

Transitions

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Germany's
 Stiftung
 TANZ
 transition
 centre, the
 newest
 member of the
 International

Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers, was our host for this year's international dancer transition meetings in June.

The discussions centred on the effect the global economic situation would have on the dancers in our countries and what we, as transition centres, could do to support them in these turbulent times.



Celebrating our Stories

We spoke of dancer mobility – with many dancers having international careers, how can we collaborate to ensure that their needs are met outside their home country? We shared best practices for outreach and education, and on the last day joined the International Federation of Actors (Europe) for the presentation of a study on dancer transition in Europe. Many countries have no transition support and little education about the issue – reminding me that Canada's dancers are very fortunate indeed.

As I stood looking out over Berlin, it struck me that the subject of the previous three days – transition – was personified by the city below. Over the past 70 years, Berlin has experienced several extreme transitions. Some were imposed, some chosen, but each involved challenges that took courage,

determination and creativity to overcome – all qualities inherent to dancers. As part of our 25th anniversary, we have been collecting dancers' stories of transition from across the country. They are wonderful tales that speak to the tenacity and passion dancers carry with them through transitions of all kinds, and ensure their success. As we head into the 2011-12 dance season – and many of you head back to school – I wish you all the very best and remember, we are here to support you! *D*

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Simone Orlando: Embodying Dance



As a child, Simone Orlando began making up her own movement phrases and floor routines

in her family home. Finding herself happiest while moving, the Vancouver-born artist followed her youthful muse for years before finally asking her mother for ballet lessons at age eleven – where she found “herself”. Though she started relatively late, she used this new passion and drive to advance quickly, and was eventually accepted by Canada’s National Ballet School.

Leaving home and moving across the country to immerse oneself in dance studies full-time is only the first of a number of possible transitions a career as a professional performer will involve. Simone moved to Toronto and began dancing alongside some of the best young dancers in the country.

She finished her studies and was offered a position with The National Ballet of Canada under the artistic direction of Reid Anderson in 1989, and, surrounded by idols like Karen Kain and Rex Harrington, the first small steps into this new world were both exciting and intimidating. Instead of class and recitals, there was choreography and performances in front of thousands. Her confidence grew, and Simone spent six years rising through the company. In 1996, she joined Ballet BC under the direction of John Alleyne, and danced for twelve years as one of the company’s most celebrated principal artists. She continuously grew and evolved into “herself”, a dancer, a soloist, a powerful, creative being that commanded the attention of full houses from

centre stage. She was praised as an artist who had been “touched by divinity”.

A sudden injury changed all that. While Simone always knew she wouldn’t be dancing forever, she didn’t expect her exit from the stage to come so soon, and for it to not have been her choice. Career-ending injuries do happen, blind to age, talent and potential, but it’s still difficult to imagine oneself unexpectedly dealing with so harsh a foe. As well, Simone had taken advice from Joysanne Sidimus to heart early in her career, and been conscientious about developing her own choreography – her Plan B. However, the nature of her injury complicated these plans, and Simone had to formulate a Plan B to her Plan B. She had to look beyond choreography and imagine it as an aspect of her new life, instead of the entirety.

Reid Anderson was now in Stuttgart, directing the Stuttgart Ballet. Simone had been a member of the DTRC for years, and, after applying for and receiving a Career

Exploration Grant, she flew to Germany to shadow Reid as an apprentice artistic director. She began to learn what it was like to manage, motivate and coax the very best out of each dancer, in addition to all the administrative responsibilities inherent to such a position. Becoming as skilled at, and as passionate about, her next career as she was about dancing was incredibly important to Simone. It was a tremendous opportunity to explore a different vein of the dance world from the inside out.

As Simone realigns her place in the dance world, she feels the same about her position as artistic director of the DTRC’s 25th anniversary gala, *Choreographing Change*, in Vancouver on December 1st – it’s an opportunity to explore the variety of responsibilities on her plate. Which aspect will prove the most enjoyable: being in the studio, creating the finale with alumni dancers? Programming the evening? Production? Creative strategy, marketing and communications? Or, perhaps, the business side of dance will turn out to be most compelling. Simone has had the highest level of training possible during her first career, and was injured at its zenith. She is eager that the education she pursues as the groundwork for her second career is of equally high quality and challenge, and is considering doing a business degree. The possibility of combining artistry and business to found her own company is not out of the question.

As such, she is excited about the chance to “test drive” artistic directorship in a very real way, and pleased that the fact she is doing so for the DTRC means that her story has, in some ways, come full circle. Life is good beyond the stage. *D*

www.dtrc.ca



Back to School with DTRC Members

It's that time of year again – textbooks are opening and students all over the globe are taking the first step of the next phase of their life. This fall, some of our members are poised to embark upon their own journeys toward second or parallel careers – and will become part of a diverse work force contributing to the enrichment of society. Here, we profile three DTRC grant recipients who are embracing their new endeavours with the same perseverance, passion, and drive that they have poured into dance. Best of luck to all of our members who are returning to school this fall!



**MICHAEL
CHALLENGER**

From:
Vancouver, BC
Dance style:
Television and
Musical Theatre

Retraining in: Filmmaking at the New York Film Academy at Universal Studios in Los Angeles, California

Why did you decide to go back to school?

In 2007, I started my commercial production company, ANU Productions. While running this company and working in entertainment, I found myself being pulled more and more toward the film industry. Through DTRC career counselling, I realized that formal education was the best way to gain the skills to grow my company.

What skills did you acquire as a dancer that you believe will benefit you in your retraining?

Growing up as a performer will not only support me as a proficient technical director, but as a director that can communicate effectively and empathetically with his talent and crew.



**MELANIE
FERRO**

From:
Halifax, NS
Dance style:
Contemporary
Retraining in:

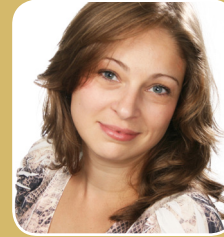
Pharmacy at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia

What drew you to a career in pharmacy?

It seemed like the perfect fit! There are many options for pharmacists – you can work in a hospital, the community, retail or the industry. I wanted this chapter of my life to be flexible and challenging, and pharmacy is an ever-changing industry.

Do you feel that your dance background will help you become a better pharmacist?

Dance has helped me on so many fronts – it has made me a well-rounded individual who can better communicate, persevere, and problem-solve. My dance background has made me the person I am today and will guide me on my new career path.



**MARTINE
LUSIGNAN**

From:
Montreal, QC
Dance style:
Ballet
Retraining in:

Political Science at York University, Glendon Campus, in Toronto, Ontario

What led you to political science?

In 2009, I obtained my certificate in Organizational Leadership at HEC Montreal. Learning about communication, ethics, leadership, management, and other cultures strengthened my desire to immerse myself in a course of study that would deepen my knowledge of politics and social science.

How do you envision your future after school?

I would like to work for the government – perhaps for Heritage Canada, arts councils or the consulate. I have my visions and aspirations, and I still do not know exactly what form they will take, but I love the process – it may not be choreographing, but it's not that different! *D*

DTRC Receives CAEA Award of Distinction

The DTRC is pleased to announce that the Canadian Actors' Equity Association has selected us to receive its inaugural CAEA Award of Distinction. This award recognizes individuals or organizations that have made remarkable contributions to the Association and to the Canadian live performance community. We would like to thank them for this honour, and we look forward to continuing to assist their membership in transitioning to new careers within the arts milieu and beyond! *D*

25th Anniversary Celebrations

For 25 years, the DTRC has been helping dancers make vital transitions into, within, and from professional performing careers. Our 25th anniversary is a wonderful opportunity to connect our supporters with the dancers whose lives they have so generously touched.

In order to celebrate our achievements thus far and raise vital funds for the future, we are hosting two galas – *Vive la Danse 25* in Toronto on October 26th and *Choreographing Change* in Vancouver on December 1st. These two events will help to build a bright and thriving future for

Canadian dancers for years to come.

In addition, we will be releasing our 25th anniversary souvenir book, *25 Transitions*, which celebrates a variety of transitions – from those just beginning their dance careers, to those who have embraced life beyond the stage.

We hope you are able to join us, but if you are not able to attend, please consider making a donation in lieu or a contribution towards the cost of a dancers' attendance. *D*

For more information, please call 1-800-667-0851 or visit www.dtrc.ca



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Celebrating 25 years helping dancers make transitions



Scott McLeod



professional performing careers