awarded Mr. Shchedrin the Russian State Prize for his work *The Sealed Angel*. He has been a member of the Berlin Academy of Arts since 1989.

Tambours du Bronx

Composer, *Carmen*

Tambours du Bronx is an urban percussion group based in Nievre, France. Tambours du Bronx translates to “Drums of the Bronx”, named after from a Varennes-Vauzelles district called “The Bronx”, a working class neighbourhood where the first industrial 225-litre monostress drums used by the group came from. Their first performance was in 1987 at the Nevers à Vif festival in Nevers, France. Since its inception, Tambours du Bronx has played more than 1,000 concerts. The group has toured internationally and opened for musicians such as Korn, Jimmy Page and Robert Plant and has released eight albums.

José Serebrier

Composer, *Carmen*

José Serebrier, today's most frequently-recorded conductor, has composed over 100 works, published by Peer Music, Kalmus, Peters, Universal Edition and Warner Music. Mr. Serebrier's new *Symphony No. 3*, released on CD and DVD, received three Grammy nominations, including Best New Composition. George Szell named Mr. Serebrier Composer-in-Residence of the Cleveland Orchestra. While there, he wrote a harp concerto, *Colores Magicos*, which later became Joffrey Ballet's major success. Mr. Serebrier's many honours include a US State Department Fellowship to study at the Curtis Institute with Bohuslav Martinů and Vittorio Giannini and with Aaron Copland at Tanglewood; Koussevitzky Foundation Award; BMI Award; commissions from Harvard Musical Association and National Endowment for the Arts and two consecutive Guggenheim Fellowships, becoming at 19, the youngest ever to obtain Guggenheims in any field. When Mr. Serebrier was 17, Leopold Stokowski

premiered his *First Symphony*. Bizet-Serebrier's *Carmen Symphony* won the Latin Grammy. Mr. Serebrier was born in Montevideo, Uruguay of Russian and Polish parents. For more information please visit joseserebrier.com.

Dorin Gal

Décor, Costume and Lighting Designer, *Carmen*

Dorin Gal is a graduate of the University of Art and Design in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. He was a member of the Bavarian State Opera for 10 years as a Dancer and Stage and Costume Designer. Mr. Gal has been a freelance designer since 1992, working with such companies as the Vienna State Opera, Budapest State Opera, Deutsche Oper am Rhein (German Opera on the Rhine), Deutsche Oper Berlin, Aalto Theater Essen, Grand Theatre Geneve, Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse, Teatro Comunale di Firenze, Salzburger Landestheater and Opera Strasbourg. Mr. Gal has designed for many ballets and operas, both classical and contemporary, including Davide Bombana's

Maria Gutierrez and Breno Bittencourt from Ballet du Capitole de Toulouse in *Carmen*.
Photo by Davide Herrero.



Strinberg's Dream Play, which won the Prix Benois de la Danse in Moscow in 1998, and the *Luigi Nono Project*, which won the Bavarian Theatre Prize in 1997.

David Briskin
Music Director and Principal Conductor

A conductor renowned for the versatility of his repertoire and the depth of his musical interpretations, David Briskin joined The National Ballet of Canada as Music Director and Principal Conductor in 2006. Prior to his appointment with The National Ballet of Canada, Mr. Briskin served as Conductor with American Ballet Theatre for seven years, leading performances at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York's City Center and in major opera houses throughout the world. Mr. Briskin is a regular guest conductor with New York City Ballet and San Francisco Ballet, and appeared with both companies this season. In March, he conducted Stanton Welch's new full-length ballet *Marie* for Houston Ballet in New Orleans. Mr. Briskin has also conducted for The Joffrey

Ballet of Chicago and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, among others. For 12 years he served as Conductor of The Juilliard School's Dance Division. Equally at home on the concert stage and in the opera house, Mr. Briskin has conducted symphony orchestras and opera productions throughout Europe, Asia and North America and served for six years as the Music Director of the Masterwork Chorus and Orchestra, conducting annual performances of Handels's *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall. In July 2008, he was appointed Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music and Conductor of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Judith Yan
Assistant Conductor

A native of Toronto, Judith Yan joined The National Ballet of Canada as Assistant Conductor in 2007. As Staff Conductor of the San Francisco Opera, Ms. Yan served as assistant to Donald Runnicles and as Cover/Rehearsal Conductor on 12 productions. For the company, she conducted

three productions, one of which was included in the San Francisco Chronicle's Top Ten Performances of 2005. Prior to her position at the SFO, Ms. Yan was Conductor-in-Residence at the Canadian Opera Company. Appointed by the late Richard Bradshaw, she worked on numerous productions, recordings and concerts. Ms. Yan made her German conducting debut with Mozart's *Idomeneo* in 2005, and her Italian conducting debut with Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* in 2007. She recently returned to Italy to conduct *La Bohème*.

Ernest Abugov
Stage Manager

Ernest (Ernie) Abugov has served as Stage Manager of The National Ballet of Canada since 1973, working with every Artistic Director in the company's history from Celia Franca to Karen Kain. He has traveled with the company all over the world touring to Israel, Asia, Europe, Mexico and throughout North America. Mr. Abugov has worked with many of the world's most renowned choreographers who have created original

works for the National Ballet including John Neumeier, William Forsythe and Glen Tetley. Mr. Abugov was born in Montréal, Québec. Before beginning his long association with the National Ballet, he worked with Les Feux Follets, The Charlottetown Festival, La Poudriere Theatre and The Studio Lab Theatre. He worked at Expo '67 in Montréal, stage managing over 4,000 puppet shows. Mr. Abugov also toured with Harry Belafonte. In what little spare time that he has, Mr. Abugov guest-lectures to theatre students.

Jeff Morris **Stage Manager**

Jeff Morris studied technical theatre production and administration at Ryerson Theatre School. He has worked as Production Stage Manager for Toronto Dance Theatre and with the Fringe Festival of Independent Dance Artists, in addition to a broad range of Toronto's independent dance artists. In 1995, Mr. Morris joined The National Ballet of Canada and has since stage-managed a wide range of the company's classical and contemporary repertoire, including world

premieres of James Kudelka's *The Four Seasons*, *Cinderella* and *An Italian Straw Hat*. He is also an adjunct faculty member at the School of Toronto Dance Theatre, where he teaches Production Elements for Dancers.

The National Ballet of Canada Orchestra

The National Ballet of Canada is privileged to have its own full orchestra with over 60 members. The orchestra has performed in each of the National Ballet's 57 seasons and is led by Music Director and Principal Conductor David Briskin. The company's first Music Director was George Crum who, along with Founder Celia Franca, was a pioneer of the company. Mr. Crum held the position from the company's inception in 1951 to 1984, when he was appointed Music Director Emeritus. The orchestra was led by Ermanno Florio from 1985 to 1990 and Ormsby Wilkins from 1990 to 2006. The National Ballet Orchestra has toured extensively with the company through Canada, the United States and Europe. Over the years, the orchestra has received much

acclaim from audiences and critics alike and has recorded two CDs of Michael Torke's compositions for *The Contract (The Pied Piper)* and *An Italian Straw Hat*.

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