Mark Godden, Resident Choreographer

Even though he lives in Montreal, Quebec, Mark Godden is referred to as HARID’s resident choreographer. The title is not much of a stretch, however, because Godden has spent considerable time creating new ballets for the school’s students each and every year since 1992. Godden’s contemporary-movement residencies and rehearsal periods, which typically span five weeks each winter, are considered an established and vital part of HARID’s curriculum.

“Classes in ballet technique, pointe, variations, partnering, and men’s classes obviously make up the bulk of our curriculum,” says director, Gordon Wright. “After all, we are—first and foremost—a ballet school. The study of other movement styles is essential for today’s dancers, however. For this reason, classes in modern, character, Spanish, and jazz also factor heavily into our program. In addition, contemporary ballet is also very important, and this is where Mark Godden’s amazing talent comes into play.”

“Mark is regularly commissioned by professional ballet companies to create innovative new works,” continues Wright. “But, each year over the past two decades, he has reserved time to visit HARID and work with our students. The experience of having a choreographer create a new work, just for them, is a very special and rewarding experience for dancers. Mark’s commitment to HARID has made this wonderful opportunity a regular part of our curriculum. It’s amazing, and I am very grateful for the time and the creative gifts (eighteen original works) he has given us over the years.”

Mark, what is the difference between working at HARID and with professional companies? When I’m choreographing for a ballet company, out of necessity, everything generally revolves around my time and needs. At HARID, it’s different—it’s about the needs of the students. And that is how it should be. I’m happy to work as part of the faculty and be part of the fabric of the school.

In recent years, you’ve done a two-week residency before returning several months later to choreograph a new work. Why is that? We introduced the January residencies so I would have more time to produce material. Now I’m often able to incorporate movement I’ve worked on during the residency into my new ballet. But, I don’t force it if the piece is telling me it needs something else.

When I used to come in only once for a few weeks each year, I never had time to coach the work I created. I’d have to set the movement and go, leaving the piece in the hands of a faculty member. Now, I have more time to coach the dancers, which is great.

Is there anything special about working with the students at HARID? I’ve always looked forward to coming to HARID each year. What’s special is that the students are taught a real methodology. When I arrive, I know where they are in their training and I pretty much know what they need from me.

The dancers are competent at making very specific shapes with their bodies. But, other things must come into play as well. You have to make a distinction between the classical piece you’re doing, the contemporary piece you’re doing, and the character piece you are doing. One can’t dance everything the same way. You have to transform yourself for each work. I spend a lot of time talking about this with the dancers. “You do something one way with your classical technique, but another way for me.” If you can find both ways; if you are given the freedom to explore both ways; then you become better at movement; you become a better dancer.

Can you say something about the impetus for the piece you are creating for HARID this year? It’s inspired by a 1928 silent film called The Man Who Laughs (starring Conrad Veidt), one of the famous old German Expressionist films. The story is from a Victor Hugo short story.

As a young child, the main character is adopted by gypsies. Horribly, they cut his mouth in such a way that his lips can no longer close and his teeth always remain exposed. He’s mortified by the permanent disfigurement he must live with. At some point, he finds a little girl who happens to be blind and he wanders the countryside with her until both are taken in by a man who runs a circus.

Continued on page 2
Both characters are flawed—him by his disfigurement and her by her blindness. They eventually form a close bond and come to need one another. I started imagining this dynamic being played out between a ballerina and a choreographer. She’s blind and there’s something wrong with him, but he conceals it behind a mask. And, as in the silent films, I liked the idea of inserting text in between the action, so I’ve included little cues to help tell the story. In the end, the choreographer may reveal his flaw. But, since I haven’t yet finished the ballet, you’ll have to wait until opening night to find out!

(For more information about HARID’s resident choreographer, Mark Godden, visit www.harid.edu/resident-choreographer.)

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### Student Outreach Program Once More Filled to Capacity

This past December, HARID once again presented a series of dance performances for more than 3,000 fourth- and fifth-grade students from South Palm Beach County schools. The performances, generously underwritten by JPMorgan Private Bank, featured Divertissements from The Nutcracker, Act II. The children responded enthusiastically to the dancers by applauding and calling out “Bravo!” and “Bravi!”, as they had been taught to do prior to the raising of the curtain. HARID presents the annual performances free of charge for the students and their schools, including bus transportation to and from the theater.

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### 2013 Summer School Enrollment Finalized

After conducting auditions in eighteen cities across the United States, HARID’s faculty and director have selected fifty-eight young dancers to attend the Conservatory’s 2013 Summer School, June 24—July 19. Another exciting and productive summer is anticipated!

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### Coral Lakes Outreach Event Hosted by Steven Caras

The residents of Coral Lakes in Boynton Beach were treated to a unique presentation on April 4. Steven Caras, a former dancer with the New York City Ballet, renowned dance photographer, and subject of the Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary entitled Steven Caras: See Them Dance, hosted an evening with The HARID Conservatory featuring choreographer Mark Godden.

After an impressive introduction celebrating Godden’s accomplishments in the world of dance, Caras interviewed the choreographer, covering his years with Canada’s Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Nederlands Dans Theater to his subsequent development and experiences as an international choreographer. Godden has received numerous awards for his original ballets, and several of his full-length works have been made into award-winning films.

In his presentation, Caras included still images of Godden as a dancer and a video excerpt from his full-length ballet, Dracula. Godden continues to create works for leading ballet companies, including Boston Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens du Montreal, Milwaukee Ballet, BalletMet, American Repertory Ballet, Louisville Ballet, North Carolina Dance Theatre, and Northern Ballet Theater in England.

Following the interview (during which HARID faculty member Victoria Schneider conducted an on-stage warm up for the dancers), Godden provided the Coral Lakes audience with a sneak preview of the new work he is creating for the school’s upcoming 25th Anniversary Spring Performances.

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### 25th Anniversary Spring Performances

2013 is HARID’s 25th anniversary year and, to celebrate this important milestone, a special series of performances are planned for May 24–26!

The program will include the adagio and pas de trois from Paquita; the Act I waltz and Act III Czardas from Swan Lake; Flower Festival in Genzano; and the premiere of Mark Godden’s most-recent new work.

In addition, HARID’s director, Gordon Wright, has invited a number of the school’s distinguished alumni to perform as guest artists. Joffrey Ballet dancers, Matthew Adamczyk (Class of 2003) and Mahallia Ward (2011) will dance the pas de deux from Wayne McGregor’s ballet Infra on Friday, May 24. On Saturday, May 25, and Sunday, May 26, Royal Winnipeg Ballet principal dancer Amanda Green (2003) and her partner Tristan Dobrowney will perform the pas de deux from Mark Godden’s As Above, So Below.

The 25th Anniversary Spring Performances will be held at the Countess de Hoernle Theater, 5100 Jog Road, in Boca Raton. Tickets are now on sale. To reserve your seats, call 561-998-8038 or visit HARID’s ticket office at 2285 Potomac Road (9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., weekdays). Tickets are also available online at www.harid.edu/performances.
Luncheon Draws Special Guests
By Marci Shatzman, March 13, 2013
(reprinted courtesy of the Boca Raton Forum)

After a 20-year career with the renowned Kirov Ballet in her native Russia, young dancers listen up when teacher Svetlana Osiyeva is doing a run-through, especially for special guests.

One frown and a ballerina knows her position is not up to snuff or a male dancer’s lift doesn’t quite make it. But sitting on the sidelines next to The Harid Conservatory’s board president, John Wargo, it’s hard not to be dazzled by a battalion of ballet dancers going through their paces.

Their 25th Anniversary Spring Performances are May 24 through 26 at the Countess de Hoernle Theater at Spanish River High School. But that’s not even why Wargo’s mother, Joan Wargo, hosted a luncheon for twenty Boca Raton philanthropists, including Pat Thomas, Christine E. Lynn, Elaine Johnson Wold, Marilyn Swillinger and Anne Green, last week to hear HARID’s story and watch the dancers in action.

A bastion of tuition-free, four-year ballet training for young dancers since 1987, HARID houses, educates, and trains dancers ages 14 to 18 in ninth to twelfth grades. “Most are from the U.S., but some are international students,” said longtime executive vice president and director, Gordon Wright.

This year, HARID’s faculty auditioned 350 prospects; then selected the best sixty students, based on what Wright calls “stringent, talent-based” criteria for admission. Prospective students come to the campus for a four-week summer camp to see if they’re a good fit, he said. At the end of the summer program, HARID chooses the top twenty to twenty-five students for admission to the following academic year.

Although the dance training is free, the academic curriculum, now delivered virtually, and other on-campus living expenses at the private boarding school cost $15,000 a year, Wright told the guests. “But, we award more than $100,000 in student financial aid each year,” he added. HARID does “back handsprings” to help talented students attend. And, when the dancers approach graduation, the school helps them apply to colleges and audition for ballet companies. “Eighty professional companies, all over the world, have hired our alumni,” he said.

“Renowned HARID alumnus Marcelo Gomes still comes down to visit and he even takes classes with the kids,” Wright added. Gomes is a principal dancer with American Ballet Theater in New York, and is considered by some to be “Number one in the world as a partner,” said Wright.

National Honor Society Inducts New Members

On March 13, seven students were inducted into the HARID Chapter of the National Honor Society during a special dinner held in Russo Hall. Conservatory president John Wargo and director Gordon Wright attended the ceremony, along with many of the faculty and staff members. The new inductees are Julia Doering, Andrea Fabbri, Kelsey Tierney, Rebecca Kelley, Jenna Gooden, Vara Reom, and Kelly Williams.

March 23: A Memorable Evening at the Kravis Center!

Many of HARID’s faculty and staff members attended a performance of American Ballet Theatre at the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts on March 23. Four of the six HARID alumni currently dancing with ABT were featured that evening. Company soloist, Isabella Boylston (Class of 2005) and Isadora Loyola (2007) performed in the opening Mark Morris ballet, Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes. Next, principal dancer, Marcelo Gomes (1996) partnered Julie Kent in the white swan pas de deux from Act II of Swan Lake. In the closing ballet of the evening, Lauren Post (2005) was featured as the Rancher’s Daughter in Agnes de Mille’s American classic, Rodeo. It was a proud, exciting evening for HARID!

The performance wasn’t the only exciting and memorable part of the evening, however. During the intermission, HARID director, Gordon Wright, escorted an unsuspecting Susan Fulks out into the theater lobby and up the grand staircase onto the piano landing, where he had conspired to join a group of close friends and colleagues. There, under a previously arranged spotlight and in clear view of hundreds of theater attendees, he dropped to one knee and proposed to Ms. Fulks. Her positive response was met with cheers and applause from everyone in the theater! For Susan and Gordon, both of whom have spent much of their lives in the theater, it was a wonderfully appropriate setting for the announcement of their engagement.

HARID wishes Susan and Gordon much happiness together, always.
HARID’s Class of 2013

While HARID’s current student body is the largest ever enrolled (forty-seven students), this year’s graduating class will be among the school’s smallest. Just six seniors will graduate in May. John Abenanty, Aimee Cover, Wayne Ellis, Vanessa Lai, Johanna Thiger, and Reagan Wise will receive their diplomas during HARID’s commencement and awards dinner on May 28, after which they will enjoy a brief holiday before embarking upon the next stage of their young lives. Congratulations and best wishes to each member of HARID’s Class of 2013!

Please Support Our Talented Young Dancers

HARID remains North America’s only tuition-free professional-training school for dancers. Nevertheless, the families of many students cannot afford the necessary fees for academic courses, housing, and meals. The funds used to provide financial assistance for such families are raised each year through HARID’s Annual Fund Campaign.

This year, HARID seeks to raise $100,000 from individuals, private foundations, and corporations. While we are well on our way, we need your help to successfully achieve our fund-raising goal by June 30.

Your support is vital to the school. Please help our talented young students by contributing generously to HARID’s Annual Fund Campaign. Each and every dollar will be used to offset student fees. The dancers and their families—along with the faculty and staff—will be grateful for your help.

You can now make a secure donation to HARID on line! Visit www.harid.edu/contribute.

25th Anniversary Reunion Planned

HARID will host an alumni reunion in May, planned to coincide with the 25th Anniversary Spring Performances. The reunion will officially begin with a reception at the school on Friday afternoon, after which the alumni will attend the opening-night dance performance. Additional weekend activities will include a ballet class taught for the alumni by faculty member Victoria Schneider, a Saturday-evening reunion dinner, and brunch on Sunday. The campus will remain open to the alumni throughout the weekend so they can enjoy visiting with one another and reminisce over photo albums and performance videos. The faculty and staff look forward to reconnecting with many of their former students.

Thank You, Annette

A fond farewell and best wishes to long-time HARID friend and volunteer, Annette Weinreb. After twenty-two years living in Florida, and nineteen years of volunteer service at HARID, Annette is moving to Sonoma Valley in California to be near her family.

Every Tuesday since 1994, Annette has driven from Boynton Beach to work in HARID’s ticket office. She has also served as an usher at dozens of HARID performances. Annette always exhibits a wonderful sense of humor and, being extremely well read and informed, she is able to offer an astute observation on any subject. Her wit and engaging conversation have always been enjoyed by HARID’s administrative staff.

Thank you for your many years of service to HARID, Annette. We will dearly miss you!

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We hope you have enjoyed reading HARID’s Spring Newsletter. The next issue will be published in November.

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