

Karen Kain  
Artistic Director

# Cornucopia of dance, theatre and opera

National Ballet offers premieres and chestnuts, Canstage has Cancon and Opera Atelier gets revolutionary

BY JAMES BRADSHAW

Toronto hosted a flurry of season announcements yesterday, with the National Ballet of Canada, the Canadian Stage Company and Opera Atelier all unveiling their plans for 2009-2010.

**NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA**  
The National Ballet's season bears the marks of recession-proofing, but the company has remained steadfast in its determination to offer new works as well as sturdy classics. The season includes two world premieres, a company premiere and a revamped favourite.

Rudolph Nureyev's *The Sleeping Beauty* makes its debut on a five-city, 13-performance tour of Western Canada in September before appearing at Ottawa's National Arts Centre in November and then opening in Toronto on Nov. 13. Other staples are the financial engine *The Nutcracker*, returning to its regular prime December slot, and James Kudelka's *Swan Lake* in the challenging March Break run.

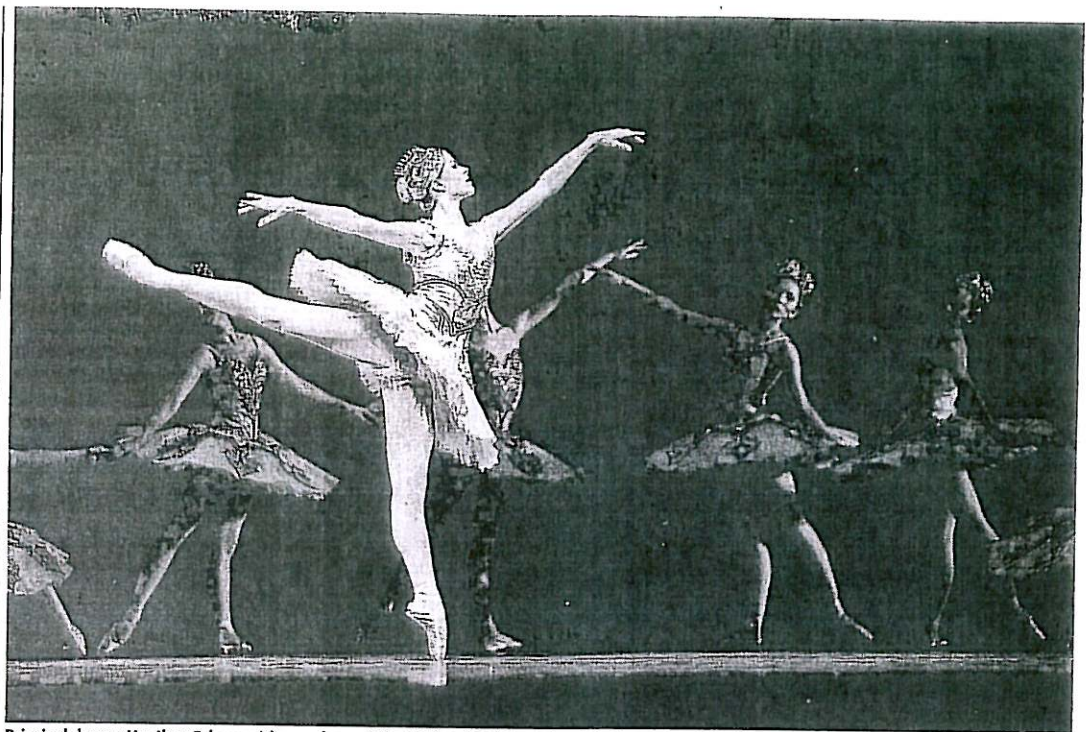
Artistic director Karen Kain said she wouldn't normally have programmed *Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake* in the same season, but the economic climate forced her to revisit her plans.

"We can't pretend we're living in a bubble. ... But I didn't give up on the two world premieres," she said.

The first of the two new works headlines the fall season's mixed program, an as-yet untitled world premiere by Edmonton-born Aszure Barton, combined with George Balanchine's neo-classical *The Four Temperaments* and Jerome Robbins's modernist *Glass Pieces*.

The winter season's mixed offering is Marie Chouinard's *24 Preludes by Chopin* in tandem with Kudelka's *The Four Seasons* and the company premiere of Robbins's solo work *A Suite of Dances*.

The summer pairing is led by a world premiere from successful Finnish choreographer



Principal dancer Heather Odgen with members of the National Ballet performing *Sleeping Beauty*. CYLLA VON TIEDEMANN

Jorma Elo. The untitled work will accompany Robbins's *West Side Story Suite* and his *Opus 19/The Dreamer* in early June. The season then closes with John Cranko's popular *Onegin*, graced with entirely new sets and costumes by Santo Loquasto.

A tearful Kain also announced that principal dancer Chan Hon Goh, a 20-year veteran of the company, is retiring this June, at the end of the current season. Her swan song will be the French classic *Giselle*.

#### CANADIAN STAGE COMPANY

The CanStage announcement foregrounded another high-profile departure, with artistic producer Martin Bragg unveiling his final season after 17 years at the helm.

Bragg's last hurrah is laden with Canadian content. Two

homegrown works, Morris Panych's *7 Stories* and Catalyst Theatre's adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, will adorn the Bluma Appel Theatre stage after no Canadian plays appeared there this season.

Also appearing at the Appel are the Canadian premiere of Tom Stoppard's *Rock 'n' Roll*, a co-production with Edmonton's Citadel Theatre directed by Donna Feore; the Obsidian Theatre production of Lynn Nottage's *Intimate Apparel*, directed by Obsidian artistic director Phillip Alkin; and Yazmina Reza's *Art*, with Panych holding the directorial reins.

CanStage will also continue the collaborative Berkeley Street Project, offering three edgier works at the Berkeley Street Theatre. Nightwood Theatre will stage the Cana-

dian premiere of Polly Stenham's *That Face* in October; Studio 180, fresh off last year's hugely successful *Stuff Happens*, will present the Canadian premiere of *The Overwhelming* by J.T. Rogers in March; and Necessary Angel will see playwright and actor Daniel MacIvor star in the Toronto premiere of *This Is What Happens Next*, created with long-time friend and collaborator Daniel Brooks.

Rounding out the season is the TD Dream in High Park production of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

"I hold this season, my last season at Canadian Stage, very dear to my heart," Bragg said.

#### OPERA ATELIER

The company is trumpeting what it calls "the two most revolutionary operas of the 18th century" for its 2009-2010

season: Christopher Willibald Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

*Iphigénie* is a revival of the production first staged by Atelier in 2003 about the abandoned Greek princess of the same name. American soprano Peggy Kriha Dye will sing the title role alongside Croatian tenor Kresimir Spicer, who appeared in 2007's *Idomeneo*.

The production of *Figaro* marks the third opera in Atelier's "Mozart Six" series following *Idomeneo* and *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Bass-baritone Olivier Laquerre will sing Figaro, with Carla Huhtanen, Kriha Dye and Philip Addis in his Atelier debut.

Both productions are directed by and choreographed by co-artistic directors Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Lajeunesse-Zing.