

10th Minnesota Season

A decade of moving works

www.jsballet.org


Striving for optimism against the barrage

In addition to “Rings” (1991), “Whaling Waters” (1992), and Improvisation #47-51, two new dances—each more intimate than bravura—will be featured in JAMES SEWELL BALLET’S spring performances at The O’Shaughnessy in St. Paul. “Witness,” a work for six dancers choreographed by company member Penelope Freeh, will share the stage with James Sewell’s full-company work, “Barrage.”

Witness

Penny’s inspiration for this contemporary ballet was a dream. In her dream, she felt two intangibles—one very private and one very public—manifesting themselves simultaneously within the same person.

The structure of “Witness” is a series of three duets (Sally Rouse and Matthew Keefe, Peggy Seipp and Justin Leaf, Julia Welsh and Benjamin Johnson), each followed by and alternated with a group dance.

Each duet is lonely in its intimacy, but as the ballet progresses each becomes more public: the first has no witnesses, the second has one, and the third has four.

The word “witness” is intended both as a noun and as a verb in its command to the audience.

Aesthetically, the choreography draws on Penny’s background in modern dance techniques, and is lent a post-apocalyptic grittiness by the “distressed” costuming.

Barrage (working title)

As this is written, five weeks before its first performance, “Barrage” is a ballet whose elements will continue to change until it takes the stage, and beyond.

James knows the ballet will end in a place of optimism and, perhaps, even joy and peace, as the dancers navigate the conflict between internal needs and external forces, creating a seamless blend of movement ranging from improvisation through classical ballet partnering.

How it gets there is the unknown—a process that has been bedeviled by the press of world social, economic, and political circumstances.

“I am trying to address not what is right or wrong with the world,” James says, “but how it makes me feel. We are trying to reproduce onstage people’s feelings of loss of control and frustration, while striving optimistically to retain focus, structure, and productivity.”

It will be interesting, he thinks, to explore a path through the barrage in each performance.

“The dancers will not be interchangeable commodities. We will see people interacting as human beings onstage.”

“Hopefully,” James says, “the combination of set and improvised elements will keep the dancers reacting honestly each time.”

Further notes about performance programs can be read at the company’s website: www.jsballet.org.

The Company

Penelope Freeh (9th season)
Benjamin Johnson (5th season)
Matthew Keefe (2nd season)
Justin Leaf (2nd season)
Sally Rouse (13th season)
Peggy Seipp (2nd season)
James Sewell (13th season)
Julia Welsh (1st season)

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SPRING PROGRAM

(subject to change)

The O'Shaughnessy in St. Paul April 25 – May 4

Whaling Waters

Premiere: August 5, 1992,

Swan's Island, Maine

Choreography: James Sewell

Music: David Surrette, Bill Burnett,

Suzy Williams

Created for the island communities of Maine and Nova Scotia to relate the story of a couple, recently wed and quickly separated by the call of the sea.

Prestidigitations: Rings

Premiere: May 18, 1991, New York City

Choreography: James Sewell

Music: Scott Joplin

A traditional male variation, danced with the Chinese linking rings.

Improvisation #47-51

Crafted spontaneously by the dancers

Music: Laura Sewell, cello

Witness

Premiere: April 25, 2003

Choreography: Penelope Freeh

Barrage

Premiere: April 25, 2003

Choreography: James Sewell

Performance for Young Children May 3 • 2 pm

An informal way to experience ballet in a shorter segment, with house lights illuminated and permission to come and go as needed.

Whaling Waters

Prestidigitations: Rings

Improvisation #52

Witness (excerpt)

Barrage (excerpt)

This activity is made possible in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Great memories make for a great season

At 10 pm on May 9th, Production Manager Kevin A. Jones will speak a few words into his headset microphone.

At his direction, the main curtain of Rolla, Missouri's Leach Theatre will then close on a JAMES SEWELL BALLET performance and the company's busiest performing season to date will pass into memory.

At season's end, the dancers will have performed more than 60 times for 50,000 people in 10 states (Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Vermont, and Wisconsin) and 11 Minnesota communities (Fergus Falls, Hibbing, Hopkins, Lakeville, Minneapolis, Moorhead, St. Cloud, St. Paul, Rochester, Willmar, and Winona).

Generous underwriting assistance for JAMES SEWELL BALLET's Twin Cities student matinees was provided by the ADC Foundation, the Carolyn Foundation, the Huss Foundation, and The O'Shaughnessy at the College of St. Catherine. American Express Financial Advisors and the National Endowment for the Arts helped underwrite the company's first student matinee for 1,000 students in Rochester, Minnesota.

A thousand thanks to the hundreds of people whose efforts made this season possible!



Backstage at Orchestra Hall, Minneapolis: The Page (Julia Welsh) and Kings Balthazar (Benjamin Johnson), Kaspar (Matthew Keefe), and Melchior (Justin Leaf) pose before one of nine performances of "Amahl and the Night Visitors." JAMES SEWELL BALLET, the Minnesota Orchestra, and the Minnesota Opera presented Menotti's classic for 18,000 people in December. More than 2,000 residents of northwest Arkansas attended subsequent "Amahl" performances presented at Fayetteville's Walton Arts Center by JAMES SEWELL BALLET and the North Arkansas Symphony Orchestra.

Crossing Lake Michigan, Sept. 25, 2002:

The dancers of JAMES SEWELL BALLET boarded the S.S. Badger Ferry in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, for the four hour crossing to Ludington, Michigan. The Crooked Tree Arts Center in Petoskey presented the company in two performances, Sept. 26 & 27. Left to right: Justin Leaf, Penelope Freeh, Matthew Keefe, James Sewell, Julia Welsh, and Benjamin Johnson.





“The lady’s got a new pair of shoes”

The O’Shaughnessy’s fashion emergency ended with the installation this winter of new seats on the main floor; new carpet throughout the theater; expanded wheelchair and companion seating; upgraded concessions; new illumination; and a new roof. Other recent improvements to the facility, open since 1970, include a new lighting system and stage floor.



The Shubert Center... today’s dream, tomorrow’s reality

The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra will become an anchor tenant of the Shubert Center in Minneapolis. The SPCO has agreed to an initial commitment of six to twelve weeks of concerts beginning with the 2006-2007 season, and will retain the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts as its Saint Paul performance home. In addition to the SPCO, the three-building Shubert complex will be an important venue to more than 20 arts organizations, including JAMES SEWELL BALLET. More information: www.minnesotashubert.org or call 612-333-9012, ext. 121.

Backstage Notes

When JAMES SEWELL BALLET went looking for a graphic designer in 1993, board member **Wendy Holmes** recalled meeting an emerging young talent who had worked with Macalester College. The ever-present and dependable **Joseph D.R. O’Leary** of Veto Design has now started his 10th year as creator/keeper of the JSB signature in all things print. A graduate of the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Joe serves a roster of Minnesota and national clients.... It was a very happy day when the stork delivered a New Year’s present—**Zoe Lucine Johnson**—to the home of dancer **Benjamin Johnson** and spouse, cellist **Kirsten Whitson**.... “Facet,” choreographed by dancer **Matthew Keefe**, was one of seven ballets selected for presentation by Ballet Builders in New York City in February. The Minnesota State Arts Board gave Matthew a Career Opportunity Grant to participate in the annual choreography competition.... Assisted by a Jerome Foundation Travel Grant, dancer **Penelope Freeh** will travel to London in June to co-create a solo dance with long-time mentor **Donna Schoenherr**. Donna and Penny met when both worked with Michael Mao Dance in New York.... This summer, dancer **Sally Rouse** will collaborate with New York dance maker **Homer Avila** on a trio dance to be performed in the annual “Blizzard” produced by 3-Legged Race.... In September, **Sally** will perform with VocalEssence in the “Lament of Gilboa,” from “King David,” in a production conducted by **Philip Brunelle** at Minneapolis’s Ted Mann Concert Hall.... In June, **James Sewell** will set his choreography for “Carnival of the Animals” on the Vevey Youth Ballet in Geneva, Switzerland.... In March, the United States Institute for Theatre Technology held its Annual Conference and Stage Expo in Minneapolis. Production Manager **Kevin A. Jones** participated in a panel discussion, “How Tech Directors (and Others Who Can’t Dance) Specify Floors for the Dance Department”.... The **Wharton Center for Performing Arts at Michigan State University** has commissioned **James Sewell** to create a new dance work. The ballet will receive its premiere in East Lansing in April 2004. It will be presented later that month in Twin Cities performances.... In JAMES SEWELL BALLET’s choreography workshop in May, dancer **Justin Leaf** will choreograph a dance incorporating classical ballet with sculptural/visual art elements of ancient Cambodia. Twin Cities dance maker **Wynn Fricke** will create a modern work inspired by a cappella voices. The company’s dancers invited Wynn to work with them after reviewing proposals from 22 Minnesota and New York City choreographers. The workshop is funded by the Jerome Foundation.... **Andrea Bork**, Minneapolis, **Pam Greve**, Plymouth, and **Kristen Hoeschler**, St. Paul, began first terms as members of JAMES SEWELL BALLET’s board of directors.... Before moving from New York to Minneapolis in 1993, James Sewell sought and received advice from many Minnesotans. Among the first to offer her moral and financial support for his endeavor was **Elinor Watson Bell**, a long-time patron of the arts. Elinor died last October at age 91. We will remember her with affection and gratitude.

**JAMES
SEWELL
BALLET**

528 Hennepin Avenue, Suite 205
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403

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National Dance Week: April 25 – May 4



10th Minnesota Season
A decade of moving works

SPRING 2003 PERFORMANCES

Twin Cities Mainstage presented with The O'Shaughnessy
2004 Randolph Avenue between Cleveland and Fairview in Saint Paul
www.stkate.edu/oshaughnessy/

FRIDAY	APRIL 25 & MAY 2	7 PM Note start time
SATURDAY	APRIL 26 & MAY 3	8 PM
SATURDAY	MAY 3	2 PM 50 minute Performance for Young Children*
SUNDAY	MAY 4	2 PM Post-performance Q & A

Pre-performance discussion 25 minutes before evening curtains.

Tickets: 651.690.6700 or 612.673.0404

Adults: \$24 • Students: \$11 • Seniors (65+): \$19 • Groups: \$18

* Performance for Young Children: all tickets \$10; age under 3 free

TARGET *Marshall Field's* **mervyns** with support from the Target Foundation