

DANCE SCENE

On the dancefloor

Beyond Dancing

Five days, four couples, one MC, a director, 100 hours and a live band were the ingredients to make *Nobody's Baby Dance Marathon* possible at Greenwich Dance's Borough Hall from June 3 to 7.

Dance marathons became a craze during a time similar to the one we are living in now. In the financial crisis of the 1930s, the physical challenge of the dance marathon was rewarded with a tempting sum of money.

There were lots of parallels to the 1930s in choreographer Arthur Pita's project, forming part of his preparations for his new work. The dancers got very little sleep, were fed similar food and allowed no modern commodities. However, with its group of professional dancers, *Nobody's Baby* was about endurance rather than a cash prize. Nonetheless, a sense of competition existed amongst the participants at Greenwich. Pita's crew was required to perform choreographies at different times of the day, regardless of how tired the dancers were.



Nobody's Baby Dance Marathon at hour 52

The general public was invited to come and see the marathon and the experiment was also broadcast live through webcams. When I visited, the dancers were performing the tango to live music from the band and on the live stream I caught a very nicely improvised Big Apple and other dances.

Pita said: "The dancers and I were working to the schedule of the 1930s dance marathon, which is [to] dance for 45 minutes then rest for 15 minutes. Every 12 hours, an hour is allowed for showers. We also consume the correct period diet and eat at the times they had originally scheduled. We worked [through] physically developing

movement, tasks, building characters and improvising till we reached 17 hours."

When the dancers became physically and mentally exhausted, some napping was introduced to complete the task. Pita said that his main aim was "to discover and not suffer and discover we certainly did".

Benny Maslov, one of the eight valiant dancers, admitted that, though not easy, it was worth the effort. "Attempting the actual marathon proved absolutely invaluable in many ways. We had a chance to develop our characters and test-drive some ideas of what would be the best way to convey the stories of people that put all of their hopes into the marathon.

"It gave us an inkling into a state of being that naturally forced us to use every possible

minute of rest and made us very economical about all our movements. Pushing beyond the point of exhaustion allowed us to enter a surreal place in which our creativity as performers was directly altered and therefore greatly influenced by the experience on a subconscious level. The choreography that we created during the sessions in the small hours of the morning was probably closest to the true spirit of the piece."

The other brave performers were Helen Ashauer, Bettina Carpi, Amir Giles, Kate Emma Nelson, Scarlett Perdereau, Nuno Queimado, Jordi Serrats and Ewan Wardrop as MC. ●

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