

The London Ballet Circle

Doreen Wells Masterclass

Tuesday 7th Oct 2014
Gresham Centre, EC2V

Situated in Sir Christopher Wren's St Anne & St Agnes Church, the Gresham Centre was an unusual venue for a Masterclass. The architecture provided a dramatic backdrop against which Doreen Wells and her nine students practised *The Ribbon Dance* from *La Fille Mal Gardee*.

Ms Wells was well known to many of the 40 or so audience members. She joined *The Sadler's Wells Ballet* in the 1950s, then danced with the Touring Company for many years. With Christopher Gable as Colas, she became their first Lise in *Fille*. She also created the role of *Raymonda* for Rudolf Nureyev and later went on to dance in several musicals including *On Yours Toes* and *42nd Street*. Ms Wells glamour and vivacity were still very much in evidence.

Five of the students had been selected from Central School of Ballet and three from the Royal Ballet Upper School. The ninth dancer was London Ballet Circle's youngest member, Raphaela Jewell, who at eleven years of age was seven years younger than the other dancers.

The students warmed up at the barre with Ayako Jakubiel, ably accompanied by the pianist, Jorge Carrasco. Once the students were prepared, Ms Wells demonstrated *The Ribbon Dance* and then began teaching the various parts. It was fascinating to see the students gradually progress from marking the steps to giving a full performance both in groups and individually. Ms Wells watched each of the dancers carefully and made corrections which the girls quickly and eagerly incorporated in their performances. Despite the slipperiness of the floor, both Ms Wells and the students danced on with smiles and good humour!

It is difficult to say whether the evening was enjoyed most by Ms Wells, the pupils or the audience. Certainly Raphaela had wonderful experience and proudly stated, "it was hard work

but I got through it!" The audience showed their appreciation with warm and enthusiastic applause. It was a memorable occasion.

Jean Wilde

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