

Youth America Grand Prix Winners

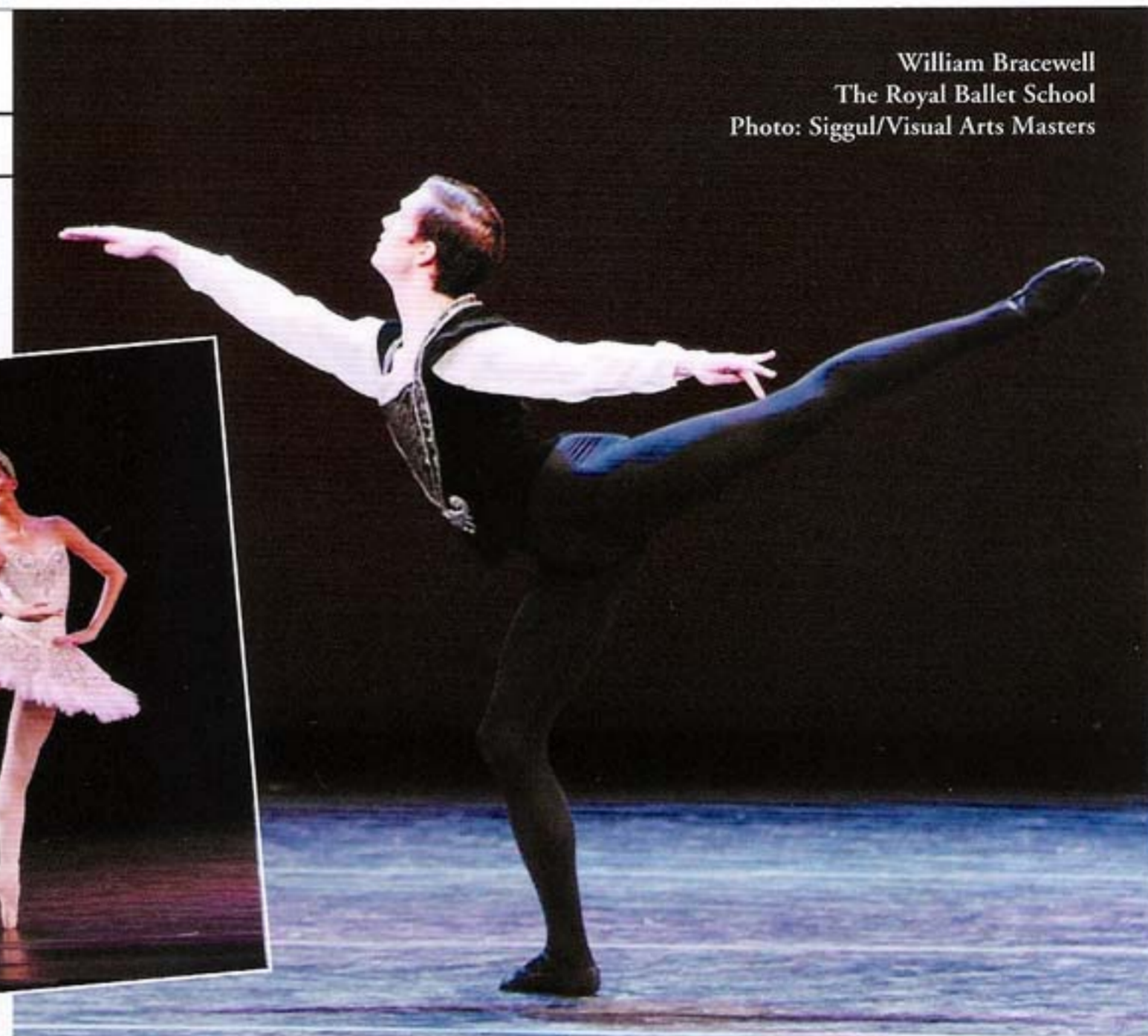
William Bracewell
The Royal Ballet School
Photo: Siggul/Visual Arts Masters



Above: Edo Wijnen
Royal Ballet School of Antwerp, Belgium
Photo: Siggul/Visual Arts Masters



Right: Hannah O'Neill
The Australian Ballet School
Photo by Nina Alover



At this year's Youth America Grand Prix, the Grand Prix went to **William Bracewell**, 18 (Royal Ballet School, London, England). Other prizes at this year's competition were as follows:

Senior Women: Gold Medal — **Hannah O'Neill**, 16, The Australian Ballet School; Silver Medal — **Zhao Wan Ting**, 17, The Rock School for Dance Education, PA, U.S.A./Beijing Dance Academy, China; Bronze Medal - **Shang Yao Qian**, 15, Beijing Dance Academy, China. Senior Men: Gold Medal - **Edo Wijnen**, 17, Royal Ballet School of Antwerp, Belgium; Silver Medal — **Joan Sebastian Zamora**, 16, The Rock School for Dance Education, PA, U.S.A.; Bronze Medal — (tie) **Arata Miyagawa**, 17, Tsubota

Ballet School, Japan; **Jong Suk Park**, 18, Washington School of Ballet, DC, U.S.A.; Youth Grand Prix - **Sam Zaldivar**, 14, Dmitri Kulev Classical Ballet Academy, CA, U.S.A.; Junior Women: Gold Medal - **Leah Christianson**, 13, Joffrey Ballet's Academy of Dance, IL, U.S.A.; Silver Medal — **Kaho Ogawa**, 14, Ballet Academy Releve, Japan; Bronze Medal — **Miko Fogarty**, 12, Diablo Ballet Apprentice Program, CA, U.S.A.; Junior Men: Gold Medal — **Derek Dunn**, 14, The Rock School for Dance Education, PA, USA; Silver Medal — **Yuto Ideno**, 14, Mie Hatanka Ballet School, Japan; Bronze Medal — **David Navarro Yudes**, 13, Escola de Dansa Marisa Yudes, Spain.



New York

Vladimir Vasiliev, the superstar of the Soviet ballet, the first Spartacus and Ivan the Terrible, collaborator of Maurice Béjart and partner of Yekaterina Maximova, is 70 years old. The birthday was celebrated at the New York City Centre on March 27 with a three-hour-long gala tribute, organized by Youth America Grand Prix's director Larissa Saveliev.

The evening opened with an entré performed by the legendary Carla Fracci dressed in a white gown with a long train. She crossed the stage unhurriedly and majestically and delivered a very personal speech in a heavy Italian accent about her once partner, Vasiliev. A video presentation of a younger Vasiliev dancing made it clear that, alas, the era of heroic male dancing is no more.

Although the gala included many brilliant stars of all nationalities, both men and women, it was a rather nostalgic affair. Even the greatest of today do not compare with Vasiliev, who was truly one of a kind — a dancer who could portray anything and anybody, from the erotic and sexually ambivalent Narcissus in a miniature created for him by Kasyan Goleizovsky, to Spartacus, equally attractive as a tender lover to his Phrygia and a ruthlessly inspiring military leader of the Roman slaves. Basil in *Don Quixote* became one of his best classical roles. Vasiliev's character dance training lent more than a touch of authenticity to his Spanish frolicking, while his technique was beyond comparison. No one could turn en dedans pirouettes quite like Vasiliev, soar through the air or invent new tricks that have since become an integral part of male ballet vocabulary. And, yet, technique has always been

placed in service to the art; Vasiliev's choreography is the same — technically demanding, but not flashy, and most of all — soulful.

The evening opened with Daria Khokhlova, an 18-year-old Bolshoi starlet, dancing the famous Scriabin's *Mazurka*, choreographed for Maximova in 1961 by Goleizovsky, and was followed by Ivan Putrov's (Royal Ballet) *Narcissus* (the composer for which was mistakenly identified in the programme as Ivan Tcherepnin, when it is Nikolai Tcherepnin, Ivan's grandfather). Although the obvious choices for a Vasiliev gala, the youngsters' renditions of the famous works only revealed their lack of deeper artistry and thought. When Maximova and Vasiliev danced Goleizovsky, both intelligence and honesty shone through; their replacements merely went through the motions, unencumbered by personalities.

A pas de deux from *La Sylphide*, performed by Yevgenia Obraztsova of Maryinsky Ballet and Emmanuel Thibault of the Paris Opera Ballet was one of the highlights of the evening, mostly due to Obraztsova's charm, femininity and impeccable execution. While Thibault was a competent James, Obraztsova's Sylphide was nothing short of enchanting. The ballerina also delighted the audience in Tchaikovsky's *Sentimental Waltz*, choreographed by Vasiliev, and *Parting* (music by John Powell), a contemporary tango crunch in Eifmanesque style by the Eifman's former leading man and Obraztsova's partner, Yuri Smekalov.

Other highlights included Daniil Simkin's signature *Les Bourgeois* and Polina Semionova (Berlin State Opera Ballet) partnered by American Ballet Theatre's David Hallberg in Béjart's *Romeo and Julia* adagio, a piece Béjart

gifted to a Maximova-Vasiliev partnership.

Hallberg also danced the rarely seen Ashton's *Dance of the Blessed Spirits* (to Gluck) — again, very pretty — and Semionova made the odd choice of introducing to New York Renato Zanella's *Alles Waltzer* (to Verdi), but then I can derive pleasure from watching Semionova sit in a chair.

The Royal Ballet's Sarah Lamb and Sergei Polunin performed *The Sleeping Beauty* pas de deux. While Lamb's interpretation of Aurora is reminiscent of Kolpakova's grand and dry academism, the statuesque and extraordinarily gifted Polunin disappointed with his sloppy technique. Rubinald Pronk (Morphoses) and Shirley Esseboom (Netherlands Dance Theatre) delighted with their fluid flexibility in Kylan's *Bella Figura* (to music of Italian Renaissance), while Olena Dolgikh and Dmytro Kondratuik of Kiev Modern Ballet demonstrated that Ukraine can do modern, and do it well.

Vasiliev's own choreography was also represented by the adagio from *Macbeth* (to Kirill Molchanov), a duet by American Ballet Theatre's Veronica Part and Gray Davis, and by two excerpts from his widely popular *Anyuta* (to Valery Gavrilin).

The gala concluded with a piece d'occasion, choreographed by Vasiliev for himself and young Khokhlova to the live accompaniment of Chopin, in which the girl was rolled around in what appeared to be an office chair, while the guest of honour threw up his arms in non-clarified despair. Following the final bows conducted by Vasiliev with great panache, the performers touchingly and spontaneously laid their flowers at the feet of the legendary dancer.

Regina Zarhina