

# A New Revolución

BY LINDA LIM

Direct from Cuba, *Ballet Revolución*, returns to Auckland this month with a brand new production. This article provides a brief insight to the creative minds behind the show.

Aaron Cash and Roclan Gonzalez Chavez come from contrasting backgrounds, but they have proven to be a winning combination in producing an explosive, intensive show with a distinctly Cuban flavour.

Born in Australia, Aaron Cash is a talented performer and one of the original Tap Dogs. He has impressive touring performance credentials and made his mark in the film industry. He has worked with some of the world's most renowned dancers, including Twyla Tharp and Mikhail Baryshnikov and Cher. Aaron joined the company when Jon Lee (co-producer for the show) approached him to go to Cuba and audition Cuban ballet and contemporary dancers, but then Jon and Mark Brady (Producer and Artistic Director) offered Aaron a job on the creative team. 'The greatest part of the whole experience has been working with Cuban dancers. They are very, dear and very special to me,' says Aaron.

Roclan Gonzalez Chavez was born in Cuba with training in both contemporary and folkloric dance. He has worked with most of Cuba's best known music and dance groups, worked extensively all over Latin America and toured internationally. Roclan draws inspiration from working with the dancers who not only provide him with the opportunity to explore choreography in a mix of styles but have brought him home to Cuba. 'The more I travel the more I want to come back because I realise how much I love my country and that this is the only place where I can work on shows with 150 dancers on stage. There is nothing like constantly getting the feedback from our cultural roots that could not happen in any other country but mine. Finally, I'm very happy in this beautiful island,' says Roclan.

The show is an innovative and dynamic mix of dance genres and styles, but how have they approached the choreographic challenge of fusing contemporary dance, ballet and street dance/hip hop together while giving it a 'Cuban' flavour.

Aaron acknowledges that 'Cuba, like anywhere else in the world is evolving. Cubans more than any other country understand dance so they love to bring what they have to the table and add to this amazing cross pollination of ideas and moves and rhythms. They are like sponges they soak everything up and spit out a beautiful interpretation



through a Cuban filter. The upcoming generation are well and truly plugged in.'

While Roclan found this initially challenging, 'after four years it is a lot easier cause they know all the styles and classes keep them trained and fit. Keeping the Cuban flavour is simple because they are all Cuban. Being together for a long time has made them more united, integrated and this provides a solid base for work.'

Aaron notes that the political and economic situation in Cuba is constantly changing; 'you really feel it at the moment, but what is of interest for me is seeing people. I have a great fondness for being able to travel, make money, succeed, become more integrated as citizens of the world. Several of our dancers have moved on to join other companies all over the world. Things like this are much more doable now with the current economic and political climate.'

For Roclan while there are changes, 'it all remains the same. It's all as it was before. The artist does not think about changes. There are simply better relations but no change. We keep doing our art, and being ambassadors of Cuban culture wherever we are.'

Aaron and Roclan's work with *Ballet Revolución* is revolutionary. With the worldwide trend in ballet for adults on the rapid increase (see article on page 18), this could well be the start of a new revolución in changing the face of ballet, in pushing the boundaries of performance and in participation. ■

*Ballet Revolución*, 17–21 June, Auckland