

## **DANCER OF THE WEEK – Christopher Marney** *Fri 24 June*

Matthew Bourne's *Sleeping Beauty* reawakened this week at the LG Arts Center in Seoul, South Korea and will be there until Sunday 3 July. Nick Kyprianou, our Audience Engagement Coordinator spoke to Christopher about his long history with the Company.

Christopher began working with Matthew Bourne fresh out of training in 1999, with Adventures in Motion Pictures and then with New Adventures. He is currently playing Count Lilac in the current tour of *Sleeping Beauty* and then will be taking up his exciting, new post as Artistic Director of Ballet Central when the tour has finished in September.



### ***When did you start taking dance classes?***

I used to perform at the Queens Theatre, in Hornchurch, when they had a repertoire company there. Anytime they needed children in a production I would audition and from there I joined the agency at Sylvia Young and started classes in dance and drama from about 8 years old. It wasn't until about 14 that I started ballet at Italia Conti. I loved performing but wasn't sure which pathway I wanted to take so those schools gave me an all-round experience. I felt so grown up taking the tube and doing auditions when I was little, even if my parents were escorting me! They introduced me to a love for theatre.

### ***Where did your formal training take place?***

I auditioned for a few professional schools at 16, including Laines, English National Ballet School and Central School of Ballet and chose the latter because I had decided to focus on dance and wanted to attend somewhere that would enable me to develop in all styles and genres. This is where I met the school's director Christopher Gable who I was amazed by because of the way he spoke about life as a dancer. His career as a dancer, actor, choreographer and director inspired me to think that it was possible for me to achieve the same.

### ***What drew you to the Company?***

I auditioned for Adventures in Motion Pictures when they were re-casting *Swan Lake* the first time it was revived in 1999. I had seen the show in 1996 when it was at the Piccadilly Theatre. As a student at the time I remember being bowled over and wondering if I could ever do it! I loved that it was a dance company where the acting was so prevalent. I had seen Northern Ballet Theatre a lot but never a contemporary dance company where narrative was so important.

I got the job and later that year played the Prince when the company toured to Europe. I knew I had found a home within the company and though I have been lucky to have the freedom to take time away and dance elsewhere I have always felt welcomed back. It's the place I have been the happiest in my career.

### ***Do you have any hobbies/interests outside of dance?***

Choreography is something I have always been into and I have managed to run it alongside my work as a freelancer, not really as a hobby but another strand to my job in the dance world. Outside of dance I have lots of interests but they all seem to feed into theatre somehow! I'm very much into dance history especially at the turn of the century, I am currently studying a course in counseling and psychotherapy, oh and I've recently started doing spin classes!

# NEW/ADVENTURES RE;BOURNE

## ***What's it like being on tour and in a different place every week?***

I love travelling, it's one of the reasons I enjoy my job so much. As a dancer I have pretty much been paid to travel the globe doing something I love. It's not so much luck as we have all worked very hard for a very long time to get here, but we are lucky to have found something we love and be doing it as a career. Different stages and audiences and the reactions and histories of all the theatres we visit are so special. It can also be difficult. You sacrifice a lot. Being away means you miss out on special occasions with family and don't see loved ones as much as you would like. You find ways and when you can combine the two it's really wonderful. To think my family have been around the world probably four times because of my dancing makes me very happy.



*Christopher with Jacques d'Amboise*

## ***Do you have a favourite venue to perform at?***

Performing at the New York City Center was fantastic. The stage and auditorium is not huge but the thought of all the people who have connections with that venue made it an immense experience for me. It was home to the Ballet Russe, Bob Fosse and Jerome Robbins danced there. I was also lucky enough to meet Jacques d'Amboise (pictured left), well known for being a principal dancer and choreographer for New York City Ballet, when we performed *Sleeping Beauty*. He was a childhood idol of mine! In the UK, Sadler's Wells and the Old Vic are two Theatres that both hold special performing memories for me.

## ***Do you have a favourite costume you've worn during your time with New Adventures so far?***

I seem to always be in white! White all-in-one as the Prince in *Swan Lake*, Romeo's white tights in *Dorian Gray*, the suit and hair as Angel in *Cinderella* and white pants in *Spitfire*! Can't think of a favourite but enjoyed my emerald, silk dressing gown and sock suspenders as the Merman in *Infernal Gallop* (pictured below).



*Christopher in Infernal Gallop (photo: Roy Tan)*

# NEW/ADVENTURES RE;BOURNE

***What's your favourite role that you have performed as so far, in the Company, and is there another New Adventures production that you would love to take part in?***

Each part has meant a lot to me in different ways but the Prince in *Swan Lake* is my favourite by far. It was the first principal role I got and the one I have done the most. It pushes you as an actor and challenges you as a dancer in the sense that the audience are seeing the story through your eyes. There isn't a moment onstage unaccounted for and it draws on you to give yourself entirely, which when you do gives back incredibly. I remember feeling utterly drained at the end of every show, mentally as well as physically but then loved getting up the next day and doing it all again. It's a blessing and very rare to find something like that.

As for future productions I feel sad to say I won't be involved with *The Red Shoes*. I had to make a big decision and will instead be taking up the Artistic Director role at Ballet Central, which is the touring company of Central School of Ballet. I hope to be back now and again to perform with the company in the near future though.

**You are able to follow Christopher on Twitter (@chrismarney) and Instagram (@christophermarney) for a further insight into his world!**