

# REVIEWS THE GREAT ROYAL NEW ZEALAND BALLET COSTUME AUCTION

Wellington

27-29 June 2008

Almost 10,000 people visited the Royal New Zealand Ballet's first costume auction. Held over three days in Shed 11 on Wellington's waterfront, people of all ages flocked to view almost 140 items on display. Costumes, hats, wigs and tiaras from the Ballet's overstuffed wardrobe department were up for silent auction during the day, while thirteen costumes were sold at live auction on the final evening. The total sale made approximately \$40,000.

Many of the costumes displayed brought back rich



ALICE 1997.  
QUEEN OF HEARTS  
DESIGNED BY  
HILARY NIEDERER,  
WORN BY  
NADINE TYSON  
PHOTO: STEPHEN  
A'COURT

memories of past productions, with some viewers moved to tears.

"The response was overwhelming," says Robyn McLean, the Ballet's communications specialist. "Not only did it raise the Company's profile enormously, it was fantastic to be able to offer members of the public the opportunity to see the costumes up close - the details are amazing."

Among the ballets represented were Swan Lake, Alice in Wonderland, The Nutcracker, Cinderella, 1001 Nights, Coppelia, La Papillon and Jean.

Many of the designs were by the late Kristian Fredrikson, including the show's highest seller, the exquisite prototype Cinderella tutu, which sold to a private bidder for \$2,650. All the items for sale had reserves and prices ranged upwards from \$80. The reasons for the sale were financial considerations and a lack of space.

"Three changes of cast for each production mean three different costumes for each role," Robyn says. "The Company is rapidly running out of space; however, a complete set of costumes from each production is retained in the Company's archives."

The majority of buyers were private collectors, but the Mad Hatter's costume from Alice, sold to a North Island doll museum. McLean says she hopes the Company might be able to hold a similar auction in a couple of year's time, perhaps in Auckland or Christchurch.

The auction illustrated the need for a permanent space to display the wealth of set and costume designs of world class standard by New

Zealand designers. The Company's Business Manager, Amanda Skoog, points out that a set of Fredrikson's designs had already been gifted to the Dowse Museum in Lower Hutt and that plans are underway to gift further costume designs to Te Papa later this year.

It would be logical if the Royal New Zealand Ballet housed the costumes and designs in their premises at the St James Theatre, Wellington, but then we come back to the main reason for the auction in the first place - lack of space. Is there a sponsor out there...?

Ann Hunt

## MAREIKURA - MESSENGERS OF IO

Soundings Theatre  
Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington  
6 June 2008

Fire ignites and gestation occurs in the womb, the Kura moves through the many rites of passage. We endure pain, and confront the self and the anguish of our ultimate matriarch Papatuanuku. 'Mareikura - Messengers of Io', is a liberating and life giving performance, a ritualistic theatre work that sits as one of a trilogy of works by Tru Paraha (Ngati Puhii). This is audacious Māori dance theatre choreography, entwining the life cycles of birth and death, transgressing souls, and enlivening tradition.

The audience is lead into another dimension of understanding, of femme fatale, Māori women, purification ritual, birth and rebirth. The first trimester is offset with a 1993 PJ Harvey track 'You're not rid of me', exalting a freedom in the most exquisitely delivered tango-inspired solo by Tru. This scene is where the audience's skin can breathe into some loud lost emotion and revel in some raw sexuality, it allows global access to the work surpassing 'Iwi-centricity'.

The conception of Mareikura has had lifelong gestation, with the work's first manifestation at Te Rea-Māori Performance Innovation Platform 2004, Te Whare Tapere o Waikato. Another section of the trilogy of works 'Parekura' was work-shopped at the second Te Rea Māori

Performance Innovation Platform in 2006. The nature of such evocative work aims to solicit passionate response, quoting Charles Koroneho; "Finally some work with backbone!", and I agree it takes backbone performance mentality and intellectuality in order to deliver innovative quality work.

Dr. Aroha Yates-Smith, in the role of Hine Te Iwaiwa, brought a weight and balance to 'Mareikura - Messengers of Io', accentuating the power and fertility of dancers Tru Paraha and Waikato University's Sir Edmund Hillary Scholar Tema Kwan Fenton-Coyne. This work embodied the three phases of a woman's life according to audience member Ngahaia Murphy; "the maiden, the young wild huntress, virgin in its truest state, that is wild and unattainable to men, undomesticated, dancing in sexual dynamism, singing in the celebration of women, as keepers of karanga", and encounters between the realms.

The uncompromising stance of the choreographer now brings this work to a wider public forum at the 2008 Matariki Celebrations at Te Papa Tongarewa's Soundings Theatre. Arguably, 'Mareikura - Messengers of Io' is one of the best Māori Contemporary Dance works in Aotearoa today. This work needs to sit in its ultimate trilogy state of three acts, to deliver full power, and expose Tru's full choreographic potential.

Korou ki te Ao!

Terri Ripeka Crawford

