

SPOTLIGHT – Sam Archer, Boris Lermontov in *The Red Shoes* Tues 31 January 2017

Tell us a bit about your role in Matthew Bourne's production of *The Red Shoes*:

I play the role of Boris Lermontov, the director of the Lermontov Ballet Company. He runs the company and makes all the final decisions, artistically and financially. He is a charismatic impresario but can also be ruthless and demanding to get what he wants. He's a visionary.

I was also the Choreographic Assistant, helping Matthew Bourne (Artistic Director & Choreographer), Etta Murfitt (Associate Artistic Director & Choreographer) and Neil Westmoreland (Resident Director & Assistant Choreographer) in the creation of the show. This meant assisting with creating choreography and helping with the development of the story.

What is your favourite moment in *The Red Shoes* for your character?

My favourite moment in the show for my character is probably the duet with Vicky in Act One when he realises she could be the dancer to take his company and his ideas/visions to the next level. I also love the little scene in Act Two when Vicky returns. It shows Lermontov at his most vulnerable and proves he actually is human. I think he realises he needs Vicky as much as she needs him (not in a romantic way) and when she returns, its like he's whole again.



*Sam Archer (right) as Lermontov dancing
with Ashley Shaw (left) as Vicky Page
(Photo: Johan Persson)*

What has inspired how you created and play your character?

I use lots of different inspirations when creating a role. Obviously Anton Walbrook's portrayal of Boris Lermontov in the original film played a huge part but I also wanted to make the character my own. Matthew likes us to do lots of research before and during rehearsals. I wanted to look at other directors and artistic directors, real and fictitious, from the past and present. I found out the character of Lermontov was, in part, inspired by Sergei Diaghilev, the impresario who founded The Ballet Russes, so understandably I researched as much as I could about the company and the man

himself. I also looked at J. Arthur Rank, the producer of the film and the director, Michael Powell. I also spoke to Matthew, as I realised he has a lot of similarities with Lermontov, with being in charge of a leading dance company and the struggles that come with the job.

It was also interesting to find out how we could make Lermontov move/dance. I took a lot of inspiration from Fred Astaire and other stars from the 1940s.

NEW/ADVENTURES RE;BOURNE

If you've been in a New Adventures show other than The Red Shoes, how does this new work differ in terms of what may have been asked from you thematically?

This is my eighth different show with the company but the first time I've been Choreographic Assistant. I was in the original cast of *Edward Scissorhands*, so have been a part of creating a new show before but during the rehearsals and creation of *The Red Shoes* I worked much more closely with Matthew, Etta and Neil in developing material for the show and the story. I also took part in the workshops which were held before we started rehearsals.

It was a fantastic experience to be a part of the creative team and to see how they all worked in developing a new show. I'm also a big fan of the 1940s era so was able to help with the different styles of dance from that time.

If your role is played by someone else also how has this informed how you develop/play the character yourself?

It's always beneficial sharing a role with someone. You get to create and develop the character together, plus it means you're able to watch the show, which gives you a greater understanding of the piece. You can share ideas but also have the freedom to make it your own.



Sam Archer (right) as Lermontov with Chris Trenfield (left) as Julian Craster, who also plays the role of Lermontov

How do you reflect on your performance after the show other than receiving notes from other company members/resident director etc?

I believe it's always good to self note after the show, especially with a new piece. You can reflect on what worked or what didn't work or what you think you might need to work on. It's also good to keep discussing the role with the person you're sharing it with as they might have new ideas or thoughts. The show is constantly evolving which keeps it fresh and exciting.

You can follow Sam on Twitter & Instagram: @sarcheruk for a further insight into his world.