

is such a visceral designer, so guttural.” A certified yoga instructor, Hay adds: “She builds on my body.” In the weeks leading up to the opening, Bowden and Hay redefined what a dress rehearsal means when a strapless gown slipped off Hay’s skin as she danced in the fitting room. It was immediately altered, because the last thing the Shaw Festival needs is a wardrobe malfunction at its marquee production. With Bowden’s costumes, this Eliza can dance all night. □

Previews for *My Fair Lady* begin April 13; it opens May 28 and closes October 30 (shawfest.com).



Alberta Ballet dancers Kelley McKinlay and Galien Johnston rehearse *Fumbling Towards Ecstasy*.

{ THE MOVEMENT EXPERT }

DRAWN TO THE RHYTHM

Paul Hardy’s costumes uncover the vulnerabilities of music and dance.

TEXT: MALWINA GUDOWSKA

For designer Paul Hardy’s first foray into ballet costume design, the key piece of advice he received was to show a lot of skin. “You have to undress dancers to make them beautiful,” said Jean Grand-Maitre, artistic director for Alberta Ballet. “Let the body be seen; it’s 30 percent fabric and 70 percent skin.”

Hardy was given free rein over the 96 costume designs for Grand-Maitre’s pop-music-inspired ballet *Fumbling Towards Ecstasy*, featuring the music of Sarah McLachlan. The show explores the female role in a patriarchal world, tackling such themes as love, childbirth and betrayal. Hardy, known for celebrating a feminine silhouette with his signature touch of whimsy, was a perfect fit.

Each female ballerina has a base costume, inspired by vintage lingerie, that is layered overtop with a diaphanous flowing top or a billowing dress. “You can have things of volume, but they don’t compromise the line of the body because they are transparent,” says Hardy.

The designer stayed true to his trademark palette of neutral hues but added hints of East Indian influence, including hits of deep orange (a colour he later learned is part of the McLachlan tartan). Many of the fabrics were custom-made in France and Italy, and each material was carefully selected based on its weight, stretch, breathability and what the dancer would be doing while wearing it. For one of the ballet’s street scenes, Hardy focused on deconstructed fashion with costumes like a backless trench and a sheer cardigan. “There’s a real vulnerability to Sarah’s music, so I wanted to symbolically translate▷



Above and right: Sketches and fabric samples from Calgary-based designer Paul Hardy’s creations for the Alberta Ballet’s *Fumbling Towards Ecstasy* production this spring; Paul Hardy, Sarah McLachlan and Jean Grand-Maitre at a rehearsal

the idea of how people are most vulnerable when they are exposed," he explains.

Hardy admits that there was a learning curve to creating pieces that are aesthetically pleasing but still allow the body to move. He says the experience of designing for dancers actually influenced his own fall/winter 2011 line. "I was inspired by the dancers' rehearsal clothing and combinations," he says, noting how they mixed unstructured with tailored, melded masculine and feminine

and put together "sometimes bizarre colour combinations of whatever workout wear they seem to have pulled out of the laundry that morning." The resulting collection is set to show—fittingly—at Canada's National Ballet School. ▷

Fumbling Towards Ecstasy runs from May 5 to 7 in Calgary and May 13 and 14 in Edmonton. For more information, visit albertaballet.com.

DANCE ON

If ballet is fashion's lover-of-the-moment, opera is her long-time partner.

Who Rodarte. **For** *Black Swan*. **When** 2010.

One of the most talked about collaborations of last year, Rodarte's Mulleavy sisters joined forces with costume designer Amy Westcott on seven of the looks for the Natalie Portman thriller, including the white and black swan costumes. They were denied an Oscar nomination for costume design, but credit was given where credit was due when Portman not only wore Rodarte to the Academy Awards but also thanked the Mulleavy sisters during her acceptance speech for winning Best Actress.



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Who Gilles Mendel.

For New York City Ballet. **When** 2010. Mendel created 45 pieces, including gangster-inspired plaid and pinstriped suits, full-length strapless gowns and a flower-shaped skirt made from 40 metres of chiffon for last year's Architecture of Dance: New Choreography and Music Festival.



Who Miuccia Prada.

For *Attila*, Metropolitan Opera. **When** 2010. In a few instances, the leather capes, studded boots, fur-trimmed coats and crumpled shirts Miuccia Prada created for her first go at costume design got better reviews than the opera.

Who Tom Ford.

For *The Letter*, The Santa Fe Opera. **When** 2009. Ford scaled back his trademark opulence by creating modest linens and loose organza pieces, ideal for the early-20th-century British Malaya setting of Paul Moravec's noir-style opera.

Who Missoni. **For** Teatro Alla Scala Opera. **When** Since 1983.

The Missoni clan have been long-time patrons of the opera, making their debut as costume designers for Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. They have created more than 100 costumes, including a number of tartan tam-o'-shanters and other Scottish-inspired attire.

Who Giorgio Armani.

For Ballet, opera, theatre and film. **When** Since 1980. In addition to nearly 200 film credits (*American Gigolo* was his first in 1980), Giorgio Armani created costumes for John Neumeier's *Bernstein Dances for the Hamburg Ballet* (1998) and Paisiello's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at Teatro Franco Parenti in Milan (1998); he has also dabbled in flamenco, working with the famed Joaquín Cortés. For opera, Armani's long list of credits includes Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (1980), Strauss' *Elektra* (1994), Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (1995), Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (1995) and Verdi's *Rigoletto* (2000). M.G.

American Gigolo

