

PRESS BOOK



Directed by Rebecca Tansley

Feature documentary film

Duration: 98 mins

Format: 2.39:1

Poorhouse

INTERNATIONAL

58 Broadwick Street
London W1F 7AL
telephone +44 (0)20 7436 8663
email info@poorhouseintl.co.uk



**THE HEART DANCES
QUOTE BANK
@April 2019**

The Film

★★★★★ 5 stars "very recommended"

Graeme Tuckett: Stuff

★★★★ "4 stars"

Francesca Rudkin: Newstalk ZB

"a triumph"

Richard Swainson: RNZ – Radio New Zealand

"a compelling, engaging and often spectacular look at a real-life drama"

Graeme Tuckett: Stuff

"presents a delicately traced picture of the Old World at sea in the New, and vice versa"

Bill Gosden: NZIFF

"an intriguing look at [a] clash of artistic sensibilities"

Russell Baillie: New Zealand Listener

"a seductive behind-the-scenes look at the dance world"

Camille Khouri: Urbis Magazine

"everything a big screen documentary should be, aesthetically pleasing and culturally relevant"

Richard Swainson: RNZ - Radio New Zealand

"a commentary on the beauty that can be born out of collaboration"

Alice Webb-Liddall: The Spinoff

"feasts on the sheer beauty of the Bubeničeks' work – the music, the theatricality, the costumes, the suite of achingly expressive *pas de deux* at the heart of the piece"

Bill Gosden: NZIFF

"weaves a seductive, elegant celebration of a vital, centuries old art"

Bill Gosden: NZIFF

"more than just another peek behind the scenes"

Adam Fresco: Flicks

“beautiful to the eye and to the ear”

Richard Swainson: RNZ – Radio New Zealand

The Director

“Director Rebecca Tansley has done a quite brilliant job... corralling the material into a spry, engaging and entertaining film”

Graeme Tuckett - Stuff

“Tansley’s sure touch allows the film to breathe – she knows how to show, not tell”

Joanna Wane – North & South

Festival selections:

New Zealand International Film Festival 2018

Sydney Film Festival 2019

Choreoscope International Dance Film Festival 2019

Naples International Film Festival 2019 (Winner, Focus on the Arts award)

Festival International du Film sur l'Art (FIFA) 2020

Golden Prague 2020

The Heart Dances the journey of *The Piano: the ballet*

Logline

An iconic film is re-imagined by celebrated Czech dancers Jiří and Otto Bubeníček for the Royal New Zealand Ballet, setting the stage for a voyage into uncharted territory for everyone involved.

Synopsis

When Czech choreographer Jiří Bubeníček and his stage designer brother Otto arrive in New Zealand to restage an extended version of their work *The Piano: the ballet* for the Royal New Zealand Ballet, the stage is set for a voyage into uncharted territory for everyone involved. The twins, both former Principal Dancers, are now sought-after by Europe's most eminent ballet companies for their choreography and staging, but they are unaware that in New Zealand their work raises questions of cultural appropriation.

Over the coming weeks the brothers must work together with Māori cultural advisor Moss Te Ururangi Patterson to adapt the work for a New Zealand context, the very process challenging concepts of freedom of expression so important to them both. Meanwhile the dancers responsible for delivering the ballet face challenges of a different kind as they come to terms with the famous characters of Ada, Stewart and Baines and the love triangle they are caught up in. They also discover that retelling this story raises questions – in their case about inter-personal rather than inter-cultural relationships.

As the premiere date approaches, and the company works behind the scenes to bring the many elements of this memorable story together, aspects of the film that inspired the ballet continue to be played out – old world versus new, new relationships, new challenges, new understandings – while Jiří and Otto discover the responsibilities of storytelling in dance are more complex than they imagined.

Director's notes

The process of creative endeavour is alchemy. Its ingredients are impossible to define, its outcome often transcends the sum of its mysterious parts. It is challenging, frustrating, terrifying and exhilarating, but it is something true artists must do. They are drawn to it as audiences are drawn to the quintessentially human experience their work represents. We are all under its spell.

This film explores the challenges of a collective creative endeavour that attempts to traverse both artistic and cultural boundaries. It is a true creative documentary, not just in its subject matter but also in its approach. I have sought to tell the story of the ballet through the individual stories of those involved, eschewing traditional documentary techniques such as narration and talking head interviews wherever possible for an immersive, fluid style that befits a moving art form.

The film is a journey in which the trajectory of the ballet's creation, from inception to opening night, serves as a structure for exploring the underlying journeys of the key protagonists. This begins in Europe, with Jiří and Otto Bubeníček and their passion for Jane Campion's story, then travels to New Zealand where we observe the early, tentative steps taken by the company and their Czech collaborators to formulate the work, and its gradual evolution into a full-blown ballet.

Just as Campion's story has characters finding their way in a new land, Jiří and his twin brother Otto must negotiate New Zealand culture – including Māori tikanga – as they develop the ballet. Equally the Māori advisor appointed to guide the production and its incorporation of Māori elements, Moss Te Ururangi Patterson, must broaden the Czech brothers' and the ballet company's understanding of the cultural issues the work raises.

Members of the company must map the work, survey its extent and get to *know* its contours, while the dancers must navigate their roles both mentally and physically, growing into the characters emotionally as they learn the choreography.

Backstage, onstage and in the rehearsal studio the choreographer is revealed conjuring the work from the dancers' bodies as they move through space and time, teasing out the tensions inherent in the process of collaboration and exposing the challenges facing various creative and technical departments.

The audience shares the experience with the dancers and their artistic and technical collaborators until the pressures, challenges and discoveries are released in the catharsis of opening night.

Introducing the characters

Jiří Bubeníček - Choreographer

"I want to do this story and I want to do a good job. But I wanted to be ready."

A Czech citizen, Jiří studied dance at the Prague Conservatory and in 1993 made his professional debut with John Neumeier's Hamburg Ballet. Here he was promoted to soloist in 1995 and, subsequently, principal dancer, and danced all the principal roles in John Neumeier's repertoire. Neumeier created the role of Vaclav Nijinsky in *Nijinsky* especially for him.

In 2006 Jiří joined the Semperoper Ballet in Dresden as principal dancer and danced with the company for ten years. He also guested with many other European companies.

In 1999 Jiří began to choreograph and since then he has created many notable works performed throughout Europe, the USA and in Japan. He retired as a dancer to concentrate on choreography in 2016 and he is now one of Europe's most sought-after choreographers. His commissions for 2018 include with the Czech National Ballet, the Royal Swedish Ballet and the Ballet Company of La Scala, Italy. His contribution to the arts has been recognised with three of the Czech Republic's highest honours.

Otto Bubeníček - Set, music, video and stage designer

"I believe art should be free. So people go out of the theatre and think about it."

Otto studied dance at the Prague Conservatory. In 1992 he received the Prix Espèces and Television Viewers' Prize at the Prix de Lausanne and in 1993 he joined John Neumeier's Hamburg Ballet where he was promoted to principal dancer in 1997. Otto has also guested with many ballet companies worldwide until his retirement in 2016.

Otto is creative in many other fields including music composition, design and film. He has composed classical and electronic music for both film and dance, including many of Jiří's ballets. He has also designed sets and costumes for several of Jiří's ballets and has co-choreographed several works with him.

For *The Piano: the ballet* Otto was responsible for the set and video design, staging and music arrangement. He travelled to New Zealand to assist the RNZB with bringing the production to the stage.

Moss Te Ururangi Patterson (Ngāti Tūwharetoa) - Māori Advisor

"This is the 21st century and we have to stand proud as Māori, but we also have to find ways to work together, to be together and to create together."

Moss Patterson is a passionate advocate for Māori culture and Māori contemporary dance in Aotearoa New Zealand. Drawing his inspiration from traditional Māori forms and symbols he has created new works for Atamira Dance Company, Black Grace Dance Company and Footnote Dance Company. Works such as *Moko*, *Pango/Black*, *Marama/Moon* have travelled around New Zealand and to international dance festivals. His works *Whakairo* and *Haka* earned him an award for Best Choreography by Tempo Dance Festival and an accolade as Best Choreographer by *New Zealand Listener*.

Moss has devised several large-scale dance projects in association with the Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra and Auckland International Arts Festival. In 2011 he was associate choreographer for the highly celebrated opening ceremony of the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand. Until recently Moss was Artistic Director at Atamira Dance Company. He now works as an independent choreographer.

As Māori Advisor to *The Piano: the ballet* Moss worked with Jiří and Otto and the RNZB across many aspects of the production – music, waka design, costume and choreographic elements. His work incorporating tikanga Māori in this way is described by the RNZB as “the beginning of a new journey for the Royal New Zealand Ballet.”

James Webster - Māori artist and musician

“We’re trying not to create too much friction as our canoe ploughs through the waves.”

James is a well-known Māori arts practitioner, working in many mediums including wood, bone and stone (sculpting and carving), paint, fibre and metal. He is also a highly respected tāmoko (Māori tattoo) artist. In addition, James is a talented musician with a passion for making and playing taonga pūoro, (traditional Māori instruments). He has performed in many concerts and tutored at wānanga (places of learning) around Aotearoa.

The Royal New Zealand Ballet

Celebrating its 65th year in 2018, the Royal New Zealand Ballet is a dance company of the highest repute. The company of up to 40 dancers performs an eclectic repertoire of outstanding dance for national and international audiences, whilst continuing to build a style that is ultimately unique to Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Originally conceived as a short work for Dortmund Ballet, *The Piano: the ballet* was re-configured and expanded for the RNZB. Jiří and Otto Bubeníček travelled to New Zealand to stage the ballet with the Company for its premiere at the New Zealand's most prestigious arts festivals in Wellington and Auckland. The ballet then enjoyed a national tour.

The Piano: the ballet

Choreography and staging	Jiří Bubeníček
Set and video design, music arrangement and staging	Otto Bubeníček
Rehearsal assistant	Arsen Mehrabyan
Māori advisor	Moss Patterson
Original costume design	Elsa Pavanel
Lighting design	Jeremy Fern

The Royal New Zealand Ballet

Artistic Director	Patricia Barker
Executive Director	Frances Turner
Ballet Masters	Clytie Campbell, Laura McQueen Schultz, Nicholas Schultz
Dancers	Abigail Boyle, Luke Cooper, Felipe Domingos Natel, Rhiannon Fairless, Alexandre de Oliveira Ferreira, William Fitzgerald, Sara Garbowski, Madeleine Graham, Tristan Gross, Kate Kadow, Shaun James Kelly, Alyssa Kelty, Yang Liu, Fabio Lo Giudice, Massimo Margaria, Yuri Marques, Paul Mathews, Nathan Mennis, Katherine Minor, Olivia Moore, Georgia Powley, Loughlan Prior, Kirby Selchow, Joseph Skelton, Katherine Skelton, Mayu Tanigaito, Marie Varlet, Leonora Voigtlander, Caroline Wiley, Nadia Yanowsky, Wan Bin Yuan.
Young dancers performing with the Company	Hazel Couper, Gemma Lew, Bianca Lungu

The Heart Dances – soundtrack

Pensée Fugitive

Composed by Bedřich Smetana
Performed by Jitka Čechová

Ma Vlast: Vitava (The Moldau)

Composed by Bedřich Smetana
Performed by Czech Philharmonic
Conducted by Jiri Belohlavek

The Heart Dances

Composed and performed by Flavio Villani

Aotearoa

Composed by R.Carr, R.Beehre, P.Dodge
Performed by Minuit

Haka Wairangi

Traditional, performed by Moss Te Ururangi Patterson

Daring

Composed and performed by Flavio Villani

Suite in the Old Style: II Ballet. Allegro

Composed by Alfred Schnittke

Nocturne Op.9, No. 2

Composed by Frédéric Chopin
Performed by Flavio Villani

Tōia Mai

Traditional rearranged by Moss Te Ururangi Patterson and James Webster
Performed by Moss Te Ururangi Patterson, Eddie Elliot and Ziljjan Robinson

The Unanswered Question

Composed by Charles Ives
Performed by The Gulbenkian Orchestra
Conducted by Michel Swierczewski

Piano Trio No.1 in Dmin, Op.32: III Elegia: Adagio-Piu Mosso-Tempo I

Composed by Anton Arensky
Performed by Borodin Trio

The Attraction of the Pedalling Ankle

Composed by Michael Nyman
Performed by Valentina Lisitsa

String Quartet in Gmin, Op.10: Assez vif et bien rythme

Composed by Claude Debussy
Performed by Alban Berg Quartett

Ballade No. 4, Op. 52

Composed by Frédéric Chopin
Performed by Flavio Villani

Big My Secret (1998 Edition)

Written by Michael Nyman
Performed by Valentina Lisitsa

7 Fantasias Op. 116: IV Intermezzo in E Major

Composed by Johannes Brahms
Performed by Hélène Grimaud

Gravity

Composed by Bic Runga
Performed by Bic Runga

Between Waves and Walls

Composed and performed by Flavio Villani

Hau

Composed and performed by Hirini Melbourne and Richard Nunns

Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major, Op.102, Andante

Composed by Dmitri Shostakovich
Performed by I Musici de Montréal

Mōi Haka

Composed by Moss Te Ururangi Patterson and James Webster
Performed by Moss Te Ururangi Patterson, James Webster

String Quartet No.2: II Agitato

Composed by Alfred Schnittke
Performed by Kronos Quartet

Horizon

Composed by H. Topp
Performed by Aldous Harding

The Heart Shatters

Composed and performed by Flavio Villani

Concerto Grosso No. 1, VI, Postludio: Andante – Allegro

Composed by Alfred Schnittke
Performed by Gidon Kremer, Tatjana Grindenko, Yuri Smirnov and the Chamber Orchestra Of Europe
Conducted by Heinrich Schiff

Sonata for Violoncello and Piano. II Presto

Composed by Alfred Schnittke
Performed by the Saabrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra with Burkhard Godhoff, Raimund Havenith and Maria Kliegel
Conducted by Gerhard Markson

And Its Dance Shall Find No End

Composed and performed by Flavio Villani