

**FRANK STAFF AND HIS ROLE IN SOUTH AFRICAN
BALLET AND MUSICAL THEATRE FROM 1955 TO 1959,
INCLUDING A PRE-1955 BIOGRAPHY.**

by

Gary Rosen B.A. LL.B (Witwatersrand) M.A. (Surrey)

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ABSTRACT

Frank Staff was the first South African choreographer to explore the concept of modern ballet in South Africa. Through the creation of his ballet companies, the South African Ballet and later the Frank Staff Ballet, he pursued unusual subject-matter not seen previously on a South African ballet stage. This thesis explores his legacy to South African dance and is divided into ten chapters with a separate introduction and conclusion. The aim, from the outset, has been to trace Frank Staff's career with particular reference to his choreographic contribution to ballet and musical theatre in South Africa. Appraised throughout in terms of critical opinion and dancers' commentaries, the study is chronologically based with emphasis on individual works created by Staff. There is an overview of Staff's early career, the rationale being to trace the earlier part of his career (from 1933 to 1952) in order to provide a basis from which Staff's most creative phase, i.e. that of the 1950's, might be explored. Staff's subsequent return to South Africa and possible reasons for choosing Johannesburg as his domicile are alluded to, as well as his vision for a new Johannesburg ballet company, the creation of the Frank Staff Ballet School and the South African Ballet Company. The South African Ballet's first regional tour to Benoni followed by a short tour to Kimberley and Vereeniging before returning to Pretoria for further performances is detailed and an examination of the South African Ballet's second Johannesburg season in November 1955 is made. An investigation into Staff's choreographic contribution to Leslie French's 1956 Johannesburg production of *The Tempest* as well as Staff's early involvement with Brian Brooke's musical theatre encapsulates his important contribution to South African musical theatre, which was a major interest throughout his life. 1957 was the most important and prolific period for Staff and his latest choreographic achievements demonstrates a broadening of his creative powers and a reaching out for previously unused influences in terms of dance and subject matter. The thesis' conclusion includes some of the possible frustrations Staff might have encountered as a choreographer working in South Africa during the 1960's and alludes to his Afro-centric works before his illness and untimely death in 1971.

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PREFACE

The unravelling of Frank Staff's career both as choreographer and as dancer has been enlightening and richly rewarding. For not only has it revealed the extent of his vast contribution to South African ballet and musical theatre, but also the impressive legacy he bequeathed to British ballet, musical theatre and films. Throughout his artistic life Staff was influenced by modernistic tendencies and his ballets were neither politically motivated nor politically inspired. In fact, Frank Staff was not a man of strongly held political ideals and he never really gave the impression of having definite views on anything other than choreography and the dance. Even after he returned to South Africa in 1953 when draconian legislation such as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), the Population Registration Act (1950), the Group Areas Act (1950), the Separate Amenities Act (1953) and the Bantu Education Act (1953) had already been implemented, Staff never expressed a political opinion -- either expressly or through his ballets. He tended to be apolitical, and those who worked with him throughout the 1950's confirmed that the South African Ballet Company (Staff's ballet company) was not a political instrument. Staff's priority was to keep his company going and he drew on subjects that appealed to him and which he believed would attract audiences. Politics was not one of these, and even his so-called Afro-centric works (alluded to in the conclusion) were not -- nor, in Staff's assessment, were they ever meant to be -- a vehicle for political protest or political commentary, but rather a means of artistic expression. And Staff was equally non-committal on issues regarding race although he never discriminated between the races and certainly never objected to performing at the University of the Witwatersrand's Great Hall, which was the only Johannesburg venue permitting mixed races during the 1950's. On the whole, however, he tended not to get involved in political issues or questions involving race relations. Frank Staff was a man of few words, a somewhat enigmatic individual and a quiet person of noble disposition. During his lifetime he was married four times: to the dancers Elisabeth Schooling and Jacqueline St. Clere; to the actress Heather Lloyd-Jones; and to the dancer-choreographer Veronica Paeper. A son was born of each marriage.

The perimeters of this paper (including its structure) are discussed more fully in the abstract.

As with most historical research, certain aspects of the study could not be fulfilled due to several factors, which included the following: non-compliance with written requests for information; a reluctance on the part of several individuals to furnish interviews; the onset of Alzheimer's disease where elderly yet important interviewees were concerned; unsuccessful attempts to contact key people (particularly Jacqueline St. Clere) who worked with Frank Staff over the period under review; and information that is now lost, for example details of the Durban Theatre Ballet with whom Staff worked in 1957.

The style of writing and referencing follows a specific design aimed at historical accuracy and consistency. Titles of ballets, balletic terms, titles of compositions, titles of films, titles of musicals, titles of operas and operettas, and names of newspapers are all italicized in the text, footnotes and bibliography; titles of ballets, films and musical theatre in the appendices are not italicized; names or titles of characters in ballets, films and musical theatre are generally cited in inverted commas although this depends on the style and context within which they are used; musical terms are generally cited in italics; names or titles of scenes, sketches or incidents in ballets, films, operas, operettas and musicals are cited in inverted commas; newspapers are identified and referred to by the names they were known at the time in question, for example the *Cape Times* in 1946 was known as *The Cape Times*; names of characters in ballets are referred to by their designated names as at the time the ballet was produced, for instance the animal characters in *Peter and the Wolf* were sometimes called "a cat" or "the cat", "a duck" or "the duck", "a wolf" or "the wolf" etc., depending on the date of production; newspapers (obviously including the names of newspapers) are left in their original language while critical appraisal of Staff's ballets from the Afrikaans press are translated into English; names of dancers and interviewees are usually given in full the first time only unless this conflicts with style or context, or where two people have the same surname, for example Elizabeth Clarke and Mary Clarke, Eduard Greyling and Lettie Greyling, Bernice Lloyd and

Maude Lloyd, Patricia Miller, Shelagh Miller and Tatlock Miller, and Dora Sowden and Lewis Sowden; the modern spelling of Russian composers first names and surnames are generally used throughout; Staff's ballets are contextualized where necessary or relevant, and reference to his post-1960 ballets are made where they relate to the development of subject matter or theme, or where Staff was directly or indirectly influenced by the concept or choreographic idea/s of other choreographers; reference to the way in which Staff's ballets may have been linked to the musical structure of a score he used are explored from time to time; Staff's hand in co-directing musical theatre is generally dealt with in broader detail than musicals where his responsibility extended solely to placing or choreography although production and casting details in these instances are also supplied; and the style of citing sources for footnotes and the bibliography is often taken -- although not exclusively -- from the 5th edition of Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Where Turabian is silent on unusual or specific sources such as theatre programmes, the author has adopted a system of referencing those sources either alphabetically or in date sequence. The referencing of theatre programmes in footnotes and the bibliography for example are listed in terms of production title (or ballet company as the case may be), venue, city or town, and the exact dates (or month/s where specific dates are unavailable) of a particular season or individual performances. Shorter citations in footnotes refer only to the production title or ballet company and the date/s of performance.

Visual sources have been utilized from Chapter 3 onwards, particularly where they shed light on the text. Unfortunately, all the photographs from Staff's company disappeared shortly after the Frank Staff Ballet Company closed in 1959. However, the use of modern photographic equipment has made it possible to develop prints from photographs Staff had submitted to various newspapers and magazines, and it is these that have been reproduced for the purpose of illuminating some of Staff's ballets and the dancers who performed them. Some are of better quality than others, yet they are the only illustrations in existence today. Visuals from later productions by other companies are also

included wherever relevant but especially in circumstances where none of Staff's company could be located. All photographs are fully acknowledged in the footnotes and bibliography. Captions in the text, however, are the author's own. Most of the photographs are acknowledged according to the following design: photographer's name, date of photograph, press caption (where available or relevant) and provenance. In circumstances where a photographer's name was unavailable, the caption is referenced in the footnote and bibliography as it appears in the press with regard to the press caption (again, if available) together with details pertaining to the name of the newspaper, date of publication and the newspaper page reference. The thesis includes several appendices as a complete checklist of Staff's choreographic and performing career from 1928 to 1959. An additional post-1998 bibliography in the bibliography section pertains to the brief discussion in the preface of Staff's apolitical stance and non-racial outlook.

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INTRODUCTION

Frank Cedric Staff was born in Kimberley, South Africa, on 15 June 1918.¹ His mother, Edith Eleanor Staff (born Knight), was a South African citizen from Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape while his father, Robert Frederick Staff, was originally from London in the United Kingdom.² A Bookkeeper by profession, Robert Staff had initially been offered employment with Helen Pann in Kimberley,³ but by 1924 he was in the employ of Messrs. Hill and Paddon Ltd.,⁴ the wholesale merchants⁵ situated at No. 3 Hollingworth's Chambers in Edwards Road, Kimberley.⁶ One of the earliest records taken from the Kimberley Directory of 1914-15 actually lists Robert Staff as a clerk residing at No. 4 Hemming Street in Kimberley,⁷ although by 1917 the Staff family had relocated to 153 Dutoitspan Road,⁸ which was the main thoroughfare in Kimberley.⁹ And it was in the house at 153 Dutoitspan Road that Frank Staff was born.¹⁰

Staff was the youngest of three children. His brother Ernest was the middle sibling while their sister, Constance Edith, was the eldest. As a young child Staff quickly showed an aptitude towards enjoying and appreciating classical music, which was hardly surprising since his

¹ Frank Staff Birth Certificate, Registered in terms of Act No. 7 of 1894 (Cape), 2 July 1918 in Kimberley, South Africa.

² *Ibid.*

³ Constance Büchner, interview with author, 1 November 1993, Cape Town, tape recording.

⁴ *Kimberley and Griqualand West Directory* (1924), 289, Africana Library, Kimberley.

⁵ "Hill and Paddon theft case -- Motor driver committed for sentence," *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (4 October 1930), 9.

⁶ Letter to author dated 29 November 1994 from Mrs. C. Duminy, Africana Library, Kimberley.

⁷ *Kimberley Directory* (1914-1915), 256, Africana Library, Kimberley.

⁸ *Kimberley Voters' Roll*, Ward No. 3 (1917), 26, Africana Library, Kimberley.

⁹ Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

¹⁰ Frank Staff Birth Certificate, Kimberley, South Africa.

parents were interested in music and amateur theatre. Consequently, it was not uncommon for the father to play the piano while his wife sang in their Dutoitspan home.¹¹ Staff's own passion for music soon found expression when he too began playing the piano although he never had any formal training. Another infatuation of Staff's was with an old gramophone and some treasured 78 r.p.m. recordings, and every evening after dinner the family would gather around the gramophone to listen to endless hours of classical music.¹²

Constance Büchner, Staff's sister, also mentioned that one of Staff's favourite pastimes as a child was to dance on the terrace with his nanny Mary:

Even as a toddler he wanted to dance and she [his nanny] used to dance with him, throwing him up and down. He was as happy as a lark when he was dancing with Mary.¹³

Staff's next experience with dancing came a few years later when, as a child of nine, he expressed the sudden desire to learn ballet. This had been prompted by Mrs Staff's collection of *The Dancing Times*, a monthly British publication¹⁴ to which she subscribed.¹⁵ Staff read each addition with great interest and decided that this was what he wanted to do. Constance Büchner gave a remarkably detailed account of how this came about:

My mother, Frank and I had been sitting in the lounge. I suppose it was in the school holidays because he was only about nine years old at the time. He got up to go out, turned as he was getting to the door, and said: 'Mom, I'm going to be a ballet dancer.' Just like that. It was the strangest phenomenon because he had never seen ballet before nor was there anything in Kimberley worth looking at. Also, he had

¹¹ Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *The Dancing Times* was established in October 1910.

P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, XLVII, 588 (March 1957): 256.

¹⁵ Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

never been out of Kimberley so it was really quite remarkable since all he had to go on were those pictures of people dancing in my mother's copies of *The Dancing Times*.¹⁶

Although Staff's request to study ballet was not based on any particular ground, the esteemed ballet historian and dance critic Cyril W. Beaumont thought Staff's decision to do so was because "as a boy, Staff did not enjoy good health...."¹⁷ Constance Büchner was unable to support this contention, and stated to the contrary that Staff was "a very healthy child and extremely active. In fact, I think he was even a bit hyperactive because he always had so much energy."¹⁸ What is quite certain however is that the decision to consider some form of physical exercise was serious, and that the need to realize it by doing ballet was Staff's own. Parental consent was not withheld as Mrs Staff herself was "always interested in anything in the arts line."¹⁹ Likewise, Mr. Staff's "educational upbringing made him quite satisfied to accept whatever Frank chose to do and he paid the fees for Frank's ballet lessons without the slightest hint of complaint."²⁰ In retrospect, Constance Büchner revealed that her parents condoned Staff's decision to learn ballet:

My parents were different; they weren't like ordinary parents. Very few parents would have accepted it in those days. I mean it was acceptable for a little girl to prance around and be a fairy but for a boy to do ballet in Kimberley was completely unheard of at the time.²¹

Nor would this have interfered with Staff's scholastic education, which began in about 1924 at the Christian Brothers' College St. Patricks,²² one of Kimberley's leading Catholic institutions that was

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Cyril W. Beaumont, *Supplement to complete book of ballets* (London: Beaumont, 1942), 154.

¹⁸ Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

established in 1897.²³ In 1927, Mrs Staff took her young son to the two well-known sisters of dancing, Amy and Euphemia Gardner, who were fast developing a reputation for their skill and dedication towards the teaching of practical ballet.²⁴ Amy Gardner herself had been trained in Cape Town by Ruby Levine, one of the earliest twentieth-century pioneers of ballet at the Cape, and the two Gardner sisters began their school of dancing shortly after Amy Gardner concluded her two years intensive training at the Cape.²⁵ The system taught by the two sisters was developed in England and known as the Association of Operatic Dancing or A.O.D. method.²⁶ Their studio, situated in Tredrea's Building at 22 Bean Street, Kimberley,²⁷ offered ballet, character and oriental dancing.²⁸ In March 1929, they added so-called "Eccentric" dancing to their teaching repertoire.²⁹ It was

²² A scholastic award was presented to Staff in April 1930 for academic achievement in Standard Four. As this formed part of the "outstanding record of the school in the past year [1929]", Staff must have commenced his schooling in 1924.

"Outstanding achievements by C.B.C. Boys," *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (14 April 1930), 5 & 7.

²³ Letter to author dated 19 October 1994 from S.L. Cawood, Bursar, Christian Brothers' College St. Patricks, Kimberley.

²⁴ Advertisement, *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (11 February 1928), 8.

²⁵ Advertisement, *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (18 February 1928), 8.

²⁶ The A.O.D. was created in 1920 in England. Founded by Phyllis Bedells, Edouard Espinosa, Adeline Genée, Tamara Karsavina and Phillip Richardson, the organization concentrated on furthering the cause of classical ballet through the introduction of carefully graded syllabuses, and an ultimate striving to improve its teaching standards. This was its aim for ballet throughout Great Britain and the Commonwealth. South Africa became the first country outside Great Britain to introduce the A.O.D. system in 1924 when Ivy Conmee became the first teacher to advocate its method in Johannesburg. In 1927, Conmee and Marjorie Sturman decided to invite Edouard Espinosa to conduct examinations in the then Union of South Africa. Espinosa accepted their invitation, examined candidates in Cape Town and Johannesburg, and was sufficiently impressed with the high standard achieved that he appointed Conmee and Sturman as examiners of the Operatic Association. In 1936, the Association was granted a Royal Charter and became known as The Royal Academy of Dancing.

²⁷ Advertisement, *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (25 February 1928), 8.
Advertisement, *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (1 March 1929), 4.

²⁸ Advertisement, *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (25 February 1928), 8.

²⁹ Advertisement, *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (1 March 1929), 4.

also in March 1929 that they introduced Ballroom Dancing with the “latest steps from London”,³⁰ which included the Quick Step and Waltz, Slow Foxtrot, Tango, and Skater’s Waltz.³¹

Amy Gardner verified that Staff had indeed been one of their pupils, but hastened to add that it was really her sister, Euphemia, who had given him his initial instruction:

Frank’s mother brought him to us and said that he wanted to learn ballet. We took him because it was quite a novelty to have a boy in those days. As far as I can remember, Frank seemed very keen at the time, and looking back now it obviously paid off. He was very enthusiastic and remarkably talented, which made him a pleasure to have in the studio. Actually Frank was Phee’s pupil [Amy Gardner’s sister] although I did get to teach him from time to time and he appeared in most of my annual shows.³²

It was with the Gardner sisters that Staff appeared in several dance displays at the Kimberley City Hall such as *So this is Venice* (1928), *Through Distant Lands* (1929) and *Wings Of Adventure* (1931). Towards the end of 1931 the Gardner sisters decided to relocate to Springs in Gauteng but recommended to Mrs. Staff that her son’s training be continued in Cape Town. Constance Büchner contended that her mother had realized the limitations of Staff’s training in Kimberley even before the Gardner’s recommendation and took the decision to travel south to Cape Town with Staff:

Mother decided that they had better get down to Cape Town to Helen Webb and that’s what they did because the training in Kimberley was very limited. And this, incidentally, was also the view of his Kimberley teachers, Amy and Euphemia Gardner.³³

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Advertisement, *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (29 June 1929), 8.

³² Amy Gardner, telephonic interview with author, 15 November 1993, Johannesburg.

³³ Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

Adopting a venturesome approach to learning ballet seriously meant Staff's schooling in Kimberley had to be disrupted, and on 1 February 1932 the thirteen-year-old Staff, accompanied by his mother, set out for Cape Town, "where Master Staff will continue his dancing studies."³⁴ His siblings however remained in Kimberley with their father.³⁵ On arriving in Cape Town, Staff and his mother wasted no time in seeking out Helen Webb, the well-known teacher of ballet in the Cape.³⁶ The type of dancing taught by Webb at the time was far removed from the more academic conventions of classical ballet, and

in Webb's own words "fancy" dancing was the order of the day, with "small daughters learning to curtsy prettily and to improve their grace and carriage".³⁷

Webb agreed to teach Staff and undertook to ensure his well-being while Mrs. Staff, now secure in the knowledge that her son would be properly taken care of, returned to the rest of her family in Kimberley.³⁸

In 1932, Webb's best-known pupil, Maude Lloyd, announced she would be returning to Cape Town from London "after completing her studies."³⁹ Lloyd, in fact, had been dancing in London with Ballet

³⁴ "Social and Personal," *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (1 February 1932), 4.

³⁵ According to Constance Büchner, Earnest Staff left Kimberley shortly afterwards when he, too, decided to travel north to Johannesburg for reasons of a personal and private nature.

Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

³⁶ Helen Webb created a dancing studio in 1912 and two years later, in 1914, she was invited to join the Cape Town College of Music. Webb severed her links with the College in 1923 when the latter was incorporated into the University of Cape Town, and she reopened her private studio shortly thereafter.

Marina Grut, *The History of Ballet in South Africa* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1981), 21.

³⁷ Grut, *History*, 20.

³⁸ Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

³⁹ "All the dancing news. One of Cape Town's most talented dancers to return from London," *The Cape Argus* (27 January 1932), 6.

Rambert, the company created by Marie Rambert in 1926. On her return to Cape Town sometime after June 1932⁴⁰ Webb asked Lloyd if she would be interested in teaching at her studio, hopefully with a view to implementing some of the latest developments in ballet.⁴¹ This was not unexpected because, as it turned out, Lloyd was regarded as "Cape Town's leading exponent of Cecchetti."⁴² Lloyd agreed, and the press even went so far as to refer to Webb's school as the Webb-Lloyd studio.⁴³ As recently as 1993, Maude Lloyd explained that

teaching for Helen Webb gave me the ideal opportunity to decide for myself whether or not teaching practical ballet was my *métier*, or whether I still wanted to perform on stage. I eventually returned to London to fulfil my service as a dancer but not before coming into contact with a very young Frank Staff.⁴⁴

Constance Büchner reflected on how the engagement of Maude Lloyd at Helen Webb's studio really enhanced the technical standards of ballet within Webb's dancing academy:

The appointment of Maude Lloyd made things very much better because Maude was up to date with the latest trends in ballet. She had been dancing professionally in England and was able to boost the technical side of ballet as well as bring all the latest ideas from England. It was she who had all the knowledge whereas Helen, one must remember, was rather cut off from the rest of the dancing world. So it was a rather fortunate time for Frank when he joined Helen's studio in 1932, because Maude was also there introducing several new techniques as well as correcting the older ones. And Helen of course spontaneously added her own magic on top of Maude's excellent contribution.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ "Two overseas dance examiners to arrive next year? -- News of Cape Town ballet displays," *The Cape Argus* (15 June 1932), 7.

⁴¹ Maude Lloyd, telephonic interview with author, 12 July 1993, London.

⁴² *The Cape Argus*, 27 January 1932, 6.

⁴³ "Ballet to-night in City Hall -- Bright programme with orchestra -- Webb-Lloyd studio's opening display," *The Cape Times* (12 August 1933), 9.

⁴⁴ Maude Lloyd, interview, 12 July 1993.

⁴⁵ Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

It was also during this time that Staff came into contact with two of Webb's other leading pupils: Cecily Robinson and Alexis Rassine.⁴⁶ Robinson recalled those early days of fledgling ballet in South Africa, particularly in Webb's studio:

Maude Lloyd was with Helen Webb when Frank came. Until Maude arrived, one never did a barre; there was no basis at all. But Maude introduced all that into Helen's studio as well as teaching the Cecchetti method of ballet. So classes became structured for the first time, and even then Frank showed great potential as a dancer with a wonderful facility for performing. He really had a great deal to offer: a very good physique, very good looks, lovely head, but he didn't exploit his talent fully because technique came so easily to him. The result was that Frank tended to be a little lazy. Alexis Rassine was also there at that time: two naughty little boys, him and Frank.⁴⁷

Cecily Robinson contended further that it was Maude Lloyd who encouraged the consolidation of Cecchetti's method into Helen Webb's studio, which may have had something to do with the fact that Staff successfully completed his Elementary Cecchetti examination with 'Commended' in August 1933.⁴⁸ One of the first Webb/Lloyd ballets Staff performed in was *The Pranks of Punch* (also referred to interchangeably as *Pranks O' Punch*) where he took the part of a mischievous imp-like character called "Toby" who caused mayhem at a Victorian party.⁴⁹ Within a short period of time it had become increasingly obvious that Staff's potential and talent as a dancer could only be fully realised with more professional training abroad. On the advice of Maude Lloyd it was agreed Staff would pursue his ballet training in England.⁵⁰ Constance Büchner recalled how

⁴⁶ Robinson was to become an important theatrical figure in the history of South African ballet, and Rassine was later to carve out an international ballet career for himself with the Sadler's Wells Ballet in London.

⁴⁷ Cecily Robinson, interview with author, 17 December 1991, Cape Town, tape recording.

⁴⁸ "Dance contest and examination results," *The Cape Argus* (23 August 1933), 6.

⁴⁹ Webb originally wanted to call the ballet *The Peregrinations of Punchinello*, but decided against this somewhat grandiose title in favour of the far "more easy-sounding one...."

Maude immediately recognized Frank's talent and she spoke seriously to my mother about his future dance training and a possible career in England. She told my mother he was born to it and that she must take him overseas to London to the Ballet Rambert.⁵¹

Staff's farewell performance in Cape Town was given at the Alhambra Theatre on 28 August 1933 when Helen Webb and Maude Lloyd presented their *Beauty and the Ballet* lunch-hour recital.⁵² Three dances were offered, each of which had been seen before, and these were *The Wild Horseman* with Cecily Robinson, *The Lament* danced by Thelma Barraud, and *Tarantella* performed by Robinson and Staff. On 1 September 1933, Staff and his mother set sail for England on the Edinburgh Castle.⁵³ Arriving in the English mid-winter of the same year, Staff immediately enrolled at the School of Ballet directed by Marie Rambert in Notting Hill Gate. His first ballet class was taken by Antony Tudor who, in addition to fulfilling other obligations, also taught at the Rambert School.⁵⁴ By the time Staff arrived in England the Rambert school was

a hive of activity of every kind, for, apart from the technical classes, ballets were being rehearsed in preparation for projected seasons at the Ballet Club and elsewhere.⁵⁵

"Dance displays -- Two more ballets at the City Hall," *The Cape Argus* (7 December 1932), 6.

⁵⁰ Maude Lloyd, interview, 12 July 1993.

⁵¹ Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

⁵² "Beauty and the ballet," *The Cape Times* (28 August 1933), 7.

⁵³ Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

⁵⁴ Antony Tudor, who was later to have a profound effect on the creation of British and American Ballet, started out as a clerk at an accountant's office at Smithfield Meat Market. Each morning as he travelled past the Rambert studio on his way to work he noticed dancers at Rambert's Notting Hill Gate studio going through a series of exercises. Curiosity got the better of him and he decided to investigate further, only to find himself part of the small troupe of dancers. Antony Tudor became one of the most outstanding pioneers of the early period of British Ballet and much of his choreography later influenced Staff's own choreographic style.

⁵⁵ Beaumont, *Supplement*, 154.

No sooner had Mrs. Staff settled her son at Rambert's institution when she took ill. Constance Büchner recalled that her mother had suffered from heart complications and Kimberley's high altitude only served to exacerbate the situation by inducing severe adverse effects on her health.⁵⁶ Tragically, she passed away in England early in July 1934, leaving Rambert with the responsibility of looking after the young Staff.⁵⁷ Staff's family were immediately telegraphed and notified, as well as urged to make arrangements concerning Staff's future career.⁵⁸ Constance Büchner, who was then employed by *The Argus* newspaper group in Kimberley, explained that she was able to obtain a transfer to the London office where she joined Staff:

And that's how it all happened with me going over to work in London and filling mother's place. Frank and I stayed together in the same establishment, which was a boarding house. Frank used to go to his classes every morning and I to my work, and we managed very nicely. Then Cecily [Robinson] came over. She had actually studied with Maude [Lloyd] as well and became very interested in the possibility of pursuing a ballet career overseas. So Cecily came over and stayed with us in London and it was quite wonderful having her there -- a happy little trio of South Africans.⁵⁹

Büchner confessed that although she was not in London long enough to see any of Staff's choreography, she did have the opportunity of watching him dance in one of the many ballet classes conducted by Rambert. This, for Büchner, was a decided highlight of her stay in London:

I wasn't in London very long, only a few years as I just wanted to get Frank settled. I did go to his classes, which Madame Rambert gave and I know to this day that I am still amazed at the exercises they were performing. I think they were very advanced for those times and much more advanced than anything Frank was getting in South Africa.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Büchner, interview, 1 November 1993.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

In London, Staff studied with Rambert, Tudor, Stanislas Idzikowsky⁶¹ and Vera Volkova, the celebrated Russian-born dancer and teacher who taught and nurtured the famous Russian system of ballet formulated by Agrippina Vaganova. Staff's ability, according to Robinson, was impressive and it was not long before he became one of Rambert's favourite students:

She was drawn to Frank's natural talent and because his talent involved being extremely versatile Rambert was interested in the possibilities he had to offer. So it was obvious that she would be absorbed by what he could do as well as by the potential he showed. Any teacher will naturally become excited when they recognize talent. And Rambert was no exception. She did of course have her on days and her off days with people but with Frank they were mostly on days. If you had learnt a step you all had to get out of the way while Mr. Staff occupied the whole studio. She was especially optimistic about Frank and always encouraged him as a dancer mainly because he was so young at the time. He was a lot younger than Ashton and the others, and very often showed a lot more promise. Frank actually had far more ability and talent as a dancer than all of them. And he had the looks, which always helps. Rambert adored Frank.⁶²

Audrey Turner, who had been a member of Robinson's company in South Africa during the 1940's and later danced with Ballet Rambert in 1947, concurred with Robinson, adding that "Rambert treasured Frank and nicknamed him 'Swanky Frankie' because he was so suave and stylish. The name somehow remained and more often than not he was invariably called 'Swanky Frankie'."⁶³

Staff's natural talent often meant that because executing technical steps was not sufficiently stimulating for him, he was often prone to boredom and to not taking ballet classes very seriously.⁶⁴ This did

⁶¹ Stanislas Idzikowsky was an Anglo-Polish dancer who had performed with Anna Pavlova and with Diaghilev's Ballet-Russes from 1914 to 1926, and then again with the Diaghilev company from 1928 to 1929.

⁶² Robinson, interview, 17 December 1991.

⁶³ Audrey Turner, interview with author, 3 October 1994, Cape Town, tape recording.

⁶⁴ Robinson, interview, 17 December 1991.

not mean that Rambert's classes were uninspiring or unimaginative although their formal and exacting demands were probably what gave them that slight edge of rigidity. And her dictatorial demeanour was no less frightening although Staff, perhaps, was one of the few dancers not to succumb to her rather despotic classroom tactics. John Gilpin, who first joined Rambert's company in 1945 before becoming *premier danseur* with London's Festival Ballet during the 1950's, recounted several years later how

Frank Staff was one of the company who refused to be intimidated, and we were always very amused at his stands against Mim's [Rambert's] authoritarianism. Her classes were always extremely hard, often I thought, unnecessarily so, and they were made difficult just because she felt they had to be. One would sense her presence if she was creeping up from behind. Then suddenly her hand would chop sharply between one's shoulder blades. 'Crack a nut!' she would snap demandingly, often really hurting as she made her attacks from the rear. One day in class she crept up behind Frank Staff, who must have been in rebellious mood, and decided he had had enough of Rambert's provocative nonsense for one day. The small figure strutted up behind Frank as he stood at the barre. 'Crack a nut!' she shouted, chopping him smartly between the shoulder blades. At this point Frank promptly and deliberately fell flat on his face, feigning great indignation at being knocked over.⁶⁵

As a young student in Rambert's establishment Staff witnessed a revival of the Andr e Howard/Susan Salaman production of *Our Lady's Juggler* in 1933 and was able to watch, at close quarters, Frederick Ashton rehearsing his new ballet *Foyer de Danse*, which was to make a lasting impression on the young Staff's mind.⁶⁶

Opportunities such as these filled him with the hope that he too might choreograph one day, although his ambition to construct dance pieces would not be fulfilled until several years later. According to Veronica Paepers, Staff's fourth wife and eventually his widow, Staff's desire to create a ballet came relatively early in life. She stated that he wanted to choreograph from a very early age:

⁶⁵ John Gilpin, *A dance with life* (London: William Kimber, 1982), 52.

⁶⁶ Staff's 1955 ballet called *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* made use of similar subject matter to Ashton's *Foyer de danse*. The similarity between the two is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Frank always claimed that around the age of nine he knew he wanted to be a choreographer. Though how he would have known that in Kimberley...is hard to imagine.⁶⁷

But Staff's longing to explore the realms of choreography was delayed. Rambert was far more interested in his ability as a dancer and, besides, he was far too inexperienced to tackle the composition of dances. Shortly after joining the school Staff was accepted as a dancer with the Rambert company and on 29 October 1933 he made his professional début as a yokel in the revival of *Our Lady's Juggler*. This was at the tender age of fifteen, although dancing professionally at such a young age was considered quite normal in those days. When Walter Gore, the protagonist in *Our Lady's Juggler*, suddenly fell ill, Staff was chosen at short notice to substitute for him. Immediately, Staff's unequivocal potential as a dancer of dramatic range was revealed, which placed him firmly in the public eye. Thereafter roles came fast and furious, and within a short space of time he distinguished himself in a variety of parts, most notably as "Valentin Garçon" and "Le Vieux Marcheur" in Ninette de Valois' *Bar aux Folies-Bergère* (1934), Faust and Mephisto in Ashton's *Mephisto Valse* (1934), a mortal born under Mars and a mortal born under Venus in Tudor's *The Planets* (1934), Mercury and Hercules in Tudor's *The Descent of Hebe* (1935), and both as the prince and a court hairdresser in Andree Howard's *Cinderella* (1935).

In about April 1935 Staff left the Rambert company for Ninette de Valois' Vic-Wells Ballet. His decision may have been prompted by several factors, not least of which was his desire to choreograph. This, however, would have been impossible since the repertoire of the Vic-Wells Ballet was determined by the work of great nineteenth and early twentieth-century choreographers together with de Valois and Frederick Ashton's own choreography. Elisabeth Schooling, who worked with Staff at the time and was later to become his first wife, explains:

⁶⁷ Theatre Programme: *Tribute to Frank Staff*, CAPAB Ballet Company, Nico Opera House, Cape Town, season 16 March -- 6 April 1991.

Frank was interested in choreography from a relatively early age. That's why, I think, he was drawn to the possibility of working with the Vic-Wells. But he was far too young and inexperienced at the time. He never gave up though, and a few years later he applied to join the Vic-Wells ballet again. But by this time he had already done some choreography for Rambert's company and thought his chances with the Vic-Wells would be greater.⁶⁸

Three more plausible reasons why Staff decided to join the Vic-Wells Ballet in 1935 pertained to his acquisition of broader experience in the classical ballet repertoire, the lure of financial security which de Valois was able to offer, and the opportunity of working in more professional circumstances. Rambert herself confessed how

our dancers, in general, proved very useful to Sadler's Wells, and I lost them one by one. They were paid there and had an interesting repertoire, so I could not blame them. ... They helped a lot at the beginning of the Sadler's Wells, as they had all been produced in our varied repertoire, including several ballets by Ashton, Tudor, and, of course the classics taught to us by Karsavina. ...we managed to provide the Wells with: first of all Ashton, for whom as a choreographer the move represented a natural development; Pearl Argyle, who was their first Odette in *Swan Lake*, as well as having ballets written for her by Ashton and de Valois; Walter Gore and Harold Turner, who were respectively the original Rake and the original Dancing Master in de Valois' masterpiece *Rake's Progress*. Leslie Edwards was one of us too, and became an important character dancer at the Wells. Markova too must be counted among the other benefits the Wells received from us.⁶⁹

With the Vic-Wells ballet company Staff was cast as a stevedore in the revival of Ashton's *Rio Grande* (1935) as well as a huntsman in their production of *Giselle* (1935). He danced the part of "Brer Rabbit" in Sara Patrick's *Uncle Remus* (1935) and created two roles in ballets by Ashton and de Valois: "Francois" in Ashton's *Valentine Eve* (1935) and the hornblower in de Valois' *The Rake's Progress* (1935).⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Elisabeth Schooling, interview with author, 15 July 1993, Chichester, tape recording.

⁶⁹ Marie Rambert, *Quicksilver: An autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 146-147.

⁷⁰ Staff was also cast with Leslie Edwards as a musician in this ballet as well as one of the three gamblers with Edwards and Richard Ellis.

Although the part of the hornblower admittedly only required prosaic and rather lay movements, it did include a short solo in the first scene. Then, as quickly as he had joined the Vic-Wells, he left, and by June 1935 he was back dancing with Rambert's company. However, his decision to approach de Valois in the first place was to stand him in good stead because roles for which he might not have been considered with Rambert's company were then quickly assigned to him. The reasons for this were twofold: Rambert had lost several of her leading dancers; and Staff had proved his worth with de Valois' establishment. He began creating roles for Rambert, the first of which was a trapeze artist in Susan Salaman's *Circus Wings*. He also created "Sir Plume" in Andree Howard's *The Rape of the Lock* and, in 1936, the virtuoso in Howard's *La Muse s'Amuse*. Then he was cast as a suitor in Ashton's reworked version of *Passionate Pavane* (1936) and as "Sir Andrew" in Wendy Toye's new version of *Cross-Garter'd* (1937), a ballet Tudor had originally created in 1931. Creating several roles and adding others from the existing repertoire bolstered his confidence and revealed his talent and innate musicality for both classical parts as well as character roles, the latter at which he had become particularly proficient. One reason for this may have been personal: Staff simply preferred roles with interpretative challenges rather than those of a straightforward, mundane nature. The other reason may have been his exposure, from early 1937, to the world of musical theatre. Although sporadic, his work in musical theatre offered new challenges and influenced his preference for roles requiring greater characterization.

Staff's first encounter with musical theatre took place in February 1937 when he appeared in Charles B. Cochran's "coronation revue" entitled *Home and Beauty*. Written by A.P. Herbert, *Home and Beauty* was an operatic revue performed at the Adelphi Theatre with music by Nikolaus Brodszky and additional music written by Henry Sullivan.⁷¹ It was structured as a two-part review in an astounding twenty-five scenes with a large cast, many of whom, including Staff, portrayed more than one role.⁷² Frederick Ashton arranged the

⁷¹ Theatre Programme: *Home and Beauty*, Adelphi Theatre, London, season February 1937.

⁷² *Ibid.*

choreography for *Home and Beauty*,⁷³ and it was in this production that Staff first became acquainted with Leslie French, the English-born Shakespearean actor who played the part of "Hugo, Viscount Flower". Little did either realize that their paths would cross some nineteen years later in Johannesburg when they worked together on French's production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.⁷⁴ But Staff's ambition in 1937 -- more than anything else -- was a burning desire to create his own movement rather than dance those arranged by others. His longing to do so was finally realized in January 1938 when he made his first ballet called *The Tartans*.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Produced in 1956, Leslie French directed and acted in the Johannesburg production of *The Tempest* while Staff took responsibility for its choreographic design.

CHAPTER ONE

Staff's first choreographic assignment came about more as a result of circumstance than an actual request to create a ballet. His aptitude for choreography was revealed in 1937 when Rambert decided to revive Susan Salaman's *Sporting Sketches*, a work originally created in 1930 with a tongue-in-cheek look at three traditional English sporting activities: boxing, cricket and rugby. In those days ballets were revived purely from dancers' memories, and when it came to the section titled *Le Cricket*, nobody could remember the actual steps or movements for the Batsman. Being aware Staff came from a country where outdoor sporting activity was popular, Rambert asked him to improvise some of the more obvious and recognisable movements, particularly as he knew the game:

Immediately he began to do movements that were much better than real cricket and behold there was somebody with a real talent. So I pushed him and talked to him and he became a choreographer.¹

According to Mary Clarke, "Staff improvised brilliantly; his movements were full of vigour and significance and he created the role afresh throughout the entire sketch."² Staff's personal reconstruction of this sketch then became the accepted version of the piece and marked his first unofficial choreographic attempt.³ Under Rambert's watchful eye he was encouraged to listen to as much classical music as possible, to attend symphony concerts regularly, and to become well acquainted with art works of the great masters. Rambert in fact would personally accompany Staff to some of London's most prominent art galleries and museums, often pointing out works of a particularly high standard and explaining their significance to him before contrasting them with those of an inferior quality.⁴ This, she believed, was an

¹ Marie Rambert, cited in Crisp, Sainsbury and Williams, *Ballet Rambert: 50 years and on* (London: 5 color, 1981), 14-15.

² Mary Clarke, *Dancers of Mercury: The story of Ballet Rambert* (London: A & C Black, 1962), 8.

³ It is possible Staff recalled something of the cricket section from Amy Gardner's *Wings of Adventure* (1931) in which he participated as a young boy in Kimberley.

integral part of any choreographer's education, and in order to prepare Staff for his own choreographic venture he too had to be made aware of great art and great music. As a logical and effective way of guaranteeing a broad spectrum of the visual and performing arts, this served to enhance Staff's choreographic design by securing appropriate music and discerning subject matter. Of course Rambert's skilful guidance was very much in evidence right from the start, and the subject of Staff's first ballet, for example, was at the suggestion of Rambert herself. This was *The Tartans*, a work originally created by Frederick Ashton in December 1930 as *Dances on a Scotch Theme* for the Lopokova season and later as *Dances on a Scottish Theme*, or as *Dances on a Scotch Theme* or simply as *The Tartans*, for Rambert's Ballet Club in December 1931.⁵ Rambert thought *The Tartans* would be a fitting place for Staff to begin because it was a short work of only about eight minutes duration;⁶ the costumes were already available; and the music, set to William Boyce's *Eight Symphonies* arranged by Constant Lambert, was also easily accessible.⁷ With music and costumes secured, Rambert decided not to overtax Staff on his first choreographic assignment by limiting the amount of dancers he could use to three, which incidentally was also the same amount used by Ashton. The ballet itself concerned the antics of a Scottish lassie and her two Scottish laddies with Elisabeth Schooling, Charles Boyd and Staff as the first cast, while Sally Gilmour, Walter Gore and Antony Kelly were seen as an alternate cast.⁸ Leo Kersley also danced one of the laddies at some performances.⁹ *The Tartans* was first performed on 16 January 1938 at the Mercury Theatre in London where it met with considerable

⁴ Gillian Joubert, interview with author, 16 November 1992, Pretoria, tape recording.

⁵ Lionel Bradley, *Sixteen years of Ballet Rambert* (London: Hinrichsen, 1946), 72. David Vaughan, *Frederick Ashton and his ballets* (London: A & C Black, 1977), 455-456.

⁶ Leo Kersley, interview with author, 8 May 1995, London.

⁷ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

⁸ Bradley, *Rambert*, 72.

⁹ *Ibid.*

success. Satisfied with the outcome, Rambert decided to offer Staff another chance by asking him to devise a new version of *La Péri*.

La Péri, like *The Tartans*, was not new to the Rambert repertoire, having been previously choreographed by Ashton in 1931.¹⁰ It was, however, more challenging than *The Tartans* because it required both a *corps de ballet* and making sense of a rather tedious narrative line. The action in *La Péri* concerned Iskender, an eastern prince of Persian origin, and a supernatural eastern mythological character known as the Péri. When Iskender becomes tired of worldly pleasures he decides to seek immortality. The key to achieving this is by gaining possession of the Péri's secret flower. Iskender steals it only to discover earthly desire instead of heavenly bliss. The Péri recovers the magic flower and returns to paradise leaving the prince to die.¹¹

Staff structured his ballet in one act and set it to the same music Ashton had used by Paul Dukas called *Poème dansé* (1912). Unlike Ashton's ballet, which was dressed by William Chappell, the designs for Staff's production were entrusted to Nadia Benois, niece of the famous Ballets-Russes designer Alexandre Benois. Perhaps the most striking aspect of Staff's *La Péri* was the contrast he made between the Péri and the more realistic characters, for while the former danced barefooted the latter were shod.¹² This aspect of Staff's character delineation reveals how Iskender and his court were shod to convey their role in the real world while the Péri danced barefooted to underline her place as a member of the spiritual world, apparently pure and remote. Staff cast Deborah Dering as the "Péri" with himself as "Iskender" and Peggy van Praagh as Iskender's chief wife.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹¹ *La Péri* has its origins in the nineteenth-century when Jean Coralli presented a two-act version of the ballet at the Théâtre de l'Académie Royale de Musique in Paris in 1843. Although the plot in Coralli's version differed quite substantially from that of Ashton or Staff, it nevertheless adhered to the nineteenth-century tenets of Romanticism where choreographers became obsessed with the concept of death, which they tried to explain by exploring a concomitant link between reality and supernatural elements as a means to understanding the mysteries of the other world.

¹² "The Ballet Club," *The Times* (17 March 1938), 12.

Staff's *La Péri* was first performed at the Mercury Theatre on 13 March 1938¹³ to mixed critical reviews and although the critics were generally in favour of the production, Staff was not. Neither were his audiences who probably felt quite indifferent to its tedious subject matter and the fact that Staff's *La Péri* was unable to "efface memories of the Ashton ballet".¹⁴ Elisabeth Schooling gave a very different reason:

Frank was very keen on using projections in this ballet but there weren't really any proper facilities for doing so. He did, however, try to achieve this but the theatre's lighting capacity was inadequate. He then seemed to lose interest in *La Péri* although I don't think Frank really enjoyed that ballet right from the start. It actually wasn't very successful -- despite the reviews -- and was subsequently withdrawn from the Rambert repertoire.¹⁵

Leo Kersley, however, was of the opinion that the only reason *La Péri* disappeared from the repertoire was because Deborah Dering left the company. In Kersley's words: "It was a mood ballet and an inventive choreographic exercise that worked well."¹⁶ Staff must have thought differently for he welcomed the decision to have the work removed from the repertoire and decided that in future his first priority would be to explore subject matter not previously used by Ashton. *Czernyana* of 1939 was the first step in this direction. However, before this could be achieved, Staff left the Rambert fold during the latter half of 1938 to try his luck once more with the Vic-Wells ballet. But all expectation of choreographing for the larger Vic-Wells company came to naught as de Valois was simply not interested in pursuing a policy that encouraged experimental work.¹⁷ Instead, Staff created the role of the "Bread Boy" in Ashton's *Harlequin in the Street* (1938), which Mary Clarke thought was "Frank Staff at his best",¹⁸ as well as

¹³ Bradley, *Rambert*, 70.

¹⁴ Clarke, *Mercury*, 114.

¹⁵ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

¹⁶ Kersley, interview, 8 May 1995.

¹⁷ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

dancing in Nicholas Sergeyev's full-length production of *The Sleeping Princess* early in February 1939.¹⁹ In April 1939, Staff created the role of "Cupid" opposite Julia Farron's "Psyche" in Ashton's *Cupid and Psyche*.²⁰ David Vaughan, Ashton's biographer, said that by this time "Staff was potentially the best British male dancer so far, as strong technically as [Harold] Turner."²¹ While this may have been the case, the same could not be said of Ashton's *Cupid and Psyche*, which unfortunately was a complete failure. Fernau Hall referred to the work as being "so abysmally commonplace that it insulted the intelligence of the audience -- which retorted with boos and hisses."²² Julia Farron recalled that it had to be withdrawn after about four performances.²³

Disillusioned with the reception given to *Cupid and Psyche* and with not being able to choreograph for the Vic-Wells organization, Staff immediately decided to leave de Valois' company. After dancing briefly with Tudor's London Ballet in May 1939 he returned to Ballet Rambert where he felt secure in the knowledge that further choreographic opportunities would be more readily available to him. His chances were in fact strengthened as Rambert had already lost Tudor, first to an independent career in England during 1937 and finally to the United States of America in 1939. Due to the challenge of Tudor's venture, it seemed as if nothing could be more remote than his return to Rambert and she, as if by an instinctive sixth sense, was equally aware Tudor would never return. Staff's return, on the other hand, could not have been more fortuitous for Rambert and she welcomed him back not as a prodigal son but as an emerging choreographic talent within the company's own ranks. It was hardly

¹⁸ Mary Clarke, *The Sadler's Wells Ballet* (London: A & C Black, 1955), 141.

¹⁹ Alexander Bland, *The Royal Ballet -- the first fifty years* (London: Threshold, 1981), 54.

²⁰ Bland, *Fifty years*, 275.

²¹ Vaughan, *Ashton*, 168-169.

²² Fernau Hall, *Ballet* (London: The Bodley Head, 1948), 18.

²³ Julia Farron, interview with author, 8 April 1992, Cape Town.

surprising that choreography was on Rambert's agenda in furthering Staff's career but she was also of the opinion that his talent could be extended beyond choreography and dancing. What Rambert had in mind was the teaching of daily company classes, and when she offered Staff this opportunity he accepted without complaint. By adding a new dimension to Staff's career Rambert had made him one of her most prized possessions, fulfilling the three important functions of choreographer, dancer and teacher. Regarding his teaching ability, Dame Margaret Scott²⁴ recalled Staff's natural flair for teaching ballet:

Whenever he took classes -- he used to give the company classes by that stage -- we were always amazed by the construction of his exercises and we used to beg him to include some of them in his ballets. His talent was really quite exceptional.²⁵

Scott was also in a position to comment on how Rambert increased Staff's responsibilities by allowing him to audition prospective applicants for her company:

It was Frank Staff who auditioned me for the Rambert Company. I don't quite remember where Mim [Rambert] was at the time, but whenever she was not available to conduct auditions herself she would instruct a senior member of her company to do so on her behalf. She had enough faith in Frank to allow him to audition new members for the company and he had the necessary talent and intelligence to know who would be a worthwhile asset to the company.²⁶

But teaching -- or auditioning dancers for that matter -- was not Staff's priority. Choreography was really what he wanted to do, and shortly after returning to Rambert's company in June 1939 he began working on his new ballet entitled *Czernyana*. It was to be the first in a series

²⁴ South African-born and educated, Dame Margaret Scott danced with the Ballet Rambert Company from 1943 to 1948. After the Rambert Company toured Australia in 1947 she decided to remain there and co-founded the Australian National Theatre Ballet Company, and was Director of the Australian Ballet School from 1946 until her retirement in 1988.

²⁵ Dame Margaret Scott, interview with author, 1 April 1991, Johannesburg.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

of comedy-styled works that would characterize his ballets for the next thirty years.

The idea for *Czernyana* began germinating after Edwin Benbow and Angus Morrison, Rambert's two company pianists, suggested to Staff that he use some of the piano exercises and études composed by Karl Czerny. Benbow and Morrison played many of these for the company's daily class and believed that as they were infinitely balletic, they would make a suitable musical choice for a ballet.²⁷ Elisabeth Schooling explained how

they played some of the pieces for Frank and he chose what he wanted to use and that's how the ballet began. Rambert also thought it would be a marvellous idea to use Czerny's music and when she saw the final product she fell completely in love with it. I remember how she once exclaimed at a dress rehearsal: "Oh! such a witty ballet." She was extremely pleased and more than satisfied with what Frank had achieved.²⁸

According to Schooling and John Andrewes, another Rambert dancer at the time who went on to create the part of the Grandfather in Staff's *Peter and the Wolf* (1940), the title *Czernyana* was also suggested by Benbow and Morrison²⁹ who thought it a good idea to use the composer's surname in much the same way as Michel Fokine's *Chopiniana* (now *Les Sylphides*) was named after its composer's surname, Chopin.³⁰ Rehearsals for *Czernyana* commenced before the outbreak of the Second World War and continued even after the War had broken out.³¹ The ballet consisted of eleven short scenes or sketches, some of which were conventional while others were more satirical. Designed by Eve Swinstead-Smith, *Czernyana* was first

²⁷ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

Letter to author dated 16 August 1994 from John Andrewes, former dancer, Ballet Rambert.

³⁰ Michel Fokine, *Memoirs of a Ballet Master*, trans. Vitale Fokine (London: Constable, 1961), 99.

³¹ Kersley, interview, 8 May 1995.

performed on 5 December 1939 at the Duchess Theatre in London³² to critical and public acclaim.³³

Towards the end of 1939 Staff was invited to join Antony Tudor's London Ballet. His decision to accept Tudor's offer was governed primarily by the promise of being able to extend his choreographic opportunities further and he made two works for the company: *The Seasons* and *Catarina, ou La Fille du Bandit*, both of which were in one act, as was to become the case with almost all of his ballets.³⁴ According to Elisabeth Schooling, *The Seasons* was at the suggestion of Peggy van Praagh, herself a former dancer with Rambert's company and later a member of Tudor's small London Ballet.³⁵ It was also Peggy van Praagh who recommended Staff use Alexander Glazunov's ballet score entitled *The Seasons* (1900).³⁶ Leo Kersley, however, was of the opinion that *The Seasons* came about after Staff acquired a book from William Chappell, another Rambert dancer, based on plants and flowers of the eighteenth-century.³⁷ Whatever the case, Staff's ballet was first performed on 3 January 1940 at the Arts Theatre, London, where it received very little critical commentary.³⁸

³² Bradley, *Rambert*, 67.

³³ The following writers -- and one unnamed critic from *The Observer* -- all praised the ballet in their respective written observations about it:

"Czernyana -- Ballet by Frank Staff," *The Observer* (10 December 1939), 16.

Bradley, *Rambert*, 23.

Clarke, *Mercury*, 117.

P.S.J. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 352 (January 1940): 202.

Fernau Hall, *Modern English Ballet* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1950), 123.

³⁴ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Kersley, interview, 8 May 1995.

³⁸ Only two reviews could be located:

"Ballet in London: The male dancer," *The Times* (13 January 1940), 4.

P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 353 (February 1940): 272.

Staff's second work for the Tudor company was totally different from the first and involved a personal twentieth-century interpretation of a lost nineteenth-century Romantic ballet. This was *Catarina, ou La Fille du Bandit*, originally created in 1846 by Jules Perrot with a rather complicated plot about a painter, Salvatore Rosa, and his love for Catarina, chief of the bandits and the heroine of the tale. Part of the action concerned a sequence where Catarina drilled an army of female bandits, and it was this section of the ballet that John Brandard, the English-born artist, decided to immortalize in a lithograph of Lucile Grahn standing with her right hand clasped around the muzzle of a musket placed vertically upright on the ground. Staff was acquainted with the lithograph from a collection of prints hanging on the walls of Rambert's Mercury Theatre.³⁹ The image of Lucile Grahn as Catarina no doubt caught his attention and appealed to him, so much so that he decided to create his own balletic interpretation of the work, which he made for Elisabeth Schooling.

Staff's *Catarina, ou La Fille du Bandit* was first performed early in February 1940 to a score by Muzio Clementi, an Italian-born pianist/composer and contemporary of Mozart, rather than to Cesare Pugni's original score which Perrot had used. Lasting less than ten minutes, Staff's ballet involved the use of classical ballet technique and was danced on pointe.⁴⁰ The work was humorous rather than serious but the decision to treat it in terms of slapstick comedy almost backfired on Staff and it achieved only limited success. Elisabeth Schooling recounted how

it was supposed to be amusing. I stood there with a gun and eventually I left the gun and it remained standing there supported by itself. That was the huge joke but nobody thought it terribly funny. I also recall trying to shoot something in the wings, but nobody thought that was particularly funny either. In fact it was a total failure and quite honestly *Catarina* is a work that's best forgotten.⁴¹

³⁹ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Staff returned to Ballet Rambert during March 1940. However, he continued to dance for the London Ballet where he created the role of the soldier in Wendy Toye's *La Leçon Apprise* and the part of Julien, the country boy, in Andrée Howard's *La Fête Étrange*. On his return to Ballet Rambert both *The Seasons* and *Catarina, ou La Fille du Bandit* were incorporated into the Rambert repertoire where they continued to be performed by the combined Rambert and London companies until December 1940 when they were finally withdrawn. During the second half of 1940 Staff began working on a new ballet entitled *Peter and the Wolf* for which Rambert gave her blessing. Set to Sergey Prokofiev's symphonic fairy-tale of the same name, *Peter and the Wolf* is arguably Staff's most famous ballet and has come to be synonymous with his name. It is also only one of a handful of ballets by Staff that has survived to the present-day. Its popularity and success requires, and indeed warrants, further discussion as this ballet has been incorporated into the repertoire of no less than ten ballet companies,⁴² and at least two autonomous ballet schools: the Australian Ballet School and the University of Cape Town (U.C.T.) School of Dance (previously the U.C.T. Ballet School).

The ballet's charm stems from the story's clear descriptive narrative line and it concerns the adventures of Peter who, despite the admonishment of his Grandfather about stray wolves and the dangers of playing in the meadow adjoining their home, dares to venture out. He is joined by his friend the bird, as well as the duck and the cat. Then a wolf does appear and promptly swallows the duck. Peter, assisted by the bird, manages to capture the wolf just as the hunting

⁴² Companies that have performed Staff's *Peter and the Wolf* since the Ballet Rambert production of 1940 have included the following:

Cecily Robinson's South African National Ballet Company in 1946; Staff's own South African Ballet Company in 1955; the Frank Staff Ballet Company in 1959; the ballet company of the Cape Association Arts Board (CAPAB) in 1963; Ballet Natal in 1965; the ballet company of the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT) in 1966; the ballet company of the Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State (PACOFs) in 1969; Northern Theatre Dance in 1971; the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet in 1986; and the dance company of the Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC) in 1988.

party arrives. They all join in a victorious procession with the wolf being led to the nearest zoo.

Staff's *Peter and the Wolf* was cast in the comedy mould with emphasis on character development and the emergence of individual personalities. His initial source of reference was the music itself, and quickly he began to conjure up images of the central characters to the scenario. Each character, with the exception of the bird, was given a national characteristic suggestive of its provenance and easily identifiable by specific movements, or by Guy Sheppard's resourceful costume designs, or both. "Peter" and "Grandfather" were Russian; the "Cat" was oriental; the "Duck" was American; the "Wolf" was Japanese; and the "Hunters" were a group of English aristocrats from the Edwardian period. The "Bird" however was non-specific. To all these characteristics Staff added an extra dimension by giving some of the characters certain movements from well-known ballets, for instance the "Duck's" movements borrowed from *Giselle* and "Peter's" movements drawn from Fokine's *Petrouchka*. Likewise, The "Bird" adopts a position similar to the one created by the "Golden Cockerel" in Fokine's *Le Coq d'or* while the "Wolf" executes movements that may have been inspired by Susan Salaman's sketch entitled "Le Boxing" from her *Sporting Sketches*.

The choreography was further enhanced by Staff's judicious use of balletic mime, and where balletic mime was absent, Staff invented his own to explain the spoken narrative which always accompanies Prokofiev's colourful score. For example, the gesture used for the "Wolf" is conveyed with the arms held almost vertically and the fingers interlocked in front of the face. While this may represent the jaws and teeth of a wolf, it could also depict an enclosure where wild animals are kept. Another Staff invention is where "Grandfather", fearful that a wolf might come out the forest, asks Peter: "Then what would you do?" This is demonstrated by pointing the index finger of the right hand upwards, circling the right hand with the index finger pointing almost downwards, and completing the gesture by pointing the index finger upwards once more. Another inventive characteristic of Staff's choreography is where the movement vocabulary reflects

some of the animal characters' more human quality in keeping with their anthropomorphic proclivity. Three instances of this is where the "Wolf" performs movements to indicate that he might have been a boxer (implying his strength and masculinity); the swimming motion of the "Duck" to suggest breaststroke; and the "Cat's" head, neck and arm movements resembling a middle eastern or oriental dancer. Much of the ballet's success was owed to Guy Sheppard's set and costume designs, which were aimed at presenting a tableaux of characters as they might have appeared or existed in the mind or imagination of a child. Particular emphasis was given to props based on household objects such as stepladders to represent trees with long and short-handled mops dyed green at their ends to create the impression of branches and foliage. The pond was a small portable hip bath. At the same time Sheppard's intention was to include an element of sophisticated elegance, which he achieved by introducing a tapestry of elegant refinement into some of the costume designs, most notably those for the hunting party. Sheppard's allusion to the fable's Russian genesis was in the peasant-like costumes for "Peter" and "Grandfather" and the slightly lopsided designs of onion domes painted on the backcloth to resemble steeples found on Russian orthodox churches. The role of "Peter" was assigned to Helen Ashley (or Lulu Dukes as she was better known)⁴³ while the technically demanding part of "The Bird" was given to Celia Franca. Sally Gilmour performed "The Duck" while Walter Gore danced "The Cat". Leo Kersley was cast as "The Wolf" with John Andrewes as "Grandfather". David Martin played the "Huntsman", supported by Joan McClelland, Suzette Morfield and Joline Wade as the three "Huntswomen".⁴⁴ *Peter and the Wolf* premièred at the Cambridge Arts Theatre on 1 May 1940 and was first seen in London on 6 June 1940 in the basement theatre of the Arts Theatre Club.

As a major choreographic breakthrough, *Peter and the Wolf* placed Staff firmly on the choreographic map as well as in the public eye. Critics lauded the work for its refreshingly original content, its

⁴³ Lulu Dukes was Rambert's daughter.

⁴⁴ Beaumont, *Supplement*, 156.

masterful choreographic design and a stimulatingly new approach to dance. As a welcome addition to the Rambert repertoire, *Peter and the Wolf* offered worthwhile entertainment value by virtue of its wide appeal to both the faithful balletomane and the general public. Much of its success was made possible by invoking a close relationship between the choreographic structure and its corresponding musical counterpart. Staff achieved this by resorting to leitmotifs of movement to differentiate between the characters in the same way Prokofiev engaged musical leitmotifs to distinguish between his different characters. However, instead of the movement being subservient to the music, Staff moulded the latter to advance the ballet's choreographic content rather than allow the music to dictate the ballet's composition. Mary Clarke observed this phenomenon by commenting how

the great merit of this *Peter and the Wolf* was that instead of seeking merely to illustrate the action described in words and music, Frank Staff [has] used words and music as a setting for imaginative choreography.⁴⁵

Clearly impressed with the result, Clarke stated that Staff's *Peter and the Wolf* was "surely the wittiest version ever made of this 'fable without a moral'", and also that it encapsulated everything "Ballet Rambert stood for: sophisticated, charming comedy, and the poetry of the dance."⁴⁶

The critic of one of London's leading daily newspapers, *The Times*, concurred in a fairly extensive review of the ballet and came to the conclusion that

the ballet is omnivorous; it will swallow any story, any music, to make a dancer's field day. In laying hands upon Prokofieff's [*sic*] new musical tale *Peter and the Wolf* it has had to make an extra gulp to swallow a spoken narrative as well. But it has made no more ado about it than the wolf made about swallowing the duck in this modern Aesop fable. The narrative pauses for its musical illustration, and the dancers can

⁴⁵ Clarke, *Mercury*, 122.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 122-123.

then enact to the music the action that has just been described.⁴⁷

Fernau Hall was equally impressed with the work and wrote that in *Peter and the Wolf*

Staff directs his satiric searchlight away from the pretensions of other choreographers to the world around him; and the result is a richness of content which gives his dance-images exceptional vitality.⁴⁸

Cyril Beaumont was likewise full of praise, writing of how Staff's choreography radiated a "charm and humour" that was perfectly illustrated by the skilful use of

steps and actions of the several actors to accord with their particular characteristics. Thus, Peter is overflowing with high spirits and boyish pranks; the duck is provided with a slow comical gait, a taking flirt of the tail, and an engaging air of absurdity; while the cat is allotted a stealthy step, knowing glance, and sinuous movement of the body which are most effective.⁴⁹

The amusing dance sequence of the hunting party was unquestionably a favourite choice among the critics when it came to deciding the ballet's highlight. This aspect of the work was considered the most endearing with its skilfully balanced elements of burlesque and satire. For here Staff's comic invention was assured. Fernau Hall, for example, was of the opinion that

the dancing of the Hunters is particularly rich in comedy: here he [Staff] mocks the rituals of that peculiar religion of certain strata of English society: le sport. The shooting party move with the utmost propriety, each member exactly mirroring the others.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ "Peter and the Wolf," *The Times* (22 June 1940), 4.

⁴⁸ Hall, *English Ballet*, 124.

⁴⁹ Beaumont, *Supplement*, 160.

⁵⁰ Hall, *English Ballet*, 124.

And for Cyril Beaumont the jocularly of the hunters was “just the kind of lively number with which to ring down the curtain.”⁵¹ Mary Clarke also pointed out that the most effective use of comedy was “entrusted to the red-nosed hunters and their sharp featured womenfolk.”⁵² Similar sentiments were expressed by A.H. Franks who thought that Staff’s choreographic devise for the hunting sequence was quite exceptional and, indeed,

one of the most brilliantly developed passages of dance burlesque I have ever seen. Matching the rhythm of the music in its mock relentlessness, the hunters observe the conventions of the hunt in a sort of ‘follow-my-leader’ chain.⁵³

Encouraged by the success of *Peter and the Wolf*, Staff began to sketch a new work that was to be more serious in content and more sombre in atmosphere. This was *Enigma Variations*, set to Sir Edward Elgar’s 1898-9 composition entitled *Variations on an Original Theme* (“*Enigma*”), or simply *Enigma Variations*. Elisabeth Schooling recalled how Staff revered Elgar’s music, particularly the *Enigma Variations* with which he was well acquainted:

Frank loved that music and he knew it very well. He used to buy records in those days and listen to anything that sounded faintly balletic. In his opinion, Elgar’s score of *Enigma Variations* was ideal ballet music.⁵⁴

Staff’s first exposure to Elgar’s *Enigma Variations* was not in London however, but as a young boy in Kimberley where his father constantly played it on a portable record-player.⁵⁵ Staff had been considering its suitability for ballet over a period of about four years⁵⁶ before finally creating the finished product. He decided from the outset to devise a

⁵¹ Beaumont, *Supplement*, 161.

⁵² Clarke, *Mercury*, 122.

⁵³ A.H. Franks, *Twentieth Century Ballet* (London: Burke, 1954), 217.

⁵⁴ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

⁵⁵ Beaumont, *Supplement*, 162.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

more abstract interpretation of the music rather than create a deliberate and straightforward representation of Elgar's friends as they are portrayed in each of the fourteen variations. *Enigma Variations* illustrated Staff's first exercise in pure abstraction where the mood and rhythm of the music would determine the spirit and style of the dance. Staff himself explained that it was not his intention "to give a series of realistic portraits but only to follow the mood of each variation."⁵⁷ The editor of *The Dancing Times* confirmed that Staff "looked at the music from a purely abstract standpoint and aimed at a choreographic interpretation of the moods or temperaments which it evokes."⁵⁸

Staff originally envisioned his ballet on a grand and lavish scale with a large *corps de ballet*⁵⁹ and full symphony orchestra. However, when it became clear that financial resources were limited and the use of an orchestra was neither practical nor possible, Staff resorted to a recording of the score by the BBC orchestra under the baton of Sir Adrian Boult.⁶⁰ The recording itself was a faithful chronicle of the full musical score in exactly the same way Elgar had composed it and this ensured a close alliance between the configuration of Staff's danced pieces and the sequential structure of Elgar's music. The consequence of this was that Elgar's contrasting use of rhythms and dynamics actually dictated the ballet's own structure and mood and it was therefore inevitable that Staff's *Enigma Variations* would invite comparison with other works of the same genre. It was probably this aspect of the work that led Lionel Bradley to compare it with Leonid Massine's concept of the 'symphonic ballet', which Massine first popularized in the 1930's.⁶¹ It was analogous to the 'symphonic

⁵⁷ Programme Notes: *Lunch Ballet, After Lunch Ballet and Tea Ballet*, Ballet Rambert, Arts Theatre Club, London, performance 2 December 1940.

⁵⁸ P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 363 (December 1940): 106-107.

⁵⁹ The Rambert company had already amalgamated with Tudor's London Ballet when Staff began working on *Enigma Variations*.

⁶⁰ Lionel Bradley Transcriptions, Unpublished Diaries, 2 December 1940, Rambert Dance Company Archive.

ballet' in so far as a close structural relationship to the music was concerned, and here Staff divided the ballet into fourteen sections to correspond with Elgar's score. This did not mean of course that each section of the ballet necessarily comprised the same number of dancers or that every section totalled a completely different number of dancers, for example the theme and first variation were both danced by the ensemble while the ninth and tenth variations were danced as two solos by Elisabeth Schooling. There was however enough contrast in the ballet's structure to attract sufficient variety with several solos and ensemble sequences, three *pas de deux*, one *pas de trios* and one *pas de six*.⁶² In addition, the choreography explored several different characteristics of ballet technique. Cyril Beaumont comments on how one variation was "built on the *arabesque* combined with 'lifts'" while another explored different types of *grande jétés* and a third examined different possibilities with the *pas de bourrée*.⁶³

⁶¹ The term 'symphonic ballet' became synonymous with a group of ballets made by Leonid Massine and set to symphonic music. Massine claimed that in these ballets his objective was for the movement to reflect the supreme musical content, and that the formal development of the music in terms of its rhythm, for example, should be interpreted by the dance. His ballets generally employed a thematic base or uncomplicated plot to achieve this objective and to create the required mood. In *Les Prèsage* (1933), Massine's first 'symphonic ballet' set to Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*, the action concentrated on man's struggle with his destiny. For his next 'symphonic ballet', *Choreartium* (1933), Massine utilised Brahms's *Fourth Symphony in E Minor* to realize a plotless work in which he set an aesthetic tone by emphasizing the interplay of man and woman through contrasted use of feminine movements with masculine strength. In 1936, Massine made his third 'symphonic ballet' called *Symphonie Fantastique*, after Berlioz's music of the same name. In this ballet Massine used Berlioz's own synopsis in which a young, lovesick musician smokes opium and embarks on a journey searching for his beloved. In this way Massine created a choreographic symphony in five scenes. Massine's fourth 'symphonic ballet' was *La Septième Symphonie* (1938), which he set to Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*. The action in *La Septième Symphonie* centred on the creation and destruction of the earth and was divided into four movements, each of which corresponded to the four musical sections of Beethoven's symphony. Massine's final 'symphonic ballet' was set to Shostakovich's *First Symphony* and called *Le Rouge de la noir* (later renamed *L'Etrange farandole*). It concerned the theme of man's endless struggle between forces of a spiritual nature, contrasted with material ones and was represented in choreographic terms by 'Aggression', 'City and Country', 'Loneliness' and 'Fate'. Staff in fact had already alluded to Massine's concept of the 'symphonic ballet' with a parodied version of one of the sketches in *Czernyana* which he titled "Etude Symphonique". *Enigma Variations* however was not -- nor was it meant to be -- a parody of the 'symphonic ballet' form, but rather a concerted effort to emulate its structure and style.

⁶² Programme Notes: *Lunch Ballet, After Lunch Ballet and Tea Ballet*, Ballet Rambert, 2 December 1940.

Enigma Variations was first performed at the Arts Theatre in Cambridge on 26 November 1940 before transferring to the Arts Theatre Club in London on 2 December of the same year. It met with limited critical approval⁶⁴ and Staff decided to revert to another of his comedy-styled ballets by reworking his ideas in *Czernyana*. The result was *Czerny II*, which Ballet Rambert first produced at the Arts Theatre in London on 15 May 1941. *Czerny II*, like *Czernyana* before it, consisted of a number of satirical and conventional sketches. All the sketches in *Czerny II* were new except for the "Variation Partagée", and the ballet itself comprised eleven movements with the third, entitled "Troisième Acte", sub-divided into seven shorter parts. Massine's idea of the 'symphonic ballet' was retained in the sketch titled "L'Assemblée Etrange". The designs for *Czerny II* were more or less the same as those used in *Czernyana* by Eve Swinstead-Smith.⁶⁵

Czerny II was followed by Staff's courtly ballet entitled *Pavane pour une infante défunte*.⁶⁶ Set to Maurice Ravel's score of the same

⁶³ Beaumont, *Supplement*, 164.

⁶⁴ Critical response was unfavourable on the whole. However, Lionel Bradley, Cyril Beaumont, Fernau Hall and the ballet critic of *The Times* tended, at times, to be more complimentary than destructive. Sources investigating critical reaction to the ballet included the following:

"The Arts Theatre Club -- A year of ballet," *The Times* (3 December 1940), 6.
 P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 363 (December 1940): 106.
 Bradley Transcriptions, Unpublished Diaries, 2, 5 & 8 December 1940.
 Beaumont, *Supplement*, 163-164.
 Edwin Evans, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 364 (January 1941): 191-192.
 Hall, *Ballet*, 69.
 ____, *English Ballet*, 124 & 184.

⁶⁵ Staff returned to the *Czernyana* theme in 1966 when he made *Czernyana III* for PACT Ballet in Johannesburg. *Czernyana III* was completely new and used only four sketches from *Czernyana* and *Czerny II*: the "Variation Partagée" from *Czernyana*; "Nuages" and "Ébats avec corde" from *Czerny II*; and the "Galop" from both ballets for the finale. As a new work, *Czernyana III* required several more piano études by Czerny, which Staff had not used previously. Graham Newcater, the South African-born composer, was entrusted with orchestrating these pieces.

⁶⁶Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte* translates as *Pavane for a dead Infanta*, an Infanta being a Spanish princess.

name, this was a short work of just over seven and a half minutes originally composed as a piano solo in 1899 and later orchestrated in 1910.⁶⁷ Staff was the fourth of Rambert's choreographers to explore the formal patterns, style and technique of the ceremonially sombre *Pavane*.⁶⁸ Elisabeth Schooling recalls that while it was not Staff's idea to choreograph the ballet in the first place, she could not remember exactly why it was that Rambert had asked him to redo it:

I think it was probably because the costumes were there and Rambert wanted to see what Frank would come up with. She was especially keen to see what new choreographers were capable of doing and Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte* was an interesting exercise without being too taxing on a new or relatively new choreographer. It could also have been that Rambert needed a short work to fill a programme which was so often the case as we were expected to do quite a lot of bits and pieces. Frank's version of the *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, incidentally, was not his idea because I don't remember him ever speaking about having a burning desire to do it.⁶⁹

Staff's version of the *Pavane pour une infante défunte* was, like those of his predecessors, a *pas de deux*. Sylvia Hayden and David Paltenghi were chosen to dance the choreography and there was no alternate cast. Rehearsals began in the foyer at the back of the Arts Theatre stage with Rambert present at all rehearsals.⁷⁰ Sylvia Hayden recalled how a long-playing record substituted for the absence of a piano and that the dance "was slow and dignified with hand and head movements and little movements with the feet as in historical dance of that period."⁷¹ She remembered how the weight of her costume made it virtually impossible to perform extensive movements or steps

⁶⁷ Michael Kennedy, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 483.

⁶⁸ Rambert's other choreographers to explore Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte* were: Antony Tudor in January 1933; Frederick Ashton in May 1933; and Bentley Stone in August 1937.

⁶⁹ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

⁷⁰ Letter dated 17 July 1993 from Sylvia Hayden to Jane Pritchard, Archivist of the Rambert Dance Company.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

requiring elevation although it was still possible to execute small running steps across the stage.⁷² Hayden's actual recollection of Staff's choreography was limited to how the piece began with her and David Paltenghi standing upstage and centre stage facing the audience. Then they proceeded to walk slowly downstage with the palm of her inside hand resting on top of his. After taking four steps forward they stopped and Paltenghi leaned slightly forward in an aristocratic greeting with one knee partially bent and his back held erect. Hayden said the phrase was repeated but was unable to remember any more of the ballet's content except to say that it was similar in style to the 'Pavane' from Ashton's *Capriol Suite* (1930).⁷³ Perhaps most illuminating of all was Hayden's brief account of the manner in which Staff choreographed the ballet:

Frank was very quiet when he worked and tended to give you an idea of what he wanted and often left in what you made of it. And he moved an arm or a leg as you were trying it out to achieve the effect he was after.⁷⁴

Staff's *Pavane pour une infante défunte* reached the stage of the Arts Theatre in London on 29 June 1941. Strangely, it seems not to have been reviewed. It was at about this time Staff began working on a new ballet to César Franck's *Variations Symphoniques* (1885). Staff's ballet was for three couples, one of which included Hayden and himself. He had already choreographed the *pas de deux* with Hayden, who felt very "honoured", before suddenly abandoning the project.⁷⁵ Hayden was not sure why Staff decided to relinquish this venture but suggested that his reasons were probably economic.⁷⁶ Ironically, César Franck's *Variations Symphoniques* found choreographic expression five years later when Ashton created *Symphonic Variations* for the Royal Ballet in 1946. Ashton's ballet, incidentally, was also

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

for three couples featuring a central couple, and is regarded as one of his masterpieces.

Towards the end of the 1941 English summer it had become apparent that Rambert's dancers were completely dissatisfied with remuneration arrangements then in force between themselves and Basil Rubin.⁷⁷

The dancers demanded higher wages, claiming their earnings were not commensurate with the cost of living. Rubin however stood firm by refusing to increase their salaries. Eventually a meeting took place between Equity, Rubin and a deputation of dancers' comprising Sally Gilmour, Walter Gore, David Paltenghi, Elisabeth Schooling, Frank Staff and Peggy van Praagh. Equity's representatives then formally instructed Rubin to pay the dancers more money. Again he refused and this led to the immediate disbanding of the Rambert Company.⁷⁸

Some of the dancers, including David Paltenghi and Peggy van Praagh, joined the Sadler's Wells Ballet while others were called up to serve in the armed forces. Some found employment in musical theatre, operas and operettas. Staff himself was appointed to choreograph the dance sequences for a new operatic production of Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1881). That was in 1942, and the production was renamed *Offenbach's Tales of Hoffmann* as one of the characters was supposed to be Offenbach himself. This was Staff's first experience of working in opera and it brought him into contact with George Kirsta, the man responsible for the production and for devising the concept of using Offenbach as a character in the piece. Kirsta of course was also accountable for introducing a rather disillusioned Hoffmann who finds

⁷⁷ Contractual arrangements between Rambert and Rubin meant that the legal administration of the company was entirely within Rubin's discretion. He retained the sole legal right to present the company over a period of several years in terms of having hired the sets and costumes from Rambert. In fact, he could also terminate performances whenever he wanted to. Rambert was powerless to deal with the situation and it was not until March 1943, when legal obstacles had finally been resolved, that the company was reassembled as an independent group. However, its status shifted from a private company to a public concern after an agreement was reached in 1943 between Rambert and C.E.M.A. (Council for the Encouragement of Music and Arts), who undertook to maintain the company nationally. C.E.M.A., in fact, was the forerunner of the Arts Council of Great Britain.

⁷⁸ Clarke, *Mercury*, 129.

himself on the stage of Offenbach's theatre as a forlorn Paris seeking solace in the arms of Helen of Troy.⁷⁹

Staff's brief was to provide a background of dancing figures to heighten the dramatic intensity whenever an important aria or duet was being sung, and to arrange the dance sequence for the second part of Act 111 entitled "On Mount Ida".⁸⁰ Sally Gilmour, Walter Gore, Elisabeth Schooling and Staff were the principal dancers supported by a *corps de ballet* of twelve, ten of whom were from Rambert's company that included Pauline Clayden, Brenda Hamlyn, Robert Harrold, Sylvia Hayden, Sara Luzita, Joan McClelland, Olivia Sarel, Margaret Scott, Marguerite Stewart and Peter Franklin-White. Mary Gornell and Rosemary Young, the only two non-Rambert dancers, completed the *corps*. Pauline Clayden, Sara Luzita and Sylvia Hayden appeared at various intervals throughout the opera as three Fates draped in black gauze dancing together or adopting group poses to resemble sculptured friezes from ancient Greece.⁸¹ Peter Franklin-White and Robert Harrold appeared as "spirits of wine and beer" with the ladies of the *corps de ballet* as their attendants.⁸² In the first act all the dancers appeared as guests at Spalanzani's party that included a display of theatrical ballroom dancing led by Sally Gilmour, Walter Gore, Elisabeth Schooling and Staff while the singers stood at either side of the stage.⁸³ Act 11 was a moonlight setting in Venice beside Giulietta's Palace⁸⁴ with the three Fates providing a background of dancing to accompany the arias and duets.⁸⁵ Most of the dancing in

⁷⁹ The whole action in Kirsta's rather convoluted version took place during a performance of *La Belle Hélène* and it seemed appropriate to include a ballet sequence in which the mythological character Paris is called upon to award a golden apple to one of three goddesses contesting its ownership.

⁸⁰ Theatre Programme: *Offenbach's Tales of Hoffmann*, Strand Theatre, London, season March 1942.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ "The Tales of Hoffmann," Strand Theatre, Albion Opera, 3 March 1942, n.p.

the opera was reserved for “On Mount Ida” in the final act. “On Mount Ida” was set to the musical strains of Offenbach’s *La Belle Hélène* and was divided into two parts: the first was a waltz for the *corps de ballet*; and the second followed the mythological tale of “The Judgement of Paris” in which Staff was seen “in a short white tunic as Paris discovering the golden apple....”⁸⁶ The three Roman goddesses competing for the apple were played by Sally Gilmour as Juno, goddess of women and marriage, Elisabeth Schooling as Minerva, goddess of household arts, and Sara Luzita as Venus, goddess of beauty who presided over gardens and ploughlands. There is no indication of the choreographic content or of any choreographic devices Staff may have used in this section, or of any possible influences, for example Antony Tudor’s *The Judgement of Paris* (1938) where Staff danced the “Client” as an alternate cast. The only minor disclosure from the reviews was that each of the goddesses entered from behind a piece of scenery, which represented a cloud, and that the actual ‘judgement’ was determined when “Venus had only to give Paris one look for the matter to be settled.”⁸⁷ The ballet sequence continued with Paris setting off for Sparta and a scene change to reveal Helen of Troy’s bedroom which marked the end of the ballet.

Offenbach’s Tales of Hoffmann opened at the Strand Theatre in London’s West End on 2 March 1942 in a production by the Albion Opera. The critics, who were not always convinced with Staff’s choreography, greeted it with a mixed reception. Of particular interest was one critic’s observation who detected a conspicuous similarity between Staff’s choreography and Massine’s *Symphonic Fantastique*. According to the critic concerned, “once or twice there is too strong a flavour of ‘symphonic’ extravagances like some of the odd postures in the final movement of the [‘Symphonic’] ‘Fantastique’.”⁸⁸ Staff was nevertheless commended on the whole and while the same critic found

Frank Staff Clippings File, Rambert Dance Company Archive, London.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

his departure from the usual norms of operatic ballet quite different, his choreography still conformed to the balletic conventions usually found in works of that nature.⁸⁹ The critic's closing statement was diplomatically, if not exactly positively, expressed: "I can't say that this work will add to Frank Staff's reputation but it doesn't detract from it and it may have been a useful experience for him."⁹⁰ And it was indeed "a useful experience for him" after he returned to South Africa in the 1950's where he staged a new production of *The Judgement of Paris* in 1957 for his own company, the South African Ballet.

The critic of *The Times* in a fairly extensive review only mentioned the ballet sequence in so far as there was "enough ballet in it for those who cannot have enough of that good thing...."⁹¹ However, neither Staff's choreography nor his performance was mentioned. P.J.S. Richardson, on the other hand, did review the choreography in his regular "Sitter Out" feature in *The Dancing Times*. But he was not impressed -- or convinced -- that the opera had provided a suitable or even satisfactory platform for the dancers. For Richardson, *Offenbach's Tales of Hoffmann* was an unfortunate choice since the dancers emerged as the losers "in this unequal battle" between opera and ballet.⁹² His findings were based on the simple premise that even when the dancers

were given space in which to move, a rare event, they cannot establish their right to a place in this opera for the very simple reason that Offenbach, when composing his music, gave no thought to ballet.⁹³

Richardson was equally disparaging about Staff's choreography, which he found "disappointing" and "too reminiscent of many of his other works".⁹⁴ His admonishment continued with the accusation that

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ "Offenbach's Tales of Hoffmann," *The Times* (3 March 1942), 2.

⁹² P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 379 (April 1942): 339.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Staff's work "shows nothing fresh, and even the ballet, *On Mount Ida* from *La Belle Hélène*, is very superficial, having no depth of purpose or movement."⁹⁵ Richardson's diatribe even implies that all the choreographed passages were embarrassing, especially where the dancers appeared to "wander on and off the stage in seeming disregard of everything and everybody else."⁹⁶ He found it totally unacceptable

to see the undoubted talents of such dancers as Sally Gilmour, Elizabeth [*sic*] Schooling, Walter Gore, Frank Staff and other members of the Ballet Rambert wasted in such work.⁹⁷

In his final comment, Richardson almost sympathizes with Staff when he states that although the choreography was ineffectual, there has been no other choreographer, to his knowledge, that had tackled *The Tales of Hoffmann* successfully:

Once again it seems the fantastic tales of Hoffmann have proved too difficult a task for the choreographer [*sic*] for one leaves the theatre, as one leaves it after *Casse Noisette*, puzzled by the lack of continuity of plot and sympathy between the plot and choreography [*sic*]. Hoffmann's literary strength lies in his power of vivid descriptions. He asserted he actually saw the nightmare apparitions that his imagination conjured up, but to date no composer or choreographer [*sic*] seems to have been capable of transforming these stories into a vehicle for ballet.⁹⁸

The critic of the *Liverpool Daily Post* was not exactly pleased with Staff's choreography either, or with the standard of dancing achieved, which was found to be sadly wanting. However, the ballet sequence from *La Belle Hélène* was considered "a neat idea" with which to end the opera in spite of being "somewhat clumsily executed."⁹⁹ The critic's concluding remark however was an admission that the ballet

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ "Tales of Hoffmann," *Liverpool Daily Post* (23 June 1942), n.p. Theatre Museum Archive, Covent Garden, London.

sequence was indeed “something different in the way of operatic production.”¹⁰⁰

Offenbach's Tales of Hoffmann was Staff's only choreographic assignment for 1942. With the war effort having intensified, the number of men called up to the military escalated and Staff was eventually conscripted to the Royal Regiment of Artillery.¹⁰¹ Elisabeth Schooling confirmed that his military service with the British Forces commenced sometime during the latter half of 1942, not long after *Offenbach's The Tales of Hoffmann* had completed its run.¹⁰² This meant that his ballet career, like so many of his colleagues, came to an abrupt end and would not be resumed until after his discharge at the end of July 1944.¹⁰³ Staff's military record shows that he was transferred several times to different regiments and at least to one unit. Enlisted on 10 July 1942, he was posted to the 35th Signal Training Regiment on 29 August 1942 and promoted to Lance Bombardier almost three months later on 20 November 1942. He remained at the Training Regiment until the following year when he was posted to the 125th Officer Training Unit where he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on 26 June 1943. On the same day he was immediately posted to 91 Anti-Tank Regiment until the following year when he was transferred on 1 March 1944 to 21 Anti-Tank Regiment. He was promoted to War Substantive Lieutenant on 26 March 1944 and on 6 July 1944 Staff relinquished his commission on account of ill health and was discharged shortly thereafter.¹⁰⁴ No reasons were given as to why he was released from the army although Elisabeth Schooling was under the impression that it was due to severe

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ The British Army Lists for the Second World War provides general information on members who served with the British Army for the duration of the War from 1939 to 1945, both dates inclusive. Staff's name appears in the list for July 1944, but not thereafter.

¹⁰⁴ Letter to author dated 31 July 1996 from Miss L.F. Hearn, Departmental Records Officer, Ministry of Defence, Middlesex, England.

mental strain.¹⁰⁵ The same opinion was expressed by Heather Lloyd-Jones, Staff's third wife, who remembered how

Frank preferred not to talk about his military experience. But it was as a result of this experience that his ballets became morbid with powerful psychological undertones. If I recall correctly, Frank even relinquished dancing full-length roles unless there was really no one else to do them.¹⁰⁶

Staff's war experience included the landing and subsequent invasion of Normandy in 1944 as well as taking part in the Allied advance through France to Brussels.¹⁰⁷ As far as military records indicate, it seems no medals were awarded to him during the course of his military service.¹⁰⁸

There were two isolated instances when Staff was able to pursue his ballet career while in the army: firstly, when his military leave coincided with the Rambert company's brief, and only, London appearance during the war; and secondly, when he was given the opportunity to arrange a ballet for one of the E.N.S.A. companies.¹⁰⁹ The first occasion arose when the company performed for one week only at an open-air theatre in Brockwell Park during June 1943. John Andrewes and Walter Gore, likewise on leave from the military, joined Staff as welcome guests. Their presence helped to boost the noticeable depletion in the ranks of the male contingent and Rambert, in turn, judiciously exploited the situation by devising an exhibition of works demonstrating the versatility of her company's repertoire with works by no less than five choreographers.¹¹⁰ Staff's second

¹⁰⁵ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

¹⁰⁶ Heather Lloyd-Jones, interview with author, 15 April 1992, Johannesburg.

¹⁰⁷ "Frank Staff ná operasie dood" [Frank Staff dies after operation,] *Die Volksblad* (10 May 1971), 4. Press information confirmed in an interview with Heather Lloyd-Jones on 15 April 1992.

¹⁰⁸ Letter to author dated 6 September 1996 from Miss L.C. Burrows, Army Medals Office, Ministry of Defence, Worcestershire, England.

¹⁰⁹ E.N.S.A. or Entertainment National Service Association was an organization that provided entertainment for the troops.

opportunity was when he created a new ballet for an E.N.S.A. company called *Pirouette*, which Fernau Hall thought was “a very dull ballet”.¹¹¹ Hall believed that the reason for this, no doubt, was probably because “the war made it impossible for him [Staff]...and his creative gifts were dissipated in...trivial or pretentious themes.”¹¹² It was also Hall’s contention that the war had such an adverse effect on Staff’s creative career that his plunge into choreographic mediocrity had become evident with *Pirouette*. According to Hall, it was “difficult to recognise the Staff who composed *Peter and the Wolf*.”¹¹³

On being released from the army, Staff rejoined the Rambert Company that had re-formed during his absence.¹¹⁴ Rambert’s company had become his home, its members his family, and many felt that it was in fact his alpha and omega. Much of Ballet Rambert’s activity after Staff rejoined the company was taken up with tours to the provinces. From the end of October 1944 and through to November of that year the company performed in Bath, Bedford, Bristol, Cheltenham, Colchester, Luton and Torquay with the most important additions to the repertoire being Walter Gore’s *Simple Symphony* and Andrée Howard’s *The Fugitive*.¹¹⁵ Both ballets were to leave an indelible impression on Staff’s mind: *The Fugitive* for its remarkable similarity in mood and subject matter to Staff’s own *Transfigured Night* of

¹¹⁰ The programme comprised Ashton’s *Capriol Suite* and *Foyer de Danse*, Fokine’s *Les Sylphides*, Howard’s *Carnival of Animals*, Staff’s *Peter and the Wolf* and Tudor’s *Jardin aux Lilas*.

¹¹¹ Hall, *English Ballet*, 124.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹¹⁴ Rambert’s company recommenced its activities at the Mercury Theatre with only one performance before a specially invited audience on 26 March 1943. The programme featured a new ballet by Andrée Howard called *Carnival of the Animals*. The company then undertook a series of hostel tours and later embarked on a programme aimed at providing entertainment for the soldiers at various army camps as well as for workers in factory canteens and, ultimately, for civilians in the provinces.

¹¹⁵ *The Fugitive* was first performed on 16 November 1944 at the Royal County Theatre in Bedford, while *Simple Symphony* was seen for the first time on 29 November 1944 at the Royal Theatre, Bristol.

1955;¹¹⁶ *Simple Symphony* for the inspiration it gave him to create his own version for the Junior School of the University of Cape Town Ballet School in 1963; and Howard's sensitive and accurate casting of Joan McClelland as the older sister in *The Fugitive*, thereby placing her firmly in the public, critics' and Staff's discerning eye.¹¹⁷ Another opportunity Staff seized during 1944 was the privilege of dancing the important role of Caroline's lover in Antony Tudor's *Jardin aux Lilas*.¹¹⁸ The ballet was obviously not new to Staff as he saw it in 1936 when Ballet Rambert first performed the work at the Mercury Theatre as well as at subsequent revivals. He was also partly responsible (together with Walter Gore) for staging its revival in 1943 and the experience it gave him was of tremendous importance to his own choreography since it allowed him both a deeper understanding of Tudor's choreographic invention and a greater perception to the more intrinsic psychological undertones of Tudor's work. The manner by which its atmosphere, the use of descriptive movement and simple gestures conveyed disparate emotions and an impending emotional calamity all contributed towards Staff's awareness of the dramatic possibilities in ballet. Naturally, Staff's respect for Tudor's creative genius was greatly enhanced and he came to venerate both the ballet and its choreographer. Donna Perlmutter, in her text on the life of Antony Tudor, goes so far as to state that Staff, among others, attached an almost sacred-like quality towards attending Tudor's rehearsals of *Jardin aux Lilas*. In Perlmutter's words:

Frank Staff and others cast in the later Tudor ballets often said they "were going to Vespers" as a metaphor for attending his [Tudor's] rehearsals of *Jardin aux Lilas*.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ For a further exploration of Andrée Howard's *The Fugitive* and how its dramatic content might have influenced Staff's *Transfigured Night* see Chapter 5.

¹¹⁷ By all accounts McClelland's performances, which were generally considered riveting, did not go unnoticed by Staff, and he decided to use her exceptional dramatic range in *Un Songe* where she would alternate with Elisabeth Schooling as the young girl.

¹¹⁸ The work is often referred to by its English title of *Lilac Garden*.

¹¹⁹ Donna Perlmutter, *Shadowplay: The Life of Antony Tudor* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1991), 51.

Perlmutter's statement is interesting but at the same time historically inaccurate as Staff never performed in *Jardin aux Lilas* while Tudor was in England. It was only in 1944, after Tudor had settled comfortably in America, that Staff was scheduled to dance in this ballet. At most, Perlmutter's statement must be interpreted as referring to Staff's attendance at Tudor's rehearsals as a spectator rather than an active participant, although the essence of the statement tends to indicate Staff's unequivocal involvement at the rehearsals conducted by Tudor. The importance of Perlmutter's statement however is confirmation of Staff's explicit deference towards Tudor and the sanctity with which he held *Jardin aux Lilas*. P.J.S. Richardson considered the performances by Gilmour, Luzita and Staff to be the most satisfying he had ever witnessed, and wrote of how

the present caste [*sic*] of *Jardin aux Lilas* is quite the best that has been seen. Sally Gilmour, Sari [*sic*] Luzita and Frank Staff interpret their roles most movingly and one is immediately made aware of the intense suffering and struggle of these three personalities in face of the impending and inevitable parting. More than ever one is convinced of the great value of this work by Anthony Tudor in contemporary ballet, and one can rejoice that it has found such sympathetic interpreters.¹²⁰

Staff's first piece of choreography for the Rambert company following his discharge from the army was *Un Songe*. However, it was not the first ballet he was planning at this stage as he had already proposed an unusual idea for ballet based on four different winds. This was virgin territory encompassing a whole range of stimulating choreographic ideas to interpret different winds and he decided, appropriately, to call the ballet *The Four Winds*. Elisabeth Schooling explains:

Frank started to work on this ballet almost immediately after he came out of the army. We were on one of our local tours at the time when Frank's imagination took its course. There was going to be a central character but it became too ambitious and too complicated with the result that Rambert got cold feet, so regrettably it was dropped. She felt that Frank's ideas needed to be clarified; they were a bit too vague and he needed to do more homework before she was prepared to accept his proposals. She was also worried the ballet would be a

¹²⁰ P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 408 (September 1944): 552.

financial burden which neither she nor the company could afford.¹²¹

At Rambert's insistence, all plans to mount the ballet were temporarily shelved and it was not until 1947, while the company was on tour in Australia, that Staff began work on *The Four Winds* again. Yet, this time, he was not particularly enthusiastic about the ballet since it held no challenges for him, and he promptly decided to abandon the project. Dame Margaret Scott, who was on tour with the company in Australia, recalls:

Like so many of his ballets, *The Four Winds* never saw the light of day and that was a pity because it was unique. Nobody had ever thought of basing a ballet on four different winds.¹²²

Prior to commencing work on *Un Songe* Staff accepted other opportunities to choreograph and dance. Robert Donat's production of *The Glass Slipper*, a musical play based on Herbert and Eleanor Farjeon's version of *Cinderella*, featured some of Rambert's dancers in two dance sequences specially arranged by Andrée Howard. *The Glass Slipper* opened on 22 December 1944 at the St. James Theatre in London. A large portion of the production was

very much a Rambert enterprise for Hugh Stevenson designed the costumes and settings, and Lulu Dukes held the whole fairytale together with her lively playing of the Prince's Zany.¹²³

In the "Masque" of "the Husband", "the Wife" and "the gay Cavalier", Staff danced the part of "the Husband" with Schooling as "the wife" and Rex Reid as "the gay cavalier". For the "Harlequinade" scene, which was subtitled "Harlequin in Search of his Heart -- A Paradise in Nowhere", Staff was cast as "Harlequin" with Annette Chappell as "Columbine".¹²⁴ Schooling revealed something of Howard's

¹²¹ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

¹²² Scott, interview, 1 April 1991.

¹²³ Clarke, *Mercury*, 142.

¹²⁴ Programme Note: *The Glass Slipper*, St. James Theatre, London, season December 1944.

choreographic style in the “Harlequinade” by disclosing that “it was by and large based on the idea of *commedia dell’arte*.”¹²⁵

Musical theatre came to dominate Staff’s life during the first half of 1945. It was probably in about late March 1945 that he began arranging the dance sequences for Tom Arnold’s production of *Perchance to Dream*, a musical romance devised, written and composed by Ivor Novello. Under the direction of Jack Minster, *Perchance to Dream* was set in two acts with the action of the first act taking place in 1818 during the Regency period while the second act was divided into two parts or scenes: 1843 of the early Victorian era; and a “modern 193--?” scene.¹²⁶ Credited with the “choreography and ensembles”, Staff probably also arranged the movement component for several of the fifteen musical items although his real contribution lay in both the “Singing Ballet” and “The Triumph of Spring”.¹²⁷ In “The Triumph of Spring” sequence, the dancers included Prudence James and Lawrence Drewe as the “Autumn Lovers” with Beryl Morina as the “Winter Queen”.¹²⁸ Programme details reveal that “The Triumph of Spring” was a choreographic unfolding of the four seasons with “Summer” coming first, followed by “Autumn”, then “Winter” and finally “Spring”.¹²⁹ It is possible that the choreography for “The Triumph of Spring” may have recalled something of Staff’s *The Seasons* for the London Ballet in 1940. *Perchance to Dream* opened on 21 April 1945 at the London Hippodrome and ran for a total of 1022 performances.¹³⁰ The critic of *The Times* regarded the work as “something of a boneless wonder” but acknowledged that it gave “rise to a succession of glamorous spectacles.”¹³¹ It was considered “less

¹²⁵ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

¹²⁶ Theatre Programme: *Perchance to Dream*, London Hippodrome, London, season April 1945.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchensen, *Musical Comedy* (London: Peter Davies, 1969), 40.

attractive than [Ivor Novello's] *The Dancing Years* [of 1939]"¹³² but still "good enough for those who like an evening of pleasant songs sung against an ever-changing background which is always bright and lively."¹³³ Staff's choreography was not mentioned, and it seemed that only Margaret Rutherford's performance was of any true value, especially as "she presents an apple-sharp old lady with such an irrepressible sense of style that her appearance often gives the rest of the characters the air of happy-go-lucky masquers."¹³⁴

Shortly after *Perchance to Dream*, Staff was invited to arrange the dances for Lee Ephraim's musical presentation of *Sweet Yesterday*.¹³⁵ Written by Philip Lever to music by Kenneth Leslie-Smith and lyrics by James Dyrenforth, Max Kester and Philip Lever, the production was directed by Jack Hulbert and featured Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth in two of the leading roles.¹³⁶ Its action takes place during June 1805 and concerns an Englishman's perilous journey through Napoleonic France in search of a lady. Unbeknown to him, she is already betrothed to a French officer. He eventually finds them and promises to help the couple escape while the lady, in return, undertakes "to convey to Pitt [the English Prime Minister] the fateful tidings that Villeneuve [of the French fleet] has sailed from Cadiz and will shortly reach Trafalgar."¹³⁷ *Sweet Yesterday* was arranged as a three-act work and contained a ballet sequence in the second act co-choreographed by Staff and the Finnish-born dancer/choreographer,

¹³¹ "Perchance to Dream," *The Times* (23 April 1945), 8.

¹³² Ivor Novello's *The Dancing Years* was originally produced at Drury Lane in March 1939 but was withdrawn soon thereafter due to the outbreak of war. It was revived almost three years later to the day when it returned to the Adelphi Theatre on 19 March 1942. *The Dancing Years* played for a total of 969 performances -- 53 less than *Perchance to Dream*.

¹³³ *The Times* (23 April 1945), 8.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Theatre Programme: *Sweet Yesterday*, Adelphi Theatre, London, season June 1945.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ "Sweet Yesterday," *The Times* (22 June 1945), 6.

Cleo Nordi.¹³⁸ The first performance was given at the Adelphi Theatre in London on 21 June 1945. Both *The Times* and *Evening Standard* reviewed the work without mentioning anything of Staff or Nordi's choreography.

In July 1945, Staff eventually began working on *Un Songe*.¹³⁹ The company was dancing in Birmingham at the time and it was decided to schedule Staff's new ballet for the English autumn of 1945. It was to be his last work for the Rambert Company, which by all accounts was not particularly well received. Although it is not known for certain what inspired Staff to write this ballet, John Andrewes indicates that more often than not

the original idea for a new ballet at that stage was Frank Staff's own, perhaps suggested by some music he had heard, but it might have germinated from a seed thrown out in conversation at dinner and enlarged on by any of us who happened to be there.¹⁴⁰

Staff envisaged the synopsis in two distinct scenes but kept to his proverbial one act structure. The scenario was sketched according to the following design:

Scene I -- Amongst the people of a dream, a girl sees her lover identified with the Ace of Spades -- a symbol of death.

Scene II -- She meets them in reality.

This division tends to conjure up images of the philosophical dilemma facing Romantic choreographers of the previous century and

¹³⁸ Cleo Nordi was born in 1899 in Kronstadt and trained in ballet in St. Petersburg with Nicholas Legat and in modern dance in Germany and Finland with a pupil of Isadora Duncan. She joined Anna Pavlova's company in 1926 and remained with them until the company was disbanded in 1931. During the 1940's Nordi taught at the Sadler's Wells Ballet School and the London Contemporary Dance Theatre as well as in Germany at the Folkwang School in Essen.

"Ballet Rambert," *The Dancing Times*, 422 (November 1945): 52.

¹³⁹ "Ballet Rambert," *The Dancing Times*, 418 (July 1945): 436.

¹⁴⁰ Andrewes, letter, 16 August 1994.

particularly of the reality/fantasy concept with a realistic scene always preceding a more fantastic one. Staff's ballet, despite being in one act only, seemed to take cognizance of the Romantic plight in a somewhat inverted way with illusion preceding reality.¹⁴¹ It may have been that Staff's predilection for inverting the obvious was clearly in evidence here, with the result that he deliberately intended his ballet not to accord structurally with the generally expected -- and accepted -- format regarding the notion of reality and fantasy as put forward in *La Sylphide* or *Giselle*. This might even have been Staff's sense of humour coming to the fore -- hence another instance of his originality.¹⁴² A further allusion to the Romantic ballet, although perhaps quite coincidental, involved the question of content and theme. Scene I of *Un Songe* dealt with a dream, something not entirely alien to ballet that could be traced back to the very subject matter of Jean Aumer's *La Somnambule* of 1827. Another possible influence in terms of subject matter and content was Ashton's *Apparitions*, which Staff probably saw when the work was first performed at the Sadler's Wells Theatre during February 1936. There was a real possibility Staff saw Ashton's ballet and that he was partly influenced by its subject matter as well as by Ashton's movement style.¹⁴³ This is especially true in Audrey Williamson's review of *Un*

¹⁴¹ Staff was probably aware of the Romantic ballet's reality/fantasy concept since two of his previous ballets, *Catarina, ou La Fille du Bandit* and *La Péri*, were based on original creations dating from that period. As it is known that Staff always researched his subject thoroughly -- often guided by Rambert fulfilling an important educationalist role -- he would have been familiar with the Romantic Ballet dilemma, particularly as he often performed the role of Hilarion in Rambert's production of *Giselle Act 11*. *Un Songe*, on the other hand, illustrated yet a further example of Staff's diverse range of subject matter and a moulding of situation and circumstance to suit his needs.

¹⁴² This is merely speculative as neither written nor oral sources could shed any light on the issue and the interviewees, for instance, were uncertain whether or not Staff was actually influenced by the construction of Romantic ballets. Written sources hinted at this possibility without being specific.

¹⁴³ Staff was never influenced by the movement or choreographic style of Ashton except when he satirized Ashton's ballets, for example in his reworked version of *Czernyana 111* for PACT Ballet in 1966. In *Czernyana 111* there was a sketch entitled "'Rendezvous' pour 'Les Patineurs'" ("Rendezvous for the Skaters"), which was really a take-off of Ashton's *Les Patineurs* (1937) and, to a lesser extent, of Ashton's *Les Rendezvous* (1933).

Songe where she points out that “in the later phrases the dance, like the Apparitions-style costumes, seems occasionally derivative....”¹⁴⁴

There is no choreographic record of *Un Songe* although the atmosphere of the first scene established a dream-like quality, which Lionel Bradley claimed “shows a new vein of tender expressiveness and mystery...which we have every right to expect from him.”¹⁴⁵ To enhance this romantic illusion, Staff set the action in complete silence. According to Mary Clarke, “this was years before Lichine’s *La Création* or Robbins’ *Moves*”, implying that Staff was the first choreographer to approach his subject using silence as a means of exploring balletic possibilities without any restrictions imposed by the music.¹⁴⁶

The second scene was more conventional and in order to imbue this scene with realism, Staff decided to use the *Adagio for Strings* by Guillaume Lekeu, the late nineteenth-century Belgian composer. Ronald Wilson, one of Rambert’s latest discoveries, was assigned the task of designing the ballet.¹⁴⁷ Staff chose Schooling, alternating with Joan McClelland, to interpret the role of the girl, with Gore as the lover.¹⁴⁸ As “people real or imaginary”, Staff cast himself together with Joyce Graeme, Margaret Scott, Jean Stokes, Michael Bayston and Stanley Newby. The ballet’s première took place on 22 October 1945 at the Theatre Royal in Norwich. Critical response to the work was almost scathing -- with one or two rare exceptions. P.J.S. Richardson, for instance, was not at all impressed with the ballet and described it as

¹⁴⁴ Audrey Williamson, *Ballet Renaissance* (London: Golden Galley, 1948), 47.

¹⁴⁵ Bradley, *Rambert*, 24.

¹⁴⁶ Clarke, *Mercury*, 143.

¹⁴⁷ Wilson was spotted by Rambert one day in the Mercury Theatre with a large sketchbook. When she asked him to show her the contents of his book she was immediately convinced he had an aptitude for design, and invited him to create the costumes for Walter Gore’s *Simple Symphony* (1944). Thereafter followed his designs for the 1944 production of *Les Sylphides* and *Swan Lake Act 11*.

¹⁴⁸ It would seem that the lover’s identification with death was strongly reminiscent of the third tableau in Ashton’s *Apparitions*.

“disappointing”.¹⁴⁹ He expressed dissatisfaction with Staff’s apparent inability to distinguish between the realistic world and the imaginative realms of fantasy.¹⁵⁰ Richardson implied that Staff failed to achieve his objective since the choreography, and indeed Staff’s choice of the Lekeu score, seemed at odds with the synopsis, which he argued

demands a clear definition between the two worlds of dream and reality, as is found in *Giselle* and *Swan Lake*. But Frank Staff’s choreography lacks this definition. It is flowing, but restless, and there are no climaxes or groupings which would add that touch of dramatic realism the theme requires. It is an interesting experiment in ballets based on classical technique, to dance without music, but here it seemed purposeless, as the dancing of the second scene continued along exactly the same lines, probably because Lekeu’s music is dreamy and sentimental and does not suggest reality. Whilst admiring the easy flow of movement, one could not help regretting that neither choreographer, dancers -- Elizabeth [*sic*] Schooling as the Girl and Walter Gore as the Lover -- nor composer gave the audience any clear-cut explanation of the theme.¹⁵¹

Audrey Williamson was perhaps more encouraging although she, too, pointed out its inherent shortcomings. Reviewing the ballet after its short-lived, and only, London performances towards the end of October 1945, she remarked how *Un Songe* was cast in the same mould of modern ballet as one had found in Balanchine’s *Cotillon* (1932), interspersed with sporadic references to Ashton’s *Apparitions*.¹⁵² But unlike Richardson’s evaluation, she argued that the ballet was not based on any particular theme, believing instead that it constituted

a pure dance study designed to create a mood or atmosphere rather than a concrete theme, and with lighting and décor used to help the suggestive yet indefinable feeling of the dance.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ P.J.S. Richardson, “The Sitter Out,” *The Dancing Times*, 423 (December 1945): 99.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Richardson, *The Dancing Times*, (December 1945): 99-100.

¹⁵² Williamson, *Renaissance*, 46.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

Mary Clarke acclaimed Staff's concept rather than his choreographic ability and concluded that the transition from silence to the use of music was a "clever idea".¹⁵⁴ However, she was not entirely satisfied with the second scene, which she described as "lifeless."¹⁵⁵ Rambert expressed parallel views by describing the first scene as suggesting "to perfection the atmosphere of a dream", but stated that once the music was introduced "it somehow lost the mysterious touch" and consequently "we had to drop the ballet from our repertoire."¹⁵⁶

Elisabeth Schooling verbalized the most recent opinion about the ballet when she said that it could not be counted among Staff's greatest achievements:

This is not one of Frank's ballets that stands out as particularly remarkable in my memory. I think its sombre nature owed something to his own personal experience in the army during the war rather than a conscious attempt to emulate some or other choreographer's work. It was another ballet, like his *Enigma Variations*, that didn't quite work for me, which, as far as I'm concerned, was not one of his more successful pieces.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Clarke, *Mercury*, 143.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Marie Rambert, "The Directors Speak: Ballet Rambert", cited in A.H. Franks (ed.), *Ballet: A Decade of Endeavour* (Bath: Burke, 1955) 68.

¹⁵⁷ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

CHAPTER TWO

In 1946, Staff went back to South Africa with Elisabeth Schooling to produce ballets for the Cape Town Ballet Club that had been founded in 1938 by Cecily Robinson.¹ Robinson's decision to invite Staff had been prompted by her belief in his professionalism and success as a dancer and choreographer abroad, and her conviction that he would be of inestimable value to South African ballet in general and to her company in particular.² Of course she knew him from Helen Webb's studio days in Cape Town and from when they both danced in London with Ballet Rambert. Also, she had seen some of his work overseas and believed he had a lot to offer.³ Robinson explained further that the programme Staff intended giving was entirely his prerogative and only *Peter and the Wolf* was specifically requested. Elisabeth Schooling remarked that their visit was made possible because they had no contractual duties with Rambert at the time and because the war had left many choreographers and dancers without any work, "so Frank had to take whatever he could get and this was one opportunity where we could dance and he could choreograph."⁴

The Staffs arrived in Cape Town on 16 June 1946 and quickly released details of their intended programme, which was originally scheduled for August at the Alhambra Theatre but later postponed until October of that year (1946). Staff visualized seven ballets for production: four by himself; and three by others that included Frederick Ashton's *Façade*, Andrée Howard's *Death and the Maiden* and Vaslav

¹ In 1945, the Ballet Club decided to change its name to The Ballet Society, Cape Town. The decision to do so came about after the Club's committee members proposed several changes to its constitution including a shift in the Ballet Club's status to a company and the creation of a school with fee-paying pupils to feed the company. It was also intended for the company to fulfil an educational role by providing ancillary projects such as lectures and lecture-demonstrations. Finally, it was decided to adopt a policy of inviting guest artists to dance with, and produce works for, the company. The first person earmarked for this new venture was Frank Staff.

² Robinson, interview, 17 December 1991.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Elisabeth Schooling, telephonic conversation with author, 25 April 1995, London.

Nijinsky's *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. His own ballets would comprise *Czernyana*, *Peter and the Wolf*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Variations on a theme by Haydn (St. Antoni)*. Robinson added two more ballets to the list, namely *Les Sylphides* (to be produced by Elisabeth Schooling) and Act 11 of *Swan Lake*. As it turned out, both *Czernyana* and *Façade* were later withdrawn due to an acute shortage of male dancers in the company.⁵ Two of the dancers in Robinson's company at the time, Lionel Luyt and Cynthia Wienand, recalled that Staff had already commenced rehearsals for *Czernyana* before it was decided to shelve both this ballet and *Façade*.⁶ Robinson explains:

It was important for Frank to know that although our standard was quite high comparatively speaking, we were not Ballet Rambert or the Sadler's Wells. Also, we suffered from the age-old problem of not having many male dancers -- something which naturally limit's a choreographer's imagination -- and of course the question of not having unrestricted funds had to be kept in mind as well.⁷

Staff's two new ballets, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Variations on a theme by Haydn (St. Antoni)*, were conceptually and choreographically poles apart. The first was set to Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture* in which Staff followed a carefully moulded synopsis of Shakespeare's text to encapsulate the essence of the drama.⁸

Elisabeth Schooling confirmed that Staff chose Tchaikovsky's score because "he knew and loved the music, so much so that Frank's version of the ballet amounted to a visual commentary inspired by Tchaikovsky's score."⁹ Cynthia Wienand thought "Frank's *Romeo and Juliet* suited the music perfectly and was extremely danceable -- even with the Montagues and Capulets dressed in long cloaks."¹⁰

⁵ There were only three men in The Ballet Society at the time: John Paget, David Poole and Lionel Luyt.

⁶ Letter to author dated 30 August 1994 from Lionel Luyt, former dancer, South African National Ballet Company (formerly Cape Town Ballet Club).

⁷ Robinson, interview, 17 December 1991.

⁸ Programme Notes: *Ballet*, South African National Ballet (formerly Cape Town Ballet Club), Alhambra Theatre, Cape Town, season 21-26 October 1946.

⁹ Schooling, conversation, 25 April 1995.

¹⁰ Cynthia Wienand, interview with author, 8 September, Cape Town, tape recording.

Irma Dyer was another dancer who participated in this production, and she too thought the music was appropriately chosen although she tended to comment more on the ballet itself (including Staff's choreography) rather than the music:

Romeo and Juliet was beautifully constructed, very musical, and, as far as I can remember, very successful. Frank was an extremely skilled craftsman and he choreographed the ballet spontaneously with whatever dancers were available at the time. It was an original work with a compelling dramatic power which audiences could relate to. Frank Staff was one of those people of very few words although he did seem to notice when a dancer showed a particular knack at executing certain steps, which he would then use to the dancer's -- and indeed the ballet's -- advantage. And this was very often without the dancer even realizing it. For example, I had learnt Greek dancing with Lesley Hodson and developed a rather natural ability to jump. Frank must have observed this because he wrote in steps where I had to leap across the stage from one side to the other.¹¹

Shelagh Miller, who was a junior member of Robinson's Ballet Society at the time, remarked that Staff's *Romeo and Juliet* "was written for Elisabeth Schooling with much of the action concentrating on her character of Juliet."¹² Robinson herself added that "much of this *Romeo and Juliet* stressed the art of *pas de deux* for the two lovers."¹³

Romeo and Juliet required a large cast, thus enabling Staff to provide everybody in the company with roles. Schooling was his outright choice for Juliet while he himself portrayed Romeo. John Paget was assigned the role of Romeo's friend, Mercutio, with Lionel Luyt as Tybalt, the nephew of Lord and Lady Capulet. The part of an apothecary was entrusted to David Poole while Friar Lawrence was given to André Revna, an employee with the City Council and not really a dancer although extremely keen to become involved in theatrical productions.¹⁴ Delysia Jacobs, Rita Leibowitz, Lillian

¹¹ Irma Dyer, interview with author, 4 October 1994, Cape Town, tape recording.

¹² Shelagh Miller, interview with author, 4 June 1995, Randburg, tape recording.

¹³ Robinson, interview, 17 December 1991.

Graham and Katherine Zaymes were chosen to introduce a “chorus” while the rest of the company’s female contingent represented kinsfolk of both feuding houses. The designs in *Romeo and Juliet* were entrusted to Sepp Reinarz, a Hollander married to company member Mea Reinarz. Cynthia Wienand recalled that “there were definite sets which I can still remember, especially the little balcony.”¹⁵

Staff’s other ballet, *Variations on a theme by Haydn (St. Antoni)*, was a plotless work, which all the interviewees referred to by its shorter title of (the) *St. Antoni Variations*. Cecily Robinson said she always thought the *St. Antoni Variations* was very much in the mould of Staff’s earlier *Enigma Variations*¹⁶ although Elisabeth Schooling disagreed, claiming instead that

if anything, Frank’s *St. Antoni Variations* was influenced by Ashton’s *Symphonic Variations*. It was not at all similar to *Enigma Variations* but more like Sir Fred’s *Symphonic Variations*, which was a work Frank truly admired.¹⁷

Staff’s *St. Antoni Variations* was set to Johannes Brahms’ score of the same name and was choreographed to stretch the company technically and to display their full artistic potential. Staff arranged the work in ten distinct movements that included several *pas de deux*, *pas de quatre*, *pas de trois* and ensemble work (usually with one or more soloists leading the group).¹⁸ It was a ballet that Hans Kramer, one of Robinson’s committee members, called “a personality dance which nobody could produce the way Frank Staff had done, and it was never done again afterwards.”¹⁹ Maurice Van Essche, an artist and designer at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in Cape Town, created the

¹⁴ Cecily Robinson, interview with author, 7 September 1994, Cape Town.

¹⁵ Wienand, interview, 8 September 1994.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Schooling, conversation, 25 April 1995.

¹⁸ Theatre Programme: *Ballet*, 21-26 October 1946.

¹⁹ Hans Kramer, interview with author, 13 October 1994, Cape Town, tape recording.

costumes for the *St. Antoni Variations*²⁰, which Cynthia Wienand remembered as being “very simple drapes, slightly Greek-styled and autumn-coloured with contrasting shades of green and beige.”²¹

In *Peter and the Wolf*, Staff cast Lulu Visser as “Peter”; Katherine Zaymes as “the Bird”; Doris Johnston as “the Duck”; Delysia Jacobs as “the Cat”; Lionel Luyt as “Grandfather”; David Poole as “the Wolf”; John Paget as “the Hunter”; and Noel Bailey, Mea Reinartz and Cynthia Wienand as “the Huntresses”.²² Charles Marais was assigned the role of the narrator but withdrew shortly before opening night due to illness. He was replaced by Staff himself.²³ In *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, Delysia Jacobs was a natural favourite for the leading nymph.²⁴ Alternating with Jacobs was Rita Leibowitz, the Durban-based dancer who had recently joined the Ballet Society. The subsidiary roles, which constituted the greater part of the cast, consisted of a number of supporting nymphs. To dance these, Staff exceeded Nijinsky's original choice of six nymphs by casting eight instead, which were represented by Tessa Adams, Noel Bailey, Shelagh Davies (alternating with Moyra Blundel), Patricia Miller (alternating with Irma Dyer), Shelagh Miller, Lulu Visser, Cynthia Wienand, and Katherine Zaymes.²⁵ Both the Léon Bakst's designs for *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and Guy Sheppard's set and costume design for *Peter and the Wolf* were made in South Africa to their original specifications. John Wright undertook the construction of sets while members of the club -- and very often the mothers of some of the dancers such as Patricia and Shelagh Miller's mother -- volunteered to make the costumes.²⁶

²⁰ Robinson, interview, 7 September 1994.
Luyt, letter, 30 August 1994.

²¹ Wienand, interview, 8 September 1994.

²² Lillian Graham danced “the Bird” at some performances.

²³ “Second leg of ballet season -- Casualties affect programme,” *The Cape Times*, (25 October 1946), 8.

²⁴ Jacobs was blond and elegant. Her distinctive appearance was tailor-made for the role of the leading nymph.

²⁵ Theatre Programme: *Ballet*, 21-26 October 1946.

Towards the end of the rehearsal period Staff agreed to furnish the press with one of his rare interviews where he commented, *inter alia*, on themes for ballet and the relationship between choreography and music.²⁷ On the aspect of suitable ballet themes, Staff believed that “myths and fairies and other classic themes had been played out.”²⁸ He went on to justify his statement by saying that from about 1936 onwards, “composers of ballets had taken themes that reflected the life around them and the times in which they lived.”²⁹ He cited Robert Helpmann’s *Miracle in the Gorbels* as an example where more contemporary subject matter was used to illustrate realistic themes.³⁰ Staff commented further that these modernistic themes tended to liberate the ballet thematically and were often linked to new developments within the classical ballet vocabulary. Ashton’s work was also mentioned as another example where classic technique was applied “in a modern way.”³¹ Staff’s own *St. Antoni Variations* apparently made use of a similar trend in so far as “his Brahms ballet [the *St. Antoni Variations*] has given classic technique a slight twist.”³²

Although Staff’s explanation for the alliance between movement and music does not constitute a revelation -- nor was it revolutionary -- he nevertheless provided a logical methodology concerning two basic procedures for the composition of a ballet:

Either you took some existing piece of music and arranged a dance to suit it. You did not, if you were a good ballet master, cut out bars that were rather dull, as some producers in this

²⁶ Robinson, interview, 7 September 1994.

Shelagh Miller confirmed that her mother had indeed made some of the costumes for The Ballet Society’s productions. Shelagh Miller, interview, 4 June 1995.

²⁷ “Ballet in the making -- Frank Staff at work,” *The Cape Argus* (16 October 1946), 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ In *Miracle in the Gorbels* the action takes place within the tragic setting of a Glasgow slum.

³¹ *The Cape Argus* (16 October 1946), 4.

³² *Ibid.*

country were guilty of doing. Alternatively, you thought out your theme and then sought a composer who could best write the type of music that would interpret your theme. Together you worked out the music and the dance movements, remembering that the length of time should be 40 minutes and that there should be four peak moments. Early on in the consultations between the composer of the music and the choreographer you would bring in the designer of the stage scenery and of the costumes.³³

Staff believed that for complete harmony of music, movement and colour it was necessary for all three artists to collaborate. He stated that the second method of ballet composition was more desirable and superior but confessed that his South African sojourn was too brief to have had scores especially commissioned for his two new ballets.³⁴ Another facet of Staff's interview related briefly to the suitability of, and laborious demands made on, dancers. He was of the opinion that

the type of dancers available are considered by the choreographer and parts are written that can be danced effectively by one or two of the dancers in the company. When the music is written and the choreography arranged the strenuous work for the dancers begins. In a professional company in London dancers will rehearse all day and perform at night. Sunday is usually a dancer's only free day and even Sundays are taken up for rehearsals just before a new production. It is a strenuous life.³⁵

Staff also expressed his disappointment in the lack of a suitable theatre for the performing arts in Cape Town. He stated that until the public realized how much could to be gained from drama, opera and ballet, a decent theatre would "be the dream of the few and not a happy reality for many."³⁶

Robinson decided to present two programmes at the Alhambra using the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra under the baton of Geoffrey Miller. The first programme, scheduled for three days from 21 - 23,

³³ *The Cape Argus* (16 October 1946), 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

October comprised *Peter and the Wolf*, *Romeo and Juliet*, the *St Antoni Variations* and *Swan Lake Act 11*. The second programme, from 24-26 October, consisted of *Death and the Maiden*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *Peter and the Wolf*, *Romeo and Juliet* and the *St. Antoni Variations*.³⁷ The critics of *The Cape Times* and *The Cape Argus* received Staff's ballets enthusiastically with Matthew Pamm of *The Cape Times* stating how the *St. Antoni Variations* established Staff "as a choreographer of marked originality."³⁸ For Pamm, this was "a significant contribution to South African ballet" because its "abundant vitality and infinite variety of classical dancing" was "applied with imagination and skill."³⁹ The unnamed critic from *The Cape Argus* thought that while Staff's *St. Antoni Variations* "derives directly" from the 'symphonic' type -- and particularly from Massine's *Choreartium* of 1933 -- it would still "be discussed as long as there are balletomanes in South Africa to hand on the torch...."⁴⁰ The critic then went on to say that the most telling aspect of the ballet was its extraordinary liquid movement, which tended to "flow gently in a continuous pattern that never lapses into banality."⁴¹

Romeo and Juliet secured Staff as "an accomplished man of the theatre with a strong sense of the dramatic."⁴² Matthew Pamm lauded the way in which Staff's judiciously choreographed movements were skilfully woven "into the texture of the drama."⁴³ It was probably this aspect of the ballet that led *The Cape Argus* critic to declare the work a "first-class programme ballet" destined to "have tremendous popular

³⁷ Matthew Pamm, "Record breaking for ballet season," *The Cape Times* (16 October 1946), 8.

³⁸ Matthew Pamm, "Thrilling programme of ballet," *The Cape Times* (22 October 1946), 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ "An evening of sheer delight -- The National Company makes its debut," *The Cape Argus* (22 October 1946), 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Pamm, *The Cape Times* (22 October 1946), 5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

appeal.”⁴⁴ However, the ballet destined to have “tremendous popular appeal” was of course *Peter and the Wolf*, Staff’s third choreographic offering enjoyed by critics, audiences and participating dancers. *Peter and the Wolf* was placed last on both programmes. Shelagh Miller thought this was both appropriate and “a marvellous way to end the evening because it left one feeling completely optimistic and totally overjoyed.”⁴⁵ Matthew Pamm expressed similar sentiments in his *Cape Times* review of 22 October 1946 when he stated how *Peter and the Wolf* “closed the programme with lovely effect.”⁴⁶ *The Cape Argus* critic was equally enthusiastic, and drew comparisons with Massine’s *Le Boutique Fantasque* (1919) in that there were “clear-cut character roles giving scope for humour and mild acrobatics” which made the Staff ballet “wholly successful.”⁴⁷ Denis Hatfield, the respected Cape Town critic whose reviews first appeared in the fortnightly journal entitled *Trek* and later in a collection of writings published under the title *Cape Theatre in the 1940’s*, was particularly impressed with the way in which Staff’s choreography “was cleverly integrated with Prokofiev’s music”, and the manner whereby the narration was used “to make a rounded and very clever balletic joke.”⁴⁸ In Hatfield’s view, *Peter and the Wolf* was “Mr. Staff’s happiest invention.”⁴⁹ The dancers tended to concur with Hatfield’s opinion. Irma Dyer, for example, remembered how “we all had such fun with *Peter and the Wolf* and it was great fun to dance.”⁵⁰ Cynthia Wienand agreed:

Peter and the Wolf was very popular and I think from there it took off because they then started doing it in schools. All the sets and costumes, which were made here, were of special

⁴⁴ *The Cape Argus* (22 October 1946), 4.

⁴⁵ Shelagh Miller, interview, 4 June 1995.

⁴⁶ Pamm, *The Cape Times* (22 October 1946), 5.

⁴⁷ *The Cape Argus* (22 October 1946), 4.

⁴⁸ Denis Hatfield, *Cape Theatre in the 1940’s* (Cape Town: Purnell and Sons, 1967), 116.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁵⁰ Dyer, interview, 4 October 1994.

interest and very appealing: stepladders for little trees; a galvanised bath for the duck's pond; and a little fence to separate the Grandfather's property from the meadow. So we certainly had props and even our blunderbusses were made out of a long piece of wood with a pipe on the end. It all had to look very home-made, like something a child would have created. I was a huntress and I wore my hair (which was black) in a snood with a tiny pillbox hat on my head and a flower projecting out of the hat. We had huntsmen's jackets, skirts and tights as well as ordinary shoes with a little piece of material fixed to the shoes like a cuff. And then later of course both Shelagh Miller and I danced the huntsman when there weren't enough men to do the part.⁵¹

Perhaps the most salient -- and indeed enlightening -- aspect of the entire programme was Denis Hatfield's immediate recognition of Staff's artistic ability to light ballets tastefully and imaginatively. For Hatfield, this was probably the most

outstanding achievement in Frank Staff's productions. The variety and subtlety of his lighting of the *St. Antoni Variations*; its sullen glare and sudden passion in *Romeo and Juliet*; the darting wit of his spotlights in *Peter and the Wolf* -- these brought something brilliant and exciting to a stage which is only too often lit with obvious red, white and blue of flood or batten.⁵²

Injury and illness led to the second programme being amended for the first performance on Thursday 24 October. By Friday 25 October however the programme had reverted to its original structure with Staff's South African première production of Nijinsky's *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. Staff danced the role of the Faun, and when the ballet was repeated in December at the Cape Town City Hall, *The Cape Argus* critic thought it was Staff's greatest dancing achievement.⁵³ Commenting on the October performances however, the critic of the same newspaper regarded the work as making

a deep impression from the moment of the curtain's rise on its glowing sky and sun-baked rock; the stylised movement of the nymphs -- a frieze come to life; and its realization of the

⁵¹ Wienand, interview, 8 September 1994.

⁵² Hatfield, *Cape Theatre*, 114.

⁵³ "Ballet programme at City Hall -- difficulties gallantly overcome," *The Cape Argus* (9 December 1946), 4.

emotional intensity that underlies Debussy's languorous music.⁵⁴

In December 1946, the ballet company decided to host a further season as a farewell tribute to Staff and Schooling who were returning to England early in 1947. Five ballets were selected for this programme, and these comprised *Death and the Maiden*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *Peter and the Wolf*, *St. Antoni Variations* and Schooling's production of Fokine's *Les Sylphides*. Sandwiched in between the dance items was Tchaikovsky's *Andante Cantabile*, which Robinson had decided to use as a musical interlude. The only available venue for the December performances was the Cape Town City Hall with its inconvenient makeshift stage and rather sterile atmosphere. Five performances were spread over six days from 7-11 December with a matinée on 8 December. Geoffrey Miller conducted the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra once again. *The Cape Times* saluted Staff and Schooling for their effort and contribution, and came to the conclusion that this was

as good an opportunity as any to pay tribute to the Staffs for the lift which they have given to ballet in this country. If and when a national ballet is established in South Africa, one can think of no person more fitted to direct it than these two talented producers.⁵⁵

On the eve of their departure for England, Staff agreed to another rare press interview in which he emphasized the adverse effects of committees and the general lack of government support (not necessarily financial) for the arts. His comments illustrated a remarkable vision for South African ballet in which he stressed, *inter alia*, that

South African ballet will never disclose more than occasional tantalising, brilliant flashes until its administration is taken out of the hands of committees. This is not meant as a slur on any present committee but as a condemnation of committees in general. Ballet has never been successfully conducted by a body of people, however well intentioned. Too much time is

⁵⁴ "Frank Staff's 'Faun'," *The Cape Argus* (26 October 1946), 4.

⁵⁵ Matthew Pamm, "Ballet in the City Hall," *The Cape Times* (7 December 1946), 12.

wasted in fruitless discussion; little that is practical ever emerges. When these rare exceptions do occur, one will probably find that some strong person has taken matters into his own hands and produced results in spite of opposition from the majority of fellow members.⁵⁶

He then drew comparison with the European model by describing how the history of ballet often shows

that all successful movements in this art have been achieved by single, single-minded persons, fanatics, possibly, who [have] combined devotion with background and knowledge. Diaghileff [*sic*], de Basil, Ninette de Valois, Marie Rambert, to mention but a few, carried out their own ideas. True, they could not have functioned without support, but they elicited and gained this support on their own terms, perhaps giving a little here and there but never compromising on what they considered essential.⁵⁷

The real crux of Staff's plea was for some form of state intervention:

I see no future for ballet in this country if it must continue to be conducted by committee, members of which, through lack of necessary background, are often groping in the dark, and prove more hindrance than help to the man who is trying to get on with the job of work. I would like to see a Government Department in general control of theatre in this country. Such a department should be organized on lines similar to the British Council in England. This Government body should then appoint one competent man to take complete charge of the various branches of theatre under its control, nominating, for instance, separate controllers for ballet, drama, etc. I think [only] then one may confidently expect South Africa to produce something which might cause a stir outside South Africa. I offer this suggestion of State controlled ballet in this country as from what I can judge there is at the present time not a sufficiently large interested public to make ballet in South Africa commercially attractive.⁵⁸

It was not until seventeen years later, in 1963, that the South African performing arts councils were established in each of the country's then four provinces to administer and provide financial assistance for ballet,

⁵⁶ Matthew Pamm, "Frank talk by Frank Staff," *The Cape Times* (27 December 1946), 8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

drama, opera and music. Sadly, it seems as if the 1998 South African situation regarding state assistance for the performing arts is rapidly reverting to that of 1946.

It was also on Staff's recommendation that the Ballet Society change its name to reflect its national proclivity since many of the company's dancers were drawn from different parts of the country and not exclusively from Cape Town. After attending a special meeting of the Ballet Society's committee members on 27 August 1946, Staff's suggestion that the company be known as the South African National Ballet was unanimously adopted. Marina Grut was of the opinion that as the dancers were absorbed from all over the country, "Staff was correct when he said that it was a national company."⁵⁹ Matthew Pamm, who was then ballet critic of *The Cape Times*, disapproved of the new name, claiming it was "arbitrary and pretentious."⁶⁰ He admitted that while the name constituted a novelty, it was a novelty that "does not strike a welcome note" because its main interest -- as well as its personnel -- was "largely local."⁶¹

Staff's impact on the Cape Town contingent of South African dancers was, nevertheless, quite profound. Cynthia Wienand comments:

To me Frank Staff was a star. At the time there was nobody in South Africa to touch this man. He was just the person we had been looking for and he brought a breath of fresh air to ballet in this country. It was really from there that we took off as a company because he inspired us with what he knew. And he wasn't a selfish man. I had heard about him through reading articles on dancers overseas and I knew that here was a star in our midst. Frank's tour definitely put ballet on the map in this country because when he came to South Africa there was still that stigma attached to male dancers, which he proved wrong. Suddenly, our male dancers began to emerge, and after Frank Staff more men were coming to the ballet and more men were doing ballet. I don't think Cecily [Robinson] and Yvonne [Blake] realized how big a stepping-stone this was going to be for South African ballet because Frank and Schooling's visit to

⁵⁹ Grut, *History*, 147.

⁶⁰ Matthew Pamm, "Abundant novelty in Alhambra ballet," *The Cape Times* (2 October 1946), 8.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

this country was the start of everything that has happened ever since.⁶²

The advent of Staff's tour certainly had a rippling effect on local dancers and they too became curious to find out more about what was happening in the dance world overseas.⁶³ Some, like Audrey Turner, claimed that Staff actually suggested they go abroad to further their careers,⁶⁴ while others, like Shelagh Miller, said the exodus of South African dancers really had nothing to do with Staff's visit at all.⁶⁵ She said the war had prevented dancers from travelling abroad as many, including herself, intended going overseas even before Staff's tour and certainly before the advent of the Second World War.⁶⁶ Whether or not Staff had anything to do with the departure of South African dancers for overseas is really a matter of speculation, although many did leave after he and Schooling had performed in Cape Town.⁶⁷

Staff and Schooling set sail for England on 4 January 1947.⁶⁸ On arriving there he joined the London-based Metropolitan Ballet, which had been founded in January 1947 by Cecilia Blatch and Leon Hepner with George Kirsta as designer. Kirsta, who had been a personal

⁶² Wienand, interview, 8 September 1994.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Turner, interview, 3 October 1994.

⁶⁵ Shelagh Miller, interview, 4 June 1995.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Among those to go, in alphabetical order, were Delysia Blake in 1947 to the Metropolitan Ballet in London; Irma Dyer to the Metropolitan Ballet in 1948; Lionel Luyt to dance in London musicals from 1951; Patricia Miller to the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet in 1947; Shelagh Miller to do television work and musical theatre in London in 1948, pantomime in Edinburgh, and ballet with the New-Ballet Company in London in 1952; John Paget and Audrey Turner to Ballet Rambert in 1947 and to the Empire, or Permanent, Ballet in 1950; David Poole to the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet in 1947; and Cynthia Wienand to Ram Gopal's Company of Indian dancers and musicians (also referred to as the Indian Ballet) during 1948 and, towards the end of 1948, to Molly Lake's Continental Ballet. Members of the Cape Town University Ballet who also decided to further their careers abroad included John Cranko to the Sadler's Wells School and Sadler's Wells Ballet in 1946, and Desmond Doyle to the Sadler's Wells Ballet in 1951.

⁶⁸ Pamm, *The Cape Times* (27 December 1946), 8.

friend of Staff's, was later to become the Metropolitan's artistic director and it was he who invited Staff to join the newly formed company in the first place.⁶⁹ Needless to say, Staff accepted the offer because it was a paying job with exciting choreographic challenges and the opportunity of working with different dancers. Without wasting any time, he immediately began working on *The Lovers' Gallery*, a light-hearted piece set in 1889 concerning the adventures of two young lovers (an officer and his girlfriend) who find themselves locked in a Viennese art gallery at night. To their surprise, portraits come to life and attempt to separate the lovers: the young girl is seduced by an oriental monarch; the officer by a nymph. Then an elderly philosopher and Amor come to life and complicate the situation by adding to the confusion. Finally, Aurora makes her entrance and restores the *status quo ante*.

Staff set his ballet to Lennox Berkeley's *Divertimento in B Flat* with designs by George Kirsta. Celia Franca was chosen to dance the young girl with Erik Bruhn as the officer. Delysia Blake was cast as the nymph while Poul Gnatt -- and later Staff himself -- performed the oriental monarch. Amor was given to Jacqueline St. Clere, who would later become Staff's second wife, while Aart Verstegen played the part of the elderly philosopher. Sonia Arova completed the cast as Aurora. Staff taught the ballet to the company and had already completed the work when he decided to rejoin Ballet Rambert for their tour to Australia and New Zealand in September 1947.⁷⁰ Originally, the tour had been scheduled for six months but had to be extended by almost eleven due to popular demand.⁷¹ Staff and Schooling never stayed the full duration of the tour and returned to England on 12 February 1948.⁷² *The Lovers' Gallery*, in the meantime, was premièred in Staff's absence on 17 October 1947 at the Blackpool

⁶⁹ Schooling, interview, 15 July 1993.

⁷⁰ P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 444 (September 1947): 629.

⁷¹ Richard Buckle, "News," *Ballet*, 7,4 (April 1949): 42.

⁷² Richard Buckle, "News," *Ballet*, 5,3 (March 1948): 50.

Opera House,⁷³ and then repeated at the Hammersmith King's Theatre for a short one-week run from 24 November.⁷⁴ Staff first saw the ballet on 13 March 1948 when it was performed in Wimbledon,⁷⁵ and was clearly dissatisfied with his product, so much so that he decided to make extensive choreographic revisions.⁷⁶ This seemed to make no difference however because the critics generally received the work unfavourably. Alan Storey, writing in *Ballet Today*, and an anonymous critic of *The Dancing Times* both thought Staff's ballet owed a lot to Arthur Saint-Leon's *Coppélia* of 1870 and Massine's *La Boutique Fantasque* of 1919 in which dolls performed animated dances.⁷⁷ Richard Buckle, on the other hand, admitted that while its theme was "banal", *The Lovers' Gallery*

has been skilfully and wittingly treated by Frank Staff and most decoratively by [George] Kirsta. In this ballet the individual and corporate good qualities of the company shine their brightest.⁷⁸

Staff then made further changes to the work before it reached the stage of London's Scala Theatre on 2 June 1948 for a short one-week run. Without altering its conception or construction, *The Lovers' Gallery* still failed to make a favourable impression. Philip Richardson called it "a puzzle coming from a choreographer like Frank Staff"⁷⁹ while A.H. Franks said it amounted to very little with "mythological characters indulging in some high jinks which never add up to anything more than an inferior romp."⁸⁰ Richard Buckle however

⁷³ "Metropolitan Ballet -- *The Lovers' Gallery*," *The Dancing Times*, 447 (December 1947): 130.

⁷⁴ P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 448 (January 1948): 182.

⁷⁵ Richard Buckle, "News," *Ballet*, 5,4 (April 1948): 37.

⁷⁶ Richard Buckle, "News," *Ballet*, 5,5 (May 1948): 50.

⁷⁷ Alan Storey, "A new ballet by Frank Staff," *Ballet Today*, 1,8 (December 1947): 26-27.

⁷⁸ Richard Buckle, "The Metropolitan Ballet," *Ballet*, 4,6 (December 1947): 23.

⁷⁹ P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 454 (July 1948): 524.

⁸⁰ A.H. Franks, *Twentieth Century Ballet*, 217.

regarded the work as a “useful ballet” -- even if he thought it was “a ham”⁸¹ -- while Fernau Hall regretted to say that “it showed very little of the spontaneity and satirical élan of *Peter and the Wolf*...”⁸²

While the Metropolitan was performing *The Lovers' Gallery* at the Scala Theatre, another new ballet by Staff reached fruition in June of the same year (1948). This was *Fanciulla della Rose*, a dramatic work created for Svetlana Beriosova who was only 15 years old at the time. Beriosova's innocent charm, technical proficiency and convincing acting ability made her the ideal tragic heroine of Staff's tale, and immediately he began to mould a synopsis that centred on a young girl (Beriosova) who is tempted by the seven deadly sins. They despoil her chaplet of roses intended for the Madonna, leaving her with only a crown of thorns. Distraught, she seeks refuge at the foot of the statute. Staff set his ballet to Anton Arensky's *Variations on a theme of Tchaikovsky* and chose Guy Sheppard to design both its décor and costumes. There were eight in the cast with seven men to represent each of the deadly sins: David Adams portrayed “Lechery”; Poul Gnatt danced “Wrath”; Stanley Hall performed “Gluttony”; Paul Hammond interpreted “Envy”; Eric Hyrst depicted “Pride”; Aart Versteegen played “Sloth”; and Staff himself was seen as “Avarice”. For the first time in his choreography, Staff arranged specific movements to indicate the young girl's psychological trauma, and these were often conveyed through the constant use of the *arabesque* with her arms held vertically at the sides of her body. Another favourite was the *bourrée* movement to communicate a feeling of helplessness. A.H. Franks believed Beriosova's emotional control was expressed through her

equally remarkable physical control in which her arms remained for long passages at her sides, the strength of the temptation being exposed through the intensity of her movements.⁸³

⁸¹ Richard Buckle, “Commentary,” *Ballet*, 5,7 (July 1948): 5.

⁸² Hall, *English Ballet*, 125.

⁸³ Franks, *Twentieth Century Ballet*, 218.

To highlight her dilemma, Staff gave each of the sins contrasting movements which Franks thought were actually “more notable for their melodrama than [for] their choreographic expression.”⁸⁴

Fanciulla delle Rose opened at the Scala Theatre on 10 June 1948 to a mixed reception although most critics were displeased with the result. Richard Buckle, for example, thought it was too similar in structure to Moliere’s *Les Fâcheux* and called it “a lazy art form,”⁸⁵ while Fernau Hall accused it of showing “the same stodginess as *The Quest* [Ashton, 1953]....”⁸⁶ P.W. Manchester expressed certain reservations about the way in which Staff structured his ballet but praised the manner whereby he arranged the dances “with an acute appreciation of male movement and a touch of acrobatics which is most welcome.”⁸⁷ For Manchester, *Fanciulla delle Rose* was indicative of Staff’s choreographic potential, so much so that one could expect “a major work we all feel he has in him to give.”⁸⁸ Staff himself considered *Fanciulla delle Rose* to be “his most satisfying work to date” and once remarked in an interview that “the critics did not like it...but it moved a stockbroker to tears.”⁸⁹

Staff accompanied the Metropolitan Ballet on their tour to Sweden and Norway during August and September 1948 where *Fanciulla delle Rose* was performed as part of the touring programme. *The Dancing Times* ran a short article about the tour in which “the company won unanimous praise from the Norwegian critics and considerable personal successes were achieved by Sonia Arova, Svetlana Beriosova and Frank Staff.”⁹⁰ In November 1948, Staff left the Metropolitan

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Buckle, *Ballet* (July 1948): 8.

⁸⁶ Hall, *English Ballet*, 125.

⁸⁷ P.W. Manchester, “The Metropolitan Ballet,” *Ballet Today*, 1, 12 (July-August 1948): 27.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Tatlock Miller, “New life for the Empire,” *Dance and Dancers*, 1, 1 (January 1950): 14.

Ballet and although his reasons for doing so are not known, he probably foresaw the company's crippling financial situation and decided to leave before its inevitable closure. A.H. Franks was of the opinion that Staff might have achieved choreographic success with this company had it not closed because

even in his failures Staff has consistently shown a potentiality to greatness, but he has not since the war had an opportunity to do his *afflatus* full justice. Had the Metropolitan Ballet not run out of money he would I think have benefited from the security of a permanent company upon which to work, and would have gradually asserted himself as a major creative artist in the field of ballet.⁹¹

Staff's association with the Metropolitan Ballet brought him into contact with a young English dancer named Jacqueline St. Clere, whom he married in London on 29 December 1951⁹² following a divorce from Elisabeth Schooling the previous year.⁹³ During 1949 Staff accepted three engagements: one as a dancer in Arthur Bliss's opera called *The Olympians*; the other two as choreographer for the filmed version of Ivor Novello's *The Dancing Years* and then as *Maître de ballet* for the Empire, or Permanent, Ballet at the Empire Theatre in London's Leicester Square.

The Olympians was choreographed by Pauline Grant and scheduled for performances at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, from 29 September 1949. Most of the dancers in the production were drawn from the Sadler's Wells School with the exception of Staff and Moyra Fraser. The role of Mercury was originally entrusted to Tutti Lemkow but for some reason Robert Helpmann was then cast in the part. Helpmann, however, only performed the role on opening night because of further commitments with the Sadler's Wells Ballet, which then made Staff's involvement possible.⁹⁴ Gladys Davidson commented

⁹⁰ "The Metropolitan Ballet," *The Dancing Times*, 458 (November 1948): 69.

⁹¹ Franks, *Twentieth Century Ballet*, 218.

⁹² "Ballet Weddings," *Ballet Today*, 5,1 (January 1952): 22.

⁹³ Dick Epstein, "Final Curtain for Frank Staff," *Sunday Express* (16 May 1971), 11.

on Staff's performance, stating how "he mimed the part with originality and witty brilliance that added much charm to the whole performance."⁹⁵ And P.J.S. Richardson was of the opinion that the "silent rôles of Venus and Mercury, who appear throughout the opera, are beautifully played by the dancers Moyra Fraser and Frank Staff."⁹⁶ Richardson clearly enjoyed both Fraser and Staff's performance and wrote favourably of the latter's delivery:

Frank Staff is a swift, cunning Mercury, whose antics have a queer streak of fantasy which logically leads up to the transformation of the down-at-heels players into Gods.⁹⁷

Staff's first choreographic task for 1949 was to arrange the dance sequences for the motion picture *The Dancing Years*, a musical romance concerning a composer of operettas who loves a mesmerizing singer. Set in pre-1914 Vienna, the singer loses interest in the composer after overhearing his fake proposal to a youthful sweetheart. She marries another but bears his son.⁹⁸ Staff's choreography was acknowledged in *The Dancing Times* in a brief article where mention was made of how he tried to avoid the same ideas used in the original staging by creating new dance routines:

South African-born Frank Staff has been dance director on the production, and I am told that he has steered clear of the routines presented in the original stage show. All the ballets are completely original and designed for film technique.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ *The Olympians* literally opened on the eve of the Sadler's Wells Ballet's departure for Canada and the United States. As this was the company's first major tour to North America, it was understandable that Robert Helpmann would not forfeit the opportunity of performing there.

Gladys Davidson, *Ballet Biographies* (London: Werner Laurie, 1954), 275.

⁹⁵ Davidson, *Biographies*, 275.

⁹⁶ P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 470 (November 1949): 80.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ "The Dancing Years," *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 17, 196 (April-May 1950): 66.

⁹⁹ John K. Newnham, "Original ballets in 'The Dancing Years' -- Dance Film Notes," *The Dancing Times*, 470 (November 1949): 83.

Staff's dancers comprised mainly members of the Sadler's Wells Ballet although there were some exceptions, for example the South African dancers Delysia Blake, John Paget and Audrey Turner.¹⁰⁰ Included in his choreography were the "Leap Year Waltz" and a figure dancing routine for Patricia Dainton, the young actress who had understudied the part of "Grete" in the staged version and then performed it in the filmed version.¹⁰¹

An honour even greater than being invited to arrange the choreographic sequences for *The Dancing Years* was Staff's appointment as *Maître de ballet* to the Empire Theatre in December 1949.¹⁰² At the time of his appointment, the Empire was being used as a cinema. The policy of the Empire management was to use the theatre as a cinema with a ballet or some other form of live entertainment being staged directly before the screening of the film. The idea Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer had in mind was to make the Empire the "Showplace of the Nation", following the example set by Radio City in New York.¹⁰³ The live entertainment would be divided into three main divisions: the Empire Singers; the Empire Girls who paraded as showgirls in typical Hollywood-style fashion; and the Empire Ballet under Staff's direction. To achieve his objective, Staff was supplied with a company of twenty-five dancers and a full orchestra under George Melachrino's direction. Nat Karson was appointed to design most of the costumes while Peter Hoffer undertook responsibility for the sets.¹⁰⁴ Advanced technical

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Ballet of course was not new to the Empire, having had its roots in the nineteenth-century when most dance displays in London were given either at the Empire or Alhambra Theatre in the form of lavish spectacles, ballets and even crude displays. A new form of theatrical entertainment known as the music hall arose, which tended to eclipse the ballet although the latter continued to survive in a rather watered down version as part of the music hall tradition. After 1917, ballet at the Empire more or less ceased to exist, and approximately thirty-two years later Frank Staff brought ballet back to the Empire.

¹⁰³ Peter Williams, "No sunset on Empire Ballet," *Dance and Dancers*, 1,7 (July 1950): 10.

¹⁰⁴ "Empire Theatre," *The Dancing Times*, 472 (January 1950): 227.

equipment was especially installed for the reintroduction of ballet into the theatre, and Staff's financial budget was apparently quite limitless. According to Michael Venables, Staff's publicity manager for the South African Ballet Company during the 1950's and a leading Johannesburg theatre critic the following decade, Staff could demand a bigger budget for both an enlarged orchestra and more dancers, "and MGM, who backed the company, would oblige without complaint."¹⁰⁵ Much excitement was generated by the prospect of ballet returning to the Empire and dancers often queued for several hours outside the theatre in Lisle Street for an audition.¹⁰⁶

Staff's directive was to present a new production almost every month and works would be performed four times a day,¹⁰⁷ the first of which was at midday, followed by a matinée at 14h45, an early evening show at 17h45, and a final performance at 20h45.¹⁰⁸ Work schedules were rigorous and while one ballet was being presented another was being rehearsed. Audrey Turner, who was one of the dancers at the Empire, explained that ballets were often thematically linked to the film being screened. So, for example, the thriller *Ambush* was accompanied by Staff's balletic thriller entitled *Frankie and Johnnie* while Staff's *Punch* accompanied the film *Battleground*. *Amphitryon '50* likewise complemented the film *Neptune's Daughter* starring Esther Williams and Red Skelton. Very often the popularity of the film would dictate the run of the ballet, and if a film was shown for six weeks then the accompanying ballet would be presented for a six-week period as well. However, if a film was only screened for three weeks, then the ballet accompanying that particular film would be staged for three weeks only. This, Turner said, often made the work very exacting, particularly where a film was unsuccessful and had to be replaced at short notice. Obviously, a new ballet had to be ready for presentation

¹⁰⁵ Michael Venables, interview with author, 23 July 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

¹⁰⁶ Turner, interview, 3 October 1994.

¹⁰⁷ "News," *Ballet*, 9,1 (January 1950): 46.

¹⁰⁸ Williams, *Dance and Dancers* (July 1950): 10.

at short notice too.¹⁰⁹ Turner explained that Staff would obtain a timetable from the theatre management before the films were screened and plot his ballets accordingly so that hopefully they would be compatible with the film shown. Tatlock Miller pointed out that Staff's task in achieving a balance between the two was probably frustrated by the fact that an audience attending a film was often not part of a regular ballet-going public, but rather

a collection of people running the gamut from super-intelligent to sub-moronic. Each kind of film attracts the audience it deserves -- tragedy, light comedy, and swim-suit films have their different following, added to which there are always the people who go to the "pictures" whatever is on. A film audience on the whole does not particularly want to use its brain.¹¹⁰

Despite all this however, Staff intended presenting ballets of the highest order as well as introducing works by new choreographers. Tatlock Miller comments:

His standards are high. He hopes to introduce good ballet to a film audience and win from it new devotees. Ballet, after all, is entertainment and if it is good entertainment it is fairly certain to be good ballet.¹¹¹

Staff's first ballet at the Empire was called *Ballet through the years* and formed part of a larger entertainment sequence entitled *Yesteryear*. It comprised several items and was first presented at the Empire Theatre on 26 December 1949.¹¹² Although *Ballet through the years* was staged in conjunction with the film *The Forsythe Saga*, it seemed to bear no thematic link to the film, but rather to explore the tradition of ballet at the Empire and the Diaghilev era. Tatlock Miller wrote that

¹⁰⁹ Turner, interview, 3 October 1994.

¹¹⁰ Tatlock Miller, *Dance and Dancers* (January 1950): 14.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Theatre Programme: *The Empire -- Showplace of the Nation*, Empire Theatre, London, first performance 26 December 1949.

for his first ballet, which has its *première* on Boxing Day, he [Staff] is looking back over those grander, gaudier and gayer, now so nostalgic, years when the Empire (built on the site of a royal residence -- which became a café chantant and later housed a panorama of Balaclava), opened in 1884.¹¹³

The first part of Staff's ballet was devoted to the Adeline Genée period, or the so-called Victorian Ballet as Richard Buckle preferred to call it,¹¹⁴ while the second was reminiscent of Diaghilev's Russian Ballet and more particularly of Michel Fokine's *Petrouchka* (1911).¹¹⁵ Set to music specially arranged by George Melachrino, the critic of *Stage* was of the opinion that "the dancing of the members of the ballet is one of those unforgettable visions, full of distinction and charm."¹¹⁶ Staff's next ballet for the Empire, *Amphitryon '50*, was loosely adapted from classical Greek mythology,¹¹⁷ and set within a 1950 context. It was first performed at the Empire on 23 January 1950.¹¹⁸ Gladys Davidson thought the work was unsuccessful, primarily because "its Ancient Greek subject seemed obscure and unknown to the cinema audience beholding it."¹¹⁹ On 13 February 1950, Staff presented his third ballet entitled *Absinthe Frappé*, which concerned the efforts of an old man trying to deprive a young girl of her diamond necklace. *Dance and Dancers* described the work as nothing more

¹¹³ Tatlock Miller, *Dance and Dancers* (January 1950): 14.

¹¹⁴ Richard Buckle, "News," *Ballet*, 9,1 (January 1950): 46.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ "The Empire -- 'Yesteryear'," *Stage* (30 December 1949): 3.

¹¹⁷ Amphitryon was a Greek mythological figure whose wife, Alcmena, denied him his marital rights until he had avenged the slaying of her brothers. To discharge his duty, he undertakes an expedition to the Taphian islands and on his return discovers from the prophet Tiresias that Zeus, king of the gods, had disguised himself as Amphitryon and spent the previous night with Alcmena, giving her the false impression that the marriage had been consummated. Zeus in fact had even extended the night to three times its length in order to ensure a great hero would be born of the union. Amphitryon accepts the prophet's explanation, returns to Alcmena, and forgives her for Zeus' deception. Their marriage is then consummated and Alcmena gives birth to twin sons, one of whom is Heracles, son of Zeus, while the other is Iphicles, son of Amphitryon.

¹¹⁸ Theatre Programme: *The Empire -- Showplace of the Nation*, Empire Theatre, London, first performance 23 January 1950.

¹¹⁹ Davidson, *Biographies*, 275.

than “a muddled Parisian festival.”¹²⁰ Staff’s next ballet, *Punch*, was first performed on 6 March 1950 to music specially composed by George Melachrino. This work seemed to have fared much better than any of Staff’s previous Empire ballets because this time he used traditional stock characters that were familiar to the audience who now had “some inkling of what is going on.”¹²¹ Gladys Davidson, in fact, called *Punch* a “very lively” ballet.¹²² However, the critic of *Dance and Dancers* found Staff’s choreography to be thinly conceived as

there still seems to be more scampering than dancing and it is a pity that the excellent dancers in this company cannot be presented in something that would show off their individual talents achieving at the same time the wonderful streamlined quality of the Empire girls so necessary for a stage of this size.¹²³

Staff then presented extracts of Fokine’s *Les Sylphides* on 27 March 1950¹²⁴ followed by a novel interpretation of Ravel’s *Bolero* and a lively *Easter on Parade* sequence.¹²⁵ Audrey Turner recalled how *Bolero* amounted to a theatrical extravaganza in which the Empire Girls and singers joined the dancers. Leo Kersley remembered it as being “an extremely popular piece in which Frank used everyone on stage.”¹²⁶ *Bolero* began with one dancer and concluded with the full complement of ninety-eight dancers, singers and Empire Girls.¹²⁷ The evident dearth of male dancers in the company meant that the Empire Girls had to be dressed as men who moved suggestively on either side of the stage as the dancers performed their routines.¹²⁸ *Bolero* was

¹²⁰ “...At home,” *Dance and Dancers*, 1,4 (April 1950): 23.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Davidson, *Biographies*, 276.

¹²³ *Dance and Dancers* (April 1950): 23.

¹²⁴ Richard Buckle, “News,” *Ballet*, 9,3 (March 1950): 48.

¹²⁵ Theatre Programme: *The Empire -- Showplace of the Nation*, Empire Theatre, London, first performance 27 March 1950.

¹²⁶ Kersley, interview, 8 May 1995.

¹²⁷ “Frank Staff,” *CAPAB Ballet* (Cape Town: Tony Williams-Short, 1970), 39.

followed by *Frankie and Johnnie* -- the last of Staff's ballets for the Empire.

Frankie and Johnnie formed part of the *Showboat-Time* revue and marked the company's 500th performance on the Empire stage.¹²⁹ Scheduled for 15 May 1950, *Frankie and Johnnie* was based on the famous American ballad about Johnnie's infidelity to Frankie who retaliates by shooting him. The music for Staff's ballet was adapted from some traditional melodies usually associated with the song which George Melachrino had arranged as a score. Staff cast Annette Chappell as "Frankie" with John Hall as "Johnnie". Noreen Lee danced "Nellie Bly", the third character in the tale responsible for the tragedy.¹³⁰ Peter Williams reviewed the work in *Dance and Dancers* and thought it owed a lot to Roland Petit's *Carmen*, which Staff probably saw when it premièred in London at the Prince's Theatre on 21 February 1949. Williams failed to state exactly how *Frankie and Johnnie* might have been derivative although visual sources tend to indicate a marked similarity in the body positions adopted by "Frankie" and "Johnnie" juxtaposed with "Carmen and "Don José". Perhaps the true similarity between the two works lay in their respective costume design: Nat Karson's designs for *Frankie and Johnnie* do bear a striking resemblance to Antoni Clavé's designs in *Carmen*. Yet, despite this, *Frankie and Johnnie* proved popular enough for the normal season of three weeks to be extended to six,¹³¹ and Peter Williams had to concede that it was the "best and most suitable work that has yet been given at the Empire."¹³² Williams explained the reason for its popularity as having nothing to do with Staff's choreography, but rather with "its torpid smoke-laden and gin-swilling atmosphere."¹³³ He said Annette Chappell and John Hall

¹²⁸ Turner, interview, 3 October 1994.

¹²⁹ *The Dancing Times* (June 1950): 554.

¹³⁰ Peter Williams, "Frankie and Johnnie," *Dance and Dancers*, 1,7 (July 1950): 11.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

imparted such convincing passion as “Frankie” and “Johnnie” that people in the front rows were “seen to clutch their seats.”¹³⁴ Staff left the Empire establishment towards the end of May 1950 when he was invited to arrange all the dance sequences for Lee Ephraim’s new presentation of Guy Bolton’s *Music at Midnight*.

Described as “a play with music” rather than a traditional musical, *Music at Midnight* was set to the melodies of Offenbach with additional music by Hans May and lyrics by Harold Purcell.¹³⁵ The action, which takes place in a Paris of the Second Empire during 1853, concerned a fictitious story about the young Offenbach who falls in love with Marie Dalmont, the reigning star of the “Bouffes Parisian”. Dalmont, who is about to retire, promises to sing in *Violette*, Offenbach’s first operetta. She decides to postpone her retirement after she falls in love with Offenbach. But circumstances are made complicated when it is revealed that Dalmont has already promised to marry a baron. The baron’s cunning father then steals the score and has it performed by Empress Eugénie and her group of amateur singers at Fontainebleau. The matter is finally resolved in the end and the musical concludes with a rousing finale set in the Green Room of the “Bouffes Parisian” Theatre.¹³⁶

Music at Midnight was set in two acts with three scenes in each act. There were nineteen musical numbers for which Staff had to arrange the dances or, at least, suitable movements. Perhaps the most prominent of these was at the beginning of the second act with a “Dance Espagnol” for Empress Eugénie and the four famous ladies of Paris named “Adele”, “Anna”, “Jeanne” and “Cora”.¹³⁷ First performed at His Majesty’s Theatre in London on 10 November 1950, the production received an extremely negative response from no less

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Theatre Programme: *Music at Midnight*, His Majesty’s Theatre, London, season November 1950.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

than five London critics.¹³⁸ All found the work tedious and tenuous without even mentioning Staff's choreography except for *The Sunday Times* critic who alluded to it rather vaguely as some "lively dances".¹³⁹

During the latter half of 1951 Staff joined the Paris-based Les Ballets des Champs-Élysées as its ballet master.¹⁴⁰ The company had already been seen in London during April and September 1946, June 1947, August 1948 and August 1951.¹⁴¹ Staff, no doubt, had been witness to several of these performances and was interested enough to want to work with the company. His appointment as ballet master was made possible by the resignation of the company's then ballet master, Youly Algaroff, who left to pursue an independent career. For whatever reason, Staff's appointment was only a temporary one,¹⁴² and he produced one work for the company entitled *Romanza Romana*.

Romanza Romana was based on a libretto by Pierre Petit and Guillaume Gillet. Petit also wrote the music for the ballet while Gillet was responsible for its set and costume design.¹⁴³ Both Petit and Gillet devised the story when, as students at the Villa Medici, they became the recipients of the Prix de Rome for music and painting

¹³⁸ *Music at Midnight* was reviewed by the critics of *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Times*, *The Times*, *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times*. Theatre Museum Clippings File, Covent Garden, London.

¹³⁹ *The Sunday Times*, 12 November 1950, n.p. Theatre Museum Clippings File, Covent Garden, London.

¹⁴⁰ Les Ballets des Champs-Élysées was founded early in 1945 under the personal supervision of Boris Kochno who, in addition to being Diaghilev's secretary from 1921, was one of the foremost creative geniuses of ballet scenarios from the post-First World War Ballets-Russes period.

¹⁴¹ P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 428 (May 1946): 390. *The Dancing Times*, (September 1946): 616.

P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 457 (October 1948): 6.

P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *The Dancing Times*, 491 (September 1951): 700.

"Les Ballets des Champs-Elysees [sic]," *The Dancing Times*, 441 (June 1957): 462.

¹⁴² "Events in Paris," *Dance Magazine*, XXV, 12 (December 1951): 51.

¹⁴³ Elsa Brunelleschi, "New ballets in Paris," *Ballet*, 11, 11 (December 1951): 35.

respectively.¹⁴⁴ The action was set in a square and dealt with several characters typical of Roman life going about their daily business. These included a nun, a preacher, some ragged boys and a “sandwich-man”.¹⁴⁵ A young tourist girl, accompanied by her uncle (the bearded gentleman), prefers to flirt with a workman rather than to concentrate on the beauty of Roman antiquity. In an attempt to elude her uncle, the young girl and the workman disguise themselves as statues in a small grotto behind a fountain.¹⁴⁶ Danielle Darmance (alternating with Violette Verdy), Vladimir Skouratoff and Dereyk Mendel portrayed the leading roles of the young girl, her lover and her uncle respectively.

Romanza Romana premièred on 3 October 1951 at the Théâtre de l’Empire in Paris to limited critical appraisal. *The Dancing Times* referred to the work as “a very pleasant ballet with considerable choreographic invention”¹⁴⁷ while Ferdinand Reyna of *Ballet Today* wrote of how the “unpretentious and charming” music blended perfectly with choreography that was “conceived in the same spirit.”¹⁴⁸ Elsa Brunelleschi however was neither impressed with the story nor with Staff’s choreography. She regarded the former as “very slight” and the latter as unnecessarily obscure with “synthetic” crowd scenes and “people dancing in undistinguished fashion”.¹⁴⁹ She was of the opinion that although “the audience like *Romanza Romana* enormously”, the same could not be said of Staff’s choreography, which she thought was decidedly inferior to his earlier works.¹⁵⁰ Brunelleschi came to the conclusion that it was regrettable

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Ferdinand Reyna, “New ballets in Paris,” *Ballet Today*, 4, 41 (December 1951): 6.

¹⁴⁶ Brunelleschi, *Ballet* (December 1951): 35.

¹⁴⁷ Pierre Tugal, “Paris,” *The Dancing Times*, 495 (December 1951): 136.

¹⁴⁸ Reyna, *Ballet Today* (December 1951): 36.

¹⁴⁹ Brunelleschi, *Ballet* (December 1951): 35-36.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Frank Staff's first chance with the Ballets des Champs-Élysées should have been such a poor one. We do not forget that in his good Ballet Rambert days he created, among other works, Elgar's *Enigma Variations* and the charming *Czernyana*. Let us hope that this company may become a fruitful ground for the expansion of his ideas.¹⁵¹

Violette Verdy, the alternate cast of the young girl, thought *Romanza Romana* displayed a "mournful introspective quality of the young Frank Staff" which left her feeling "greatly impressed by his gift for characterization."¹⁵² Sadly, Staff was never able to expand his ideas with the Ballets des Champs-Élysées company as it was disbanded towards the end of 1951 due to a lack of finances. His experience of working with this troupe however was not without consequence.

Veronica Paeper explains:

Frank's time in Paris was very important because it brought him into contact with people such as Jean Cocteau, Roland Petit and Boris Kochno. I remember him speaking a great deal about Kochno's genius in particular, and I'm sure this acquaintance was later to influence Frank's own ballets and stand him in good stead.¹⁵³

Written texts (including articles and programme notes) indicate that Staff travelled to the United States of America during 1952 where he worked on Broadway productions in New York as well as at the San Francisco Opera House.¹⁵⁴ *Dance Magazine*, the leading authoritative

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Michael Hobson, "Violette Verdy recalls some South Africans," *The Friends of the Ballet*, Newsletter No. 20 (January 1976): 4.

¹⁵³ Veronica Paeper, interview with author, 20 August 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

¹⁵⁴ All sources listed below state that Staff worked in San Francisco. Those marked with an asterisk claim that he choreographed works for Ballet Theatre in New York or on Broadway where he apparently staged a production of *Alice in Wonderland* with Margaret Rutherford and Sybil Thorndike:

* "Frank Staff," *CAPAB Ballet* (Cape Town, Tony Williams-Short), 39.

* Martha Bremser (ed.), *International Dictionary of Ballet Vol. 11* (London: St. James Press, 1993): 1344.

* Programme Note: *The South African Ballet*, University Great Hall, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, season 9-12 February 1955.

* Programme Note: *Tribute to Frank Staff*, 16 March - 6 April 1991.

American dance periodical, makes no mention of Staff's work in New York or San Francisco at this time. Nor could correspondence from the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts or the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum confirm that he ever worked in America.¹⁵⁵ This does not mean to say however that Staff was not in America during 1952. In fact, Veronica Paeper maintains that it was in America where Staff learnt to light ballets:

Frank loved to light his own ballets and he would spend hours in the theatre working out exactly how a ballet should be lit. He mastered the art of lighting techniques while he was in San Francisco.¹⁵⁶

And it was also in America that Staff apparently met two spinster sisters who lived in a dilapidated old house in Boston. The older of the two at the time was eighty and the younger sixty-eight. Their brother had been committed to an asylum for the murder of the younger sister's suitor.¹⁵⁷ Staff was fascinated with events that led to the suitor's murder and the three siblings' lives intrigued him sufficiently enough to want to create a ballet. This led directly to *Transfigured Night*, which he made in 1955 for his own company, the South African Ballet. But before he took the opportunity to explore further choreographic possibilities in South Africa, Staff returned to England and accepted an invitation to join a small group of dancers known as the New-Ballet Company.

Programme Note: *The South African Ballet*, University Great Hall, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, season 21-26 November 1955.

Programme Note: *The South African Ballet*, Benoni Town Hall, performance 20 April 1956.

Programme Note: *The South African Ballet*, Reps. Theatre, Johannesburg, season 7-19 January 1957.

Grut, *History*, 414.

¹⁵⁵ Letter to author dated 10 April 1995 from Madeleine M. Nichols, Curator, Dance Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Letter to author dated 6 March 1995 from Kirsten Tanaka, Head Librarian, San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum.

¹⁵⁶ Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

¹⁵⁷ Grut, *History*, 175.

The New-Ballet company was founded late in 1952 under the joint directorship of Antoinette Wijnberg, herself a former dancer with the Kurt Jooss company, and her husband Patrick Harvey who was also a musician, composer and company pianist.¹⁵⁸ The company numbered ten dancers -- six ladies and four men -- with the intention being to present new and more contemporary works not yet seen in London.¹⁵⁹ Mary Clarke confirmed that the company's objective was to stress "NEW ballets and not to rely on established favourites, except for odd classical and Spanish divertissements."¹⁶⁰ Clarke stated further that "there is no corps-de-ballet in the New-Ballet Company, every dancer is of soloist category."¹⁶¹

The company's first season was scheduled for a one-week run at the Wimbledon Theatre from 11 November 1952. There were several premières by four choreographers including Staff's *Ballade*, which he set to Gabriel Fauré's 1881 composition of the same name for piano and orchestra. Dressed and designed by Hugh Stevenson, *Ballade* was a plotless work for seven dancers that was very much in the style of a romantic reverie. The dancers were not identified by specific names: the ladies represented young maidens and the men portrayed young men. Five ladies and two men made up the cast. Shelagh Miller, who was a member of the New-Ballet company and who performed in *Ballade*, remembers how

Ballade was a straightforward classical ballet with no storyline and no convoluted themes. It was just a beautiful romantic piece of choreography with particularly difficult choreography to execute. Yet, Frank was also a considerate choreographer and he often gave a dancer certain movements to do which would show them off to their best advantage. But he would also extend the movement or step by making it that more challenging for the dancer. Elizabeth Christie, for example, was good at doing turns and her choreography in *Ballade*

¹⁵⁸ "Stop Press," *Dance and Dancers*, 3,10 (October 1952): 25.

¹⁵⁹ "New-Ballet company will perform contemporary works," *Ballet Today*, 5,11 (November 1952): 6.

¹⁶⁰ Mary Clarke, "London Datelines," *Dance Magazine*, XXVI, 12 (December 1952): 61.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

consisted of turns that included awkward, reverse turns around the stage. Margaret Kovac was a very strong muscular dancer and she had most of the demanding, stronger movements to perform. Constance Garfield, on the other hand, was more of a romantic dancer, and her movements were slower and flowed more freely, which naturally enhanced her beautiful classical line.¹⁶²

Ballade opened to reveal the dancers frozen in tableau form before they began to move. Structurally, the ballet comprised *pas de deux*, *pas de trois* and *solis*.¹⁶³ Shelagh Miller pointed out that “everything just flowed all the time with everyone running in and out. It certainly wasn’t a static ballet and the movement never stopped.”¹⁶⁴ Clive Barnes reviewed the work and thought it bore a certain similarity to Fokine’s *Les Sylphides*, particularly where the theme was concerned. He argued that in *Les Sylphides* various shapes are transformed into maidens who emerge from the shadows pursued by a young man seeking “his platonic ideal of beauty.”¹⁶⁵ *Ballade*, he said, proposed a continuation of this theme but with two men this time wooing the maidens. However, this is where Barnes is not quite correct because Fokine’s *Les Sylphides* deals with sylphs and was directly inspired by August Bournonville’s *La Sylphide* of 1836 whereas Staff’s *Ballade* concerned mortal maidens. Barnes does state nonetheless that the “family likeness” between the two only extended to their theme as structurally and choreographically they were quite dissimilar.¹⁶⁶ He found *Ballade* to be structurally more amorphous whereas *Les Sylphides* “clung closely to the Maryinsky style of presentation” with its Petipa-like *divertissement* of ballabiles, *pas de deux* and *solis*.¹⁶⁷ Barnes was also of the opinion that because the ballet’s shape was amorphous it became unnecessarily long. Yet, he said its similarity to *Sylphides* and its shapeless form were only

¹⁶² Shelagh Miller, interview, 4 June 1995.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Clive Barnes, “Ballade,” *Dance and Dancers*, 4,1 (January 1953): 13.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

minor blemishes on a remarkably successful work. Staff has produced long passages of dancing which so precisely match the music that one is left gasping at the beauty of the unity he has created. In an earlier work for Ballet Rambert, *Un Songe*, Staff revealed an instinctive feeling for romanticism that shone through the ballet's muddled narrative. Now with *Ballade* he has caught what previously eluded him, the essence of ballet romanticism.¹⁶⁸

Staff's second work for the New-Ballet Company was a complete reworking of *Frankie and Johnnie*, which he renamed *He was her Man*. His idea for the ballet's title came directly from the final line of each verse of the song and in this production the cast was increased to nine, which included new characters such as "A Habitue", "Battling Brady, a "Barman", three "Hostesses" and one dancer to represent the "Chorus". Constance Garfield was "Frankie"; Alan Barker performed "Johnnie"; Shelagh Miller played "Nelly Bly"; Nigel Burke was "A Habitue"; Jack Skinner danced "Battling Brady"; Kenneth Smith executed the part of the "Barman"; Angela Bayley, Elizabeth Christie and Margaret Kovac were the "Hostesses"; and Angela Bayley interpreted the "chorus".¹⁶⁹ In this version Frankie was no longer a prostitute nor Nelly Bly a bartender. There was no funeral for Johnnie and no prison sentence for Frankie.¹⁷⁰ It began, instead, with the shooting of Johnnie followed by a blackout and a series of flashbacks to convey the story. Each verse of the ballad was sung in between the action and this structure probably made the drama easier to follow because of its simplification.¹⁷¹ Clive Barnes reviewed the work in *Dance and Dancers* and came to the conclusion that while the "simpler concentrated story that emerges is more malleable to Staff's purpose", the end result "lacks the poetry that transforms a police record into a tragedy."¹⁷² Barnes did however find the production

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Clive Barnes, "He was her Man," *Dance and Dancers*, 4,2 (February 1953): 21.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Shelagh Miller, interview, 4 June 1995.

¹⁷² Barnes, *Dance and Dancers* (February 1953): 21.

slick and appropriately placed in an American Mid-West milieu of the 1870's which, he thought, enabled Staff to capture "much of the laconic humour of the piece."¹⁷³ He went on to say that Staff's "frequently apt" choreography was impressive, particularly in the bar-room scene with its "well-conceived dance of boredom" and a rather unusual *pas de deux* for Frankie and a bed which he thought was quite "brilliant".¹⁷⁴

Hugh Stevenson designed the set and costumes for *He was her Man* while Patrick Harvey composed a new score for the production which opened at the Coliseum Theatre in Harrow on 11 December 1952.¹⁷⁵ Staff left the company shortly thereafter although the company itself only lasted for about three months until Walter Gore rescued it where it became known as the Walter Gore Ballet. Shelagh Miller recalled that

despite having a long rehearsal period and a hard rehearsal period the company just petered out. Frank did the two ballets and went. He certainly didn't stay with us for very long and might have foreseen its closure although I think the company could have gone on. It was saved by Walter Gore in the end who had done several ballets for us including his *Romantic Assembly*.¹⁷⁶

It was also in 1952 that Staff was invited to arrange choreographed sequences for a new film being produced by Laurence Olivier and Herbert Wilcox. This was *The Beggar's Opera*, a work that had its origins in the early eighteenth-century when John Gay, the English poet, playwright and theatre manager, wrote a libretto for Christoph Pepusch's 1728 production of a three-act opera. The action in Gay's text centred on a highwayman named MacHeath, and Polly, the heroine of the tale. It was really a satire on the politics of the day as well as on Italian operatic conventions. A sequel called *Polly*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Shelagh Miller, interview, 4 June 1995.

followed in 1729 for which John Gay wrote the libretto as well. Twentieth-century revivals of the work date from 1920 with Frederic Austin's re-orchestrated version for a London production at the Lyric, Hammersmith, and Kurt Weill's updated 1928 version in Berlin set to lyrics by Bertold Brecht. Known as *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Threepenny Opera*), Weill's creation featured the well-known singer Lotte Lenya. In 1937, Darius Milhaud presented his arrangement of *The Beggar's Opera* called *L'Opéra des gueux*, and in 1944 *The Beggar's Opera* returned to England for a new production in Birmingham by E.J. Dent. In 1948, Benjamin Britten gave *The Beggar's Opera* a new interpretation with his version in Cambridge. The 1953 filmed version however was a totally new arrangement of the music, scored this time by Sir Arthur Bliss.

Based on John Gay's text, the filmed version of *The Beggar's Opera* takes place during September 1741 in London. Macheath, a highwayman, is incarcerated at Newgate jail awaiting execution. "The Beggar", imprisoned in the same jail, "rings up the curtain on his opera."¹⁷⁷ The action that followed centred on the cavalier highwayman, who is adored by many ladies. One of them is Polly Peachum, to whom he is secretly married, and the other is Lucy Lockit. The Peachum's try to persuade Polly to betray Macheath but he escapes and seeks refuge at a tavern. One of the tavern ladies named Jenny Diver betrays him and he is sent to Newgate jail. With the aid of Lucy Lockit he escapes, but is lured by an actress at the gaming-house of Mrs Trapes who alerts Peachum to Macheath's whereabouts. He is recaptured and sent back to Newgate where he is taken to Tyburn for execution. This proves too painful for the Beggar who cries "A reprieve!" The rest of the inmates echo the same sentiment. The gates of Newgate are opened and Macheath rides away to freedom.

The Beggar's Opera was directed by Peter Brook and featured several well-known British actors and actresses led by Laurence Olivier as "Macheath". Others in the cast included Dorothy Tutin as "Polly", George Devine as "Peachum", Stanley Holloway as "Lockit" and

¹⁷⁷ Gavin Lambert, "The Beggar's Opera," *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 20, 234 (July 1953): 100.

Hugh Griffith as "The Beggar".¹⁷⁸ Film credits mention Staff's contribution as "dances arranged by Frank Staff",¹⁷⁹ and presumably these were the dances arranged for both the tavern and gaming-house scenes, as well as the jail scenes. Gavin Lambert's review in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* makes no explicit mention of Staff's choreography except for a possible hint when describing the elaborate opening to the tavern scene.¹⁸⁰ For the rest, Lambert delivered a scathing attack on the production, referring to the film as "scrappy" with "unfinished-looking succession of episodes", "little aptitude for the camera", a "discordant mixture of styles" and "a total lack of ability."¹⁸¹ Even Lord Olivier's performance came under attack for being "curiously muted, lacking the swagger, the roistering, that Macheath requires."¹⁸² Sir Arthur Bliss's music was criticized for its "incongruous modern idiom" that sounded "bombastic".¹⁸³

Towards the end of 1952 Staff was invited to arrange the dances and ensemble sequences for a new musical entitled *The Glorious Days*. Devised, staged and directed by Robert Nesbitt, *The Glorious Days* was presented by Tom Arnold at the Palace Theatre in London's Shaftesbury Avenue from 28 February 1953.¹⁸⁴ Its subject was based on a scenario by Harold Purcell and Robert Nesbitt,¹⁸⁵ which *The Dancing Times* described as "a modern play with interpolations of music, dancing and ceremonial covering the last three hundred years."¹⁸⁶ The *London Times* suggested that

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Letter to author dated 12 September 1996 from Graham Melville, Cataloguer, British Film Institute, London.

¹⁸⁰ Lambert, *Monthly Film Bulletin* (July 1953): 100

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Theatre Programme: *The Glorious Days*, Palace Theatre, London, season February 1953.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

some of the glorious days are grandly historical or legendary. The rest of the glorious days belong to the quite recent history of the light musical stage. They invite applause, which comes easily.¹⁸⁷

More than a thousand costumes and twenty-eight different settings went into the making of *The Glorious Days*, which by all accounts must have been a lavish spectacle.¹⁸⁸ Staff took charge of all the special dance routines except those for Anna Neagle in the third act, which were arranged by Betty and Philip Buchel.¹⁸⁹ The main attraction of *The Glorious Days* lay not in Staff's choreography, but in the appearance of Anna Neagle, who performed a variety of roles including Nell Gwynn, a young Queen Victoria, an older Queen Victoria, an ambulance driver, the ambulance driver's mother, as well as the leading lady "in well remembered shows of the twenties and the thirties."¹⁹⁰ According to *The Times*, *The Glorious Days* was a "wondrously complicated story in which the historical figures are part of the disordered dreams of a heroic Chelsea ambulance driver".¹⁹¹ Anna Neagle as the ambulance driver appeared in most of the dreams and it was hardly surprising that "the show begins and ends with Miss Neagle."¹⁹² Staff's choreographic contribution however was not mentioned by the critic of *The Times*.

During the first half of 1953 Staff became involved with the Joan Maude/Michael Warre production of *All Hallowe'en*, a low budget thirty-four minute black and white film directed by Michael S. Gordon.¹⁹³ The action took place sometime during the nineteenth-

¹⁸⁶ "The Glorious Days," *The Dancing Times*, 511 (April 1953): 429.

¹⁸⁷ "The Glorious Days," *The Times* (2 March 1953), 11.

¹⁸⁸ *The Dancing Times* (April 1953): 429.

¹⁸⁹ Theatre Programme: *The Glorious Days*, February 1953.

¹⁹⁰ *The Times* (2 March 1953), 11.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ "Title detail print," *All Hallowe'en*, British Film Institute, (London), n.d.

century where the aged Lady Delville gives a Hallowe'en party at her country manor estate. A ghostly footman introduces Rowena, one of the guests, to Gervase, who has been dead since the seventeenth-century. Lady Delville and her guests drink rejuvenating wine, and when the effect of the wine has worn off towards the end of the evening they discover that Rowena has vanished. She has joined Gervase, her phantom lover!

The idea in *All Hallowe'en* was to create a "part poem, part ballet" effect.¹⁹⁴ Naturally, this required dancers although only two were needed. Playing the part of "Rowena" was Sally Gilmour, while Oleg Briansky portrayed her phantom lover.¹⁹⁵ According to the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, the "part poem, part ballet" effect tended to emphasize the romantic rather than the macabre, which the critic believed led directly to the film's downfall.¹⁹⁶ Although Staff's choreography was not specifically condemned, the film was still regarded as

fatally handicapped by its own artiness; the mixture of dancing, miming, painted scenery, a rather breathlessly "poetic" commentary and some "period" dialogue [to]...suggest a world so immediately bizarre that the central ghost story does not seem strange or mysterious at all.¹⁹⁷

The critic's concluding statement was no more encouraging, and here the dancing, sandwiched in between the other components of the film, was said to be undistinguished:

One would like to be able to praise a venture of this kind, but the sad truth is that *All Hallowe'en* is a very gauche affair, that its settings, dancing, playing and dialogue are undistinguished, that as a film it has no kind of rhythm, and that it leaves only a final impression of appearing more pretentious than was probably intended.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ "Current non-fiction and short films," *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 20, 236 (September 1953): 138.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER THREE

After completing his work for the New-Ballet Company, as well as his choreography for *The Glorious Days* and *The Beggar's Opera* -- and probably even after working on *All Hallowe'en* -- Staff returned to Paris where he anticipated further choreographic opportunities with Les Ballets des Champs-Élysées. Instead, he found that the French Government, which normally would have provided the necessary sponsorship for new productions,

had failed to receive its yearly grant...owing to each successive Governments [*sic*] extremely short life, with the consequent result that the Minister concerned with the matter, though willing, never was in office long enough to sign the appropriate documents, still less to guide them through the long and devious channels of Government.¹

It seemed perhaps more appropriate for Staff to consider creating his own company,² although the prospect of doing so in England was not really feasible for several reasons: there were already a number of large, well-established English companies at the time such as the Sadler's Wells Ballet, the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, the Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet, Ballet Rambert and, by 1950, the London Festival Ballet; smaller companies including the International Ballet and Walter Gore's company had already begun to emerge; and several other organizations within the perimeters of the smaller company genre, for example the Anglo-Polish Ballet, the Empire Ballet, the New-Ballet and the Metropolitan Ballet had all been disbanded by the early 1950's mainly for financial reasons. Staff was obviously aware

¹ Frank Staff, "Curriculum Vitae and addenda," n.d., 3.

Staff's curriculum vitae was adapted and modified from Gladys Davidson's text entitled *Ballet Biographies*. The first four pages of Staff's curriculum vitae are devoted to his career. However, this only covers his career until 1950, as there is no mention of his work with Les Ballets des Champs-Élysées in 1951. It is contended therefore that this citation was written by Staff himself. Only the first four pages are numbered although the document has been retained in its entirety by Sylvia Davis, one of the earliest members of Staff's South African Ballet Company, who kept a small private collection of memorabilia including theatre programmes from Staff's South African Ballet Company.

² This is mere speculation because it could not be established with certainty whether or not Staff actually intended forming a ballet company while living in England.

of this and must have questioned the wisdom of attempting to launch yet another company in England. Consequently, by “1953 he returned to the Union [of South Africa] with the intention of starting South Africa’s first professional ballet company.”³ And more substantial evidence to this effect is contained in a brief programme note on Staff’s career as well as in several programme notes on Jacqueline St. Clere’s career who, as his wife, accompanied him to South Africa. The information on Staff specifically states that “he came to Johannesburg in 1953 with the intention of starting South Africa’s first professional Ballet Company”,⁴ while information on St. Clere confirms that the Staffs returned to South Africa “in 1953 to found the South African Ballet Company.”⁵ However, Staff’s decision to return to South Africa seems to have been motivated more by impulse than for any other reason, as he himself recalled many years later:

It was in the middle of winter that I was walking through the streets of London. It was an unpleasant day and a person could barely see through the smog. And then I saw an exhibit in the window of a shipping-firm depicting the advantages of the sunny south. At that moment I decided: not a minute longer in these weather conditions. A week later I was on a ship to South Africa.⁶

Veronica Paeper verified Staff’s somewhat hasty decision to return to South Africa when she recounted how

Frank had a wonderful career going for him and then he made this sudden decision to come back to South Africa. He told me he was walking along a foggy street in London when he past a travel agent and saw a ship in an advert for South Africa. Without hesitation, he rushed in and booked a ticket. It was nothing premeditated but rather a spontaneous reaction.⁷

³ “New works performed by South Africian [sic] Ballet Company,” *House and Home in Southern Africa*, 2,1 (April & May 1957): 33.

⁴ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 7-19 January 1957.

⁵ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955.

⁶ “Bekende Choreograaf nuwe Balletmeester” [Well-known choreographer is new Ballet Master,] *Die Volksblad* (4 January 1969), 9.

⁷ Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

Michael Venables suggested a very different explanation, recalling how Staff once told him “they moved out here [to South Africa] because Frank wanted his second child to be born in this country, giving as a reason the fact that he himself had been born in Kimberley.”⁸ This explanation of course also bore no relationship to any immediate plans of establishing a ballet company in South Africa. Whatever the reason, the Staffs were back in South Africa by 6 June 1953, having arrived in Cape Town by ship as “refugees from the London weather.”⁹ They wasted no time in travelling north to Johannesburg, the city Staff had chosen for his domicile,¹⁰ and rented an elegant apartment in Murray Gordon Mansions situated “on the hill overlooking Forest Town and the Johannesburg Zoo.”¹¹ Sylvia Davis, a founder members of Staff’s company in 1955, confirmed that Murray Gordon Mansions was Staff’s residence, but added that initially, although not for a very lengthy period of time, the Staffs rented an apartment fairly close to the city’s central business district in the neighbouring area of Berea:

They weren’t in Berea for very long because Frank couldn’t stand the concrete jungle -- he wanted to be in the country -- so they found a little flat in Murray Gordon Mansions on Westcliff Ridge in Johannesburg. The building was surrounded by trees and very beautifully situated. Murray Gordon Mansions was in fact an old block of flats and it was there that Frank and Jacqui used to entertain quite extravagantly.¹²

There seems to be no particular reason why Staff chose to live in Johannesburg although, from a financial point of view, it was logical to settle in a city able to offer the most lucrative of opportunities. Brian Brooke, the well-known actor, director and theatre producer¹³

⁸ Venables, interview, 23 July 1992.

⁹ “Two refugees from rain,” *The Cape Argus* (6 June 1953), 7.

¹⁰ Amelia, “A woman’s journal,” *The Star* (22 July 1953), 6.

¹¹ Michael Venables, “Recollections of Frank Staff,” Unpublished Reminiscences, 13 August 1992, Cape Town, 1.

¹² Sylvia Davis, interview with author, 29 May 1955, Johannesburg, tape recording.

¹³ Brian Brooke was born on 27 September 1911 in Sabie, Eastern Transvaal, and was educated at Graham College in Grahamstown. After completing his schooling

who was based in Cape Town after the Second World War until he relocated to Johannesburg and worked with Staff in musical theatre from 1956 onwards, recalled in his autobiography, *My own personal star*, that by the early 1950's

Johannesburg, I was convinced should, with its population, be the Mecca of theatre in South Africa. Cape Town called itself the cultural centre, but that was only because the most motivated artistic people lived there. The money and the audiences were here in Johannesburg.¹⁴

Cape Town, clearly, was not as financially rewarding as Johannesburg, and besides, ballet was already established in Cape Town with its

he registered for an engineering degree at the University of the Witwatersrand but soon discovered that academic life was not for him, and he left after the first year. He then worked for the Victoria Falls Power Company as an assistant switchboard operator. After being posted to Witbank he became involved, quite fortuitously, in amateur dramatics, which he discovered was very much to his liking. Realizing that theatre was to be his true vocation, he set out for London where he met the legendary Lilian Baylis. Brooke then became involved in repertory theatre performing mainly in the English provinces. While in Bangor however he came into contact with Petrina Fry who was to become his wife in July 1939. During the Second World War, Brooke joined the Royal Corps of Signals; was made a Captain in the British Army; and partook of the D-Day landings at Normandy in 1944. After the war Brooke, and later Petrina Fry, returned to South Africa where he formed a repertory company and began producing plays at the Hofmeyr Hall in Cape Town. By 1949, Brooke had consolidated his position in Cape Town by working in close conjunction with African Consolidated Theatres. In 1953, following an unsuccessful run of *The Innocents* and *Ring Round the Moon* in Durban, his association with African Consolidated Theatres came to an abrupt end. But Brooke recovered and continued to work independently by presenting one (successful) production after the next in East London, Grahamstown, Pietermaritzburg, Port Elizabeth and at the Reps. Theatre in Johannesburg. While presenting *Johnny Belinda* at the Reps. he decided to build his own theatre in Johannesburg, which he subsequently designed and built in 1955. Choosing the site of the Central Tabernacle of the Apostolic Faith Mission in De Villiers street, Brooke converted the building at a cost of about £85 000 and called it the Brooke Theatre. It opened deliberately on 13 September 1955 -- the number thirteen being Brooke's lucky number -- with a production of Terence Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea*. Brooke sold the theatre in 1980 and in 1981 the building was demolished. Brian Brooke died on 26 April 1997.

Gillian Anstey, "Obituary -- Brian Brooke," *Sunday Times* (4 May 1997), 22.

Brian Brooke, *My own personal star -- an autobiography* (Johannesburg: Limelight, 1978).

_____, interview with author, 2 October 1995, Randburg, tape recording.

Fiona Chisholm, "SA theatre manager, actor Brian Brooke dies aged 85," *Cape Times* (1 May 1997), 11.

Garalt MacLiam, "Obituary -- Actor and director Brian Brooke: the 'grand old man' of South African theatre," *The Star* (30 April 1997), 2.

"£85 000 Brooke Theatre to be opened next July," *The Star* (1 November 1954), 9.

¹⁴ Brooke, *Personal Star*, 224.

genesis stretching as far back as the nineteenth-century, and a significantly entrenched tradition of dance by the early twentieth-century. The creation of the University of Cape Town (or U.C.T.) Ballet School in 1934 and the University of Cape Town (or U.C.T.) Ballet Company from the mid-1940's,¹⁵ as well as Cecily Robinson's Cape Town Ballet Club in 1938, clearly dominated the local Cape Town ballet scene. And Durban, another major centre where ballet was evolving during the twentieth-century, was equally unsuitable because of its weak ballet tradition, which may have been due to one of several factors. Anna Pavlova's tour to South Africa during 1925/26, for example, specifically excluded Durban from its itinerary, as did the tours to this country of Alexandre Levitoff's Russian Ballet in 1934 and René Blum's Ballets de Monte Carlo in 1936. All these tours were of crucial importance both to Cape Town and Johannesburg as they stimulated public interest, cultivated ballet audiences and offered the local dancer with an idea of what was possible professionally in ballet. Matthew Pamm, a resident of Cape Town since his birth in 1914 and later a leading ballet critic for *The Cape Times*, claimed that "by 1934, there was unquestionably wider interest in ballet in this country than had existed at the time of the Pavlova tour [in 1925/26]".¹⁶ The result was that by "1936 ballet fever swept South Africa...."¹⁷ The "wider interest" and "ballet fever" to which Pamm referred was, no doubt, a direct reference to Cape Town and Johannesburg only and certainly not to Durban. Without an audience there could be no ballet, and in Durban this essential factor made it virtually impossible to establish either one or more amateur ballet companies. Insufficient audience support was clearly reason enough not to have a ballet company at all in Durban. Even Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin's tour to South Africa in 1949, which did include Durban, failed to launch a substantial ballet audience there. Marina Grut records in *The History of ballet in South Africa* that even after

¹⁵ Also often simply referred to as the U.C.T. Ballet.

¹⁶ Matthew Pamm, "Ballet visits South Africa," cited in John Worrall (ed.), *Ballet in South Africa* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1949), 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Durban had established its own professional ballet company in 1964,¹⁸ there was still no real need for a ballet company as audience attendance figures did not warrant one. In commenting on the demise of NAPAC Ballet in 1976, Grut writes:

The end of NAPAC Ballet must have been a great disappointment to ballet lovers in Durban. However, looking back on the history of ballet audiences in that province, it could not have come as a surprise. There never seemed to be any demand for a company, and none existed previously on which the new NAPAC company could have been founded. It was unrealistic to think that, once money became available, a company could suddenly bloom and grow. In Cape Town there had been a tradition of ballet with good leadership; Johannesburg had dance talent...but in Durban there was no comparable situation to back the formation of a company.¹⁹

When Staff returned to South Africa in 1953 he released a press statement bemoaning the fact that many dancers had left the country, which was unfortunate. He said there was no reason why South Africa should “be deprived of dancing talent through lack of opportunity here,”²⁰ and he decided to form a professional touring company known as Ballet Caravan.²¹ The idea was for the company to tour the country for nine months of the year in the hope that dancers might be prevented from leaving the country.²² To make it even more attractive, he recommended that a chamber orchestra be established to accompany the dancers on tour and in the larger centres, and to what he called “the remote backveld as well.”²³

Staff was convinced his scheme would succeed in spite of the public’s negative perception. “I listen to pessimistic prophecies but I am going

¹⁸ Originally called Ballet Natal, this was the ballet company of the Natal Performing Arts Council, which by 1967 had changed its name to NAPAC Ballet.

¹⁹ Grut, *History*, 306.

²⁰ *The Star* (22 July 1953), 6.

²¹ He envisioned Ballet Caravan to be operational by March 1954. This however never transpired as Ballet Caravan never materialized.

²² *The Star* (22 July 1953), 6.

²³ *Ibid.*

to succeed," he said. "I have faith in the little places.... Benjamin Britten is the same, often preferring the most unlikely small theatres for his operas."²⁴ The company's repertoire would be drawn from Staff's own ballets together with new creations, and he also envisaged staging works of distinguished choreographers. His determination included plans for a theatre school in Johannesburg, the purpose of which was to "present straight plays as well," and a ballet school.²⁵ In fact, any intention of launching a ballet company in Johannesburg would have to be preceded, first and foremost, by a ballet school. A report to this effect appeared in the Johannesburg press on 21 May 1953 -- exactly one day after the Staffs set sail for South Africa from Southampton on 20 May 1953²⁶ -- in which the "Dramatic Critic"²⁷ of *The Star* wrote:

Frank Staff's idea of starting a school for ballet in Johannesburg has much to commend it. His plans include the possibility of opening subsidiary [*sic*] in other centres, but under his personal supervision. The curriculum will include not only ballet technique but also a thorough theatrical training. Hitherto Cape Town has claimed to be the home of ballet in South Africa. The impact of the J. St. Clere-Staffs on the Rand -- where there is great natural talent for dancing -- could easily change [all that.]²⁸

His first priority, naturally, was to find suitable premises where ballets could be conceived and dancers rehearsed. Of necessity, it was equally important to open a private studio from which to build a company of dancers as Staff was determined that all the members of his company should be drawn from the studio setting.²⁹ Bernice Lloyd (or Bernice

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ "Frank Staff to start ballet school in Johannesburg," *The Star* (21 May 1953), 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Bernice Lloyd, interview with author, 4 October 1992, Johannesburg, tape recording.

Yudelowitz as she was then known),³⁰ was clearly in a position to comment, as she had been one of Staff's earliest pupils:

Frank never had open auditions; he preferred to take dancers with whose abilities he was familiar. It was of paramount importance to him that dancers should be able to realize his choreographic intention, and what better way to achieve this than by choosing those dancers from your studio: you can at once recognize their special characteristics; select those who suit your specific needs, and then mould them accordingly.³¹

Norma Miller, another original Staff pupil, agreed:

It was in the studio that Frank saw different potential in different people, so that when he started to choreograph he would take into account disparate personality types of various individuals he was working with and whom he could use. And then he would develop their characters.³²

Federal House, situated at 48 Harrison Street in central Johannesburg between Pritchard and President Streets, was chosen by Staff because it was accessible and suited his requirements perfectly. Sylvia Davis maintains that Staff chose this particular venue because it had a sprung floor.³³ While not disputing the fact whether there was a sprung floor or not, Victoria Carlson³⁴ could not remember if Staff had the floor

³⁰ Bernice Yudelowitz became Bernice Lloyd in 1957. Staff and the then ballet critic of *The Star*, Oliver Walker, suggested a change of surname. The choice of Lloyd was apparently occasioned by a marked resemblance of Bernice Yudelowitz's performance style to that of Maude Lloyd. To avoid any confusion between the surnames Yudelowitz and Lloyd, Bernice Yudelowitz is referred to throughout the text as Bernice Lloyd, the name by which she became known ever since 1957.

Bernice Lloyd, telephonic conversation with author, 13 August 1993, Johannesburg.

³¹ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

³² Norma Miller, interview with author, 23 November 1993, Johannesburg, tape recording.

³³ Davis, interview, 29 May, 1995.

³⁴ Victoria Rhodie, or Victoria Carlson as she became known in the South African Ballet Company, was requested by Staff and Oliver Walker to adopt a stage name because the surname Rhodie was apparently too difficult to spell. She decided to use the name Carlson which was her mother's maiden name. Victoria Carlson was born in Kimberley and received her early ballet training from Irene Timlin and Joyce Hooper. On hearing about Staff, she travelled north to Johannesburg with her

specially laid or whether it was already there when he decided to lease the premises:

I'm not really certain whether Frank found the studio with its sprung floors or whether he had them put in. But it was totally new for us, and again I don't think it was something any other ballet teacher in Johannesburg had at the time, or was even aware of. Frank endeavoured to make studio circumstances as professional as possible.³⁵

Sylvia Davis recalled how the studio's resilient floor was probably its most outstanding feature and a characteristic she was not likely to forget:

I will always remember the sprung floor. Frank would never have allowed us to dance on a solid floor because of the damage it could do to the back and muscles. His overseas experience had obviously taught him that there had to be a floor with a certain amount of elasticity to it.³⁶

Situated on the second floor of Federal House, it was important the studio be fitted with mirrors, which Staff duly acquired for the one side of the room while a huge window overlooking Harrison Street was located on the other side.³⁷ There were also much-needed -- and indeed imperative -- ballet barres for side practice,³⁸ "a little curtained area used as a dressing room for changing",³⁹ and "a small sort of

mother where Staff interviewed both mother and daughter. He immediately accepted the young Victoria as a pupil and later as a dancer with the South African Ballet Company. Carlson's ballet training was simultaneously furthered with Ivy Conmee, who prepared Carlson for her Royal Academy of Dancing (R.A.D.) Advanced and Solo Seal examinations. After successfully completing these she trained exclusively with Staff.

Victoria Carlson, telephonic conversation with author, 29 January 1996, Johannesburg.

³⁵ Victoria Carlson, interview with author, 6 October 1992, Johannesburg, tape recording.

³⁶ Davis, interview, 29 May 1995.

³⁷ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

³⁸ Norma Miller, interview, 23 November 1993.

³⁹ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

alcove where Frank's office was."⁴⁰ Finally, toilet facilities were provided although "we had to go up these little steel steps to get to the toilet where it was very dark and rather dingy."⁴¹ Thus, the "Frank Staff Ballet School at Federal House, 48 Harrison Street",⁴² came into being during the second half of 1953.



Plate 1: Federal House, home of the Frank Staff Ballet School and the South African Ballet Company.⁴³

⁴⁰ Norma Miller, interview, 23 November 1993.

⁴¹ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

⁴² Advertisement in Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, season 1958/59.

⁴³ "Surge of activity in Pritchard St," Photograph, as reproduced in "Property Star Supplement", *The Star* (27 January 1973), 13.

Norma Miller and Bernice Lloyd were among those who remembered those halcyon days and their first encounter with Staff. They recalled how his teaching methodology and classes were quite different and somewhat unique, each maintaining how Staff's classes made a lasting impression on their minds, indelibly imprinted on their memories. Bernice Lloyd in particular said her own teaching method a decade later had been moulded by Staff's approach to teaching, and reminisced how Staff

arrived in the country with some publicity in the newspapers. My mother thought it would be a good idea to take me to him. Perhaps he could strengthen my technique, help me with my *pirouettes*, which were my weak area. And so I went to Frank at the same time that I still learnt with Rona Smith doing my RAD through Rona. I think Frank was more inclined towards teaching the Vaganova [Russian] method, which I didn't know at the time although today I realize that it was Vaganova he taught. This, I think, he acquired from his own experience in London where he took classes with the eminent teacher Vera Volkova, who had studied with Vaganova in Russia. Frank was the most wonderful teacher, apart from his exciting -- and very different -- choreography, and if you asked him a question he always had a logical answer, an explanation for everything. He firmly believed that if you had a problem area in your work there was a way around it. I trusted him implicitly. His classes were quite magnificent despite the structure of the barre being constant and unchanged. The same applied to the way he structured his centre practice, which didn't vary much either although one worked on perfecting the *enchainments*, which were wonderful. And he expected you to grasp the work immediately. It was a wonderful training that would later stand me in good stead when I joined Luisillo's [Spanish dance] company. Frank, incidentally, also had his own personal idiosyncrasies when he taught such as clicking his fingers and using his hands to demonstrate a movement usually designed for the whole body.⁴⁴

Norma Miller told of how she first became involved as a pupil in Staff's studio:

About nine months after the birth of my third child I told Reina Berman, the respected Royal Academy teacher, I would like to start ballet again and she said there was this wonderful teacher in town who was different but that I would first have to be interviewed by him. The wonderful teacher was Frank Staff. The interview duly took place and then he asked me to do a

⁴⁴ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

few steps. To my delight he accepted me as a Frank Staff pupil. The way he taught was unique and dynamic, and he had a wonderful way of expressing himself, more often than not with his hands. What struck me as different was his choice of music, and instead of using Chopin or Tchaikovsky for ballet *enchainments*, Frank preferred to set his combinations to Mozart or Bach. That was the first aspect that made his classes so different, although, because he was so advanced, it took us quite a while to get used to this unusual music for his ballet classes. Secondly, the actual construction of his *enchainments* was another facet to this unusual experience: they would be given with an off-beat which in itself is totally the opposite to what one is accustomed to doing. In this sense his method was already way ahead of anything else in Johannesburg. Thirdly, a lot of the movements had to be executed in a harsh manner. They were strong movements although fairly obscure. At first we felt very uncomfortable performing them, but later they felt perfectly natural to do and became at one with the music. Frank's lessons were so inspiring, which, I think, had a lot to do with his tremendous musical knowledge. That in itself was unsurpassed as far as I'm concerned, and often when I had a private lesson with him he would tell me about a new record he had recently bought, and encouraged me to listen to the music. He actually used to make me sit down and listen to the music, after which he would question me on it. Frank was an exemplary teacher. He did everything at the barre on both sides but he wouldn't follow a syllabus, so to speak. He would incorporate his own little bits so that in the *plié* exercise for example he would often include other movements like a *développé* or a *petit battements* in the same exercise. And then he had an *adage* exercise in the centre that was excellent and again very different but nothing he couldn't do himself. I remember him asking the pianist to play the music and he would listen. Then he would stop the pianist and ask her to play again while he would mark out the sequence a couple of times. He would do it all himself a couple of times and then say: "right, did you see what I did. Now you do it." And one had to watch him because he often improvised. Frank was not that particular about technique because he felt that his pupils should already have a technique before they first came to see him. But, by the same token, he didn't just take anybody and that's why he used to have interviews with prospective pupils. It really was a wonderful period in my life. I loved his dancing, I loved his classes. We all did.⁴⁵

Another initial pupil of Staff's was Ivy May McDonald, who had already opened a private ballet studio in Johannesburg when she decided to return to Staff as a student. Ivy May McDonald explains:

⁴⁵ Norma Miller, interview, 23 November 1993.

I was living in Johannesburg at the time with Rona Smith and Pauline Stokes as my ballet teachers. I opened a studio at the age of seventeen, but when I read an article in the newspaper about Frank I decided to join his studio. He suggested I join as a full-time student, which I did, and that's how I came to be a pupil of the Frank Staff Ballet Studio. He gave wonderful classes, beginning at about nine o'clock in the morning and only finishing at about half-past eleven. We would have a break in the middle of the class when he would show us what he had in mind for the second part of the class, thereby getting us orientated for the steps and style of what he required. Many outside people came to do his classes, including a lot of people from Pretoria and Vereeniging. They wanted to see what he had to offer because he had been taught by some of the best teachers in the world, and especially as he had worked professionally in dance overseas. Frank would take the seniors in the school while Jacqueline St. Clere taught the more junior pupils. He also gave weekly classes for students of other teachers and would report back to the teacher concerned where that particular teacher's faults lay. He was very good at that and very helpful. For me, he was a very inspiring teacher, very encouraging and always giving good advice wherever and whenever he could.⁴⁶

And Dreas Reyneke, then known as Dries Reyneke,⁴⁷ was another Staff pupil from 1954 who joined the company at the beginning of 1957.⁴⁸ Reyneke's remarks about Staff's strength as a teacher were particularly telling and forthright:

⁴⁶ Ivy May McDonald, interview with author, 14 February 1997, Oudtshoorn, tape recording.

⁴⁷ Dries Reyneke changes his Christian name to Dreas after relocating to England in 1971. He explained the reason for this as simply being that people in England had difficulty with the pronunciation of "Dries" whereas "Andreas", pronounced as three syllables, was far easier to pronounce. "Andreas" was shortened to "Dreas" and is the name by which he is known today -- hence the reference to Dreas Reyneke in all correspondence. For his work with Staff's company during the 1950's, he is acknowledged as Dries Reyneke, the name by which he was then known.

Letter to author dated 18 December 1996 from Dreas Reyneke, former dancer, The South African Ballet Company.

⁴⁸ Dries Reyneke began taking classes with Staff from the beginning of 1954 when, as a student at Potchefstroom University, he used to commute from Potchefstroom to Johannesburg on Saturdays for classes at Staff's studio. In 1956, after graduating from Potchefstroom University, he moved to Johannesburg and worked at the Hope Homes School for children with poliomyelitis. While working at the Hope Homes School he began dancing with Staff's company, making his debut with them at the beginning of 1957. He performed with them whenever he could, and in 1960 left for England to join Ballet Rambert. During the 1960's he returned to South Africa and danced for CAPAB Ballet, and in 1970 for PACOFS Ballet. After 1970, Reyneke

Frank instilled musicality from the first moment and in all my dance career he was the best teacher for *pirouettes*, turns and giving a sense of the pliability of the floor, i.e. the *temps lié*, the *fondue* etc. Within six months his students had style.⁴⁹

Adele Samuels, who joined Staff's company during 1955 but was not one of his initial studio pupils, also commented on the profound effect he had on her:

I had heard of Frank's arrival in this country and his fledgling company. I was with Marjorie Sturman at the time and was friendly with Toby Fine who had met him previously. Toby introduced us and that was my first meeting with him. I was initially in awe at this first meeting because he had this wonderful carriage. The head was held erect, always ramrod, and yet he was so terribly casual about it all. He just said that I should come up and join the ballet, which I did. It was just like that with no interview. But he was different from other teachers one had known because he wouldn't fuss with the little things, but if you were falling over on a *pirouette*, for example, he would look at what you were doing and then ask you to do A, B, and C. And if you followed what he said by doing A, B and C, then you could do ten turns with the greatest of ease.⁵⁰

Bernice Lloyd revealed that some of Staff's earliest pupils, with the exception of Norma Miller, all became founding members of Staff's South African Ballet Company, and that these included herself, Victoria Carlson, Aileen Farrell, Zelide Jeppe, Monica Mason and Ivy May McDonald.⁵¹

In 1954, Staff began to organize his company, the main objective of which was to provide South Africa with a professional ballet company and to secure some form of fixed employment for scenic designers,

left South Africa for England on a more permanent basis where he eventually opened The Body Conditioning Studio in London.

Letter to author dated 3 July 1996 from Dreas Reyneke, former dancer, South African Ballet Company.

⁴⁹ Letter to author dated 20 October 1995 from Dreas Reyneke, former dancer, South African Ballet Company.

⁵⁰ Adele Samuels, interview with author, 27 October 1992, Johannesburg, tape recording.

⁵¹ Bernice Lloyd, conversation, 13 August 1993.

costumiers and dancers.⁵² But as it turned out, the company was not professional in the sense that the dancers were paid a regular salary, if at all, nor was their employment guaranteed in terms of a written employment contract or some other form of binding agreement such as a letter of appointment. Victoria Carlson, Hendrik Davel,⁵³ Kendrew Lascelles,⁵⁴ Bernice Lloyd and Adele Samuels all agreed that the company was not professional, with each giving their own reasons as to why this was so. Carlson recalled that she

was paid one salary when we went on tour. My train fare and costumes, which Jacqui [St. Clere] made, were paid for. As far as I can remember, we supplied the shoes ourselves although Frank gave me a small amount towards this. I think it was myself and Ken [Lascelles] who got a bit of money out of dancing and I remember Frank doing the choreography for a Westminster cigarettes advert in which I took part and for which I was paid, although that had nothing to do with the company as such. Other than that, we weren't paid.⁵⁵

Hendrik Davel referred to the company as "a semi-, quasi-professional company" but remembered "once being paid about £25.00 at the end of a season."⁵⁶ Davel hypothesized further, explaining that he was of the impression "Frank hoped something would later develop and he would be able to offer people full-time contracts, but it never

⁵² Programme Note: *The South African Ballet*, 9-12 February 1955.

⁵³ Hendrik Davel was still a matriculant pupil in Pretoria when Staff asked him to dance with the South African Ballet early in 1955. His teacher until then had been Gwynne Ashton, and although he only worked with the company during their first season in 1955, he nevertheless valued the opportunity of being able to perform in Staff's ballets. In Davel's own words: "This was an experience that could only have stood me in good stead throughout my ballet career."

Hendrik Davel, interview with author, 21 September 1992, Pretoria, tape recording.

⁵⁴ Kendrew Lascelles studied at the Royal Ballet School in London during the 1950's before returning to South Africa. He joined the South African Ballet Company in 1957 as its principal dancer.

Kendrew Lascelles, interview with author, 23 September 1992, Johannesburg, tape recording.

⁵⁵ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

⁵⁶ Davel, interview, 21 September 1992.

reached that point.”⁵⁷ Kendrew Lascelles suggested the company was only professional where its repertoire and the actual standard of dancing were concerned. Unfortunately, “the main reason why I eventually left Frank was financial, which was a pity because never before had dancers in Johannesburg been offered such a diverse collection of ballets to perform.”⁵⁸ Hendrik Davel expressed precisely the same sentiments as Lascelles by giving financial reasons for reluctantly leaving the company, but supported Lascelles’ contention that the company could only be regarded as professional

from the artistic side where it certainly was a success. So many people from the company grew, developed and learnt to love the art of ballet. They saw what fun it could be, what great work could be achieved and what they were capable of doing.⁵⁹

Bernice Lloyd came to the conclusion that

this was not a professional company. Parents worked towards it and his then wife, Jacqui St. Clere, made all the costumes while others like Michael Venables, our publicity and administration manager, did sterling work and was dedicated and determined that Frank’s company should succeed. People really rallied round to help Frank. We never got paid in the company although we were promised on several occasions, and we had to pay for our own shoes. I don’t think we had to pay for the costumes though.⁶⁰

Adele Samuels was absolutely adamant that

Frank’s company could not be classified professional in the way that ballet companies operate today. We were not remunerated and there were no perks that a professional company would normally offer. All we got ultimately was maybe a pair of shoes and costumes. So although the standard was of a professional company and certainly operated like one, we never actually got paid a salary although we didn’t have to contribute towards the cost of the costumes and sets.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

⁵⁹ Davel, interview, 21 September 1992,

⁶⁰ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

Finally, Michael Venables indicated that the company was, at most, “little more than a demi-, semi-amateur group” for which the dancers failed to earn “anything more than their travelling expenses -- if that.”⁶² Venables recalled that he “acted as unpaid and largely unqualified public relations man and general ‘gofer’ for the company.”⁶³ But, regardless whether the company was professional or not, Staff still undertook to have it registered in terms of relevant legislation as the South African Ballet⁶⁴ with himself as its director, even if his self-appointed directorship was only of a nominal nature.

Staff’s intention was not to have a large company and he cited the case of Roland Petit who scored a major breakthrough in Paris using a small group of dancers “with far-reaching effects...”⁶⁵ It was not necessary therefore for the company to number more than a maximum of fifteen dancers as the ultimate aim was to “run our company in the French style” with each dancer having the status of a soloist and performing “leading or minor roles as required.”⁶⁶ In this way every member of the company would be given an equal opportunity because “each gets a chance.”⁶⁷ The full-length classical ballets were not intended for Staff’s repertoire as “Mr. Staff does not approve of small scale presentations of large scale ballets.”⁶⁸ Consequently, the ballets would have to be arranged to suit the size of the company, so Staff’s plans to stage *Petrouchka* and *Le Coq d’Or* had to be abandoned as that would have been “like putting on half a symphony [with so few dancers].”⁶⁹ But most importantly, however, were the inevitable

⁶¹ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

⁶² Venables, “Recollections,” 1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁴ Programme Note: *The South African Ballet*, 9-12 February 1955.

⁶⁵ Grut, *History*, 323.

⁶⁶ “Frank Staff to present 4 new ballets,” *Rand Daily Mail* (4 November 1955), 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

financial considerations, and as there was no guarantee of either a State subsidy or a firm offer of financial support from the public or private sector, it would have been impossible to operate a large company with its inescapable overheads. A press release confirmed that the company would “be kept small at first in order to be able to pay its way.”⁷⁰ And Norma Miller recalls how, prior to the creation of the company,

Frank and I went around trying to collect money to form this company. I drew up a list of a who’s who and especially those who might have been interested in the odd ballet. We would approach organizations and individuals for financial support in the afternoon after my lessons in the morning. Incidentally, we were the only two who went around collecting money, going from firm to firm asking whether they would be interested in supporting the ballet, and while some gave others did not. If I remember correctly there was even one company that gave us material for the costumes. But Frank really started the company from nothing, and I remember how the backdrops had to be very simple because he just couldn’t afford anything lavish. The costumes were equally simple. And we had to pay for our own costumes and our own shoes but we were willing to do this because it was so exciting to be able to work with Frank. What made it so exciting was that there really wasn’t a ballet company here at that time -- the only company being the one [Marjorie] Sturman, [Ivy] Conmee and [Poppy] Frames had put together with little *divertissements* and pieces that were often quite frivolous. It is important to point out that Frank only decided to start his ballet company when he thought he had enough students and enough talent, and that’s when we started collecting money which must have been sometime in 1954.⁷¹

Staff himself set out several objectives and proposals in a short annexure to his “Curriculum Vitae” entitled “Construction of the Company” where he stated that

as the day of the large scale Company has ended, the ideal size for a Modern Company is approximately fifteen people, divided into eight female and seven male dancers. Bearing in mind the modest numbers involved, these dancers must of necessity be of at least soloist standard, with four outstanding artists being the “stars” though they are part of the fifteen, and

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ “Frank Staff starts professional S.A. Ballet,” *Rand Daily Mail* (14 January 1955), 6.

⁷¹ Norma Miller, interview, 23 November 1993.

would on occasion appear in minor roles, thus achieving the effect of a Group rather than the usual hide-bound division between *Corps de Ballet*, Soloists and Principals. All the Ballets listed, have been designed to use a cast of, on the average, twelve dancers, with the normal exception of the Classical Ballets, *Les Sylphides* and *Lac Des Cygnes*, the performance of which would entail the recruitment of [additional] local dancers, (approximately twelve to fifteen). The sets of each ballet [will have] to be designed in the most economical manner possible, allowing greater scope for lighting to achieve the desired effects. In fact the actual set of each Ballet would be a mere indication of its locale, which the lighting would complete. This has been proved to be the most successful and satisfactory method (both artistically and economically) of solving the Company's transport problem.⁷²

It was obvious that Staff had envisaged a platform for experimentation through his own choreography. His policy regarding an anticipated repertoire was set out in an appended document entitled "Provisional Repertoire",⁷³ which comprised twelve ballets of which ten were to be his own. The two ballets not of his own making, but nevertheless still to be included in the repertoire, were two of his own personal favourites: Nijinsky's *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and Tudor's *Jardin aux Lilas*. The Staff ballets would include *Apollo '54* to music by Benjamin Britten, a reworked version of *Ballade* (originally made for the New-Ballet Company in 1952 to Gabriel Fauré's *Ballade* Op. 19 for piano and orchestra), *Elementary Steps* to a score by Ernő Dohnányi, *Fanciulla delle Rose* to Anton Arensky's *Variations on a theme of Tchaikovsky* (originally choreographed for the Metropolitan Ballet in 1948), *Frankie and Johnnie* to Patrick Harvey's music for the version Staff made in 1952 for the New-Ballet Company, *L'Assemblée Etrange (sic)* to music by André Grétry, *Lt. Kije* and *Peter and the Wolf* to the Prokofiev scores of the same name, *Romeo and Juliet* to Tchaikovsky's musical interpretation used by Staff in 1946 for Cecily Robinson's South African National Ballet, and, finally, *Vacance Sicillienne* to music by a twentieth-century English-born composer named Remo Lauricella. Staff's intention was to present *Apollo '54*, *Ballade*, *Frankie and Johnnie*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Peter and the Wolf* for the first season, which he maintained

⁷² Staff, "Curriculum Vitae," n.p.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

could be divided into two programmes staged over a two-week period. Staff suggested that *Ballade, Frankie and Johnnie*, and *Peter and the Wolf* “would make a good programme” while *Romeo and Juliet*, *L’Après-midi d’un faune* and *Apollo ’54* “would make the change of programme, these two being sufficient for a fortnight’s run.”⁷⁴ He also stated that *Apollo ’54*, *L’Après-midi d’un faune* and *Romeo and Juliet* would “be used as reinforcement for longer seasons”⁷⁵ while the rest of the ballets would be produced

as the need arose, i.e. upon return visits to any City or Town, when one new work is presented, in order to provide the necessary variety, and to prove that the Company has a policy that is alive and forward-looking.⁷⁶

Making use of a live orchestra was certainly not a privilege Staff could afford, so long-playing recordings had to suffice. Staff had decided to call his company the South African Ballet because he wanted “to recruit talent from all over [the country], so as to give it a national character.”⁷⁷ The full complement of dancers originally numbered fourteen and comprised Delysia Blake, Victoria Carlson, Judy Cohen, Hendrik Davel, Sylvia Davis, Aileen Farrell, Monica Mason, Ivy May McDonald, Denis Meyer, André Retief, Anitra Shore, Staff himself, Jacqueline St. Clere and Bernice Lloyd.

Staff’s first public performance in Johannesburg however was not given with his company, but rather with two of its founding members, Aileen Farrell and Ivy May McDonald, who appeared in a one-off benefit performance for the S.P.C.A. at the Selborne (City) Hall on 30 June 1954. The bill itself consisted of a Staff ballet called *The Kiss*, which he set in a classroom to music by Scarlatti, a piano recital, various Irish and Scottish folk songs and a compilation of songs from Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Mikado* and *The Gondoliers*.⁷⁸ The

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Rand Daily Mail* (14 January 1955), 6.

programme was reviewed in *The Star* on 1 July 1954 with Bruce Anderson, Ivor Kirsten and Jean Temple being singled out for giving particularly noteworthy performances. Also commended were "The Glenton Girl Choristers" for their rendition of Gilbert and Sullivan as well as Jack and Ida Woolf for adding "a different touch by their versatile acrobatic feats."⁷⁹ Staff's ballet failed to attract a single mention in the press.

In mid-January 1955, the press announced: "Frank Staff starts professional S.A. Ballet".⁸⁰ The report gave details of Staff's past achievements as well as information regarding the company and its forthcoming season in Johannesburg. Scheduled for a short four-day run from 9 to 12 February at the University of the Witwatersrand's Great Hall,⁸¹ the season was given "as part of the effort of the Germiston committee's University Appeal."⁸² Staff's repertoire for the company's Johannesburg debut performances consisted of four works with two selected from the provisional repertoire -- *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Peter and the Wolf*-- and two not drawn from his original proposed list. The first of the new works was *Divertimento*, which he set to music by Jacques Ibert, while the second was *Don Juan*, which he based on the well-known legend of the licentious Don Juan. In the latter ballet Staff's musical inspiration was Sergey Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*.⁸³

⁷⁸ "Concert in aid of S.P.C.A.," *The Star* (1 July 1954), 9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Rand Daily Mail* (14 January 1955), 6.

⁸¹ Sylvia Davis recalled how, as a student of the University of the Witwatersrand, Staff had asked her in 1954 to take his curriculum vitae to the necessary university authorities in order to secure the University Great Hall as a venue for their first season. Davis, he believed, would know exactly where to go and was probably best qualified for this task due to her connections with the University.

Davis, interview, 29 May 1995.

⁸² *Rand Daily Mail* (14 January 1955), 6.

⁸³ Davis, interview, 29 May 1995.

Divertimento opened the programme, followed by *Don Juan*, then *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and finally *Peter and the Wolf*. Clearly, the programme was evenly balanced with two of the works in the comedy style (*Divertimento* and *Peter and the Wolf*) and two of a more serious nature. *Don Juan* in fact emerged as quite sombre and dramatic. This inaugural season also marked the beginning of a practice that was to become a hallmark of most of Staff's productions: the use of an overture to set the tone before the curtain went up, which was always the overture to Mikhail Glinka's 1842 opera entitled *Ruslan and Lyudmila*.⁸⁴

The first work, *Divertimento*, had its set and costumes designed by Ivor Kruger⁸⁵ with twelve dancers making up the cast: Aileen Farrell as "The Unwilling Bride"; Staff as a "Hussar from her past"; André Retief as "The Unwilling Groom"; Ivy May McDonald as a "Lady from the Groom's past"; Denis Meyer as "The Mayor and Father of the Bride"; Jacqueline St. Clere and Hendrik Davel as two "Gendarmes"; and Victoria Carlson, Judy Cohen, Anitra Shore, Bernice Lloyd and Monica Mason as the "Wedding Guests".⁸⁶ Described by Hendrik Davel as "a French send-up of liaisons with Jacqui [St. Clere] as a sort of coquette or a kind of flirt and me as her military beau, *Divertimento* was quite light-hearted and a fun ballet to do."⁸⁷ Ivy May McDonald agreed with Davel when she reminisced about the ballet and recalled further how Staff actually poked fun at his own dancers in this ballet:

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ None of the interviewees could remember the exact set and costume designs for *Divertimento*. Visual sources show Hendrik Davel in a military-styled uniform while the ladies were dressed in leotards and short skirts. As the bride, Aileen Farrell wore white, whereas Ivy May McDonald, as a lady from the groom's past, was clad in black to represent her symbolic disappointment, or perhaps an element of mourning. Both wore veils: Farrell's was white; McDonald's black. Farrell wore pink tights and matching pink pointe shoes while McDonald wore black tights with black pointe shoes. Although the colour of Jacqueline St. Clere's costume is unknown, her leotard was embellished with a chain across the chest to resemble a necklace and short puffed sleeves on either arm.

⁸⁶ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 9-12 February 1955.

⁸⁷ Davel, interview, 21 September 1992.

I was always considered to be prim and proper at the time but Frank decided to invert all that and turned my character into a prostitute, which had everybody in the company hysterical. We all thought it was very funny that he should choose me for that part. Anyway, Frank said I was very good as the prostitute.⁸⁸

There is no mistaking the origins of this ballet, despite it being in the comedy genre. As a parody, Staff was clearly having fun with Antony Tudor's *Jardin aux Lilas*, which although a dramatic piece, had more or less the same central characters. These included "Caroline", who was an unwilling bride, "The man she must marry", "An episode from his past", and Caroline's former lover. The rest of the cast in *Jardin aux Lilas* is made up of a *corps de ballet* representing guests.

Critical commentary on *Divertimento*, as with all the works of this season, was sparse. *The Star*, for instance, merely established that *Divertimento* was a "ballet in the French manner"⁸⁹ with "gaiety and ready inventiveness in the wedding...."⁹⁰ The Afrikaans press was equally vague: *Die Transvaler* singled out Aileen Farrell and André Retief who "had to swing to and fro like a clock's pendulum" while Ivy May McDonald and Staff danced "very well".⁹¹ The same critic, who remained anonymous, stated that although *Divertimento*, together with *Don Juan* and *Peter and the Wolf*, was not exactly outstanding, it was still thoroughly entertaining.⁹² Writing in more general terms, another anonymous critic from *Die Vaderland* chose not to mention *Divertimento* specifically, but to include the work under the broader context of assessment when, after giving an opinion on *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, simply commented that "the other three ballet pieces were all good."⁹³ None of the critics however alluded to Tudor's *Jardin aux Lilas*, probably because they were not even aware of its existence.

⁸⁸ McDonald, interview, 14 February 1997.

⁸⁹ "Frank Staff's big plans for S.A. Ballet," *The Star* (20 January 1955), 9.

⁹⁰ Pat Hovenden, "Frank Staff shines as choreographer and dancer," *The Star* (10 February 1955), 11.

⁹¹ "Ballet", *Die Transvaler* (11 February 1955), 9.

⁹² *Ibid.*

Only two photographs of *Divertimento* were located. Both indicate its light-hearted nature and rather cheeky disposition. The first, of Aileen Farrell as “The Unwilling Bride” and Ivy May McDonald as a “Lady from the Groom’s past” (Plate 2), reflects a whimsical quality while the second, of Jacqueline St. Clere and Hendrik Davel, illustrates the most unlikely pair of “Gendarmes” (Plate 3).



Plate 2: Aileen Farrell, left, and Ivy May McDonald, right, in *Divertimento* (1955).⁹⁴



Plate 3: Hendrik Davel and Jacqueline St. Clere in *Divertimento* (1955).⁹⁵

⁹³ “Goeie Ballet” [Good Ballet,] *Die Vaderland* (10 February 1955), 4.

⁹⁴ “S.A. Ballet Dancers,” Photograph, as reproduced in *The Sunday Times* (6 February 1955), 10.

⁹⁵ Photograph, as reproduced in the *Rand Daily Mail* (4 February 1955), 6.

Don Juan, the first dramatic ballet of the evening, was

something Frank had wanted to do for a long time. From the very beginning he used to talk about *Don Juan* and insisted on doing that ballet because its theme obviously appealed to him very much.⁹⁶

Staff's synopsis for this ballet immediately established it as a sinister work and quite the opposite of *Divertimento*. A programme note explains: "The scene is Don Juan's apartment. Don Juan's bedroom is on the right. The Devil has a door to Hell on the left. There is little choice for the Visitors."⁹⁷ This ballet was significant for Staff because it marked the first time he designed sets and costumes for ballet. As the character "Don Juan", Staff chose Denis Meyer. Staff was "The Devil", who also happened to be Don Juan's valet. Victoria Carlson was cast as the "Servant Girl", Aileen Farrell as "The First Visitor" and Ivy May McDonald as "The Unknown Visitor". The rest of the company were "Spirits from Hell".⁹⁸ Hendrik Davel and Sylvia Davis remarked separately on some isolated incidents from the ballet, with Sylvia Davis explaining how

as one of the "Spirits from Hell" I had to roll around on the floor all over the stage. I had bruises for weeks. There was also a wonderful *pas de deux* in which Frank danced, and of course he designed the most ingenious and highly effective lighting in this ballet. And then there were also various scenes so the ballet changed all the time. The dramatic action was quick; the emotional content compelling; and one was constantly drawn to each of the scenes. I remember *Don Juan* as being a fierce and passionate work.⁹⁹

Hendrik Davel verified that as

one of those fiends in the background somewhere rolling around on the floor, I can remember Frank having a wonderful time with all the different ladies. He was the devil and, as such, orchestrated the action by manipulating each of the characters. The character of Don Juan went from one bed to

⁹⁶ Norma Miller, interview, 23 November 1993.

⁹⁷ Programme Note: *The South African Ballet*, 9-12 February 1955.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Davis, interview, 29 May 1995.

another while we, as fiends and furies, tried to entice them. I also remember at the end of one scene how we ended up rolling in this mesh of curtain. It was crazy to do although it must have looked quite effective and no doubt convincing. But as a story, *Don Juan* involved imagination and figures flitting from his [Don Juan's] past. Frank had a marvellous imagination and was able to transpose all those wonderful ideas on stage through movement.¹⁰⁰

Ivy May McDonald also recalled the ballet, and commented that its most ingenious theatrical aspect was the section given to the "Spirits from Hell" who wore "black leotards with vibrant trimmings wired to one another so that when they rolled across the floor it really gave the impression of being in hell with its dark, dramatic overtones."¹⁰¹ She pointed out that the serious nature of *Don Juan* (when juxtaposed with *Divertimento* and *Peter and the Wolf*) balanced the programme "very well" without it becoming "too laboured or heavy."¹⁰²



Plate 4: Aileen Farrell and Frank Staff in a scene from *Don Juan*.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Davel, interview, 21 September 1992.

¹⁰¹ McDonald, interview, 14 February 1997.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ "South African Ballet will visit Benoni," Photograph, as reproduced in the *Benoni City Times en Oosrandse Nuus* (6 May 1955), 4.

As with *Divertimento*, Staff's *Don Juan* was barely acknowledged by the critics in terms of its choreographic content although Pat Hovenden of *The Star* did comment on the way in which the ballet "ended with some wild and dramatic dancing by the ensemble of spirits."¹⁰⁴ Hovenden found the story "lightly sketched" but enjoyed Denis Meyer's portrayal of "Don Juan", which she regarded as "ingenious" despite being somewhat "shy".¹⁰⁵ The reviewer of *Die Vaderland* likewise failed to express an opinion on the ballet's choreographic merit but acknowledged Aileen Farrell, Ivy May McDonald and Staff for their outstanding performances.¹⁰⁶

Staff chose *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, with set and costume designs after Bakst's original concept, because of his admiration for Nijinsky as well as his long affinity with the work. Norma Miller remembered how

Frank always spoke of *L'Après-midi d'un faune* with affection. I think it was one of his favourite roles because he always enjoyed performing it and he was excellent as the Faun. He admired that sort of choreography because it was so different, and he related so well to it because his own choreography was often very different and equally avant-garde.¹⁰⁷

It was unanimously agreed that Staff was arguably one of the finest twentieth-century interpreters of Nijinsky's Faun. Adele Samuels explains:

First of all Frank was beautiful and the whole dynamism, his whole body, came right across the stage. He was tangible and at the same time dynamic and there was absolutely no mistaking or misinterpreting what was going on. The angle of Frank's head was perfect: two degrees higher and it would have been wrong. Secondly, he had this straight back with this incredible carriage that made him perfect for the role. Finally, all his movements were sharp and in keeping with the character because he understood exactly what he was doing. There was an intelligence to his interpretation which is often something

¹⁰⁴ Hovenden, *The Star* (10 February 1955), 11.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Die Vaderland* (10 February 1955), 4.

¹⁰⁷ Norma Miller, interview, 23 November 1993.

lacking in other dancers who tend to concentrate too much on doing the steps or trying to achieve a two dimensional effect -- that exact degree of angularity that is intrinsic to the part. One could see that when Frank danced the role it looked perfectly natural, which came from an intelligent thought process behind the actual interpretation.¹⁰⁸

Hendrik Davel, who later danced with several leading ballet companies in London from 1964 to 1972 including the Royal Ballet, London Festival Ballet, Walter Gore's London Ballet and Norman McDowell's London Dance Theatre, was probably the most experienced -- and most qualified -- to comment on Staff's portrayal of the Faun:

I think that Frank was a wonderful Faun. He was excellent. I think of all the Faun's I saw, Frank was probably the most authentic to what I imagine Nijinsky had done. And the way he walked was so perfect. Frank was a very quick dancer, he was terribly quick and what impressed me about him in *Faun* was the way in which he would do two brittle, very sharp movements and turn. Also, he had a great sensuality at the same time that is so absolutely vital for the role.¹⁰⁹

Bernice Lloyd was of the opinion that Staff's Faun was unsurpassed because "he had the intelligence, intellect, thought and depth to portray a role as complex as the Faun."¹¹⁰ She went on to say that "Frank was extremely masculine, so the climax towards the end of the ballet was completely convincing."¹¹¹ Bernice Lloyd's final remarks regarding Staff's characterization are particularly interesting -- and indeed noteworthy -- as she claims that despite having seen "Rudolph Nureyev dance the Faun in New York, he really wasn't a patch on Frank's powerful reading of the part."¹¹² And Kendrew Lascelles, who despite only joining the South African Ballet Company in 1957, remembers vividly seeing Staff in *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. Lascelles comments:

¹⁰⁸ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

¹⁰⁹ Davel, interview, 21 September 1992,

¹¹⁰ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Frank's performances of the Faun were an unforgettable experience because of its sensual and mesmerizing quality that also happened to be brilliantly danced. One must not forget however that the Faun Frank danced was the original Faun taught to him by Stanislas Idzikowsky who had been one of Frank's teachers in England and who danced with Diaghilev's Ballets-Russes company. If my memory serves me correctly, Idzikowsky had also performed the role of the Faun with the Diaghilev company. Happily Frank prized it.¹¹³

Michael Venables recollected how "Delysia Blake said that dancing opposite Frank in this ballet was frightening. He would project such sexuality that she almost felt she was about to be raped on stage in front of the audience."¹¹⁴

The casting of *L'Après-midi d'un faune* was almost predictable with Staff in the leading role and Delysia Blake, whose professional association with Staff went back to 1946 when both worked with the Cape Town Ballet Club, as the leading nymph. Blake's entourages of supporting nymphs, in accordance with Nijinsky's traditional six, were represented by Victoria Carlson, Judy Cohen, Sylvia Davis, Bernice Lloyd, Monica Mason and Anitra Shore.¹¹⁵

The press was in agreement that *L'Après-midi d'un faune* was the decided highlight of the evening, with Pat Hovenden commending Staff and Blake on their performance:

Frank Staff's dancing was seen at its best in the slow, stylized movements of the Nijinsky ballet "L'Après [*sic*] Midi d'un Faune" to which Delysia Blake contributed a fine performance as the nymph.¹¹⁶

Die Vaderland described the ballet as "the highlight of the [evening's] performance...in which Frank Staff performed the role of the lithe

¹¹³ Kendrew Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

¹¹⁴ Venables, "Recollections," 6.

¹¹⁵ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 9-12 February 1955.

¹¹⁶ Hovenden, *The Star* (10 February 1955), 11.

Faun. His movements were perfectly controlled.”¹¹⁷ The critic of *Die Transvaler* was equally enthusiastic about Staff’s performance -- and indeed about the ballet as a whole -- and came to the conclusion that

the best performance of the evening was surely *L’Après-midi d’un faune* with choreography by Nijinsky. Frank Staff was an elegant Faun and the costumes by Bakst and music by Debussy (unfortunately on record) were [likewise] good. Delysia Blake as the nymph also deserves praise.¹¹⁸



Plate 5: Frank Staff as the Faun in the 1946 production of *L’Après-midi d’un faune* for the South African National Ballet, which he then produced for the South African Ballet Company in 1955.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ *Die Vaderland*, (10 February 1955), 4.

¹¹⁸ *Die Transvaler* (11 February 1955), 9.

¹¹⁹ Photograph by Anne Fischer, 1946, Cape Town City Ballet Archive, Cape Town.



Plate 6: Delysia Blake as the leading nymph with Frank Staff as the Faun in Staff's 1946 production of *L'Après-midi d'un faune* for the South African National Ballet, which he then revived for the South African Ballet Company in 1955.¹²⁰

The choice of *Peter and the Wolf* to end the evening's performance seemed a logical one. Shelagh Miller contended that "*Peter and the Wolf* is a marvellous way to end the evening because it leaves the audience and the dancers with a feeling of sheer exhilaration."¹²¹

In addition, Staff was able to utilize nine of his dancers with himself as "the hunter". The balance of the cast were as follows: Jacqueline St. Clere as "Peter"; Anitra Shore as "a bird"; Aileen Farrell as "a duck"; Victoria Carlson as "a cat"; André Retief as "a wolf"; Hendrik Davel as "Grandfather"; and Ivy May McDonald, Sylvia Davis, Bernice Lloyd and Staff as "the hunters". The set and costume designs were

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Shelagh Miller, interview, 4 June 1995.

faithfully reproduced from Guy Sheppard's original 1940 designs for Ballet Rambert.

Hendrik Davel explained why *Peter and the Wolf* proved itself an important milestone, particularly where his own career was concerned, as well as for the audience:

Peter and the Wolf was different from what one had been led to believe ballet was about. It had a charm and that's what made it so exciting. Unlike a ballet like *Swan Lake*, which had cardboard characters, *Peter and the Wolf* had real characters that portrayed real things in life and one could relate to them, which had a big influence on me wanting to become a ballet dancer. Personally, it was a total realization that there was more to ballet than just white frocks as in the case of *Les Sylphides* or *Swan Lake*. And I think it was a revelation for audiences as well who had come to associate ballet only with works like *Sylphides* or *Swan Lake*. They realized there was more to ballet than what the classics had to offer.¹²²

Peter and the Wolf went on to prove its unmistakable dependability for always "providing pure pleasure".¹²³ The critic of *Die Transvaler* lauded Jacqueline St. Clere for her endearing "Russian boy" and Aileen Farrell for her charming interpretation of the "winsome 'ugly duck'".¹²⁴ The only drawback of the performance, according to the critic, was the evident lack of an orchestra that resulted in the *tempi* being too fast, alternatively too slow.¹²⁵ Without the slightest hint of being remotely disturbed by the recording, the critic of *Die Vaderland* considered the work "specially amusing" and singled out Jacqueline St. Clere for her "mischievous Russian boy" and Aileen Farrell's duck that would make "any wolf utter long shrills of admiration."¹²⁶ *The Star* suggested that *Peter and the Wolf*, together with *Divertimento*, reflected Staff's "reservoir of choreographic ideas only waiting for an opportunity to bubble out."¹²⁷ Aileen Farrell was mentioned once

¹²² Davel, interview, 21 September 1992.

¹²³ *Die Transvaler* (11 February 1955), 9.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Die Vaderland* (10 February 1955), 4.

more for her amusing portrayal of the duck and the critic concluded by stating that *Peter and the Wolf* was “the most elaborate and amusing of the examples of Frank Staff’s choreography in the programme.”¹²⁸ Michael Venables recalled some particularly memorable moments, not least of which were the “hilariously camp huntresses with exaggerated blunderbusses.” He also remembered how rehearsals for this specific ballet were always “sparkling with creative ideas, with Frank enjoying himself hugely.”¹²⁹ *Peter and the Wolf* subsequently became one of the company’s signature tunes and was often revived during the course of the company’s history.



Plate 7: Jacqueline St. Clere as “Peter” jumping for joy in the 1955 production of *Peter and the Wolf*.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Hovenden, *The Star* (10 February 1955), 11.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Venables, “Recollections,” 6.

¹³⁰ “Jacqueline St. Clere,” Photograph, as reproduced in the *Rand Daily Mail* (2 December 1955), 7.



Plate 8: Posed photograph of Jacqueline St. Clere as “Peter” and Aileen Farrell as “the Duck” in the 1955 production of *Peter and the Wolf*.¹³¹

The South African Ballet’s first season at the University Great Hall was a resounding success. *Die Transvaler* hailed the company as

worthy of bearing the name ‘professional’. The dancing was at times outstanding and full of promise for the future. The performances are truly worth seeing.¹³²

Die Vaderland echoed similar sentiments, stating how the first performance was “worth the trouble” and that “this performance absolutely earns the support of a public who appreciates art and [who] wants to witness the extension of a natural South African ballet.”¹³³

¹³¹ “Peter and the Duck,” Photograph, as reproduced in the *Rand Daily Mail* (27 May 1955), 6.

¹³² *Die Transvaler* (11 February 1955), 9.

Pat Hovenden commended Staff's choreography for its "skill, versatility and wit" and thought Staff was "a noble dancer".¹³⁴ She congratulated the company as a whole for "the brilliance of its opening performance" and hoped the South African Ballet Company would be an incentive for South African dancers to remain in this country rather than to pursue dancing careers abroad:

The time has come when South African dancers -- as with other products of this country, most of the best have been exported -- will coalesce in permanent and professional South African ballet on its home ground.¹³⁵

¹³³ *Die Vaderland* (10 February 1955), 4.

¹³⁴ Hovenden, *The Star* (10 February 1955), 11.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FOUR

In May 1955, Staff's company performed for one night only at the Benoni Town Hall. Presented on 10 May 1955,¹ the programme repeated the four ballets given at the University Great Hall in February of that year. The *Benoni City Times en Oosrandse Nuus* proudly referred to the company as "the first professional all-South African Ballet"² and explained that the evening would begin with a comedy-styled work, *Divertimento*, and close with another comedy-styled work, *Peter and the Wolf*.³ Sandwiched in between the two were *Don Juan* and *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, which demonstrated, once again, Staff's ability to balance his programmes skilfully and sensibly. *Divertimento* was described by the *Benoni City Times en Oosrandse Nuus* as

a ballet in the French manner with an unwilling bride and an unwilling groom who 'hangs himself' before the story ends happily with everyone very much alive.⁴

No details were provided by the Benoni press on *Don Juan* or *L'Après-midi d'un faune* although brief commentary on the décor for *Peter and the Wolf* was alluded to when the reporter stated that "instead of trees there are ladders with feather dusters instead of branches."⁵ Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the press release was Staff's disclosure to take his company to Europe "to prove to the countries who produce first class ballet that the Union dancers are up to their standard."⁶ As it turned out, this never happened although certain arrangements were made in 1957 for the company to perform in Central and North Africa. But this too never transpired.

¹ Advertisement, *Benoni City Times en Oosrandse Nuus* (6 May 1955), 8.

² *Ibid.*

³ "South African Ballet will visit Benoni," *Benoni City Times en Oosrandse Nuus* (6 May 1955), 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

The Benoni performance was lauded by the *Benoni City Times en Oosrandse Nuus* in a review headed "Brilliant ballet in Benoni".⁷ *L'Après-midi d'un faune* emerged as the most popular ballet of the evening although *Peter and the Wolf* came a close second, particularly as it was "well expressed and danced with ease."⁸ The critic thought that the décor and costumes in *Peter and the Wolf* were convincing and enterprising, and wrote of how "they set the tone of the story in the correct atmosphere of childish fantasy with ladders and feather dusters portraying trees."⁹ The critic's final comment about this ballet was that although it was "one of simplicity", it nevertheless achieved a certain degree of "effectiveness."¹⁰ *Divertimento* and *Don Juan* were briefly canvassed with the former described as a "French comic ballet" and the latter as "the dramatic story of Don Juan and a flirtation with death."¹¹ The reviewer's most telling comments however were not about the ballets themselves or Staff's choreography, but rather about the high standard achieved by the company:

Proof that South African ballet is on a level with overseas countries was given to Benoni on Tuesday night...and if the standard of their performance is any criterion, they will revive a love of their art in all parts of the Union that they visit. The result is a high-class production of famous presentations interpreted in refreshing manner.¹²

The company's solitary May performance in Benoni was followed by a short tour to Kimberley. This was to mark the first time Staff would be dancing in the town of his birth since his departure in 1932, and much excitement was generated by his anticipated visit. The first time news of his projected tour became available was on 16 July 1955 when *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* published an advertisement to this

⁷ "Brilliant ballet in Benoni," *Benoni City Times en Oosrandse Nuus* (13 May 1955), 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Benoni City Times en Oosrandse Nuus* (13 May 1955), 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

effect. The company was enlarged to eighteen dancers for the tour with fourteen ladies and four men.¹³ Four performances (two matinées and two evenings) were given at the Kimberley Theatre on 29 and 30 July in a programme of works that boasted no less than four ballets. Three of the works were repeats from the company's Johannesburg season with an entirely new ballet completing the bill. The revivals were *Don Juan*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Peter and the Wolf* while the new ballet was *Symphony of Sylphs*.¹⁴

Seen as a necessary replacement for *Divertimento*, *Symphony of Sylphs* satisfied the much sought-after requirement of providing relatively conservative audiences with a befitting so-called 'white' ballet to which they were accustomed and would normally expect to see.¹⁵ No one was more aware of this than Staff himself, and "he knew local audiences at that time would object if there were not at least one white ballet in a programme."¹⁶ *Symphony of Sylphs* itself was a cheerful attempt to imitate nineteenth-century Romantic ballet with specific reference to *La Sylphide*, and, more particularly, to *La Sylphide's* movement style and costume design.¹⁷ Staff had already proved

¹³ "Frank Staff ballet premiere for city," *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (29 July 1955), 6.

¹⁴ When the ballet was first performed by the CAPAB and PACT Ballet companies in the 1960's Staff decided to vary its name by replacing the preposition "of" with "for". The ballet then became known as *Symphony for Sylphs*. To avoid confusion the ballet is referred to hereafter as *Symphony of Sylphs* except where interviewees of later productions refer to it as *Symphony for Sylphs*.

¹⁵ 'White' ballets are those making predominant use of traditional white tutus, either of the long or short variety. They often relate to a single, plotless work such as *Les Sylphides* or, perhaps, Serge Lifar's *Suite en blanc* (1943), or they take the form of a single act from a longer work such as Act 11 of *Giselle* or Act 11 of *La Sylphide*, or even the lakeside scenes from *Swan Lake*.

¹⁶ Venables, "Recollections," 5.

¹⁷ There were two productions of *La Sylphide* in the nineteenth-century. The first was created in 1832 by Filippo Taglioni for his daughter Marie, and the second was in 1836 by August Bournonville for his pupil, Lucile Grahn. Although both concern the same subject matter, Taglioni's choreography has been lost. In 1972, Pierre Lacotte attempted a reconstruction of Taglioni's choreography using lithographs of the Romantic period. But this cannot be regarded as an authentic Taglioni production but rather as Lacotte's impression of the choreography and, hence, of the ballet itself. Bournonville's choreography on the other hand has endured with some minor adjustments and is the version known today. It is this version Staff knew although his reference is clearly to that of Taglioni's production -- given that he

himself a master satirist with the various *Czernyana* ballets where the Romantic Ballet, among others and especially *Giselle*, had become an unsuspecting victim perfectly encapsulated in the two Staff episodes entitled "Visions" and "Presque Classique". And in *Peter and the Wolf* Staff made further reference to *Giselle* where the duck's caricatured movements for her reluctant but conveniently veiled exist resembled the Queen of the Wilis. *Catarina, ou la Fille du bandit* illustrated Staff's first full-scale attempt at achieving a burlesque interpretation of an entire Romantic Ballet. *Giselle*, however, was not accentuated in *Symphony of Sylphs* because Staff only wished to concentrate on *La Sylphide*.

The costume designs in *Symphony of Sylphs* were directly "after the Taglioni prints"¹⁸ while the décor was entrusted to Ivor Kruger.¹⁹ The ballet itself was only partly inspired by lithographs of the nineteenth-century -- and not the eighteenth-century as *Die Burger*²⁰ and *The Cape Times*²¹ incorrectly reported almost a decade later -- as Staff specified that *Symphony of Sylphs* was really "a ballet in the Classical manner, based on incidents in the ballet 'La Sylphide'."²² He said that although *Symphony of Sylphs* illustrated a contemporary choreographic interpretation based on Romantic lithographs,²³ it was not important that the public should at once recognize his allusion to *La Sylphide* as the ballet would still be humorous. There can of course be no doubt that Staff's direct reference to *La Sylphide* (set in Scotland) was indicated by his choreographic style and through the use of Romantic-

acknowledges the costume designs 'after the Taglioni prints' -- which obviously relates to lithographs of Marie Taglioni dancing in her father's production of the ballet.

¹⁸ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955.

¹⁹ Theatre Programme: *Open air ballet*, The South African Ballet, Vosloo Park, Vereeniging, performance 22 October 1955.

²⁰ "Drie ballette in Orkes se Feesseisoen" [Three ballets in Orchestra's Festival season,] *Die Burger* (15 April 1964), 2.

²¹ "A triple bill by University Ballet at the City Hall," *The Cape Times* (14 April 1964), 4.

²² Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-25 November 1955.

²³ *The Cape Times* (14 April 1964), 4.

styled bell-shaped tutus one finds in Act 11 of *La Sylphide*. Staff's ballet matched these designs and was embellished with tartan sashes for the ladies draped across their shoulders and around their waists. The men's costumes were likewise decorated with tartan sashes and matching tartan caps.²⁴ It was also decided that the hairstyles for the ladies should accord to the traditional Romantic ballet convention, with a coronet of large roses on their heads. This idea, incidentally, was stylistically similar to the same hair-style of the four ballerinas in Anton Dolin's 1941 version of Jules Perrot's 1845 *Pas de quatre*, which itself dates from the height of the Romantic era in ballet.²⁵

Staff's choreographic allusion to *La Sylphide* was partly evident in the middle section of the ballet and the first *allegro vivace* movement, which according to Bernice Lloyd was really the Scottish part of the ballet in which the dancers wore traditional Scottish caps and tartan sashes.²⁶ And this was still evident in Staff's 1964 production for CAPAB Ballet where, despite making amends to the choreography, he retained the Romantic quality without disturbing the general framework of the ballet. Bernice Lloyd recalled further that in the Scottish section, "the dancers performed the exact same step one finds in the Scottish reel from Act 1 of *La Sylphide*."²⁷ Chrysteen Fuller, who danced in the 1964 CAPAB Ballet production, was able to confirm that the Scottish flavour from the original 1955 production remained intact when she explained how "the Scottish movement was all footwork, steps of *batterie* and quick movements where we did a little highland reel."²⁸ Fuller recalled at least one further hint of *La*

²⁴ Sylvia Davis recalls the men wearing traditional Scottish kilts.

²⁵ Perrot's *Pas de quatre* of 1845 paid tribute to the four leading Romantic ballerinas of the day: Marie Taglioni; Fanny Cerrito; Lucile Grahn; and Carlotta Grisi. There was a fifth, equally famous, Romantic ballerina named Fanny Elssler who, for some reason, was not available for Perrot's 1845 ballet. The *Pas de quatre* was a *divertissement* of pure dance that concentrated on the ballerinas' technical skills as opposed to their acting ability.

²⁶ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Chrysteen Fuller, interview with author, 4 November 1991, Cape Town. tape recording.

Sylphide where one of the men, presumably a pale imitation of the hero James in *La Sylphide*, continually searched

for the sylphs through the heather while we constantly eluded him even although we were actually with him a lot of the time and even dancing around him. Every now and then we would disappear either behind him or off the stage in much the same way the sylph taunts and entices James in *La Sylphide*.²⁹

Since *La Sylphide* had its genesis in the Romantic period with its own unique style of ballet, it was understandable that Staff wanted to incorporate some of the more typical characteristics of the Romantic style in *Symphony of Sylphs*. This was especially noticeable in his use of a “very relaxed fifth positions of the arms”,³⁰ and for the many body positions where the dancers had to appear “off-balance.”³¹ But nowhere was the style more prominent than in the *adagio pas de deux* with its forward, leaning arabesques. Ivy May McDonald, who originally danced the *pas de deux* with Norman Lindsay, remarked that

the *pas de deux* was beautiful, and Frank incorporated a solo for Norman [Lindsay] and myself as part of the *pas de deux*. He tried to keep to the style of the Romantic Ballet but some of the music didn't allow for it, so he had to make choreographic changes although it made no difference because nobody really knew, and besides, the *pas de deux* was still a work of genius. *Symphony of Sylphs* was a milestone in my career as a dancer because Frank wrote the work specifically for me or with me in mind, and it was my first big, real solo role. The *pas de deux* itself was very classical and someone once said I was very prosy in the part so I started putting all sorts of things into it. Frank, however, said I should not change it because that would make it more of a demi-character part and that was not what he really intended, nor was it supposed to be. He wanted me to retain the style of the period, which was very difficult, because I was unaccustomed to performing movements leaning forwards at a very strange slant that felt very awkward.³²

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

³² McDonald, interview, 14 February 1997.

Veronica Paeper, who danced the *pas de deux* on tour in CAPAB Ballet's production, corroborated what Ivy May McDonald had said by adding how difficult the style of the *pas de deux* was, essentially because "Frank insisted the movements be performed perfectly at terrifying angles."³³ Chrysteen Fuller added that the *pas de deux* reminded her of a similar *pas de deux* from *La Sylphide* where the ballerina "drifted out of the gentleman's hands"³⁴ while Bernice Lloyd implied the beginning was not dissimilar to certain aspects of the second *pas de deux* from Act 11 of *Giselle*. In Lloyd's view, this *pas de deux*, like the *Giselle* Act 11 *pas de deux*, "began quite peacefully with the ballerina executing a very high *développé à la seconde* before turning to the arabesque line and continuing with those marvellous lifts Frank was so wonderful at choreographing."³⁵ Chrysteen Fuller noted further that the lifts in the *pas de deux* were exactly the same as those travelling lifts found in the *pas de deux* from Fokine's *Les Sylphides* where the ballerina is lifted and carried across the stage on the diagonal. And Michael Venables indicated yet another similarity between Staff's ballet and *Les Sylphides* in the opening movement where the corps were clustered in the centre of the stage, like "an island of white tutus from which one arm and then another was raised as the dancers broke away."³⁶ A further resemblance between *Les Sylphides* and *Symphony of Sylphs* was made by John Simons, a seasoned performer with CAPAB Ballet since its inception in 1963, who stated that the action of the sylphs in the last movement of Staff's 1964 CAPAB version was very much like

the same sort of nonsense one finds with the 'miseries' in *Les Sylphides*. But in Frank's ballet the music itself suggested the frivolity rather than the movement itself. And Frank, as everyone knows, was exceptionally musical.³⁷

³³ Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

³⁴ Fuller, interview, 4 November 1991.

³⁵ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

³⁶ Venables, "Recollections," 5.

³⁷ John Simons, interview with author, 24 March 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

Denise Schultze, a skilled performer with PACT Ballet during the 1960's and another to dance the *pas de deux* in PACT's 1966 production of *Symphony for Sylphs*, echoed similar sentiments to those expressed by John Simons, particularly where Staff's musicality was concerned:

Symphony of Sylphs, quite simply, was a ballet that interpreted the music. And then one gets another interpretation of that same music, for example in [George] Balanchine's *Symphony in C*, which is entirely different, but just as valid in its own way. I think Frank's ballet, apart from using sylphs for its subject, was just a wonderful interpretation of the music. If people can express that in their dancing, and not just dance it but be able to express it musically with all those little nuances like the sylphs chatting and gossiping away, then the ballet is very clever and the choreographer has succeeded. That, in fact, is where one sees a choreographer's ability for crafting beautiful movement, which is actually a gift, and this is what happened in *Symphony for Sylphs*. Taking the mickey out of sylphs was purely incidental because there were some very serious parts in it as well, for instance, the most beautiful Romantic *pas de deux* which really had nothing to do with sylphs and everything to do with interpreting beautiful music.³⁸

Perhaps Chrysteen Fuller best summed up the influences in this ballet when she said it paid tribute to Bournonville, Fokine, Taglioni and, of course, to Staff's "own innate musicality."³⁹ The music to which the interviewees referred was Georges Bizet's *Symphony in C*. Twelve dancers, including Staff, made up the original cast of *Symphony of Sylphs* with Victoria Carlson, Sylvia Davis, Zelide Jeppe, Valda Joubert, Bernice Lloyd, Monica Mason, Ivy May McDonald, Jacqueline St. Clere and Adele Samuels in the *allegro vivo* section; Ivy May McDonald and Norman Lindsay in the *adagio (pas de deux)*; Adele Samuels, Jacqueline St. Clere, André Retief and Staff in the first *allegro vivace* movement; and the whole cast making up the second *allegro vivace* movement.

³⁸ Denise Schultze, interview with author, 14 August 1991, Cape Town, tape recording.

³⁹ Fuller, interview, 4 November 1992.



Plate 9: Ivy May McDonald, left, Jacqueline St. Clere, centre, and Bernice Lloyd, right, in costume for *Symphony of Sylphs* (1955).⁴⁰



Plate 10: Posed photograph of CAPAB Ballet's 1964 production of *Symphony for Sylphs* with, from left to right, Angeline Georgeu, Vivian Tomlinson, Lynette Miller and Chrysteen Fuller in front.⁴¹

⁴⁰ "First night at the ballet," Photograph, as reproduced in *The Star* (22 November 1955), 13.

⁴¹ Photograph by Jansje Wissema, 1964, Cape Town City Ballet Archive, Cape Town.



Plate 11: CAPAB Ballet's *Symphony for Sylphs* (1964) with, from left to right, Chrysteen Fuller, Lynette Miller and Angeline Georgeau observing Vivian Tomlinson as the Scotsman looking for the sylphs.⁴²



Plate 12: Lynette Miller, left, Bea Beele, Front, and Ingrid Sebba, right, with Victor Hughes and Irene Siegfried in CAPAB's 1964 production.⁴³

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Photograph by Tony Williams-Short, as reproduced in *CAPAB Ballet - 21 years: 1963-1984* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Press, 1984), plate 2.

The press prophetically forewarned the Kimberley public that “early booking is advisable to avoid disappointment”.⁴⁴ And closer to opening night, *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* ran three articles about the company, its repertoire and artistic director. The first of these, headed “Ballet season for Kimberley” and published on 26 July 1955, announced rather majestically that

Kimberley is eagerly awaiting the season in the Kimberley Theatre on Friday and Saturday of the South African Ballet Company under the direction of Frank Staff. Staff...has achieved worldwide recognition as a producer, dancer and choreographer. He exemplifies the success of South Africans who have set out to make their names overseas. It is a tribute to Staff's courage and perseverance that after further training in England he has become one of the leading figures in ballet.⁴⁵

The greater part of the article however served to introduce several company members to the public, with Delysia Blake and Jacqueline St. Clere singled out for their impressive track record with overseas ballet companies. Others recognized for their promise included Bernice Lloyd, who was referred to as someone “likely to make a name for herself in ballet”, and Ivy May McDonald for being “a dancer with a fine classical technique.”⁴⁶ André Retief, likewise, was considered “a talented and versatile young man.”⁴⁷ The second article, appearing on 29 July 1955, surveyed the company's Kimberley repertoire with equal coverage given to each ballet. First to be mentioned, naturally, was the new ballet, *Symphony of Sylphs*. The reporter acknowledged the work as a world première and stated further that rehearsals for *Symphony of Sylphs* had already been in progress for a period of about six weeks.⁴⁸ Amusingly, and although clearly incorrect, the journalist concerned said this ballet was “based on the Prince of Taglioni.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Advertisement, *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (16 July 1955), 2.

⁴⁵ “Ballet season for Kimberley,” *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (26 July 1955), 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ “Staff ballet,” *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (29 July 1955), 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Commentary regarding *Don Juan* however was more accurately and effectively précised with the article stating how

it [*Don Juan*] piquantly depicts the devil masquerading as Don Juan's valet, ushering two of the women in his life into Hell, and subsequently Don Juan himself.⁵⁰

Observations about *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Peter and the Wolf* were not particularly enlightening as the information given was probably gleaned from earlier reports. *L'Après-midi d'un faune* however was considered to be "one of the world's classics."⁵¹

The third article also appeared on 29 July and was decidedly the most illuminating of all three. This was because Staff broached the topic of his vision for South African ballet in one of his infrequent interviews, which, despite its brevity, provided a unique glimpse of what he had envisioned for the company. His plan was forthright, ambitious and adventurous:

It is my ambition to take a ballet company consisting of South Africans to North Africa and then to Israel. After this we will tour Italy, France and possibly England as well. The most important thing is that we want to bring all the members of the company back to South Africa. I think it would serve as useful propaganda for this country as well, which is needed at present.⁵²

The article concluded with Staff's complimentary remarks about the Kimberley Theatre. In his opinion,

it compares with the standard of any intimate theatre in the world. The stage is almost as large as the auditorium; an unobstructed view can be obtained from everywhere and it is in good taste. So many theatres today resemble cinemas.⁵³

⁵⁰ "Staff ballet," *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (29 July 1955), 6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² "Ballet has taken him round [the] world," *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (29 July 1955), 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Casting for the ballets were more or less the same as for the company's inaugural February season of 1955. Only three significant changes were made: André Retief substituted for Denis Meyer as "Don Juan"; Ivor Kruger, who had designed Staff's *Divertimento* and was now making his début as a dancer, was seen as a replacement for André Retief in *Peter and the Wolf* as "a wolf" while Retief himself took over the Grandfather role in *Peter and the Wolf* from Hendrik Davel, who had left the company. The ladies performing major roles included Victoria Carlson, Sylvia Davis, Valda Joubert, Bernice Lloyd, Ivy May McDonald, Adele Samuels and Jacqueline St. Clere.

The programme was reviewed in *The Diamond Fields Advertiser*, and in an unprecedented step the review appeared on the first page of the newspaper, which was considered quite unusual in those days as reviews were normally restricted to the leisure and entertainment page. Perhaps this was because Staff's visit to Kimberley, which was certainly very well received, was also calculated as something of a theatrical milestone. The critic, who remained anonymous, immediately recognized Staff's potential as a choreographer of distinction and came to the conclusion that it was

little wonder Kimberley's own Frank Staff has reached the top flight in the world of ballet. His choreography is outstanding and this, supplemented by superb dancing, makes him a product of which South Africa may well be proud.⁵⁴

L'Après-midi d'un faune emerged as the most outstanding feature of the evening. Staff's performance was acclaimed for its "sensitive interpretation" while Victoria Carlson's delivery of the leading nymph was regarded as "a fine performance."⁵⁵ Staff's own choreographic contribution to the programme "did him the utmost credit."⁵⁶ *Don Juan* was hailed for being "cleverly drawn" and displaying "a wealth

⁵⁴ "Frank Staff shines as dancer, choreographer," *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (30 July 1955), 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

of inventiveness.”⁵⁷ André Retief’s reading of the title role was considered “impressive” while Victoria Carlson, Ivy May McDonald and Jacqueline St. Clere were “outstanding.”⁵⁸ The critic praised the manner whereby “the ballet was brought to an exciting climax with some dramatic dancing by the ensemble of spirits from Hell.”⁵⁹

Critical commentary regarding *Symphony of Sylphs* was disappointing with no real analysis of either the ballet’s choreographic content or any characteristic motifs Staff might have adopted from the Romantic ballet. The only hint of the ballet’s choreographic form was where “the sequence was cleverly broken into by a quaint touch of Scots humour danced by Staff and Jaqueline [*sic*] St. Clere.”⁶⁰ General commentary about the ballet tended to be more in the nature of rather mundane and superficial references that might have applied to almost any one of the other works. Hence, the ballet was simply referred to as “an impressive work on classical lines.”⁶¹ The critic did, however, acknowledge that it “was well danced by the company.”⁶² Criticisms regarding *Peter and the Wolf* were not particularly telling either. The critic in fact only mentioned the participants in the ballet without any commentary on individual performances except for Jacqueline St. Clere, who apparently “gave a wholly refreshing performance as Peter, a role for which her vivacity made her the perfect choice....”⁶³ The ballet nevertheless managed to elicit one additional comment where the critic said it demonstrated yet another “excellent example of Frank Staff’s versatility as a choreographer.”⁶⁴ No further reviews appeared.

⁵⁷ *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (30 July 1955), 1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ “Staff ballet,” *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (29 July 1955), 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

It was not until November 1955 that the company would perform a full evening's programme of ballet in Johannesburg again. However, they did participate in Aileen Farrell's "Programme of Ballet" at the Johannesburg Reps. (Alexander) Theatre during May of that year. Staff in fact had agreed to allow performances of *Peter and the Wolf* with his company appearing as guest artists at what was essentially a children's show Farrell was arranging.⁶⁵ Then, on 22 October 1955, the company performed in Vereeniging at Vosloo Park followed by two performances in Pretoria at the City Hall on 2 and 3 November.⁶⁶ They returned to Johannesburg for a second season at the University Great Hall from 21 to 26 November 1955.

Several new company members were in evidence for the Vereeniging and Pretoria performances that included the dancer Joan Mosselson,⁶⁷ who would later dance many significant roles for Staff. Gone were Delysia Blake, Judy Cohen, Hendrik Davel, Aileen Farrell, Denis Meyer and Anitra Shore. The Company's dancers now numbered fifteen (with Staff as one of the dancers), which was exactly the same number for their inaugural February season in Johannesburg.

⁶⁵ The other ballets, all performed by children, included *Pixie's gift to the blind Girl*, *The Circus* and *The Barn Dance*. Performances were held from 29 to 31 May 1955.

"Ballet," *Rand Daily Mail* (20 May 1955), 6.

⁶⁶ The company shared its Pretoria performances with Roshild Leibbrandt's company of dancers, and it was one of those rare occasions that the company performed with an orchestra, which, in this case, was led by Pierre de Groot under the baton of Peter Rorke. Michael Venables described the orchestra as nothing more than "a scratch orchestra of about 15 players."

Venables, "Recollections," 5.

"Triumph for Pretoria's Ballet Theatre," *The Pretoria News* (3 November 1955), 5.

⁶⁷ In 1958, Joan Mosselson changed her surname to Rochelle (her middle name) at the request of Staff and Brian Brooke who thought the surname Mosselson "too long" for the billboards.

Undated letter from Joan Lubner (Mosselson) to author, dispatched on 6 January 1996.

Staff introduced a new ballet for the Vereeniging and Pretoria touring programme entitled *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, to which he added *Symphony of Sylphs*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Peter and the Wolf*. Interestingly, both *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* and *Symphony of Sylphs* had not been planned by Staff in terms of his "Provisional Repertoire" although both were viewed as necessary additions that were later seen in Johannesburg as well. *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* was not unlike *Symphony of Sylphs*: it was comedy-styled and based on famous works of art, only this time Staff took his inspiration from paintings of dancers at the Paris Opéra by Edgar Hilaire Germain Degas.⁶⁸ A programme note by Staff went so far as to acknowledge the work as being "after the Degas Studies of the Ballet".⁶⁹ But Staff's use of Degas' paintings for his choreographic inspiration was neither unique nor original: Frederick Ashton had already explored a similar theme in 1932 when he made *Foyer de Danse* to music by Lord Berners "in which he [Ashton] translated the world of Degas into action..."⁷⁰ In 1946, Lionel Bradley wrote of how *Foyer de Danse* "has not been equalled by any of the other attempts to translate the pictorial world of Degas into movement."⁷¹ He was correct, as the only other attempt to create a ballet based on the Degas paintings was Serge Lifar's *Entre deux rondes* of 1940.⁷² It seems quite plausible therefore that Staff's ballet was probably inspired more by Ashton than by Degas as the characters in Staff's ballet were taken directly from Ashton's creation, namely a "Maître de Ballet", a bevy of "Coryphées", a star ballerina called "L'Étoile" and "Un Abonné", which Staff renamed the

⁶⁸ The distinguished French Impressionist artist, Edgar Degas (1834-1917), was particularly fond of drawing and painting ballet dancers. His work tends to depict the dancers more in a studio setting or backstage rather than in performance, and he was clearly more interested in colour, light and shade than in the dancers themselves or the actual ballets represented.

⁶⁹ Theatre Programme: *Open air ballet*, 22 October 1955.

⁷⁰ Bradley, *Rambert*, 13.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷² There was of course Ninette de Valois' *Bar aux Folies-Bergère* (1934), which was not inspired by Degas, but rather by Édouard Manet's (1832-1883) painting of the same name. *Bar aux Folies-Bergère* was de Valois' attempt to recreate the nineteenth-century world of French painter Henri Toulouse-Lautrec and the popular can-can.

“Patron”. Moreover, Staff knew the Ashton ballet intimately, having danced the “Maître de Ballet” as an alternative cast when the ballet was revived after Staff had arrived in England. Other similarities included their costume design and choreographic structures. In spite of being “after Degas”,⁷³ the costume designs in *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”* were identical to those found in *Foyer de Danse*, which was also “after Degas”.⁷⁴ Both had similar settings although in *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”* the studio atmosphere was more pronounced because of the set design representing a Paris studio whereas Ashton had to make do with the limitations of the Mercury Theatre stage. Choreographic structures were almost identical: Staff’s ballet, like Ashton’s, also contained a *barre*, an *adage*, a *pas de deux* and some “stretching at the barre...”⁷⁵ And not unlike *Foyer de Danse*, which David Vaughan called a combination of the “classic with demi-caractère movement”,⁷⁶ *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”* also had its own proportion of serious dancing juxtaposed with humorous elements. Visual sources indicate certain similarities between the two ballets, especially where their respective costume designs are concerned.



Plate 13: Frederick Ashton’s *Foyer de danse* (1932) with Alicia Markova as “L’Étoile” and the six “Coryphées”.⁷⁷

⁷³ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955.

⁷⁴ Bradley, *Rambert*, 68.

⁷⁵ Vaughan, *Ashton*, 80.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁷⁷ Photograph by Bertram Park, as reproduced in *Sixteen years of Ballet Rambert* (London: Hinrichsen, 1946), plate 18.



Plate 14: Frank Staff's *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* (1955) with, from left to right, Monica Mason, Bernice Lloyd, Valda Joubert, Jacqueline St. Clere, Adele Samuels, Victoria Carlson, Zelide Jeppe and Joan Mosselson.⁷⁸

While not contesting the possibility of Ashton's influence, Bernice Lloyd remarked that Staff's ballet was strongly reminiscent of August Bournonville's *Konservatoriet* (1849),⁷⁹ or *Conservatoire* as it is also known:

I was not aware of it at the time but when I saw Bournonville's *Conservatoire* many years later I suddenly remembered having seen something very similar some years before. Then Frank's *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* came to mind and I knew at once

⁷⁸ "The ladies of the ballet," Photograph, as reproduced in *The Star* (19 November 1955), 9.

⁷⁹ *Konservatoriet* was Bournonville's tribute to the famous French-born dancer/teacher Auguste Vestris (1760-1842) who had been Bournonville's mentor in Paris. Although *Konservatoriet* was choreographed in two acts, the work is best remembered for its classroom scene in which Bournonville captured the very atmosphere of a typical Vestris ballet class at the Paris Conservatory of Dance.

where he had got his ideas from. *Conservatoire* was a nineteenth-century ballet so it's quite obvious which came first and which was derivative. Both were classroom ballets with a striking similarity in their choreographic styles and structures: *Conservatoire* begins with the dancers entering the classroom and warming up before proceeding with a barre whereas in *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* we walked in, put our ballet bags down and then went to the barre where Monsieur "X" would teach us a barre. I can remember that in the *battements glissé* exercise I would carry on with the *glissé derrière* so that the girl behind me used to get her foot caught with mine. It was that sort of humour which made it similar to *Conservatoire*. Then Monsieur "X" would take his favourite pupil, "L'Étoile", and they would dance a *pas de deux*, which, again, was very similar to *Conservatoire*. Also, one of the girls would try to win the affection of Monsieur "X" with a posy of flowers. There were also other incidents in Frank's ballet that stemmed directly from *Conservatoire* -- I have no doubt about that.⁸⁰



Plate 15: PACT Ballet's 1987 production of August Bournonville's *Conservatoire*, staged by Poul Gnatt.⁸¹

There is no way of telling whether Staff actually saw *Conservatoire* or not although the possibility cannot be ruled out. Likewise, Harald Lander's *Études*, choreographed for the Royal Danish Ballet in 1948 and first performed in Copenhagen before being revised in 1951 and absorbed into the repertoire of the Paris Opéra in 1952, was another influential classroom ballet Staff might have seen while in Europe.⁸²

⁸⁰ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

⁸¹ Photograph, as reproduced in *PACT Ballet Thirtieth Anniversary Season*, PACT Ballet Theatre Programme, State Theatre, Pretoria, season 4-8 May 1993.

⁸² Although purely speculative, Lander's *Études* presents yet another possibility that

In Lander's *Etudes* the action commences with *pliés* at the barre and then continues with centre practice involving both *adage* and *allegro* combinations. While the form of Staff's ballet certainly bore a resemblance to this, he went further by giving the dancers specific characters to interpret: Staff was the "Maître de Ballet" with Adele Samuels as "L'Étoile"; Perry McKann was the "Patron"; Jacqueline St. Clere and Valda Joubert were "Les Méchantes". Victoria Carlson, Zelide Jeppe, Monica Mason, Joan Mosselson and Bernice Lloyd completed the cast as "Les Corypheés".⁸³ A further distinction lay in Staff's choreographic design where the action would sometimes freeze into a living reproduction of one of Degas' pictures. This, however, may have been taken directly from Ashton's *Foyer de Danse*.

Adele Samuels and Victoria Carlson were able to confirm that Staff's ballet, not unlike *Conservatoire* or *Etudes*, began with the proverbial exercises at the barre. Carlson added that while the choreography included some stretching exercises as well, Samuels provided greater details on the ballet's content and structure when she remarked how

Frank was the ballet master, the "Maître de Ballet", and he gave us the class. I was his ballerina, "L'Étoile", which is named after the ballerina in Degas' painting titled "L'Étoile". *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* actually means the studio of Mr. "X", and that's precisely what it was: a ballet class with portable barres. The whole point was to use some of those Degas images like the girls lounging around on the barre. At the end of a phrase or the end of a movement there would be someone sitting in that characteristic Degas position where, for example, the girls are sitting with their legs apart. Frank created those Degas pictures within the choreography. We did *battements tendus* at the barre with a slightly forward look to it and our fingers held slightly forward. It was just a simple movement with a *battements tendus* to the front, to the side and then two jumps turning in the same direction. After the barre we went to the centre and continued with a *port de bras* exercise. I also recall a centre barre and the inevitable jumps. There were two mischievous "Méchantes", Jacqui [St. Clere] and Valda Joubert, the one of whom always jumped with her feet unpointed while Frank as the "Maître" would look at them, get upset and then send them off. There were also some solos and I, as the "Maître's" pet, had one of those solos and of course a *pas de deux* for myself and Frank, after which he

casts doubt on Staff's originality of ideas for *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*.

⁸³ Theatre Programme: *Open air ballet*, 22 October 1955.

would very flourishingly take a bow. I think the most significant aspect of this ballet was the way in which Frank followed the form of the music. It was so cleverly adapted that it seemed as though Prokofiev's music was written especially for this ballet.⁸⁴



Plate 16: *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* with Frank Staff as the "Maître de Ballet" supporting Adele Samuels as "L'Étoile". Jacqueline St. Clere, left, and Valda Joubert, right, in the background as two mischievous "Les Méchantes".⁸⁵

L'Atelier de Monsieur "X" was set to Prokofiev's Symphony No. 1, the "Classical", and had as its uncomplicated set a few traditional ballet barres, a spiral staircase placed centre stage and a backcloth on to which was painted a large archway to represent windows usually found in large Paris studios. Saxon Lucas⁸⁶ was responsible for

⁸⁴ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

⁸⁵ "Frankie and Johnnie coming to town," Photograph, as reproduced in the *Potchefstroom Herald* (14 May 1959), 3.

⁸⁶ Saxon Lucas was considered one of the most promising scenic designers of his generation. Only 22 years old at the time, he was born in Johannesburg and educated at St. Johns College and Hilton College in KwaZulu-Natal. In 1949 he went to England to further his education at the Crescent School under the guidance of Reginald Leefe, himself a former resident scenic designer at Stratford, and with Reginald Sayle, who was the current resident scenic artist at Stratford's Memorial

designing the décor.⁸⁷ The costumes corresponded to the style of the late Romantic period in ballet and consisted of three-quarter length white tutus for the ladies⁸⁸ with bustle bows of different colours on their backs.⁸⁹ On their legs they wore pink tights with pink ballet shoes on their feet. Cameo brooches appended to a tight fitting piece of velvet were attached to their necks⁹⁰ and across their foreheads they wore broad bands.⁹¹ Some were even required to have a fringe as part of their obligatory hairstyle.⁹² Staff wore a white shirt, to which was attached a necktie or cravat, a white jacket, dark trousers and conventional shoes. No details exist of Perry McKann's costume as the leering "Patron".⁹³

The ballet was favourably received in Pretoria with the critic of *The Pretoria News* praising the ballet and complimenting Adele Samuels on her performance of "L'Étoile":

Frank Staff's ballet after Degas...was a charming work, well dressed and presented with a pleasant humour. Here Adele Samuels, as the star of the ballet, showed herself a star indeed--graceful and lovely in movement.⁹⁴

Theatre. Lucas soon became the school's leading designer, and after completing his studies two years later, he embarked on a career with the scenic department of the Alexander Theatre in Birmingham. During the mid-1950's he returned to Johannesburg where he worked as stage manager for the Brian Brooke Theatre Company. The Staff/Lucas collaboration began in 1955 and reached fruition two years later in 1957.

"Designer for six ballets," *Rand Daily Mail* (4 January 1957), 7.

⁸⁷ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955.

⁸⁸ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

⁸⁹ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

⁹⁰ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

⁹¹ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

⁹² Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

⁹³ There are no visual sources of McKann as the "Patron", neither were interviewees able to remember what he wore or express an opinion on the costume design as this was really a small part that did not require any dancing *per se*. It is therefore assumed that he was probably dressed in a conventional period costume.

⁹⁴ *The Pretoria News* (3 November 1955), 5.

Symphony of Sylphs was equally well received in Pretoria although the reviewer of *The Pretoria News* failed to take cognizance of any Romantic innuendoes Staff might have alluded to, probably due to the critic's own ignorance of the style of the period.⁹⁵ The tendency, instead, was only to acknowledge the dancers although mention was made of the ballet in more general terms, for instance where the work was said to be one "of great beauty, the dancers achieving a lovely fluidity of movement in their graceful, weaving patterns."⁹⁶ The critic then proceeded to praise the dancers:

The Adagio by Ivy May McDonald and Norman Lindsay was particularly satisfying. Norman Lindsay has both power and personality as a dancer and Ivy May McDonald is an airy dancer, her arm movements full of grace. Jacqueline St. Clere, Frank Staff, Adele Samuels and Perry McKann were lively and delightful in the Allegro Vivace movements.⁹⁷

Perhaps the most notable aspect of *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Peter and the Wolf* were the change of casting due to several dancers leaving the company. Delysia Blake's absence gave Victoria Carlson the opportunity to portray the chief nymph in *L'Après-midi d'un faune* while Valda Joubert substituted for Carlson as one of the supporting nymphs.⁹⁸ Another new supporting nymph was Zelide Jeppe who replaced Judy Cohen. Noticeable cast changes to *Peter and the Wolf* included Bernice Lloyd as "a bird", Valda Joubert as "a duck", Norman Lindsay as "Grandfather" and Adele Samuels as one of "the hunters".⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Both Chrysteen Fuller and Veronica Paeper remarked how, even during the sixties, critics and audiences were unaware of the ballet's Romantic connotations. Paeper said it was far too sophisticated for Cape Town audiences and should have been produced in London where it would have been appreciated. Fuller added that in those days ballet was regarded as a very serious art form and certainly not something to be ridiculed. She said it was a pity that critics failed to see the more humorous side of ballet, and that it was quite in order -- and indeed quite acceptable -- to laugh at the ballet.

⁹⁶ *The Pretoria News* (3 November 1955), 5.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Theatre Programme: *Open air ballet*, 22 October 1955.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FIVE

By the time preparations for the Company's second Johannesburg season at the University Great Hall had begun, certain amendments to the composition of company dancers had already been effected, and a newly administrative body appointed. James Hanley and Naomi Stamelman joined the company for the November season thereby increasing the number of dancers to seventeen.¹ The decision to nominate several people to monitor the company's administrative affairs was certainly a step in the right direction, and the following appointments were made: Michael Venables was named as the company's Publicity Manager; Eugene Joubert, a lawyer who later became the husband of Victoria Carlson and whose sister was company dancer Valda Joubert, was chosen as the company's Chairman; Hillary Goldberg, who was the husband of Sylvia Davis,² became the Treasurer; Solly Cohen was appointed Front of House Manager; and Duncan Brodie was put in charge of the sound system and was responsible for playing the records at all performances.

Six ballets were earmarked for the Johannesburg November season, which included two repeats from the February run (*L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Peter and the Wolf*), two Johannesburg premières (*L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* and *Symphony of Sylphs*) and two completely new dramatic narrative ballets entitled *Cirque de la Mort* and *Transfigured Night*. Scheduled for presentation from 21 to 26 November 1955, Staff arranged four different programme combinations: the Monday, Tuesday and Friday evening performances (21, 22 & 25 November) comprised *Cirque de la Mort*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* and *Symphony of Sylphs* while those for the Wednesday and Thursday evening performances (23 & 24 November) consisted of *Peter and the Wolf*, *Symphony of Sylphs* and *Transfigured Night*. The

¹ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955.

² Sylvia Davis was already married to Hillary Goldberg when Staff founded the South African Ballet company. Victoria Carlson, on the other hand, only met her husband subsequent to joining the company.

Sylvia Davis, telephonic conversation with author, 25 August 1995, Johannesburg.
Victoria Carlson, telephonic conversation with author, 29 January 1996, Johannesburg.

Saturday matinée performance (26 November) catered for a potentially younger audience by offering the more light-tempered ballets that included *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, *Peter and the Wolf* and *Symphony of Sylphs* while the Saturday evening performance (26 November) featured *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, *Peter and the Wolf*, *Transfigured Night* and *Symphony of Sylphs*.³ Cast changes to *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Peter and the Wolf* were necessary as some of the dancers had left the company. In *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, Victoria Carlson replaced Delysia Blake as the leading nymph while Sylvia Davis, Bernice Lloyd and Monica Mason were joined by Zelide Jeppe, Joan Mosselson and Naomi Stamelman as the supporting nymphs. *Peter and the Wolf* also witnessed several cast changes with Bernice Lloyd and Monica Mason alternating in the role of "a bird",⁴ Norman Lindsay and André Retief sharing the part of "a wolf",⁵ Valda Joubert replacing Aileen Farrell as "a duck", Perry McKann as "Grandfather" instead of Norman Lindsay and Adele Samuels substituting for Bernice Lloyd as one of the hunters.⁶

Critical response to the two revivals was scarce -- probably because the critics wanted to concentrate more on the new works -- while *L'Après-midi d'un faune* generated only one unfavourable comment. *Peter and the Wolf* received two mentions in separate reviews. Last minute cast changes had to be made when Norman Lindsay did not arrive in time from Pretoria -- as indeed he did not arrive at all on opening night because of an usually severe thunderstorm which caused all train

³ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955. Advertisement, *The Star* (17 November 1955), 12.

⁴ Bernice Lloyd danced the bird on Wednesday 23 November and at the Saturday evening performance of 26 November while Monica Mason performed the part on Thursday 24 November and at the matinée on Saturday 26 November.

Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955.

⁵ No dates were given exactly as to when Norman Lindsay or André Retief would perform this role although *Die Vaderland* does reveal that André Retief danced the part of "a Wolf" at the Wednesday performance.

"Min belang in knap ballet" [Little interest in clever ballet,] *Die Vaderland* (24 November 1955), 4.

⁶ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955.

services from Pretoria to be disrupted.⁷ Oliver Walker of *The Star* judged *L'Après-midi d'un faune* as "the least successful [item of the programme]" because, understandably, "Mr. Staff probably had timetables not nymphs on his mind."⁸ And although Walker appreciated Staff's "worrying overworked night", he still found the performance of *L'Après-midi d'un faune* unsatisfactory, particularly as Staff himself had been partially hidden by the scenery at the beginning of the ballet, and more generally because "the dreamy eroticism never came across."⁹ *Peter and the Wolf* however seemed to fare better, and was given its usual, positive reception. The critic of *Die Vaderland* lauded the ballet for providing perfect entertainment -- especially for children -- and praised Victoria Carlson, Valda Joubert, André Retief and Jacqueline St. Clere for having "shone in their depiction of the characters in the children's story."¹⁰ *Die Transvaler* made a passing reference to the ballet for getting the most applause.¹¹

L'Atelier de Monsieur "X" and *Symphony of Sylphs* were cast with the same dancers as for the company's earlier touring programme to Pretoria and Vereeniging. Critics from the Johannesburg press agreed that both ballets were worthy additions to the company's repertoire. Oliver Walker undoubtedly gave the most comprehensive review of *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* when he wrote of how Staff successfully

linked some of Degas' best-known studies of ballet dancers with the music of Prokofiev's "Classical Symphony", an association of ideas that is a most delightful adornment of the music. Here the link-up is easy, almost automatic. There is the bored ballet teacher (Frank Staff himself in loose jacket, flowing bow and a touch of grey at the temples), the "star" pupil (Adele Samuels), who steals the limelight, the "patron" in seedy tail-coat, [and] "les mechants" [*sic*] (the naughty ones in the class), who pout and twitter resentfully because the teacher has no eyes for their twinkling toes.¹²

⁷ Amelia, "A woman's journal," *The Star* (22 November 1955), 10.

⁸ Oliver Walker, "Spirited grace of S.A. ballet dancers in new works," *The Star* (22 November 1955), 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Die Vaderland* (24 November 1955), 4.

¹¹ "Ballet," *Die Transvaler* (25 November 1955), 2.

The critic of *Die Transvaler* concurred by stating that the ballet was a “good example of outstanding collaboration between choreographer and composer.”¹³ But there was no actual collaboration between Staff and Prokofiev, the latter having died in Moscow in 1953. What the critic probably meant to say was that *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”* achieved a perfect harmony between music and movement. Staff was praised for “fulfilling his role of the old, but not yet cold, dancer with knowledge and judgement” while Adele Samuels and Jacqueline St. Clere were commended for “the rich contribution they made to a good performance.”¹⁴ The ballet was referred to very briefly in *Die Vaderland* as a work that allows “the company to capitalize on pantomime” with its “simple but revealing” designs.¹⁵

By all critical accounts, *Symphony of Sylphs* proved more popular with the Johannesburg press than *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”*, and managed to solicit no less than five separate mentions. Both *Die Transvaler* and *Die Vaderland* made distinct reference to the ballet while *The Star* referred to the work as “a delicious opening to a week’s season of ballet”.¹⁶ However, Oliver Walker questioned the appropriateness of Bizet’s score and came to the conclusion that it was unsuitable because it had the effect of making Staff’s ballet tantamount to little more than simply using “rechauffe [*sic*] classical forms.”¹⁷ Walker did not discount Staff’s efforts entirely however and stated directly afterwards that “this is not to say that Mr. Staff’s composition was inept. On the contrary, the ensemble dancing and grouping made exquisite patterns and were executed with real professional éclat.”¹⁸ In the first of two reviews in *Die Vaderland*, Staff was congratulated for the manner in

¹² Walker, *The Star* (22 November 1955), 2.

¹³ “Ballet,” *Die Transvaler* (23 November 1955), 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ “Ballet moes sonder danser klaarkom” [Ballet had to manage without dancer,] *Die Vaderland* (22 November 1955), 27.

¹⁶ Walker, *The Star* (22 November 1955), 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

which his choreography for *Symphony of Sylphs* allowed “the dancers to travel across the stage with classical sylph-like grace,” and for Staff’s “improvised interpretation” (Staff was replacing Norman Lindsay at extremely short notice) in the *pas de deux* section with Ivy May McDonald.¹⁹ In fact, the critic claimed that this form of improvisation “was one that would have been the envy of many substitutes.”²⁰ The ballet was still received enthusiastically when it was reviewed for a second time in *Die Vaderland* where the critic confirmed “a person could enjoy a magnificent performance of ballet to its fullest in the classical style.”²¹ The ladies, especially Jacqueline St. Clere, were singled out for their “graceful and flowing movements” while Staff and Norman Lindsay were complimented for their “reliable support.”²² In *Die Transvaler*’s review of 23 November, *Symphony of Sylphs* only secured a passing mention as a ballet that “had colour and style,”²³ while two days later, the same newspaper reported that where “perfect art is concerned, there can be no comparison with *Symphony of Sylphs*.”²⁴ All four principal dancers in this production, namely Ivy May McDonald, Jacqueline St. Clere, Norman Lindsay and Staff apparently “enchanted with beauty of movement and interpretation.”²⁵

Cirque de la Mort was Staff’s fourth offering for the November season and, as its name suggests, concerned the circus of death with “Death” lurking in the shadows “just waiting for the appropriate moment to pounce on one of his unsuspecting victims.”²⁶ Inspired by Dmitry Kabalevsky’s *Symphony No. 2* (1934), Staff clarified the action by dividing his scenario into three scenes, with each scene referred to as

¹⁹ *Die Vaderland* (22 November 1955), 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Die Vaderland* (24 November 1955), 4.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Die Transvaler* (23 November 1955), 2.

²⁴ *Die Transvaler* (25 November 1955), 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

a movement, and each movement corresponding to the musical structure of Kabalevsky's score. In the first scene "Death" and "his assistant" encounter a travelling circus at night and, "in order to assume control of it, he ["Death"] disposes of the Proprietor."²⁷ When rivalry between the clown and the strong man over a tightrope walker becomes apparent, "Death" decides to spin a coin to determine who shall live. The second scene takes place after the circus performance with the rivalry growing stronger and "Death" intervening by making a gift to the clown. In the third scene later that night, "a group of Masquerades arrive, and, wishing to be amused, attempt to wake the Circus. The drama they witness is the climax of the eternal triangle - as engineered by Death."²⁸ The ballet ends with the ultimate death of the tightrope walker leaving "Death" and his assistant elated with their conquest.²⁹

The familiar circus milieu gave Staff a perfect opportunity to cast all his dancers. He portrayed "Death" with Adele Samuels as "his assistant". James Hanley was cast as the "Circus Proprietor" and Valda Joubert as the "Boy in Blue". Norman Lindsay performed the "Strong Man" while Victoria Carlson danced the "Acrobat". Ivy May McDonald was the "Tightrope Walker" with Bernice Lloyd and Monica Mason as two "Urchins". Perry McKann was chosen to perform "A Clown" while Sylvia Davis, Zelide Jeppe and Joan Mosselson were cast as "Three Eccentrics". Monica Mason led the procession of "Masquerades".³⁰

The set and costume design for *Cirque de la Mort* was by Len Grosset. Adele Samuels revealed that "the costumes were simple and plain but effective, for example I wore a black leotard."³¹ But she, like the other interviewees, was unable to remember any further details of

²⁷ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

³⁰ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955.

³¹ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

Grosset's designs including his set. There were however two noteworthy aspects about this production which the interviewees were able to recall: firstly, that Staff cast his dancers in roles best suited to their temperament and particular strengths; and, secondly, that the ballet demonstrated Staff's innovative ability to distinctively adopt, and adapt, a somewhat unusual technique for the purpose of 'lighting' the ballet. With reference to the first, Victoria Carlson was a case in point where, as a particularly supple dancer, she was expected to perform reverse somersaults and cartwheels like an acrobat. Norman Lindsay, by the same token, was given an opportunity to flex his muscles as the "Strong Man".³² Victoria Carlson explains:

Frank had the perfect eye for casting and *Cirque de la Mort* was the perfect example where this happened. He recognized our individual abilities and gave us the chance to do something he felt was right; to perform roles he believed were appropriate for us and to establish the exact character and precise style of what was required. And this occurred in whatever Frank was trying to achieve with his ballets.³³

Michael Venables concurred, adding that "every ballet was created on the basis of assessing what the company's dancers could do, and then extending them just a bit further each time."³⁴ The other aspect that made the ballet fairly unusual was Staff's lighting technique, which included the use of lights flickering onto a screen, alternatively on the dancers themselves that was almost reminiscent of the silent film genre of the 1920's and 1930's.³⁵ Michael Venables pointed out that Staff attempted to combine film of a circus with the dancers by using an "old, scratchy, black-and-white movie film projected behind live dancers", but questioned its success by concluding that "I think he [Staff] was trying to bluff himself."³⁶ There seems to have been no specific reason for using this technique other than for its effect or to

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

³⁴ Venables, "Recollections," 2.

³⁵ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

³⁶ Venables, "Recollections," 3.

create mood or atmosphere. Adele Samuels had no explanation why Staff opted for this technique other than to say that

what he did was to have lights shining on the characters while flicking at the same time. He tried to get that flickering effect by the quick use in succession of repeating black and white, black and white. And when this was projected on the dancers their movements had to be very jerky to enhance the effect. I'm not quite sure why this was also projected onto the screen, but then I'm equally unsure why Frank used it in the first place.³⁷

Ivy May McDonald did not comment on Staff's lighting technique but rather on her role as the "Tightrope Walker":

I had an umbrella, would come on stage, look, see Frank as "Death", stand dead still, call somebody, and then we would move across to the other side. As the character I knew there was something happening, we all did. There was a presence there; Frank and everybody would do their bit and wait. It was very dramatic, especially when Frank danced his part. One could not help but be drawn to him.³⁸

Cirque de la Mort may have represented Staff's first exploration using the combined themes of the circus and death although it was certainly not his last. The idea of using death as a choreographic metaphor in the circus seemed to have preoccupied Staff's mind for many years to come, and in 1992 Graham Newcater³⁹ recalled how Staff had told him in the late sixties why death and the circus were perfectly compatible:

Frank said that there was something sinister about a circus, the smell of the sawdust, the likelihood of an accident and the possibility of the animals breaking loose and trampling all over the audience. This intrigued him and he thought it would make a wonderful subject for ballet.⁴⁰

³⁷ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992,

³⁸ McDonald, interview, 14 February 1997.

³⁹ Graham Newcater became Staff's musical collaborator during the 1960's and early 1970's when he worked with Staff on *Czernyana 111* (1966), *Raka* (1967) and *The Rain Queen* (1971).

⁴⁰ Graham Newcater, interview with author, 3 November 1992, Johannesburg, tape recording.

Veronica Paeper, likewise, confirmed Staff's desire to translate N.P. Van Wyk Louw's *Lewenslyn* into movement. The idea behind Staff's fascination with death in the circus therefore continued long after *Cirque de la Mort*. Interestingly, *Lewenslyn* was also set in a circus and concerned a woman daredevil motorbike rider who, according to Veronica Paeper, "flies out of the wall of death and goes into the theatre. She pleads with God to try again and the same thing happens."⁴¹

Newcater continues:

And the idea of this woman driving the motorcycle and almost coming through the top of a wall where she overshoots the mark and lands in the audience is all terrifying. Then she sees death although every man she meets is in fact death in disguise. It might be her lover or her husband, or her father or even the circus manager, but there's always this circus figure of death behind all the activity. I could see Frank was working up a marvellous concept for ballet although I did not realize he had done this quite a few years before. But he was very taken with this idea and very serious about death -- almost obsessed in fact. I still remember him asking me how I would orchestrate the music for the daredevil rider and I told him that it would be quite simple because imitating the sound of a motorcycle could be achieved with a trill on the side drum and muted horns with trombones. And this could be varied with a crescendo for the horns and a decrescendo on the trumpets where one would get this pattern of flutter-tonguing, and behind them would be the side drum which would sound just like a motorbike.⁴²

Although this ballet never materialized, there was at least one other occasion where Staff used a circus setting for ballet. That was in 1964 when he choreographed *Circus* for the U.C.T. Junior Ballet School, and although the concept of death was understandably omitted from this production, it was nevertheless a ballet using a circus theme. Arthur La Trobe danced the "Strong Man" in the U.C.T. production and remembers the work as being "a very simple ballet with a comic feel to it, danced by children and performed for children. It was no more than Frank's tongue-in-cheek treatment of typical circus

⁴¹ Veronica Paeper, interview with author, 30 November 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

⁴² Newcater, interview, 3 November 1992.

characters with naive, child-like choreography.”⁴³ La Trobe gave as an example his part of the “Strong Man” where he had to pretend he was struggling to lift false dumb-bells, “when no sooner had I put them down than a poodle came on and ran off with them. It was that sort of humour with just some light-hearted entertainment for children where death didn’t form any part of the ballet, nor was it even hinted at.”⁴⁴ But in Staff’s last ballet for the company’s November 1955 season, *Transfigured Night*, death was of major importance, not only as one of the ballet’s major themes, but also as an integral part of the narrative line.

Unfortunately, *Cirque de la Mort* failed to elicit a single critical response and was only mentioned in press advertisements for the season. Norman Lindsay’s failure to arrive from Pretoria in time on opening night meant that *Cirque de la Mort* had to be shelved until the following evening.⁴⁵ However, it still failed to generate any form of critical commentary despite being billed as a world première.⁴⁶ Michael Venables was not in the least bit surprised as he thought “this ballet was entirely forgettable.”⁴⁷

Advertised together with *Cirque de la Mort* as the other world première was Staff’s *Transfigured Night*. The action of this ballet involved two sisters, their brother, a young man and a murder. Veronica Paeper disclosed that while

Frank never discussed the actual characters in *Transfigured Night*, he did say that it was based on a true story involving an old southern family in America where the elder sister’s jealousy led to an authentic murder taking place. He told me that he managed to visit the old ladies while in America and found the younger sister slightly affected by what had

⁴³ Arthur La Trobe, interview with author, 8 August 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Amelia, *The Star* (22 November 1955), 10.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Venables, “Recollections,” 3.

happened, which left her rather disturbed. But the elder sister, he said, was still very much in control.⁴⁸

While not contesting whether or not Staff's story was indeed factual, Adele Samuels divulged her own experience while trying to locate additional evidence of the murder and discovered a legend based on virtually the same circumstances:

Transfigured Night may have been inspired by a true story of a family where a murder took place, although I don't think it was a family Frank knew personally. He probably read about this because when he said he was going to write this ballet for me I decided to do some research on the subject as I knew nothing about it. And that's when I went to the library, looked for something on Schoenberg, whose music Frank was going to use, and only found the story of what he [Schoenberg] had based the music on. Then I happened to stumble across a legend that was remarkably similar to *Transfigured Night*, and this was not the story of Lizzie Borden, which Frank used some years later. So, while Frank's story for *Transfigured Night* might have been sparked off by an unlikely meeting with the sisters in America, there was also this legend. And that's my recollection of it.⁴⁹

Four characters made up the cast: "The Elder Sister", "The Younger Sister", "Their Brother" and "The Young Man".⁵⁰ To dance these roles Staff chose Adele Samuels as the elder sister and Jacqueline St. Clere as her younger sibling. Norman Lindsay was cast as their brother with Staff himself as the younger sister's suitor.⁵¹ Staff devised a synopsis by setting the action in the 1890's along the following narrative line:

In one of the Southern States of America live the remains of a family, dominated by the Elder Sister. This is the story of her attempt to retain the unity of the family, when confronted by the romance of the Younger Sister, and her consequent eventual departure in marriage.⁵²

⁴⁸ Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

⁴⁹ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

⁵⁰ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 21-26 November 1955.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

In 1957, Staff decided to clarify the drama by changing the wording slightly in the synopsis. The effect he wanted to achieve was a closer link between the choreographic action and the synopsis. The amended story then read as follows:

A close family bond unites the two sisters and the brother, who live in seclusion in their home in the Southern States of the U.S.A. A suitor comes to woo the younger sister, and they elope, to the fury of the elder sister, who resents the breaking up of the family. She uses her influence over the brother to bring the romance to an end, and restore the family solidarity.⁵³

Staff resorted to Arnold Schoenberg's⁵⁴ *Verklärte Nacht*⁵⁵ for his ballet. Schoenberg, in turn, had been inspired by Richard Dehmel's poem about a woman who confesses to a man that she is pregnant but not with his child. He tells her his love for her is unconditional and he will accept the child as his own. As a highly-charged emotional score with a very different texture and form to what South African dancers had been accustomed to, this type of complex rhythmical structure presented a completely new challenge to dancers who were used to the more familiar and recognizable melodies of Tchaikovsky and Delibes. Finding the beats in the music almost impossible to count, the dancers looked upon this venture as daunting although not insurmountable. Adele Samuels pointed out that what made Staff's choice of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* so unique was that it was revolutionary as far as ballet music in South Africa was concerned. For Samuels, it was "completely different, new and exciting, and certainly not the kind of music we usually associated with ballet, or music we were used to dancing to."⁵⁶ She praised Staff for his perfect choice in music and said it was a courageous attempt to use this kind of music for ballet in the first place. According to Samuels, it was a major achievement for

⁵³ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 7-19 January 1957.

⁵⁴ Originally spelt Schönberg, Arnold Schoenberg decided to change the spelling of his surname to Schoenberg after emigrating to America where he taught at the University of California, Los Angeles, from 1936-44.

⁵⁵ Originally composed for string sextet in 1899, Schoenberg then arranged the score for string orchestra in 1917 before finally revising it in 1943.

⁵⁶ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

ballet because “it worked so well and had an illuminating brilliance as well as an uncanny ability to capture mood perfectly.”⁵⁷ Chrysteen Fuller, who first danced the part of the elder sister in the 1964 CAPAB Ballet production, went on to suggest that because Schoenberg’s score

is such incredibly strong music, one either loves or hates it depending on one’s feelings for Schoenberg. It [the music] also has the ability of actually dictating the story and, perhaps, even imposes its own passions on the choreography.⁵⁸

Others who danced in later productions of *Transfigured Night* all agreed that the music suited the brooding quality of the ballet perfectly. Of particular interest was whether the music could be ‘counted’ in the usual way to which dancers were accustomed. The outcome was perceived both similarly and differently. Bernice Lloyd, who succeeded Samuels in the elder sister role for the South African Ballet’s January 1957 revival, remembered how “it was the first time I ever had contact with that type of music. It was eerie, and not really possible to count although I never tried to count the music; I just felt it.”⁵⁹ And Anlenor Heinze, who shared the part of the elder sister with Chrysteen Fuller in Staff’s 1964 production for CAPAB Ballet, commented in similar vein by stating that it would have been

extremely difficult for dancers who are used to counting one, two three, four.... With Schoenberg’s *Verklärte Nacht* one doesn’t, and the only practical way to get round the music is to go with the flow of the music, with the sense and the mood of the music as it were, and to know where the music is going. So one really needed to know one’s music and that’s where Frank scored because he just happened to be so incredibly musical.⁶⁰

Elizabeth Triegaardt, another distinguished “Elder Sister” in CAPAB Ballet’s 1971 production and in many revivals thereafter, agreed with Heinze’s remarks by expressing an analogous observation:

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Fuller, interview, 4 November 1991.

⁵⁹ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

⁶⁰ Anlenor Heinze, interview with author, 26 May 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

Transfigured Night is one of those ballets where one never had to count the music -- in fact one couldn't really count the music -- but rather to feel it instinctively and then respond accordingly.⁶¹

But Veronica Paeper, the original "Younger Sister" to Heinze's "Elder Sister" in the 1964 CAPAB production and later a notable "Elder Sister" in PACT Ballet's 1968 production, disagreed with both Heinze and Triegaardt, maintaining that it was, and indeed is, "absolutely possible to count even though it might sound impossible. It's all in counts of eight."⁶² Lynne Fouché, who danced the role of the younger sister in the Johannesburg City Ballet's 1961 production, recognized the implicit difficulty with dancing to the music from the first time she performed in the ballet. In Fouché's words: "Arnold Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* wasn't the normal dance music I was used to dancing to. It wasn't Cesare Pugni or Tchaikovsky. It was always slightly atonal with different phrases having counts in the phrases that always made it a constant challenge for me as a dancer."⁶³

Len Grosset was entrusted with the original 1955 designs in which he tried to capture a foreboding quality with an equally appropriate atmosphere of impending destruction and decay. The set itself was quite simple and consisted of a backdrop of stark curtains, some Venetian blinds about six foot in length situated upstage (more or less in the centre), and a small bench placed stage left in the downstage direction.⁶⁴ When Grosset later designed the backcloth for the Johannesburg City Ballet's 1961 production,⁶⁵ he created the impression of a drawing room with pink-coloured wallpaper, which appeared to be peeling thus enhancing the dilapidated nature of both

⁶¹ Elizabeth Triegaardt, interview with author, 5 May 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

⁶² Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

⁶³ Lynne Fouché, interview with author, 26 November 1993, Randburg, tape recording.

⁶⁴ Venables, "Recollections," 2.

⁶⁵ Grosset only designed the décor, which consisted of a backcloth and a bench, while Miriam Jacobsen and Eileen Sulski took responsibility for the costume designs.

house and situation. The backcloth had a cut-out in the centre to resemble a doorway with crumbling Ionic-styled pillars on either side supporting a triangular-shaped object suggestive of a roof. To the left of the pillars and at the top of the backcloth was a painted chandelier, while behind the doorway was a Venetian blind through which a green light shone to represent the moon.⁶⁶ In keeping with the run-down quality necessary for the ballet's atmosphere, the Venetian blind had to appear imperfect with some of its slats not completely horizontal and seemingly damaged. Staff's imaginative lighting added a touch of credibility to the set's already stark and ominous quality.

The costumes for both sisters consisted of "Empire-styled"⁶⁷ dresses with the elder sister attired in a wine-coloured costume flecked with pink and a piece of lace encircling her neck. A velvet ribbon around the neckline complemented her costume, and she wore pink tights and pink pointe shoes.⁶⁸ It is interesting to note that the colour of the elder sister's costume in later productions was jet-black with just a hint of purple. Also, in those productions, the elder sister wore black pointe shoes.⁶⁹ For Chrysteen Fuller, the use of black pointe shoes in the early CAPAB Ballet productions represented a major advancement since "those black shoes became a natural extension of her being, making her look more like a person than just a ballerina."⁷⁰ But Samuels insisted that "Frank particularly didn't want black for the elder sister because it would have been too obvious. His preference called for much more subtle colours operating on equally suggestive levels."⁷¹ Bernice Lloyd however "distinctly" remembers wearing a

⁶⁶ Fouché, interview, 26 November 1993.

⁶⁷ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ The later productions in which the elder sister wore a black costume (including black pointe shoes) were those for the Johannesburg City Ballet in 1961 designed by Miriam Jacobson and Eileen Sulski; CAPAB Ballet's 1964 production designed by Tom Maybank; and PACT Ballet's 1968 production designed by Raimond Schoop. In 1971, Tom Maybank's CAPAB designs were replaced by Raimond Schoop's 1968 PACT designs.

⁷⁰ Fuller, interview, 4 November 1991.

black and purple costume, and this was clearly before later productions had implemented the use of black for the elder sister.⁷² Lemon was originally chosen for the younger sister to suggest and reflect her vulnerability and youthful innocence. Bernice Lloyd always thought that “a lemon-coloured dress for the younger sister gave her a certain freshness, and was an indication of her innocence and a manifestation of her forthright righteousness.”⁷³ Another possible reason for deciding to dress the younger sister in pale yellow was because the choreographic action makes reference to her engagement to “The Young Man”. It is contended, therefore, that she would have to be dressed in a colour befitting the occasion. Both the men were dressed in conventional suits and while both wore pale-coloured shirts, the younger sister’s lover wore a light-coloured period jacket and matching trousers with ordinary pliable shoes. The brother’s suit and shoes were black.⁷⁴

In later productions of the ballet from about the late 1960’s to the early 1990’s, “The Young Man” was known as the “Lover”, and was deliberately dressed in a soldier’s uniform rather than as a civilian. According to Veronica Paeper, this was actually the idea of designer Raimond Schoop who, in an attempt to heighten the ballet’s dramatic effect, suggested the action be set sometime during or immediately after the American Civil War. In this way the younger sister’s suitor might have been a soldier “from the other side as it were, a confederate or something like that,”⁷⁵ which would explain why “the elder sister was so anti her younger sister’s lover right from the start.”⁷⁶

Present at some of the early 1955 rehearsals was Michael Venables, who described them as “a deeply moving experience.”⁷⁷ Venables

⁷¹ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

⁷² Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

⁷⁵ Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

recalled further that Staff's choreographic process often began after his imagination had been sparked off by a specific piece of music, "and the result would be something like 'Transfigured Night'."⁷⁸ Although only using *Transfigured Night* to illustrate his point, Venables remembered how the creative process often took place in Staff's Murray Gordon apartment where

Jacqui [St. Clere] and little Mark [Staff's son by St. Clere] would tiptoe round the flat for several days while Frank, a courteous but totally remote stranger, played the record again and again, tracing out patterns on the carpet with his toe.⁷⁹

The second phase of Staff's choreographic method -- and here it did apply to *Transfigured Night* -- evolved in the rehearsal room with dancers waiting to be given instructions. In a rather protracted procedure, Staff sought additional inspiration by listening to his music several times. Adele Samuels explains:

When you had heard the same Schoenberg music being played three or four times you knew Frank was creating a ballet. He used to immerse himself in that music and nothing else mattered. Then one day he got up and just did a few steps to the music. But they weren't really steps in the technical sense of, say, a *pas de chat* or a *pas de bourrée*, but rather a visual interpretation of the music in his own balletic terms. And that's how he created *Transfigured Night*. The dancers, without even realizing it, had immediately become familiar with the music long before he taught any of the actual steps to them. Then he would ask us to try a particular movement, and either he would like it or not. If he liked it, then that remained part of his choreographic product, but if he felt it was not really suitable, then he would change it accordingly. So the ballet was created on our bodies, according to what felt comfortable and, of course, to what appeared visually accurate in terms of characterization. And that's how *Transfigured Night* was finally born. The process of creation might have been a laborious task, but when Frank got it right it was powerful and brilliant.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Venables, "Recollections," 2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

As a rule, *Transfigured Night* was not rehearsed often. Staff believed that constant repetition of his more emotional ballets would diminish their dramatic impact. He maintained that endless rehearsals promoted boredom among the dancers, which could have the effect of being more destructive than beneficial in the long run.⁸¹ "Frank was different. He wanted a certain degree of spontaneity and freshness in *Transfigured Night* where he believed that if the ballet was rehearsed to death, there would be nothing left to interpret and very little scope for characterization."⁸²

There was no telling how the final product would be received, primarily because this ballet was something of a risk. Limited rehearsal periods and unusual music -- regarded as totally alien to the ballet-going public at the time -- led Adele Samuels to declare:

Frank took a gamble with *Transfigured Night* for those two reasons and the first night was terrifying as none of us knew what to expect. I remember the audience remaining deathly quiet throughout the performance, and thinking to myself that it was a disaster. And then at the end there was this spontaneous burst of applause, which seemed to go on forever, and of course the numerous curtain calls which it so richly deserved. Jacqui [St. Clere] and the three of us just looked at each other and I burst into tears. It was different to anything else I had experienced previously or since.⁸³

The first performance was decisively successful. Samuels recalled that

after the first performance I didn't see much of Frank because he was changing. We all then went to my parents' house for tea including Frank, although he decided to walk there instead. He knocked at the door. As I was already home I opened the door and thought, now what? He remarked how he was exceptionally pleased with the performance and that it had gone off exactly the way he wanted. He was clearly more than satisfied with the ballet and my interpretation of the elder sister. So, I feel quite confident that my interpretation was what he wanted, especially when he turned to me and said: "Thank you very much." I was speechless and it humbled me

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

very much because at that stage I had no confidence. Frank had the uncanny ability to recognize things which I, and perhaps others, couldn't see, and he was able to bring out those special qualities which other people could not.⁸⁴

Critical response to the ballet was one of express approval despite the critic of *Die Transvaler* choosing not to comment on the ballet other than to say that it formed part of a triple bill together with *Symphony of Sylphs* and *Peter and the Wolf*.⁸⁵ *The Star*, on the other hand, devoted an entire review to the ballet, which was considered unprecedented for its time. Headed "Unusual ballet"⁸⁶ and reviewed by Pat Hovenden, the production was considered "an interesting and meritorious new work."⁸⁷ However, Hovenden did remark that although she thought the work was admirable, it was not entirely flawless:

In this rather solemn ballet Mr. Staff has courageously relied on technique and capacity for intelligent interpretation in the four dancers, forswearing the easier appeal of comic mime. A handsome set by Len Grosset epitomizing the lonely decay of a home in the Southern States of America, sombre music by Arnold Schonberg [*sic*] and skilful choreography by Staff himself blended with fine dancing by four performers to make this the most moving work of the evening, though after the protracted development of the theme the climax seemed rather blurred. Adele Samuels in the dominating role of the elder sister made hers the most memorable performance of the four. Jacqueline St. Clere infused a gentle romanticism into her role as the younger sister while the relatively shadowy male roles were in the hands of Frank Staff and Norman Lindsay.⁸⁸

Die Vaderland acclaimed the ballet for "yielding a magnificent climax to a touching story of the two sisters, the younger one of whom, much against the will of the older one, falls in love with a young man."⁸⁹ All four dancers were praised for having "delivered captivating, level-

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Die Transvaler* (25 November 1955), 2.

⁸⁶ Pat Hovenden, "Unusual ballet," *The Star* (24 November 1955), 11.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Die Vaderland* (24 November 1955), 4.

headed interpretations.”⁹⁰ Nowhere however was any mention made of Staff ever having plagiarized Antony Tudor’s *Pillar of Fire*, a ballet his adversaries often accused him of doing. An accusation of Staff’s apparent plagiarism requires further scrutiny.

Pillar of Fire was created in 1942 for Ballet Theatre a few years after Tudor had relocated to America. It premièred on 8 April 1942 at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Staff, however, was still in England at the time of its première, and if, as alleged, he was in America during 1952, it seems highly unlikely he saw *Pillar of Fire* as the ballet was not performed by Ballet Theatre during the time Staff was in America. Nor did any other company stage the ballet during this period because it was only being performed by Ballet Theatre.⁹¹ The only other occasion Tudor mounted the work for another company was in 1962 when he produced it for the Royal Swedish Ballet.⁹² Although historical black-and-white film extracts of *Pillar of Fire* were filmed, these were only made in 1959,⁹³ about four years after *Transfigured Night* was created. The likelihood that Staff saw *Pillar of Fire* before he created *Transfigured Night* is somewhat remote, unless of course an in-house film of the Ballet Theatre production had been made available to him.

While the subject matter of *Transfigured Night* has been likened to that of *Pillar of Fire*, they were also very different. In *Pillar of Fire*, for example, there are three sisters. The middle sister, Hagar, whose older sister has become a spinster, foresees the same fate for herself. Fearing she will lose the man she unrequitedly loves to her flirtatious younger sister, Hagar forms a liaison with another known as “The

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Madeleine M. Nichols, [cperrier @ypl.org]. “Pillar of Fire” Request to New York Public Library for information on stagings of Antony Tudor’s *Pillar of Fire* from 1951 to 1953, [allison @uctlib. ac.za]. 7 May 1996.

⁹² The Royal Swedish Ballet performed *Pillar of Fire* for the first time on 30 December 1962.

⁹³ [oclc.fs @oclc.org]. “Pillar of Fire” Filmed versions of *Pillar of Fire* [allison @uctlib.uct.ac.za]. 23 October 1996.

Young Man from the House Opposite".⁹⁴ But he, in turn, is enticed by Hagar's younger sister who tries to weave her way through Hagar and the young man. Distraught and rejected, Hagar is eventually united with the man she really loves who reveals his compassion for her. There is no murder in *Pillar of Fire*, and if anything Hagar's despair bears more of a resemblance to Caroline's anguish in Tudor's *Jardin aux Lilas*. Owen Murray discussed the ostensible symmetry between the two ballets' subject matter and came to the conclusion that

although there is a family with a dominating sister in *Pillar of Fire* as well, the story in Frank's *Transfigured Night* is really very different, and so what if they express similar emotions. It is a simple fact of life that when one considers the range of human emotions relating to anxiety and disappointment they are ultimately very limited. And they become even more limited when expressed in balletic terms, irrespective of whether one uses conventional balletic mime or an ordinary gesture to convey anger or frustration. So I don't see Frank's ballet as being an exercise in plagiarism from that point of view.⁹⁵

Yet, there are isolated movements, choreographed patterns, body configurations, related emotions and even a family portrait that arises in both ballets where a marked similarity between the two becomes quite evident. However, the parity between the two usually occurs at different points in the music and does not always involve the same amount of characters. For instance, the music for the elder sister's solo where her anguished jealousy first becomes apparent and then becomes more real after the reappearance of the younger sister and her lover moving swiftly across the stage is matched by a *pas de deux* for Hagar and the young man. However, the similarity is only evident in so far as the same emotional distress is conveyed. Choreographically they are completely different. And yet there is one lift in the *Pillar of Fire pas de deux* where Hagar is held in front of the young man as he faces downstage. His arms are bent at the elbows as he supports her vertically outstretched arms with the palms of her hands resting in his.

⁹⁴ For sake of convenience, "The Young Man from the House Opposite" is referred to hereinafter as the young man while "The Young Man" in *Transfigured Night* is referred to as the lover, alternatively as the younger sister's lover.

⁹⁵ Murray, interview, 21 July 1992.

As she is lowered onto the floor she bends her knees, tucks her legs under her, and is slowly turned around by him in a complete circular movement before touching the floor. Emotionally exhausted, she comes to rest on her back and makes a sharp turn onto her left side by immediately tucking her right leg inwards. Then she stands and follows him into the house. In *Transfigured Night* there is almost the identical lift where the elder sister is lifted by her brother and held aloft on his shoulder with her arms outstretched above her head at approximately forty-five to sixty degrees. As she impulsively clenches her arms directly above her head the brother slowly lowers her to the ground and the similarity between the two *pas de deux* now becomes evident with her (elder sister's) legs tucked underneath her as she is lowered. She comes to rest on her knees -- instead of lying down facing upwards as Hagar does -- where she remains. As she sits in a kneeling position her brother slowly walks around her, circling her, in a conventional, unhurried walk.

There are also some noticeable choreographic differences where the same section of music is used for a *pas de deux* in both ballets. The most pointed example of this is in the lyrical *pas de deux* for the younger sister and her lover in *Transfigured Night* juxtaposed with the emotionally powerful and intensely anxious *pas de deux* for Hagar and the young man. The difference between the two lies in their steps, which when contrasted are distinctly dissimilar. But there is also a striking choreographic similarity in the particular use of a movement where two dancers are standing, facing the same direction. As one dancer extends a leg in front of the body (*dégagé devant*) with the body inclined backwards, the other dancer completes the frame by extending the opposite leg behind the body (*dégagé derrière*) with a marked forward incline of the body. In *Transfigured Night* this occurs in the early *pas de deux* for the two sisters while in *Pillar of Fire* it takes place between Hagar and the young man. The other similarity to *Pillar of Fire* occurs where exactly the same section of music is used for the young man's famous slow, suave walk in *Pillar of Fire*. The only difference however is that in *Pillar of Fire* the young man walks in a straight line whereas in *Transfigured Night* the brother walks in a circle. And yet the young man's walk in *Pillar of Fire* is arguably

more akin to the lover's confident and proud walk in *Transfigured Night* as the latter walks on the diagonal towards the younger sister and almost ignores the elder sister apart from politely acknowledging her presence.

Perhaps one of the most obvious parallels between the two ballets is the way in which they begin: *Pillar of Fire* opens with Hagar sitting and adjusting her hair; *Transfigured Night* commences with the younger sister sitting on a small bench placed downstage in the stage left direction. The elder sister is seen standing upstage, more or less centre stage. She faces upstage, and gently sways to and fro in anticipation of the lover's arrival.

Further similarities between the two works occur in the relationship that different sets of characters have to one another. In *Pillar of Fire* it is the association between Hagar and the young man that is echoed by the tenderness of the *pas de deux* sequence for the younger sister and her lover, alternatively in the more anxious moments between the elder sister and her brother. While choreographic analysis is self-evident, the conceptual difference between the two ballets stem from their characters and the action. In *Transfigured Night*, the younger sister is clearly the equivalent of Hagar, while the elder sister could be viewed as a combination of Hagar's elder and younger sisters. Given the interpretation that both the eldest sister in *Pillar of Fire* and Staff's elder sister are unmarried, it is possible that the personalities of the eldest and youngest sister in *Pillar of Fire* are joined in Staff's ballet. This is apparent if *Transfigured Night's* elder sister, a spinster, is matched to Tudor's youngest sister on the basis that the elder sister in *Transfigured Night* is secretly attracted to her younger sister's lover. There are in fact incidents in Staff's choreography to indicate the elder sister's attraction to her sister's lover, and several dancers who performed the elder sister role always felt that she too was in love with her younger sister's lover. While the lover in *Transfigured Night* and Hagar's potential lover in *Pillar of Fire* may be regarded as a catalyst in their respective dramas -- he is of course vital to the action -- there is not the slightest hint that the younger sister in *Transfigured Night* is rejected by her lover although Hagar is rejected by the young man in

Pillar of Fire. Yet, it is the elder sister in *Transfigured Night* who experiences rejection when her sister's lover ignores her as she extends her hand towards him and he responds by walking past her.

A further contrast between the two works lies in the amount of characters in each ballet, for example there are only four in *Transfigured Night* while the protagonists in *Pillar of Fire* are joined by several acquaintances and a chorus of "Lovers in Innocence" and "Lovers in Experience". Also, there is no brother in *Pillar of Fire* and neither does the elder or younger sister in *Transfigured Night* turn to a second man as Hagar does in *Pillar of Fire*. Another difference is the way in which each ballet ends: Staff's ballet ends in tragedy with the status quo ante restored while Hagar's dilemma is finally resolved by her reconciliation with "The Friend". However, there is no doubt that a conspicuous feature common to both ballets was their all-embracing atmosphere of gloom and sense of futility. In 1990, two years after Veronica Paeper staged *Transfigured Night* for the London City Ballet, Alastair Macaulay wrote in the *Financial Times*:

Transfigured Night...may just impress you if you (a) had not previously thought dance could illustrate this kind of psychological drama (b) have not seen the far superior examples choreographed by Staff's old colleague Antony Tudor -- in particular, *Pillar of Fire*, an older work made to the same Schoenberg score.⁹⁶

Sylvia Davis went a step further when she stated that "Frank took a lot of it [*Pillar of Fire*] over, and I would say that it's definitely based on Tudor's ballet."⁹⁷ Staff, of course, obviously made use of the same music although some were of the opinion that even the décor design was similar. Owen Murray, who first danced the part of the lover in CAPAB Ballet's 1964 production, recalls that after seeing *Pillar of Fire* he was surprised to find "Tudor even had the same Venetian blinds in his production."⁹⁸ Phyllis Spira, who never danced in *Transfigured Night* but was well acquainted with the ballet, endorsed

⁹⁶ Alastair Macaulay, "London City Ballet," *Financial Times* (5 April 1990), 15.

⁹⁷ Davis, interview, 29 May 1995.

⁹⁸ Owen Murray, interview with author, 21 July 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

the likeness between the two ballets' designs by adding how their costumes "were in fact exactly the same."⁹⁹ Spira continued:

It went further than just having the same costumes because the similarities extended to the set, the setting -- in the Deep South of America -- the music, and even the storyline. In fact, when I saw *Pillar of Fire* for the first time in America it struck me as very powerful and I immediately thought of *Transfigured Night*. I think that *Transfigured Night* is the influence Tudor's work had on Staff. And then there was another influence: Agnes de Mille's *Fall River Legend*, which also takes place in the American south with a murder being perpetrated as well. But this time it's committed with an axe rather than a sword. A further similarity between Agnes de Mille's *Fall River Legend* and *Transfigured Night* concerns the use of deviant characters: in the former it's Lizzie Borden herself while in the latter it's the brother and the elder sister.¹⁰⁰

And yet there are some who claim that any links between *Pillar of Fire* and *Transfigured Night* are more illusory than real. Lynne Fouché, for example, remained totally steadfast in her opinion that the resemblance only extended to the music, setting and mood. In her opinion,

Transfigured Night was definitely not anything like *Pillar of Fire* because it has a lot of symbolism in it, or even power symbolism if you like. All those gestures were mastery of the situation, which Frank required to be heavy and slow, and perhaps that was the only Tudor element in *Transfigured Night*. Choreographically, which is what the argument is all about, it's completely different and I don't think that unless one has danced in *Transfigured Night* one has the right to say Frank copied Tudor. I danced in *Transfigured Night* on several occasions and I've seen *Pillar of Fire* many times, and even when Frank staged *Transfigured Night* for us he changed little things, which then becomes personal because it's created on you. So, when one sees *Pillar of Fire* several times, and one has danced in *Transfigured Night*, there's nothing vaguely similar. The mood might be similar, but that's created a lot by the music. Tudor's *Lilac Garden* has the same feeling or mood as *Transfigured Night*, but nobody would think of making the connection between the two simply because they have the same atmosphere. People somehow seem to base their observations entirely along the storyline, which appears to be the main criterion in deciding whether or not the work was plagiarized.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Phyllis Spira, interview with author, 16 June 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Fouché, interview, 26 November 1993.

Fouché bolstered her argument by stating that because the movement vocabulary in ballet is limited, there are certain steps that are bound to be the same. She recalled how “I’ve seen bits and pieces of Jerome Robbins’ *Dances at a Gathering* sitting in Germany, which is probably quite coincidental. But nobody would dare to say Robbins copied someone else’s work.”¹⁰² Another example of conspicuous plagiarism endorsed by Fouché was August Bournonville’s 1836 version of *La Sylphide*, a ballet created four years after Filippo Taglioni’s founding production of 1832. “And yet there again nobody would consider the Bournonville version to be a copy of Taglioni’s production.”¹⁰³ Fouché stated it was ironic that Bournonville’s version has endured over the years to the twentieth-century while Taglioni’s has long been forgotten with only lithographs as a memorial to the Taglioni ballet. According to Fouché, “*La Sylphide* is now inextricably linked to Bournonville as being the original work simply because it’s the one that has survived.”¹⁰⁴ In her concluding remarks, Fouché said:

I think that to say something is a crib is incorrect. Influence is a better way of expressing it because one is influenced by what one admires, and your admiration extends to using an idea which cannot possibly, or even sub-consciously, be ignored. Frank was a genius and I refuse to believe he would have found it necessary to copy someone else’s work.¹⁰⁵

Gillian Joubert was in agreement with Fouché when she said that Staff had sufficient knowledge of his own not to plagiarize Tudor’s ballet. Joubert contended that even in circumstances where the same piece of music had been used by two choreographers, the end product was still capable of validity provided the concept differed substantially from another choreographer’s, because

if the concept is totally different then is that such a bad achievement? Just because Tudor happened to choreograph a ballet using Schoenberg’s music doesn’t mean nobody else is

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

going to have a similar idea for his or her musical inspiration. Besides, with Frank's mind and Frank's vivid imagination, I don't think he had to take anything from Tudor or anybody else for that matter.¹⁰⁶

Joubert speculated that if there was any likeness or possible symmetry between the two works then this was the result of Tudor and Staff's choreographic background. In considering their career history, she reiterated how both were of the same generation, both had been nurtured by Rambert, and both were innately musical:

It is these overpowering influences that makes the issue so interesting because one has two different people writing ballets and yet one gets the possible similarity of movement calling through the music and calling through the idea. But I think a lot happens, which is just part of the evolutionary process relating to a particular time and place and this was probably the case with *Pillar of Fire* and *Transfigured Night*. It was the era of the psychological ballet, and there's less than fifteen years between the two works, so its quite natural for both works to have been brilliantly conceived ideas.¹⁰⁷

Kendrew Lascelles, who danced the brother in the South African Ballet Company's 1957 revival, believed that Staff was "too original a choreographer to have to copy from someone else. In fact I never heard him talk much about other choreographers."¹⁰⁸ Lascelles said that if anything, trying to create a mood rather than duplicating another person's work is really what influenced *Transfigured Night*:

It was like experiencing that dark Spanish quality with sombre drapes. Very effective, and I have a strong feeling it was more of a Tennessee Williams effect rather than anyone else. For me, *Transfigured Night* was shaking the foundations of the theatrical dramatic culture in this country at the time, and that was far more important than if Frank had copied Tudor or not. People should realize and appreciate the impact of Frank's creation as a dramatic piece of theatre that had not been seen before on a South African ballet stage, rather than quibbling about plagiarism, which personally I don't think he was guilty of perpetrating.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Joubert, interview, 16 November 1992.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Elizabeth Triegaardt, although unfamiliar with *Pillar of Fire*, expressed the same sentiments as Lascelles where Tennessee Williams was concerned. She stated that “*Transfigured Night* always reminded me of the impassioned heat of a Tennessee Williams play.”¹¹⁰ And Denise Schultze, who was also not familiar with *Pillar of Fire*, explained that very often

when one watches another choreographer or dancer or teacher at work one does become influenced, and maybe sometimes one takes something from that person without actually knowing it and without actually taking it as a copy. Even watching how other people teach influences one’s own method of teaching. I know because it happened to me.¹¹¹

Although not entirely convinced that there had been any overt plagiarism, Chrysteen Fuller presented a more objective explanation and stated how the music determined the similarity, “if there is one at all.”¹¹² Fuller argued that even if there was an element of resemblance,

does it really matter? They are both wonderful choreographic works. I’ve never danced in the Tudor ballet so I can’t comment on it from that point of view at all. But I can say that the incredibly strong music will inevitably produce a similar storyline as the music actually dictates the story and perhaps even a similar construction for a ballet. I mean one can’t write a man’s solo to music that is written specifically for a romantic *pas de deux*. It just doesn’t make sense to do this and one can say the same about the music for *Transfigured Night*. Schoenberg’s musical construction of the score makes it inevitable for the structure of a ballet to be very similar to another work using the same music. One can only write against music to a certain degree, and that music -- in this case the Schoenberg score -- tells its own story making similarities unavoidable and almost impossible.¹¹³

There was another ballet, not specifically proposed by any of the interviewees, where subject matter may have influenced Staff’s

¹¹⁰ Triegaardt, interview, 5 May 1992.

¹¹¹ Schultze, interview, 14 August 1991.

¹¹² Fuller, interview, 4 November 1991.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

Transfigured Night. That, of course, was *The Fugitive*, made by Andrée Howard in 1944. It concerned two sisters who provide refuge to a fugitive. He falls in love with the younger sister much to the chagrin of the elder sister who, consumed with jealousy, decides to expose him. The fugitive is left with no alternative but to commit suicide. Jealousy and death feature prominently in this ballet, as indeed they do in *Transfigured Night*.¹¹⁴ Later, choreographers turned to similar subject matter and themes as those found in *Transfigured Night*. These include Alvin Ailey's *Feast of Ashes* (1962), Kenneth MacMillan's *Las Hermanas* (1963), Ivan Sertic's *Las Apasionadas* (1964) and, finally, Eleo Pomare's *Las Desenamoradas* (1967).¹¹⁵



Plate 17: The Johannesburg City Ballet's 1961 production of *Transfigured Night* with Primrose Austin (in black) as the domineering elder sister asserting her authority over the younger sister (Lynne Fouché) by confronting the latter's lover (Sven van Zyl). André Beaumont as the brother (suitably dressed in black as well) looks on.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ It is merely speculative to say that Staff was influenced by this ballet although its first performance, given by Ballet Rambert on 16 November 1944 at the Royal County Theatre in Bedford, took place about three months after Staff's discharge from the army when he was clearly still in England. There is a strong likelihood therefore that he saw the production in Bedford.

¹¹⁵ All these productions were based on Federico García Lorca's *The House of Bernada Alba*, which deals with rivalry and jealousy among sisters.

¹¹⁶ Photograph by Maurice, as reproduced in *A season of ballet by the Johannesburg City Ballet*, Johannesburg City Ballet Theatre Programme, Aula Theatre, University of Pretoria, performances 15 & 16 September 1961.



Plate 18: Veronica Paeper as the innocent younger sister dancing a solo in the University of Cape Town Ballet Company's 1964 production of *Transfigured Night*.¹¹⁷



Plate 19: Veronica Paeper and Frank Staff as the young lovers in the University of Cape Town Ballet Company's 1964 production. This scene occurs shortly after the lovers meet for the first time in the ballet.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Photograph by Jansje Wissema, 1963, Cape Town City Ballet Archive, Cape Town.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*



Plate 20: A different set of lovers: Janice Worth and Owen Murray in CAPAB Ballet's 1968 revival of *Transfigured Night*.¹¹⁹



Plate 21: Dawn Weller and Juan Sanchez as the young lovers in PACT Ballet's 1968 production.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Photograph by Studio Five, Cape Town City Ballet Archive, Cape Town. n.d.

¹²⁰ "Dawn Weller," Photograph, as reproduced in *The Friends of the Ballet*, Newsletter No. 18 (August 1975), 1.



Plate 22: Frank Staff (centre) as the lover with Anlenor Heinze (in front) as the elder sister and Veronica Paeper (back) as the younger sister in a posed scene where the elder sister shows her disapproval of the lover. University of Cape Town Ballet: 1964.¹²¹



Plate 23: Elizabeth Triegaardt as the elder sister with John Simons as the brother in CAPAB Ballet's 1971 revival. This scene occurs after a 'traumatic' *pas de deux* for the elder sister and the brother.¹²²

¹²¹ Photograph by Jansje Wissema, as reproduced in *Capab Ballet -- 21 years: 1963-1984* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Press, 1984), plate 3.

¹²² Photograph by James de Villiers, as reproduced in *Tribute to Frank Staff*, 16 March -6 April 1991.

Reverting to the short November 1955 season, all the critics were unanimous in approving the company's success, which they agreed implicitly had been an overwhelming victory for Staff in particular, and ballet in general. Oliver Walker was one such critic to salute the company. In his review appearing immediately on the day after the opening night, he proclaimed:

Ballet, done with such a high degree of polish and such a truly imaginative drive, has now found a home here instead of being an importation and should be generously supported throughout the rest of the week.¹²³

According to Walker, there was another mark of distinction prevalent at these performances, which he said was made possible by the use of reliable recordings. This not only enriched the actual performances themselves but also reflected Staff's professionalism. Walker acknowledged how

the use of Hi-fi equipment notably aided the performance and was musically a great comfort to the audience for it was impeccably played by some fine overseas orchestras.¹²⁴

Audience attendance however was erratic, and varied from extremely low patronage at the beginning to sell-out performances at the end. This was certainly not the fault of inadequate advertising but rather of unfortunate weather conditions. *The Star* remarked how "the rain largely affected the première of Frank Staff's South African ballet in the University Great Hall last night"¹²⁵ while "Pandora", writing in the *Rand Daily Mail*, went on to confirm that

the pouring rain undoubtedly kept away a large proportion of the would-be audience, who probably felt that dry feet should be the first consideration. I began to feel more sympathetic towards them by the time I was drenched from top to toe.¹²⁶

¹²³ Walker, *The Star* (22 November 1955), 11.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Amelia, *The Star* (22 November 1955), 10.

¹²⁶ Pandora, "Week of premieres," *Rand Daily Mail* (24 November 1955), 9.

And a press release in *The Star* lamented poor attendance figures but suggested the public ameliorate the situation by attending the balance of the season.¹²⁷ Ironically, the last three performances were fairly well-attended with the result that “owing to public demand” three more performances had to be arranged for the following week on the Friday and Saturday evenings with an additional matinée on the Saturday.¹²⁸ Three programmes were presented with slight adjustments made to the composition of each: on the Friday evening the company was seen in *Cirque de la Mort*, *Transfigured Night*, *L’Après-midi d’un faune* and *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”* while on the Saturday evening they performed *Cirque de la Mort*, *Peter and the Wolf*, *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”* and *Transfigured Night*. The Saturday matinée stressed the same comedy-styled works shown at the matinée of 26 November, namely *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”*, *Peter and the Wolf* and *Symphony of Sylphs*.¹²⁹ The company’s 1955 season marked a positive step in the right direction of launching an exciting new ballet company for Johannesburg with Staff’s confidence greatly bolstered in realizing his fundamental aims and aspirations.

¹²⁷ Amelia, “A woman’s journal,” *The Star* (24 November 1955), 10.

¹²⁸ Advertisement, *Rand Daily Mail* (28 November 1955), 8.

¹²⁹ Advertisement, *Rand Daily Mail* (30 November 1955), 12.

CHAPTER SIX

In 1956, the South African Ballet gave very few performances. Nor did Staff create any new works for his company during that year. The reasons for this were threefold: in April of that year Staff assisted Leslie French with a production of *The Tempest*;¹ Staff worked with the Brian Brooke organization on a production of *Salad Days* during the first half of the year; and, finally, the visits to Johannesburg of Alexander Danilova² in August of that year and Dame Margot

¹ Leslie French, the English-born actor and producer, was regarded as a particularly skilful interpreter of several Shakespearean texts with much of his readings performed at the Old Vic. Educated at the London School of Choristers, his first appearance was in a 1914 matinée at the Little Theatre. Following his appointment with the Old Vic in September 1930, he made his début as a Shakespearean actor performing "Poins" in *Henry IV (Part 1)* and as "Ariel" in *The Tempest*. His interpretations of "Puck" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Ariel" in *The Tempest* and the title role in *Richard III* were famous. Prior to coming to South Africa, French was seen at the Alexandra Theatre in London performing "Hercule Poirot" in Agatha Christie's *Peril at End House*, which he later produced in Cape Town. It was also in Cape Town that he staged *The Taming of the Shrew* before travelling north to Johannesburg where he produced *The Tempest* for the Reps. Theatre in 1956.

"London Shakespearean producer at work," *The Pretoria News* (22 March 1956), 5.

² Alexander Danilova's rise to fame is legendary. Born in Russia on 20 November 1903, she trained at the Imperial Ballet School in St. Petersburg and at the State Ballet School in Petrograd. She became a member of the State Academic Theatre for Opera and Ballet (GATOB), toured Western Europe in 1924 with the Soviet State Dancers and was engaged by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes where she became his ballerina in 1927. Danilova then danced as a ballerina with the Ballet Russe de Colonel de Basil from 1933 to 1938, and as the company's *prima ballerina* from 1938 to 1952. By the time she appeared in Johannesburg, Danilova was an established artist. Her tour to Johannesburg during August 1956 generated much excitement among the local ballet fraternity, with the result that a week of additional performances had to be arranged to accommodate the public. The original season from 13 to 18 August at His Majesty's Theatre was extended until 25 August, which included two extra matinées on 18 and 25 August. Sonia Tyven and her partner, Robert Lindgren, joined Danilova and her partner, Frederic Franklin, for all these performances. Two programmes (including two world premières) were given. The first, simply titled Programme A, comprised seven items that included *Carib Peddler*, *Chopiniana*, *Cotillon*, *Devil's Holiday*, *Mlle. Fifi*, *L'Heure Bleu* (World Première) and the *Nutcracker pas de deux* while the second, Programme B, consisted of eight works entitled *Drummer*, *Echoes of Vienna*, *Fiesta Espagnol*, *Le Mirage*, *Manhattan Moods* (World Première), *Mozartiana*, *Pas de deux Classique* and the 'Pas Hongrois' from *Raymonda*. Pianists Gordon Beasley and William McDermott provided musical accompaniment for both programmes.

Advertisement, *The Star* (8 August 1956), 12.

Advertisement, *The Star* (14 August 1956), 10.

Fonteyn³ in October virtually eclipsed the local ballet scene. The South African Ballet's first performance in 1956 took place on 20 April at the Benoni Town Hall. Presented as part of Benoni's Golden Jubilee celebrations,⁴ three works from the repertoire were chosen: *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, *Symphony of Sylphs* and *Transfigured Night*. Casting in all three ballets was almost identical to the University season of November 1955 with some minor adjustments made to *Symphony of Sylphs* and *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*. In *Symphony of Sylphs*, Ivy May McDonald only performed the *pas de deux* with Norman Lindsay while Carol Cain replaced Zelide Jeppe. André Retief substituted for Perry McKann.⁵ In *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, Norman Lindsay danced Perry McKann's role of the "Patron" while Carol Cain replaced Zelide Jeppe as one of the "Corypheés".⁶ Casting for *Transfigured Night* remained unchanged.

The Benoni City Times en Oostrandse Nuus reviewed the performance favourably and more extensively than their review of the company's first Benoni performance in May 1955. *Symphony of Sylphs* was referred to as a ballet "in the traditional style" with the dancing of Staff and Jacqueline St. Clere singled out for being exceptional. The critic concerned wrote: "Towards the end, a Scottish theme was introduced by the orchestra and Frank Staff and Jacqueline St. Clere gave an

Advertisement, *The Star* (17 August 1956), 10.

³ The press announced confirmation of Fonteyn's visit to Johannesburg in April 1956. She had been invited to appear as a guest at the Johannesburg Festival largely at the behest of the Festival's musical director, Mr. Ernest Fleischmann. Originally, the idea was to bring the entire Royal Ballet, but this was not possible as the company's intended tour of America for television performances and a projected visit to Moscow had already been arranged. It was then decided to invite Fonteyn instead, and this led to further negotiations with Dr. Roberto Arias, Fonteyn's husband and the Panamanian ambassador in London. Arias persuaded the general administrator of the Royal Opera House, Mr. David Webster, to release Fonteyn for a period of ten days.

"Margot Fonteyn will dance at festival with S.A. company," *The Star* (14 April 1956), 3.

⁴ "Jubilee ballet show," *Benoni City Times en Oostrandse Nuus* (13 April 1956), 5.

⁵ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 20 April 1956.

⁶ *Ibid.*

interpretation of highland dancing in a brilliant pas de deux.”⁷ *Transfigured Night* was lauded more for the performances of its participants than for its choreographic content. Adele Samuels, for instance, was hailed for her “excellent miming” that “contributed to the merit of the performance” while “the dancing of Frank Staff and Jacqueline St. Clere were acclaimed by the audience.”⁸ In *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”* however, there was a clearer -- albeit brief -- account of the ballet’s content where the critic explained that it was about “an amusing study of a group of dancing pupils who misbehaved each time their master’s back was turned.”⁹

The performance was obviously successful (as was the company itself) and the choreography was probably also appreciated by the critic who stated that

with the expert hand of Frank Staff guiding the company, the South African Ballet should rise to great heights and there is no doubt that there will be a welcome waiting for them whenever they manage to return to Benoni.”¹⁰

The South African Ballet’s performance in Benoni was Monica Mason’s last with the company. She left not long thereafter to pursue further studies at the Royal Ballet School in England.¹¹ However, she valued the opportunity of being able to work with Staff’s company despite the brevity of her stay. Mason explains the significance of this experience:

Frank took one away from the eisteddfod and festival attitude to ballet and when I joined his little company we did things like *Peter and the Wolf*, *Transfigured Night*, *The Faun* [*L’Après-midi d’un faune*] and a Degas ballet to Prokofiev’s ‘Classical

⁷ “South African Ballet makes welcome return,” *Benoni City Times en Oosrandse Nuus* (27 April 1956), 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ In 1958, Mason joined the Royal Ballet Company where she was promoted to soloist in 1961 and principal dancer in 1967. Today Monica Mason is the Assistant Director of the Royal Ballet Company at Covent Garden.

Symphony'. *Peter and Faun* both made a very big impression on me -- especially *Faun* because Frank was dancing in it. Working in his company lifted me right out of the kind of amateur dancing environment in this country at that time. Suddenly going on stage was about different things. Going on stage was now about finding the best in myself. It somehow put the whole thing in a different perspective for me. At last I was doing what I wanted to do -- dancing in a theatre, in a fantastic, fantasy world that before I could only dream about.¹²

Mason recalled further that Staff's ballets represented "real choreography", adding that even as a thirteen-year-old she sensed "everything to do with his work was serious and that we were expected to behave like professionals."¹³ She remembered further -- and quite vividly too -- how Staff was always "patient but demanding", and that she "adored attending classes and rehearsals in his studio."¹⁴ And, as she was "intent on somehow becoming a professional dancer",¹⁵ she thought Staff's school and company

seemed like the perfect place to start. Of course I was still at school and I remember that sometimes I had to find a quiet corner where I could sit and do my homework -- the rehearsals often went on into the evening.¹⁶

Finally, Mason disclosed how Staff "opened my eyes to the theatre and I was particularly excited by the challenges offered to his dancers by his dramatic ballets."¹⁷ *Transfigured Night*, in particular, intrigued her although she "was clearly too young to be part of this work."¹⁸ Before Mason left for England, Staff gave her letters of introduction, and when these were presented in London she was "thrilled to

¹² "Arabesque interviews Monica Mason," *Arabesque*, 1,5 (28 December 1980): 8.

¹³ Letter to author dated 6 February 1995 from Monica Mason, Assistant Director, Covent Garden Royal Ballet, London.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

discover...he was a respected choreographer and known to many people.”¹⁹

It was not until October 1956 that the company performed in Johannesburg. This time it was to mark the 1956 Johannesburg Festival, which began with a “Grand Gala Festival Opening”²⁰ on 14 September featuring a performance of W.H. Wilkie’s circus at Milner Park, and a carnival at Pioneer Park near Wemmer Pan south of Johannesburg.²¹ Among the many illustrious artists to appear at the Festival²² were Dame Margot Fonteyn and her partner Michael Somes, who arrived in South Africa on 12 October 1956.²³ Together they danced the second act of *Swan Lake* with a *corps de ballet* drawn exclusively from Marjorie Sturman’s Festival Ballet Society. Petty rivalry among local ballet teachers apparently resulted in Staff’s dancers being excluded from Fonteyn’s *Swan Lake* performances.²⁴ Included in the same programme was Festival Ballet Society’s *1845 Grand pas de quatre*; the University of Cape Town Ballet’s Act 11 of *Coppélia* with Patricia Miller, Julian Bolt and Richard Glasstone as ‘Swanhilda’, ‘Franz’ and ‘Dr. Coppelius’ respectively, and the *Don Quixote pas de deux* with Toby Fine and Stanley Holden.²⁵ The venue

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Advertisement, *The Star* (11 September 1956), 10.

²¹ “Festival may become annual event,” *The Star* (15 September 1956), 3.

²² Other international artists included Guido Cantelli, Mimi Coertse, Giuseppe di Stefano, Pierre Fournier, Sir Malcolm Sargeant, Andrés Segovia and Yehudi Menuhin. To mark the occasion, Sir William Walton composed the Johannesburg Festival Overture.

“Festival farewell -- we remember them,” *The Star* (29 October 1956), 11.

²³ “Stars are here straight from cheering crowds of Europe,” *The Star* (13 October 1956), 3.

²⁴ Bernice Lloyd, telephonic conversation with author, 15 June 1996, Johannesburg.

²⁵ Theatre Programme: *Ballet*, Johannesburg Festival 1956, His Majesty’s Theatre, Johannesburg, season 15-19 October 1956.

“Now we know why Fonteyn is called the world’s greatest ballerina,” *The Star* (16 October 1956), 7.

for these performances was His Majesty's Theatre, except for one performance on 20 October where a special stage had to be erected at the Johannesburg Zoo Lake. Fonteyn's first performance on 15 October was followed with subsequent appearances during the week until 20 October.²⁶ All her performances were sold out with the Zoo Lake performance attracting an impressive capacity crowd of about 6,000.²⁷ The Durban Civic Orchestra accompanied the guests under the baton of Frits Schuurman for the first half of the programme while Jeremy Schulman, as guest conductor, took over for the second half of the programme.²⁸

The South African Ballet danced in a different programme during the same week as Fonteyn's performances when they performed *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* and *Symphony of Sylphs* on 16 and 18 October.²⁹ This was obviously the second programme, which also featured Festival Ballet Society in Sturman's *Mr. Pickwick on the Ice* and the *1845 Grand pas de quatre*. Completing the programme was Patricia

"Margot Fonteyn ontroer" [Margot Fonteyn in moving performance,] *Die Vaderland* (16 October 1956), 6.

²⁶ *The Star* of 7 October 1956 set out an erroneous performance itinerary for Fonteyn in which it claimed that the ballerina would be performing every evening from 15 to 20 October, both dates inclusive. As it turned out, Fonteyn did not in fact perform -- nor was she scheduled to perform -- on either 16 or 18 October despite the report which stated as follows:

Monday 15 October 1956 -- Gala première with Fonteyn, Somes, Miller, Holden and "leading South African dancers";

Tuesday 16 October 1956 -- Ballet with Fonteyn;

Wednesday 17 October 1956 -- Ballet with Fonteyn;

Thursday 18 October -- Ballet with Fonteyn;

Friday 19 October 1956 -- Ballet with Fonteyn; and

Saturday 20 October 1956 -- Ballet with Fonteyn at Zoo Lake.

"Festival programmes for the week," *The Star* (7 October 1956), 10.

²⁷ "Swan Lake' at the Zoo," *The Star* (19 October 1956), 9.

²⁸ Critical commentary, not surprisingly, focused almost exclusively on Fonteyn and Somes although Toby Fine, Patricia Miller, Richard Glasstone and Stanley Holden were acknowledged for their dancing.

The Star (16 October), 7.

²⁹ Theatre programme: *Ballet*, Johannesburg Festival Ballet, His Majesty's Theatre, Johannesburg, performances 16 and 18 October 1956.

Miller and Michael Somes in the “Bluebird” *pas de deux* from *The Sleeping Beauty*.³⁰ Jeremy Schulman conducted the Durban Civic Orchestra for this programme.³¹

Two new dancers joined Staff’s company in time for the festival while several *ad hoc* dancers performed in *Symphony of Sylphs*. The new members of Staff’s company were Rosaleen Kassel and Frankie Milner while the *ad hoc* dancers included Sylvia Glick, Elizabeth Jacobs, Hannah Seinek and Denise Schultze. Casting for *Symphony of Sylphs* included Bernice Lloyd and Kendrew Lascelles (billed as Kenneth Lascelles) replacing Ivy May McDonald³² and Norman Lindsay in the *pas de deux*, Adele Samuels, Jacqueline St. Clere, Norman Lindsay and Staff in the first *allegro vivace* movement and the whole company in the second *allegro vivace* movement.³³ The casting of all solo roles in *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”* remained the same as for the Benoni performance of 20 April that year. There was, however, a very slight change to the total number of “Corypheés” with Elizabeth Jacobs making six instead of the usual five and Frankie Milner replacing Monica Mason. Staff added three new characters: a “Chaperone” and two “Petit Rats de L’Opera”. Sylvia Davis danced the former while Rosaleen Kassel and Naomi Stamelman were seen as the latter. Sylvia Davis recounted how, as the oldest member of the company

³⁰ The evening opened with an adaptation of the 1845 *pas de quatre* followed by *Symphony of Sylphs*, *Mr. Pickwick on the Ice*, ‘Blue Bird’ *pas de deux* (from *The Sleeping Beauty*) and closed with *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”*.

Theatre programme: *Ballet*, 16 and 18 October 1956.

³¹ Theatre programme: *Ballet*, 16 and 18 October 1956.

³² Ivy May McDonald left the company to devote her time to teaching practical ballet. She had kept her private studio going during the seven months she danced with Staff’s company but finally decided to concentrate more on teaching full-time rather than dancing. Teaching, she said, was her livelihood whereas dancing for Staff was without any financial reward. However, she told Staff he could call upon her whenever he needed her to replace an indisposed dancer, as indeed he did in 1957 when she danced one of the “Corypheés” in *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”* at a one-off performance in Modderfontein.

McDonald, interview, 14 February 1997.

³³ Theatre Programme: *Ballet*, 16 and 18 October 1956.

(she was thirty-one at the time), Staff had probably typecast her in this more mature part:

I was really the lady who had to train the girls, teach them to keep time, tell them what to do, and generally take charge of them. So it was more like a ballet mistress in the old-fashioned French way rather than a conventional chaperone.³⁴

Once again, press reviews tended to concentrate more on the visiting artists although *The Star* did mention *Symphony of Sylphs* as being a work "of classical inspiration" and *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* for displaying "scope for comic mime".³⁵ *The Star* also mentioned that Staff "danced in two ballets last night."³⁶ *The Rand Daily Mail* was silent on the South African Ballet and only mentioned Elizabeth Jacobs, an 18-year-old Pretoria dancer, who had "been chosen to dance in two of Frank Staff's ballets during the Margot Fonteyn festival season..."³⁷ *Die Transvaler* and *Die Vaderland* were likewise silent on the two Staff ballets.

The South African Ballet did not participate in the performance at the Zoo Lake since only two works by the Festival Ballet Society, namely *Swan Lake Act 11* with Fonteyn and Somes, and *Mr. Pickwick on the Ice*, were featured.³⁸ Nor were Staff's dancers used as part of an enlarged *corps de ballet* of swans for the Zoo Lake performance of *Swan Lake*. And the same evidently applied to *Mr. Pickwick on the Ice*.³⁹ It seems, therefore, that the Zoo Lake event was an exclusive Festival Ballet Society affair.

³⁴ Davis, interview, 29 May 1995.

³⁵ "Festival reviews -- double joy from two bluebird roles," *The Star* (17 October 1956), 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ "Johannesburg will see her dance," *Rand Daily Mail* (13 October 1956), 5.

³⁸ Theatre Programme: *Ballet under the stars*, Johannesburg Festival 1956, Zoo Lake, Johannesburg, performance 20 October 1956.

³⁹ Although logistically this may have been impossible, it seems that petty jealousy played more of a part than logistics or the particular merits of Staff's dancers in deciding who should perform with Fonteyn at Zoo Lake.



Plate 24: Posed photograph of Staff's dancers in costume (except Sylvia Davis) for *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*. From left to right they are: Back row; Sylvia Davis, Jacqueline St. Clere, Frankie Milner, Carol Cain and Victoria Carlson; front row, Adele Samuels, Rosaleen Kassel, Naomi Stamelman and Joan Mosselson.⁴⁰

On 2 and 3 November 1956 the South African Ballet and Roshild Leibbrandt's company each danced two ballets at the Pretoria City Hall. Staff's company performed *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* and *Symphony of Sylphs* while Leibbrandt's company performed a ballet to music by Mozart and a Hungarian-styled ballet to Liszt's second *Hungarian Rhapsody*.⁴¹ *The Pretoria News* referred to Staff as "a tip-top man" whose "stuff is worth seeing" and to Staff and Leibbrandt as "world names."⁴² Neither the Pretoria nor Johannesburg press reviewed these performances.

⁴⁰ "Honour for local ballet," Photograph, as reproduced in *The Star* (16 October 1956), 11.

⁴¹ "Wayfarer," *The Pretoria News* (28 October 1955), 6.

⁴² *The Pretoria News* (28 October 1955), 6.

It was in about February 1956 that Staff became involved with Leslie French's production of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The first press release concerning *The Tempest* was published by *The Pretoria News* on 22 March 1956, which suggests that Staff probably began collaborating with French early in March of that year or even before in February. Leslie French of course had been an old acquaintance of Staff's (their association going back to 1937 when both appeared in Charles B. Cochran's London production of *Home and Beauty*), and it was hardly surprising that French secured the services of Staff because he probably knew of Staff's progress in London and South Africa. And since it was not uncommon for *The Tempest* to incorporate various transformation scenes as well as musical interludes and dances as part of the action, Staff was naturally required to arrange all the dancing sequences including the Masque. He was also requested to assist with the *mise-en-scène* and to devise suitable movements that would reflect something of the characters' personalities. Bernice Lloyd, who was one of the dancers in this production, confirmed how Staff skilfully moulded movements to reveal the special qualities of the various characters.⁴³ For example, Ariel's mischievous nature had to be conveyed with light movements while the somewhat deformed Caliban (who was the exact opposite of Ariel) had to exhibit heavier, awkward and more earthy movements. Staff also arranged a ballet sequence of nymphs and reapers with Jacqueline St. Clere leading the merry-making.⁴⁴ Michael Venables remembered the short adagio ballet in the Masque scene for Jacqueline St. Clere and three of the men but hastened to add that it amounted to little more than "another bit of commissioned hack work."⁴⁵

The production itself was designed by Len Grossett (scenery) and Miriam Jacobsohn (costumes) while the task of lighting was assigned to Anthony Farmer.⁴⁶ Rosabel Watson arranged Elizabethan music to

⁴³ Bernice Lloyd, conversation, 15 June 1996.

⁴⁴ Martin Squire, "Hurrah for sweet Will -- and sweet Leslie!" *The Sunday Times* (29 April 1956), 19.

⁴⁵ Venables, "Recollections", 4.

accompany the action with some of the music apparently taken from the original production of *The Tempest* in 1612.⁴⁷



Plate 25: Frank Staff's dancers rehearsing for *The Tempest* with, from left to right, Jacqueline St. Clere, André Retief and Bernice Lloyd.⁴⁸

Leslie French's production of *The Tempest* was at the behest of the Johannesburg Repertory Players and premiered at the Baker Memorial Hall in Pretoria on 17 April 1956.⁴⁹ Scheduled for a short one-week run only, it then transferred to Johannesburg for a longer season of one month at the Reps. Theatre from 25 April until 26 May. Press notices indicate the success of the season with many performances sold out. All the matinées for instance were already sold out just two days after the first performance.⁵⁰ And later advertisements reveal that several

⁴⁶ Theatre Programme: *The Tempest*, Reps. Theatre, Johannesburg, season April 1956.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ "Frank Staff and dancers," Photograph, as reproduced in *The Pretoria News* (11 April 1956), 5.

⁴⁹ "London Shakespearean producer at work," *The Pretoria News* (22 March 1956), 5.

⁵⁰ Advertisement, *The Star* (27 April 1956), 12.

evening performances were also sold out, particularly those for the Saturday evening performances.⁵¹

Critical response was almost unanimously positive where Staff's choreography was concerned, except for the critic of *Die Transvaler* who was slightly ambiguous in trying to decide whether it was the performance itself or Staff's choreography that was "on the clumsy side" and "not gracious enough."⁵² The critic failed to justify, or even identify, exactly what aspect of the ballet sequences -- if this was indeed the case -- were "clumsy" and not nearly "gracious enough."⁵³ The reviewer of *The Pretoria News*, writing under the pseudonym "Alexina", offered a very different opinion by stating how

the special delights of the masque were beautifully contrived and the ballet sequences, arranged by Frank Staff, was effective but could be more so if the space were not so cramped.⁵⁴

Pat Hovenden of *The Star* thought that

the dances and the blessings by the goddesses attending Miranda's betrothal, always somewhat tedious to the taste of today, are disposed of as happily as possible by Frank Staff's choreography. Shakespeare is satisfyingly handled like this.⁵⁵

Martin Squire of *The Sunday Times* praised Jacqueline St. Clere for her notable dancing in the nymphs and reapers scene.⁵⁶ Both Pat

⁵¹ Advertisement, *The Star* (8 May 1956), 12.
 Advertisement, *The Star* (15 May 1956), 10.
 Advertisement, *The Star* (19 May 1956), 10.
 Advertisement, *The Star* (25 May 1956), 12.

⁵² "Kuns en vermaak -- Shakespeare-spel goed gehanteer" [Art and entertainment -- Shakespeare performance well-handled,] *Die Transvaler* (27 April 1956), 2.

⁵³ The reviewer tended to fault almost every aspect of the production although some positive credit was given to some of the individual performers.

Die Transvaler (27 April 1956), 2.

⁵⁴ "An experience not to be missed -- 'The Tempest'," *The Pretoria News* (18 April 1956), 5.

⁵⁵ Pat Hovenden, "Spectacular and vigorous Shakespeare," *The Star* (26 April 1956), 11.

Hovenden and Martin Squire offered complimentary reports about the production as a whole.

While *The Tempest* was being performed, Staff became involved with Brian Brooke's production of *Salad Days*, a musical originally conceived by Julian Slade and Dorothy Reynolds during the early fifties in England. Slade, a barrister's son, was educated at Cambridge where he began writing undergraduate revues, and

from there he graduated as an actor to the Bristol Old Vic, where he and his leading lady, Dorothy Reynolds, began composing a sequence of Christmas musicals designed essentially to let the fundamentally classical company have a bit of fun around the piano.⁵⁷

Salad Days was one of the musicals to emerge from the Slade/Reynolds collaboration. Originally commissioned by Denis Carey, then director of the Bristol Old Vic Company,⁵⁸ the action involved two college graduates who encounter a tramp with a magic piano that causes all who hear it to sing and dance.⁵⁹ Scheduled for December 1953 at the Bristol Old Vic,⁶⁰ *Salad Days* was hailed "an instantaneous success"⁶¹ before transferring to the Vaudeville Theatre in London on 5 August 1954.⁶² And in just under five years after its Bristol première, *Salad Days* opened in New York at the Barbizon Plaza Theatre on 10 November 1958.⁶³ *Salad Days* was often regarded as "a satisfactory answer to the vogue of American musicals which was

⁵⁶ Squire, *The Sunday Times* (29 April 1956), 19.

⁵⁷ Sheridan Morley, *Spread a little happiness -- the first hundred years of the British musical* (London: Thames and Hudson), 135.

⁵⁸ Theatre Programme: "From the prompt corner," *Salad Days*, Brooke Theatre, Johannesburg, season May 1956.

⁵⁹ Morley, *Spread*, 135.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Theatre Programme: *Salad Days*, May 1956.

⁶² Mander and Mitchenson, *Comedy*, 40.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

started by ‘Oklahoma’ just after the war...”,⁶⁴ and was still being performed in London twenty-one months after its South African première in Johannesburg.⁶⁵ By the time its London run had ended almost six years later,⁶⁶ a total of 2,283 performances had been given.⁶⁷ By the end of the 1950’s it had become “the longest-running musical in the history of the British theatre”, even surpassing *Chu-Chin-Chow* (1916), *The Boy Friend* (1953) and *My Fair Lady* (1958).⁶⁸ It was, however, overtaken by Lionel Bart’s *Oliver!* during the 1960’s.⁶⁹ This was indeed a far cry from the original intention to stage *Salad Days* for a short three-week run in Bristol.⁷⁰ By the end of 1961 it “was already being revived...”⁷¹

Brian Brooke’s decision to mount the musical had been prompted by a visit to London in 1955 when he saw the West End production and noted its success. He returned to South Africa believing that this was “just the thing” for Johannesburg audiences.⁷² In fact, *Salad Days* was the first musical staged by the Brian Brooke organization and it seemed both logical and appropriate to elicit Staff’s expert advice on matters pertaining to movement, dance routines and, to a lesser degree, the staging itself. Brian Brooke, however, was unable to recall precisely how Staff became involved with the production:

I was an entrepreneur in theatre management at the time and I knew Frank, obviously I knew Frank as we all did, but I’m not quite sure how we met or how Frank came to be involved with *Salad Days*. Whether he approached me for work or whether I

⁶⁴ Theatre Programme: *Salad Days*, May 1956.

⁶⁵ Mander and Mitchenson, *Comedy*, 40.

⁶⁶ Morley, *Spread*, 135.

⁶⁷ Mander and Mitchenson, *Comedy*, 40.

⁶⁸ Morley, *Spread*, 135.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁷² “Net die ding” [Just the thing,] *Die Transvaler* (25 April 1956), 2.

first contacted him to assist with the production is completely beyond my recollection.⁷³

Whatever the case, the very nature of Staff's task was to arrange individual movement sequences for the musical items and the general *mise-en-scène*, which could include the actual choreography or at least some form of movement. The result was that Staff mapped out movements for a cast of thirteen in fourteen musical sequences, seven in the first act and seven in the second. Brooke explained the procedure of what might be expected in a production of this nature:

The director would take the dialogue up to a certain point and then hand it over to the choreographer. Sometimes it wasn't actual choreography but just moving everybody around the stage and Frank had an excellent feel for movement and placing. That, I believe, was the case in *Salad Days*.⁷⁴

Brooke's speculation as to whether this was indeed "the case" is based on the premise that he was not involved with the production -- Michael Finlayson was its director because Brooke was away on tour with *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, which "went on forever".⁷⁵ In fact, Brooke never got to see *Salad Days* and the upshot of his reminiscence meant that as he never worked with Staff on this production he was not really in a position to comment on Staff's contribution.

The Johannesburg production of *Salad Days* was designed by Pamela Lewis (décor) and Heather MacDonald-Rouse (costumes), while Bob Fairweather and Fay Kleams provided musical accompaniment on two pianos.⁷⁶ Rory MacDermott and Laverne Burden played "Timothy" and "Jane", the two college graduates, while Anthony Cullen was seen as "the tramp".⁷⁷

⁷³ Brooke, interview, 2 October 1995.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Theatre Programme: *Salad Days*, May 1956.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*



Plate 26: Rory MacDermott rehearsing steps set by Staff for *Salad Days*.⁷⁸

Salad Days opened at the Brooke Theatre on 17 May 1956⁷⁹ and ran until 16 June 1956,⁸⁰ with matinée and evening performances on each Saturday. Reviewed in *The Star* and *The Sunday Times* only, Oliver Walker of *The Star* was neither convinced nor impressed and tended to be quite caustic in his review. Julian Neale in *The Sunday Times* was less severe, although he too found the work to be “formless”.⁸¹ Later in his review Neale conceded that “even if some of the songs are not quite tuneful enough and one or two of the jokes sound a little tired, it is difficult not to fall under the spell of its gentle charm.”⁸² But nowhere in his review does Neale make reference to Staff’s

⁷⁸ “Look at me now -- I’m dancing,” Photograph, as reproduced in *The Star* (10 May 1956), 10.

⁷⁹ Advertisement, *The Star* (17 May 1956), 12.

⁸⁰ Advertisement, *The Star* (16 June 1956), 8.

⁸¹ Julian Neale, “Fresh and sparkiing [sic],” *The Sunday Times* (20 May 1956), 19.

⁸² Neale, *The Sunday Times* (20 May 1956), 19.

choreography. Oliver Walker, on the other hand, does comment on the dancing where he states that

there were far too many moments when the dancing and ensembles looked as if it was staff night-out in the great hall and the vicar would presently rise and thank one and all for services rendered to make the village fete [*sic*] a rousing success.⁸³

Walker was really quite scathing about most aspects of the production (from the actors apparent ineptitude to the actual direction), and went on to state that “the company had as little right to attempt this musical charade about a magic piano as it is qualified to put on grand opera.”⁸⁴ Clearly unimpressed, Walker’s final remarks went further to castigate the production when he claimed that it

stumbled dangerously at too many points, and while the music made no impression at all on my susceptible ear I can well believe that in the proper hands something very different and quite desirable might have been made of it.⁸⁵

It seems difficult to believe that an ostensibly defective musical would have run for a period of one month even if performances were not completely sold out. And a comparison with *The Tempest* shows further that as *Salad Days* ran for exactly the same length of time, it must have received a fairly positive public response in spite of Oliver Walker’s rather adverse remarks.

⁸³ Oliver Walker, “‘Salad Days’ is a very green show,” *The Star* (18 May 1956), 11.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

News of the South African Ballet's first season for 1957 was released by the *Rand Daily Mail* on 18 December 1956, complemented by an advertisement in *The Star* on the same day.¹ This was followed by a press release in *The Sunday Times* on 30 December 1956 endorsing the *Rand Daily Mail's* report.² Details of, and commentary on, the company's impressive and varied proposed repertoire was described in both *The Sunday Times* and the *Rand Daily Mail*. Interestingly, the South African Ballet's season marked the first theatrical event for 1957 in Johannesburg, and was scheduled for a season at the Reps. Theatre from 7 January until 19 January. Presented in association with Jimmy Shellhole of the M.O.T.H. society³ and the Woodside Sanctuary for mentally handicapped and physically disabled children, the proceeds were to be divided between the M.O.T.H. Memorial Centre and the Woodside concern. Vernon Veale, chairman of Woodside Sanctuary, anticipated that box office receipts would boost necessary funds for the building of a new children's home, and expressed his "gratitude to the South African Ballet Company for their generous support for our cause."⁴

Both standard works from the repertoire, by now clearly the company's signature pieces, and four new ballets by Staff were presented. The result was an array of nine ballets organized into seven different programmes illustrating Staff's insightful ability to compile and balance his programmes in a logical fashion.⁵ The established works comprised *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, *Peter and the Wolf*, *Symphony of Sylphs* and *Transfigured Night*, while the

¹ Advertisement, *The Star* (18 December 1956), 16.

² "The first night of the new year," *The Sunday Times*, (30 December 1956), 5.

³ The M.O.T.H. (Memorable Order of Tin Hats) society was an organization drawn from ex-servicemen of the two World Wars.

⁴ Vernon Veale, "A message from the Chairman of the Woodside Sanctuary for mentally and physically disabled Children," Programme Note: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 3.

⁵ "Frank Staff producing season of nine ballets," *Rand Daily Mail*, (18 December 1956), 14.

new creations were *Apollo '57*, *The Birthday*, *The Impresario* and *The Judgement of Paris*.⁶

Staff structured seven programmes according to the following design: Two premieres, *Apollo '57* and *The Judgement of Paris*, were performed with *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* and *Symphony of Sylphs* on the opening night (7 January), and then again on 9 January; the third premiere, *The Impresario*, was complemented by *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, *The Judgement of Paris* and *Transfigured Night* for three performances on 10 and 11 January as well as the Saturday evening performance on 12 January; the matinée performance of 12 January specifically catered for an afternoon audience with *Peter and the Wolf*, *The Impresario*, *The Judgement of Paris*, and *Symphony of Sylphs*; the final new work of the season, *The Birthday*, was first seen on 14 January as part of another programme together with *Apollo '57*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Peter and the Wolf*, and was repeated on 16 January; the mixed bill of 19 January included *The Birthday*, *The Impresario*, *The Judgement of Paris* and *Transfigured Night* while the matinée of 19 January predictably concentrated on comedy-styled works such as *Apollo '57*, *Peter and the Wolf* and *The Birthday*; and finally, the closing performance on 19 January marked the only time all four new ballets were performed.⁷

Apollo '57 was undoubtedly the most ambitious of Staff's four new ballets. It required a cast of fifteen dancers, with most of the dancers performing at least two roles. While the theme of *Apollo* was not entirely new to ballet -- having had its roots in the French court of Louis XIV during the seventeenth-century⁸ and made famous in the

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet*, 7-19 January 1957, 7.

⁸ Louis XIV's performance as the sun in *Le Ballet Royale de la Nuit* on 23 February 1653 heralded the first of his many impersonations of the sun-god and earned him the title 'Sun King'. Greek mythology had been an all-embracing source for ballets during the eighteenth-century and, to a lesser extent, the nineteenth-century as well. In 1763, the Austrian-born dancer and choreographer, Franz Anton Hilverding, produced *Apollon et Daphné, ou Le retour d'Apollon au Parnasse* in Russia where he worked from 1758 until 1764. Nineteen years later, the French dancer, theorist and choreographer Jean-Georges Noverre produced *Apollon et les muses* in London.

twentieth-century by George Balanchine's seminal production of *Apollon musagète* in 1928 for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets-Russes -- Staff's concept was more contemporary both in its interpretation and setting, and arguably more distinctive. The idea of using the Greek sun-god, immutably embodied in the visual arts as the archetype of masculinity and often associated with music and prophecy, obviously appealed to Staff's senses as it had his predecessors. In fact, this had been uppermost in his mind while he was in Paris with Les Ballets des Champs-Élysées and possibly even before where he considered the Apollo theme's suitability for ballet. According to the *Rand Daily Mail*, Staff had already "began to plan this ballet for the Champs-Élysées Company in 1950 when there was a scheme afoot to bring the famous Parisian troupe to South Africa."⁹ Perhaps it was this proposed South African tour that actually sparked Staff's imagination with the idea of creating *Apollo* in the first place? *The Sunday Times*, without being any more specific, only confirmed how the ballet had originally been intended for the Paris-based company "before Staff decided to come back and settle in his home country."¹⁰ But this is historically incorrect as Staff first went back to London after his brief spell in Paris before returning to South Africa. However, as the tour did not materialize, the ballet was held in abeyance pending more

In 1802, another French-born dancer and choreographer, Charles Didelot, presented *Apollon et Daphné* in St. Petersburg where he resided from 1801 to 1811. In 1803, Didelot staged his second production based on the Apollo theme entitled *Apollon et Persée*. The first twentieth-century Apollo ballet was created in April 1928 when Adolph Bolm presented *Apollon musagète* to a specially commissioned score from Igor Stravinsky, which had been made possible by the Elizabeth Sprague-Coolidge Foundation. Arranged for a festival of contemporary music at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., Bolm's version was succeeded some two months later by George Balanchine's *Apollon musagète*. Set to Stravinsky's score as well, Balanchine's choreographic reading premiered in Paris on 12 June 1928. During the course of his lifetime Balanchine made various changes to the work, particularly in 1978 when he removed Apollo's birth scene and deleted the ending where Apollo ascends Mount Olympus. Balanchine's creation is better known today by its preferred shorter title of *Apollo*, which he introduced during the 1950's. Other major twentieth-century productions have included Bronislava Nijinska's *Apollon et la belle* (1937) for the Polish Ballet in Paris, Serge Lifar's *Apollon musagète* (1956) for the La Scala Ballet in Milan, Aurel von Milloss's *Apollon musagète* (1941) for the Teatro delle Arti in Rome, Yvonne Georgi's *Apollon musagète* (1951) for the Düsseldorf Opera Ballet in Düsseldorf and Tatjana Gsovsky's *Apollon musagète* (1952) for the Berlin Festival.

⁹ *Rand Daily Mail* (18 December 1956), 14.

¹⁰ *The Sunday Times* (30 December 1956), 5.

befitting circumstances and was finally realized in 1957. Yet, Staff's concept of setting *Apollo* within a more contemporary milieu was not the first time he experimented with updating mythological subject matter to the twentieth-century: *Amphitryon '50* for the Empire Ballet was his first choreographic exercise to explore this possibility.

Jacqueline St. Clere remarked in December 1956 that *Apollo '57* "is our strongest ballet -- certainly our most expensive",¹¹ which is not difficult to understand in the light of production costs for the many scene changes (there were nine) coupled with costumes for a large cast and special requirements for cinematographic effects. Together with *Peter and the Wolf*, *Symphony of Sylphs* and *Transfigured Night*, *Apollo '57* was one of Staff's longest ballets, with a running time close to twenty-five minutes. Kendrew Lascelles verified its length when he explained that as this ballet was the main attraction of the evening, "it was a long piece with lots for everyone to do, which made it very busy choreographically and quite challenging for the dancers."¹² *Apollo '57* was made possible by the addition of seven new dancers to the company, replacing the five who had left, and the welcome return of Delysia Jacobs. The new members were Francois du Plessis, Ottie Friedman, Rosaleen Kassel (or Kaye, as she was also known), Kendrew Lascelles, Frankie Milner, Dries Reyneke and Iris Scorgie. Those absent from the company's roster were Valda Joubert, Norman Lindsay, Ivy May McDonald, André Retief and Adele Samuels.

Apollo '57 was designed by Saxon Lucas whose earlier designs included the whimsical backcloth for *Symphony of Sylphs* and a modest set design (including backcloth) for *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*. As it turned out, Staff used Lucas to design the other three new ballets. With a total of six ballets to his credit, Lucas revealed that

designing for this ballet season has been extraordinarily stimulating; the music and Frank Staff's choreography have inspired me to great originality.¹³

¹¹ *Rand Daily Mail* (18 December 1956), 14.

¹² Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

¹³ "Designer for six ballets," *Rand Daily Mail* (4 January 1957), 7.

The costumes were modern in concept except for Apollo, the Muses, and the young girl who were all dressed in more traditionally-styled loose robes of ancient Greece. Apollo wore a short white pleated skirt embellished with a painted Greek motif. Attached to his shoulders and hanging halfway down his back was a white cape complemented by another Greek-inspired design. Apollo's footwear, as shown on the Saxon Lucas etching, consisted of short, slightly below the knee, white boots which were probably made of soft canvas. The design reveals a simple patterned sketch at the top of the boot and tassels extending downwards in front of the boot. Interestingly, the only visual of this production (except for Apollo's costume design) shows Kendrew Lascelles wearing white ballets shoes and not boots. It is possible Lascelles changed his shoes during the course of the ballet although this seems highly unlikely, alternatively that the original designs were later modified.



Plate 27: Costume design by Saxon Lucas for Kendrew Lascelles as
"Apollo".¹⁴

¹⁴ "Premier designer," Photograph, as reproduced in the *Rand Daily Mail* (4 January 1957), 7.

For the young girl, Lucas designed a simple white two-piece costume consisting of a fairly tight fitting rounded top to resemble a Greek tunic under which was attached a skirt extending to below the knee. Victoria Carlson remembers the costume as being “very comfortable and easy to move in.”¹⁵ Pink tights and pointe shoes completed her costume. Because the young girl was not Greek in origin, it was unnecessary for her costume to reflect some or other Greek-inspired motif but rather to depict her innocence of character and purity of soul. The men wore conventional shirts (often with their sleeves rolled up), tights and trousers. Some of the men’s trousers were rolled up to just below the knee. Ballet shoes rather than more conventional footwear was worn. Nobody could recall exactly what the women wore, other than to say their costumes were modern. Sylvia Davis remembered her costume in scene three (the cinema scene) as “a little 1920’s short skirt.”¹⁶

Rather than resorting to Igor Stravinsky’s *Apollon musagète* of 1927-8, Staff decided to use Benjamin Britten’s *Variations on a theme of Frank Bridge*, which had been composed in 1937 for the Boyd Neel String Orchestra.¹⁷ The work was a tribute to Britten’s composition teacher, Frank Bridge, and was inspired by the second of Bridge’s *Three Idylls* for string quartet,¹⁸ composed in 1906.¹⁹ Using the Bridge composition as his theme, Britten wrote ten variations entitled “March”, “Romance”, “Aria Italiana”, “Bourrée Classique”, “Wiener Walzer”, “Moto Perpetuo”, “Funeral March”, “Chant”, “Fugue”, and “Finale”. Humphrey Carpenter wrote of the *Variations* as being “an astonishing work, radiating energy and ideas....”²⁰ Eric Walter White

¹⁵ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

¹⁶ Davis, interview, 29 May 1995.

¹⁷ Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten -- A biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 106.

Eric Walter White, *Benjamin Britten -- A sketch of his life and works* (London: Boosey and Hawkes Ltd., 1954) 27.

¹⁸ White, *Britten -- works*, 28.

¹⁹ Carpenter, *Britten -- biography*, 108.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

stated that it revealed "to the full his [Britten's] resource and skill in dealing with a string orchestra."²¹ In 1939, the *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* was performed in New York for the first time with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra,²² and three years later it was used to accompany a ballet by Lew Christensen called *Jinx* at the National Theatre in New York.²³ In 1949, Frederick Ashton used the score for his surrealist-inspired ballet entitled *Le Rêve de Léonor*, which he created for the Ballets de Paris de Roland Petit in London.²⁴

The next ballet production to use Britten's *Variations* was John Cranko's *Variations on a Theme* for Ballet Rambert in 1954.²⁵ The fourth ballet inspired by the Britten score was Alan Carter's *Haus der Schatten* for the Bayerischer Staatsopernballett in 1955.²⁶ Staff's *Apollo '57* preceded Kenneth MacMillan's *Winter's Eve* (obviously set to the same Britten score) by exactly one month and three days.²⁷ MacMillan's *Winter's Eve*, incidentally, was created for American Ballet Theatre in New York. However, there was a strong possibility Staff actually saw both Ashton's and Christensen's ballets in London, and that he probably knew about the Carter and Cranko productions. He was, no doubt, even aware of MacMillan's anticipated ballet in New York. There is no way of telling why Staff chose Britten's music in the first place, other than to speculate he knew some of Britten's music and was probably aware of Britten's only ballet score entitled

²¹ White, *Britten -- works*, 28.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Christensen's *Jinx* was produced for the Dance Players society and concerned superstition in a circus with a clown shunned for causing endless chaos until a crowd decides to beat him to death. However, he materializes once again. The ballet was revived -- and revised -- for the New York City Ballet in 1949 and was seen the following year in London when New York City Ballet visited England.

White, *Britten -- works*, 34.

²⁴ White, *Britten -- works*, 73.

²⁵ Eric Walter White, *Benjamin Britten -- His life and operas* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), 69.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

The Prince of the Pagodas (1956). Also, other choreographers had realized the potential of Britten's *Variations* for ballet and Staff had already been exposed to Britten's music for the 1953 film version of *The Beggar's Opera*.

It is not known however whether or not Staff ever contemplated using Britten's *Young Apollo* (1939) although it seems highly unlikely as the work was withdrawn until 1979, three years after the composer's death in 1976.²⁸ But it is evident that Staff admired Britten's compositions, and later he used several of them for his musical inspiration: in 1963 he created *Simple Symphony* for the University of Cape Town Junior Ballet School²⁹ to Britten's 1934 score of the same name; in 1965 he produced *Soirée Musicale* for Ballet Natal³⁰ to Britten's sparkling *Matinée musicales* (1941);³¹ in 1967 he choreographed a studio-styled ballet entitled *So this is ballet?* for PACT Ballet³² to Britten's well-known *A Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra (Variations and*

²⁸ Written for piano and string orchestra, Britten's *Young Apollo* was especially created for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Toronto, and was first transmitted on air on 27 August 1939 with the composer as (piano) soloist. Although Britten originally allocated the work an opus number -- Opus 16 -- he later decided to withdraw it. Humphrey Carpenter explained how Britten "told Wulff Scherchen it was 'founded on the last lines of Keats' *Hyperion*', which describes the young Apollo's 'golden tresses' and 'limbs/Celestial'. He also made it clear that Wulff himself was the subject of the piece...."

Carpenter, *Britten -- biography*, 133.

²⁹ Staff's *Simple Symphony* was a suite of dances with no narrative line. Denise Schultze remembers the work for its comedic nature as performed by the junior students of the university ballet school.

Schultze, interview, 14 August 1991.

³⁰ Theatre Programme: *Ballet*, Ballet Natal, NAPAC, Alhambra Theatre, Durban, season October 1965.

³¹ Britten's *Soirée Musicale* (1936) was an adaptation of Rossini melodies arranged in five movements. Antony Tudor used the score in 1938 for a ballet also entitled *Soirée Musicale*. By 1941 Britten had arranged further Rossini melodies to which he added the overture from Rossini's *La Cenerentola* and incorporated the earlier *Soirée Musicale* for a new work entitled *Matinée Musicales*. George Balanchine used the *Matinée Musicales* for his 1941 ballet entitled *Divertimento*.

³² *So this is ballet?* was especially designed for schools' programmes and followed the training of a dancer from simple *pliés* at the barre to *pas de deux* in the centre.

Theme on a Theme of Purcell) of 1946; and in 1970 he wrote *The Séance* for PACOFS Ballet to Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* (1940).³³

Staff's *Apollo '57* opened to reveal a sky-cloth with four scrims arranged one in front of the other and suspended vertically at regular intervals down the length of the stage. Each was painted to represent a different scene and placed about two-thirds across the width of the stage. Michael Venables found this opening scene particularly effective, and recalled how "designer, Saxon Lucas, created a very striking sky-cloth against which three goddesses were silhouetted, immobile, when the curtain rose."³⁴ Victoria Carlson as the young girl made her entrance with a series of *bouffées* travelling downstage in a sweeping s-bend shape. As she passed in front of the scrims each was lit automatically to represent the scene she was moving through.³⁵ Victoria Carlson added that the scrims "were then flown out to give us the necessary space to dance" before each reappeared individually as and when they were required.³⁶ The ballet itself was structured as a series of tableaux, the first of which was entitled "Olympus". Here Apollo was awakened by three Muses "to whom he expressed his desire to visit Earth. They whisper their warnings, and his mortal journey begins."³⁷ In Kendrew Lascelles, an athletic dancer of noble bearing and striking countenance, Staff had found his perfect Apollo. To dance the three Muses, Staff chose Jacqueline St. Clere as "Calliope", the muse of epic poetry, Delysia Blake as "Melpomene", the muse of tragedy, and Bernice Lloyd as "Terpsichore", the muse of dance.³⁸ The action proper began with Apollo being born from the

³³ Raeford Daniel, "Frank Staff takes talent to O.F.S.," *Rand Daily Mail* (23 April 1970), 14.

³⁴ Venables, "Recollections," 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Carlson, conversation, 29 January 1996.

³⁷ Programme Note: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 9.

³⁸ In Balanchine's *Apollo* the Muses were Calliope, Terpsichore, and Polyhymnia to represent mime. Logically, it would seem that Staff's choice of Melpomene, the muse of tragedy, was probably more apt for his ballet with its somewhat 'tragic'

Muses standing in a circle arranged like petals of a flower.³⁹ Apollo then emerged from the circle and leapt towards the wings as though flying down to earth. Kendrew Lascelles described how

this incredible leap was like a swan-dive with my arms held straight up and above my body while my legs were placed together behind my body. It had to be approached like a rugby tackle because that's the position Frank wanted me to adopt.⁴⁰

The leap itself only took about three seconds to execute with Lascelles plummeting from more or less five feet off the ground. Michael Venables remembers this spectacular exit and commented how Kendrew Lascelles leapt "high and far into the wings where he landed on a mattress!"⁴¹ Lascelles, however, offered a very different explanation as to how his landing was cushioned:

There were about six gentlemen in the wings waiting to catch me. They were fascinated with all of this until I invariably knocked some of them over. But it really was a magnificent leap from centre stage and a wonderful moment in the ballet.⁴²

In the second scene, set on earth in a city, Apollo's presence "attracts the Cicerone and a young girl."⁴³ Staff cast himself as the Cicerone with a group of eight onlookers observing the activity. Playing the part of eight "Onlookers" were Sylvia Davis, Francois du Plessis, Rosaleen Kassel, Frankie Milner, Joan Mosselson, Dries Reyneke, Iris Scorgie and Naomi Stamelman.⁴⁴ Staff's Cicerone, as Victoria Carlson recalled, had sinister-like connotations "as he tried to keep us [Apollo and the young girl] apart. He wanted to manipulate the situation, be in command of it and ultimately control Apollo's

consequences as Staff's ballet was really something of a tragicomedy or, perhaps, a balletic interpretation of black comedy.

³⁹ Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Venables, "Recollections," 4.

⁴² Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

⁴³ Programme Note: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 9.

⁴⁴ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 9.

destiny.”⁴⁵ Kendrew Lascelles agreed with Carlson in as far as the Cicerone’s saturnine character tried to influence and control Apollo’s fate, but added that the Cicerone was also an educator, “a modern day Virgil-type figure showing Apollo and the young girl new adventures, leading them on, as it were, but always knowing the end result.”⁴⁶



Plate 28: Scene Two: The City, with Kendrew Lascelles, Victoria Carlson and some of the “Onlookers”.⁴⁷

In the following three scenes, particularly the third and the fifth, the Cicerone’s scheming character became more obvious. In the first of these, scene three in Staff’s scenario, Apollo is taken to a cinema by the Cicerone where he is shown a silent motion picture featuring three characters: “The Husband” (Francois du Plessis), “The Wife” (Sylvia Davis), and “The Lover” (Dries Reyneke). The very nature of the ‘film’s’ content, although apparently quite humorous, must have implied some clandestine conduct between the wife and her lover jealously observed by the wife’s husband. Sylvia Davis recalled how in this scene she stood centre stage, motionless, with a bright follow

⁴⁵ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

⁴⁶ Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

⁴⁷ “New works performed by South African [sic] Ballet Company,” Photograph, as reproduced in *House and Home in Southern Africa*, 2,1 (April-May 1957), 33.

spot focused on her.⁴⁸ Then the action began, accentuated with modern movements becoming more frenetic as the three characters rushed across the stage, creating the effect of a suspicious husband chasing after his wife and her lover.⁴⁹ The idea behind this sketch, according to Davis, was for the wife to assert her independence from her husband.⁵⁰ Commenting on the cinema scene, Michael Venables explained how “Frank used very successfully the already rather corny technique of flickering strobe lights and intermittent action to represent a silent movie.”⁵¹ Sylvia Davis confirmed that Staff’s use of the flicker system had the effect of watching a silent movie in which

all the movements were stylized. Everything in fact was stylized to create the right effect and to create the feeling of being in a cinema while at the same time it was also quite comical. That was Frank’s genius with lighting coming out, and it was completely convincing. He was, incidentally, the first in this country to use that kind of innovation.⁵²

The fourth scene took place in an Art Gallery. However, immediately before this scene Kendrew Lascelles and Victoria Carlson performed a *pas de deux*, which Lascelles described as

one of the most beautiful Frank ever created with its lifts, incredibly soft lines and wonderful flowing quality. I remember this piece of choreography for its superb lyricism and for having to sustain a deceptive quality throughout. Much of its brilliance was owed to Vicky [Carlson], who could do anything perfectly. She had the most beautiful body with extraordinary long limbs, and was extremely strong under that satin smoothness. Her dynamic ability showed grace and strength at the same time. In fact, Frank once told me she was one of the best dancers he had ever known, which made it possible for him to work directly, so to speak, from the music to the artist with Vicky and I experimenting with patterns of double-work almost like a sculptor working with living material.⁵³

⁴⁸ Sylvia Davis, telephonic conversation with author, 29 May 1995, Johannesburg.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Venables, “Recollections,” 4.

⁵² Davis, interview, 29 May 1995.

⁵³ Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

Victoria Carlson likewise recalled the *pas de deux* with its difficult construction involving

all those lovely, complicated lifts I had never seen before. Also, I remember a series of *pirouettes* after which I would throw my weight forward in time for Ken [Lascelles] to catch me before being dragged across the floor. Then we got involved in all sorts of twists and turns and it was fantastic but extremely difficult. It really was a very unusual *pas de deux* that stretched my ability and I loved it because it worked very well.⁵⁴



Plate 29: Victoria Carlson and Kendrew Lascelles rehearsing the *pas de deux* for *Apollo '57*.⁵⁵

After the *pas de deux*, the *Cicerone*, followed by the young girl, led *Apollo* into the gallery.⁵⁶ Inside the gallery were works by four eminent artists: Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Gainsborough, Pablo Picasso and Harmensz Rembrandt van Rijn. All were portraits, three

⁵⁴ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

⁵⁵ Photograph, as reproduced in *The Star* (15 June 1957), 3.

⁵⁶ Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

of which were untitled and simply described as “The Gainsborough”, “The Picasso” and “The Rembrandt”. The fourth was da Vinci’s *The Mona Lisa* (1503-6). Ottie Friedman was “The Gainsborough”, Iris Scorgie impersonated “The Picasso” and Francois du Plessis appeared as “The Rembrandt”. All were framed, motionless and expressionless except for Frankie Milner, who just smiled as *The Mona Lisa*.

Interestingly, Staff’s choice of artist were all drawn from a different century: da Vinci from the sixteenth-century; Rembrandt from the seventeenth-century; Gainsborough from the eighteenth-century; and Picasso from the twentieth-century.⁵⁷ For some unknown reason, Staff decided not to include a nineteenth-century artist. The action in this scene ended with Apollo being robbed. Excluding Apollo’s misfortune, this fourth scene appears to be reminiscent of Staff’s *Lovers’ Gallery* of 1947.

In the fifth scene, Apollo and the young girl arrive at a house of ill-repute where they are introduced by the Cicerone, but are soon separated by deception. The Muses reappear, and Melpomene “gives Apollo a knife with which he kills himself.”⁵⁸ Sylvia Davis, Rosaleen Kassel, Frankie Milner, Joan Mosselson, Iris Scorgie and Naomi Stamelman all interpreted “The girls of the house” for this scene.⁵⁹ With its slight texture of decadence, it was in this scene that Apollo lost his innocence. Kendrew Lascelles explains:

I suppose Apollo had begun to lose his innocence the moment he set foot on earth. The brothel scene demonstrated his actual loss of innocence. Here the story almost becomes like Orpheus and Euridice going down into the underworld. There was a definite feeling of Orpheus in that scene.⁶⁰

The ‘death’ of Apollo led directly to the sixth scene where “two undertakers, delighted with the death, are prevented by the Muses from

⁵⁷ No one could recall whether the Picasso portrait was drawn from the artist’s Rose Period, his Blue period, the Negro period or from Cubism. It was suggested however that Staff was probably influenced by Picasso’s Cubist period.

⁵⁸ Programme Note: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

removing the body.”⁶¹ Staff cast Francois du Plessis and Dries Reyneke as the undertakers. Nobody could really remember the action in this scene other than to say that the “Lament and funeral on a wet afternoon”, led by Victoria Carlson, was quasi-processional. In the seventh scene, the Muses restore Apollo to life as he is immortal and the girl becomes a spirit. Staff titled the next scene “Fugue”, and here

the undertakers, after accusing each other of stealing the bodies, fight. But peace is restored by the Muses’ return. Apollo and the girl’s spirit enter, searching for each other, and, in being brought together by the Muses, the legend and the ghost become lovers.⁶²

In the final tableau, which was an apotheosis, the Muses lead Apollo back to Olympus while the girl’s spirit is left to search. Hence, “the education is complete.”⁶³

No one was able to recall how the relationship between each dance scene and its respective musical counterpart was actually structured. It is suggested however that the division was fairly clear-cut from scenes six to nine of the ballet -- presuming of course the ballet corresponded exactly to the sequence of Britten’s score. And it follows therefore that while the “Funeral March” probably corresponded to scene six of the ballet, Britten’s “Chant” was used for scene seven. Britten’s “Fugue” no doubt matched scene eight (also conveniently entitled “Fugue” in the ballet) while the “Finale” was no doubt used for scene nine. The actual choreographic/musical structure from scene one to scene five is not that clear. Assuming Staff followed Britten’s musical sequence, then the choreographic/musical structure from scenes one to five may have been grouped according to the following design: “Introduction and Theme” and “Adagio” for scene one; “March” for scene two; “Romance” with its Prokofiev-like timbre for the romantic *pas de deux* although Kendrew Lascelles

⁶¹ Programme Note: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

recalled this *pas de deux* coming directly before scene four (The Art Gallery) in which case Staff might have changed the sequence around with the frenetic-sounding “Aria Italiana” coming first for scene three (The Cinema), and then the “Romance” for the *pas de deux* with the “Bourrée Classique” to link scenes three and four; “Wiener Walzer” for scene four; and “Moto Perpetuo” for scene five (The Brothel).⁶⁴

Staff’s concept for *Apollo ’57* is interesting because it allows for different and varied interpretations. Kendew Lascelles has already alluded to a marked similarity between scene five (The brothel) and *Orpheus in the Underworld*. The ballet may also be viewed as representing Apollo’s allegorical journey, arguably on similar lines to *The Pilgrim’s Progress* or *The Rake’s Progress* where allegorical journeys are also undertaken. Staff himself hinted at this idea through his use of the words “mortal journey” at the beginning of the synopsis to describe Apollo’s experiences on earth, and insinuates how Apollo eventually becomes a ‘slave’ to the Cicerone.⁶⁵ Greek mythology endorses how Apollo “twice served mortal men as a slave.”⁶⁶ The first occasion was when Apollo served Admetus, the King of Pherae in Thessaly, and promised to guarantee him against death as well as ensure that all the royal cows would give birth to twins. Apollo’s second master was Laomedon, for whom he agreed to build the walls of Troy.⁶⁷ Although Staff’s Apollo makes no pledge -- nor does he assist the Cicerone in any way -- the notion is fairly clear that he is subject to the Cicerone’s dominance in much the same way as mythology describes Apollo’s enslavement by mortal men. Although purely hypothetical, Staff’s ballet could also be viewed as a species of the incarnation; especially where the theory applies that Apollo becomes mortal once his earthly journey begins. Likewise, the tale

⁶⁴ This of course is purely conjectural because none of the interviewees could recall the exact relationship between Britten’s score and the structure of Staff’s ballet.

⁶⁵ This is equally speculative.

⁶⁶ Michael Grant and John Hazel, *Who’s Who in Classical Mythology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 39.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

comes full circle with an apotheosis where Apollo is led back to Olympus.

The division of scenes into clear-cut incidents not only illustrates Apollo's educational journey on earth, but is also indicative of Staff's conscious or sub-conscious attempt at a rough balletic translation of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. Dante's text, written in about 1308 and completed shortly before his death in 1321, is set as a three-part allegory representing the author's imaginary and arduous journey to God. To achieve this he must first pass through the twenty-four great circles of Hell (the Inferno), followed by Purgatory where he must ascend the perilous Mount Purgatory before finally reaching Paradise (Heaven).⁶⁸ Dante's perilous journey is alleviated by the spirit of Virgil,⁶⁹ his guide and mentor, who accompanies him on part of his journey and who constantly encourages him in the face of adversity.

In Canto XXVII of *Purgatory*, Virgil resigns his office leaving Dante on his own before Beatrice, the real life Florentine girl with whom Dante was in love, assumes Virgil's office and guides him [Dante] through heaven. In *Apollo '57*, Apollo may be likened to Dante; the Cicerone to Virgil; and the young girl, or perhaps the Muses, to Beatrice. There are several significant differences however: in Staff's ballet the action takes place on earth rather than an in imaginary hell although Apollo's life experience on earth could be viewed as a kind of hell which he has to endure before being able to ascend Mount Olympus -- his heaven? Nowhere is this more evident than in scene five of the ballet with its house of ill-repute (assuming this is one of

⁶⁸ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy 1. Hell*, translated by Dorothy L Sayers, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1974).

_____, *The Divine Comedy 2. Purgatory*, translated by Dorothy L. Sayers, (Suffolk: Chaucer Press, 1974).

_____, *The Divine Comedy 3. Paradiso*, translated by Dorothy L Sayers and Barbara Reynolds, (Buckinghamshire: Hazell Watson and Viney, 1974).

⁶⁹ Publius Vergilius Maro, or Virgil as he is better known, lived from 70 to 19 B.C., and is regarded as one of the most celebrated of all Roman poets. His best-known work is probably the *Aeneid*, which deals with an imaginary tale about the adventures of Aeneas who was one of the sons of King Priam of Troy. When Troy was sacked, Aeneas escaped but later returned to found the Latin race and with it the origins of the Roman Empire.

the great circles of hell), and the action in scene nine with Apollo being led back to Mount Olympus by the Muses, which may be compared to Dante's hazardous ascent of Mount Purgatory -- despite Apollo not having to face the roots or fruits of sin while being led with the Muses representing Virgil or Beatrice; the Cicerone's character is decidedly unprincipled whereas Virgil's spirit is benign; and unlike Beatrice, who is confined to appearing in the third part of *The Divine Comedy* only, the young girl in Staff's ballet -- if she is to be regarded as the equivalent of Beatrice -- accompanies Apollo throughout his journey, commencing in scene two and continuing until scene nine when Apollo returns to Olympus "leaving the spirit to search."⁷⁰

The notion of *Apollo '57* being linked to Dante's *Divine Comedy* is of course merely speculative as Staff never explained his interpretation of, or intention with, the ballet. Yet, it is a possibility that cannot be ruled out, bearing in mind Staff's extensive general knowledge coupled with his imaginative flair. An earlier reference by Kendrew Lascelles to the Cicerone as a "Virgil-type figure" is, by implication, a possible endorsement that Staff was actually aware of the similarity. Lascelles explains:

The Cicerone as a 'Virgil-type' was my expression, for that was how I saw the character and remember Frank vaguely describing him as my -- Apollo's -- guide. Although Frank never flaunted his erudition, he was substantially well-read and knew his literature as thoroughly as his music and art history, and I think it's plausible to knit Cicerone to Virgil as a guiding presence to Apollo because that was precisely the Cicerone's balletic role of pointing Apollo's way and presenting the choices without prejudice or suggestion, but with a certain compassion for the romance or 'Beatrice' element. So I think that Frank's deliberate weaving of Dante into the Apollo myth is not by any means beyond the pale. Although Frank never said anything about Virgil directly, the characteristics were crystal clear to me and that's how I related to Frank's role in the ballet. Put it this way, Frank certainly did not try to dissuade me from that interpretation.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Programme Note: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 9.

⁷¹ Letter to author dated 15 September 1996 from Kendrew Lascelles, former dancer, South African Ballet Company.

A further example of Staff's ingenuity is the way in which he inverted the Cicerone's function. Normally, a Cicerone is a guide who points out antiquities to visitors but in Staff's ballet the Cicerone introduces Apollo, himself an antiquity, to more modern phenomena, namely the cinema and a twentieth-century art gallery as evidenced by the Picasso portrait. Apparently, even the brothel scene was set in the twentieth-century, both in terms of its tone and style.

Apollo '57 was clearly an eclectic work that drew on a variety of sources for its content and choreography. Bernice Lloyd contended that in spite of the ballet being "written very quickly, literally overnight",⁷² it was a clear demonstration of Staff's intelligent ability to introduce and use disparate dancing styles.⁷³ The Muses, for example, were given movements indicative of Isadora Duncan's early modern style of dancing while the choreography for scene two derived its shape from Kurt Jooss' movement style. The latter style of movement was particularly evident in the way Staff combined ballet technique (minus virtuosic steps and pointe work) with less formal movements typical of German expressionism in dance known as *Austrucktanz*. The very nature of scene two makes it quite possible for Staff to have been inspired by Kurt Jooss' *The Big City* (1932).⁷⁴ And another aspect to Staff's choreography was the use of modern movements for the characters in the cinema scene, which contrasted effectively with the more fixed positions of the portraits in the art gallery scene where no movement was required at all. Apollo and the young girl's *pas de deux* sequences were all academic ballet steps. More pedestrian and lay movements were used for the funeral episode to enhance its sombre nature. Many of Staff's own movements were more of a demi-character nature -- the Cicerone being a demi-character role -- with various steps for both his character and the others, for

⁷² Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

⁷³ Bernice Lloyd, conversation, 24 September 1996.

⁷⁴ There is a strong possibility Staff actually saw *The Big City* as well as other works by Kurt Jooss. *The Big City* was revived after Jooss settled in England in 1933, making it highly conceivable that Staff saw this work.

example the brothel ladies and those from the cinema scene, taken from the twentieth-century and particularly the style of the fifties.

Apollo '57 was positively received by the critics despite some minor reservations. All agreed that the work paid testimony to Staff's innovative genius through his use of a theatrically convincing concept. The cinema scene, in particular, emerged as the most successful and thought-provoking. Lewis Sowden of the *Rand Daily Mail* wrote:

Here we have Apollo (Kendrew Lascelles) coming down to earth to see what its all about. Eight scenes follow amid rapid lights and transparencies, in the course of which we have a cinema show (a cunning device this), a street scene which is very Ballets Joossish, and an undertakers dance which Dries Reyneke and Francois du Plessis make both macabre and grotesque. The Apollo of Kendrew Lascelles has both stature and flashing movement; Frank Staff as the sinister Cicerone weaves about him expressively; and Victoria Carlson as the young girl has an ingenious grace.⁷⁵

The critic of *The Star* also came to the conclusion that

“*Apollo '57*” is a work of stature in spite of the gimmick scene changes and the almost cinematographic concept of its presentation. And artist [Saxon] Lucas certainly “went to town” to provide the slickest and most ingenious set ever seen in ballet here. The most fascinating of the nine scenes was a flashback to the early 1920 flicker-film days, ingeniously presented.⁷⁶

The same critic expressed some misgivings about Kendrew Lascelles performance however, but stated that Victoria Carlson was exemplary:

Kendrew Lascelles, in the name part, has the build and the looks, but he lacked somehow the presence to integrate into the dream quality of the story. But what he lacked Victoria Carlson, as the young girl he falls in love with, made up for abundantly. This young dancer has an irresistible vivacity, and she moves with grace and conviction.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Lewis Sowden, “Two new ballets by Frank Staff,” *Rand Daily Mail* (8 January 1957), 11.

⁷⁶ “Stimulating ballet by Frank Staff,” *The Star* (8 January 1957), 7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Although J. van der Merwe of *Die Transvaler* erroneously referred to the music as “Benjamin Britten’s *Apollo ’57*”, he also praised Victoria Carlson for her elegance. However, van der Merwe formed a very different opinion to *The Star*’s critic about Kendrew Lascelles by stating that Lascelles “dazzled in his interpretation of *Apollo*’s worldly ‘education’.”⁷⁸

Jaap Boekkooi of *Die Vaderland* described the ballet as “a strange mixture of mobster elements and classicism”, but came to the conclusion that this work was the decided “highlight of the evening.”⁷⁹ He was also of the opinion that “the combination of Saxon Lucas’ spectacular décor, Staff’s choreography, and the Duncan-like movements of the three Muses reflected an enchanting dream on stage.”⁸⁰ In a later review Boekkoei briefly alluded to *Apollo ’57* as a vehicle for displaying Victoria Carlson’s talent, remarking how she “is a particularly expressive dancer”, and concluding that *Apollo ’57* makes one “recall the whole season with an appetite for more of these successful attempts through its stimulation and talent.”⁸¹ The critic of *The Sunday Times* singled out Carlson and Staff’s performance in a very general -- and brief -- comment about those dancers who distinguished themselves “in individual instances....”⁸² And when the critic of *The Star* returned a week later to review *The Birthday*, it was *Apollo ’57* that emerged “the main event of the evening” with its “happy pot-pourri of classical Greek and M.G.M. in cinemascope.”⁸³

Following the pattern set by *Apollo ’57*, Staff’s second new ballet for the opening performance of 7 January was also inspired by mythology.

⁷⁸ J. van der Merwe, “Genoeglike balletaanbieding” [Enjoyable ballet performance,] *Die Transvaler* (9 January 1957), 2.

⁷⁹ Jaap Boekkoei, “Frank Staff sorg vir verassings” [Frank Staff provides surprises,] *Die Vaderland* (8 January 1957), 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Jaap Boekkoei, “Die liefde vir anachronismes” [A love for anachronisms,] *Die Vaderland* (15 January 1957), 3.

⁸² “Important milestone in S.A. Ballet,” *The Sunday Times* (13 January 1957), 10.

⁸³ “Ballet fans are missing a treat,” *The Star* (15 January 1957), 7.

This was *The Judgement of Paris*, drawn from Greek legend about a contest for a golden apple in which the goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite (their Roman equivalent being Juno, Minerva, and Venus respectively) dispute the ownership thereof. They ask Paris, a shepherd and son of King Priam of Troy, to make the award with each offering the handsome youth a particular bribe in return. Hera promises him control over the earth; Athena guarantees him victory in battle; and Aphrodite pledges the most beautiful woman. He chooses Aphrodite, who then orchestrates his marriage to Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta. This union both leads to the siege of Troy, which lasts ten years, and directly to the downfall of Paris.

Staff was not the first choreographer however to base a ballet on the mythical story of Paris and the three goddesses: the same subject matter had already been explored in the eighteenth-century when mythological themes formed an important part of balletic subject matter. The first production of *Le Jugement de Pâris* was in 1751, when Jean-Georges Noverre created the work at the Opéra, Lyons.⁸⁴ It was followed by Pierre Gardel's presentation -- also titled *Le Jugement de Pâris* -- at the Paris Opéra in 1793.⁸⁵ Perhaps the most famous of all productions was the one by Jules Perrot (entitled *Le Jugement de Pâris* as well) and first performed at Her Majesty's Theatre in London on 23 July 1846. Perrot's decision to create a new version of the ballet came about after his overwhelming success with *Le Pas de quatre* in 1845. Together with Benjamin Lumley, then director of Her Majesty's Theatre, Perrot decided to extend the plotless *Le Pas de Quatre* to one involving a narrative line with its pivotal section, *Le Pas des Déesses*, concentrating on the three goddesses competing for the attention and affection of Paris.

The first twentieth-century choreographer to explore the theme of Paris and the three goddesses was Frederick Ashton when he created *The Judgement of Paris* for the Vic-Wells Ballet on 10 May 1938.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Bremser, *International Dictionary Vol 11*, 1029.

⁸⁵ Martha Bremser (ed.), *International Dictionary of Ballet Vol 1* (London: St James Press, 1993), 736.

Ashton's version was devised specifically as a vehicle for Pearl Argyle⁸⁷ and set to a score by the twentieth-century British composer, Lennox Berkeley. His treatment of the story was a neo-classical one, which David Vaughan described as "a trifle, a throwback to the neo-classical style of *Pomona* [Ashton's ballet of 1930 for the Camargo Society]."⁸⁸ The next production of *The Judgement of Paris* came about five weeks after Ashton's when the London Ballet presented Antony Tudor's version at a special Agnes de Mille solo dance recital in London on 15 June 1938. Tudor, like Ashton, set his ballet to a contemporary twentieth-century score. This time it was to the German composer Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera*. In discussing whether there was any possible link between his ballet and Ashton's, Tudor in fact remarked many years later how his ballet was " 'a rather evil take-off' of Ashton's 'neo-classic version' ".⁸⁹ However, Tudor's ballet was a decidedly modern interpretation set in a sleazy Paris nightclub. The goddesses -- called by their Roman names Juno, Minerva and Venus -- were bored prostitutes who performed a jaded dance routine for their only client who happened to be a drunk. He chooses Venus before passing out and is robbed of his possessions. Although Tudor's ballet was comedy-styled, it did contain elements of pathos, which made it a somewhat depressing work. Staff's experience with Tudor's ballet was that he danced the client as an alternate cast, and he also danced Paris as an alternate cast in Keith Lester's production of *Le Pas des Déesses* for the London Ballet in 1939 and Ballet Rambert in 1940. However, Staff's *Judgement of Paris* only came after two further twentieth-century productions: the first, in Detroit, was David Lichine's *Helen of Troy* (1942) for Ballet Theatre;⁹⁰ and the second, in Paris, was John Cranko's *La Belle*

⁸⁶ *The Judgement of Paris* was produced as part of a Gala programme to raise money for the recently extended Sadler's Wells stage.

⁸⁷ Ashton had not created a new ballet for Pearl Argyle since *Le Baiser de la Fée* in 1935, and her incomparable beauty made her the ideal Venus.

⁸⁸ Vaughan, *Ashton*, 164.

⁸⁹ Bremser, *International Dictionary Vol 1*, 736.

⁹⁰ Bremser, *International Dictionary Vol 11*, 853.

Hélène (1955) for the Paris Opera Ballet.⁹¹ Both Lichine and Cranko resorted to Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* for their musical inspiration.

Staff's own personal choreographic encounter based on the mythological fiction took place some fifteen years before 1957 when he choreographed the ballet sequences for a shortened version of *The Judgement of Paris* for Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann* in March 1942. His *Judgement of Paris* for the South African Ballet however was totally different from the 1942 version in so far as its setting, music and choreography were concerned. It was likewise dissimilar to Keith Lester's production both in tone and style, and quite unlike Frederick Ashton's version despite the use of contemporary music. It was also different to Antony Tudor's version in spite of its equally familiar modern setting. Unlike Tudor, Staff's ballet was entirely comedic without any hint of sorrow -- either explicit or implied.

Staff set his ballet to the American composer Morton Gould's 1943 four-part concerto entitled *American Concertette* or *Interplay*, as the score is also known.⁹² Jerome Robbins, the American choreographer, was the first to use the Gould score for his 1945 ballet called *Interplay*. Saxon Lucas designed Staff's ballet, and although no record of the set design exists today, the costumes were a mixture of at least one classically-styled tunic (for Mercury) and more modern dress for the goddesses.⁹³

Staff divided the action of his ballet into three sections, calling them "First Judgement", "Second Judgement" and "Third Judgement" with the logical subtitle to his ballet of "A ballet in Three Judgements."⁹⁴ The characters were known by their Greek names, with each goddess

⁹¹ Bremser, *International Dictionary Vol 1*, 313.

⁹² The first movement of Gould's score is marked by Jazz syncopated rhythms; the second is a straightforward *Gavotte*; the third, a typical "Blues" number to represent a familiar species of the American Jazz genre; and the fourth is a spirited *presto*.

⁹³ There is no indication as to the costume design for "Paris" although one assumes this may have been Greek-inspired, as was the case for "Mercury". Nor is there any indication of Lucas' designs for the "sheep".

⁹⁴ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 10.

appearing in a different judgement: Athena appeared in the first; Aphrodite was seen in the second; and Hera emerged in the third. Staff cast Victoria Carlson as "Athena" with Jacqueline St. Clere as "Aphrodite" and Delysia Blake as "Hera". Dries Reyneke portrayed "Mercury" with Staff as "Paris". Other characters in the ballet depicted "Sheep" with Rosaleen Kassel, Frankie Milner, Joan Mosselson and Naomi Stamelman as Paris' flock. Bernice Lloyd was a sheep of a very different kind: "a black sheep".⁹⁵ This was clearly indicative of Staff's sense of humour, as was his idea of having Saxon Lucas design a set for Athena's first appearance to resemble the steps of the University of the Witwatersrand⁹⁶ -- no doubt the steps of the University Great Hall with its imposing, classical-styled architecture. When Athena, goddess of crafts and skills, finally emerged in Staff's version, she too was framed in what appeared to be a sculptured 'temple'.⁹⁷ Aphrodite was supposed to be a take-off of Marilyn Monroe "practising her arts in a night-club"⁹⁸ while Hera, "as a gun-

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail*, (8 January 1957) 11.

⁹⁷ Whether deliberate or merely fortuitous, this was another of Staff's typically imaginative innovations coming to the fore. His sketch entitled "Yonder lies your hinterland" in CAPAB Ballet's 1968 production of *Episodes* was yet another example of Staff's ingenuity. In that ballet, set to Tchaikovsky's Suite No. 4 (Mozartiana) of 1887, part of Staff's inspiration came from an inscription engraved directly below a statute of Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) in the Cape Town Company's Gardens. The inscription reads: "Your hinterland is there", and in "Yonder lies your hinterland" the dancers walked across the stage carrying boxes on their heads: tall dancers carried small boxes while shorter dancers carried larger boxes. The idea was to create an amusing visual image of expeditionary forces moving across darkest Africa in search of David Livingstone. Eduard Greyling was one of the dancers in this sketch, and he recalled wearing a white pith helmet and large army boots. Chrysteen Fuller remembered how "the dancers walked across the stage peering into the distance. Every now and then they made a position like the statue of Rhodes standing in the [Cape Town Company's] Gardens." Elizabeth Triegaardt confirmed how "hysterical" this sketch was with "Eduard [Greyling] leading a whole caravan of lackeys with boxes on their heads." Triegaardt also pointed out that "there were no steps as such in this sketch. It was just a simple procession of dancers moving across the stage."

Fuller, interview, 4 November 1991.

Eduard Greyling, interview with author, 25 June 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

_____, conversation with author, 16 November 1996, Cape Town.

Triegaardt, interview, 5 May 1992.

⁹⁸ Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (8 January 1957), 11.

totting cowgirl”⁹⁹ dressed in “an ‘Annie get your gun’ guise”,¹⁰⁰ proceeded to canter “across the stage followed by a posse of silly little mixed up sheep.”¹⁰¹ The critic of *The Star* pointed out that it was amusing “to see Mercury (Dries Reyneke) in classical garb moving to a basic boogie beat, and leave the stage, not with a leap, but literally a headlong dive into the wings.”¹⁰² Referring to the ballet as “a wry twist”, the critic remarked further how some exceptional humour coupled with highly inventive choreography made it

so slick and funny as to give one a belly laugh. This did me. Here, too, were inventive attitudes and lifts that would make choreographer Gene Kelly green with envy.¹⁰³

Lewis Sowden, likewise, expressed optimistic comments about the ballet which he found equally amusing. Sowden wrote of how the three goddesses

with Frank Staff as a sometimes bumpkinish, always errant Paris, and Dries Reyneke as a lively Mercury, make a bizarre affair of the classical comedy, with a jolly climax in its final scene.¹⁰⁴

Sowden was equally satisfied with Staff’s choice of Morton Gould’s score, believing that it was “just the kind of music that might have been stretched without doing it violence.”¹⁰⁵ The only reservations Sowden had with the ballet was its ending and the absence of Helen of Sparta. In fact he asked why Staff had stopped the

⁹⁹ *The Star* (8 January 1957), 7.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (8 January 1957), 11.

¹⁰¹ *The Star* (8 January 1957), 7.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (8 January 1957), 11.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

story short without the final presentation of the Apple of Discord? And with so many lambs skipping about the stage, where was the face that launched a thousand sheep?¹⁰⁶

The critic of *The Sunday Times* wrote more generally about all the ballets of this season but found that “in the new ‘Judgement of Paris’, the four sheep looked more like little strays than an ordered flock.”¹⁰⁷ However, the same critic went on to praise Jacqueline St. Clere and Dries Reyneke for showing excellence in this ballet.¹⁰⁸ J. van der Merwe of *Die Transvaler* was clearly impressed with the ballet despite incorrectly referring to the music as “Morton Gould’s *The Judgement of Paris*”.¹⁰⁹ After correctly stating that the score was “in a modern and light idiom”, he praised Staff’s creation, particularly as it gave solo opportunities to the dancers.¹¹⁰ Van der Merwe was also of the opinion that

the vitality of the dancers, the lively energy [and] good characterization enthralled throughout. Frank Staff (Paris), Dries Reyneke (Mercury), Victoria Carlson (Athena), Jacqueline St. Clere (Aphrodite) and Delysia Blake (Hera) each contributed to its success.¹¹¹

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this production was that none of Staff’s dancers could recall anything about the action or indeed about the choreography itself. Michael Venables summed up the situation rather succinctly when he said that he could not recall anything about the ballet either, “except very vaguely.”¹¹²

The Impresario, Staff’s third new ballet, was created for Bernice Lloyd who was particularly adept at performing the different range and styles

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *The Sunday Times* (13 January 1957), 10.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Van der Merwe, *Die Transvaler* (9 January 1957), 2.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Venables, “Recollections,” 4.

of Spanish dance.¹¹³ Set to a selection of music by several Spanish composers including Federica Tórroba, Tomás Bretón, Ruperto Chapí and Cleto Zabala,¹¹⁴ Staff drew his inspiration from two recordings made under the Brunswick label entitled *Fiesta in Madrid* and extracts from *Olé Olé*.¹¹⁵ From the first recording he chose the Zapateado from Bretón's *Escenas Andaluzas* and three pieces by Tórroba that included the *Jardines de Granada*, the *Antequera* and the *Habañera* from *Monte Carmelo*. From the second recording he selected two Preludes from Chapí's *El Tambor de Granaderos* and *La Revoltosa*, the Pasadoble from Zabala's *El Niño de Jerez* and various pieces by Tórroba entitled *Danzas Asturianas*, *Mazurca de las sombrilles*, *Mosaico Sevillano*, *Habañera de soldadito* and "Ay! mi morena" from *Luisa Fernanda*.¹¹⁶

The Impresario had a decidedly Spanish feel to it, particularly in the unmistakable nature of its music, the Spanish names of its characters and the treatment of its subject matter. The action concerned Federico (Kendrew Lascelles) who is in love with Carmella (Bernice Lloyd). Carmella is averse to dancing for the Impresario (Staff), but her determined sister (Joan Mosselson) forces her to do so.¹¹⁷ Completing

¹¹³ Later in the year Lloyd's accomplished Spanish dancing skills resulted in her joining Luisillo, the celebrated Mexican-born Spanish dancer, whose company had been performing at His Majesty's Theatre in Johannesburg during May and June of 1957. Lloyd asked him to assess her ability. He agreed, and was sufficiently impressed with her skills to want to offer her a place in his company. She, in turn, accepted, and "within five days" had joined his company.

Advertisement, *The Star* (1 May 1957), 12.

Advertisement, *The Star* (7 June 1957), 16.

Bernice Lloyd, telephonic conversation with author, 9 November 1996, Johannesburg.

¹¹⁴ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 10.

¹¹⁵ Frank Staff, Handwritten list on single page of musical recordings used, n.d.

¹¹⁶ Letter to author dated 26 February 1997 from Lee Taylor, Library/Information Service, National Sound Archive, The British Library.

¹¹⁷ "Bernice Lloyd shines in Spanish dance," *The Star* (11 January 1957), 7.

the cast as two urchins “at a loose end”¹¹⁸ were Dries Reyneke and Francois du Plessis. Saxon Lucas, once again, dressed the ballet.

Bernice Lloyd, who believed this ballet had been inspired more by circumstance than by her actual (Spanish) dancing ability, recalled:

Many of Frank’s ballets were sparked off by his wonderful imagination, usually after some incident or situation had caught his eye. In the case of *The Impresario* it was my mother, who was quite a pushy ballet mother, and I always thought of *The Impresario* as a send-up of my very determined mother. In the ballet this was Carmella’s ambitious sister, rather than her mother, but the message was clear. As a ballet it was very exciting, very clever, and I remember I had about thirty seconds to change from a dress into Toreador-styled trousers. The ballet almost brought the house down every time it was performed.¹¹⁹

Michael Venables, on the other hand, “must have watched *The Impresario* about thirty times” but could “remember nothing about it at all.”¹²⁰ The press, however, responded favourably to the ballet. Lewis Sowden, for instance, acclaimed both Staff’s concept and choreography, as well as the performance of his (Staff’s) dancers:

If other works of his [Staff’s] are built on grace and satire, this one is grace and sheer good humour. A swain in love with a dancer, an ambitious sister, an impresario waiting to see her -- that’s all the story. And yet, Frank Staff, introducing a couple of urchins and dancing *The Impresario* himself with the clear black and white strokes of a wood-cut, makes of this trifling affair something significant and delightful. Bernice Lloyd danced the reluctant ballerina with rebellious spirit; that long backward step of Kendrew Lascelles had impulse behind it; and with Joan Mosselson, Dries Reyneke and Francois du Plessis in the other parts, here was a short ballet nicely poised on the fringe of the irrational.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 10.

¹¹⁹ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

¹²⁰ Venables, interview, 23 July 1992.

¹²¹ Lewis Sowden, “Notable feat in ballet,” *Rand Daily Mail* (11 January 1957), 13.

The Star was equally complimentary, particularly about Bernice Lloyd's performance and Saxon Lucas' designs although certain aspects of the production were regarded as tenuous:

The new ballet introduced last night -- "*The Impresario*" -- is a gay little piece which provides mainly a good excuse for solo Spanish dancing by Bernice Lloyd. And [what] a delightfully expressive dancer she is.... The story...is a little thin and, in the dancing, often quite obscure. Running around rather at a loose end is Kendrew Lascelles as Carmella's lover, and at a very loose end, indeed, are two urchins. But the decor and costumes...in simple, vivid colours, are magnificent.¹²²

The critic of *Die Vaderland* devoted an entire review to *The Impresario*, which was considered somewhat unusual for a ballet not of two or three acts. Here again, Staff was commended for achieving a worthy and successful product, which the critic described in terms of

an agile lover who crosses the stage musically with equal speed and precision in long, measured paces both forwards and backwards, and a stubborn ballerina who performs balleticized Spanish steps against the wishes of her ambitious sister, made up Frank Staff's new offering, *The Impresario*, at the Reps. Theatre last night. This humorous and enjoyable presentation is characterized by Frank Staff's simple, yet effective, choreography. Characterized by the passion of a Spaniard, Bernice Lloyd showed on the beat of [her] castanets that she does not lack talent.... [The] *Impresario* is danced by the master, Frank Staff himself, while Kendrew Lascelles (the lover in *The Impresario*) executes his steps with a confidence that should take him very far [in the future].¹²³

Staff's last new ballet for the January 1957 season was *The Birthday*. Created especially for Rosaleen Kassel, who was still a scholar at the time, Staff wanted to display her talent as a dancer of considerable promise.¹²⁴ The ballet was also written partly for Delysia Blake, who was tall and whose height would be put to good advantage as an amusing "guest at the wrong party".¹²⁵ Besides, it would also stretch

¹²² *The Star* (11 January 1957), 7.

¹²³ Jaap Boekkoei, "Vuur van Spanjaarde in *The Impresario*" [Fiery Spaniards in *The Impresario*,] *Die Vaderland* (11 January 1957), 27.

¹²⁴ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

¹²⁵ Venables, interview, 23 July 1992.

her acting skill by giving her an opportunity to demonstrate a different and diverting role.¹²⁶ The synopsis of the ballet was uncomplicated and involved a Victorian nursery party (thematic shades of the Helen Webb/Maude Lloyd production of *Pranks O'Punch?*) although here the occasion was a birthday celebration for a young girl. Guests arrive, "and each, in their way, entertain their hostess."¹²⁷ Rosaleen Kassel was the birthday girl and hostess of the party. Victoria Carlson, Francois du Plessis, Kendrew Lascelles, Bernice Lloyd, Frankie Milner, Joan Mosselson, Dries Reyneke, Naomi Stamelman, Jacqueline St. Clere and Iris Scorgie performed the guests in attendance. Staff was "Major Domo", the head steward of the household whose function was to orchestrate the sequence of events.¹²⁸ The ballet was set to Constant Lambert's arrangement of three pieces by the eighteenth-century Belgian composer, Modeste Grétry. Titled *Ballet Suite*, Lambert had organized a suite of dances from Grétry's *Zémire et Azor* (1771), *Céphale et Procris* (1773) and *L'Embarras des richesses* (1782) for Ninette de Valois' 1931 ballet entitled *Cephalus and Procris*.¹²⁹ Lambert arranged the music in twelve parts. Listed chronologically, these were entitled "Largo -- Andante", "Gigue légère", "Pantomime", "Passepiéd", "Largo", "Pantomime", "Tambourin", "Louvre", "Air lent", "Passepiéd", "Gavotte" and "Finale".¹³⁰

As an excuse for a dance *divertissement*, *The Birthday* was probably best-remembered for Delysia Blake's somewhat dramatic entrance wearing a leopard-skin leotard and a very long train carried by four of

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 10.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Kathrine Sorley Walker, *Ninette de Valois -- idealist without illusions* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), 347.

"LXT 5063 -- Gluck and Grétry ballet suites," Record Sleeve, The Decca Record Company Limited, London.

¹³⁰ "LXT 5063," The Decca Record Company Limited, London.

the dancers.¹³¹ Michael Venables recalled yet another highly amusing incident where Staff was

the conductor of a mimed, on-stage instrumental trio, wickedly parodying the podium mannerisms of one of our well-known conductors of the era, of whom Frank disapproved. That was an in-joke which few people outside the company were aware of.¹³²

Critical response varied although the consensus of opinion was positive. Pieter Serfontein of *Die Transvaler* considered Rosaleen Kassel's portrayal as one "whose work will remain clearly in mind. ...her dancing convincingly reflected the feeling of joy and zest for life."¹³³ Serfontein went on to describe that although the ballet was humorous, graceful and original, it seemed a pity "the dancers repeated themselves frequently and there were instances where the movements were staccato-like and virtually came to a halt."¹³⁴ Neither was Dora Sowden of the *Rand Daily Mail* entirely convinced either. She said the synopsis was nothing more than "a vague assortment of guests who used the occasion as a peg for dressy divertimenti."¹³⁵ However, she did praise three of the dancers: Delysia Blake for having "personified elegance" after making "an exotic entry"; Jacqueline St. Clere for her "winsomeness in two gay episodes"; and Staff for revealing "some deft footwork."¹³⁶ Rosaleen Kassel was barely mentioned, and then only as "a little be-bloomered girl", while the rest of the cast "contributed drollery and dash."¹³⁷ *The Star* credited the ballet as "a pretty little work, prettily staged."¹³⁸ And while its action was regarded "as good

¹³¹ Venables, "Recollections," 4.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Pieter Serfontein, "Twee dansers beindruk" [Two dancers impress,] *Die Transvaler* (16 January 1957), 2.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Dora Sowden, "'Birthday' is Gay Ballet," *Rand Daily Mail* (15 January 1957), 5.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *The Star* (15 January 1957), 7.

an excuse as any for pleasant and often amusing solo pieces,” Delysia Blake was the only dancer mentioned for her “smoothest and most exciting” display as the uninvited guest.¹³⁹ Jaap Boekkoei in *Die Vaderland* found *The Birthday* to be “one of the most pleasing of the whole series [of Staff’s new ballets].”¹⁴⁰ And although he regarded the décor as anachronistic (he accused it of having “irrelevant Cubist tendencies”), he was impressed with the dancing of the entire cast and especially Rosaleen Kassel, Delysia Blake, Jacqueline St. Clere and Staff, whom he equated “with a Watteau-like finesse”.¹⁴¹ He also thought Constant Lambert’s arrangement of Grétry’s music depicted the “personification of grace.”¹⁴²

The Birthday underwent a transformation eight years later when Staff used a similar theme for NAPAC Ballet’s *Soirée Musicale* (1965). In that ballet the synopsis involved a group of people preparing for a party before presenting the audience, who were now their guests, with an entertainment display. Although not a birthday party, gifts were brought, champagne was discovered, and costumes distributed before the entertainment began.¹⁴³ Gone were the characters “Major Domo” and “guest at the wrong party”. Replacing them were the “Sleeping Beauty”, “Danse Russe (Trés Russe)”, “Bolero (Trés Espagnol)”, “Beauty and the Beast” and a “Grand Grand pas de deux” for a seemingly amusing *divertissement*.¹⁴⁴

The South African Ballet’s repeat performances of the company’s established repertoire was favourably received except for *Symphony of Sylphs*, which *The Star* suggested should “be shelved for a while”

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Boekkoei, *Die Vaderland* (15 January 1957), 3.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Theatre Programme: *Ballet*, Ballet Natal, NAPAC, Touring programme, season December 1965.

¹⁴⁴ Theatre Programme: *Ballet*, October 1965.

because the critic had “seen it at least five times”.¹⁴⁵ The reviewer of *The Sunday Times* offered a more direct explanation as to why *Symphony of Sylphs* was unsatisfactory: apparently the dancing of the *corps de ballet*, and not the choreography itself, lacked cohesion. Consequently, the production appeared much “untidier than I had seen it on previous occasions”.¹⁴⁶ Of all the revived works the most successful was Nijinsky’s *L’Après-midi d’un faune*. Dora Sowden thought it “was so sultry and sleek” that it had “the force of a fresh production.”¹⁴⁷ She congratulated Staff for being “more animal-human in movement” and complimented the frieze of seven girls,¹⁴⁸ which she thought “had never been better presented.”¹⁴⁹ However, Sowden levelled one minor criticism when she said Delysia Blake’s chief nymph was “a too composed recipient of the faun’s attentions” despite being “statuesque” and “beautifully costumed.”¹⁵⁰ *Die Transvaler*’s critic found Staff’s performance “strong and convincing”,¹⁵¹ while *The Star*’s critic went a step further by saying that

the prize for the evening goes to Frank Staff himself for his smoothest performance here in “An Afternoon in the life of a Faun” [*sic*]. A pity that some of the other ballets lacked the finish of this so obviously well-rehearsed classic.¹⁵²

Peter and the Wolf was arguably the second most successful ballet

¹⁴⁵ *The Star* (8 January 1957), 7.

¹⁴⁶ *The Sunday Times* (13 January 1957), 10.

¹⁴⁷ Dora Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (15 January 1957), 5.

¹⁴⁸ For the January revival of *L’Après-midi d’un faune* Staff increased the number of supporting nymphs to seven. To dance these he selected Victoria Carlson, Sylvia Davis, Ottie Friedman, Bernice Lloyd, Joan Mosselson, Iris Scorgie and Naomi Stamelman.

Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Dora Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (15 January 1957), 5.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Serfontein, *Die Transvaler* (16 January 1957), 2.

¹⁵² *The Star* (15 January 1957), 7.

of the season despite failing to secure commentary in all the press reviews. Dora Sowden's concise remark summed up its popularity: "'*Peter and the Wolf*' has always been one of the company's most robust successes."¹⁵³ Jaap Boekkoei believed that as a "ballet-with-commentary", *Peter and the Wolf* "occupies a unique place" in the repertoire simply because its amusing subject matter makes it easier for younger generations to appreciate the art of ballet.¹⁵⁴ *Die Transvaler* only alluded to the ballet in so far as Jacqueline St. Clere's characterization of "Peter" was "cheerful and enthusiastic."¹⁵⁵ Nowhere was mention made of dancers making their début in the ballet, for example Frankie Milner as "a duck"; Dries Reyneke as "a wolf"; Kendrew Lascelles as "Grandfather"; and Joan Mosselson and Naomi Stamelman as two of "The Hunters".¹⁵⁶

There were also several cast changes to *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, including Kendrew Lascelles as a new "Maître de Ballet"; Victoria Carlson as "L'Étoile de ballet";¹⁵⁷ Dries Reyneke in the role of the "Patron"; and four new corypheés danced by Delysia Blake, Rosaleen Kassel, Iris Scorgie and Naomi Stamelman. Gone were the "Petit 'Rats' de L'Opera" from the October 1956 performances at His Majesty's Theatre. The press tended to ignore *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* although Kendrew Lascelles was mentioned twice in two very different assessments: once in the *Rand Daily Mail* where Lewis Sowden said "Monsieur Lascelles was a negative personality, [which is] not his part at all";¹⁵⁸ and once in *Die Vaderland* where Jaap Boekkoei referred to *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* as "refreshing with Kendrew Lascelles in the role of the maitre [*sic*] de ballet."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Dora Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (15 January 1957), 5.

¹⁵⁴ Boekkoei, *Die Vaderland* (15 January 1957), 3.

¹⁵⁵ Serfontein, *Die Transvaler* (16 January 1957), 2.

¹⁵⁶ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 8.

¹⁵⁷ Samuels decided to stop dancing when she got married shortly before the first 1957 season. However, this turned out to be more of a temporary nature than a permanent arrangement, and by June 1957 she was back dancing with the company.

¹⁵⁸ Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (11 January 1957), 13.

Circumstance also dictated cast changes to *Transfigured Night* following the departure of Adele Samuels and Norman Lindsay from the company. To dance their roles, Staff cast Bernice Lloyd as the elder sister and Kendrew Lascelles as her brother.¹⁶⁰ Press reviews unequivocally recognized Lloyd's dramatic portrayal in what was probably her most challenging role to date.¹⁶¹ *The Sunday Times* only mentioned the ballet in as far as Lloyd's performance was concerned while *The Star* praised her for successfully overcoming the technical and dramatic demands of "the difficult role of the pathetic elder sister."¹⁶² Lewis Sowden welcomed the different interaction of characters in this ballet and noted how Bernice Lloyd and Kendrew Lascelles allowed a dramatic tension to unfold between their characters. The highlight for him however was the almost indifferent Staff/Lascelles relationship and the way in which Bernice Lloyd contrasted "admirably with Jacqueline St. Clere."¹⁶³ In his opinion, this *Transfigured Night* "had the best dancing of the evening", primarily because Bernice Lloyd "danced with angular passion (clean except for some faulty head movements)" while Jacqueline St. Clere displayed "a free, sometimes coy grace decorating the humanity of the eloping sister."¹⁶⁴

The January 1957 season marked a choreographic breakthrough for Staff, evidenced by the consensus of critical opinion that his enterprising artistic sensibility and choreographic output was quite unsurpassed in Johannesburg. This was obvious shortly after the season began when Lewis Sowden commented that a collective appraisal of Staff's ballets reflected "a remarkable creation in view of their great variety, their abundance of ideas, and their application of

¹⁵⁹ Boekkoei, *Die Vaderland* (8 January 1957), 7.

¹⁶⁰ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet Company*, 7-19 January 1957, 10.

¹⁶¹ Bernice Lloyd's debut as the emotionally-charged, technically demanding elder sister was made seven months before her eighteenth birthday, which was a formidable task for a young woman of seventeen.

¹⁶² *The Star* (11 January 1957), 7.

¹⁶³ Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (11 January 1957), 13.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

movement to situation.”¹⁶⁵ In Sowden’s opinion, “Mr. Staff is not afraid of his stage. He uses the whole of it, so that his writing is never bitsy and his enchainements [*sic*] never lack movement.”¹⁶⁶ The critic of *The Star* was equally indebted to Staff, affirming that “not since the Sadler’s Wells visit a few years back have we been offered such inventive and stimulating ballet.”¹⁶⁷ *Die Transvaler* predicted as early as 9 January that Staff would be “responsible for a completely successful and enjoyable season.”¹⁶⁸ And on the day before, Jaap Boekkoei wrote in *Die Vaderland* that Staff’s ballets were indicative of a “fertile choreographic imagination.”¹⁶⁹ The Sunday newspapers expressed approval as well, with Percy Blakeney of the *Sunday Express* maintaining that Staff gave “genesis to new ideas of the worthiest kind.”¹⁷⁰ Blakeney also detected a certain “freshness” in Staff’s ideas, aided and abetted “by the cleverness of the stage design, effected by Saxon Lucas where it is not Bakst’s”, and judged the entire season “new and original and well-begotten.”¹⁷¹ The critic of *The Sunday Times* likewise regarded Staff’s work as a “great achievement” and “indeed...an important milestone in South African ballet.”¹⁷² Staff’s actual choreography was praised for its “high level of resourcefulness and skill -- imaginative in idea and dance-worthy in detail.”¹⁷³ The same critic’s rather forthright remark summed up a noteworthy opinion in that Staff’s “focus, wit and meaning of movement was seldom masked and never lost.”¹⁷⁴ Finally, an article

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *The Star* (8 January 1957), 7.

¹⁶⁸ Van der Merwe, *Die Transvaler* (9 January 1957), 2.

¹⁶⁹ Boekkoei, *Die Vaderland* (8 January 1957), 7.

¹⁷⁰ Percy Blakeney, “Good Staff work at the ballet,” *Sunday Express* (13 January 1957), 18.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *The Sunday Times* (13 January 1957), 10.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

written on Staff in the April/May edition of *House and Home in Southern Africa* précised Staff's career, mentioned the ballets of the January 1957 season, and came to the conclusion that

apart from his merit as an excellent dancer, here was testimony that we have a first-class choreographer living in South Africa. Those who have ocme [*sic*] under the spell of ballet overseas and miss its presence in South Africa should welcome the return of Frank Staff and Jacqueline St. Clere, for with this company they are given the opportunity once again of experiencing a particular aesthetic pleasure that only ballet can give.¹⁷⁵

Yet, the critics did point out some general flaws although none related to the choreography itself. The critics of the *Rand Daily Mail*, *The Star* and the *Sunday Express* each expressed the view that Staff's choreographic demands were sometimes beyond the scope of his dancers,¹⁷⁶ while more general criticisms (although not necessarily made by representatives of the same newspaper) included an untidy *corps de ballet*;¹⁷⁷ the fact that the opening programme of *Apollo '57*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *Symphony of Sylphs* and *The Judgement of Paris* was far too long;¹⁷⁸ the use of recorded music, which failed (as it always does) to compensate for a live orchestra;¹⁷⁹ and an objection to excessively long intervals.¹⁸⁰ But even more disturbing than the critics' grievances was the fact that the company performed to "barely half-filled houses."¹⁸¹ There seems to be no concrete reason for this although *The Star* suggested two possibilities: audiences still preferred

¹⁷⁵ "New works performed by South Africian [*sic*] Ballet Company," *House and Home in Southern Africa* 2,1 (April & May 1957): 33.

¹⁷⁶ *The Star* (8 January 1957), 7.
Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (8 January 1957), 11.
Blakeney, *Sunday Express* (13 January 1957), 18.

¹⁷⁷ Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (8 January 1957), 11.
Boekkoei, *Die Vaderland* (8 January 1957), 7.
The Sunday Times (13 January 1957), 10.

¹⁷⁸ Boekkoei, *Die Vaderland* (8 January 1957), 7.

¹⁷⁹ *The Sunday Times* (13 January 1957), 10.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *The Star* (15 January 1957), 7.

the classics; and petty rivalry within the local ballet fraternity still seemed to prevail. The report stated:

Johannesburg's so-called balletomanes, whose chief adventure into ballet is a seasonal and tentative toe-wetting on the shores of Swan Lake, have stayed away either in panic, pique or protest. True Mr. Staff has not a single Prince Charming, no bewitched princess, no fairy (wicked or otherwise), not one "white" ballet and not a single bar of Tchaikovsky. If you still find it hard to believe that ballet can survive these "deficiencies," you have a pleasant surprise in store. Even if little Shirley does dance for the "opposition," and even if her teacher does not, on principle, go and see Frank Staff's dancers (a sad but true reflection on the petty jealousies in local ballet) then be a devil and go and see for yourself.¹⁸²

In an attempt to bolster public support, Staff offered audiences a special block of cheaper tickets at 4s. 10d. each for the two performances on 17 and 18 January.¹⁸³ It is not known whether or not a reduction in price led to greater support for the company although Staff remained unperturbed, and, to the contrary, steadfast in his decision to present the company once again in June of that year.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ "Cheaper ballet," *The Star* (17 January 1957), 11.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The South African Ballet's June 1957 performances took place at the Reps. Theatre in Braamfontein under the auspices of the National Opera Association of South Africa.¹ Six performances were given in a programme comprising the more popular works of the January season, which included *Apollo '57*, *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Peter and the Wolf*.² The company performed on alternate evenings from 20 to 28 June with a matinée on 29 June while the other evenings were taken up with Alessandro Rota's production of *Madame Butterfly* (including the matinée on 22 June).³ Both the opera and ballet were accompanied by the S.A.B.C. studio orchestra⁴ with Jeremy Schulman conducting the opera and Anton Hartman conducting the ballet.⁵

The absence of Bernice Lloyd necessitated several cast changes despite the return of Adele Samuels and the addition of Rosemary Harvey.⁶ In *Apollo '57*, Adele Samuels performed "Terpsichore", the role

¹ Established in 1955, the National Opera Association of South Africa came about after discussions between the Johannesburg City Council and the South African Broadcasting Corporation, which led to a committee being formed under the chairmanship of Alec Gorshel. The object of the National Opera Association was to promote opera in South Africa, both in its original language as well as in English and Afrikaans. The fruits of collaboration between the Broadcasting Corporation and the City Council resulted in a production of *Madame Butterfly* during June 1957. Other operas planned for 1957 included *Gianni Schicchi* and John Joubert's first indigenous Afrikaans chamber opera entitled *In die droogte*. But circumstances prevented these operas from being performed and they were set-aside until June 1958 when, under the banner of the newly-created South African Federation for Opera, they were performed at the Johannesburg Reps. Theatre.

Programme Note: *South African Federation for Opera*, Reps. Theatre, Johannesburg, season June 1958, 10.

² Theatre Programme: *National Opera Association of South Africa presents The South African Ballet Company*, Reps. Theatre, Johannesburg, season 20-29 June 1957.

³ Advertisement, *Die Vaderland* (19 June 1957), 10.

⁴ The abbreviation S.A.B.C. is frequently used as an alternative for the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

⁵ Theatre Programme: *National Opera Association of South Africa presents The South African Ballet Company*, 20-29 June 1957.

⁶ *Ibid.*

created by Bernice Lloyd, while in *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* Staff and Adele Samuels performed their original roles of "L'Étoile" and the "Maître de Ballet" respectively while Ottie Friedman was seen as the "Chaperone". In *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, the total number of supporting nymphs was reduced to six with Rosemary Harvey replacing Bernice Lloyd and Sylvia Davis not cast this time as a nymph.⁷ *Peter and the Wolf* also witnessed some changes with Victoria Carlson in Bernice Lloyd's role of "a bird" and Delysia Blake in Carlson's part of "a cat". Rosemary Harvey replaced Sylvia Davis as a "huntress" and all the performances were accompanied by Cedric Messina's narration of the tale.⁸

Only three critical reviews were forthcoming: two from the English press (the *Rand Daily Mail* and *The Star*) and one from *Die Vaderland*. The *Rand Daily Mail's* Lewis Sowden made some encouraging remarks while the other two critics were almost vitriolic in their reviews and complained of unnecessary repetition of the repertoire and a dearth of any new ballets for June.⁹ Jaap Boekkoei in *Die Vaderland* headed his critique "Something was lacking" and implied that the "something" was a new ballet since the programme only consisted of revivals, which he believed probably accounted for empty seats on the opening night.¹⁰ To justify his argument, Boekkoei claimed how this was the third occasion he had personally seen *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* and *L'Après-midi d'un faune*.¹¹ *The Star's* critic went one step further by asking whether the same ballets really warranted "another airing within six months or so of their last performance?"¹² The answer given was an emphatic: "I doubt it --

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ What the critics failed to understand was that from January to June 1957 Staff was involved with the Brian Brooke production of Sandy Wilson's *The Boy Friend*.

¹⁰ Jaap Boekkoei, "Iets het gekort" [Something was lacking,] *Die Vaderland* (21 June 1957), 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "Clever ballets get another airing," *The Star* (21 June 1957), 11.

particularly as nothing new has been added."¹³ The same (unnamed) critic's personal remarks about *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Peter and the Wolf* were hardly flattering either:

'L'Atelier de Monsieur X' and Nijinsky's rather dreary little picture of a faun's afternoon are, I think, frankly tired. Gay and charming as it is, 'Peter and the Wolf' is another that could do with a well-earned rest.¹⁴

The Star viewed Adele Samuels' interpretation of "L'Étoile" in *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* as somewhat bland because "the humour came more from the corps support than from the soloist, Adele Samuels, who forsook the coquetry and verve of her counterpart [Victoria Carlson] of the last season."¹⁵ Lewis Sowden, on the other hand, was of the opinion that Samuels

gave a graceful performance as the leading dancer in "L'Atelier," with Staff as the very busy Maitre [*sic*], and Jacqueline St. Clere carrying on mischievously behind his back. Her dancing is never more alive than when on mischief bent.¹⁶

Jaap Boekkoei believed Staff made a far "stricter and bewildered ballet master" than Kendrew Lascelles' earlier reading in January.¹⁷ *L'Après-midi d'un faune* was awarded a generous reception although *The Star's* critic was of the viewpoint that Staff,

with sweating determination, went through the technical rigours of "L'Après Midi" [*sic*] without adding anything to -- or subtracting from -- former performances.¹⁸

¹³ *The Star* (21 June 1957), 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Lewis Sowden, "Comedy, satire, drama in lively S.A. Ballet presentation at Reps," *Rand Daily Mail* (21 June 1957), 6.

¹⁷ Boekkoei, *Die Vaderland* (21 June 1957), 12.

¹⁸ *The Star* (21 June 1957), 11.

Peter and the Wolf met with greater success although Cedric Messina's narration was regarded as far too serious and formal.¹⁹ Lewis Sowden in fact wanted to know why Messina had chosen "to make the narration so solemn an affair, as if, like 'Grandfather', he didn't approve of it a bit?"²⁰ For this *Peter and the Wolf* Staff made several choreographic changes, most notably to the dance sequences for "Peter", the "cat" and the "wolf". Lewis Sowden believed these choreographic changes were for the better because they made the ballet "even more picturesque."²¹ In his view, this became particularly evident in Jacqueline St. Clere's "more droll" performance of "Peter" and Delysia Blake's "more sinuously feline" portrayal of the "cat".²² *The Star* hinted at the choreographic amendments by referring to Dries Reyneke's "wolf", Frankie Milner's "duck", Victoria Carlson's "bird", and Delysia Blake's "cat". For example, Dries Reyneke's novel interpretation of "a wolf" was lauded for allowing a complete "newness to the piece" that gave "us a sly, cunning wolf instead of a blustering beast."²³ Milner, Carlson and Blake were all credited for displaying some "delicious mime."²⁴ Jaap Boekkoei, without being specific, commented on Staff's modified choreography by saying that it showed "considerable imagination".²⁵

The critics' appraisal of *Apollo '57* established the work as being the most satisfying ballet of the programme. Lewis Sowden recorded how

the most ambitious work in the repertoire remains "Apollo '57," in which Kendrew Lascelles again dances a radiant, wide-leaping Apollo, and Victoria Carlson, the earth girl, charms

¹⁹ Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (21 June 1957), 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *The Star* (21 June 1957), 11.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Boekkoei, *Die Vaderland* (21 June 1957), 12.

the god with her demure ways. Staff is again the sinister Cicerone -- he has equal command of the comic and the grave; the scene in the cinema remains effective, and the funeral grotesque.²⁶

The Star's critic confirmed that *Apollo '57* was both a "stimulating ballet" and the decided "highlight of the programme" where

one cannot help responding with an almost gasping admiration to the inventiveness of the choreography, the aesthetic grouping and the lovely sets by Saxon Lucas.²⁷

Jaap Boekkoei expressed favourable comments about *Apollo '57* by stating that it "renewed our appreciation of Staff's resourcefulness."²⁸ And Staff himself must have felt equally proud of his achievement, so much so that he returned to the Apollo theme eight years later when he produced *Apollo '65* for Ballet Natal in Durban. *Apollo '65*, incidentally, was not to be his last ballet based on classical Greek mythology.²⁹ The NAPAC production of 1965 had been occasioned

²⁶ Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (21 June 1957), 6.

²⁷ *The Star* (21 June 1957), 11.

²⁸ Boekkoei, *Die Vaderland* (21 June 1957), 12.

²⁹ Staff's interest in, and appreciation of, classical Greek mythology found further choreographic expression in 1965 when he created the *Five Faces of Eurydice* for PACT Ballet and, in 1970, when he wrote a short sequence entitled "Europa and the Bull" for a larger work called *Kaleidoscope* for PACOFS Ballet. *Five Faces of Eurydice* was loosely based on the Orpheus and Eurydice legend, which Staff then amended, so that contrary to the original story Orpheus does not look back at Eurydice as he leads her out of the Underworld. This frustrates Pluto (Hades) who decides to pursue them through the ages, determined to regain Eurydice. The five faces, or visions as Staff subtitled them, were set in Ancient Greece (the Prologue); Ancient Egypt where Eurydice assumes the identity of Cleopatra holding court with Pluto as the Lord Chamberlain and Orpheus as Julius Caesar; the artist Jean-Honoré Fragonard's France of the eighteenth-century in which Fragonard's "The Swing" (1766) is depicted in the ballet with Eurydice as "the girl on the swing", Orpheus as her lover and Pluto jealously watching over them (shades of the cinema scene from *Apollo '57* and *Apollo '65?*); Paris of the 1890's in a restaurant at the Gare de Lyons with Eurydice as a ballerina under the watchful eye of her Impresario (apparently a take-off of Diaghilev) and Orpheus as a strolling guitar player; and the Paris Metro at the Place Pigalle where Pluto, who has now assumed the identity of a stationmaster, follows the couple into the Metro more determined than ever to lead Eurydice into the (modern) underworld. Orpheus apprehends him with some startling consequences: a train runs him over and Eurydice becomes a cloud. In the PACOFS production of *Kaleidoscope*, "Europa and the Bull" took its inspiration from the Greek fiction in which Zeus disguised himself as a bull in order to carry Europa, a Palestinian Princess, on his back to Crete. According to Veronica Paeper,

by the directors of NAPAC rather than by the management of the ballet company itself. Staff was invited to produce three works for Ballet Natal's September/October 1965 season.³⁰ The choice of works were all his prerogative and he chose *Apollo '57* (as *Apollo '65*), a new ballet entitled *Soirée Musicale* and *Peter and the Wolf*, which was only added to NAPAC's touring programme during December 1965.³¹

Apollo '65 drew substantially from the ballet's original 1957 scenario with slight adjustments to its synopsis. The main difference lay in the structure of *Apollo '65*, which Staff cut to six scenes instead of nine.³² However, the ballet basically followed the same shape as *Apollo '57* with an alteration in scene five (the brothel scene) where Apollo only feigns death instead of killing himself. However, the young girl then kills herself. In this scene the Cicerone brings the young girl to the brothel instead of her following Apollo into the house of ill-repute.³³ Staff reduced the action concerning the undertakers by including their presence only in scene five and eliminating them completely from scene six, and obviously from scene eight which did not feature in the NAPAC production. Also, the Muses in the 1965 version reappeared in scene six as opposed to scene five in the 1957 production. All the original *pas de deux* sequences for Apollo and the young girl were

who created the part of Europa in Staff's ballet, this sketch simply involved Arthur La Trobe as the bull frantically chasing Paeper across the stage.

Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

Theatre Programme: *PACT Ballet in Casse Noisette, La Fenêtre of Five Faces of Eurydice*, Aula Theatre, Pretoria, season 8-11 December 1965, Civic Theatre, Johannesburg, season 14 -23 December 1965.

Theatre Programme: PACOFS Ballet, Bloemfontein Civic Theatre, Bloemfontein, season 30 September - 3 October 1970.

Ken Yeatman, interview with author, 18 October 1992, Johannesburg, tape recording.

³⁰ Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

³¹ Staff's three ballets dominated NAPAC's touring programme to Queensburgh on 4 December, Umbogintwini on 7 December, Mooi River on 11 December and Pinetown on 13 December 1965.

"Duck asks a question," *The Natal Mercury* (3 December 1965), 10.

³² Theatre Programme: *Ballet*, October 1965.

³³ *Ibid.*

retained.³⁴ A further contrast between the two productions was that only one portrait featured in scene two (the cinema scene) of the 1965 production, and that was the smiling Mona Lisa.³⁵

Staff created *Apollo '65* for Veronica Paeper, his Terpsichorean muse of the 1960's who portrayed the part of the young girl, and Owen Murray as Apollo. Staff performed his original part of the Cicerone.³⁶ Both Paeper and Murray were appearing as visiting guest artists from CAPAB Ballet although Paeper and Staff were actually travelling north to Johannesburg to take up new appointments with PACT Ballet as soloist and ballet master respectively. The designs for *Apollo '65* were by Gerry Strydom and the ballet formed part of a triple bill together with Staff's *Soirée Musicale* and Joy Shearer's re-choreographed version of *The Three Cornered-Hat*.³⁷ *Apollo '65* was first performed on 23 September 1965 at the Pietermaritzburg Rowe Theatre³⁸ before transferring to the Alhambra Theatre in Durban.³⁹ Veronica Paeper comments why, in her opinion, the 1965 version was a product years ahead of its time:

Apollo '65 was a very sophisticated piece of theatre that was almost wasted on the audiences of that particular part of the country. I don't believe the audiences understood what it was all about. Also, Frank was requiring a very unskilled troupe of dancers to convey something very professional and refined that was beyond their ability. And a further disadvantage was that he had very little time in which to create this piece, with the result that it did not get the showing it rightfully deserved. In my opinion, *Apollo '65* was the wrong ballet for the wrong company at the wrong time.⁴⁰

Owen Murray, not unlike Paeper, remembered the ballet being taught

³⁴ Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

³⁵ Theatre Programme: *Ballet*, October 1965.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ "Ballet premiere tonight," *The Daily News* (23 September 1965), 5.

³⁹ Advertisement, *The Natal Mercury* (24 September 1965), 16.

⁴⁰ Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

in a very short time, about three weeks in all including dress rehearsals. I also recall that we never got to rehearse on Gerry Strydom's set until the dress rehearsal in Pietermaritzburg, so there really wasn't much time set aside for Frank's ballet.⁴¹

For Paeper, Apollo's birth and the *pas de deux* sequences for Apollo and the young girl were the most memorable, while Owen Murray thought Gerry Strydom's set design was the production's most redeeming feature. In his opinion, the ballet

had the most fantastic set by Gerry Strydom with wooden constructions arranged on different levels to resemble a whole city. Although this was quite a brilliant concept, it took up three-quarters of the stage and I remember how we all had to dance in front of the set. The only time I ever got to perform on it was when I ran up on to the structure, grabbed hold of a rope, and swung across the stage until I eventually landed on a mat in the wings.⁴²

Critical commentary regarding *Apollo '65* varied and while some critics approved of the production, others were less enthusiastic. Although most reviewers simply recounted the story, the majority justified reasons for enjoying the ballet or not. Thelma Kelly of *The Natal Witness* was one of the critics who enjoyed the work, calling it "an exciting modern work" that "highlighted an evening of ballet presented by NAPAC at the Rowe Theatre last night."⁴³ Kelly went on to compliment Veronica Paeper and Owen Murray for their "skilful technique" and "emotion", and praised Staff for a profound musicality that "shows an awareness of every nuance of the unusual instrumental effects of Benjamin Britten's music."⁴⁴ Tommy Ballantyne, writing for *The Daily News* when the ballet was first performed in Pietermaritzburg, was equally impressed with the production. Referring to the work as "an original ballet", Ballantyne remarked that its more satisfying scene was "the interlude in the brothel danced with

⁴¹ Murray, interview, 21 July 1992.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Thelma Kelly, "'Apollo '65,' a sparkling ballet," *The Natal Witness* (24 September 1965), 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

lively piquancy by the garish 'ladies'."⁴⁵ In his opinion, the principal dancers gave noteworthy performances and served Staff's choreography well. Veronica Paeper was said to have danced with "a fine lyrical quality" while Owen Murray made "a fine Apollo."⁴⁶ Staff himself was a "polished Cicerone."⁴⁷ However, another (unnamed) critic from *The Daily News* reviewed the work shortly after its Durban première and came to the conclusion that Staff's choice of music was inappropriate as Britten's score was "heavy and sonorous" and failed to "add [any] encouragement to the [ballet's] theme."⁴⁸ And while the same critic felt Veronica Paeper's performance had "much artistry", the same could not be said of Owen Murray's "Apollo", which the critic believed was "not inspiring."⁴⁹ Elizabeth Clarke of *The Natal Mercury* thought the work had not really achieved its objective because it lacked slickness, which

most choreographers agree, is the keynote to a successful modern ballet. Appolo '65 [*sic*], the second of Staff's ballets, lacked this essential quality. The theme had no basic continuity and the result was therefore decidedly disjointed.⁵⁰

However, Veronica Paeper's portrayal of the young girl made a favourable impression on Elizabeth Clarke with its "pathos and innocence of young love and the final anguish of forbidden romance."⁵¹ When Elizabeth Clarke reviewed the ballet at the Queensburgh Civic Centre in early December, she found the work conspicuous by Staff's absence,⁵² and came to the conclusion that

⁴⁵ Tommy Ballantyne, "Wit and satire chief themes," *The Daily News* (24 September 1965), 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ "Season of ballet," *The Daily News* (8 October 1965), 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Elizabeth D. Clarke, "For ballet lovers," *The Natal Mercury* (8 October 1965), 17.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Dale Cutts, the actor, replaced Staff as the Cicerone for the December run of the ballet with Kay Connett as the young girl and David Cooke as Apollo.

without his presence or influence it was “sadly lacking”.⁵³ She warned further that without Staff, “the company will have to strive very hard if they are to achieve the same standard of performance.”⁵⁴

There were also visiting critics from Johannesburg who assessed Staff’s three ballets: Dora Sowden from the *Rand Daily Mail*; Oliver Walker from *The Star*; Pieter Serfontein from *Die Transvaler*; and Lettie Greyling from *Die Vaderland*. For some or other reason, Oliver Walker did not review the original *Apollo ’57*, but was given the opportunity to do so with the modified version of 1965. His verdict was favourable and even hinted at the possible influence of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* where several of the ballet’s characters tempt Apollo. Walker states:

Frank Staff’s inventive satiric humour as a choreographer and dancer shows a welcome return to form in “Apollo ’65” in this new Napac balletic venture. ...Apollo...in a series of amusing scenes, tastes the dubious pleasures of city life against the wishes of the muses. Cicerone (Frank Staff) is a saturnine guide to Apollo who shows him a silent “flock,” with dizzy lighting and jerky characters, an art gallery in which a seductive girl’s head bobs up disconcertingly through half a dozen canvases, and a bordello with a line-up of haunch-rolling tarts.⁵⁵

For Walker, the grieving young girl at Apollo’s apparent death scene was reminiscent of *Romeo and Juliet*, which he said was “in the best *Romeo and Juliet* tradition....”⁵⁶ One of Walker’s final comments concerned Staff’s choice of music, which he regarded as “very skilfully” used.⁵⁷ His only misgiving related to part of the narrative where Staff “could have built his story to a better climax as the girl

Theatre Programme: *Ballet*, December 1965.

⁵³ Elizabeth D. Clarke, “Well groomed ballet by Napac,” *The Natal Mercury* (6 December 1965), 15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Oliver Walker, “Successful ballet venture,” *The Star* (8 October 1965), 16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

whirls into a dream of disconsolateness with her lover's departure."⁵⁸ Dora Sowden's commentary was strictly limited to Gerry Strydom's designs which she called "futurist-symbolic on Olympus and tatty-indicative on earth."⁵⁹ She made no mention of Staff's choreography or of the dancers' interpretations. Pieter Serfontein of *Die Transvaler* pointed out the cinema sequence, art gallery and brothel episodes as very "striking scenes".⁶⁰ Serfontein maintained that the cinema scene, with its effective use of a flicker system and Staff's ingeniously choreographed staccato movements to suggest a film, became a personal highlight. Paeper and Murray were singled out for perfecting Staff's choreography with technical proficiency and for "creating atmosphere with tender expression."⁶¹

The final visiting reviewer, Lettie Greyling, thought the two Staff ballets were a revelation. In her opinion, they were both "original and very fresh", with unusual subject matter inevitably "governed by clever choreography."⁶² Lettie Greyling maintained that with these two ballets,

the choreographer [Frank Staff] will shine more brightly in our ballet firmament. His approach to ballet is refreshingly new and a glorious rejection of the classical and tedious presentations to which we are accustomed [to seeing] in the Transvaal.⁶³

Her specific observations about *Apollo '65* included a brief description of the narrative, Owen Murray's "by no means brilliant" performance,

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Dora Sowden, "Ballet starts well," *Rand Daily Mail* (11 October 1965), 6.

⁶⁰ Pieter Serfontein, "Aantreklike balletaand deur Naruk-groep" [Attractive ballet evening by Napac group,] *Die Transvaler* (12 October 1965), 2.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Lettie Greyling, "Naruk oortuig met ballet" [Convincing ballet by Napac,] *Die Vaderland* (12 October 1965), 2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

and Veronica Paeper's moving portrayal of the young girl with "its tender and clean characterization".⁶⁴



Plate 30: Owen Murray as "Apollo", Veronica Paeper as the "Young Girl", and, from left to right, Ingrid Green, Denise Cooke and Wendy Grant as the three Muses in the NAPAC production of *Apollo '65*.⁶⁵

The South African Ballet Company gave its last performance for 1957 at the Modderfontein Dynamite Factory outside Johannesburg.⁶⁶ This was a one-off performance on 19 October in which three ballets were

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Photograph by Bird and Leeney, as reproduced in Marina Grut, *The History of Ballet in South Africa* (Cape Town: Human and Rosseau, 1981), plate 213.

⁶⁶ Theatre Programme: *The South African Ballet Company*, Modderfontein Dynamite Factory, Modderfontein, performance 19 October 1957.

presented: *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, *Transfigured Night* and *Peter and the Wolf*. The marked absence of Delysia Blake, Bernice Lloyd, Joan Mosselson and Dries Reyneke was compromised by the brief return of Perry McKann, Ivy May McDonald and Adele Samuels. In *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*, Adele Samuels danced her original role of "L'Étoile" as did Perry McKann his created role of the "Patron". Diana Berrie joined the company as one of "Les Corypheés" together with Victoria Carlson, Rosaleen Kassel, Ivy May McDonald and Naomi Stamelman, while Staff was seen once again as the "Maître de Ballet".⁶⁷ *Transfigured Night* reverted to its original 1955 cast with the exception of Norman Lindsay as "the brother". The part was now taken by Kendrew Lascelles.⁶⁸ The most important cast changes to *Peter and the Wolf* were Victoria Carlson as "a bird", Adele Samuels as "a cat", Perry McKann as "Grandfather", Kendrew Lascelles as "a wolf" and Ivy May McDonald as one of "The Hunters".⁶⁹

There were two reasons why the company did not perform between June and the single performance of 19 October at Modderfontein: firstly, Staff had been involved with arranging a possible company tour to central and north Africa planned for July of that year; and, secondly, an invitation to produce ballets for, and dance with, the Durban Theatre Ballet Company during October of that year meant that he had to set time aside for the Durban excursion. Neither did he envision any new ballets for his company, a fact that had become clear shortly after the January season when he became committed to Brian Brooke's mammoth production of *The Boy Friend*. Although this was largely responsible for Staff not being able to devote sufficient time to his company, it was really the combination of working on *The Boy Friend*, preparing for a tour north of the Limpopo River and the pending tour to Durban that prevented him from concentrating on his own company.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

His first distraction was of course *The Boy Friend*, which had its beginnings early in 1953 in London when friends of director Vida Hope urged him to produce a new musical by Sandy Wilson. In February of that year Hope went to visit Sandy Wilson where he perused Wilson's scenario for *The Boy Friend*, listened to the score, and declared: "I saw, I heard and I was conquered."⁷⁰ Rehearsals began in March with Vida Hope as director. The production itself opened at the Players' Theatre "underneath the arches between Charing Cross station and Hungerford Bridge" sometime during April 1953.⁷¹ On 14 January 1954, *The Boy Friend* moved to the Wyndham's Theatre where a total of 2,084 performances were given by the time the curtain finally fell on 7 February 1959.⁷² The Broadway production opened on 30 November 1954 at the New York Royale Theatre,⁷³ and although the New York production failed to achieve the same success as it did in London -- either because "that original passion" or "that original understanding" had "been somehow compromised"⁷⁴ -- it was still considered to be "perfect period-piece nostalgia".⁷⁵ In his text entitled *Spread a little happiness -- the first hundred years of the British musical*, Sheridan Morley attributes much of its London success to the way in which

the brilliance of the original Boy Friend lay in its passion for historical accuracy and its understanding that small is beautiful...and its score, ranging from the hauntingly romantic 'Room in Bloomsbury' to the splendidly comic 'Never too Late To Fall In Love', is one that any composer of the 1920's would have been proud to acknowledge.⁷⁶

Brian Brooke's decision to stage *The Boy Friend* in Johannesburg had been occasioned by several factors -- not least of which was its

⁷⁰ Morley, *Spread*, 132.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² "Last curtains for 'The Boy Friend'," *The Star* (8 January 1959), 6.

⁷³ Mander and Mitchenson, *Comedy*, 40.

⁷⁴ Morley, *Spread*, 133.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

resounding success in London and, to a lesser extent, in New York. Other factors included relatively low production costs and would, in the long run, prove more cost-effective with little demand on both the budget and its participants; *The Boy Friend* was an ideal choice with its minor spectacle; the trend in the 1950's (in London at least) was to present the smaller musical since audiences had tired of its larger, louder and so-called brassy American counterpart; a new theatrical production was needed to promote local talent, provided of course local talent could be found; Brooke, who had seen *The Boy Friend* in London, was struck by its potential and had met Sandy Wilson to discuss the possibility of a Johannesburg staging with Wilson himself as director; Brooke believed that *The Boy Friend* would help re-establish the audiences' faith in his ability to present musicals of the highest order following *Salad Days*, which was unsuccessful and had "turned out to be a costly experiment";⁷⁷ and Brooke believed that in Frank Staff he had found the ideal choreographer who "had a great feel for period -- in fact Frank was excellent with any period piece -- which in this case was the style of the 1920's."⁷⁸

By February 1957, and even before any contract had been signed with Sandy Wilson, Brooke requested the music be sent in advance to determine whether or not a local cast could perform it adequately. Initially, this caused "some wrangling" between Brooke and Sandy Wilson until it was agreed that two overseas principals would be "standing by in London to take over here if local leads cannot be found."⁷⁹ Auditions were first held on 1 March 1957,⁸⁰ and then for a period of two months thereafter until a suitable cast had been found.⁸¹ This of course would still be subject to Sandy Wilson's approval after

⁷⁷ Programme Note: "From the prompt corner," *The Boy Friend*, Brooke Theatre, - Johannesburg, season May 1957.

⁷⁸ Brooke, interview, 2 October 1995.

⁷⁹ "'The Boy Friend' here in May if local talent measures up," *The Star* (27 February 1957), 9.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Programme Note: "From the prompt corner," *The Boy Friend*, May 1957.

his arrival in South Africa on 27 March.⁸² Brooke and Staff conducted all the auditions, with Staff's responsibility extending to the choice of four men and four women for the dancing roles.⁸³ Staff's choreographic assignment was to arrange dance routines for the musical items, and from the outset he stipulated his requirements:

The dancing-singing team should have vivacity, a sense of humour and a sense of style, an ability to sing, a knowledge of dancing and, if possible, mime.⁸⁴

He emphasized further that as "the 1920 dance numbers are strenuous", it would be imperative for the dancers "to begin training early to build up strength for the parts."⁸⁵ Sometimes the musical items only required a single movement or a minimum of movement that was more in the nature of staging than actual dance routines, and in these instances the onus of determining exactly how this would be achieved lay with Staff as well.⁸⁶ Public response to the first audition on 1 March 1957 was positive with Brooke, Staff and the pianist, John Massey, pleasantly surprised at "the number of artistes who showed up yesterday [1 March 1957]."⁸⁷ Brooke sent a telegram to Sandy Wilson explaining the positive response and then told the press: "I'm 90 per cent sure that the show will go on."⁸⁸ A further audition was held on 4 March when those provisionally chosen would be required to perform songs from the musical to determine "whether Brian Brooke would be 100 per cent sure -- and sign the contract."⁸⁹ As it turned out, Brooke was more than "sure" and by 23 March he decided to go

⁸² "Girls meet 'The Boy Friend'," *The Star* (28 March 1957), 1.

⁸³ *The Star* (27 February 1957), 9.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Brooke, interview, 2 October 1995.

⁸⁷ "'The Boy Friend' almost a certainty," *The Star* (2 March 1957), 7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

ahead with the musical.⁹⁰ Wilson, who was duly notified, signed the contract accordingly. Although auditions continued even before Wilson's arrival in Johannesburg with "dozens of artistes" showing an interest in the production, only a temporary cast was chosen that would still be subject to Wilson's approval.⁹¹ "Further auditions were then held and when the final cast was chosen Sandy Wilson found that he had five clear weeks in which to produce the show."⁹² The final choice was made early in April. *The Star* released the names of some of the all-South African cast on 6 April, including the names of the four leading players. They were: Maureen Adair as "Polly Browne"; Ivan Berold as "Tony"; Shirley Hepburn as "Madame Dubonnet"; and Bruce Anderson as "Percival Brown".⁹³ Also named were the four women and four men chosen by Staff to perform "the four girls" and "the four boys".⁹⁴ With the exception of Charles Castle who never played the part of "Alphonse", all the others named in the press went on to perform their designated roles, and these included June Campbell as "Nancy", June Hern as "Maisie", Evadne Kohler-Baker as "Fay", Hilda Kriseman as "Dulcie", Jon Buckley as "Pierre", Roger Spence as "Alphonse", Sven van Zyl as "Marcel" and Robert Wilson as "Bobby van Hunsen".⁹⁵ Staff chose June Campbell and Sven van Zyl as "Lolita" and "Pepe", the two "speciality dancers", for the "Carnival Tango" in the third act.⁹⁶

Sandy Wilson was more than pleased with the casting, and in fact wrote additional verses for the South African production. According to *The Star*, "Sandy is literally shouting from the rooftops that he is thrilled with the talent out here," and that those chosen "are every bit

⁹⁰ "'Boy Friend' is on," *The Star* (23 March 1957), 7.

⁹¹ Programme Note: "From the prompt corner," *The Boy Friend*, May 1957.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ "'Boy Friend' cast," *The Star* (6 April 1957), 7.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Theatre Programme: *The Boy Friend*, May 1957.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

as good as in the overseas productions.”⁹⁷ *The Star* also mentioned that Staff’s choreography “will be quite different” without explaining how it would be different, or whether the choreographed sequences would differ substantially (as they must have done) from their West End or Broadway counterparts.⁹⁸ And there was even talk of a long-playing recording being made of the local production, which Wilson said he was “going to make sure that I have one made for myself.”⁹⁹ As with *Salad Days*, the designs for *The Boy Friend* were split between the same team of Pamela Lewis (décor) and Heather MacDonald-Rouse (costumes). Musical direction was by Gertrude Walsh.¹⁰⁰

The action in *The Boy Friend* is set in 1926 and takes place in three acts, namely the Drawing Room of the Villa Caprice in Madame Dubonnet’s Finishing School near Nice, the Plage in Nice, and the Terrasse of the Café Plataplon.¹⁰¹ The story concerns Polly Browne, daughter of millionaire Percival Browne, who comes to Madame Dubonnet’s Finishing School where she meets Tony, dressed ostensibly as a messenger boy, who delivers a package for her. She invites him to attend the Carnival Ball as her partner. Polly falls in love with Tony, and he, seemingly, with her. When he suggests she is a wealthy young lady at the Villa Caprice, she tells him that she is only a secretary at Madame Dubonnet’s. Towards the end of Act 11 Tony flees following a false accusation of theft. In the final act Tony’s true identity is revealed when it is discovered that he is in fact the Honourable Tony Brockhurst, son of Lord and Lady Brockhurst. The action concludes with Polly’s true identity being revealed (she is the daughter of Percival Browne after all) and Tony forgives her

⁹⁷ “Big ‘Boy Friend’,” *The Star* (13 April 1957), 7.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Sandy Wilson, *The Boy Friend* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1957), 17.

deception. They embrace, and the musical ends with everybody dancing the Charleston.

The opening night on 14 May 1957 was considered unparalleled in the history of Johannesburg theatre, with much excitement generated even before the audience had entered the auditorium. As some of the patrons arrived in Bentley's and other equally impressive motor vehicles, a crowd apparently thronged the pavement to catch a glimpse of them.¹⁰² "Amelia", writing in *The Star*, described how the positive reception given by the first night audience had Wilson

on the brink of tears and perhaps a little beyond it when the curtain rose for the sixth or seventh time and insistent cries of 'Author' drew him on to the stage...."¹⁰³

"Amelia" wrote further how Wilson was heard to murmur that "it wasn't like this even in London and New York."¹⁰⁴ Brian Brooke explained why this was so:

Our production of *The Boy Friend* was the best production that ever happened in the world. Although Sandy Wilson had a great success with this musical in London, he went to New York where they wanted to upbeat everything by about 20%. This drove poor Sandy mad, and in the end he was literally banned from the theatre. In fact, I think he was only allowed to stand at the back of the stalls on the opening night. So when I brought him out here I decided that Frank should do the choreography, not only because Frank knew exactly what was required, but also because he was sensitive and sympathetic. Between them they got the *tempi* faster than London but slower than New York and it was absolutely spot on. Sandy was very pleased with the result and it was absolutely brilliant, thanks to Frank who was quite wonderful that way.¹⁰⁵

The critics were quite unanimous in their praise although none, with the exception of Oliver Walker, specifically commented on Staff's choreography -- and then by way of a brief mention only. Walker

¹⁰² Amelia, "Hilarious night at Brooke theatre," *The Star* (15 May 1957), 10.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Brooke, interview, 2 October 1995.

enjoyed the way in which

exits were as stylized as Frank Staff's ripping dances. Characters went off, with lofted arms and backward glances more tender than Eurydice departing for the shades.¹⁰⁶

Walker commented briefly on the impressive "high Charleston kicks" and how the cast "had pretty songs to sing and clever dances to go with the songs."¹⁰⁷ The critic of *Die Vaderland* only hinted at Staff's choreography by comparing the 1920's Charleston to the 1950's trend of "rock and roll".¹⁰⁸ The *Rand Daily Mail's* critic indirectly alluded to Staff's choreography when June Hern was complimented for her impressive "singing and Charlestoneing."¹⁰⁹ Roley Egelston of *The Sunday Times* seemed equally vague, and only referred to some "lively dancing" without elaborating any further.¹¹⁰ Surprisingly, there were no reviews in *Die Transvaler* or the *Sunday Express*.

Throughout its run, *The Boy Friend* played to capacity houses, "breaking all records for the theatre."¹¹¹ With most performances virtually sold out, a black market for tickets arose and the press reported that theatre officials were offered £5.00 a ticket on one occasion "if they would let one man's party in. There were no seats -- not even at that price."¹¹² The musical's popularity also meant that Sandy Wilson's hope of a local recording would become a reality, and Decca released a 78 r.p.m. disc sometime towards the end of May.¹¹³ Made under Wilson's supervision, the South African recording

¹⁰⁶ Oliver Walker, "'The Boy Friend' bursts with joie de vivre," *The Star* (15 May 1957), 9.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ "'Boy Friend'," *Die Vaderland* (15 May 1957), 15.

¹⁰⁹ "The fun they had in the 'twenties," *Rand Daily Mail* (15 May 1957), 6.

¹¹⁰ Roley Egelston, "Boffo! Zowie!" *The Sunday Times* (19 May 1957), 20.

¹¹¹ "'Boy Friend' a record-breaker," *The Star* (25 May 1957), 7.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

featured seven songs from the musical,¹¹⁴ and joined both R.C.A.'s recording of the American stage version and the H.M.V. recording of its English counterpart.¹¹⁵

By the time *The Boy Friend* celebrated its 100th performance on Friday 9 August 1957,¹¹⁶ a total of 48 000 people had seen the musical. And this, no doubt, was partly due to Staff's discerning choreography and his professionalism in assisting Brooke with auditions, as well as aiding Sandy Wilson determine the exact *tempi* required for all the musical items. *The Boy Friend* broke all theatrical records in Johannesburg with attendance figures surpassing Brooke's own production of *The Teahouse of the August Moon* by 15 000.¹¹⁷ *The Boy Friend* gave its last Johannesburg performance on 12 October¹¹⁸ before undertaking a tour of Zimbabwe,¹¹⁹ and then a South African national tour to Kimberley, Port Elizabeth, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Cape Town.¹²⁰ *The Boy Friend* returned to Johannesburg in 1958 for a short three-week run at the Brooke Theatre from 7 April¹²¹ with

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *The Star* (23 March 1957), 7.

¹¹⁶ Advertisement, *The Star* (9 August 1957), 14.

¹¹⁷ Oliver Walker, "48, 000 have laughed at 'The Boy Friend'," *The Star* (6 August 1957), 9.

¹¹⁸ Advertisement, *The Star* (11 November 1957), 14.

¹¹⁹ "Grapevine," *The Star* (21 September 1957), 7.

¹²⁰ Certain cast changes were made for the touring programme, the most important of which was Ivor van Rensburg taking over the part of "Tony" from Ivan Berold. Performances in Zimbabwe met with remarkable success, and the musical ran for three weeks in Harare (to capacity houses) before giving its 200th performance in Bulawayo on 19 November. In Durban, another cast change was made when Anthea Crosse replaced Maureen Adair as "Polly Browne". Brian Brooke stated that a total of 340 performances (inclusive of performances in Johannesburg and Zimbabwe) had been given by the time *The Boy Friend* finally ended its touring engagements.

The Star (21 September 1957), 7.

"'Boy Friend' breaks Rhodesian record," *The Star* (13 November 1957), 13.

"Home-town debut," *The Star* (7 April 1958), 10.

Programme Note: *Grab me a Gondola*, Brooke Theatre, Johannesburg, season May 1958.

¹²¹ Advertisement, *The Star* (25 March 1958), 16.

Anthea Crosse as "Polly Browne" and Ivor van Rensburg as "Tony".¹²² As there were no press reports to the contrary, Staff's choreography was probably used for the 1958 revival as he was in Johannesburg at the time and consequently available to supervise the dance routines.¹²³

In June 1957, there was also talk of Staff co-producing a musical with Sandy Wilson in London and possibly New York as well. The subject for this musical was to be based on a book entitled *My Royal Past* by the renowned English photographer Cecil Beaton, and the idea to co-produce the musical came about during rehearsals of *The Boy Friend* when Wilson invited Staff to join him later in the year in London.¹²⁴ Although Staff was keen to go at first, he was not prepared to leave South Africa for too long, explaining that "I've put in too much work here", and all hope of collaborating with Wilson came to naught.¹²⁵

It was while *The Boy Friend* was being performed in Johannesburg that news of the South African Ballet's proposed tour to Central and North Africa became available. The idea for the tour came about as a result of an overseas representative from a theatrical agency seeing the company perform during 1956.¹²⁶ However, Staff was initially keen for the company to tour Israel -- apparently having arranged a tour for January 1957 -- and said they "would be there now but for the political situation."¹²⁷ The Israeli tour was probably scheduled after the January 1957 season because Staff only told the press in January 1957 that he would pursue a tour "as soon as peace [in Israel] breaks out."¹²⁸

¹²² "Polly's new 'Boy Friend'," *The Star* (2 April 1958), 13.

¹²³ During April 1958, Staff worked with Brian Brooke on *Grab me a Gondola*, another musical scheduled for early May of that year (1958) at the Brooke Theatre.

¹²⁴ "Frank Staff to team up with Sandy Wilson," *Rand Daily Mail* (18 June 1957), 6.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Rand Daily Mail* (18 June 1957), 6.

¹²⁷ Antony Quain, "Stoep talk -- Training them young," *The Star* (10 January 1957), 10.

¹²⁸ "Big ballet," *Rand Daily Mail* (4 January 1957), 6.

He also envisioned a European tour "within the next two years",¹²⁹ but this, as with the Israeli tour, did not materialize.

Several countries had been earmarked for the African tour, and while the *Rand Daily Mail* named four,¹³⁰ *The Star* identified five by adding Asmara in Eritrea to the list.¹³¹ The others were referred to by their colonial names and included Abyssinia (Ethiopia), the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of Congo and formerly Zaïre), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).¹³²

According to the *Rand Daily Mail* and *The Star*, the dancers were due to leave for Addis Ababa in Ethiopia on 3 July 1957.¹³³ A further press release in the *Rand Daily Mail* however gave their date of departure as 5 July.¹³⁴ Irrespective of when they were actually due to leave, the dancers were inoculated against infectious diseases on 27 June.¹³⁵ Antony Quain of *The Star* reported on 3 July that

adhesive plaster will be the hallmark of the South African Ballet during its tour of Ethiopia and the Belgian Congo. Frank Staff and his thirteen dancers who are leaving Johannesburg by air today, have all just been vaccinated against smallpox. But Frank has refused to allow the doctor to vaccinate them on their legs in case it might affect their dancing. So, the operation was performed on their upper arms and covered with sticking plaster. Incidentally, this is the first time that a South African ballet company has ever left the Union on tour. They hope to do a command performance at the court of the Emperor of Ethiopia.¹³⁶

¹²⁹ Quain, *The Star* (10 January 1957), 10.

¹³⁰ *Rand Daily Mail*, (18 June 1957), 6.

¹³¹ Oliver Walker, "Staff's ballet to perform in Addis Ababa," *The Star* (17 June 1957), 9.

¹³² *Rand Daily Mail* (18 June 1957), 6.
Walker, *The Star* (17 June 1957), 9.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ "They belong to a ballet company but this isn't a rehearsal -- they're just getting ready to be inoculated for a tour north," *Rand Daily Mail* (28 June 1957), 3.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Antony Quain, "Stoep Talk -- Clearly marked," *The Star* (3 July 1957), 11.



Plate 31: Preparing for inoculations at the Johannesburg District Surgeon
are, from left to right, Roseleen Kassel, Joan Mosselson,
Victoria Carlson and Dries Reyneke.¹³⁷

Although the company's repertoire details for the tour were not mentioned in the press, Oliver Walker did note that the company would comprise fourteen dancers (including Staff) for the tour; that the tour would be conducted over a twenty-nine day period; and that a total of twenty-six performances would be given.¹³⁸ There was no further disclosure about the tour except that Timothy Murgatroyd, the 26-year-old stage designer who had been working in London as an assistant to producer Alec Shanks and was the stage manager of the South African Ballet for their June 1957 season,¹³⁹ would be in charge of the décor on tour.¹⁴⁰ The dancers' inoculations were in vain however as the tour did not materialize. Victoria Carlson seemed to recall that the sponsor withdrew financial support at the last minute but confirmed how "everything had been planned. Police clearance had been approved and we had already been inoculated when suddenly

¹³⁷ "They belong to a ballet company but this isn't a rehearsal -- they're just getting ready to be inoculated for a tour north," Photograph, as reproduced in the *Rand Daily Mail* (28 June 1957), 3.

¹³⁸ Walker, *The Star* (17 June 1957), 9.

¹³⁹ Theatre Programme: *National Opera Association of South Africa presents The South African Ballet Company*, 20-29 June 1957.

¹⁴⁰ Walker, *The Star* (17 June 1957), 9.

there was no money. Unfortunately, I can't remember exactly who the sponsor was."¹⁴¹ After discussing the matter with Eugene Joubert, who was the company's manager at the time, Carlson said that he too was unable to recall the name of the sponsor but seemed to think that the tour was actually "at the request of the Ethiopian government."¹⁴² Dreas Reyneke came to a similar finding when he said that

there was some link with Ethiopia because, if I'm not mistaken, Emperor Haile Selassie, like the Shah of Iran, also had a home in Johannesburg. I think the Emperor's home was in Houghton.¹⁴³

Bernice Lloyd and Michael Venables expressed some doubt about the tour ever being planned at all. Bernice Lloyd said that despite not being in Staff's company at the time -- she was dancing with Luisillo's troupe of Spanish dancers -- this sort of information would have been known to her, especially as

the ballet world in Johannesburg was very small, very insular at the time, and anything of that magnitude would have been known to all who were connected with dance. I can say that Frank and Oliver Walker had a very great friendship -- Oliver was always in Frank's office -- so they probably "cooked" the whole thing up.¹⁴⁴

Michael Venables offered an equally cynical view, arguing that

as the company's publicity manager, I would have been one of the first to know about this tour, and I can't say I did. Frank liked to shock; he liked to see how people would react to what he said. I think this whole tour idea was pure fabrication on the part of Frank and even of Oliver Walker, who was very friendly with Frank. It was probably a publicity stunt more than anything else.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Carlson, conversation, 29 January 1996.

¹⁴² Victoria Carlson, telephonic conversation with author, 30 January 1996, Johannesburg.

¹⁴³ Letter to author dated 12 February 1996 from Dreas Reyneke, former dancer, South African Ballet Company.

¹⁴⁴ Bernice Lloyd, telephonic conversation with author, 19 January 1996, Johannesburg.

Yet, both Bernice Lloyd's opinion and Michael Venables' misgivings about the tour does not explain why a photograph of the dancers being inoculated appeared in the *Rand Daily Mail* and not *The Star*, the latter being the newspaper for which Oliver Walker wrote. Furthermore, Antony Quain's article in *The Star* about the dancers having their vaccinations had nothing whatsoever to do with any reporting by Oliver Walker. Bernice Lloyd's argument and Michael Venables' viewpoint therefore seems to be unfounded.¹⁴⁶

Staff's last choreographic assignment for 1957 was *Ballimente*, a work created not for his own company but for Rita Leibowitz's Durban Theatre Ballet.¹⁴⁷ The idea Staff and Leibowitz had in mind with the Durban Theatre Ballet was to create an associate company of the South African Ballet in Durban so that the two companies could combine for full-scale productions, which would be presented throughout South Africa.¹⁴⁸ Leibowitz was appointed as the ballet mistress of the Durban Theatre Ballet with Staff as its director-in-chief.¹⁴⁹

To launch the new Durban Theatre Ballet, Staff was invited to produce and dance in several ballets. The company's short inaugural season was planned for October 1957 and dovetailed with a production of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* at the (Durban) Alhambra Theatre.¹⁵⁰ The opera, by Alessandro Rota's Opera Company and the Durban Civic Choir,¹⁵¹ was performed on alternate nights with the ballet.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁵ Michael Venables, telephonic conversation with author, 22 January 1996, Cape Town.

¹⁴⁶ Correspondence to the Ethiopian Embassy at the East Africa desk in Pretoria on 6 February and 3 April 1996 for further possible clarification of the proposed tour remained unanswered.

¹⁴⁷ *The Natal Daily News* (1 October 1957), 8.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Rand Daily Mail* (18 June 1957), 6.

¹⁵⁰ "Nancy Graham ballet show today," *The Natal Witness* (28 September 1957), Magazine Supplement, 2.

¹⁵¹ Advertisement, *The Natal Mercury* (23 September 1957), 8.

¹⁵² *The Natal Witness* (28 September 1957), 2.

Both were accompanied by the Durban Civic Orchestra with Fritz Schuurman conducting the opera and Charles Denholm the ballet.¹⁵³ *The Natal Mercury* referred to the event as “a season of grand opera and ballet” with *Madame Butterfly* scheduled for 1 October and the ballet set for the following evening.¹⁵⁴ Further performances of the ballet were given on the evenings of 4 and 8 October with two matinées on 5 and 9 October.¹⁵⁵ A unique feature of the ballet programme was that all the works were produced by Staff, and these comprised *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *Les Sylphides*, *Peter and the Wolf* and Staff's new work, *Ballimente*.¹⁵⁶

Staff's musical inspiration for *Ballimente* was the ballet sequence from Jules Massenet's opera *Le Cid* (1885), which probably accounted for *The Natal Mercury* inadvertently referring to Staff's ballet as *Le Cid*.¹⁵⁷ The opera itself takes place in twelfth-century Spain ('Le Cid' being a prominent knight of the time) and is based on the seventeenth-century French dramatist Pierre Corneille's tragedy about 'Le Cid'. The ballet component takes place in Act 11 where young couples engaged to be married are joined by townsfolk and peasants in dances drawn from different Spanish provinces. Massenet arranged these dances in seven movements, with each offering its own vivid and unique contrasting style. The first, titled “Castillane”, conjures up images of Castile with its animated *allegro* in 6/8 time. Loud and softer contrasts make for an energetic movement complemented by the use of castanets to suggest a lively festival spirit. The next movement is “Andalouse” to represent Andalusia, and is a quieter dance scored for strings and woodwind only. As an *adagio*, its serene mood gives the movement a dignified texture. The third dance, known as the “Aragonaise”, marks a return to another lively 6/8 rhythm and is characterized by the vibrant energy of Aragon. This is followed by

¹⁵³ *The Natal Mercury* (23 September 1957), 8.

¹⁵⁴ Advertisement, *The Natal Mercury* (24 September 1957), 10.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *The Natal Daily News* (1 October 1957), 8.

¹⁵⁷ Advertisement, *The Natal Mercury* (2 October 1957), 8.

“Aubade”, meaning ‘dawn song’, which begins with a short sprightly march for flute, piccolo and triangle. Throughout this movement the strings are played *pizzicato* except for the final two chords. Catalonia is captured next with “Catalane”, which begins with a short introduction leading to a more serious theme emphasized by cellos. Woodwinds interrupt the theme and provide some diverting and light-hearted *staccato* relief that concludes with a spirited *presto*. The sixth movement is entitled “Madilène” and was inspired by Madrid. Written in two parts, the first, a slow section, is scored in a nostalgic vein for cor anglais and flute while the second, arising by way of an *accelerando*, is more lively with full orchestra and castanets returning to play an key part. The former kingdom of Navarre in the Pyrenees area probably inspired the final movement, “Navarraise”. It begins with woodwinds and lower strings to which violins are added with a series of short phrases leading to a gradual increase in *tempo* that culminates in the reappearance of the “Aragonaise” theme and a rousing coda with which to conclude the ballet.

Since it was very seldom Staff ever deviated from the structure of a composer’s score, *Ballimente* was probably no exception. However, it is not known whether or not Staff’s dances were choreographed to represent the different dance styles from each of the Spanish provinces alluded to in Massenet’s score. The press was not particularly helpful in this regard either, as they tended to account more generally about the work instead of appraising each of the movements separately.

Ballimente was fairly well received by the press although the second of two reviews in *The Natal Daily News* intimated that the choreography was disappointing as Kendrew Lascelles was only given “a meagre chance of showing his paces.”¹⁵⁸ The first review by *The Natal Daily News* however was decidedly more positive with the critic lauding the manner in which

the dance assumed traditional Spanish form; castanets, Moorish maids and Iberian rhythm lent flashing colour. The ensemble took the exciting music of Massenet’s “Le Cid” and engineered a spirited visual spectacle.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ “Durban, it’s ballet to be proud of,” *The Natal Daily News* (6 October 1957), 6.

The same critic, known only by the initials D.K.S.,¹⁶⁰ lamented what was obviously a near accident, apparently caused by the dancers themselves rather than by the choreography, when "it seemed a catastrophe had to come...but somehow it was avoided...and the curtain fell on a satisfying evening's entertainment."¹⁶¹

Thelma Kelly of *The Natal Mercury* thought *Ballimente* was

almost bewildering in its variety of colour and movement. With little to interpret except mood, the dancers pirouetted and leaped across the stage in a frenzy of gay abandon, making a fitting finale to the programme.¹⁶²

Of the other works presented, *Peter and the Wolf* (narrated by actor David Horner)¹⁶³ was regarded as having "few rivals."¹⁶⁴ *The Natal Daily News* viewed the ballet as "the gem of the programme...with some delicious dancing by Jacqueline St. Clere, Denise McTavish and Pamela Beale."¹⁶⁵ Michael Glaister's "fearsome yet slightly pathetic wolf" was regarded as suitably convincing and danced the way "it should be."¹⁶⁶ Thelma Kelly of *The Natal Mercury* enjoyed the way in which

¹⁵⁹ "Ballet was diverting and exciting," *The Natal Daily News* (3 October 1957), 10.

¹⁶⁰ Two telephonic conversations with the librarian of *The Daily News*, Mpume Dube, revealed that it was customary practice in those days for *ad hoc* critics either to write under their initials or to write anonymously without even acknowledging their initials. No record of their full names has been retained by *The Daily News*, which makes it impossible to identify these critics. Neither were there any employees of *The Daily News* alive today who could identify these critics. Consequently, there is no way of telling who D.K.S. was.

Mpume Dube, telephonic conversation with author, 23 and 24 December 1996, Durban.

¹⁶¹ *The Natal Daily News* (3 October 1957), 10.

¹⁶² Thelma Kelly, "Fascinating variety at ballet," *The Natal Mercury* (3 October 1957), 2.

¹⁶³ *The Natal Mercury* (2 October 1957), 8.

¹⁶⁴ Kelly, *The Natal Mercury* (3 October 1957), 2.

¹⁶⁵ *The Natal Daily News* (6 October 1957), 6.

¹⁶⁶ *The Natal Daily News* (3 October 1957), 10.

all the gaiety and colour, humour, sparkle and happiness were cleverly brought out by the danseuses. Jacqueline St. Clere (as Peter) waved a magic wand around the audience and seemed by her very naturalness to be dancing for the love of dancing alone. Pamela Beale's portrayal of the cat was excellent and she was well supported by the rest of the cast.¹⁶⁷

Yet, Kelly thought *L'Après-midi d'un faune* was the most successful work on the programme and she commended Staff on his thought-provoking rendition of the leading role:

The cruel and almost animal-like sensuality of Frank Staff as the faun seemed to cast an aura of macabre fascination over the audience, contrasted as it was against the stark bleakness of the setting. This was dancing as Nijinsky intended it and as only the most virile and masculine dancer could have done it. The atmosphere of animal emotions was evoked with complete artistry and superb interpretation.¹⁶⁸

Least satisfactory was *Les Sylphides* because it required "absolute technical perfection and mastery of form," which Thelma Kelly believed was absent and consequently unable to achieve "the high standard of the other items."¹⁶⁹ But she went on to admit that "one felt a qualified admiration for the poignant beauty of the massed ensemble."¹⁷⁰ Kendrew Lascelles recalled the Durban excursion as "one of those rare opportunities when Frank allowed me to perform the 'faun' at some of the performances of *L'Après-midi d'un faune*."¹⁷¹

Ballimonte, in fact, was Staff's second Spanish-styled ballet, the first being *The Impresario*. But it was not to be his last, and in 1966 he returned to Spanish motifs for a new PACT Ballet creation entitled *Spanish Encounter*. Set to Joaquin Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* (1939), *Spanish Encounter* was a Spanish-styled take-off of *Les Sylphides* in which the ladies wore traditional below the knee-length

¹⁶⁷ Kelly, *The Natal Mercury* (3 October 1957), 2.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

tutus of the Romantic period.¹⁷² Veronica Paeper remembers the costumes for their “little black bobbles to emphasize the ballet’s Spanish flavour.”¹⁷³ And little black tassels running the length of the bodice around the edges at the top and the back of the ladies costumes were complemented with long black gloves of elbow-length, pink tights and pink pointe shoes. The men were dressed in white shirts with cummerbunds, black matador-styled jackets, black trousers and matching black shoes.¹⁷⁴

According to Veronica Paeper, *Spanish Encounter* was never really performed on the professional stage but was saved, instead, for schools performances only.¹⁷⁵ Its world première certainly took place on a school stage when it was first performed at the Athlone Boys’ School in Johannesburg.¹⁷⁶ Yet, there is evidence contrary to Paeper’s statement where the ballet was in fact performed at more professional venues, for instance the three Gala performances by PACT Ballet at the City Hall in Germiston on 25 March 1966 and the National Theatre in Pretoria on 28 and 29 March of the same year.¹⁷⁷ Dawn Weller of The State Theatre Ballet (formerly PACT Ballet) added that she remembered the work partly for its music but more for the fact that “we toured a lot with this ballet.”¹⁷⁸

There were only two other instances where Spanish-inspired subject matter formed part of Staff’s ballets without the whole ballet being overtly Spanish in content. This first was in *Soirée Musicale* (for

¹⁷² Veronica Paeper, interview with author, 30 November 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Dora Sowden, “500 boys see world ballet premiere,” *Sunday Times* (20 February 1966), Magazine Supplement, 5.

¹⁷⁷ Theatre Programme: *A gala evening of ballet*, PACT Ballet, City Hall, Germiston, performance 25 March 1966

¹⁷⁸ Dawn Weller, interview with author, 14 October 1992, Pretoria, tape recording.

NAPAC) and the second was in *Episodes* (for CAPAB Ballet). In *Soirée Musicale* there was a short “Bolero (Trés Espagnol)”, which Eugene Berry, who was one of the NAPAC dancers to perform in this ballet, remembered with Margaret McLeay and Marie de Gaye executing “very slow movements that suddenly became very fast with typically stylized Spanish arms.”¹⁷⁹ In *Episodes* there was a short sketch entitled “Carmen was a hippie”, which was an updated parody of Bizet’s *Carmen*. Marilyn Cohen danced “Carmen” with a cigarette, which led Eduard Greyling to say that this “was just a little comedy piece with Marilyn being all sexy and Spanish.”¹⁸⁰ Owen Murray explained further that as the 1960’s was the hippie era, it was not surprising “Marilyn was given movements to do from that period wearing lots of make-up and dancing with an inevitable cigarette.”¹⁸¹ Perhaps the real significance of “Carmen was a hippie” was whether it influenced any latter-day choreographers or not? Chrysteen Fuller seemed to think it did, and gave Veronica Paeper’s *Ten Pieces* as a case in point when she remarked how

in Veronica’s *Ten Pieces* there’s a Spanish sequence with a Carmen Miranda-type character that Phyllis [Spira] originally created wearing a flirtatious little Spanish-styled skirt and which Juanita [Yazbek] later danced. This was of course very much inspired by the Spanish sequence in *Episodes*.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Eugene Berry, interview with author, 21 September 1992, Johannesburg, tape recording.

¹⁸⁰ Greyling, interview, 25 June 1992.

¹⁸¹ Owen Murray, interview with author, 15 August 1992, Cape Town, tape recording.

¹⁸² Fuller, interview, 4 November 1991.

CHAPTER NINE

Frank Staff's artistic growth as one of South Africa's leading choreographer's continued to flourish in 1958 with his choreographic enterprise bearing a marked similarity to 1957. Characterized by several new ballets, additional work in musical theatre, and the sharing of ballet with opera, it was also in 1958 that Staff published the only known article ever written by him in which he attempted to answer why it was that South Africa had produced dancers of excellence. In his discourse Staff also referred to the emergence of several prominent South African ballet companies including his own.

Staff's first choreographic assignment for 1958 was the musical entitled *Grab me a Gondola*. Co-authored by Julian More and James Gilbert with music by Gilbert and lyrics co-written by More and Gilbert, *Grab me a Gondola* was set in two acts and eleven scenes, with some typical Venetian settings such as the Grand Canal as well as other characteristic settings including the "Piazza San Marco" and "the Pensione Tino". One not so typical Venetian setting was where the action took place on board the "H.M.S. Broadside". The action itself concerned the Venice Film Festival with optimistic starlets and their over-inflated egos. The cast comprised, among others, a fictitious film star named Virginia Jones, several British starlets with Marcia Grey as the most prominent of these, a few eager pressmen and a few even more eager Italian men. While some believed the "Virginia Jones" character was a caricature of Diana Dors or Jayne Mansfield, the musical's co-author James Gilbert preferred to say that "she is not a satire on any one famous blond actress" but rather "three or four well-known personalities rolled into one."¹ He was not, however, specific as to which "three or four well-known personalities" were being parodied, although they were probably some of the leading fair-haired actresses of the day -- irrespective of whether they were naturally blonde or platinum blonde.

Grab me a Gondola had its genesis in London where it was first performed at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, on 27 November 1956.

¹ "They make fun of four film stars," *Rand Daily Mail* (30 April 1958), 6.

A month later, on 26 December 1956, it transferring to the Lyric Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue in London's West End.² Unlike *Salad Days* or *The Boy Friend*, *Grab me a Gondola* was never performed in the United States³ and only managed 673 performances in London before closing.⁴ Brian Brooke's decision to stage *Grab me a Gondola* had been prompted after his wife, the actress Petrina Fry, had seen the London production and thought its light-hearted theme would suit Johannesburg audiences. She urged Brooke to consider its viability and he, in turn, flew to London to see the production where he met James Gilbert. Negotiations with Gilbert led to the rights being secured for a Johannesburg staging, as well as the engagement of Gilbert to supervise and collaborate on the South African production with Brooke and Staff as its directors.⁵ Brooke remembered how,

after I had seen this production last year [1957], I persuaded the composer, James Gilbert, to come out to South Africa to collaborate with Frank Staff and myself in the direction of the South African presentation. He told me that, provided he could get his release from his B.B.C. commitments as a Television Director, he would be delighted. Fortunately all this was satisfactorily arranged....⁶

On his decision to choose Staff as co-director, Brooke had this to say:

Frank had proved his remarkable attention to detail with our production of *The Boy Friend*, and it was on that basis I decided to allow him to co-direct *Grab me a Gondola* with me. The procedure was quite simple: *Grab me a Gondola* had a script, and where the dialogue stopped, I would say: "Frank, it's now over to you", and he would take over the dancing and movement aspect of the production having watched my last move. But as co-director he was given more latitude than before, and we worked very well together. Indeed, we were perfectly compatible and I cannot remember a single moment of my association with Frank Staff when we were not like brothers.⁷

² Mander and Mitchenson, *Comedy*, 42.

³ Morley, *Spread*, 138.

⁴ Mander and Mitchenson, *Comedy*, 42.

⁵ Oliver Walker, "'Grab me a Gondola' composer to fly out," *The Star* (27 March 1958), 13.

⁶ Programme Note: *Grab me a Gondola*, May 1958.

Brooke explained further in a programme note that the Johannesburg production had been embellished with two new songs, and that greater emphasis had been placed on the dancing component:

At the outset he [James Gilbert] agreed that the treatment of this musical could be original as Frank Staff and I were anxious to create a production which would use the talents of the South African cast to the best advantage. The ballet behind "Lonely in a crowd" has been introduced here for the first time. The song, "When I Find That Girl", is now featured in Act One and James Gilbert was asked if he would write another song for [the character] "Tino" to sing in Act Two. The result was "Guisseppina" which was especially composed and written for the Johannesburg production. A stronger emphasis has also been put on dancing in this production and Frank Staff's choreography and setting of the musical numbers is entirely new.⁸

As co-director, Staff's obligations extended to the auditioning process which, by now, was familiar territory to him -- having auditioned the dancers for *The Boy Friend* in 1957. A press report of 3 March 1958 revealed that "Frank Staff...is still looking for good-looking young dancers."⁹ Speaking on behalf of Staff, Jacqueline St. Clere explained to the press that "good dancing is essential for the group of girls and young men" who "should also be able to sing a bit."¹⁰ The same report, incidentally, released supplementary information about the production including the names of its principal performers, who were Joan Blake, Olive King, Ivan Berold (whose part was eventually taken by Sergio Galli) and Ivor van Rensburg.¹¹ In addition, the press

⁷ Brooke, interview, 2 October 1995.

⁸ Programme Note: "From the prompt corner," *Grab me a Gondola*, May 1958.

⁹ Oliver Walker, "Dancers are needed at the Brooke," *The Star* (3 March 1958), 13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Joan Blake was cast as the protagonist, "Virginia Jones", with Ivor van Rensburg as "Tom Wilson", the newspaper columnist. Olive King played "Margaret", Tom Wilson's fiancée, and Sergio Galli was cast as "Prince Luigi Boubon Corielli". Others in the cast included Robert Wilson as "Alex Bryan", who was Virginia Jones' manager, John Hayter as "Lt.-Commander Fitzmorris R.N.", Harold Lake as "Tino", the proprietor of Pensione Tino, Shelagh Ross as "Guisseppina", his wife, and Jacqueline St. Clere as "Marcia Grey", one of the six starlets. Two of the other "starlets", namely Rosemary Harvey and Joan Mosselson (now billed as Joan Rochelle and referred to hereinafter by that name), were from Staff's company. Another Staff dancer in this production was Kendrew Lascelles who performed one

revealed that a small orchestra of about twelve would support Gertrude Walsh, principal pianist for the production.¹² Scheduled for the Brooke Theatre, the production was set to open on 5 May 1958.¹³ Rehearsals, however, commenced almost six weeks before the opening night.¹⁴ James Gilbert himself arrived in South Africa on 14 April¹⁵ -- approximately three weeks before the first performance.¹⁶

Grab me a Gondola proved to be Brian Brooke's most ambitious undertaking at the time: its cast and orchestra totalled more than thirty, with twelve sets which "expected to cost nearly three times as much as 'The Boy Friend'".¹⁷ Brian Brooke himself recalled with pride:

Because of the tremendous difficulty of presenting a show of this size and cost in a theatre as small as the Brooke, we had to avoid importing the principals to play the leading roles. James Gilbert payed [sic] us the compliment of saying that we could hardly have cast it better in London.¹⁸

Staff's choreographic duty was extensive, and included arranging the "Show Page Ballet", the dancing sequence for "Lonely in a crowd" and "Rocking at the Canon Ball", the movement aspect for an amusing satirical Shakespearean sketch entitled "Cravin' for the Avon" and the "finale".¹⁹

of the Shakespearean characters in the "Cravin' for the Avon" sequence as well as one of the pressmen, peasants and sailors.

Theatre Programme: *Grab me a Gondola*, May 1958.
Rand Daily Mail (30 April 1958), 6.

¹² Walker, *The Star* (3 March 1958), 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Theatre Programme: *Grab me a Gondola*, May 1958.

¹⁷ Walker, *The Star* (27 March 1958), 13.

¹⁸ Programme Note: "From the prompt corner," *Grab me a Gondola*, May 1958.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Designed by Pamela Lewis, *Grab me a Gondola* was met with mixed reports from the critics. Most were in agreement that although this was by no means the greatest musical ever written, it nevertheless still offered a pleasant diversion with some highly amusing scenes. Most impressive, according to Lewis Sowden of the *Rand Daily Mail*, were the lyrics for "Cravin' for the Avon" and "What are the facts", as well as the singing of Sergio Galli who "was the first to stop the show with his song 'Lonely in a crowd'."²⁰ In praising individual performances, Lewis Sowden found Joan Blake's interpretation of Virginia Jones to be indicative of "that slightly fantastic 'star quality' in spite of her mannerisms, or because of them."²¹ Nonetheless, he mentioned how Joan Blake "had to encore 'Man not a Mouse'", as did Ivor van Rensburg with "What are the Facts" and Harold Lake with his rendition of "Giuseppina". Jacqueline St. Clere evidently "led the starlets with vivacity", while "Frank Staff's dances were first-rate."²² Sowden's final comment about the production -- and indeed the musical itself -- was that although "the gondola rocks a little oddly at times... it gets to shore triumphantly."²³

Oliver Walker's review in *The Star* was fairly similar to Lewis Sowden's for the *Rand Daily Mail* although Walker singled out Robert Wilson and John Hayter for displaying "the value of slick movement with the dance-and-song routines."²⁴ Ivor van Rensburg and Sergio Galli, on the other hand, were "inclined to be embarrassing with their peg-like postures and wincing smiles."²⁵ Walker agreed that "What are the fact's" emerged as one of the most successful songs while Joan Blake's portrayal of Virginia Jones was "too mature."²⁶ Olive King,

²⁰ Lewis Sowden, "The gondola has a gimmick," *Rand Daily Mail* (7 May 1958), 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Oliver Walker, "Gay skitting at keyhole columnists and starlets," *The Star* (6 May 1958) 11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Jacqueline St. Clere and the starlets were complemented on their “youth, beauty and vivacity” while the dancing of the chorus pressmen and photographers “carried plenty of punch.”²⁷ Although Staff’s name was not mentioned specifically in this particular review, Walker’s favourable reference to the dancing implied that he had no objection to the choreography as he would have said otherwise. *Die Vaderland*, however, did mention Staff’s choreography in a brief statement where the critic wrote of how the ballet was particularly clear in its mood rather than its technique.²⁸ The critic was especially impressed with the performances of Joan Blake, Olive King, Ivor van Rensburg, Sergio Galli and Harold Lake. Jacqueline St. Clere was also singled out for her “enthusiasm” in the “Rocking at the Canon Ball” sequence.²⁹ Curiously, *Die Transvaler’s* theatre critic saw fit not to review the work at all.

Grab me a Gondola was also reviewed by the critics of both *The Sunday Times* and the *Sunday Express*. Roley Eggleston of *The Sunday Times* accused the work of unnecessary padding, claiming that it dampened a musical that was otherwise “generally well worth seeing.”³⁰ Eggleston’s main criticism however was levelled at the authors’ inability to maintain the satire rather than Brooke or Staff’s handling of it.³¹ He nevertheless went on to praise Joan Blake for being “wonderful as the fast fading film star valiantly keeping her bust high and her defences low”, but unfortunately failed to mention Staff’s choreography.³² Percy Blakeney of the *Sunday Express* did allude to the choreography when he wrote of how the cast “sing and dance (Frank Staff’s original choreography) with such verve and élan that the first night very nearly repeated the memorable furore of ‘The Boy

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ “Skitter in uitspattige vertonerigheid” [Sparkle in loud display,] *Die Vaderland* (6 May 1958), 22.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Roley Eggleston, “Too much padding,” *The Sunday Times* (11 May 1958), 34.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

Friend' opening."³³ Clearly impressed with Brooke's direction of the musical -- Staff as co-director was not mentioned in this regard -- Blakeney could not fault the production. After praising most of the major players, Blakeney saluted Pamela Lewis for her designs, the orchestra for keeping perfect time, and Brooke for pulling "it off again, and that's no cause for weeping."³⁴



Plate 32: The Starlets with Jacqueline St. Clere (centre), Joan Rochelle (to Miss St. Clere's left) and Rosemary Harvey (to Miss Rochelle's left).³⁵

Grab me a Gondola proved as popular as *The Boy Friend* and almost shared equal success. By July, a local recording of the Johannesburg cast had been made available on 45 r.p.m. disc³⁶ and a month later, on 4 August, the production celebrated its 100th performance.³⁷ *Grab*

³³ Percy Blakeney, "Joan Blake and 'Gondola' cast show London up," *Sunday Express* (11 May 1958), 21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Photograph, as reproduced in *Grab me a Gondola* theatre programme, May 1958.

³⁶ Advertisement, *The Star* (28 June 1958), 8.

³⁷ Advertisement, *The Star* (28 July 1958), 16.

me a Gondola ran for three and a half months in Johannesburg, and after its final performance on 19 August 1958,³⁸ the musical then transferred to Durban's Alhambra Theatre for a three-week run from 25 August to 13 September.³⁹ Due to the size of the production and the transport costs involved, *Grab me a Gondola* was not taken to Cape Town or Zimbabwe.⁴⁰

It was also in May 1958 that Staff was asked by the recently formed South African Federation for Opera to present a ballet for their inaugural season at the Reps. Theatre during mid-June of that year.⁴¹ Without hesitation he consented, and chose to stage not one of his own works, but rather one of his own personal favourites, namely Fokine's *Les Sylphides*.⁴² It was to be the only time his company would ever perform the Fokine classic, and it was also the only time the company would be performing in Johannesburg during 1958 apart from a one-off matinée performance at the University of the Witwatersrand to celebrate the 10th Arts Festival.⁴³ *Les Sylphides* had to be augmented

³⁸ Advertisement, *The Star* (18 August 1958), 14.

³⁹ Advertisement *The Natal Mercury* (25 August 1958), 8.

⁴⁰ "Gondola on tour," *The Sunday Times* (3 August 1958), 12.

⁴¹ The South African Federation for Opera was created in 1958 and established along similar lines to the National Opera Association of South Africa. In view of the fact that opera had been presented in Afrikaans since 1946 and because *Die Fledermaus* and *In die Droogte* were scheduled for June 1958, it was decided to combine the National Opera Association of South Africa with its sister organization, Opera Vereeniging van Suid-Afrika (Opera Association of South Africa), which in fact was a completely separate body. This led directly to the creation of the South African Federation for Opera with Dr. P Snideman, Dr. M.S. du Bason, Mr. Gideon Roos and Mr. Louis Trevor as signatories to the new South African Federation for Opera.

"New opera federation," *The Star* (12 May 1958) 11.

Programme Note: *South African Federation for Opera*, Reps. Theatre, Johannesburg, season June 1958, 10.

⁴² There seems to be no other reason why Staff chose *Les Sylphides* other than his respect for Fokine's masterful choreography with its perfect construction and sublime beauty. However, it was possible that a so-called 'white' ballet was an essential prerequisite for the programme, or that Staff simply wanted to stretch his dancers' capabilities.

⁴³ Apart from advertisements in *The Star*, there were no further details except for the date of performance on Saturday 16 August. The only other information pertained to the programme's title, "Movement and Ballet", with the movement component

with ten *ad hoc* dancers to replace the seven from Staff's company who, for different reasons, were all absent from the usual catalogue of dancers. Missing were Delysia Blake, Sylvia Davis, Adele Samuels, Ottie Friedman, Joan Rochelle, Naomi Stamelman and Jacqueline St. Clere. Replacing them were Wendy Berkeley, Grace Blithe, Susan de Beer, Jinx Goldberg, Sandra Leigh, Avril Mosselson, Melanie Muskat, Diana Ostrawiak, Jennifer Patrick and Thelma Sher.⁴⁴

The South African Federation for Opera devised three different programmes from 12 to 28 June. The first of these was *La Traviata*, conducted by Jeremy Schulman and sung in Italian on 12, 14, 18, 20 and 27 June with two matinées on 21 and 25 June. The second was *Die Fledermaus*, conducted by Anton Hartman and sung in Afrikaans on 13, 17, 19, 23, 25 and 28 June with a matinée on 14 June. The third was a triple bill made up of John Joubert's *In die Droogte*,⁴⁵ Bruce Anderson's production of *Gianni Schicchi*⁴⁶ and *Les Sylphides*. Edgar Cree conducted this programme with performances on 16, 21, 24, 26 June and two matinées on 18 and 28 June. *In die Droogte* was naturally sung in Afrikaans while *Gianni Schicchi* was given in English.⁴⁷ The S.A.B.C. orchestra accompanied all three separate programmes.⁴⁸

presented by the Ruth Oppenheim Company. On the same afternoon's programme was a one-act play entitled *Five Days*, which was performed by the University Players. None of the works were reviewed by the press.

Advertisement, *The Star* (29 July 1958) 16.

Advertisement, *The Star* (16 August 1958) 8.

⁴⁴ Programme Note: *South African Federation for Opera*, June 1958, 18.

⁴⁵ Presented during the second half of the South African Music evening at the Johannesburg Technical College Theatre, *In die Droogte* was given its world première on 20 October 1956 and formed part of a mixed bill together with Arnold van Wyk's 'n *Fantasie op Hollandse volksliedere*, four songs from Hubert du Plessis' *Die Vreemde Liefde* and a violin sonata by Blanche Gerstman.

"Wêreldpremière van 'Die Droogte'" [World première of 'The Drought'], *Die Vaderland* (19 October 1956), 6.

⁴⁶ Oliver Walker, "We need glamour to present arts festivals," *The Star* (26 June 1958), 13.

⁴⁷ Advertisement, *The Star* (4 June 1958), 14.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

For his *Les Sylphides* production Staff cast Rosemary Harvey in the Waltz with Victoria Carlson in the first Mazurka and Kendrew Lascelles in the second. Bernice Lloyd danced the Prelude while Victoria Carlson and Kendrew Lascelles were chosen to perform the *pas de deux*. The whole company performed the Nocturne at the beginning of the ballet.⁴⁹

Les Sylphides only managed to attract minor critical commentary. Opinions were levelled at the dancing only rather than the actual staging and there was no real appraisal of the choreography itself or of Staff's success in achieving Fokine's choreographic objective. Dora Sowden, for instance, only said she found *Les Sylphides* "always attractive"⁵⁰ and went on to explain how

"Les Sylphides", sandwiched in between [the two operas], showed off Frank Staff's South African Ballet very well, with some very good dancing from Kendrew Lascelles, Bernice Lloyd, Victoria Carlson, and Rosemary Harvey.⁵¹

Oliver Walker's review in *The Star* was slightly more substantial:

Frank Staff's S.A. Ballet group gave us a highly decorous "Les Sylphides" which might have been more spirited (certainly in the Mazurkas) if the stage had been less crowded. Rosemary Harvey, Victoria Carlson, and Bernice Lloyd shone in mild solo-work, and Kendrew Lascelles did manly work with his easy lifts and graceful bearing.⁵²

The critic of *Die Transvaler* did not mention *Les Sylphides*, apart from acknowledging that it formed part of the triple bill,⁵³ while the critic of *Die Vaderland* singled out Victoria Carlson and Kendrew Lascelles for

⁴⁹ Theatre Programme: *South African Federation for Opera*, June 1958, 18.

⁵⁰ "'Traviata' still leads the way," *Rand Daily Mail* (27 June 1958), 10.

⁵¹ Dora Sowden, "The triple bill is the best," *Rand Daily Mail* (18 June 1958), 8.

⁵² Oliver Walker, "Thin scoring for a draughty opera," *The Star* (17 June 1958), 11.

⁵³ "Die Droogte belangrike mylpaal in musiek" ['The Drought' an important milestone in music,] *Die Transvaler* (19 June 1958), 2.

“giving neat performances.”⁵⁴ *Les Sylphides* was not reviewed in either *The Sunday Times* or the *Sunday Express*.

There seems to be two plausible reasons why *Les Sylphides* was not reviewed more extensively by the press: firstly, this was essentially an opera season that happened to include a ballet as a convenient diversion, and, secondly, the visit by members of the Royal Danish Ballet to Johannesburg in June of that year tended to eclipse the local ballet scene altogether.⁵⁵ This, in fact, may have been the determining factor for Staff’s decision not to present his company in Johannesburg at all during that period. Likewise, Tamara Toumanova’s⁵⁶ visit to Johannesburg in late October 1958 may have been yet another reason why Staff decided not to present his company in Johannesburg. It was also possible, however, that Staff was preoccupied at the time with arranging new ballets for a pending South African national tour.

Press reports indicate that Toumanova’s visit to Johannesburg was highly successful, and apart from her two scheduled performances in two separate programmes at the Johannesburg City Hall on 25 and 27 October,⁵⁷ she also gave two additional recitals featuring a third programme at the City Hall on 5 and 12 November.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ “Afrikaans opera is hoogtepunt van die seisoen” [Afrikaans opera is highlight of the season,] *Die Vaderland* (17 June 1958), 15.

⁵⁵ A contingent of dancers from the Royal Danish Ballet (including Margrethe Schanne and Frank Schaufuss) performed two programmes at the Johannesburg Empire Theatre from 9 to 18 June. The first programme comprised extracts from Act 11 of *Swan Lake*, *The Fair in Bruges*, *Pas de deux* from *Don Quixote*, 1845 *Pas de quatre* and *Dream Pictures*. The second programme consisted almost exclusively of snippets extracted from August Bournonville’s ballets that included the dances from *La Ventana* (1854), *La Sylphide* (1836) and *Napoli* (1842). Other works on the programme included the “Black Swan” *pas de deux* from *Swan Lake* and *Variations* choreographed by John Taras.

Advertisement, *The Star* (9 June 1958), 14.

Advertisement, *The Star* (16 June 1958), 12.

⁵⁶ Tamara Toumanova was one of the three Russian “baby ballerinas” -- the other two being Irina Baronova and Tatiana Riabouchinska -- who was invited by George Balanchine in 1932 to join the Ballets-Russe de Monte Carlo. Toumanova was only 13 at the time -- hence the reference to her as a “baby ballerina”.

⁵⁷ The recital on 25 October featured *L’Epoque Romantique* with choreography by Toumanova herself, Anatol Obouchoff’s version of the *Don Quixote pas de deux*,



Plate 33: Frank Staff and Tamara Toumanova admiring African tapestries during the ballerina's visit to Johannesburg in October and November 1958.⁵⁹

Fokine's *The Dying Swan* and Serge Lifar's *Romeo and Juliet*. The programme from 27 October comprised Toumanova's *Adagio Sentimental*, Peter Boretsky's *L'Oiseau de la Nuit* and *Somnambule*, Alexander Gouseff's *Grand pas* from *Esmeralda* and Serge Lifar's *Le Guerrier*.

Advertisement, *The Star* (22 October 1958), 14.

⁵⁸ For these two performances Toumanova danced the *Grand pas de deux* from *The Nutcracker* and a selection of other pieces that included *Delamor Y Della Muerto*, *Humouresque*, *The Dying Swan* and the *Don Quixote pas de deux*.

Advertisement, *The Star* (3 November 1958), 16.

Advertisement, *The Star* (12 November 1958), 16.

⁵⁹ "Tamara meets local star," Photograph, as reproduced in *The Star* (3 November 1958), 1.

The Danish Ballet's tour to Johannesburg and Toumanova's recitals are of course only speculative reasons as to why the South African Ballet did not perform in Johannesburg during the latter half of 1958. The most plausible explanation is that Staff was engaged in at least one other theatrical venture in Johannesburg at the time or, as mentioned earlier, that his mind was preoccupied with arranging a national tour for his company towards the end of the year.

Staff's next choreographic assignment following *Les Sylphides* was the arrangement of various dance sequences for Cecil Wightman's stage adaptation of *Snoektown Calling*. Scheduled for August 1958 at the Brooke Theatre, *Snoektown Calling* had been a popular radio series written, produced and presented by Wightman since 1936 on the South African national radio service.⁶⁰ Later, after the creation of Springbok Radio on 1 May 1950,⁶¹ *Snoektown Calling* was presented on commercial radio.⁶² Wightman's material satirized the South African community and was said to have "done more towards giving a real South African atmosphere to radio in this country than any other broadcaster."⁶³ He was regarded as South Africa's leading humorist and impersonator who always "kept a fresh approach" to his script writing with its "happy knack of topicalities."⁶⁴

Snoektown Calling was transmitted throughout the war years and began with the familiar sound of the Cape fish-horn used by fish sellers announcing their wares. Although *Snoektown Calling* was intrinsically a family programme, Wightman imbued it with respectable satirical humour that would appeal to the most

⁶⁰ The national radio service was created in 1936 when the South African Broadcasting Corporation was established by an Act of Parliament, Act 22 of 1936.

This is the SABC -- South African Broadcasting Corporation (Johannesburg: Group Communications Directorate of the SABC, April 1996), 4.

⁶¹ *This is the SABC* (April 1996), 4.

⁶² "Theatre under stars on Zoo Lake," *The Star* (9 February 1957), 7.

⁶³ *The Star* (9 February 1957), 7.

⁶⁴ "'Snoektown Calling' at Brooke," *The Star* (1 August 1958), 10.

sophisticated of listener because “one of his [Wightman’s] proudest boasts is that he never depends on vulgarity or dubious material.”⁶⁵

Billed as an “intimate revue”,⁶⁶ Wightman’s staged version of *Snoektown Calling* took place at the Brooke Theatre from 22 August⁶⁷ until 13 September 1958.⁶⁸ To assist him re-create various well-known radio comedy sketches such as the fictitious (cannibal) radio station called “Station Ublumgubulu” and the characters “Katjie and Lammie”, Wightman secured the services of Ginger Jennings and Bernabe van Alphen.⁶⁹ Staff’s contribution took the form of four dance pieces entitled *Interlude in Black and White*, *Ever since Sandy Wilson*, *The Legend of Frankie and Johnnie* and *Jamaican Rhumba*.⁷⁰ Three of the dancers from the South African Ballet (Victoria Carlson, Joan Rochelle and Kendrew Lascelles) participated in all four of the works with Staff making a guest appearance in *The Legend of Frankie and Johnnie*.

Interlude in Black and White was the first of the four works to be presented. As its title implied, this was an uncomplicated dance diversion with Carlson, Lascelles and Rochelle dressed in black and white. Joan Rochelle stated quite emphatically that *Interlude in Black and White* “was exactly that. No story, black and white costumes and a very interesting black and white set.”⁷¹ Kendrew Lascelles called the work “a really super little piece” set to an arrangement of music by George Shearing, which he was unable to recall.⁷² Victoria Carlson

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Theatre Programme: *Snoektown Calling*, Brooke Theatre, Johannesburg, season August 1958.

⁶⁷ Advertisement, *The Star* (22 August 1958), 16.

⁶⁸ Advertisement, *The Star* (13 September 1958), 8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Letter to author dated 18 December 1996 from Joan Lubner, former dancer, South African Ballet Company.

however remembered the name of the piece as *Dancing on the Ceiling*,⁷³ which Shearing had arranged from the 1930 Richard Rogers/Lorenz Hart musical called *Simple Simon*.⁷⁴

The second item, titled *Ever since Sandy Wilson*, contrasted strongly with the first in terms of its content, mood and style. Viewed as a frolicsome “send-up of the Charleston”,⁷⁵ it was also Staff’s tribute to Sandy Wilson with whom he “got on famously.”⁷⁶ Kendrew Lascelles recalled the spirit of friendship between Staff and Wilson when he recounted how “Sandy [Wilson] even came to the studio one day, so *Ever since Sandy Wilson* was a sort of tribute of Frank’s.”⁷⁷ The third Staff ballet on the programme was *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny*, which marked the third time Staff was presenting this work -- the first being as *Frankie and Johnnie* for the Empire Ballet in 1950 and the second as *He was her Man* for the New-Ballet Company in 1952. The 1958 version, apart from its new title and the spelling of “Johnnie” as “Johnny”, was probably closer to the 1950 version, particularly where the number of dancers involved were concerned: in *Frankie and Johnnie* there were three, each representing the three main characters of “Frankie”, “Johnnie” and “Nellie Bly”, while in the New-Ballet production of *He was her Man* there were nine. In *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny* there were four characters with Joan Rochelle representing “Frankie”, Staff portraying “Johnnie”, Victoria Carlson

⁷² Letter to author dated 16 December 1996 from Kendrew Lascelles, former dancer, South African Ballet Company.

⁷³ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

⁷⁴ *Dancing on the Ceiling* was originally used in the musical *Simple Simon* at the Ziegfield Theatre in New York. First performed on 18 February 1930, the song was then known as *He dances on my Ceiling* before it was changed to *Dancing on the Ceiling* for another Rogers and Hart musical entitled *Ever Green*. *Ever Green* was first performed in London at the Adelphi Theatre during December 1930.

Steven Suskin, *Show tunes 1905-1991 -- The songs, shows and careers of Broadway's major composers* (New York: Limelight, 1992), 170-172. Morley, *Spread*, 67-69 & 94.

⁷⁵ Lubner, letter, 18 December 1996.

⁷⁶ Lascelles, letter, 16 December 1996.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

dancing “Nelly Bly” and Kendrew Lascelles playing the “Barman”.⁷⁸ In addition, Staff’s musical choice for this ballet was the score arranged by George Melachrino, his colleague and friend from the Empire Ballet days who had written the music for the 1950 production, instead of resorting to Patrick Harvey’s 1952 composition for *He was her Man*.⁷⁹



Plate 34: Frank Staff and Joan Rochelle in Staff’s 1958 version of *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny*.⁸⁰

The final Staff work for *Snoektown Calling* was *Jamaican Rhumba*, which, perhaps, was the most colourful of all. Described by Adele Samuels as “all frills and maracas”,⁸¹ *Jamaican Rhumba* stressed a particularly vibrant quality through its quick movements in which

⁷⁸ Theatre Programme: *Snoektown Calling*, August 1958.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ “Frankie and Johnny,” Photograph, as reproduced in the *Rand Daily Mail* (19 August 1958), 8.

⁸¹ Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

the dancers would run on and off the stage, often leaping high. Frank loved the effect it created. Two would run on and leap across the stage and then run off again before another one would run on. *Jamaican Rhumba* was a lot like that, very fast and very energetic.⁸²

Victoria Carlson pointed out that in spite of its simple costume designs, each costume was different and brightly-coloured, which added excitement to the piece. Joan Rochelle, for example, wore a leotard embellished with trimmings on its straps and around the top and bottom of the leotard. Longer frill-like attachments were gathered at the back of the leotard extending downwards away from her body. Her hair was loose and on her feet she wore white high-heeled shoes. Kendrew Lascelles wore a white shirt tied in a knot at the waist with loose sleeves towards the elbows. Horizontal strips of coloured material were sewn onto his shirt at regular intervals with a strip sewn from the uppermost horizontal strip extending down the length of the sleeves. On his feet were ballet slippers.



Plate 35: Joan Rochelle and Kendrew Lascelles in *Jamaican Rhumba*.⁸³

⁸² Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

⁸³ "At the Brooke," Photograph, as reproduced in *The Star* (18 August 1958), 11.

All the costume designs for *Snoektown Calling* were by Pamela Lewis. Jack Dent provided musical accompaniment at the piano, which no doubt included the music for Staff's items as well. Critical appraisal was mixed with Oliver Walker offering the most comprehensive report. Walker was certainly the only critic to single out most of Staff's works, and even if his comments were brief, he at least acknowledged three of the Staff pieces when he wrote that

apart from some neat decor in the "Interlude in Black and White" and some terse, satiric dancing in "The Legend of Frankie and Johnny", Frank Staff's dancers also put on "Ever since Sandy Wilson", which scores very neatly off the Charleston gaucheries that made "The Boy Friend" a unique success.⁸⁴

Lewis Sowden questioned the wisdom behind turning this popular radio show into a staged one and came to the conclusion that while "Cecil Wightman should have worked out a theatrical frame-work", the final product was better suited to "the air and perhaps it should stay there."⁸⁵ Sowden thought that while Staff's ballet sequences were "picturesque compositions against imaginative backgrounds", he doubted whether they were really relevant because "'Snoektown' and ballet don't go well together, and one had the feeling that both the dancers and the audience knew it."⁸⁶ Sowden ignored the choreographic content of Staff's pieces as well as the performances of its participants.

The critic of *Die Vaderland* found Wightman's production far too long and, like Lewis Sowden, was also of the opinion that as a staged show it failed to live up to expectation. Commentary pertaining to Staff's contribution however was more positively expressed, and although no specific remarks were made about the finer choreographic details of each item, *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny* was singled out for

⁸⁴ Oliver Walker, "Mr. Wightman needs no props to give you the most in laughs," *The Star* (23 August 1958), 2.

⁸⁵ Lewis Sowden, "Ballet doesn't go with 'Snoektown'," *Rand Daily Mail* (23 August 1958), 2.

⁸⁶ *Rand Daily Mail* (23 August 1958), 2.

Staff's "surprise" personal appearance.⁸⁷ Clearly impressed, the critic went on to state that it was hoped "this standard and kind of production will become a regular and much sought after characteristic of his [Staff's] choreography in the future."⁸⁸ Victoria Carlson, Kendrew Lascelles and Joan Rochelle were all mentioned for their "outstanding" performances although Lascelles was considered "a little pretentious technically."⁸⁹ *Snoektown Calling* was not well received by the critic of the *Sunday Express* who said this production "proved that while South Africa may have grown up, Snoektown hasn't".⁹⁰ Staff's choreography was rather vaguely alluded to in terms of "some ballet numbers of sorts."⁹¹

When the South African Ballet's tour to North and East Africa did not materialize in 1957, Staff set about organizing another tour, which he scheduled for late November and early December of 1958. This time however it would be within the confines of the South African borders. But before this could be achieved the South African Ballet had to be restructured as a touring company. With this in mind, Staff decided to make necessary amendments to the company's constitution. Firstly, there would have to be a reduction in the number of dancers as touring was an expensive undertaking; secondly, a different and far more innovative repertoire with new works would be added to some of the more established works from the repertoire and; finally, Staff believed that a change to the company's name was desirable to reflect its new status and identity.⁹² This did not mean the company would no longer perform in Johannesburg but rather that it would spend more time away from the city, thus giving the ballet-going public elsewhere in the

⁸⁷ "Het vertoning gered" [Saved the performance,] *Die Vaderland* (22 August 1958), 25.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ "Nostalgic applause," *Sunday Express* (24 August 1958), 22.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² "Frank Staff writes four new ballets for his company," *The Star* (26 November 1958), 13.

country the chance to see Staff's ballets. The new company totalled eight dancers, namely Victoria Carlson, Rosemary Harvey, Rosaleen Kassel (now known as Rosalind Kaye), Kendrew Lascelles, Bernice Lloyd, Jacqueline St. Clere, Staff, and Arlene Swift whose real name was Arlene Schiff. The new ballets for the fledging company were all choreographed by Staff and consisted of *Lizzie Borden*, *Romantic Encounter*, *The Swan of Tuonela* and *Toccata and Fugue*.⁹³ *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny* was also incorporated into the repertoire while *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Transfigured Night* represented the more established works.⁹⁴ Renamed the Frank Staff Ballet, the company was duly registered in November 1958 as the Frank Staff Ballet (Pty.) Ltd.⁹⁵

Apart from *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny*, *Lizzie Borden* (set to Morton Gould's *Fall River Legend*), and the two standard works from the old repertoire, Staff used music by three composers not previously considered by him. For the first of these, *Romantic Encounter*, he used Frédéric Chopin's *Concerto No. 2 in F Minor for piano and orchestra* while *The Swan of Tuonela* was set to Jean Sibelius' third Lemminkäinen legend of 1896 with the swan represented on the *cor anglais* as a solo. *Toccata and Fugue* drew its inspiration from J.S. Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*. It was, incidentally, the only time Staff would ever use music by Bach, Chopin or Sibelius -- except of course for his June 1958 staging of *Les Sylphides* to Chopin's music. The set and costume designs for *Lizzie Borden* were split between Pamela Lewis (sets) and Jacqueline St. Clere (costumes) while Saxon Lucas and Jacqueline St. Clere designed the set and costumes respectively for *Toccata and Fugue*. *Romantic Encounter* and *The Swan of Tuonela* were dressed by Jacqueline St. Clere and danced in front of a plain backcloth. *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny* retained the Pamela Lewis set and costume designs from *Snoektown Calling*.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

The content of Staff's new ballets all followed a strong narrative line with *Romantic Encounter* being comedy-styled while the other three were of a more serious, somewhat dramatic nature. *Romantic Encounter* was a variant of *Les Sylphides* -- hence the music by Chopin -- with its dream-like quality emphasized by two of the characters, "a poet" and "a nymph", who, in turn, are rudely interrupted by a Staff invention called "an intruder". While the reference to *Les Sylphides* was unequivocally clear, there were at least two other ballets dating from the nineteenth-century repertoire that may have inspired Staff. These were *Ondine* and, to a lesser extent, *Napoli*.⁹⁶ This is especially true because of the similarity between their characters and the dominant theme of a mortal's hapless love for a spirit. In *Romantic Encounter*, the notion of a mortal being pursued by a nymph was not dissimilar to the *Ondine* theme or any of the other Romantic ballets involving unrealistic characters such as sylphs or naiads. The idea of introducing "an intruder" no doubt accounted for an element of discord, which also prevailed within the Romantic ballet genre. Of course the possibility existed that *Romantic Encounter* may have been a specie of Staff's earlier *Ballade*. In *Romantic Encounter*,

⁹⁶ Louis-Xavier-Stanislas Henry's *Undine* was first performed in 1825 in Vienna at the Kärntnertor Theatre and was followed eleven years later by Paul Taglioni's *Undine, die Wassernymphe* at the Hofoper in Berlin. However, the most famous of all nineteenth-century versions of the ballet were probably the two productions by Jules Perrot in 1843 and 1851. The first of these, titled *Ondine ou La Naiade*, was created for Fanny Cerrito at Her Majesty's Theatre in London while the second, called *The Naiad and the Fisherman*, was made for Carlotta Grisi, and was first performed in the unusual open-air setting of Peterhof in St. Petersburg. Briefly, the story of *Ondine* concerned the fisherman Matteo, his betrothed Giannina, and a naiad named Ondine. It tells of Ondine's love for Matteo and how she interrupts his ordered life by luring his beloved Giannina into the water and assuming her identity. The ballet ends however with Giannina restored to life and reunited with Matteo while Ondine returns to her home beneath the sea. August Bourmonville's *Napoli* of 1842 followed a slightly inverted scenario in which Teresina, the heroine, is lost at sea during a storm. Naiads carry her lifeless body to the blue grotto on the Island of Capri where Golfo, a sea-sprite, restores her to life. When she pleads to be returned to her beloved Gennaro, the sea-sprite Golfo responds by turning her into a naiad. Gennaro enters the grotto and saves Teresina with the aid of an amulet of the Madonna. Teresina resumes her human form once more and the couple depart from the cave reunited. The ballet ends with a celebration of Teresina and Gennaro's reunion.

Cyril Beaumont, *Complete book of ballets* (London: Putnam, 1937), 288 & 293. _____, *Supplement*, 22-27.

Peter Brinson and Clement Crisp, *A guide to the repertory -- ballet and dance* (Devon: David and Charles, 1980), 22.

Victoria Carlson took the part of “the nymph” with Kendrew Lascelles as “the poet”. Bernice Lloyd was “an intruder”. Kendrew Lascelles remembers the work as “a *pas de deux* and a *pas de trois* with some fine moves and very exacting to dance.”⁹⁷ He said it was of a classical nature but regretted to add that he could not “recall one step of it now, nor do I think we danced it that often.”⁹⁸ Lascelles did confirm however that *Romantic Encounter* was not unlike *Les Sylphides*, particularly in terms of its atmosphere.

The Swan of Tuonela was quite different to *Romantic Encounter* and followed the Finnish legend in which a swan floated on the black waters surrounding the entrance to Tuonela, the hell of Finnish mythology and domain of Tuoni and his wife Tuonetar. As its guardian and protector, the swan prevents any potential invader from entering Tuonela. Lemminkäinen was one of the heroes of the Finno-Ugric Kalevala, and being both physically brave and able to overcome his enemies with magic and incantations, he dared to go as far as the banks of the black river. When he tried to shoot the swan with his arrow he was cast into the river, and his body was shattered across the waves of Manala, the sister underworld in Finnish mythology.⁹⁹

Staff created his *Swan of Tuonela* as a dramatic *pas de deux* for Bernice Lloyd and Kendrew Lascelles. It began with Lloyd executing a controlled *bourrée* upstage with her back facing the audience that was not dissimilar to the way in which Fokine’s *The Dying Swan* begins. At first she dances, but her attention is drawn to “the hunter” who has invaded her domain. She confronts him, and pretending to be in love, dances a love *pas de deux* with him. Then she entices him, and despite his pleading, drowns him in the river. The swan continues to float down the river keeping a constant vigil for her next victim.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Letter to author dated 25 March 1997 from Kendrew Lascelles, former dancer, South African Ballet Company.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ “Finno-Ugric Mythology,” *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* (New York: Crescent Books, 1959), 304-305.

¹⁰⁰ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

Apart from briefly commenting on the ballet's structure -- a *solo* followed by a *pas de deux* and ending with another *solo* -- Bernice Lloyd explained how Staff wanted to create a vehicle that would show off her long, expressive arms. In the course of discussion, Lloyd remarked further how her arms and hands had to be shaped in a certain way to indicate the more typical characteristics of a swan:

Frank was very impressed with my long arms and decided to create a ballet that would show them off to their best advantage. And what better way than to create a work with a swan as its central character. The arms were used in different ways to represent different attributes of a swan. At times, both arms moved upwards and downwards to reflect its wings while at others one arm would be bent slightly at the elbow to suggest its long neck. Also, my fingers were invariably held close together and bent forward to denote the swan's head and beak.¹⁰¹

The Swan of Tuonela was also partly derived from Act 111 of *Swan Lake*, which features the malevolent Black Swan. In Staff's ballet the similarity lay both in the movements suggested by the swan and in Jacqueline St. Clere's costume design which consisted of a black and silver-coloured classical-styled tutu with black feathers complemented by a small headdress resembling a coronet. Thin black tights and black point shoes completed the costume. Victoria Carlson pointed out that a small plug was attached to the bodice, which, when released, revealed a red mark on the front of the bodice.¹⁰²

Bernice Lloyd summarized the choreographic content of *The Swan of Tuonela* as follows:

It was a bit of Petipa's "Black Swan" from *Swan Lake* and a bit of Fokine's *The Dying Swan*, but unlike *The Dying Swan*, Frank's *Swan of Tuonela* was a *pas de deux* with movements and a matching style that corresponded to the "Black Swan". The beginning and ending were exactly the same as the beginning of *The Dying Swan*, calm and composed, while the *pas de deux* section, where she lures the hunter, was as bewitching as the "Black Swan", both choreographically and atmospherically.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

Perhaps the most interesting feature about this ballet was that it demanded stamina more than technical virtuosity since the ballerina was required to dance *en pointe* for the full duration of the performance. Bernice Lloyd explains:

It began *en pointe* and ended *en pointe*. Not once did I come off *pointe* because that's the way Frank wrote the ballet. Admittedly, the Sibelius score is not really a lengthy piece of music but when the whole ballet has to be danced *en pointe* it seems to go on forever. As a test of endurance, I don't think there's much to beat Frank's *Swan of Tuonela*.¹⁰⁴



Plate 36: Bernice Lloyd as the malevolent Black Swan in *The Swan of Tuonela*.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Photograph, as reproduced in the *Cape Argus* (10 December 1958), 8.

Continuing the theme of death, and even more dramatic than *The Swan of Tuonela*, was *Lizzie Borden*. Set to Morton Gould's *Fall River Legend* of 1947 and made famous by Agnes de Mille's ballet of the same name in 1948,¹⁰⁶ Staff's version told the story of the infamous Lizzie Borden, a Sunday-school teacher, accused of murdering her father and stepmother in 1892 with an axe at their home in Fall River, Massachusetts. Evidence was in favour of Borden's guilt -- she was in the house on the day the murders were committed and had tried to purchase a poisonous chemical the day before. However, her innocence was supported by her own righteous background, her benevolent reputation, some wealthy influential people, certain women's rights organizations and other groups. Lizzie Borden was acquitted of the double murder after a 13-day trial. Staff's creation departed from history with some artistic licence taken towards the end of the ballet where Lizzie Borden finds herself on the scaffold before her executioner. Staff's full title for his ballet was *Lizzie Borden (Took an Axe)* which, no doubt, was partly inspired by an anonymously written poem entitled "The Crimes of Lizzie Borden", which read as follows:

Lizzie Borden with an axe,
Hit her Father forty whacks,
When she saw what she had done,
She hit her mother forty-one.¹⁰⁷

The ballet was structured in one act and six scenes with a "Prologue" and an "Epilogue". Explanatory programme notes explain the ballet as a series of flashbacks from Borden's past. In the "Prologue", Lizzie Borden has been sentenced to hang for the murders of her father and stepmother: "She thinks back to her childhood and the events that have led to the present."¹⁰⁸ Scene one dealt with Lizzie's childhood,

¹⁰⁶ Created for Ballet Theatre in one act and eight scenes, Agnes de Mille's *Fall River Legend* was first performed on 22 April 1948 at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

¹⁰⁷ Oscar Williams (ed.) "The Crimes of Lizzie Borden," *A little treasury of Modern Poetry, English and American* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1947), 600.

¹⁰⁸ Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, Zion Centre, Johannesburg, performances 24, 27 & 28 October 1959, 9.

the death of her biological mother and her first encounter with “The Spinster”, who was to become her stepmother. Scene two was set a few years later when Lizzie visits her mother’s grave: “The last links are broken with her father by the intrusion of the Spinster.”¹⁰⁹ Scene three takes place a year later at a party. Lizzie’s father and “The Spinster” arrive and announce their marriage. Unable to accept the situation, Lizzie’s anger is provoked further after her stepmother casts doubts on her (Lizzie’s) sanity. Scene four is titled “Madness”, and it was in this scene that Lizzie Borden took an axe, committed patricide and hacked her stepmother to death. The ballet ends on the scaffold with an “Epilogue” in which Kendrew Lascelles as “The Hangman” proceeded to fasten “Lizzie’s hands behind her back before he hanged her.”¹¹⁰

Staff choreographed *Lizzie Borden* especially for Rosemary Harvey, with himself as her father. Joan Rochelle played Lizzie’s real mother while Bernice Lloyd played the part of “The Spinster”. Kendrew Lascelles was both “The Arresting Officer” and “The Hangman” while the rest of the company portrayed the “Neighbours”.¹¹¹ Bernice Lloyd comments on Staff’s subtle casting with specific reference to *Lizzie Borden*:

Frank had this wonderful ability for casting and he saw the talents of Rosemary Harvey as being ideal for *Lizzie Borden*. Frank knew exactly who would be suited to what and he was always spot-on with his casting. He could cast his ballets like no one else I know, and *Lizzie Borden* was a perfect example of that. Rosemary was ideal for the title role as were the others in the parts they danced in this ballet.¹¹²

And Victoria Carlson’s observations about Rosemary Harvey’s performance in *Lizzie Borden* are equally noteworthy:

Lizzie Borden was Rosie Harvey. I remember her quite distinctly going mad in the end, charging round the stage with

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

¹¹¹ Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, 24, 27 & 28 October 1959, 9.

¹¹² Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

an axe and killing her stepmother and her father. Rosie was quite phenomenal as Lizzie and she really excelled in the title role.¹¹³

Bernice Lloyd however went on to express a more personal, albeit general, appraisal of the ballet when she recalled how

Lizzie Borden was a macabre work, but not to the same extent as *Transfigured Night*, and while I personally don't think it was as powerful a ballet, it could have been a great work because it had the potential for greatness, especially with its very dramatic ending suggested by the hangman's noose. But something was lacking.¹¹⁴

Michael Venables was of a similar opinion, and although he did not "find it all that exciting", Staff was apparently "very proud of it."¹¹⁵ In fact, the success of *Lizzie Borden* always "puzzled" Venables.¹¹⁶ Victoria Carlson and Bernice Lloyd placed *Lizzie Borden* in the same category as *Transfigured Night*, especially because of its morbid nature and the fact that death played a significant part in the unravelling of its narrative. Victoria Carlson said she always classed *Lizzie Borden* "in the same bracket as *Transfigured Night* because of their similar stories and Frank's stylistically similar choreography. And that's why, in my mind, those two fit so perfectly together."¹¹⁷ Bernice Lloyd recognized the symmetry between the two works with regard to their story, style and mood, but added that in *Lizzie Borden* there were more dancers, and unlike *Transfigured Night* there were no sexual innuendoes.¹¹⁸

In 1970, Staff returned to the *Transfigured Night/Lizzie Borden* theme for a new ballet entitled *The Séance*. Created for PACOFS Ballet, *The Séance* was inspired by Gian Carlo Menotti's 1946 opera entitled

¹¹³ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

¹¹⁴ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

¹¹⁵ Venables, "Recollections," 4.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

¹¹⁸ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

The Medium. Staff set his new ballet to Benjamin Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem*, which was composed in 1940. *The Séance* concerned a phoney medium, her brother and their assistant. When the parents of a dead girl consult the medium and ask to speak to their dead child, the medium and her charlatan helpers are shocked to find that the girl's spirit does indeed appear. The medium and her staff are thrown into a state of disarray, as a result of which the medium suffers a stroke and dies. The similarity between this ballet, *Lizzie Borden* and *Transfigured Night* lay predominantly in their identical moods with death playing a major role. Like *Transfigured Night* and *Lizzie Borden* before it, *The Séance* made use of simple stage sets and gloomy lighting to promote its sinister atmosphere. Veronica Paeper, who danced the role of the medium in *The Séance*, agreed that it was "in the same style as *Transfigured Night*, particularly in the beginning where it was more like a dance-drama that tried to establish and convey a claustrophobic mood."¹¹⁹ And Arthur La Trobe, who performed the role of the medium's brother, confirmed that *The Séance*

was very much in the style of *Transfigured Night* with its bleak lighting, foreboding atmosphere and seedy little room where the medium and her scheming accomplices would have their seances.¹²⁰

Of all the critics reviewing *The Séance* it was only Marilyn Jenkins of *The Star* who recognized its similarity to *Transfigured Night*. In her opinion, *The Séance* bore "many similarities to 'Transfigured Night,' particularly in the movement given to Veronica Paeper..."¹²¹

The last of Staff's new ballets for the touring programme was *Toccata and Fugue*. Dressed in black leotards and black tights except for "The White Angel" who was logically dressed in white,¹²² Staff set the work

¹¹⁹ Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

¹²⁰ La Trobe, interview, 8 August 1992.

¹²¹ Marilyn Jenkins, "'Seance' exploits a sinister mood," *The Star* (17 April 1970) 18.

¹²² Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October.
Samuels, interview, 27 October 1992.

to Johann Sebastian Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor (BWV538)* and contrived a thin plot to corroborate what was really an abstract work.¹²³ The ballet concerned two lovers who "have come to an untimely death and find themselves in limbo. Here a battle ensues for the possession of their souls."¹²⁴ To dance the two lovers, Staff cast himself with Joan Rochelle. Kendrew Lascelles performed "The White Angel" while Victoria Carlson and Rosalind Kaye danced "The Black Angels".¹²⁵ Victoria Carlson remembers the ballet as

very abstract with the Bach music extremely strenuous to dance to. But, by the time we had learnt the ballet we all understood the music and we loved it. Of course the music was totally new to me, and yet it was just the right piece of music for this ballet. Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue* not only became part of the ballet, it also became part of us as well.¹²⁶

The touring programme began on 28 November 1958 at the Kimberley Theatre with three performances: one on Friday 28 November, and the other two (a matinée and evening performance) on Saturday 29 November.¹²⁷ Promoted by its new name of the Frank Staff Ballet Company, the repertoire included the four new ballets together with *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny*.¹²⁸ The Kimberley press publicized the event with two articles: one on 22 November¹²⁹ advertising the company's short tour with a brief mention of Kimberley-born Victoria Carlson who would be returning to dance in

¹²³ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

¹²⁴ Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, Rustenburg Town Hall, Rustenburg, performance 25 April 1959.

¹²⁵ "Frank Staff ballet provides pleasing entertainment," *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (29 November 1958), 1.

¹²⁶ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

¹²⁷ Advertisement, *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (22 November 1958), 2.

¹²⁸ "Four new ballets to be presented in Kimberley," *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (28 November 1958), 3.

¹²⁹ "Staff bringing ballet company to Kimberley," *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (22 November 1958), 9.

the city of her birth, and the other on 28 November¹³⁰ describing the ballets Staff intended presenting.

The critic of *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* praised the ballets in spite of poor attendance figures on the opening night. The critic was also particularly impressed, *inter alia*, with the way in which Staff's choreography was admirably served by his young company:

There is much to be highly commended in the presentation by the Frank Staff Ballet Company which opened a Union-wide tour and a two-day season before a meagre house in the Kimberley Theatre last night. The feature of the presentation is the inclusion of new ballots [*sic*], for which Staff himself has done the choreography and which receive full justice from his small but accomplished touring company. The programme is nicely varied and into his chereography [*sic*] Mr. Staff has invested the wealth of knowledge which has earned him great acclaim not only in South Africa, his own country, but overseas.¹³¹

The Diamond Fields Advertiser's critic thought Lizzie Borden was "without doubt" the most successful and "most colourful" of all the ballets presented.¹³² Rosemary Harvey's delivery of the title role was considered "a fine performance", suitably "backed by Staff, Kendrew Lascelles, Joan Rochelle and Bernice Lloyd -- a dancer with a wealth of expression."¹³³ The audience's choice however was for *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny* which, according to the critic,

developed into one of the best received works of the evening and an ideal vehicle for the dancing of Joan Rochelle, Staff and Victoria Carlson (Rhodie).¹³⁴

Victoria Carlson was singled out for "her precision and grace" that could "seldom be faulted" although she tended "periodically to forsake

¹³⁰ *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (28 November 1958), 3.

¹³¹ *The Diamond Fields Advertiser* (29 November 1958), 1.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

expression for perfection.”¹³⁵ *Toccata and Fugue* was judged “an excellent descriptive offering” in which a contest depicted the struggle “between good and evil for the souls of two young lovers seeking immortality....”¹³⁶ Unfortunately, the critic failed to comment any further on either the ballet itself or on the performances of the dancers, choosing instead simply to reiterate the casting for this ballet.¹³⁷ Critical commentary on *The Swan of Tuonela* was insubstantial other than a brief mention of the ballet’s provenance and that it was danced “by Lascelles and Miss Lloyd.”¹³⁸ *Romantic Encounter* was found to have had some “ragged edges” although “this did not detract from the ballet as a whole in which Miss Carlson, Miss Lloyd and Lascelles impressed.”¹³⁹

Bloemfontein was the company’s next destination, and here two performances of the Kimberley programme were given at the (Bloemfontein) City Hall on 2 and 3 December.¹⁴⁰ The press, regrettably, did not review the ballets. From Bloemfontein the company travelled to Cape Town for four performances at the Bellville Civic Centre from 11 to 13 December¹⁴¹ with a matinée on Saturday 12 December.¹⁴² In addition to the new ballets, the repertoire for Cape Town included *L’Après-midi d’un faune* and *Transfigured Night*.¹⁴³ Although no casting details were available for *L’Après-midi d’un faune* and *Transfigured Night*, the principal roles in the former were probably taken by Staff and Victoria Carlson while the latter

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Advertisement, *The Friend* (1 December 1958), 8.

¹⁴¹ Advertisement, *The Cape Argus* (4 December 1958), 16.

¹⁴² Advertisement, *Cape Times* (3 December 1958), 10.

¹⁴³ Henry Duthie, “Frank Staff will stage new ballets in Bellville Theatre,” *The Cape Argus* (3 December 1958), 6.

most likely included Bernice Lloyd, Jacqueline St. Clere, Kendrew Lascelles and Staff himself. Only the *Cape Times* critic reviewed the programme and expressed regret that, for whatever reason, the Cape Town ballet-going public had decided to avoid Staff's company. The critic states:

There was a lamentably poor house at the Bellville Civic Theatre last night when the Frank Staff Ballet Company opened their short season of ballets. This was surprising as Cape Town boasts of a large ballet following, and it is over 12 years since Mr. Staff last danced at the Cape. It is pleasing to note that he has lost little of his skill both as a dancer and choreographer. Perhaps, as it deserves, this enterprising entertainment will attract larger audiences when it is repeated to-night and to-morrow night.¹⁴⁴

Romantic Encounter, called *Les Recontres Romantiques* for the Bellville programme, fared the worst, and was considered "a rather unfortunate choice as the music, and consequently the choreography, is apt to be repetitive."¹⁴⁵ According to the critic, the ballet's only redeeming feature was the showing of Victoria Carlson, who "injected some life into this rather tedious and overlong ballet."¹⁴⁶ Bernice Lloyd and Kendrew Lascelles were nevertheless also credited for giving Carlson "some brave support."¹⁴⁷ The critic was of the opinion that Staff was more comfortable in "subjective ballet" and cited *Toccata and Fugue* as an example of sheer excellence with some impressive décor.¹⁴⁸ Bernice Lloyd was said to have "danced with admirable control" in *The Swan of Tuonela* and was "ably supported by Kendrew Lascelles."¹⁴⁹ *Lizzie Borden* and *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny* were regarded as the two works in which "Frank Staff

¹⁴⁴ "Frank Staff ballet at Bellville," *Cape Times* (12 December 1958), 4.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

showed his true skill as a choreographer” but failed to explain how, or why, this was so.¹⁵⁰

The company’s final destination was East London where they were scheduled to give two performances at the John Bisseker Hall on 19 and 20 December. *L’Après-midi d’un faune* and *Transfigured Night* were excluded from the East London repertoire.¹⁵¹ With part of the proceeds committed to the “Daily Dispatch Children’s Fund” (a charity established to raise funds for the East London Child Welfare Society for underprivileged children),¹⁵² the company seemed set for their two performances in East London. However, when they arrived in East London by rail at 13H30 on 18 December, they were surprised to find that they would be performing on 18 and 19 December instead of Friday 19 December and Saturday 20 December. Apparently there had been a misunderstanding regarding performance dates, which was further frustrated by a series of setbacks including no accommodation arranged for the dancers, no front-of-house staff organized, no ushers or back-stage crew appointed, no tape-recorder hired (the company’s equipment had been damaged in Cape Town), and a venue with a restricted stage height that made it virtually impossible to ‘fly’ the sets. But perhaps most serious of all was the fact that the venue itself might not be available.¹⁵³ As soon as Staff received confirmation that the John Bisseker Hall was indeed available, the company anxiously began rehearsing and continued to do so until the curtain rose some six hours later that evening.¹⁵⁴ It seems admirable -- and, given the circumstances, even remarkable -- that through sheer determination the company somehow

managed to get everything in order, borrow a tape-recorder, fix up their lighting, adapt their sets, arrange accommodation,

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Advertisement, *Daily Dispatch* (15 December 1958), 8.

¹⁵² “Two evenings of ballet,” *Daily Dispatch* (15 December 1958), 6.

¹⁵³ “A state of confusion awaited them,” *Daily Dispatch* (19 December 1958), 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

arrange ushers and a cashier and still turn in a fine performance.¹⁵⁵

The press were evidently sympathetic, and remarked that

in spite of a harrowing afternoon trying to get ready for a performance in the John Bisseker Hall last night, the Frank Staff Ballet gave a performance which, in most cases, successfully overcame shortcomings in lighting and staging, sometimes triumphantly so.¹⁵⁶

The critic of the *Daily Dispatch* found *Lizzie Borden* to be the most satisfying item of the programme, stating quite emphatically that this was "undoubtedly the best thing in the programme".¹⁵⁷ The critic went on to praise Rosemary Harvey, Bernice Lloyd and Staff:

This brief dance-drama gave Rosemary Harvey, as the unhappy Lizzie, a wonderful role, and it was extremely well danced by her. Bernice Lloyd, as the cold spinster was good, and Frank Staff danced with the assurance and skill of the artist that he is.¹⁵⁸

The Legend of Frankie and Johnny, in the critic's opinion, emerged as the second most successful work because,

as a choreographer, Frank Staff seems happier with the programme-ballet and his dancers seemed more at home, too, in the works which gave an opportunity to act, as in "Frankie and Johnnie," [sic] which ...was cleverly and wittily done.¹⁵⁹

In *Toccata and Fugue*, Joan Rochelle and Staff were singled out for giving "strong performances" while *The Swan of Tuonela* was considered "little more than an extended pas seul en point for Bernice Lloyd...who took the opportunities offered by choreography and music

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ "They did well despite setback," *Daily Dispatch* (19 December 1958), 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

to give a most pleasing performance."¹⁶⁰ *Romantic Encounter* was judged the least satisfactory item on the programme since

the choreography tended to become repetitive and the dancing generally was uneven and rather untidy, with the exception of that of Victoria Carlson, whose lovely line and strong technique shone brightly.¹⁶¹

The Frank Staff Ballet's last performances for 1958 took place in Springs at the Municipal Theatre on Friday 26 December and two performances (matinée and evening) on Saturday 27 December.¹⁶²

The programme was exactly the same as for East London despite *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* inadvertently referring to *The Swan of Tuonela* as the *Serenade of Tuonela!*¹⁶³ Critical response to the ballets was favourable, except for *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny* which the critic found "rather flat...because there was no Cyd Charisse to dance it."¹⁶⁴ Interestingly, the critic remarked on Staff's obvious penchant for creating ballets in the modern genre:

Modern ballet, with its stark, graphic movements, its tendency to turn away from romanticism towards surrealism, impressionism or (modified) realism, is not everybody's piece of cake. Like all modern art forms its beauty appeals more to the intellect than to the visual senses and its difference from conventional ballet is as apparent as a comparison between a Raphael and a Picasso. With his slick choreography and fine team of dancers, Frank Staff...captured perfectly the essence of modern dancing and some of the items were thrilling in presentation.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² "Frank Staff Ballet here at Xmas," *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* (12 December 1958), 13.

¹⁶³ "New ballets will be seen in Springs," *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* (19 December 1958), 13.

¹⁶⁴ "Frank Staff brought fine modern ballet to Springs Theatre," *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* (2 January 1959), 12.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The critic was particularly impressed with Staff's sympathetic handling of the Bach score for *Toccata and Fugue*, which was referred to as a "stark, symbolic adaptation...beautifully danced by himself [Staff] and Joan Rochelle," and arranged as "a modern, strifetorn love scene."¹⁶⁶ The critic praised Staff further by saying that "turning cold Mr. Bach into a near-boiling highly dramatic ballet took imagination and artistic taste."¹⁶⁷ *The Swan of Tuonela* was considered "a tragic, mythical little sketch of love and death" in which Bernice Lloyd danced "superbly".¹⁶⁸

Agreeing with the audience's choice of *Lizzie Borden* as the most popular item on the programme, the critic wrote:

Here Mr. Staff showed his skill at dramatic choreography to the full, and with Rosemary Harvey dancing brilliantly the role of Lizzie to Gould's lush contemporary orchestrations, this was a fine note on which to end a delightful evening's entertainment.¹⁶⁹

The critic's final comment about Staff and his company was equally enthusiastic:

I, for one, hope that it is not long before Frank Staff brings his company to our theatre. His is a definite talent, worthy of the highest praise.¹⁷⁰

Staff's final contribution to ballet in 1958 was in the form of a written article in which he praised the remarkable standard of ballet teaching in South Africa, evidenced by the number of South Africans dancing in companies throughout Europe, North America and apparently South America as well. He referred to the older generation of teachers in particular and paid tribute to them accordingly. However, he warned that the younger generation of teachers had "yet to prove themselves"

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

because “the danger with them is their very youth and consequent inexperience.”¹⁷¹

Staff proceeded to question why, apart from the standard of teaching, South African dancers had been so successful abroad? He asked if talent was a contributory factor, and came to the conclusion that it was. Probing further for an explanation as to where this talent came from, he raised four possibilities, which included the climate, inspiration, tradition, and blood. He said the South African climate, which was conducive to “outdoor pursuits with a consequent aid to physique”,¹⁷² was certainly a factor whereas inspiration did not contribute towards talent, especially because the South African dancer, unlike the European student, was not exposed to seeing some of the world’s greatest ballet companies. Neither could esteddfoods be regarded as a source of inspiration because, in Staff’s words, they were “more of an outlet to the parents’ ambitions!”¹⁷³ Tradition, he felt, was not really a factor either because “we are not yet old enough as a country to have established our own purely national ballet” although “the time [for this] may not be far off.”¹⁷⁴ Blood, however, was considered a far stronger possibility. Here Staff referred to the diversity of the (white) South African population with its mixture of blood from England, France, Holland, Germany and other countries. He argued that this might have provided “some feeling for the tradition one cannot trace elsewhere.”¹⁷⁵ Although Staff did not commit himself as to where this talent came from, he did recognize its presence and acknowledged that it “exists and is enormously potent.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Frank Staff, “Ballet,” in *Who’s who in entertainment and sport in South Africa 1958-59*. Don Barrigo (ed.), (Johannesburg: 20th Century, 1958), 157.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

The second part of Staff's article concentrated on the emergence of ballet companies in South Africa with Marjorie Sturman's Festival Ballet listed first and credited as a company "with a fine repertoire of ballets, mainly the classics".¹⁷⁷ Staff conceded that the dearth of male dancers in this country was a major stumbling block which prevented regular ballet seasons and a sense of continuity. The second company he singled out was Dulcie Howes' University of Cape Town Ballet, which he claimed suffered from a lack of male dancers as well. By alluding to the repertoire of Howes' company, which was more or less drawn from the classics with a sprinkling of ballets from the Sadler's Wells Ballet such as Ashton's *Les Rendezvous* and de Valois' *The Haunted Ballroom*, Staff argued that these ballets, and especially the classics, all "demand the highest standard of male dancing possible and, what is more, lots of them."¹⁷⁸ Yet, in spite of these difficulties, he thought both Howes and Sturman had, "by superhuman effort and great integrity, kept their respective companies advancing in healthy fashion."¹⁷⁹ Next, Staff lists his own company. Referring to it as the South African Ballet,¹⁸⁰ he explained how they had a repertoire of about fifteen ballets with no classics as the problem of not having enough male dancers once again dictated the repertoire. However, he stated that the classics would be incorporated at a later stage although their absence had "not proved a disadvantage in our seasons and have served to attract a different audience to the usual one encountered."¹⁸¹ Rita Leibowitz's Durban Theatre Ballet was mentioned lastly, and in a brief account Staff recalled its recent first season comprising one classical ballet and three contemporary works. In his view, this had been "pioneer work of a high order and the result justified the immense amount of work by the Director [Leibowitz]."¹⁸² He also

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ This article was obviously written before the company became known as the Frank Staff Ballet.

¹⁸¹ Staff, *Who's who*, 157.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

pointed out that the Durban Theatre Ballet would soon amalgamate with his company although this never happened. Staff's concluding statement was positive and he declared that it was obvious

the art of ballet is in an extremely healthy state, and one can look forward into the future and see many bright and fine achievements by South Africans and South African companies, here and abroad.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER TEN

1959 began for the Frank Staff Ballet as 1958 had ended with a short company tour. Limited to the Gauteng province, the tour was of a whistle-stop nature and included only single performances (except for Springs) in Rustenburg on 25 April, Vereeniging on 2 May, Krugersdorp on 9 May, Potchefstroom on 16 May, Nigel on 23 May and Springs on 6 June. The ballets on offer comprised an almost set programme and included *Toccata and Fugue*, *Jamaican Rhumba*, *Romantic Encounter*, *The Legend of Frankie and Johnnie* and *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"*.¹ *The Swan of Tuonela* replaced *Jamaican Rhumba* in Vereeniging² and Krugersdorp,³ while *The Swan of Tuonela* was performed instead of *Romantic Encounter* in Potchefstroom.⁴ *Peter and the Wolf* was revived for the two Springs performances instead of *Romantic Encounter*, and marked the return to the ballet stage of Jacqueline St. Clere as "Peter".⁵

The absence of several dancers from the company's strength and a predictable acquisition of new members, including the welcome return of Adele Samuels, meant that Staff had to rearrange several of his casts. Victoria Carlson married Eugene Joubert in June 1959 but returned to the company during the course of the year. Not long thereafter she decided to relinquish her dancing career altogether in favour of teaching practical ballet for Ivy Conmee.⁶ Bernice Lloyd likewise opted for a career teaching practical ballet and Spanish dancing⁷ while Kendrew Lascelles left the company for musical

¹ Theatre programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, Town Hall, Rustenburg, performance 25 April 1959.

² Advertisement, *Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark News* (24 April 1959), 8.

³ Advertisement, *West Rand Times and Westrander* (1 May 1959), 4.

⁴ "Frankie and Johnnie coming to town," *Potchefstroom Herald* (14 May 1959), 3.

⁵ "Frank Staff changes programme -- Jacqueline St. Clere to dance," *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* (1 June 1959), 12.

⁶ Carlson, interview, 6 October 1992.

⁷ Bernice Lloyd, interview, 4 October 1992.

theatre.⁸ In *Toccata and Fugue*, the part of “the white angel” was danced by Dries Reyneke with Adele Samuels in Victoria Carlson’s stead as one of “the black angels”.⁹ An entirely new grouping of dancers made up the cast for *Romantic Encounter* with Rosalind Kaye as the “nymph”, Léon Pomeranetz as the “poet” and Adele Samuels as the “intruder”.¹⁰ In *The Legend of Frankie and Johnnie*, Rosemary Harvey performed “Nelly Bly” with Dries Reyneke as the drunk and the barman.¹¹ Cast changes were also made to *L’Atelier de Monsieur “X”* although Adele Samuels retained her role of “L’Étoile” with Staff dancing his original role of the ballet master. New company member Susan de Beer danced one of the “Corypheés” with Rosalind Kaye, Naomi Stamelman and Arlene Swift as the other “Corypheés”. Joan Rochelle and Rosemary Harvey were seen as “Les Méchantes”.¹²

The Rustenburg performance took place in the local Town Hall and was presented in association with the Rustenburg Music Society.¹³ The *Rustenburg Herald* publicized the event in a short article and claimed that Staff was “responsible for raising the standard of ballet in this country.”¹⁴ Preferential booking for the Music Society’s members opened on 17 April while the general public could reserve their seats from 21 April. The price of tickets was a mere ten shillings for adults and five shillings for scholars.¹⁵ The performance was not reviewed in the *Rustenburg Herald* -- nor in fact were there any critical reviews for the performances in Vereeniging, Krugersdorp or Potchefstroom. The *Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark News* however ran a single, brief

⁸ Lascelles, interview, 23 September 1992.

⁹ Theatre programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, performance 25 April 1959.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ “Ballet for Rustenburg,” *Rustenburg Herald* (17 April 1959), 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

article tracing Staff's career¹⁶ while the *Potchefstroom Herald* crisply outlined the content of Staff's ballets intended for Potchefstroom on 16 May.¹⁷ *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* made up for the dearth of publicity in the other centres with no less than three articles on Staff and his company, and one critical response to the Springs performance. The first, headed "Leading South African Ballet returning to Springs -- Frank Staff has international reputation", publicized one performance on 6 June and went on to describe Staff's career achievements.¹⁸ The second article, aptly titled "Frank Staff has colourful programme for Springs", listed the ballets Staff intended presenting with a brief commentary on each of the works.¹⁹ It was in the third bulletin entitled "Frank Staff changes programme -- Jacqueline St. Clere to dance" that the public was made aware of a programme change with Jacqueline St. Clere returning to the stage for *Peter and the Wolf*. It was also in this report that mention was made of two performances at the Springs Municipal Theatre on 6 June: one at 17h30; the other at 20h15.²⁰ When the first performances was eventually given after all the publicity bestowed on Staff, it was met with a scathing attack by *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser*. Individual ballets and dancers were not criticized although the critic asked whether it was possible

that a ballet troupe can, inside of six months, deteriorate from a finely rehearsed, accomplished group to a bunch of half-baked, amateurish dancers hardly good enough for a bronze at the local Eisteddfod? This question was answered for us by the Frank Staff Ballet Company at the Springs Municipal Theatre last Saturday night and I am afraid, the answer was yes. Here was a company with a national reputation. It had performed in Springs once before and with some success. And now it has come back to stun us -- not with its improvement, but its degeneration.²¹

¹⁶ "Master of ballet," *Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark News* (1 May 1959), 9.

¹⁷ *Potchefstroom Herald* (14 May 1959), 3.

¹⁸ "Leading South African Ballet returning to Springs -- Frank Staff has international reputation," *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* (1 May 1959), 12.

¹⁹ "Frank Staff has colourful programme for Springs," *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* (29 May 1959), 12.

²⁰ "Frank Staff changes programme -- Jacqueline St. Clere to dance," *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* (1 June 1959), 12.

It seemed everything went wrong at the performance, because

it wasn't only the dancing that was at fault. The whole performance was so badly produced many left before the final number. Lighting went wrong, backdrops came amiss, interludes became extended intervals during the removal of a chair or two and the sound -- for the music was all on tape -- was hardly discernible as ballet music, so scratched was the tape.²²

The critic's final comment not only revealed a decided dislike for the performance, but also a possible death knell for the company since "the whole evening was so uninspired and so uninspiring that I had better...refrain from mentioning any names."²³

In May 1959, Staff became involved with Anthony Farmer's musical comedy entitled *I Spy*. For whatever reason, Brian Brooke did not stage any musicals during 1959 so it seemed logical that Staff would accept an invitation to arrange all the dance sequences for *I Spy*. Moreover, Farmer's locally-written musical provided an important stopgap for Staff by giving him further work opportunities as well as additional latitude to explore the realms of musical theatre.

Scheduled for a run of exactly one month from 13 May to 13 June at the Library Theatre in Johannesburg, *I Spy* was co-written by Anthony Framer and Ken Hooper with music and lyrics by Ralph Trehwela. Miriam Jacobsohn was entrusted with designing the sets and costumes.²⁴ The action concerned a fictitious university called Swartwatersrand and the intrigue surrounding the discovery of a blond spy on its campus. Although *I Spy* was a parody on certain events at the University of the Witwatersrand, all the characters were ostensibly fictional, having "no reference to any person".²⁵ However, it was

²¹ "Uninspired performance by ballet company," *The Springs and Brakpan Advertiser* (12 June 1959), 4.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Theatre Programme: *I Spy*, Library Theatre, Johannesburg, season 13 May-13 June 1959.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

plainly obvious that allusions to invented people were really inspired by real-life individuals. For example, mention of a Special Branch official called Colonel Strangler was a direct reference to Colonel Spengler, then chief of the Johannesburg Special Branch. Reference to an imaginary Cabinet Minister named Dr. Theophile Dongenes was an obvious allusion to Dr. Theophile Ebenhaezer Dönges, who was then Minister of Finance and formerly Minister of the Interior from 1948-58.²⁶ Three potential blonde spies in the musical²⁷ recalled Priscilla Lefson, the real so-called former blonde spy at the University of the Witwatersrand.²⁸ Perhaps the most controversial figure in the musical was Ladislav Borgorska, a visiting Russian professor whose presence attracted a further element of suspicion. Apart from the spy theme -- enhanced by the students wearing red-coloured garments and calling one another 'comrade'²⁹ -- there was also Swartwatersrand's anticipated annual rugby match against Protea University (University of Pretoria?) and rehearsals for *Lysistrata*.³⁰

I Spy was structured in two acts and twelve scenes (six scenes in each act), with twenty-three songs that included a 'university song'.³¹ The casting of *I Spy* seems to have been the sole prerogative of Anthony Farmer with Staff playing no part whatsoever. Principal roles were taken by Hazel Brown as "Judy", Shelagh Holliday as "Dizzy", Bella Mariani as "Madge", Ralph Gruskin as "Freddie" and Ivor van Rensburg as "Alan".³² John Boulter was cast as "Professor Borgorska" while Lyn Hooker played "Judy" at some performances.³³

²⁶ "I Spy' is such fun, she says," *The Sunday Times* (17 May 1959), 15.

²⁷ Hazel Brown as "Judy" emerged as the actual spy.

"Blonde 'spy'," *The Star* (22 April 1959), 3.

²⁸ *The Sunday Times* (17 May 1959), 15.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Lewis Sowden, "Boisterous spy without malice," *Rand Daily Mail* (15 May 1959) 6.

³¹ Theatre Programme: *I Spy*, 13 May-13 June 1959.

³² *Ibid.*

Staff's responsibility, however, was to arrange the choreography for a Russian-inspired scene in the first act, as well as a Rugby match³⁴ and "Nightmare Ballet" in the second.³⁵ He probably even organized the *Lysistrata* rehearsal for a scene entitled "The stage of the Great Hall" in the second act and for "The Rag Ball" in the musical's final scene. It seems quite plausible that he also had a hand in the placing of the actors on stage, as well as devising suitable movements for those songs that did not require actual dancing. But his duties did not extend to the direction of the production or even co-directing. For this reason, only the critics' commentary regarding Staff's choreography is warranted.

Lewis Sowden wrote in the *Rand Daily Mail* that "the Rugby match produced two of the funniest scenes of the evening" while the *Lysistrata* scene (if Staff was responsible for its choreography) was "the most muddled one".³⁶ Oliver Walker, by implication, agreed in *The Star* that the Rugby scene was convincing, but bemoaned the fact that

more imagination (and satire) of the kind shown by choreographer Frank Staff in the slow-motion Rugby scene would have given the second act the lift it badly needed after a nosily amusing opening.³⁷

Die Vaderland's critic felt the most noteworthy dance scenes were "the 'Russian' scene early in the first act while the highlight in the second act was the slow moving 'Rugby-ballet'".³⁸ Martin Squire of *The Sunday Times* thought "the snappiest wheeze was the slow-motion

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Unfortunately, it is not known whether or not Staff's choreography for the rugby match was influenced by Susan Salaman's 'Le Rugby' from her *Sporting Sketches* of 1930. Staff knew 'Le Rugby', having danced in the piece after the ballet was revived by Ballet Rambert during the 1930's.

³⁵ Lewis Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (15 May 1959), 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Oliver Walker, "Rugbyskit in slow-motion is a riot," *The Star* (14 May 1959), 13.

³⁸ "Dun bedekte nyd in 'Blyspel' laat slegte smaak na" [Thinly concealed antipathy in comedy leaves bad taste,] *Die Vaderland* (14 May 1959), 13.

Rugby scrimmage brilliantly devised by choreographer Frank Staff' and the "Nightmare Ballet".³⁹ The musical was not reviewed in *Die Transvaler* or by the critic of the *Sunday Express*.

The Frank Staff Ballet Company's first Johannesburg season during 1959 took place on 24, 27 and 28 October at the Zion Centre.⁴⁰ Given under the patronage of the Governor-General, the performances were in aid of the National War Memorial Health Foundation (W.O.338) and the Southern African Association of Youth Clubs (W.O.141).⁴¹ The programme offered was predictable, and with one minor exception it consisted of ballets taken from the touring programmes. The exception was a new addition to the company's repertoire, although not a new ballet for Staff. This was *Ballade*, a work originally made in 1952 for the New-Ballet Company in London. On view for the first time in Johannesburg were *Lizzie Borden* and *The Swan of Tuonela* while more familiar works to Johannesburg comprised *Peter and the Wolf* and *The Legend of Frankie and Johnny*, with the latter's title shortened this time to *Frankie and Johnny* and "Johnnie" spelt as "Johnny".⁴² *Frankie and Johnny* had of course been seen the previous year in Cecil Wightman's production of *Snoektown Calling* while *Peter and the Wolf* had always been a firm favourite with the Johannesburg public since 1955.

Dora Sowden in the *Rand Daily Mail* publicized the event with an article entitled "Frank Staff creates new ballets".⁴³ Claiming that "a Frank Staff season is a major event in itself",⁴⁴ Sowden cited a London

³⁹ Martin Squire, "The new musical 'I Spy' is this Ralph's show," *The Sunday Times* (17 May 1959), 16.

⁴⁰ Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, Zion Centre, Johannesburg, performances 24, 27 & 28 October 1959.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Dora Sowden, "Frank Staff creates new ballets," *Rand Daily Mail* (8 October 1959), 6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

journal⁴⁵ in which Staff was hailed for having “a wonderful richness of pure invention, which in British ballet has only been equalled by Ashton and MacMillan.”⁴⁶ She went on to bemoan the fact that his talent was not fully appreciated in South Africa simply because,

in this country, Staff has had the treatment usually meted out to anyone who settles here. When he came, he was given a guest reception -- enthusiastic interest, gratifying support. Now, after about seven years, he has become [another] “local boy”. The public has to be reminded that this is not just another local amateur dancer-choreographer.⁴⁷

An interesting -- if not exactly unusual --phenomenon was the acquisition of four new dancers and the return of Victoria Carlson. Carlson danced in all the ballets except for *The Swan of Tuonela* while Dries Reyneke danced in everything. André Revna made a return in *Peter and the Wolf*. The new dancers were Brian Bertscher, Shirley Bestbier, Mary Merredew and John Moore.⁴⁸ New dancers meant new casts although all were appearing in *Ballade* for the first time. Subtitled “an abstract ballet in the Romantic style”,⁴⁹ *Ballade* was really a vehicle for Dries Reyneke and the female members of the company. Unlike the New-Ballet Company’s production with its five ladies in the cast, this version boasted ten. Two further differences were that only one man featured in this production (as opposed to two in the 1952 version), and this *Ballade* had a new set and new costumes. The designs themselves were split between Saxon Lucas (set) and Jacqueline St. Clere (costumes), which may have even been based on Hugh Stevenson’s original 1952 designs. As another ‘white ballet’, *Ballade* was given a varied reception by the critics. The *Rand Daily Mail* declared that with this ballet Staff had proved himself “as skilful as anybody anywhere.”⁵⁰ Oliver Walker, however, wrote in *The Star*

⁴⁵ Sowden, unfortunately, failed to disclose the title of the article or give the name of the publication.

⁴⁶ Dora Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (8 October 1959), 6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, 24, 27 & 28 October 1959.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

that *Ballade* was “somewhat insipid” notwithstanding that it gave “the corps de ballet excellent opportunities to make pretty pictures in the conventional modes of classic-romantic ballet.”⁵¹ Walker’s only real objection related to the musical prologue, which he found “overlong, and should be cut down.”⁵² J. van der Merwe in *Die Transvaler* thought the work was too demanding technically for soloists Rosalind Kaye and Dries Reyneke.⁵³ Mary Kenwood, the Johannesburg correspondent of *Ballet Today*, thought quite the opposite to J. van der Merwe about Rosalind Kaye and Dries Reyneke’s performance, although her rather illustrative commentary tended to concentrate more on the costume designs than Staff’s choreography. She nevertheless offered a concise opinion of how *Ballade*,

which opened the programme, was an abstract ballet in the romantic style. The enchanting Faure [*sic*] music and sylvan setting by Saxon Lucas immediately set the mood, and the dancing was of a consistently high standard. Outstanding was the delightful *pas de deux* danced by Rosalind Kaye and Dries Reyneke. Cleverly, Jacqueline St. Clere had costumed Rosalind Kaye in all-over green tights, and this, apart from being an attractive contrast with the classical long tutus of the other dancers, served to enhance her lovely line.⁵⁴

The second item on offer was *Frankie and Johnny* with two significant cast changes: Dries Reyneke as “a barman” and John Moore as “a drunk”.⁵⁵ Victoria Carlson, Joan Rochelle and Staff repeated their roles of “Nelly Bly”, “Frankie” and “Johnny” respectively.⁵⁶ The *Rand Daily Mail* approved the way in which Staff told “a murder story in a few minutes with a wealth of detail that one could see again and

⁵⁰ Dora Sowden, “First rate [*sic*] ballet,” *Rand Daily Mail* (26 October 1959), 6.

⁵¹ Oliver Walker, “Frank Staff’s exciting new ballets,” *The Star* (26 October 1959), 13.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ J. van der Merwe, “Balletgroep open Wroegend” [Ballet company indulges in tragedy,] *Die Transvaler* (26 October 1959), 2.

⁵⁴ Mary Kenwood, “Johannesburg,” *Ballet Today*, 12, 10 (December 1959): 21.

⁵⁵ Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, 24, 27 & 28 October 1959.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

again.”⁵⁷ Linking Staff’s portrayal of “Johnny” with the “Father” in *Lizzie Borden* and the “Hunter” in *Peter and the Wolf*, Oliver Walker came to the conclusion that Staff always “brought an immediate sense of drama and polished movement into whatever he did.”⁵⁸ J. van der Merwe thought the work was one of Staff’s “gems” and said its compact structure made the length of the ballet effective and well within the demands of its dancers.⁵⁹ Joan Rochelle and Victoria Carlson were lauded for giving “masterful interpretations in their roles of the two street mistresses.”⁶⁰ Equally impressed was the critic of *Die Vaderland* who singled out Rochelle and Staff for “excellent dramatic interpretations”.⁶¹ Mary Kenwood confirmed that the work was a worthy addition to the repertoire and claimed that

this was modern ballet at its best, and included a stunning *pas de deux* which rivalled the famous [bedroom] one of Roland Petit and Renée Jeanmaire in *Carmen*. Brief though it is, this ballet is a most effective and a vital addition to the Company’s repertoire.⁶²

The Swan of Tuonela was the third item on the programme with Rosalind Kaye and Dries Reyneke replacing Bernice Lloyd and Kendrew Lascelles.⁶³ The *Rand Daily Mail* critic equated the work with *The Dying Swan* by stating that in *The Swan of Tuonela* Staff had created a *prima ballerina* role comparable to that of the Fokine classic.⁶⁴ *Die Transvaler* regretted to say that in this ballet Dries Reyneke was beyond “the choreographic demands of Frank Staff.”⁶⁵

⁵⁷ Dora Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (26 October 1959), 6.

⁵⁸ Oliver Walker, *The Star* (26 October 1959), 13.

⁵⁹ van der Merwe, *Die Transvaler* (26 October 1959), 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ “Frank Staff se balletgroep lewer puik uitvoering” [Frank Staff’s ballet company delivers first-rate performance,] *Die Vaderland* (27 October 1959), 11.

⁶² Kenwood, *Ballet Today* (December 1959): 21.

⁶³ Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, 24, 27 and 28 October 1959.

⁶⁴ Dora Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (26 October 1959), 6.

⁶⁵ van der Merwe, *Die Transvaler* (26 October 1959), 2.

However, the critic failed to explain what the “choreographic demands” were and why Dries Reyneke was beyond them. Mary Kenwood thought the ballet was impressive and devoted most of her comments to Rosalind Kaye’s performance, which she said

made of Frank Staff’s imaginative choreography a thing of real beauty. She [Rosalind Kaye] has exceptionally fine arms (almost Russian in their flexibility) and uses them with wonderful effect and fluidity -- so much so that one wonders if Frank Staff created this role particularly with her in mind.⁶⁶

The penultimate ballet on the programme was *Lizzie Borden*, to which Staff effected further cast changes. With himself, Joan Rochelle and Rosemary Harvey retaining their original roles, he chose Arlene Swift in Bernice Lloyd’s stead as “the spinster” and Dries Reyneke in the roles originally assigned to Kendrew Lascelles.⁶⁷ Brian Bertscher, who danced one of “the neighbours”, recalled performing a character solo in which he wore brightly-coloured trousers. He remarked how the dance included many *pirouettes* and several moments where he would stand on one leg and lean over it towards the free leg with the foot of the latter leg flexed.⁶⁸ More amusingly, he remembered how at the final performance he “had a complete blank and forgot the dance completely -- much to Frank’s annoyance -- but it was a good lesson as I always made sure that in future I would go over the steps before performing them on stage.”⁶⁹ The other “neighbours” in this production were Victoria Carlson, Susan de Beer, Rosalind Kaye, Mary Merredew, André Revna and Naomi Stamelman.⁷⁰

Bertscher commented further that his one memory of *Lizzie Borden* was how, “at one point in the ballet, she [Rosemary Harvey] did a long run in a circle with her head held up to the ‘sky’, which I always found

⁶⁶ Kenwood, *Ballet Today* (December 1959): 21.

⁶⁷ Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, 24, 27 and 28 October 1959.

⁶⁸ Letter to author dated 12 March 1997 from Brian Bertscher, former dancer, Frank Staff Ballet Company.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, 24, 27 and 28 October 1959.

dramatic and striking and will never forget.”⁷¹ It may have been this aspect of the ballet that Mary Kenwood was referring to when she wrote of how it became “a moving portrayal of the dementia which preceded the murders....”⁷² Kenwood had certain reservations about the ballet, and “in spite of Rosemary Harvey’s superb study of *Lizzie*...this ballet somehow did not quite come off.”⁷³ Without elaborating any further, she still thought the story unfolded in a “dramatic and vivid style” with “some wonderful moments”.⁷⁴ Kenwood went on to praise Staff and Joan Rochelle for a “lyrically tender *pas de deux* between Lizzie’s [real] mother and father...before the mother’s death set off the chain of events culminating in the murders.”⁷⁵ She also commended Dries Reyneke for his excellent reading of the “lecherous Minister.”⁷⁶ Oliver Walker likewise referred to Dries Reyneke’s Minister as “lecherous” and said that Reyneke was a valuable asset to the company and, indeed, “a most able associate.”⁷⁷ Walker was particularly impressed with Joan Rochelle’s “sensuous abandon and fragile disapproval” and lauded the ballet for depicting “a first-rate example of Mr. Staff’s vivid choreographic sense, and his power of telling a tale in movement that highlights character and makes speech superfluous.”⁷⁸ The *Rand Daily Mail* critic was not as impressed as Walker, but admitted that *Lizzie Borden* had “stark and vivid moments.”⁷⁹ *Die Vaderland* and *Die Transvaler* both singled out Rosemary Harvey for her reading of the title role.⁸⁰

⁷¹ Bertscher, letter, 12 March 1997.

⁷² Kenwood, *Ballet Today* (December 1959): 21.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Walker, *The Star* (26 October 1959), 13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Dora Sowden, *Rand Daily Mail* (26 October 1959), 6.

⁸⁰ *Die Vaderland* (27 October 1959), 11.
van der Merwe, *Die Transvaler* (26 October 1959), 2.

J. van der Merwe of *Die Transvaler* also thought Dries Reyneke made an “imposing Evangelist” and called the ballet “a hit”!⁸¹

Peter and the Wolf, as always, was kept for last, and here Staff made some necessary cast changes and gave the “Hunter” and his three “Huntresses” distinct names.⁸² In adjusting his cast, Staff chose Rosalind Kaye as “The Bird”, Arlene Swift as “The Duck”, André Revna as “The Grandfather” and Dries Reyneke as “The Wolf”.⁸³ Jacqueline St. Clere, Victoria Carlson and Staff retained their roles of “Peter”, “The Cat” and “A Hunter” respectively while Rosemary Harvey, Joan Rochelle and Naomi Stamelman were the three “Huntresses”.⁸⁴ The “Hunter” was named “Rothbart”, presumably because he had a red beard and was a clear and rather playful reference to “von Rothbart”, the evil magician in *Swan Lake*. The “Huntresses” were called “Fanny” (Joan Rochelle), “Daisy” (Rosemary Harvey) and “Violet” (Naomi Stamelman) without there being any particular reason for giving them those specific names other than for their humour.⁸⁵

All the critics agreed that *Peter and the Wolf* had retained its sparkling quality. Jacqueline St. Clere, in particular, was mentioned in *Die Transvaler*, *Die Vaderland* and *Ballet Today* for her lively portrayal of “Peter”.⁸⁶ Oliver Walker praised Staff’s “Hunter”⁸⁷ while Mary Kenwood thought Arlene Swift’s “Duck” was “especially good.”⁸⁸

⁸¹ van der Merwe, *Die Transvaler* (26 October 1959), 2.

⁸² The performances of *Peter and the Wolf* in October 1959 marked the first time the “Huntresses” were referred to in the feminine gender in any one of Staff’s many productions for his own company.

⁸³ Theatre Programme: *Frank Staff Ballet Company*, 24, 27 and 28 October 1959.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Die Vaderland*, (27 October 1959), 11.
Kenwood, *Ballet Today* (December 1959): 21.
van der Merwe, *Die Transvaler* (26 October 1959), 2.

⁸⁷ Walker, *The Star* (26 October 1959), 13.

⁸⁸ Kenwood, *Ballet Today* (December 1959): 21.

The performances at the Zion Centre were highly successful with many ballet-lovers having to be turned away. This led Staff to schedule three additional performances at the Brooke Theatre, one on 12 November and two on 14 November.⁸⁹ Despite adequate press advertising, the public stayed away. On the day before the first performance, Staff asked: "What's happened. I find there are only 17 bookings at the Brooke for Thursday night. Where are all the people who begged us to repeat the show?"⁹⁰ The explanation for this seems to have been answered in December of that year by Mary Kenwood who echoed earlier sentiments expressed by Dora Sowden in October 1959. Kenwood wrote:

It is a strange facet of the South African character that people in this country either cannot, or will not, grant recognition to South African artists living here. Only when a South African has made good and settled in Europe will his countrymen grant him the honour that is his due. This is a pity, for Frank Staff and his company are something of which every South African should be proud, and Frank Staff's personal status as a choreographer is the equivalent of the best in the world today.⁹¹

Kenwood also claimed that this season proved Staff's choreographic gifts to be at "the peak of their strength."⁹² Ironically, the company closed shortly thereafter without fanfare or farewells, and only remained alive in the rather fractured memories of the Frank Staff dancers. The disintegration of the company spelt the death of most of Frank Staff's ballets from the fifties, added to which was the complete obliteration of all his ballets from the forties except for *Peter and the Wolf* and the 1959 version of *Czernyana*. In 1966, Staff made his *Czernyana 111* for PACT Ballet, but that too has been lost apart from a few filmed fragments.⁹³

⁸⁹ Oliver Walker, "Ballet mystery," *The Star* (11 November 1959), 13.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Kenwood, *Ballet Today* (December 1959): 21.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ None of Staff's ballets from the sixties were notated or filmed (except for *Raka* and extracts of *Czernyana 111*), so there is no possible way of reconstructing them authentically.

Staff's final choreographic undertaking for 1959 was the Herbert and Eleanor Farjeon's version of *The Glass Slipper*, which was based on the well-known story of Cinderella. *The Glass Slipper* was not new to Staff as he had danced in the London production during December 1944 when he performed both the "Masque" and the "Harlequinade" choreographed by Andrée Howard. In 1959, however, Staff complemented his dancing skills with choreographic ones when he arranged all the dancing sequences for the Johannesburg production, and while it is not known whether he relied on Andrée Howard's choreographic concept or not, it is clear that his task was limited to coordinating the dances only. Consequently, he was not involved with the casting or direction of this production.

Three bodies combined to produce *The Glass Slipper*, namely the Johannesburg Repertory Players, the Children's Theatre and the National Theatre Organization (N.T.O.)⁹⁴ Hugh Goldie, who was chosen from the Johannesburg Repertory Theatre to direct the production, said he doubted if

any of the three managements concerned in this collaboration would have been able to tackle a production of this magnitude and complexity alone. As it is, by pooling our brains, finances and technical resources, we are able to attempt a Christmas production worthy of the occasion and one which we believe the Johannesburg theatre-going public will be quick to appreciate.⁹⁵

Set to music by Clifton Parker of the Old Vic company,⁹⁶ the musical director of the Johannesburg production was Joyce Goldie with a small orchestra led by Walter Moni.⁹⁷ Although all the musical items were fairly uncomplicated, there was

⁹⁴ "Three Christmas groups get Christmas spirit," *Rand Daily Mail* (20 November 1959), 10.

⁹⁵ Theatre Programme: *The Glass Slipper*, Reps. Theatre, Johannesburg, season 9 December 1959-- 9 January 1960.

⁹⁶ *Rand Daily Mail* (20 November 1959), 10.

⁹⁷ Theatre Programme: *The Glass Slipper*, 9 December 1959-- 9 January 1960.

a nip of modernity about each that twists it out of the ordinary. Clifton Parker is a past master in the art of employing the unusual -- instead of the obvious -- device to bring this fairy-like quality to his work.⁹⁸

Bruce Anderson, who featured predominantly in the "Harlequinade" as well as singing three parts and playing the part of "The Herald", was appointed chorus master while Frank Graves and his wife Doreen⁹⁹ of the National Theatre Organization designed the sets and costumes respectively.¹⁰⁰ The sheer size of the production with its large cast of twenty-two players required the services of a production manager, a stage manager and an assistant stage manager. Victor Melleney of the National Theatre Organization was appointed as production manager with Frank Rembach as stage manager and John Bier as assistant stage manager.¹⁰¹ Staff was cast as the "Zany" and danced the part of "Harlequin" in the "Harlequinade" while Rosalind Kaye, the only Staff dancer in this production, performed three parts: "Columbine" in the "Harlequinade"; "Fire"; and "Solo Dancer".¹⁰² The "Harlequinade" took place in "The Throne Room" during the last act (Act 111 Scene 111) and formed part of the general entertainment.¹⁰³ It involved six participants with Staff and Rosalind Kaye joined by Bella Mariani, Terry Shimmin and Anne Ziegler as "The Three Graces".¹⁰⁴ Bruce Anderson trebled as "The Doctor"; "The Merchant"; and "The Captain".¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ "Glass Slipper, Mame and Psychiatrist next week," *The Pretoria News* (16 January 1960), 2.

¹⁰⁰ Theatre Programme: *The Glass Slipper*, 9 December 1959-- 9 January 1960.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Others who performed principal roles included Yvonne Theron as "Cinderella", Hilda Kriseman and Olive King as "Araminta" and "Arethusa (Cinderella's two ugly stepsisters), Anne Ziegler as the "Fairy Godmother", David Beattie as Cinderella's "Stepmother" and John Hayter as "The Prince".

Theatre Programme: *The Glass Slipper*, 9 December 1959 -- 9 January 1960.

¹⁰³ Theatre Programme: *The Glass Slipper*, 9 December 1959 -- 9 January 1960.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*



Plate 37: The “Harlequinade” with Rosalind Kaye as “Columbine”, Bruce Anderson as “The Captain” and Frank Staff, kneeling, as “Harlequin”.¹⁰⁶

The Glass Slipper played at the Reps. Theatre over a four-week period from 9 December 1959 to 9 January 1960¹⁰⁷ before transferring to the Aula Theatre in Pretoria for a total of eight performances with two performances daily¹⁰⁸ from 20 to 23 January 1960.¹⁰⁹ Staff’s dancing as well as his arrangement of the dancing sequences was favourably received by the press although Oliver Walker felt that because this was an extremely long show, “Frank Staff’s solo Harlequin dance at the end was ill-timed for so late an hour.”¹¹⁰ *Die Vaderland* admired Staff’s “outstanding” choreographic devise where the dancers hid Cinderella from the audience’s view as she made a quick costume change.¹¹¹ The critic applauded most of Staff’s choreography and

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Photograph, as reproduced in *The Pretoria News* (15 January 1960), 4.

¹⁰⁷ Advertisement, *The Star* (30 November 1959), 16.

¹⁰⁸ Advertisement, *The Pretoria News* (20 January 1960), 8.

¹⁰⁹ Advertisement, *The Pretoria News* (4 January 1960), 6.

¹¹⁰ Oliver Walker, “Gremlins join in Cinderella tale,” *The Star* (10 December 1959), 13.

Rosalind Kaye's "enchanted" performance.¹¹² Leon Bennett of *The Sunday Times* was likewise enthusiastic and stated that "Frank Staff's choreography was supreme. His all-too-infrequent appearances are cherished as gems of the theatre."¹¹³ Finally, the critic of *The Pretoria News*, who was in fact the last to review the work, thought "the final Harlequinade ballet, arranged by Frank Staff who also danced the leading role of Harlequin, was clever -- and a delightful ending to the pantomime."¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ "Waardige opvoering sluit N.T.O. se jaar van toneel af" [Worthy performance closes N.T.O.'s year of theatre,] *Die Vaderland* (11 December 1959), 11.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Leon Bennett, "The enchantment of 'The Glass Slipper'," *The Sunday Times* (13 December 1959), 16.

¹¹⁴ "'The Glass Slipper' lavish, gay spectacle," *The Pretoria News* (21 January 1960), 4.

CONCLUSION

The demise of the Frank Staff Ballet in 1959 did not spell the end of Staff's career. On the contrary, he continued to choreograph during the 1960's and in fact right up until his death in 1971. And in some instances he even danced as well. However, 1959 marked an end to an important phase of his career and the start to a new one. But as artistic director and sole choreographer of the South African Ballet and later the Frank Staff Ballet, he had complete latitude in the decision-making process regarding his choice of subject matter and selection of music, as well as the unfettered use of his own hand-picked dancers. It followed quite logically therefore that the 1950's were probably the most creative years of his career and certainly the most challenging, exciting and fulfilling time of his artistic life. As a consummate performer and master choreographer his remarkable vision for South African ballet, coupled with a sense of endeavour and achievement, was matched by an equally distinguished flair for imaginative lighting. His choreographic range during the 1950's was impressive and at its most varied with subjects ranging from classical mythology to Spanish-inspired motifs, lithographs to paintings, ballads to legends, and other non-fictional sources many of which Staff had contrived himself. His ballets of a humorous and often satirical nature were energetic and innovative while those reflecting a tender or more serious and dramatic side were equally powerful and arresting. Yet, Staff's choreographic ideas during the 1960's reflected those of the 1950's with very little new material emerging except for his initial foray into Afro-centric themes.

A survey of Staff's new or so-called original ballets from the 1960's reveal that many were in fact tantamount to reworked ideas of earlier concepts. *Comment?* and *Kaleidoscope*, which he made for PACOFS Ballet in 1970, were in the same mould as their *Czernyana* counterpart while *The Séance*, also for PACOFS Ballet in 1970, mirrored much of the same idea and gloomy atmosphere found in *Cirque de la Mort*, *Lizzie Borden* and *Transfigured Night* as well as some of his earlier works such as *Un Songe* of 1945 and *Fanciulla delle Rose* of 1948. It also became apparent that many of Staff's ballets from the sixties were

simple repeats of earlier works he had created for other companies. *Peter and the Wolf*, *Symphony of Sylphs* and *Transfigured Night*, for example, were all added to the repertoire of CAPAB Ballet while *Czernyana* (as *Czernyana 111*), *Peter and the Wolf*, *Symphony of Sylphs* and *Transfigured Night* were absorbed into the repertoire of PACT Ballet. Likewise, *Apollo '57* (as *Apollo '65*) and *Peter and the Wolf* were both incorporated into Ballet Natal's repertoire while *Peter and the Wolf* and *L'Atelier de Monsieur "X"* became part of the PACOFS Ballet repertoire.

Perhaps one of the main reasons why Staff's choreographic dexterity was prevented from achieving full maturity during the 1960's was because of interference from colleague and the bureaucratic red tape of the performing arts councils of South Africa. Two instances where this occurred were with his ballets *Episodes* and *Concerto*. In the former, Staff was originally going to call his ballet *Mozartiana*, but when it was discovered George Balanchine had named one of his works *Mozartiana*, Staff was made to change the name of his ballet to *Episodes*. As it turned out, this was ironic because Balanchine, in conjunction with Martha Graham, had already created a work called *Episodes* in 1959. In the case of *Concerto*, which Staff made for PACT Ballet in 1968, he was literally told to create a work using a specific dancer with whom he had no particular affinity. And yet, surprisingly enough, he still managed to produce a highly original product that was both entertaining and enterprising. Although different, the case of *Raka* (1967) for PACT Ballet, which Staff eventually moulded out of more general ethnic cultures rather than African cultures only, was ultimately given to him to create after two other potential choreographers, namely Roland Petit and David Poole, had first declined the offer.¹ Once again, however, Staff succeeded in presenting a dance-drama of unprecedented proportions that had never been seen before on a South African ballet stage.

Staff's Afro-centric works were generally considered quite advanced for their time, especially as they reflected Afro-centric themes rather

¹ Faith de Villiers, interview with author, 22 October 1992, Johannesburg, tape recording.

than being a mere duplication or triplication of (Staff's) earlier ideas. But in the case of his Afro-centric works, namely *Raka*, *Mantis Moon* and *The Rain Queen*, these never came about as a result of Staff having suggested them in the first place. Instead, and with the exception of *Raka*, which Staff acquired by default, they had been recommended to him. The composer Hans Maske, for instance, suggested *Mantis Moon*, while designer Raimond Schoop recommended *The Rain Queen*.² Needless to say, Staff accepted both projects willingly and approached his respective subjects enthusiastically. Of course there's no way of telling what might have transpired had Staff lived beyond 1971. And yet, the likelihood of him acquiring his own African-inspired subject matter seemed somewhat remote because he had accepted a post with a ballet company in Augsburg, Germany.³ He and Veronica Paeper were already making plans to leave South Africa when fate determined otherwise.⁴

Staff's Afro-centric works began with *Raka*, which had been written by the South African poet N.P. van Wyk Louw and concerned the destruction of a primitive – and not necessarily African -- village by an evil force. *Raka* was followed by *Mantis Moon* (for PACOFS Ballet) and was inspired by Bushmen paintings Staff had encountered in Namibia. The action for this work was based on Bushmen legend and superstition where the transmutability of humans, animals and heavenly bodies all formed part of Bushmen belief. The mysteries of death and re-birth were also canvassed in the piece, as was the concept of the mantis as god.⁵ Unlike *Raka*, *Mantis Moon* was deeply rooted in African soil, but in much the same vein as *Raka*, it was not a political work although somewhat revolutionary for its time.

² Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Mantis Moon* was first performed at the Bloemfontein Civic Theatre on 23 April 1970 to a specially commissioned score from Hans Maske.

"Advertisement" *The Friend*, (3 April 1970), p.8

Early in 1971, Staff decided to probe African-based cultures further by developing Raimond Schoop's suggestion of the Rain Queen whose incantations supposedly guaranteed rain. Intended for the PACOFS company, this was only possible because of Staff's status with PACOFS Ballet where, as its artistic director, he was given almost unrestricted freedom to explore whatever themes, concepts or ideas he believed suitable for the medium of dance. Unlike *Raka* and *Mantis Moon*, *The Rain Queen* was intended as a three-act ballet in which the action would concentrate on a specific African tribe located within a particular South African region. The tribe was the Balobedu people who came to South Africa more than 250 years ago. They were led by their Queen, Modjadji, who was in fact the Rain Queen.⁶ The Balobedu inhabited the far northern part of the Northern Province (formerly the Northern Transvaal).⁷ Sadly, however, the timing for this came too late as Staff was seriously ill with cancer. The work was never completed, which evidently makes it impossible to tell how *The Rain Queen* might have looked in Staff's version.⁸ Consequently, any further comparisons with either *Mantis Moon* or *Raka* would be mere speculation. Ironically, however, it was at a time when Staff's

⁶ "South African dancers shine," *The Star*, (6 October 1970), p.21

⁷ Veronica Paeper recalls how she and Staff travelled beyond Pietersburg and beyond Tzaneen in the far northern Transvaal until they finally reached their destination and the place where the Rain Queen lived. But it was raining and the Rain Queen refused to see them. They eventually did get to meet her although Paeper doubts whether it was the actual Rain Queen they met because when they were ushered "into this huge palace, which was really a kraal consisting of a number of huts, nobody knew exactly which hut the rain queen inhabited or whether she was even there." Paeper remembers how "we had to take our shoes off because the ground was supposed to be holy. A leopard skin was placed on the floor; the elders of the tribe came in and sat down; and the Rain Queen, or who we thought was the Rain Queen, appeared. Later we learnt that one doesn't actually meet the Rain Queen but rather an impersonator or her double." Paeper explained how everyone had to be seated when the Rain Queen arrived because "no one was allowed to tower over her as this would be regarded as disrespectful. Then she sat down and our guide/interpreter, an Oxford-accented black gentleman who didn't quite seem to fit in but who was apparently one of her consorts, proceeded to ask her questions on our behalf." It transpired that the Rain Queen's function was to induce rain, and the people in fact believed she could achieve this by invoking the gods in a sacred ceremony on the mountain. It was a ceremony nobody was ever allowed to witness, and those who did were punished by death.

Paeper, interview, 20 August 1992.

⁸ In 1973, David Poole re-choreographed *The Rain Queen* as a tribute to Staff, which was presented by CAPAB Ballet.

creative genius seemed to rival that of the 1950's. But as Staff grew weaker his creative powers disintegrated. He was admitted to Bloemfontein's National Hospital on 23 April for tests but was discharged.⁹ Then his condition deteriorated. He complained of a stomach ailment and experienced difficulty with swallowing, which led to his readmission to the National Hospital on 3 May where he was given several blood transfusions.¹⁰ The doctors were keen to perform surgery on Staff but he was too weak to undergo an operation, and he remained in hospital until such time as his condition improved. On 7 May, Staff underwent stomach surgery that lasted six hours.¹¹ *Die Volksblad* described his condition as "fair".¹² However, it was anything but fair and Staff died on 10 May 1971 without regaining consciousness.¹³ He was only fifty-two, and died five weeks short of his fifty-third birthday. The district registrar's report confirmed the cause of death as being "carcinoma of stomach with spread to acsophagus [*sic*]" while the immediate cause was attributed to "post operative bronchopneumonia and debility."¹⁴ The death certificate revealed that Staff's condition had been present since June 1970.¹⁵

Frank Staff was cremated in Bloemfontein on 12 May 1971 after a service at the Anglican Cathedral of St. Andrew and St. Michael.¹⁶

⁹ "Death of ballet choreographer Frank Staff," *The Argus*, (10 May 1971), p. 2

¹⁰ "Opera to take place of 'Rain Queen'," *The Friend*, (4 May 1971), p.4

¹¹ "Balletmeester skielik dood" [Ballet master dies suddenly,] *Die Transvaler*, (11 May 1971), p.6

¹² "Balletman," *Die Volksblad*, (8 May 1971), p.3

¹³ *Frank Staff abridged death certificate -- A183625*, Regional Representative, Department of the Interior, Bloemfontein, 13 May 1971

"Frank Staff ná operasie dood" [Frank Staff dies after operation,] *Die Volksblad*, (10 May 1971), p.1

"Death of ballet choreographer Frank Staff," *The Argus*, (10 May 1971), p. 2

"Frank Staff, the great dancer, is dead," *Rand Daily Mail*, (11 May 1971), p.2

"Staff created ballet history," *The Friend*, (11 May 1971), p.4

¹⁴ *Frank Staff abridged death certificate -- A183625*, Regional Representative, Department of the Interior, Bloemfontein, 13 May 1971

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

The director of PACOFS, Mr. Schalk Theron, paid tribute to Staff in *The Friend* when he said

it was indeed a privilege to have had Mr Staff as a choreographer for three years. Of all the choreographers, he was the most suited to lead a small group like the Pacofs company and under his direction many ballets with a South African background were created. He was a man endowed with outstanding talents.¹⁷

Dulcie Howes, the doyenne of the U.C.T. School of Ballet and CAPAB Ballet, was another who paid tribute to Staff in an article published in the *Cape Times* where she wrote how

the untimely death of Frank Staff comes as a great shock and it is a tragic loss to the ballet world, both dancers and audiences, here and oversea. His work was distinguished by an inherent sense of what was required theatrically from the ballet. He had a rare wit, a delicious sense of satire and a deep sense of musicality. His untimely death robs the world of a great choreographer.¹⁸

Perhaps the most illustrious of all paying tribute to Staff was Dame Margot Fonteyn, who was dancing as a guest artist in PACT Ballet's production of *The Sleeping Beauty* in Johannesburg. Fonteyn said it was a "great tragedy" Staff was unable to complete *The Rain Queen* and recalled how she had worked with him at Sadler's Wells before the Second World War. In her opinion, "he was a good man to work with. Ballet will miss him."¹⁹ CAPAB Ballet paid homage to Staff in December 1971 with two programmes dedicated to his honour. The first, a triple bill, featured *Peter and the Wolf*, *Transfigured Night* and Marina Keet's *Misa Flamenca* while the second was a new production of *Swan Lake* staged by Attilio Labis.

¹⁶ "Frank Staff ná operasie dood" [Frank Staff dies after operation,] *Die Volksblad*, (10 May 1971), p.1

"Staff created ballet history," *The Friend*, (11 May 1971), p.4

¹⁷ "Tragedy -- Dame Margot," *The Friend*, (11 May 1971), p.4

¹⁸ "A tribute by Dulcie Howes," *Cape Times*, (11 May 1971), p.7

¹⁹ "Tragedy -- Dame Margot," *The Friend*, (11 May 1971), p.4

It is a strange fact of life that Frank Staff's impressive contribution to South African ballet and musical theatre is largely forgotten today. Only a handful of his ballets survive, and although this represents a sad testimony to a man whose life was devoted to dance, those works to endure -- *Raka*, *Peter and the Wolf* and *Transfigured Night* -- are probably amongst his finest creations. Fortunately, their safeguarding has been made possible by the tenacity of Veronica Paeper, whose sheer determination to keep them alive has both ensured their survival and enriched the repertoires of companies privileged enough to perform them. Indeed, it has been part of Paeper's impassioned quest to preserve something of Staff's legacy through her own choreography, which she says continues to draw inspiration from his memory. And it is somewhat ironic that in spite of meritorious service to the South African performing arts, Frank Staff has often been considered lightweight and even insignificant. As a frequently misunderstood individual, he has seldom been accorded his rightful place in South African theatre, which has made him a fitting example of a prophet who is not without honour except in his own country.

APPENDIX 1FRANK STAFF AND THE KIMBERLEY EISTEDFODD: 1928-1930

<u>DATE</u>	<u>SECTION OR CATEGORY & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE DANCE PERFORMED</u>	<u>RESULT</u>
27 SEPTEMBER 1928	NATIONAL DANCING SECTION, CLASS B, 'RUSSIAN DANCE'	TIED FIRST PLACE WITH MISS A. CARTER
28 SEPTEMBER 1928	DUO DANCING, CATEGORY B: 9 & UNDER 12	FIRST PLACE WITH LILLIAN CORBEY
29 AUGUST 1929	TRIO DANCING SECTION, 9 & UNDER 12: 'RUSSIAN TRIO'	FIRST PLACE WITH MISSES B. BARSKE & M. BROWN
29 AUGUST 1929	DUO DANCING SECTION: 9 & UNDER 12	FIRST PLACE WITH LILLIAN CORBEY
29 AUGUST 1929	GROUP DANCING UNDER 16	SECOND PLACE WITH MISSES BARSKE, BERRY, BROWN & GOLDBERG
30 AUGUST 1929	NATIONAL DANCING SECTION, 9 & UNDER 12: 'RUSSIAN DANCE'	FIRST PLACE
31 AUGUST 1929	OPEN CHARACTER SECTION	FIRST PLACE
4 AUGUST 1930	NATIONAL DANCING SECTION: 10 & UNDER 13	FIRST PLACE
5 AUGUST 1930	NATIONAL DANCING SECTION: 12 & UNDER 16	FIRST PLACE
6 AUGUST 1930	CHARACTER DANCING: CLASS 86	SECOND PLACE

APPENDIX 2FRANK STAFF'S INVOLVEMENT WITH SOUTH AFRICAN AMATEUR DANCE AND THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS: 1928-1933

<u>DATE OF PRODUCTION</u>	<u>TITLE OF PRODUCTION</u>	<u>VENUE</u>	<u>ROLE(S)</u>
20 NOVEMBER 1928	SO THIS IS VENICE (CHOREOGRAPHY BY AMY GARDNER)	CITY HALL, KIMBERLEY	(1) A FROG (11) THE RAJAH (111) RUSSIAN DANCER (IV) BABY LOVER (V) THE HUNTER (VI) HARLEQUIN LOVE
25 NOVEMBER 1929	THROUGH DISTANT LANDS (CHOREOGRAPHY BY AMY GARDNER)	CITY HALL, KIMBERLEY	(1) A FRENCH REAPER (11) AN ISLAND EXPLORER (111) PRINCE HASSIM (IV) RUSSIAN COSSACK
9 OCTOBER 1930	DANCE RECITAL (CHOREOGRAPHY BY IRENE TIMLIN)	CITY HALL, KIMBERLEY	(1) THE COSSACK (11) AN AMERICAN SAILOR
24 APRIL 1931	THE WRECK OF THE ARGOSY (MORE OR LESS). A CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' COLLEGE PRESENTATION	CITY HALL, KIMBERLEY	PEDRO
6 MAY 1931	GRAND BIO-VAUDEVILLE ENTERTAINMENT	VAUDETTE CINEMA, KIMBERLEY	HORNPIPE CHOREOGRAPHY: AMY GARDNER
3 JUNE 1931	CHARITY PERFORMANCE FOR CLAUD STANDISH BROWN	CITY HALL, KIMBERLEY	STEP-DANCING CHOREOGRAPHY: AMY GARDNER
11 NOVEMBER 1931	WINGS OF ADVENTURE (CHOREOGRAPHY BY AMY GARDNER)	CITY HALL, KIMBERLEY	(1) A SKELETON (11) PAS DE DEUX WITH MISS K. MACALMAN (111) TENNIS PRESENTATION

APPENDIX 2 (CONTINUED)FRANK STAFF'S INVOLVEMENT WITH SOUTH AFRICAN AMATEUR DANCE AND THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS: 1928-1933

<u>DATE OF PRODUCTION</u>	<u>TITLE OF PRODUCTION</u>	<u>VENUE</u>	<u>ROLE(S)</u>
21 NOVEMBER 1932	DANCES FROM SPAIN (ARRANGED BY DELIS ROHR)	PLAZA CINEMA, CAPE TOWN	SPANISH DANCING WITH DOROTHY FAIRFIELD, VERA KIRSCH, DELIS ROHR, FRANK STAFF & SYLVIA ROOD
13 DECEMBER 1932	THE PRANKS OF PUNCH, OR PRANKS O' PUNCH (CHOREOGRAPHY BY HELEN WEBB AND MAUDE LLOYD)	CITY HALL, CAPE TOWN	TOBY
11 FEBRUARY 1933	LES SYLPHIDES (CHOREOGRAPHY BY MICHEL FOKINE ARRANGED BY MAUDE LLOYD)	CITY HALL, CAPE TOWN	THE POET
12 AUGUST 1933	CARNAVAL (CHOREOGRAPHY BY MICHEL FOKINE ARRANGED BY MAUDE LLOYD)	CITY HALL, CAPE TOWN	HARLEQUIN
12 AUGUST 1933	TARANTELLA (CHOREOGRAPHY BY MAUDE LLOYD)	CITY HALL, CAPE TOWN	PAS DE DEUX WITH CECILY ROBINSON
12 AUGUST 1933	THE STEETS OF PARIS (CHOREOGRAPHY BY HELEN WEBB AND MAUDE LLOYD)	CITY HALL, CAPE TOWN	PAS DE TROIS WITH CECILY ROBINSON & THELMA BARRAUD
28 AUGUST 1933	BEAUTY AND THE BALLET (CHOREOGRAPHY BY HELEN WEBB WITH ARRANGEMENT OF THE TARANTELLA BY MAUDE LLOYD)	ALHAMBRA THEATRE, CAPE TOWN	PAS DE DEUX WITH CECILY ROBINSON

APPENDIX 3

BALLET CHOREOGRAPHED BY FRANK STAFF: 1938-1959 (LISTED IN CHRONOLOGICAL DATE SEQUENCE)

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>DESIGNS</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>FIRST CAST & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE, ROLE OF DANCER</u>
16 JANUARY 1938	THE TARTANS	WILLIAM BOYCE	WILLIAM CHAPPELL	MERCURY THEATRE, LONDON	BALLET RAMBERT	ELISABETH SCHOOLING, CHARLES BOYD & FRANK STAFF
13 MARCH 1938	LA PÉRI	PAUL DUKAS	NADIA BENOIS	MERCURY THEATRE, LONDON	BALLET RAMBERT	DEBORAH DERING (THE PÉRI) FRANK STAFF (ISKENDER) PEGGY VAN PRAAGH (CHIEF WIFE)
5 DECEMBER 1939	CZERNYANA	KARL CZERNY	EVE SWINSTEAD-SMITH	DUCHESS THEATRE, LONDON	BALLET RAMBERT	ENSEMBLE (FUGUETTE), OLIVIA SAREL & JOLINE WADE (SUCRÉ) JOAN McCLELLAND, OLIVIA SAREL, JOLINE WADE & ROSEMARY YOUNG (ÉBATS), SALLY GILMOUR (M'AS-TU-VUE) FRANK STAFF (IMPROVISATION) ELISABETH SCHOOLING & TRAVIS KEMP (PASTORAL) WALTER GORE & FRANK STAFF (VARIATION PARTAGÉE) ELISABETH SCHOOLING (PRESQUE CLASSIQUE) WALTER GORE & ENSEMBLE (ÉTUDE SYMPHONIQUE) ELISABETH SCHOOLING & SALLY GILMOUR (LES BELLES SOMNOLENTES) ENSEMBLE (GALOP)
3 JANUARY 1940	THE SEASONS	ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV	WILLIAM CHAPPELL	ARTS THEATRE, LONDON	LONDON BALLET	PEGGY VAN PRAAGH, WITH CHARLOTTE BIDMEAD, DEBORAH DERING, MONICA BOAM, SYLVIA HAYDEN, ELIZABETH HAMILTON, THERESE LANGFIELD, SUSAN REEVES & PAULINE CLAYDEN (WINTER) ELISABETH SCHOOLING, WITH ANTHONY KELLY, MONICA BOAM, SYLVIA HAYDEN, SUSAN REEVES & PAULINE CLAYDEN (SPRING) FRANK STAFF, WITH CHARLOTTE BIDMEAD, DEBORAH DERING, MONICA BOAM, ELIZABETH HAMILTON, SYLVIA HAYDEN, PAULINE CLAYDEN, ANTHONY KELLY, ROBERT DORNING & DAVID PALTENGI (SUMMER) MAUDE LLOYD (AUTUMN)

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

BALLET CHOREOGRAPHED BY FRANK STAFF: 1938-1959 (LISTED IN CHRONOLOGICAL DATE SEQUENCE)

DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE	TITLE OF BALLET	MUSIC	DESIGNS	THEATRE	COMPANY	FIRST CAST & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE. ROLE OF DANCER
12 FEBRUARY 1940	CATARINA, OU LA FILLE DU BANDIT	MUZIO CLEMENTI	_____	ARTS THEATRE, LONDON	LONDON BALLET	ELISABETH SCHOOLING (CATARINA)
1 MAY 1940	PETER & THE WOLF	SERGEY PROKOFIEV	GUY SHEPPARD	ARTS THEATRE, LONDON	BALLET RAMBERT	LULU DUKES (PETER) CELIA FRANCA (A BIRD) SALLY GILMOUR (A DUCK) WALTER GORE (A CAT) JOHN ANDREWES (GRANDFATHER) LEO KERSLEY (A WOLF) DAVID MARTIN (HUNTSMAN) JOAN McCLELLAND, SUSETTE MORFIELD & JOLINE WADE (HUNTSMEN)
27 NOVEMBER 1940	ENIGMA VARIATIONS	EDWARD ELGAR	GUY SHEPPARD	ARTS THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE	BALLET RAMBERT	CHARLOTTE BIDMEAD, MONICA BOAM, PAULINE CLAYDEN, CELIA FRANCA, SYLVIA HA YDEN, LEO KERSLEY, DAVID PALTENGHI, ELISABETH SCHOOLING, FRANK STAFF & PEGGY VAN PRAAGH
15 MAY 1941	CZERNY 2	KARL CZERNY	EVE SWINSTEAD- SMITH	ARTS THEATRE, LONDON	BALLET RAMBERT	SALLY GILMOUR, ELISABETH SCHOOLING, FRANK STAFF, DAVID PALTENGHI, JOAN McCLELLAND, OLIVIA SAREL, PAULINE CLAYDEN & MONICA BOAM (REVEIL) FRANK STAFF (SE HABLA ESPANOL) TROIEME ACTE (THIRD ACT) -- ENSEMBLE (ENTRÉE DES FEES ET DES PAGES) SALLY GILMOUR (VARIATION 1) ELISABETH SCHOOLING (VARIATION 2) WALTER GORE (VARIATION 3 -- CARABOSSE) ELISABETH SCHOOLING, SALLY GILMOUR & FRANK STAFF (PAS DE TROIS) ENSEMBLE (PAS DU TOUT) SORTIE DES FEES ET DES PAGES: FRANK STAFF & WALTER GORE (VARIATION PARTAGÉE) SALLY GILMOUR (FAUX PAS) ELISABETH SCHOOLING & DAVID PALTENGHI (NUAGES) ENSEMBLE (VISIONS) OLIVIA SAREL, JOAN McCLELLAND & PAULINE CLAYDEN (ÉBATS AVEC CORDE) ELISABETH SCHOOLING PRESQUE JAZZ) ENSEMBLE (L'ASSEMBLÉE ÉTRANGE & GALOP)

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>DESIGNS</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>FIRST CAST & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE, ROLE OF DANCER</u>
29 JUNE 1941	PAVANE POUR UNE INFANTE DÉFUNTE	MAURICE RAVEL	HUGH STEVENSON	ARTS THEATRE, LONDON	BALLET RAMBERT	SYLVIA HAYDEN & DAVID PALTENGI
22 OCTOBER 1945	UN SONGE	GUILLAUME LEKEU	RONALD WILSON	THEATRE ROYAL, NORWICH	BALLET RAMBERT	ELISABETH SCHOOLING (THE GIRL) WALTER GORE (THE LOVER)
21 OCTOBER 1946	PETER & THE WOLF	SERGEY PROKOFIEV	GUY SHEPPARD	ALHAMBRA THEATRE, CAPE TOWN	SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL BALLET	LULU VISSER (PETER) KATHARINE ZAYMES (THE BIRD) DORIS JOHNSTON (THE DUCK) DELYSIA JACOBS (THE CAT) LIONEL LUYT (GRANDPAPA) DAVID POOLE (THE WOLF) JOHN PAGET (THE HUNTER) NOEL BAILEY, MEA REINARZ & CYNTHIA WIENAND (HUNTSWOMEN)
21 OCTOBER 1946	ROMEO & JULIET	PYOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY	SEPP REINARZ	ALHAMBRA THEATRE, CAPE TOWN	SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL BALLET	DELYSIA JACOBS, RITA LEIBOWITZ, LILLIAN GRAHAM & KATHARINE ZAYMES (CHORUS) DAVID POOLE (AN APOTHECARY) FRANK STAFF (ROMEO) JOHN PAGET (MERCUTIO) ELISABETH SCHOOLING (JULIET) LIONEL LUYT (TYBALT) ANDRÉ REVNA (FRIAR LAWRENCE) TESSA ADAMS, NOEL BAILEY, MOYRA BLUNDELL, SHELAGH DAVIES, PAMELA DE WAAL, IRMA DYER, DORIS JOHNSTON, MAVIS LINDSAY, PATRICIA MILLER, SHELAGH MILLER, JOY SHEARER, SHIRLEY STRIPP, AUDREY TURNER, LULU VISSER & CYNTHIA WIENAND (KINSFOLK OF CAPULET & MONTAGUE HOUSES)

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>DESIGNS</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>FIRST CAST & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE, ROLE OF DANCER</u>
21 OCTOBER 1946	VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY HAYDN (ST. ANTONI)	JOHANNES BRAHMS	MAURICE VAN ESSCHE	ALHAMBRA THEATRE, CAPE TOWN	SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL BALLET	DELYSIA JACOBS, PATRICIA MILLER, KATHARINE ZAYMES & ENSEMBLE (ANDANTE) PATRICIA MILLER, DELYSIA JACOBS, KATHARINE ZAYMES & ENSEMBLE (VARIATION 1) JOHN PAGET & DAVID POOLE (VARIATION 2) DELYSIA JACOBS, RITA LEIBOWITZ, KATHARINE ZAYMES & LIONEL LUYT (VARIATION 3) DELYSIA JACOBS, RITA LEIBOWITZ, KATHARINE ZAYMES & LIONEL LUYT (VARIATION 4) DELYSIA JACOBS & KATHARINE ZAYMES (VARIATION 5) JOHN PAGET & ENSEMBLE (VARIATION 6) DELYSIA JACOBS, LIONEL LUYT & DAVID POOLE (VARIATION 7) SHELAGH DAVIES, PATRICIA MILLER & SHELAGH MILLER (VARIATION 8) FINALE - ENSEMBLE (VARIATION 9)
17 OCTOBER 1947	THE LOVERS' GALLERY	LENNOX BERKELEY	GEORGE KIRSTA	OPERA HOUSE, BLACKPOOL	METROPOLITAN BALLET	SONIA AROVA (AURORA) DELYSIA BLAKE (THE NYMPH) ERIK BRUHN (THE LOVER) CELIA FRANCA (THE LOVELORN LADY) JACQUELINE ST. CLERE (AMOUR) AART VERSTEGEN (THE PHILOSOPHER) POUL GNATT (THE ORIENTAL)
10 JUNE 1948	FANCIULLA DELLE ROSE	ANTON ARENSKY	GUY SHEPPARD	SCALA THEATRE, LONDON	METROPOLITAN BALLET	SVETLANA BERISOVA (THE YOUNG GIRL) DAVID ADAMS (LECHERY) POUL GNATT (WRATH) STANLEY HALL (GLUTTONY) PAUL HAMMOND (ENVY) ERIC HYRST (PRIDE) FRANK STAFF (AVARICE) AART VERSTEGEN (SLOTH)
26 DECEMBER 1949	BALLET THROUGH THE YEARS	GEORGE MELACHRINO	NAT KARSON	EMPIRE THEATRE, LONDON	EMPIRE BALLET	EMPIRE BALLET DANCERS

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

BALLET CHOREOGRAPHED BY FRANK STAFF: 1938-1959 (LISTED IN CHRONOLOGICAL DATE SEQUENCE)

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>DESIGNS</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>FIRST CAST & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE, ROLE OF DANCER</u>
23 JANUARY 1950	AMPHITRYON '50	J.S. BACH ARRANGED BY GEORGE MELACHRINO	NAT KARSON	EMPIRE THEATRE, LONDON	EMPIRE BALLET	JOHN HALL (AMPHITRYON) ANNETTE CHAPPELL (ALCMEANA) IGOR BARCZINSKI (JUPITER) JOHN PAGET (MERCURY) BRENDA HAMLIN, NOREEN LEE & JOAN McCLELLAND (THREE FRIENDS OF ALCMEANA) GLEN GORDON (A SOLDIER)
13 FEBRUARY 1950	ABSINTHE FRAPPÉ	GEORGE MELACHRINO	_____	EMPIRE THEATRE, LONDON	EMPIRE BALLET	ANNETTE CHAPPELL & IGOR BARCZINSKI (THE LOVERS) JEAN ARTOIS, DAVID GILBERT, GLEN GORDON, JOHN HALL, BRENDA HAMLIN, NOREEN LEE, JOAN McCLELLAND & JOHN PAGET
6 MARCH 1950	PUNCH	GEORGE MELACHRINO	PETER HOFFER	EMPIRE THEATRE, LONDON	EMPIRE BALLET	ANNETTE CHAPPELL, IGOR BARCZINSKI, DAVID GILBERT, GLEN GORDON, JOHN HALL, JOHN PAGET, VIVIENNE REINE, AUDREY TURNER & PAMELA VINCENT
27 MARCH 1950	BOLERO	MAURICE RAVEL	PETER HOFFER & NAT KARSON	EMPIRE THEATRE, LONDON	EMPIRE BALLET	EMPIRE BALLET DANCERS WITH THE EMPIRE GIRLS
15 MAY 1950	FRANKIE & JOHNNIE	TRADITIONAL ARRANGED BY GEORGE MELACHRINO	PETER HOFFER & NAT KARSON	EMPIRE THEATRE, LONDON	EMPIRE BALLET	ANNETTE CHAPPELL (FRANKIE) JOHN HALL (JOHNNIE) NOREEN LEE (NELLIE BLY)
3 OCTOBER 1951	ROMANZA ROMANA	PIERRE PETIT	GUILLIAME GILLET	THÉÂTRE DE L'EMPIRE	LES BALLETS DES CHAMPS- ELYSEES	DANIELLE DARMANCE (THE YOUNG GIRL) VLADIMIR SKOURATOFF (HER LOVER) DERYK MENDEL (HER UNCLE)
11 NOVEMBER 1952	BALLADE	GABRIEL FAURÉ	HUGH STEVENSON	WIMBLEDON THEATRE	NEW-BALLET COMPANY	ANGELA BAILEY, ELIZABETH CHRISTIE, CONSTANCE GARFIELD, MARGARET KOVAC, SHELAGH MILLER, JACK SKINNER & KENNETH SMITH

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

BALLETS CHOREOGRAPHED BY FRANK STAFF: 1938-1959 (LISTED IN CHRONOLOGICAL DATE SEQUENCE)

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>DESIGNS</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>FIRST CAST & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE, ROLE OF DANCER</u>
11 DECEMBER 1952	HE WAS HER MAN	PATRICK HARVEY	HUGH STEVENSON	COLISEUM THEATRE, HARROW	NEW-BALLET COMPANY	CONSTANCE GARFIELD (FRANKIE) ALAN BAKER (JOHNNIE) SHELAGH MILLER (NELLY BLY) ANGELA BAYLEY (CHORUS) NIGEL BURKE (A HABITUE) JACK SKINNER (BATTLING BRADY) KENNETH SMITH (A BARMAN) ANGELA BAYLEY, ELIZABETH CHRISTIE & MARGARET KOVAC (THREE HOSTESSES)
9 FEBRUARY 1955	DIVERTIMENTO	JACQUES IBERT	IVOR KRUGER	GREAT HALL, UNIVERSITY WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	AILEEN FARRELL (UNWILLING BRIDE) FRANK STAFF (A HUSSAR FROM HER PAST) ANDRÉ RETIEF (UNWILLING GROOM) IVY MAY McDONALD (A LADY FROM HIS PAST) DENIS MEYER (MAJOR & FATHER OF THE BRIDE) JACQUELINE ST. CLERE & HENDRIK DAVEL (GENDARMES) VICTORIA CARLSON, ANITRA SHORE, BERNICE LLOYD, JUDY COHEN & MONICA MASON (WEDDING GUESTS)
9 FEBRUARY 1955	DON JUAN	SERGEY RACHMANINOV	FRANK STAFF	GREAT HALL, UNIVERSITY WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	DENIS MEYER (DON JUAN) FRANK STAFF (HIS VALET) VICTORIA CARLSON (SERVANT GIRL) AILEEN FARRELL (THE FIRST VISITOR) IVY MAY McDONALD (THE UNKNOWN VISITOR) ENSEMBLE (SPIRITS FROM HELL)
9 FEBRUARY 1955	PETER & THE WOLF	SERGEY PROKOFIEV	GUY SHEPPARD	GREAT HALL, UNIVERSITY WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	JACQUELINE ST. CLERE (PETER) ANITRA SHORE (A BIRD) AILEEN FARRELL (A DUCK) VICTORIA CARLSON (A CAT) HENDRIK DAVEL (GRANDFATHER) ANDRÉ RETIEF (A WOLF) FRANK STAFF, IVY MAY McDONALD, SYLVIA DAVIS & BERNICE LLOYD (THE HUNTERS)

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

BALLET CHOREOGRAPHED BY FRANK STAFF: 1938-1959 (LISTED IN CHRONOLOGICAL DATE SEQUENCE)

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>DESIGNS</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>FIRST CAST & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE, ROLE OF DANCER</u>
29 JULY 1955	SYMPHONY OF SYLPHS	GEORGES BIZET	IVOR KRUGER (SET) & SAXON LUCAS (COSTUMES)	KIMBERLEY THEATRE, KIMBERLEY	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	VICTORIA CARLSON, SYVIA DAVIS, ZELIDE JEPPE, VALDA JOUBERT, BERNICE LLOYD, MONICA MASON, IVY MAY McDONALD, ADELE SAMUELS & JACQUELINE ST CLERE (ALLEGRO VIVO) IVY MAY McDONALD & NORMAN LINDSAY (PAS DE DEUX) JACQUELINE ST. CLERE, ADELE SAMUELS, FRANK STAFF, PERRY McKANN & ENSEMBLE (ALLEGRO VIVACE)
22 OCTOBER 1955	L'ATELIER DE MONSIEUR "X"	SERGEY PROKOFIEV	SAXON LUCAS	VOSLOO PARK, VEREENIGING	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	FRANK STAFF (MAITRE DE BALLET) ADELE SAMUELS (L'ETOILE DE BALLET) PERRY McKANN (PATRON) VALDA JOUBERT & JACQUELINE ST. CLERE (LES MÉCHANTS) VICTORIA CARLSON, ZELIDE JEPPE, BERNICE LLOYD, MONICA MASON & JOAN ROCHELLE (LES CORYPHÉÉS)
21 NOVEMBER 1955	CIRQUE DE LA MORT	DMITRY KABALEVSKY	LEN GROSSET	GREAT HALL UNIVERSITY WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	FRANK STAFF (DEATH) ADELE SAMUELS (HIS ASSISTANT) JAMES HANLEY (CIRCUS PROPRIETOR) VALDA JOUBERT (BOY IN BLUE) NORMAN LINDSAY (STRONG MAN) IVY MAY McDONALD (TIGHTROPE WALKER) MONICA MASON (URCHIN) VICTORIA CARLSON (ACROBAT) PERRY McKANN (A CLOWN) SYLVIA DAVIS, ZELIDE JEPPE & JOAN ROCHELLE (THREE ECCENTRICS) MONICA MASON & ENSEMBLE (MASQUERADERS)
23 NOVEMBER 1955	TRANSFIGURED NIGHT	ARNOLD SCHOENBERG	LEN GROSSET (SET) & FRANK STAFF (COSTUMES)	GREAT HALL UNIVERSITY WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	ADELE SAMUELS (ELDER SISTER) JACQUELINE ST. CLERE (YOUNGER SISTER) NORMAN LINDSAY (THEIR BROTHER) FRANK STAFF (THE YOUNG MAN)

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

BALLET CHOREOGRAPHED BY FRANK STAFF: 1938-1959 (LISTED IN CHRONOLOGICAL DATE SEQUENCE)

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>DESIGNS</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>FIRST CAST & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE, ROLE OF DANCER</u>
7 JANUARY 1957	APOLLO '57	BENJAMIN BRITTEN	SAXON LUCAS	GREAT HALL UNIVERSITY WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	KENDREW LASCELLES (APOLLO) JACQUELINE ST. CLERE (CALLIOPE) DELYSIA BLAKE (MELPOMENE) BERNICE LLOYD (TERPSICHORE) FRANK STAFF (THE CICERONE) VICTORIA CARLSON (THE YOUNG GIRL) SYLVIA DAVIS, FRANCOIS DU PLESSIS, ROSALEEN KASSEL, FRANKIE MILNER, JOAN ROCHELLE, DRIES REYNEKE, IRIS SCORGIE & NAOMI STAMELMAN (ONLOOKERS) FRANCOIS DU PLESSIS (THE HUSBAND) SYLVIA DAVIS (THE WIFE) DRIES REYNEKE (THE LOVER) FRANCOIS DU PLESSIS (THE REMBRANDT) IRIS SCORGIE (THE PICASSO) OTTIE FRIEDMAN (THE GAINSBOROUGH) FRANKIE MILNER (THE MONA LISA) SYLVIA DAVIS, ROSALEEN KASSEL, FRANKIE MILNER, JOAN ROCHELLE, IRIS SCORGIE & NAOMI STAMELMAN (THE GIRLS OF THE HOUSE) FRANCOIS DU PLESSIS & DRIES REYNEKE (THE UNDERTAKERS) VICTORIA CARLSON & ENSEMBLE (LAMENT & FUNERAL ON A WET AFTERNOON)
7 JANUARY 1957	THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS	MORTON GOULD	SAXON LUCAS	GREAT HALL UNIVERSITY WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	FRANK STAFF (PARIS) DRIES REYNEKE (MERCURY) ROSALEEN KASSEL, FRANKIE KASSEL, FRANKIE MILNER, JOAN ROCHELLE & NAOMI STAMELMAN (SHEEP) BERNICE LLOYD (A BLACK SHEEP) VICTORIA CARLSON (ATHENA) JACQUELINE ST. CLERE (APHRODITE) DELYSIA BLAKE (HERA)
10 JANUARY 1957	THE IMPRESARIO	TOMÁS BREITÓN RUPERTO CHAPI CLETO ZABALA FEDERICA TORROBA	SAXON LUCAS	GREAT HALL UNIVERSITY WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	KENDREW LASCELLES (FEDERICA) BERNICE LLOYD (CARMELLA) JOAN ROCHELLE (HER AMBITIOUS SISTER) DRIES REYNEKE & FRANCOIS DU PLESSIS (TWO (URCHINS) FRANK STAFF (THE IMPRESARIO)

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

BALLET CHOREOGRAPHED BY FRANK STAFF: 1938-1959 (LISTED IN CHRONOLOGICAL DATE SEQUENCE)

DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE	TITLE OF BALLET	MUSIC	DESIGNS	THEATRE	COMPANY	FIRST CAST & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE. ROLE OF DANCER
14 JANUARY 1957	THE BIRTHDAY	ANDRÉ GRÉTRY	SAXON LUCAS	GREAT HALL UNIVERSITY WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	ROSALEEN KASSEL (BIRTHDAY GIRL) FRANK STAFF (MAJOR DOMO) VICTORIA CARLSON, BERNICE LLOYD, FRANKIE MILNER, JOAN ROCHELLE, IRIS SCORGIE, NAOMI STAMELMAN, JACQUELINE ST. CLERE, FRANCOIS DU PLESSIS, KENDREW LASCELLES, & DRIES REYNEKE (GUESTS) DELYSIA BLAKE (GUEST AT THE WRONG PARTY)
2 OCTOBER 1957	BALLIMENTE	JULES MASSENET	_____	ALHAMBRA THEATRE,	DURBAN THEATRE CO.	KENDREW LASCELLES & MEMBERS OF THE DURBAN THEATRE BALLET
22 AUGUST 1958	EVER SINCE SANDY WILSON (FOR SNOEKTOWN CALLING)	_____	PAMELA LEWIS	BROOKE THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	VICTORIA CARLSON JOAN ROCHELLE & KENDREW LASCELLES
22 AUGUST 1958	INTERLUDE IN BLACK & WHITE (FOR SNOEKTOWN CALLING) ¹	GEORGE SHEARING	PAMELA LEWIS	BROOKE THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	VICTORIA CARLSON, JOAN ROCHELLE & KENDREW LASCELLES
22 AUGUST 1958	JAMAICAN RHUMBA (FOR SNOEKTOWN CALLING)	ARTHUR BENJAMIN	PAMELA LEWIS	BROOKE THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	VICTORIA CARLSON JOAN ROCHELLE & KENDREW LASCELLES
22 AUGUST 1958	THE LEGEND OF FRANKIE & JOHNNY (FOR SNOEKTOWN CALLING)	GEORGE MELACHRINO	PAMELA LEWIS	BROOKE THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG	SOUTH AFRICAN BALLET CO.	JOAN ROCHELLE (FRANKIE) FRANK STAFF (JOHNNY) VICTORIA CARLSON (NELLY BLY) KENDREW LASCELLES (BARMAN)

¹ SEE INSERTION FOR SNOEKTOWN CALLING IN APPENDIX 4.

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)BALLETS CHOREOGRAPHED BY FRANK STAFF: 1938-1959 (LISTED IN CHRONOLOGICAL DATE SEQUENCE)

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>DESIGNS</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>FIRST CAST & WHERE AVAILABLE OR APPLICABLE, ROLE OF DANCER</u>
28 NOVEMBER 1958	LIZZIE BORDEN	MORTON GOULD	PAMELA LEWIS (SET) JACQUELINE ST. CLERE (COSTUMES)	KIMBERLEY THEATRE, KIMBERLEY	FRANK STAFF BALLET CO.	ROSEMARY HARVEY (LIZZIE BORDEN) JOAN ROCHELLE (HER MOTHER) FRANK STAFF (HER FATHER) BERNICE LLOYD (THE SPINSTER) KENDREW LASCELLES (THE ARRESTING OFFICER & HANGMAN) DRIES REYNEKE (THE EVANGELIST) VICTORIA CARLSON, ROSALIND KAYE & ARLENE SWIFT (NEIGHBOURS)
28 NOVEMBER 1958	ROMANTIC ENCOUNTER	FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN	JACQUELINE ST. CLERE	KIMBERLEY THEATRE, KIMBERLEY	FRANK STAFF BALLET CO.	VICTORIA CARLSON (A NYMPH) KENDREW LASCELLES (A POET) BERNICE LLOYD (AN INTRUDER)
28 NOVEMBER 1958	THE SWAN OF TUONELA	JEAN SIBELIUS	JACQUELINE ST. CLERE	KIMBERLEY THEATRE, KIMBERLEY	FRANK STAFF BALLET CO.	BERNICE LLOYD (THE SWAN) KENDREW LASCELLES (THE HUNTER)
28 NOVEMBER 1958	TOCCATA & FUGUE	JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH	SAXON LUCAS (SET) JACQUELINE ST. CLERE (COSTUMES)	KIMBERLEY THEATRE, KIMBERLEY	FRANK STAFF BALLET CO.	JOAN ROCHELLE & FRANK STAFF (THE LOVERS) KENDREW LASCELLES (THE WHITE ANGEL) VICTORIA CARLSON & ROSALIND KAYE (THE BLACK ANGELS)
24 OCTOBER 1959	BALLADE	GABRIEL FAURÉ	SAXON LUCAS (SET) JACQUELINE ST. CLERE (COSTUMES)	ZION CENTRE, JOHANNESBURG	FRANK STAFF BALLET CO.	SHIRLEY BESTBIER, VICTORIA CARLSON, SUSAN DE BEER, ROSEMARY HARVEY, ROSALIND KAYE, MARY MERREDEW, DRIES REYNEKE, JOAN ROCHELLE, NAOMI STAMELMAN, ARLENE SWIFT & JACQUELINE ST. CLERE

APPENDIX 4MUSICALS CHOREOGRAPHED BY FRANK STAFF: 1942-1959

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF MUSICAL</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>DESIGNS</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>
2 MARCH 1942	OFFENBACH'S TALES OF HOFFMANN	JACQUES OFFENBACH	GEORGE KIRSTA	STRAND THEATRE, LONDON
21 APRIL 1945	PERCHANCE TO DREAM	IVOR NOVELLO	JOSEPH CARL (SETS) F. DAWSON (COSTUMES)	LONDON HIPPODROME
21 JUNE 1945	SWEET YESTERDAY	KENNETH LESLIE-SMITH	CLIFFORD PEMBER (SETS) ALEC SHANKS (COSTUMES)	ADELPHI THEATRE, LONDON
10 NOVEMBER 1950	MUSIC AT MIDNIGHT	JACQUES OFFENBACH AND HANS MAY	ANTHONY HOLLAND	HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE, LONDON
28 FEBRUARY 1953	THE GLORIOUS DAYS	HARRY PARR DAVIES	CHARLES DAWSON KITTY FOSTER ANTHONY HOLLAND DORIS ZINKEISEN	PALACE THEATRE, LONDON
17 MAY 1956	SALAD DAYS	JULIAN SLADE	PAMELA LEWIS (SETS) HEATHER MACDONALD-ROUSE (COSTUMES)	BROOKE THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG
14 MAY 1957	THE BOY FRIEND	SANDY WILSON	PAMELA LEWIS (SETS) HEATHER MACDONALD-ROUSE (COSTUMES)	BROOKE THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG
5 MAY 1958	GRAB ME A GONDOLA	JAMES GILBERT	PAMELA LEWIS	BROOKE THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG
22 AUGUST 1958	SNOEKTOWN CALLING	ARTHUR BENJAMIN GEORGE SHEARING GEORGE MELACHRINO	PAMELA LEWIS	BROOKE THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG
13 MAY 1959	I SPY	RALPH TREWHELA	MIRIAM JACOBSON	LIBRARY THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG
9 DECEMBER 1959	THE GLASS SLIPPER	CLIFTON PARKER	FRANK GRAVES (SETS) DOREEN GRAVES (COSTUMES)	REPS. THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG

APPENDIX 5CHOREOGRAPHY BY FRANK STAFF FOR MOTION PICTURES: 1949- 1953

<u>TITLE OF MOTION PICTURE</u>	<u>YEAR OF RELEASE</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>DIRECTOR</u>	<u>PRODUCER</u>	<u>DISTRIBUTOR</u>
THE DANCING YEARS	1949	IVOR NOVELLO	HAROLD FRENCH	WARWICK WARD	ASSOCIATED BRITISH-PATHE
THE BEGGAR'S OPERA	1952	SIR ARTHUR BLISS	PETER BROOK & HERBET WILCOX	LAURENCE OLIVIER	BRITISH LION
ALL HALLOWE'EN	1953	ARTHUR OLDHAM	MICHAEL GORDON	JOAN MAUDE & MICHAEL WARRE	A.B.F.D.

APPENDIX 6BALLETS BY OTHER CHOREOGRAPHERS PRODUCED BY FRANK STAFF FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN BALLETT: 1955-1958

<u>TITLE OF BALLETT</u>	<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN BALLETT</u>	<u>CHOREOGRAPHER</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>	<u>CAST & WHERE APPLICABLE ROLE OF DANCER</u>
L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE	9 FEBRUARY 1955	VASLAV NIJINSKY	CLAUDE DEBUSSY	GREAT HALL, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG	FRANK STAFF (THE FAUN) DELYSIA BLAKE (LEADING NYMPH) WITH VICTORIA CARLSON, JUDY COHEN, SYLVIA DAVIS, BERNICE LLOYD, MONICA MASON & ANITRA SHORE (SUPPORTING NYMPHS)
LES SYLPHIDES	16 JUNE 1958	MICHEL FOKINE	FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN	REPS. THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG	WENDY BERKELEY, GRACE BLYTH, SUSAN DE BEER, VICTORIA CARLSON, JINX GOLDBERG, ROSEMARY HARVEY, ROSALIND KASSEL, KENDREW LASCELLES, SANDRA LEIGH, BERNICE LLOYD, FRANKIE MILNER, AVRIL MOSSELSON, MELANIE MUSKAT, DIANA OSTRAWIAK, JENNIFER PATRICK, JOAN ROCHELLE, THELMA SHER & IRIS SCORGIE (NOCTURNE) ROSEMARY HARVEY (VALSE) VICTORIA CARLSON (MAZURKA) KENDREW LASCELLES (MAZURKA) BERNICE LLOYD (PRELUDE) VICTORIA CARLSON & KENDREW LASCELLES (PAS DE DEUX) ENSEMBLE (FINALE)

APPENDIX 7ROLES CREATED BY FRANK STAFF: 1935-1940 (LISTED CHRONOLOGICALLY)

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>CHOREOGRAPHER</u>	<u>CREATED ROLE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>
20 MAY 1935	THE RAKE'S PROGRESS	NINETTE DE VALOIS	THE HORN BLOWER	VIC-WELLS BALLET	SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE, LONDON
16 JUNE 1935	CIRCUS WINGS	SUSAN SALAMAN	(1) BOXING-KANGAROO (11) TRAPEZIST	BALLET RAMBERT	MERCURY THEATRE, LONDON
10 NOVEMBER 1935	THE RAPE OF THE LOCK	ANDRÉE HOWARD	SIR PLUME	BALLET RAMBERT	MERCURY THEATRE, LONDON
11 OCTOBER 1936	PASSIONATE PAVANE	FREDERICK ASHTON	A DANCER	BALLET RAMBERT	MERCURY THEATRE, LONDON
8 NOVEMBER 1936	LA MUSE S'AMUSE	ANDRÉE HOWARD	THE VIRTUOSO	BALLET RAMBERT	MERCURY THEATRE, LONDON
14 NOVEMBER 1937	CROSS-GARTER'D	WENDY TOYE	SIR ANDREW	BALLET RAMBERT	MERCURY THEATRE, LONDON
? NOVEMBER 1937	THE GOLDEN APPLE	ANDRÉE HOWARD	PARIS	BALLET RAMBERT	TELEVISION PERFORMANCE, A MERCURY THEATRE PRODUCTION, LONDON
13 FEBRUARY 1938	CROQUIS DE MERCURE	ANDRÉE HOWARD	DANSE DE TENDRESSE	BALLET RAMBERT	MERCURY THEATRE, LONDON
10 NOVEMBER 1938	HARLEQUIN IN THE STREET	FREDERICK ASHTON	THE BREAD-BOY	VIC-WELLS BALLET	SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE, LONDON

APPENDIX 7 (CONTINUED)ROLES CREATED BY FRANK STAFF: 1935-1940 (LISTED CHRONOLOGICALLY)

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>CHOREOGRAPHER</u>	<u>CREATED ROLE</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>
19 MARCH 1939	PARIS-SOIR	WALTER GORE	ANARCHIST	BALLET RAMBERT	MERCURY THEATRE, LONDON
27 APRIL 1939	CUPID AND PSYCHE	FREDERICK ASHTON	CUPID	VIC-WELLS BALLET	SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE, LONDON
6 MARCH 1940	LE LEÇON APPRISE	WENDY TOYE	SOLDIER	LONDON BALLET	ARTS THEATRE, LONDON
23 MAY 1940	LA FÊTE ÉTRANGE	ANDRÉE HOWARD	JULIEN	LONDON BALLET	ARTS THEATRE, LONDON

APPENDIX 8

<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>CHOREOGRAPHER</u>	<u>ROLE PERFORMED BY STAFF</u>	<u>CREATOR OF ROLE FOR BALLET RAMBERT REPERTOIRE</u>
ALCINA SUITE	ANDRÉE HOWARD	THE LOVER	ANTONY TUDOR
APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE, L'	VASLAV NIJINSKY	THE FAUN	WILLIAM CHAPPELL
AURORA'S WEDDING, DANCES FROM	MARIUS PETIPA	BLUEBIRD VARIATION	HAROLD TURNER
BAR AUX FOLIES-BERGÈRE	NINETTE DE VALOIS	(1) VALENTIN GARÇON (11) LE VIEUX MARCHEUR	(1) FREDERICK ASHTON (11) OLIVER REYNOLDS
BOXING, LE	SUSAN SALAMAN	THE AMERICAN CHAMPION	WILLIAM CHAPPELL
CARNAVAL	MICHEL FOKINE	(1) HARLEQUINADE (11) PANTALON	(1) LEON WOIZIKOVSKY (11) WALTER GORE
CINDERELLA	ANDRÉE HOWARD	(1) THE PRINCE (11) COURT HAIRDRESSER	(1) FREDERICK ASHTON (11) WALTER GORE
CRICKET, LE	SUSAN SALAMAN	(1) BATSMAN (11) UMPIRE	(1) WILLIAM CHAPPELL (11) ROBERT STUART
CROQUIS DE MERCURE	ANDRÉE HOWARD	MERCURY	WALTER GORE
DARK ELEGIES	ANTONY TUDOR	(1) NO. 2 (11) NO. 3 (11) NO. 5	(1) ANTONY TUDOR (11) WALTER GORE (111) HUGH LAING
DEATH AND THE MAIDEN	ANDRÉE HOWARD	DEATH	JOHN BYRON
DESCENT OF HEBE, THE	ANTONY TUDOR	(1) MERCURY (11) HERCULES	(1) HUGH LAING (11) ANTONY TUDOR
FAÇADE	FREDERICK ASHTON	(1) POPULAR SONG (11) THE DAGO	(1) WALTER GORE (11) FREDERICK ASHTON

APPENDIX 8 (CONTINUED)

ROLES PERFORMED BY FRANK STAFF IN THE BALLET RAMBERT REPERTOIRE: 1932-1946
CREATOR OF ROLE FOR BALLET RAMBERT REPERTOIRE

<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>CHOREOGRAPHER</u>	<u>ROLE PERFORMED BY STAFF</u>	<u>CREATOR OF ROLE FOR BALLET RAMBERT REPERTOIRE</u>
FOYER DE DANSE	FREDERICK ASHTON	MAÎTRE DE BALLET	FREDERICK ASHTON
GALA PERFORMANCE	ANTONY TUDOR	CAVALIER TO THE PARISIAN BALLERINA	GUY MASSEY
GISELLE ACT 11	JEAN CORALLI & JULES PERROT	HILARION	MICHAEL HOLMES
JARDIN AUX LILAS	ANTONY TUDOR	CAROLINE'S LOVER	HUGH LAING
JUDGEMENT OF PARIS, THE	ANTONY TUDOR	THE CLIENT	ANTONY TUDOR
LAC DES CYGNES ACT 11, LE	LEV IVANOV	PRINCE SIEGFRIED	BENTLEY STONE
LADY INTO FOX	ANDRÉE HOWARD	(1) MR. TEBRICK (11) HUNTSMAN	(1) CHARLES BOYD (11) LEO KERSLEY
LADY OF SHALOTT, THE	FREDERICK ASHTON	(1) SIR LANCELOT (11) A LOVER	(1) FREDERICK ASHTON (11) WALTER GORE
LYSISTRATA	ANTONY TUDOR	THE HUSBAND	ANTONY TUDOR
MASQUES, LES	FREDERICK ASHTON	(1) A PERSONAGE (11) THE LOVER	(1) FREDERICK ASHTON (11) WALTER GORE
MEPHISTO VALSE	FREDERICK ASHTON	(1) FAUST (11) MEPHISTO	(1) WALTER GORE (11) FREDERICK ASHTON
MERMAID	ANDRÉE HOWARD & SUSAN SALAMAN	THE PRINCE	WILLIAM CHAPPELL
OUR LADY'S JUGGLER	ANDRÉE HOWARD & SUSAN SALAMAN	JUGGLER	WALTER GORE
PAS DE DÉESSES, LE	KEITH LESTER	PARIS	KEITH LESTER

APPENDIX 8 (CONTINUED)

ROLES PERFORMED BY FRANK STAFF IN THE BALLET RAMBERT REPERTOIRE: 1932-1946

<u>TITLE OF BALLET</u>	<u>CHOREOGRAPHER</u>	<u>ROLE PERFORMED BY STAFF</u>	<u>CREATOR OF ROLE FOR BALLET RAMBERT REPERTOIRE</u>
PAVANE POUR UNE INFANTE DEFUNTE	BENTLEY STONE	DANCER	BENTLEY STONE
PLANETS, THE	ANTONY TUDOR	(1) MORTAL BORN UNDER MARS (11) MORTAL BORN UNDER VENUS (111) THE PLANET	(1) HUGH LAING (11) WILLIAM CHAPPELL (111) GUY MASSEY
RAPE OF THE LOCK, THE	ANDRÉE HOWARD	(1) THE BARON (11) UMBRIEL	ANTONY TUDOR
RUGBY, LE	SUSAN SALAMAN	THE PLAYER	HAROLD TURNER
SOIRÉE MUSICALE	ANTONY TUDOR	TARANTELLA	GUY MASSEY
SPECTRE DE LA ROSE, LE	MICHEL FOKINE	THE SPIRIT	HAROLD TURNER
SUITE OF AIRS	ANTONY TUDOR	DANCER	ANTONY TUDOR
SYLPHIDES, LES	MICHEL FOKINE	MAZURKA	HAROLD TURNER

APPENDIX 9ROLES PERFORMED BY FRANK STAFF IN MUSICAL THEATRE: 1937-1959

<u>DATE OF FIRST PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>TITLE OF OPERA/ MUSICAL</u>	<u>CHOREOGRAPHY</u>	<u>MUSIC</u>	<u>THEATRE</u>	<u>ROLE(S)</u>
2 FEBRUARY 1937	HOME AND BEAUTY	FREDERICK ASHTON	NIKOLAUS BRODSZKY	ADELPHI THEATRE, LONDON	(1) THE UNDER- FOOTMAN (11) A VALET (11) A KING (IV) A STATUTE
2 MARCH 1942	OFFENBACH'S TALES OF HOFFMANN	FRANK STAFF	JACQUES OFFENBACH	STRAND THEATRE, LONDON	PARIS
22 DECEMBER 1944	THE GLASS SLIPPER	ANDRÉE HOWARD	CLIFTON PARKER	ST. JAMES THEATRE, LONDON	(1) THE HUSBAND (11) HARLEQUIN
30 SEPTEMBER 1949	THE OLYMPIANS	PAULINE GRANT	SIR ARTHUR BLISS	ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON	MERCURY
22 AUGUST 1958	SNOEKTOWN CALLING	FRANK STAFF	GEORGE MELACHRINO	BROOKE THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG	JOHNNY (IN THE LEGEND OF FRANKIE AND JOHNNY)
9 DECEMBER 1959	THE GLASS SLIPPER	FRANK STAFF	CLIFTON PARKER	REPS. THEATRE, JOHANNESBURG	(1) THE ZANY (11) HARLEQUIN

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Plate 30: Bird and Leeney. Photograph. As reproduced in Marina Grut, *The History of Ballet in South Africa*. Cape Town: Human and Rosseau, 1981. Plate 213.

Plate 31: "They belong to a ballet company but this isn't a rehearsal -- they're just getting ready to be inoculated for a tour north." Photograph. As reproduced in the *Rand Daily Mail* (28 June 1957), 3.

Plate 32: Photograph. As reproduced in *Grab me a Gondola*. Theatre programme, Brooke Theatre, Johannesburg, May 1958.

Plate 33: "Tamara meets local star." Photograph. As reproduced in *The Star* (3 November 1958), 1.

Plate 34: "Frankie and Johnny." Photograph. As reproduced in the *Rand Daily Mail* (19 August 1958), 8.

Plate 35: "At the Brooke." Photograph. As reproduced in *The Star* (18 August 1958), 11.

Plate 36: Photograph. As reproduced in the *Cape Argus* (10 December 1958), 8.

Plate 37: Photograph. As reproduced in *The Pretoria News* (15 January 1960), 4.

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