Dear Harlequin friends,

“Around ten years ago we got a call from orthopaedic surgeon, Dr Boni Rietveld. He wanted to place an order with us for two square meters of the Harlequin Liberty sprung floor for his Medical Centre for Dancers and Musicians (MCDM) at The Hague. This initial contact marked the beginning of an exciting joint adventure. Since then, we have jointly carried out several decisive studies that demonstrate the direct relationship that exists between the quality of the floors and frequency of injuries. Our Group has therefore largely contributed to raising awareness in the dance world about the necessity of trauma prevention. But even in our wildest dreams we would never have imagined we could bring together with such success professionals from all walks of life in partnership with the Centre national de la danse de Pantin (CND) at the International Forum on Dance and Health. You will find in this newsletter the full report, as well as information on the different initiatives carried out by our teams throughout the world.”

CHANTAL LAGNIAU
General Manager Harlequin Floors Europe
FOCUS EVENT

A landmark forum

Called “Health and the artistic gesture”, “The dancer’s foot”, “Panorama of initiatives within dance companies”, “Which initiatives to help conserve, enhance and support dance medicine”, “Cross-presentation of health initiatives”, “Historic”, “To be marked in red”, “Passionate”: all this was not only to give high visibility to dancer health, the Netherlands Tania Rietveld, a longstanding partner of Harlequin Floors, explained how important prevention is when dealing with traumas. He outlined that 68% of dancers’ injuries concerned the lower extremity of the leg, the knee and foot, and distinguished three levels of prevention: first among which is the quality of the floor. He also pointed out that his studies and tests on dance floors carried out with several European dance companies brought to light how important the surface is: it should be one that doesn’t grip too much, is not too slippery, not too flexible but also a more constant effect (indispensable for jumps and pirouettes), but also a more constant effect (indispensable for jumps and pirouettes), but also a more constant effect (indispensable for jumps and pirouettes). Dr Rietveld is convinced of the necessity of providing not only a bounce but a cushioning that provides a secure and good landing. He further emphasised to what extent movement and sports sciences, through their multi-disciplinary approach, were particularly suited to addressing the physical, mental and social well-being of dancers. Beyond the context of performance, the researcher suggests that dance should be considered as a proper tool through which to promote health. She therefore took advantage of the event to organise a meeting with all the physiotherapists present at the event, during which these questions were dealt with.

In order to place these discussions under an undisputed medical authority, the round table discussion brought together all the opening speakers (Dr Carlo Bagutti, director of the Prix de Lausanne (in such a case the weight is transferred to the dancer’s heel and this in turn weakens the ankle), and not too rigid (risk of tendinitis, fractures and in the long term, unforeseen and proprioceptive problems).

Dr Rietveld is concerned of the necessity of providing not only a bounce effect (indispensable for jumps and pirouettes), but also a more constant cushioning than that provided by double boards which are still in use in certain dance companies. According to Dr Rietveld, the Harlequin Liberty sprung floor with its dual density elastomer blocks is an efficient and safe option. Annabelle Couillandre, Director of the Institut régional de formation en massage-thérapie (Regional Institute for Physiotherapy Training), emphasized to what extent movement and sports sciences, through their multi-disciplinary approach, were particularly suited to addressing the physical, mental and social well-being of dancers. Beyond the context of performance, the researcher suggests that dance should be considered as a proper tool through which to promote health. She therefore took the initiative to organise a meeting with all the physiotherapists present at the event, during which these questions were dealt with.

Designed to welcome ballet directors, healthcare professionals, researchers and dancers – among whom were Benjamin Millepied, Director of the Ballet de l’Opéra de Paris and Dorothée Gilbert, étoile dancer – the unprecedented two days of study combined the approaches to health and prevention of risks in professional practices. The event was prepared and co-organised by the CND and Harlequin Floors, represented by Ghada Lagnan (General Manager), Mark Ruesmuizen (Group Marketing Manager), and Patrick Lesage, European Key Account Manager. The conference, which enjoyed wide media coverage, appeared to be the natural outcome of the very active awareness-raising thrust led by Harlequin Floors for the past ten years in collaboration with its partners from the world of dance. Nevertheless, the goal of the initiative was not only to give high visibility to the topics discussed. The forum was also intended to open up new avenues of study and action in future, thanks to the pooling of experiences and practices. The mission was successfully fulfilled, as each of the players involved was able to discern their needs and expectations, and above all recognise the mechanisms that work well, find inspiration, and arrive at a point of fruitful reflection.

“Historic”, “to be marked in red”, “passionate”: this was what was repeated over and over again after the first International Forum on Dance and Health, which was held at the Centre national de Danse (CND) in Pantin (Paris) on 27 and 28 November 2014 in partnership with and sponsored by Harlequin Floors. The participants unanimously praised this major initiative, the positive impact of which will benefit the entire dance world.
Some professionals have already become aware of the importance of what is at stake. During the round-table discussions organised simultaneously during the course of the two-day event, participants were presented with the innovative mechanisms which professionals have implemented in their structures. The Malandain Ballet Biarritz, at the initiative of its Director Thierry Malandain and his administrator Yves Kordian, was able to set up a programme placed under the responsibility of Georges Tran, the ballet’s Secretary General, which brought together physiotherapists, osteopaths and sports doctors. The ballet, which also goes under the name of the Centre chorégraphique national, fitted out its studios at the Gare du Midi in Biarritz with the Harlequin Liberty sprung floor, so as to ensure maximum safety for its dancers. Another good example is the Ballet de l’Opéra de Paris, which also changed all its practice floors at the Palais Garnier last summer. Its new Director Benjamin Millepied who insisted on being present, announced an ambitious programme aimed at catching up the years they have lagged behind, and which puts the dancers’ health at the centre of the institution’s attention. We saw a similar approach at the École supérieure de danse de Cannes Rosella Hightower, which acquired Harlequin dance and sprung floors for its new building. Pierre-Marie Quéré (Director) and Peter Lewton-Brain (in charge of its health hub), listed their specific initiatives in relation to research carried out via the Faculté des Sciences du Sport de Nice. All were convinced that prevention is of key importance, and that it depends largely on the quality of the dance floors on which the dancers work, whether in the studio or on stage.

The world dances on Harlequin Floors!

PILOT ACTIVITIES AND GOOD PRACTICES

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In Situ
Dans les coulisses de l’Opéra de Paris

A beautiful book for all lovers of dance and photography. Provides real insights behind the scenes of the Opéra de Paris.

Antonio Najarro
Director of the Spanish National Ballet

The Harlequin Liberty sprung floor perfectly meets the needs of our dance company where we practice all types of Spanish dance, and which uses different dance shoes every time. Thanks to the Harlequin Liberty sprung floor, we are able to perform zapateado dances, do jumps, turns, and dance in total safety, and thereby enhance the quality of the choreographic performance.

Antonio Najarro
Director of the Spanish National Ballet

HARLEQUIN MAKES A DOUBLE IMPACT!

A double success for the Harlequin Floors teams in Spain, who have just fitted out the two most well-known and prestigious companies on the Iberian Peninsula. Following on from the first hall renovated in 2013, the great hall (800 m²) of the Spanish National Ballet now has a dance floor covered with the Liberty semi-permanent surface. The floor was made in black, the traditional colour of the flamenco, and given a supplementary layer of hard varnish to provide the necessary resistance for the fast-paced zapateado dances.

The Spanish National Dance Company in turn acquired a portable Harlequin Liberty sprung floor, including transport carts and border finish for use on the company’s tours. An all-time first for this contemporary dance troupe which has reverted to the great classical repertoire ever since the arrival of its new director, José Carlos Martinez (ex-étoile dancer at the Opéra de Paris).

What could be more natural for an exhibition on the magic of dance than a stroll along a black Harlequin Cascade dance floor? For the occasion, Harlequin Floors fitted out the floor of the Galerie Clémentine de la Féronnière in Paris’ Marais district in October and November 2014. This is where Pierre-Elie de Pibrac, photographer and plastic artist, presented a selection of his beautiful work on the dancers of the Opéra de Paris. The fruit of a season spent inside the Palais Garnier, these 300 photos can be found in the book In Situ – Dans les coulisses de l’Opéra de Paris (In Situ – Behind the scenes at the Palais Garnier), published by Editions Clémentine de la Féronnière.

JULIAN MACKAY, WINNER OF THE HARLEQUIN BURSARY

From 2 to 7 February 2015, the ballet world met in Lausanne for the 43rd Prix de Lausanne, for which Harlequin Floors is one of the loyal sponsors, and where one of the two practice studios is fitted out with a portable Harlequin Liberty sprung floor. And thanks to Harlequin Floors, even those who were not able to make it to the Théâtre Beaulieu this year were fortunate enough to be able to watch live broadcasts of the classes given to the candidates by étoile dancers Patrick Armand and Monique Loudières. Our Group, which has supported the Prix de Lausanne’s video blog for the past five years, organised the daily live streaming from the event, and which was broadcast the next day on the Prix de Lausanne’s YouTube channel to reach an even greater audience. This innovative initiative made it possible for web users to watch the whole event from the inside, and see the numerous variations and interviews as if they were right there on the spot. With no less than 175,000 connections on the live streaming page and 385,000 views in total, this initiative has enjoyed great success.

By the end of the week 20 finalists had been selected, and six of the winners received bursaries to finance their studies. Patrick Armand, European Key Account Manager, awarded the Harlequin Floors bursary to Julian Mackay, a 17 year old American dancer from Montana and student at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy. The talented young performer, whose three brothers and sisters are also dancers, distinguished himself in the classic variation of Prince Albrecht, in the second act of Giselle, as well as in the Solo for Diego by contemporary choreographer, Richard Wherlock. With the help of the bursary, he is planning to continue his training at the English National Ballet.

Harlequin Floors – loyal partner of the Prix de Lausanne

SEE THE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH JULIAN MACKAY HERE:
Guy Dagger, Managing Director of Harlequin Floors, and Mark Rasmussen, Group Marketing Manager, took part in the 24th congress of the International Association for Dance, Medicine and Science (IADMS), for which Harlequin Floors is one of the sponsors, from 16 to 19 October 2014 in Basel. Founded in 1990 by a group of practitioners and dancers, the association now has over 900 members in 35 countries. The IADMS’s annual event, rich in debates and meetings, brings together hundreds of dance and medical professionals.

The first stone for the extension works to the École supérieure de danse Rosella Hightower was laid on 13 February 2015. The school is currently managed by Paola Cantalupo. Many personalities were there to celebrate the ambitious renovation of the school which was established 54 years ago by renowned dancer and teacher, Rosella Hightower. At the beginning of the 2015 academic year, the school’s students were welcomed to the new campus which includes dance halls, boarding facilities and last but not least, four brand new dance studios equipped with the Harlequin Activity dance floor.

Freelance photographer Agathe Poupeney specialises in live performances and has been working with the Opéra de Paris for many years. She appeared on the cover of the previous issue of HarlequinNews (No 12) which was dedicated to the new dance floor of the Opéra de Paris, and photographed the International Forum on Dance and Health held at the Centre national de la Danse and which was jointly organized by Harlequin Floors (see pages 2 to 4). She also showcases the work of numerous dance companies and theatres, and produces the photos for the books on the Bartabas (Zingaro Circus) show and the Versailles Académie du spectacle équestre (Academy for Equestrian Shows).

“...My preferred field is focusing on dancers’ and circus performers’ bodies. I attempt to capture the moments of fragility where feelings show in the expression and movement of the body and convey the underlying emotion.”

Do you want to know more about the Harlequin products?

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