

Saturday April 2, 2015, Telegraph-Journal, Salon  
State of the Art

## ALWAYS HER OWN WOMAN

I'm enjoying every single page of *Even Stones Have Life*, Roslyn Rosenfeld's biography of Lucy Jarvis. It's a truly wonderful book about a very special character, enlivened by Jarvis' own descriptions of her outings and of people she meets. I'm once again impressed with the importance of saving letters, of giving these letters context but without fooling around by trying to fictionalize them. Rosenfeld does a fine job of providing the context because she has done her homework and has an art historian's knowledge.

Jarvis writes, "If so many people had not lost their basic will to make life a work of art (as unspoilt nature does), if this had not happened, individual artists might not even be noticed so specially as they are today." She did indeed make her life into a work of art, finding her own way. At the School of the Museum of Fine Arts the young Jarvis already sees through their conservative way of teaching: "too copyist". "She decries the teaching of shabby 'tricks' of perspective and light and shade." I meet up with those I've only heard about but also those I know: Brigid Toole Grant, Gary Saunders. I see that my father was attending art school in Boston--although the more commercially oriented Vesper George--at that very time. Her lifelong companion, fellow student Helen Weld, was from Lowell, Massachusetts, and I can imagine that she and he might have met on the train to Boston.

Browsing through the book's reproductions, I was struck that she obviously experimented under the influence of Vlaminck, Bonnard, Van Gogh but is always her own woman. I'm glad I got to see the exhibit of her work at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. Thank you again Jaye Hargrove for pushing me around the Gallery in a wheelchair and Ann Brennan for accompanying us.

I like to go to concerts with Gwen Martin because she knows so much about music. At the Symphony New Brunswick collaboration with the Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company, I discovered that she knows a lot about dance as well. I'd never seen the Atlantic Ballet although I've read a lot about it, been astounded that the driving force behind it, Susan Chalmers-Gauvin, could create such an organization from scratch. The artistic director Igor Dubrovolskiy choreographed the dance, "Iceman", from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. David Adams was the solo violinist. At the Imperial and Capitol Theatres the orchestra was in the pits, but because The Playhouse has no pit, the orchestra played in the back, in the dark, giving an eerie feeling to the music.

At a certain point, the principal dancer Eldiyar Daniyarov dramatically appeared from out of that dark, naked except for briefs, his makeup and the lighting making him look like an iceman. I could count his ribs, but not as if in a skeleton, instead as if indicating strength. I was prepared that the performance would not have the gravitas of a classical ballet, but I still liked the parts that involved only the dancers better and liked less those involving tables, chairs, dress racks.

The first part of the concert belonged to the Symphony only. Stravinsky's *Pulcinella Suite* is one of Gwen's favourites, and she was impressed with how musical the orchestra is under Michael Newnham, how well they performed this difficult piece. She pointed out that he was conducting with one arm and beating the syncopation with the fingers of the other hand. When the music started, I thought this can't be Stravinsky although it was so familiar. It seemed too classical; I realized with a start that this revolutionary music after a hundred years no longer seemed strange, both the advantage and disadvantage of being old myself. The second piece was Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 1 in D*, also a hundred years old.

Gwen and I share a love of all things Russian. I will never see Moscow, but I love to hear Russian music. The dancer whose ribs I counted came to Moncton from the Eifman Ballet Company of St. Petersburg. Dubrovskiy and the dancer Diyanov came from Kiev.

The Symphony plays again April 5 in a concert with Puccini, Verdi, Respighi, and solos by their big guns, the bassoonist Patrick Bolduc and the French horn player Ulises Aragón; the advance notice says "two of the least understood musical instruments." I hope that's explained because my granddaughter plays the French horn. The concert will also have the première of a piece by Michael Miller.

The Cultural Laureate of Fredericton, Ian LeTourneau, gave a nifty poetry reading on International Poetry Day. I don't know how the technology works, but I went on the Cultural Laureate Facebook page and clicked "like", and automatically he came up on my page that evening reading his poetry. This was especially fortuitous because we were in the midst of a snowstorm.