

# 10 QUESTIONS FOR REX HARRINGTON

**A**FTER DAZZLING BALLET AUDIENCES AROUND THE WORLD FOR 20 YEARS with emotionally powerful performances and matinee-idol looks, Rex Harrington, 41, announced that this season would be his last as a principal dancer with the National Ballet of Canada. Harrington spoke with TIME's Leigh Anne Williams about his farewell year and what he may leap into next.

## ANY REGRETS ABOUT

**RETIRING?** No. Physically, it's time. The day-to-day pain of dancing takes its toll, and recovery time is longer. I have pain in my joints. I have bone spurs on my ankles. I'm dealing with things that just don't heal anymore.

## WHAT WERE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR CAREER?

I went to Russia. I danced at the Kirov. I danced in Milan. Certainly, going to La Scala and dancing with [Italian prima ballerina] Carla Fracci was a high point. I was on that stage where the greatest names in opera and ballet have been for hundreds of years. Those are the things that inspire me and that I'm most proud of—that little me has been on those world stages and danced for the most educated audiences and been accepted.

## HOW DID RUDOLPH NUREYEV'S TIME WITH THE NATIONAL BALLET INFLUENCE YOU?

He was an animal. It was raw. It was sexual. I've always tried to combine [the styles of] Rudolph and [Danish dancer] Erik Bruhn. Erik was that simple, pure, don't-do-too-much, leave-them-wanting-more ice prince. So I try to combine both of them.

## WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM YOUR DANCE PARTNERS?

Karen [Kain] and I were daring onstage. I could tilt her that extra bit or do something

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in a lift that made people sit up and take notice. Evelyn [Hart] taught me a lot about commitment to the rehearsal process, which I didn't have. I used to tease Evelyn by saying I just want to go out there and be spontaneous. And she

said, "Fred Astaire worked on spontaneity down to the little finger."

## WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT REHEARSING?

I like the spontaneity of the live moment. The rehearsal

process is not what inspires me; it's being onstage. There are people who dance better in the studio, and then they get onstage, and you wonder what happened to them. They're nervous, or they're just not performers. I'm a performer.

**WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE ROLES?** *Onegin*, *Four Seasons*, *Romeo*—roles that require something beyond the banality of technique, of just pure dancing. Roles that require acting.

**YOUR ESTRANGED MOTHER HAS NEVER SEEN YOU DANCE PROFESSIONALLY. YOU'VE RECENTLY RE-ESTABLISHED CONTACT WITH HER. WILL SHE SEE ONE OF YOUR LAST PERFORMANCES?** I'm hoping that she's coming to *Onegin* at the National Arts Center in March. I have the plane ticket. I haven't talked to her since the last shows, but we'll see.

**YOU'VE SAID YOU PLAN TO REINVENT YOURSELF. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO NEXT?** I'll still be with the company as a guest artist, but I'm open to everything. I could go to Broadway. I'm training now for film and television. I'm taking acting lessons. I have an agent. What I do physically will become something else. I'm doing voice, singing, so that I'm ready if the opportunity arises. I don't think I'd be satisfied just stopping. I have to perform.

## WHAT BROADWAY PRODUCTION WOULD YOU LIKE TO STAR IN?

I'd love to do the M.C. in *Cabaret*. Or *Chicago* [singing]: "Give 'em the old razzle-dazzle. Razzle-dazzle 'em."

**WHAT'S WITH THOSE "SEXY REXY" BOXER SHORTS BEING SOLD TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE BALLET?** Oh, my God, the underwear. Well, I guess you only have to be flattered. ■