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**Article from José Limón Company News Letter :**

Former Company member Stephen Pier recently returned from setting "The Unsung" on the Royal Danish Ballet, so we asked him to write about his experiences.

*​****Tell us why this was a special experience for you.***

**SP**: My personal connection to both the José Limón Company and the Royal Danish Ballet is rather profound and, I must say, somewhat unique as I had the rare pleasure of dancing with both of these great companies. I've always believed that José and Bournonville shared certain common values. They were both interested in the development of men's dancing. They shared a commitment to exploring the deeper aspects of the human experience through dance. They both sought to elevate dance as an art form beyond mere entertainment.

***How did it go?***

**SP**: I was slightly apprehensive before I started, knowing how physically and mentally demanding "The Unsung" is for the dancers and not knowing how these very classically trained dancers would take to it. From the first day, however the dancers were completely enthralled and gave everything they had to the process. They held nothing back. The director, Nikolaj Hubbe, who fell in love with the piece years ago, was present at many rehearsals and told me the dancers had come to him to tell him how much they were getting out of the process and how much they loved the piece. They were so eager that I prepared two casts to afford as many of them as possible the opportunity to work on it. The company arranged to add extra rehearsals to accommodate that. Throughout the process, company members kept coming up saying how excited everyone was to be doing this work. Many of them came to watch rehearsals of other sections. The crowning moment was, as it should be, the premiere. The men pulled together fantastically and I knew after the first set of taps that they were "in the zone". They really entered another world together. The audience was in shock! Wonderful ovations! Most of all, I was pleased that these dancers clearly understood what this piece and this way of dancing was about. It was meaningful to them, to me, and to all who saw it.

***What memories do you have of dancing "The Unsung" yourself?***

**SP**: Passing this piece on to other dancers evoked so many deep physical memories. I recalled vividly the incredible experience of learning it from Gary Masters when I was a young dancer, and performing it all over the world. It was one of those pieces that goes deep into every fiber of one's being, where you always could feel the audience in a kind of mystical union with the dance. The piece is both brutal and noble, highly physical and deeply sacred. It gets inside of you and changes your DNA somehow. An audience member said to me, "I imagine the dancers both love and hate this piece." He was right. One approaches it knowing it will demand an awful lot of you, but once you are in it, it takes you somewhere and you never know quite where you will end up or how.

***Tell us about the next step on your life.***

**SP**: I have recently taken over the directorship of the Hartt School Dance Division at the University of Hartford. It's a wonderful opportunity to help develop the dancers and choreographers of tomorrow and to pass on the beautiful lessons of my many teachers, coaches, choreographers and colleagues. I have been blessed with a wonderfully rich life in dance with so many rewarding experiences with the Limón Company, the Hamburg Ballet, the Royal Danish Ballet, and many, many artists around the world. It is a great delight and honor to have the chance to share this in the hopes of enriching the coming generations of dance artists. To be able to sum up my life as a dancer by giving the richest parts of it on to others is a true blessing.