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Grand performance from Les Grands Ballets de Montreal

**Dancers
bring gender
politics to life**

BOB CLARK
CALGARY HERALD

A double blast of fresh, warm Mediterranean air swept through the Jubilee Auditorium on Thursday, leaving little less than a sea of delighted smiles in its wake.

It blew into the tube in the form of Les Grands Ballets de Montreal which, under the auspices of Alberta

Ballet, danced their inimitably spirited way through a thoroughly engaging program that consisted of two works by contemporary Italian master choreographer Mauro Bigonzetti — Four Seasons and Cantata. And what a wild blast it turned out to be.

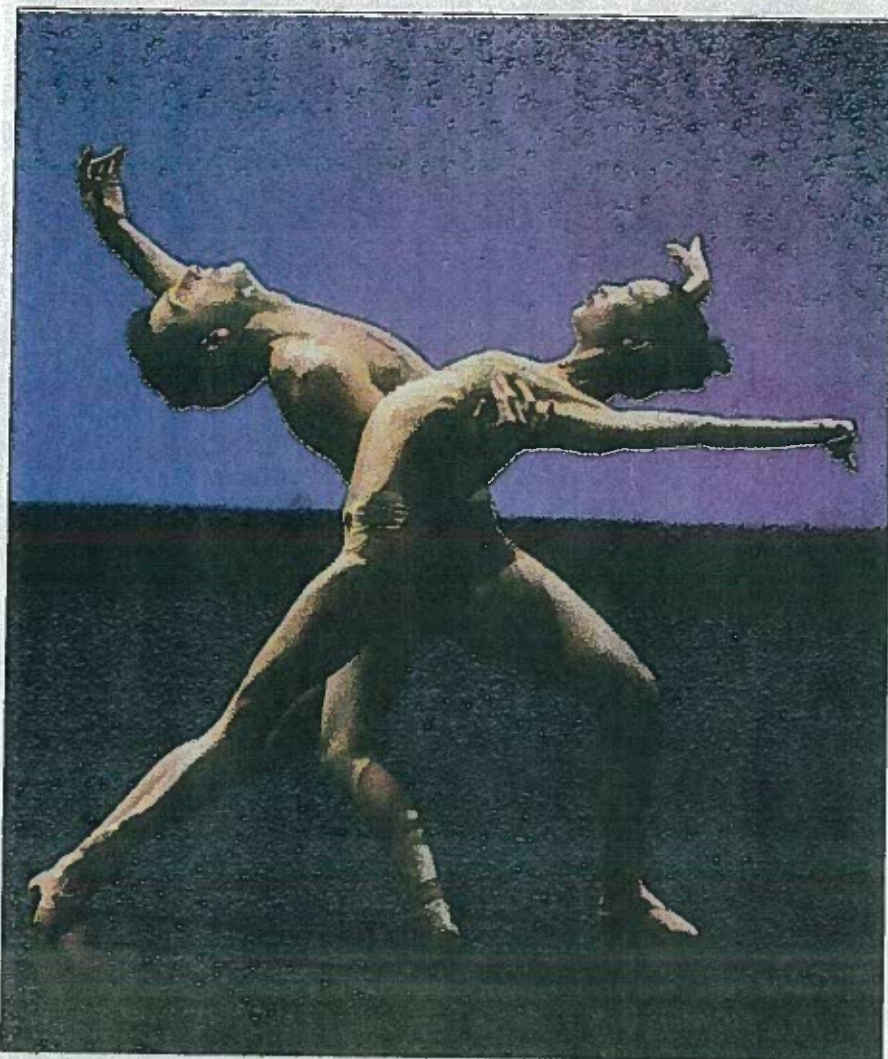
The first half of the show, a pointe-shoed setting of Vivaldi's most famous music, everywhere demonstrated a rich and wide-ranging vocabulary of personalized conveying the movement conveying the joy, humour and strain in the four seasons of human relationships.

REVIEW
Les Grands Ballets de Montreal presents Four Seasons and Cantata tonight at the Jubilee Auditorium. Tickets: Call 403-245-4549.
★★★★½

There was little that was abstract about the dance. From the outset, you could easily follow (perhaps even identify with) the emotional theatre of gender politics that the dancers so energetically yet skilfully — OK, so there were a few wobbles here and there — brought to life

through the lavish and frequently striking dance imagery Bigonzetti provided. Men rolling up and down women; comically mechanical embraces (slap!); the slow pulse of frozen, angular poses that dissolve into rapid gestural stuff that leads eventually to a detailed story of sad recollection. Duets abound — duets of doll-like manipulation, for example, of grabbing and holding and pushing away, or of rolling across the floor locked inextricably in one another's arms.

SEE BALLET, PAGE D8



Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald
Dancers perform the opening scenes of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal production of Four Seasons, presented by Alberta Ballet at Jubilee Auditorium.

FROM D1 BALLET: High-octane evening

The movement is organic — there's a strong sense of motivic development and recurrence, as well as flurries of rapid upper-body movement that are nearly kaleidoscopic in effect during ensembles.

There's drama and athleticism in the dances, but lots of humour, too: a solo dancer walks to the front of the stage, strikes a pose and then shrugs and walks away; two guys try to cajole a third with moves reminiscent of pop dance.

Suffice it to say that the second work on the Les Grands Ballets program, the folklorically inspired Cantata, kicked what was already a high-octane eve-

ning of entertainment up another notch by adding some good ol' fashioned head-tossing, hair-pulling raw energy to the evening's mix. It was like Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, dances villageoises stuff done up southern Italian style — or better yet, Bigonzetti-style.

The women are dragged and flung, the men are literally stood upon, rising slowly to the occasion on all fours — a demonstration, no doubt, of how strong their love is for the women standing on their backs.

Immensely likable, the colourful and beautifully costumed Cantata, which fairly explodes with exu-

berance and good spirits, takes on an even more festive dimension through the live participation of the four singer-musicians comprising the all-female ensemble, Gruppo Musicale Assurd.

Tales of jealousy, passion and seduction are told in traditional music (using tambour and squeeze-box) that spans from lullaby and 19th-century serenade to an arrangement that has almost a folk-rock beat — as well as in dance that's rooted in vigour and ends in wild abandon.

What a ball.
What a blast.

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