

Next Competition

Mihaela Vieru interviewed **Nilay Yeşiltepe Güngör**,
Artistic Director of the Istanbul International Ballet
Competition



Photo by Yasar Saracoglu

Please tell us how you initially got started in ballet.

I started ballet in Istanbul Conservatory at the age of 10. I still remember the first day my mother drove me to the exams. I had valuable Turkish, British and Russian professors during my studies. I finished the Conservatory in 9 years instead of the official period of 11 years. Then I moved to Ankara where I lived for two years and received my Diploma of Higher Education in Ballet. I joined the Istanbul State Ballet in 1980 right after my graduation and danced as a soloist in most of the major productions like Swan Lake, Giselle, Don Quixote, La Fille Mal Gardée, Paquita, La Bayadere, Coppelia. I believe Ballet is one of the most difficult arts, and you must work hard to succeed. I was lucky and well-trained. Put all my heart in it...

Mr and Mrs Prof. Vladimir Sukanov are very important persons in my life. They were my teachers in Ankara Conservatory and I learned a lot from both. I am grateful and I remember them with love and respect. I wish they could read this interview and see my salute.

After many years of dancing as a soloist with the Istanbul State Ballet, I started to work in the Foreign Relations department as well. Soon after I became an advisor for the Management of the State Opera & Ballet.

In 2010 Istanbul was the European Capital of Culture. Under the projects that introduced the modern Turkish arts in theatre and dance - with an international impact - was also the 2nd Ballet Competition. Please tell us more about it.

This project was one of my dreams. This was also a suggestion of Mr. Rudolf Nureyev, with whom I had the privilege to dance and work during my career. When the European Parliament and the Council of Cultural Ministers of the European Union approved and announced Istanbul to be the European Capital of Culture for 2010, I proposed the project to Prof. Rengim Gokmen. He liked it and encouraged it. I was appointed as the artistic director, and in 2007 we proposed the project to Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency. They confirmed and we started to work.

Shortly though we were notified that we must be ready by 2008 instead 2010. That was very challenging! Prof. Gokmen, besides being a famous Conductor, is also the Director of all Opera and Ballet Houses and Symphony orchestra in Turkey. He is also the founder of the international Aspandos Opera and Ballet Festival and the International Bodrum Ballet Festival.

We owe the success of our project to the contribution of our Ministry of Culture, our Directorate of the State Opera and Ballet, Prof. Gokmen and all my friends in the team. This project could not materialize without their support, respect and love. You know well that this type of success of important art organizations depends largely on a strong team working together in perfect harmony.

How did the Directorate General of State Opera and Ballet support the Arts and specially ballet?

You cannot make this kind of large productions of Opera and Classical Ballet without the contributions of the Foundations or the State. The same situation is of course valid

Competition 2009 with the Jury: Jara Karais, Salt Sakıncı, İsmail Muhammedov, Yuri Grigorovich, Meric Sumen, Julia Bocca, Saphire Webbe, Sue An Kang, Vladimir Malakov © Yusuf Sarıoğlu



for Conservatories. If you want to see stars on the stage you must first educate the talents by high class professors, in well managed Conservatories. In Turkey, these are completely state-supported institutions. We carry the responsibility of representing our nation, our state, our culture. We have world famous artists who are known by their names first. Our kind of productions are known with the names of the Nation, State, Ministry, Directorate or Foundations. I see that national and international sponsors are more and more interested to take the role of State institutions and support continuously our kind of highly prestigious international art events, followed largely by TVs, magazines, newspapers and audiences. This is a profitable type of business for all contributors. I think I will receive many calls from private foundations and finance groups interested in becoming our partners in the near future.

How do you intend to surprise the audience in the upcoming competition in Istanbul?

On our first competition in 2008 and the second one IBC 2010 has very prestigious

names of the World Ballet circle. Mr. Charles Jude was in 2008 President of the Jury and the Great Master of Ballet, Legendary Yuri Grigorovich, for whom we all have respect and love, accepted to be the President of the IBC 2010. If you read our website, you shall understand.

Istanbul International Ballet Competition is young, although it is already known and supported all over the World. Talents and Stars are happy to be part of it. I enjoy the success and I'm proud of it, on behalf of our team. I strongly feel the responsibility to live up to it, in fact, I think I like the challenge. We are excited to create and observe positive results. It is true that if you want to get universally approved success, you need to follow the Universal truth. You can only achieve that through hard work, love and knowledge that is acquired through experience.

We are working hard, we listen to suggestions, because we are committed to improving the quality of IBC. We shall continue to invite talented, world famous stars. Our primary interest is in the classics. However, the target is to give young dancers and



With Derek Hodge in Canada (Poznanachki)



Photo by Yasar Senaroglu

choreographers a chance to become tomorrow's classics. Of course, everything depends on our budget... We have more and more art lovers coming from other countries to enjoy IBC and Istanbul together. The city is alive 24 hours a day and you need months to discover all its aspects. The competition is broadcasted live on NTY, which is the most-watched national tv channel -well known in lots of foreign countries too. I have to remind you that IIBC's awards are higher than others.

What are you most excited about for the Istanbul Competition 2012?

I am excited in the name of all talents in the World because I believe IIBC is an ideal platform and springboard which will always help them to expand their horizons and receive greater opportunities. This is why we all have to support this organization.

How will next year's Competition be different from past performances?

New competitors, of course, then our guests World Stars who will perform in the Gala Night, and finally- the Ballet Masters in the Jury. We are thinking of having Masters Class Week in the same period of IIBC. It has not been decided yet, but we wish to host ballet artists and famous instructors. This will be profitable for the artists' career, as we know that every different master helps increase their technical and artistic level. We shall, of course, publish the details on our website once they are confirmed.

What is the thing that surprised you the most since starting the competition in 2008?

...The fact that right after IBC 2008, we were invited by the International Federation of Ballet Competitions, and we were honored as their new member, as we fulfilled all the conditions of membership.

We were all very excited and honored because we know how difficult it is to be approved by them. They have very strict, serious conditions and high quotas. The IFBC President is the legendary Choreographer Yuri Grigorovich and the General Secretary is a very important authority: Mr.Sergey Usanov. How couldn't we be excited? IIBC was a very young organization and the persons who accepted us were and are very important authorities of ballet in the world. Be-



ing approved and receiving official greetings from IFBC was a big bonus! This was one of most important and meaningful days in my career and my life. I said to myself: "Thank God we did something good and right", I believe there is no greater responsibility than being congratulated by international Masters of your field.

What advice can you give to those competing? What advice might you have for young, aspiring dancers?

Courage, which will be the fruit of their hard work and self-confidence. They all should be focused on getting the Istanbul Trophy. I recommend that they carefully read, fill in, and deliver the application forms as soon as possible. They should choose wisely their repertory. Then they can come and compete. IIBC is a perfect place to show their talent. The Jury will always be the most respectable one.

This is an opportunity to get the attention of the directors, representatives of important ballet companies, schools, teachers, choreographers and of course the Media. I will be the happiest person to see them holding their trophies, job offers and leave Istanbul with their awards.

Finally, I must say, professionals, directors, sponsors, institutions, we all need to encourage contemporary composers to write new ballet music and choreographers to create spectacular works. We'd love to continue dancing Tchaikovsky and Petipa, but we wish for NEW Tchaikovskies and Petipas who will give us the masterpieces of our time.

The 3rd Istanbul International Competition will be held on 25-30 June 2012
Info: www.istanbulballetcompetition.gov.tr





**Staatstheater an
GARTNERPLATZ**

TanzTheaterMünchen



blacOUT
CH: Paar, Meló | UA
ab 28. Oktober 2012

AUGENBLICK, VERWEILE
CH: Paar | Musik: Tschairowsky | U
ab 3. Februar 2012

TANZ TOTAL
Junge Choreografen | U
ab 5. Juli 2012 in Schwere R

DER NUSSKNACKER
CH: Paar | Musik: Tschairowsky
ab 29. November 2012

ROMEO UND JULIA
CH: Paar | Musik: Prokofjev
ab 20. Mai 2012
im Prinzregententheater

Staatsintendant Dr. Ulrich Peters
Künstlerischer Leiter des TTM & Chefchoreograf: Hans Henning Paar

www.gartnerplatztheater.de



