

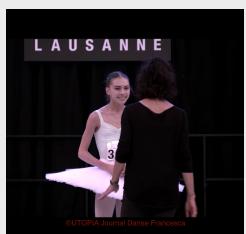
UNE DU JOUR

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Maggie Lorraine
with Samuel and Jade at
Utopia School and
Dance Troupe of
Lausanne

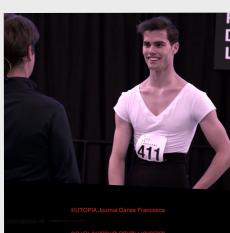


**Prix de Lausanne
2019**



Jade Mitchell

Samuel Winkler



Australia in Lausanne. Exclusive interview with Maggie Lorraine and her students, Jade Mitchell and Samuel Winkler.

On the 1st and 2nd of February, I had the pleasure of welcoming to my dance school, which I head in Lausanne with my husband, Maggie Lorraine, Leading Teacher of the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School of Melbourne, Australia. Maggie introduced two students, Jade Mitchell and Samuel Winkler, seventeen each, to the Prix de Lausanne 2019. This is the fourth time, the VCASS is present at the Prix de Lausanne: In 2012, with Calvin Richardson, now soloist at the Royal Ballet, in 2014, with Georgia Swan, currently soloist at the Queensland Ballet, and, in 2015, with Rebecca Blenskinsop, who joined the English National Ballet this year. This meeting gives me the opportunity to talk about classical dance and its different worlds. Each country has different traditions regarding dance in general, and classical dance in particular. There are nations where its divulgence is almost normal, in the sense that it is part of the basic culture, for example Russia, and in others where the amalgam is more difficult. The reasons are diverse, the relationship with the body, a secular tradition, religious aspects, lack of means and so on. Each country has an approach to this art that is its own. Although sometimes the nuances may seem small, they enclose, in themselves, substantial differences. It is therefore, in this spirit, that I interviewed Maggie Lorraine, an exceptional woman who did and does a lot for dance, with a wealth of experiences, full of meetings and exchanges dedicated to the knowledge of the other, and the curiosity to learn and share. English by birth, she lived the development of dance in England. Madame Rambert's protege... But I prefer that she be the one who tells her incredible life experience. It's a privilege to have been able to interview such a person so rich inside. Thanks, Maggie.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: Maggie, you have danced in many countries, England, South Africa, New Zealand, tell me about your incredible life and career.

Maggie Lorraine: I started dancing in England with Marie Rambert, one of the

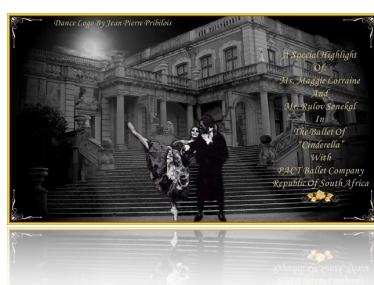
pillars of English dance. Obviously, the Rambert was influenced by the Russians, having been part of Diaghilev's company, but especially by the great Italian Maestro Enrico Cecchetti. Considering him as a very brilliant man, she modelled herself in the pedagogical vision of the Master. So, my initial training at the Rambert School, I suppose, was mixed, a combination of Italian and Russian schools. When I went from Rambert's company, where I was principal dancer, in a classical and modern repertory, to the Royal Ballet, I was rather shocked because I found myself in a very English school with a formation more rigid than the one



I came from. I believe that Rambert was a free woman, mentally more contemporary with regard to the training of the dancer. The Royal Ballet, at that time, was influenced by Ninette de Valois and Frederik Ashton, who himself had studied with the Rambert. Ashton was working on upper body and back, which benefited me. While, to simplify, the English school of Valois accentuated the work of the lower body. This aspect allowed me to strengthen and improve my technique. The strong footwork is certainly a distinctive feature of the Royal Ballet. From the Royal, I moved to what is now the English National Ballet, at the time, it was the London Festival Ballet of London. Beryl Gray, during this period, was the director of the company and came from the Royal, he was a pure product of the English ballet. The ballet master and rehearsal general manager were Australian, Joan Potter and Vasiliev

Trunov, two beautiful persons. The interesting thing to observe, looking back today, is that their way of dancing, so to make us repeat the ballets, was really different from the English one. I found myself, once again, in a mixed style of work. The Australians used the space in another way, filled it, occupied it much more than the English. At that time, I fell seriously ill and my life was in danger. Like all the dancers, I hurried to catch up and go back to work, but I wasn't physically ready to return to professional life and had a awful breakdown. I resigned from the company. After few months, I recovered, but lost confidence in my ability to return to dance. So I responded to a job advertisement as a stage director for the Repertory Drama Company. I was miraculously taken, and so began my alternative career at the Repertory Drama Company under the direction of Timothy West in Bellingham. I worked with such famous actors as Timothy West, Prunella Scales, Brian Brown, Muriel Pavlov, Robert Beatty, Peter Wyndham, Sally Anne Field and Roy Doltrice. It was a very difficult time for me, but I learned a lot, I educated myself. Later, I was taken for the musical "The King and I". This is how I met my first husband, a young emerging actor, Ron Smercakci. We got married and, having obtained a contract for a theatrical tour in South Africa, I resigned from "King and I" and departed. Following my husband, I was fortunate to have alternative experiences to the dance. For example, during the tour, they offered me to do the stage lighting. I accepted, learning so much about stage management. When you're a dancer, you have another vision of the scene, you don't realise many things. Working for the actors, I learned how to manage the space from a theatrical point of view, which are the

most effective points of the stage in order to communicate emotions. It was really interesting for me to discover another way to use the scene. At the end of the tour, we decided to stay in South Africa. Both of us were looking for work. I came to know, I don't know how, I don't remember, that they needed five dancers to dance in a cabaret. I had never danced in a cabaret, but I accepted. It was exhausting, fast changes, the public very close to your face, really tiring. I wanted to be able to go back to dancing in the theatre, but I



hadn't been dancing for too long, I had lost my technique, everything. So, I introduced myself to the PACT Ballet Company of Johannesburg, met the director and told him, "Do you need a teacher?" The answer was "No, we do not need a teacher, but if you want to dance, you are taken." I replied him "But it's too long that I don't dance", he said "Come and take lessons with the company, and when you will back in shape, we will take you". It was a gift. Of course, I accepted and, after more or less three weeks, I was absolutely not ready, they engage me. But to my great surprise, my contract was postdated, and started so far from the moment I began taking the classes. I loved working with them. I think the company was strongly influenced by the Cecchetti technique. The Ballet Director, Denise Schultze, was brilliant, an absolutely great teacher, one of the best I've ever had. Here classes were so musical and smart. She was a sensitive dancer who understood the body and the interpretation. I liked to dance in this company, I was confident. I danced beautiful roles as a soloist and first dancer. Among time, my husband had found work in a "anti-apartheid" theatre group. In Johannesburg, there was a famous dramaturge, Barry Simon, who created, with others, the Market Theatre. Nobody could buy tickets, the shows were accessible to all, and at that time it was absolutely illegal. You couldn't have a person of colour sitting next to you. Thus, I became a consultant for the movement of the Market Theatre. It was very interesting as I was involved in their improvisation sections. So, I learned a lot about theatre improvisation, it was a great experience. To return to the dance, I think Denise built her bases from the Cecchetti technique, to then move away from it. When you become a teacher, you must do it, going forward, having experiences, as I also did. I think Denise is the person who most influenced me, certainly after the Rambert teacher, obviously.



Francesca Senzasono Groux: Rambert was the first?

Maggie Lorainne: She was the first, and had a huge impact on me.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *You were young, had sixteen years when the Rambert made you enter in her company, and eighteen years when you became first dancer. Starting so young to work, at a professional level, has been for sure an incredible experience?*

Maggie Lorainne: Yes, yes, my reflection today, compared to all I have experienced, is that many people influence your path. Being the dance companies are a multicultural microcosm, even if you stay in the same company, you will suffer countless influences. I divorced my husband because as we now had different rhythms of life. I was once again a full-time dancer, and he, as an actor, was away very often because he was making films. I returned to England, to the London Festival Ballet, but after having lived in that wonderful country that is South Africa, I hated being in England. In short, to sum up, I worked with a contemporary group, a very short contract, a sort of strange combination of musicians, actors and dancers, an idea that I thought was very interesting. Then I left England to dance as a soloist and first dancer in New Zealand and Australia. The Australian Ballet is a very English company. It was born with the name of Borovansky Ballet, thanks to Russian influence, with Edouard Borovansky who danced in Anna Pavlova's company. But when it became the Australian Ballet, it was modelled on the example of the Royal Ballet...



Francesca Senzasono Groux: *I really appreciate the Australian Ballet, I think it's an interesting company, as are its dancers. Looking at it you can breathe another atmosphere...*

Maggie Lorainne: Like Australia, a vast and bright country... Sorry, Francesca, I have spent a lot of time answering your question...

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *It doesn't matter, on the contrary, it's great! At the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School, are you Director of the Ballet?*

Maggie Lorainne: I am the Leading Teacher, in charge of the Dance sector in the School.

Senzasono Groux: *So do you coordinate all that concerns the dance?*

Maggie Lorainne: Yes, yes, how to say, I work with teachers who have a great reputation, it's not like relating to young teachers. I have to deal with professors who have a lot of experience, I can't tell them what they have to do, I can't. Our educational principle is based on the identification of talent, and the physical health of students is a priority. We choose bodies that can progress in harmony with the dance, we don't choose bodies a priori. Being the classical dance at the base of the training in our school, we are very careful in identifying the feet that are likely to be able to work on the points. Taking the girls before they start studying them, we must be able to predict how their feet will grow. If the feet don't have this possibility, they aren't taken. We can't admit them in the school for, then, torture them!

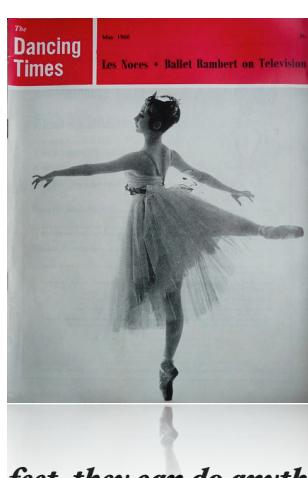


Francesca Senzasono Groux: *Okay, I understand. So, for you, for your school, is't more important to find the talent on which to work and encourage diversity rather to have bodies ready, standardised?*

Maggie Lorainne: Yes, in fact, we have very different bodies in the school.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *What you tell me is very interesting. I think that, today, we're moving towards a uniformity, from a physical point of view, that I don't find interesting. As I always say, they are beautiful but all the same. Change country but find the same bodies. The dance is beautiful because there is diversity, small, high...*

Maggie Lorainne: That's exactly what we have at school, diversity. And that's what I say to all the students I teach, "You are a dancer because you have the passion and you have to believe in your talent". Of course, there are those who will succeed immediately, and others who must work and work. For example, Jade is small, she wasn't flexible, the feet were problematic. Jade is the result of hard work done together, in synergy. This is possible by strengthening the muscles, using the technique. And when you asked me about the teachers, the difficult aspect is to constantly remind them to be more attentive to how they can help the student, without simply saying "It has to be like this". But it's difficult, an experienced teacher doesn't want to be told how to teach.



Francesca Senzasono Groux: *And what do you think about the evolution of classical ballet? Now the bodies are much more flexible, with magnificent feet, they can do anything, men and women. Do you think it's an evolution or not?*

Maggie Lorainne: I think ballet is a dynamic art, it must evolve, develop. Obviously, each of us has personal preferences. For me, we dance with the heart. If there's no emotion, but the legs are always higher, I don't care, it's not for me. I only want dancers who dance with the soul, as they are physically then it doesn't matter. I have always thought that our students should be able to be engaged in companies, with the ability to adapt to what a director will ask them. This was exactly what Vaganova said. She said that the dancers had

Maggie Lorainne and



Margot Fonteyn



to be able to face new choreographies. With the Rambert, I had a solid ballet education, but I also had a good preparation in modern, the Rambert was like that. Let's not forget that she worked with Diaghilev and Nijinsky who created avant-garde ballets for that time, extremely modern, contemporary ballets.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *I think, at that time, they were courageous. Today, we separate each aspect. Before, everything was together; while maintaining the difference of styles...*

Maggie Lorainne: The Diaghilev era was an extraordinary time. The Rambert spoke to me a lot about that time. I was a child, I really was, and the Rambert was a very motherly figure to me and talked a lot about Diaghilev, Nijinsky and Karsavina. She danced in an age of progress for dance, she was very modern indeed. But, I realised it only later, because I was too young to understand.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *And you need time to understand things...*

Maggie Lorainne: You have to live life to understand, and this is what she told me, "You work, you work all the time, but if you don't live you won't be an artist".

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *It's really interesting, dancing for you is like for me I think. The soul is the urge, we dance with the heart. If you think about dance, what does it evoke, what does it mean for you to be a dancer, to dance?*

Maggie Lorainne: For me, art is communication. I think music is the fulcrum on which everything revolves. Dance is the interpretation, through movement, of the music. Whatever genre you dance, you share its interpretation with the public. That's what I say to the students, "You have a language to communicate, you have to be aware of it, you have to communicate who you are."

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *Is there anything important to you, that you want me to add?*

Maggie Lorainne: I taught for the others. When you start teaching, you never end. You have to keep learning, just like when you were a dancer, you're never perfect and you have to keep your mind open. I became a member of The Education Committee of the International Association of Dance Medicine and Science (IADMS) and it greatly influenced me as a teacher. I work by using anatomy in class, I show students the muscles trying to make them feel and understand existing connections. Surely, my pedagogical principle is: work with the body you have, and understand it.

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Francesca Senzasono Groux: *Thus obtaining the maximum.*

Maggie Lorainne: Yes.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *I understand, I like your educational vision.*

Maggie Lorainne: I love my students.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *I see it when you teach and it's important. I think they will later realise the profound meaning of your words.*

Maggie Lorainne: Yes, it's true, many tell me that, some are teachers today.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *It's like with parents, with time you think back to their words and you think "Okay, mom, I understand why you told me..."*

Maggie Lorainne: Yes, yes.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *Do you prefer to have been a dancer or be a teacher?*

Maggie Lorainne: I loved being a dancer, but I love being a teacher!

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *So both of them but in a different way.*

Maggie Lorainne: I liked being on stage, I loved dancing, I loved very challenging roles from an interpretative point of view...

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *Which ballet you preferred to dance?*

Maggie Lorainne: What I was dancing at the time. I danced wonderful roles.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: Isn't there a role you prefer?

Maggie Lorainne: No, I couldn't say which one.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: Was dancing only important?

Maggie Lorainne: Yes.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: All that you told me, with so much generosity, is extremely interesting to me. I have been teaching for many years, I have seen everything, and I think that the body is a wonderful machine that we must understand in order to make it progress without ruining it, respecting it. Sometimes, I have the impression that in our profession it is decided for convenience or otherwise, that the dancer must enter by force into a stereotype that does not correspond to him, there is no choice.

Maggie Lorainne: It is true, only appearance without a soul.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: Thank you for everything, thank you for the trust given me.

Maggie Lorainne: Thank you, thank you for the welcome in your school, and for making us feel welcome.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: It was a real pleasure to host you. Jade, Samuel, it's up to you, are you ready? Jade, start with you. At what age did you start dancing?

Jade Mitchell: I started at five.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: Five years!? Why?

Jade Mitchell: I really wanted to dance, I asked my mother, "Can I take dance lessons?", and she brought me.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: Don't you know why?

Jade Mitchell: I felt I needed to express myself, to move.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: Have the sacrifices you faced since you were a child not weighed you down? Is it more important for you to dance?

Jade Mitchell: I love dancing, I don't care what people think, I don't feel deprived of something, I want to dance, that's what I want to do, it's what I love.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: How do you feel about this Prix de Lausanne?

Jade Mitchell: I'm very excited first of all, I'm thrilled at the idea to meet so many people from all over the world. We took the lesson today with Ruda Bejart, it was a great experience. I think Samuel and I will grow a lot as dancers and persons this week.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: Are you sure then that you will want to become a professional dancer?

Jade Mitchell: I hope so! (laughing)

Francesca Senzasono Groux: And where do you think you will dance?

Jade Mitchell: I can't tell you right now, I think there are many nice places to dance. There will be a place that will capture me, and I hope to find the right place for me.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: What do you prefer, classical or modern dance?

Jade Mitchell: I love classical dance so much, but I enjoy dancing modern dance, exploring other types of movements. It's nice to have the chance to practice both. Especially when you are a classical dancer, currently, you must be able to dance the contemporary.

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Jade Mitchell



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Samuel Winkler



Francesca Senzasono Groux: *Samuel, tell me you started dancing at the age of?*

Samuel Winkler: At the age of seven.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *Was it difficult as a boy to study dance? In Italy and Switzerland there are still many preconceptions about young people who approach this magnificent art as children. Is it different in Australia?*

Samuel Winkler: I was lucky, I hadn't difficulties. I started because my brother, the younger one, decided to try the dance. So, I had to accompany him, and for a year we followed the same course together. Then, he stopped and I continued, because I felt good, it was something special for me.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *If you think about dance, what makes you come to mind? What does it mean to be a dancer for you? Same for you Jade, what does it mean?*

Samuel Winkler: I hope it's the feeling I get when I practice it, a path to the soul, wherever you are. It is important for me to do my best.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *For you, is more important the technical part of the dance or the artistic one, or both are important?*

Samuel Winkler: Both are important. As far as I am concerned, I start by working the technique, so, later, I am able to feel, to interpret, through it.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *Can you imagine your life without the dance ?*

Samuel Winkler: I really don't know what to do without dance.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *And you Jade can you imagine yourself without the dance?*

Jade Mitchell: No.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *So, what does it mean for you to dance, to be a dancer?*

Jade Mitchell: For me, being able to express what I feel, emotions, is something special.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *And you, Samuel, what do you prefer to dance, the modern, the classical dance, both or something else? For example, I love character dance, when I practiced it I felt a wonderful feeling...*

Samuel Winkler: I think I prefer the classic, perhaps because that's what I practiced the most. I feel good when I dance the classic. I also like the modern, but I prefer the classic.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *And in which company would you like to dance?*

Samuel Winkler: I have the same thought as Jade, I don't know where I want to dance, I have to find the right place.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *Is there a ballet you love the most? Tell me your dreams, think about making a wish...*

Jade Mitchell: "Romeo and Juliet", it's my dream, the music is so beautiful...

Samuel Winkler: I don't know, the "Swan Lake" is my favourite ballet, even if the first time I saw it I got bored. I love Tchaikovsky's music.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: *In the modern?*

Samuel Winkler: It's hard to answer, there are so many companies and choreographers, I don't know

everything, maybe Wayne McGregor.

Jade Mitchell: Nods!

Francesca Senzasono Groux: It is a very vast world, with many nuances, it's true it's not simple... In the classical technique, what do you prefer to perform, the jumps, the turns...?

Samuel Winkler: Jump!

Jade Mitchell: I think turning... and the adagios.

Francesca Senzasono Groux: What is the movement that makes you feel free?

Jade Mitchell: I think in the adagios...

Samuel Winkler: Jump!



Francesca Senzasono Groux: About three months have passed since the Lausanne Competition. Jade and Samuel have danced in the semifinals improving a lot during the week. The thing that struck me, already at school from us, in the lessons and rehearsals, was their positive attitude totally open to novelty and learning. This is not always the case. Smiling and available, they made themselves known during the competition. Thanks to the Prix de Lausanne 2019, even if they didn't arrive at the final, they obtained more study proposals at Schools present at the Competition. Their choice fell on the John Neumeier's School in Hamburg. Two scholarships for two years, for Jade and Samuel, who will continue the adventure together as they did at the Prix de Lausanne. Congratulations, guys, and good luck! I will continue to follow you, as you well know!



To conclude, what to say about Maggie, a generous, sensitive but enterprising woman, always looking for something she doesn't know to learn and continue her special journey. The great experience of a different path, where the beauty and the ugly of life met and clashed, making her, for me, special. I loved and I love talking to her, exchanging opinions on the dance we both love so much. As I said at the beginning, another way to perceive dance and to teach it.

Written by Francesca Senzasono Groux

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