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Preface

Like its subject, this book has changed form and character several times. It was originally intended to be a study of Henning Kronstam's roles, then became an artistic biography, a biography, and finally a portrait.

I first approached Kronstam in the spring of 1993 and asked if he would be interested in working with me on a book about his roles. I had met him three years earlier; although I had been very interested in the Royal Danish Ballet and the ballets of Bournonville since I first saw them in 1976, I was unable to travel to Copenhagen until the spring of 1990. Kronstam had just staged *Giselle* and I thought it an exceptional production because of its poetry and dramatic cogency. During several subsequent visits, I was equally impressed with other ballets in his charge—*La Sylphide*, *Napoli*, *Onegin*, *Theme and Variations*. Whether they were his productions or ballets he had merely rehearsed, each had a directorial style that distinguished it from the other works in the company's repertory. I was especially intrigued because, even though I watched the rehearsals, I couldn't figure out how he did it. There was a mystical symbiosis between Kronstam and the dancers that produced miracles and that left the Royal Theatre with him. Kronstam had a reputation—partly deserved—for being a difficult and private man. Sensing that he would not be open to a biography, I proposed a book about his roles. I would interview him about the ballets he was preparing and write about what I saw in rehearsals and on stage.

I began to suspect that the gods would not smile favorably upon this project when, two days after Kronstam had agreed to my proposal, he vanished from the Theatre. The explanation given by the company's management was so inconsistent with what I had observed that I became curious and decided to try to find out what had really happened. After ignoring several letters, Kronstam finally wrote me and we agreed to start working on the book in January 1994. I never asked him what had happened at the Theatre, partly because I did not want to start from his side of things, and partly because he was mired in a severe depression much of the time I knew him. One of the ways he coped with his illness was to avoid discussion of painful or unpleasant matters. He was just beginning to be able to discuss the situation at the Theatre when he died.

Since I could not watch Kronstam coach his roles, the book evolved into an artistic biography, although I was handicapped by the fact that I had barely seen him dance. I came to know him as a dancer through the eyes of other dancers and through watching the few snatches of film that are available, mostly in private hands. The second section of the book, in which I discuss his major roles in detail, is primarily drawn from interviews with him, which are left, as much as possible, in his voice.

After Kronstam died, in May 1995, the book changed yet again, as there were too many gaps or unanswered questions to make a biography as complete as I would have wished. There were questions I had not known to ask, dates, motivations, and explanations that will never be known. At the beginning, Kronstam had wanted to restrict the book to his artistic life. During our last interviews, a few weeks before he died, he decided that two aspects of his life that he had always kept secret were important to the book and agreed to their inclusion. He suffered from an illness that he went to great lengths to conceal and that affected all aspects of his career and his life. He had begun to talk about it, but there were still many things I did not know. This aspect of his life has been reconstructed with the help of a psychiatrist, Dr. Ellen Levine, who has written an afterword.

This, then, is a portrait rather than a formal biography. There are a few gaps, mostly dates and places where Kronstam worked during summers and dates of several incidents in his private life that cannot now be ascertained. There are several people whom I wanted to interview who could not be found, a few who declined, some who died during the course of the project before being inter-

viewed, and several friends who could never be identified—there was only a description or a first name.

The book is written by an American for American readers. The Danish ballet world, especially Kronstam's world, is very different from the American one. That is precisely one of the things that attracted me to Kronstam and the Danish tradition, and it must be borne in mind when one confronts something that contradicts everything one has ever been taught about ballet (such as the fact that boys have to begin studying ballet at eight or nine while girls can start as late as eighteen because their bodies are more flexible). I have tried to understand the Danish point of view and present it for American readers. I hope I will not offend Danes in doing this, and that I have interpreted their beautiful tradition as accurately as could be expected from a foreigner. The book is also written for those who inhabited Kronstam's world. I hope the Danish dancers, especially "*Hennings born*" (Henning's children), will understand that some of the material here that seems to violate Kronstam's privacy was necessary in order to tell his story fairly. Although the end of his life was difficult, he had great courage and an indomitable spirit and there was always a strong pulse of optimism coursing beneath the surface.

Notes on Sources

Unless otherwise noted, all the quotations attributed to Henning Kronstam come from three interview sessions with him in January 1994, August 1994, and April 1995, and from many telephone interviews and conversations between February 1994 and May 1995.

All other quotations are from interviews I conducted with dancers and other associates, as well as Kronstam's friends and members of his family. References are given only for quotations from print sources or other interviews, or if the identity of a source is not obvious from the text. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the artists, friends, and family who gave so generously of their time and memories: Nina Ananiashvili, Ib Andersen, Niels Balle, Ann Barzel, Peter Bo Bendixen, Henrik Bering Liisberg, Jessie [Kronstam] Birger-Christensen, Mogens Boesen, Jens Brenaa, Jette Buchwald, Claudia Cassidy, Rudi van Dantzig, Johnny Eliassen, Erling Eliasson, Sorella Englund, Eliot Feld, Flemming Flindt, Vivi Flindt, Carla Fracci, Tommy Frishøi, Rose Gad, Franz Gerstenberg, Ingrid Glindemann,

Serge Golovine, Kenneth Greve, Ann-Kristin Hauge, Bjarne Hecht, Linda Hindberg, Jan Holme, Tove Holme, Nikolaj Hübbe, Mette Hønningen, Mona Jensen, Lis Jeppesen, Boel Jørgensen, Una Kai, Niels Kehlet, Patricia Klekovic, Mette-Ida Kirk, Fred Konrad, Janne Kronstam, Torben Kronstam, Alexander Kølpin, Niels Bjørn Larsen, Anne Grethe Lassen, Peter Ernst Lassen, Larry Long, Murray Louis, Adam Lüders, Thomas Lund, Anna Lærkesen, Bruce Marks, Peter Martins, Alexander Meinertz, Beppe Menegatti, Margaret Mercier, Poul Rolf Meurs-Gerken, Henriette Muus, John Neumeier, Kjeld Noack, Margrethe Noyé, Benedikte Paaske, Viveka Paulsen, Stephen Pier, Yuri Possokhov, Kirsten Ralov, Lloyd Riggins, Jerome Robbins (by letter), Heidi Ryom, Silja Schandorff, Margrethe Schanne, Peter Schaufuss, Lise Scherfig, Lene Schrøder-Hansen, Antoinette Sibley, Kirsten Simone, Ulla Skow, Glen Tetley, Ingryd Thorson, Julian Thurber, Helgi Tomasson, Violette Verdy, Karin Vikelgaard, Edward Villella, Arne Villumsen, Arlette Weinreich, Stanley Williams, Annemari Vingård, Anne Wivel, and Richard Wolf.

All newspaper and magazine articles, contracts, and correspondence are from Kronstam's own collection, now in the possession of his nephew and heir, Torben Kronstam, or the Drama Collection of the Royal Library, Copenhagen. Kronstam kept no diary but had saved two drawers and one suitcase full of clippings. He was not an archivist, and many of the clippings are undated. Because newspaper dance reviews are often placed on the lower half of the page, the paper's name was often cut off as well; dates and newspaper names are given, when known, in the text.

I have enough Danish to read through the clippings as well as books on Danish ballet and garner facts, and some of the translations of simple texts, or a few phrases, are my own. For longer or more complex texts I was dependent on others, and I am extremely grateful to Alexander Meinertz, Bjarne Hecht, Lene Schrøder-Hansen, and Birgitte Engelbrechtsen, who translated dozens of Danish newspaper clippings, letters, and contracts.

Kronstam also kept a large file of contracts and other correspondence. There were very few personal letters, and these were mostly letters from admirers, or thank you notes from dancers he had coached. While at first this seemed a minimal archival record, these papers proved to be invaluable in verifying things he told me and checking stories that came up in interviews. There were a few times Kronstam claimed poor memory in order to avoid answering a question, but I never caught him in a lie.

Several other works were of enormous help in writing this book. First and foremost, Tobi Tobias's 1983 interviews with Kronstam for her "Oral History of the Royal Danish Ballet and Its Bournonville Tradition" provided information that would have otherwise been lost. Two works of Erik Aschengreen were also very helpful: his list of Kronstam's roles published in *Les saisons de la danse* in 1976, which provided an outline for my research; and his entertaining and informative history of the Royal Danish Ballet from 1948 to 1998, *Der går dans*, which helped place many events in context and give the Danish view of things.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to many people: first and foremost Henning Kronstam, for working with me during what must have been the most difficult period in his life, for his candor, and for all he taught me. His story would not have been brought to print were it not for the tireless efforts of my agent, Laura Langlie. For this, and for her unwavering faith in this project, I owe her an enormous debt. I am also very grateful to my editors at the University Press of Florida, Meredith Morris-Babb and Gillian Hillis, for their care and guidance, and the designer, Louise O'Farrell.

Dancers were unfailingly generous with their time and memories, and I am extremely grateful to everyone I interviewed for the book, even those not directly quoted here. Several people endured multiple interviews and were helpful in other ways. Kirsten Simone showed me her private collection of films of Kronstam's dancing, which enabled me to understand Kronstam's gifts as a dancer. Kenneth Greve gave me access and introductions to friends of Kronstam's outside the Theatre. Ib Andersen, Bjarne Hecht, Nikolaj Hübbe, Margaret Mercier, and Arlette Weinreich, each with extraordinary memories, answered far more than their share of questions and were invaluable in helping me place events in context.

Dr. Kay Jamison was very helpful in answering questions about Kronstam's condition. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Ellen Levine, who provided invaluable guidance in helping me present as accurate a picture as possible of Kronstam's health as well as a psychological autopsy as an afterword. Dr. Levine traveled to Copenhagen to meet with several people who had known Kronstam so as not to be dependent on my view alone, listened to taped interviews with him, and was willing to go over material countless times as new insights were discovered.

I thank those who read the manuscript in various stages and provided corrections and suggestions: Mary K. Baumgartner, Elizabeth Liebman,

Michael Popkin, Lene Schröder-Hansen, and Leigh Witchel. George Jackson not only read the manuscript but has answered endless questions about Danish ballet and ballet history in general from the time I began writing, more than twenty years ago. I am grateful to colleagues who answered questions, usually on very short notice, including Joan Acocella, Erik Aschengreen, Mary Cargill, Robert Greskovic, Majbrit Hjelsbo, Knud Arne Jürgensen, Alan M. Kriegsman, Alastair Macaulay, Lewis Segal, and Tobi Tobias. Alexander Meinertz has provided information and assistance that made many parts of this book possible, allowed me access to his research on Vera Volkova, read several chapters more than once, and constantly goaded me to do better. I also thank Torben Kronstam for granting me access to his uncle's papers, and Majbrit Hjelsbo for her hospitality and for checking many facts and sources. Of course, any errors in facts or conclusions are mine alone.

I am also grateful to several directors of the Royal Danish Ballet—Frank Andersen, Peter Schaufuss, Johnny Eliassen, Maina Gielgud, and Aage Thordal-Christensen—for allowing me access to rehearsals, classes, and performances between April 1990 and January 2000. Marianne Hallar and Lilo Skaarup at the Royal Theatre's library were very helpful in finding the photographs for this book and in working out a way for me to have copies of them. I thank all the photographers who allowed me to use their work, especially Morten Mydtskov Rønne at the Mydtskov studios, who made so many of his family's photographs of Kronstam available to me, and John Johnsen, whose photos from the 1970s give a rare glimpse of Kronstam in live performance, as well as David Amzallig, Marianne Grøndahl, and Claus Poulsen. Several photographs in Kronstam's collection were without identifying information. There were a few photographs from the 1950s and 1960s where no address for the photographer could be found, despite concerted efforts, but I thank those photographers as well. I am grateful, too, to the Danish newspaper *Politiken*, which was kind enough to allow me to reprint substantial portions of an important interview with Kronstam before he took over the directorship of the Royal Danish Ballet in 1978. Finally, I am extremely grateful for three generous donations, from Elizabeth Liebman, Queen Margrethe and Prince Henrik's Fund, and Queen Ingrid and King Frederik's Fund, which helped cover the costs of the photographs in this book. My mother, Millicent Tomalonis, has supported my writing in every way possible. To her, as well as the many friends and colleagues who listened to my book stories, I am extremely grateful.