



Bryony Brind, ballet dancer - obituary

Principal dancer at the Royal Ballet who became a staple of gossip columns after her career faded

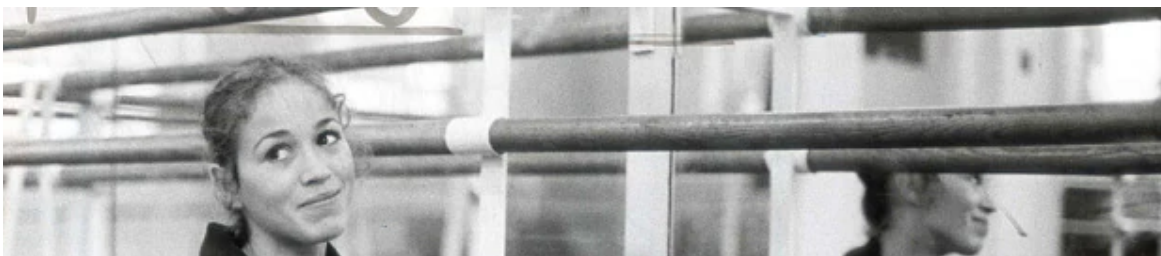
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Bryony Brind, who has died of heart failure aged 55, made world headlines in 1982 when, aged just 22, she was picked out of the Royal Ballet's junior ranks by Rudolf Nureyev to become his partner at Covent Garden.

Only half his age, the coltish Bryony Brind seemed to represent a fresh kind of British

ballerina, but in the pressure of public glare her career faded in less than a decade. She then acquired a new celebrity when she stepped out (platonically) with Prince Michael of Kent and became the romantic novelist Dame Barbara Cartland's daughter-in-law..



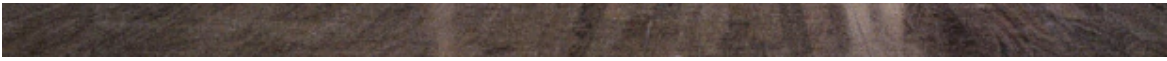


Thin and long-legged, Bryony Brind was physically striking, and won one newspaper's accolade as one of the most beautiful women in London. In classical ballet roles she was more ethereal-looking than the usual British physique, and her leanness and flexibility were well suited to contemporary ballets requiring all-over body tights.

She emerged at a time when the Royal Ballet was regarded as having lost some of its classical finesse and lustre under a new contemporary-minded artistic director, Norman Morrice. Her debut in the leading role of *Swan Lake* at Covent Garden, aged 21, was acclaimed by relieved critics and a public longing for fresh faces after a decade of over-familiarity with senior ballerinas.

The following year, when the 44-year-old Nureyev was invited back to the Royal Ballet to stage the classical *La Bayadère: Kingdom of the Shades*, he chose Bryony Brind to be his ballerina, even though she was still a junior dancer. It was not an unmitigated compliment. Nureyev was aggrieved at having been passed over as artistic director, and he said about his return: "She is the best bet. I have come back to this bucket of s---."





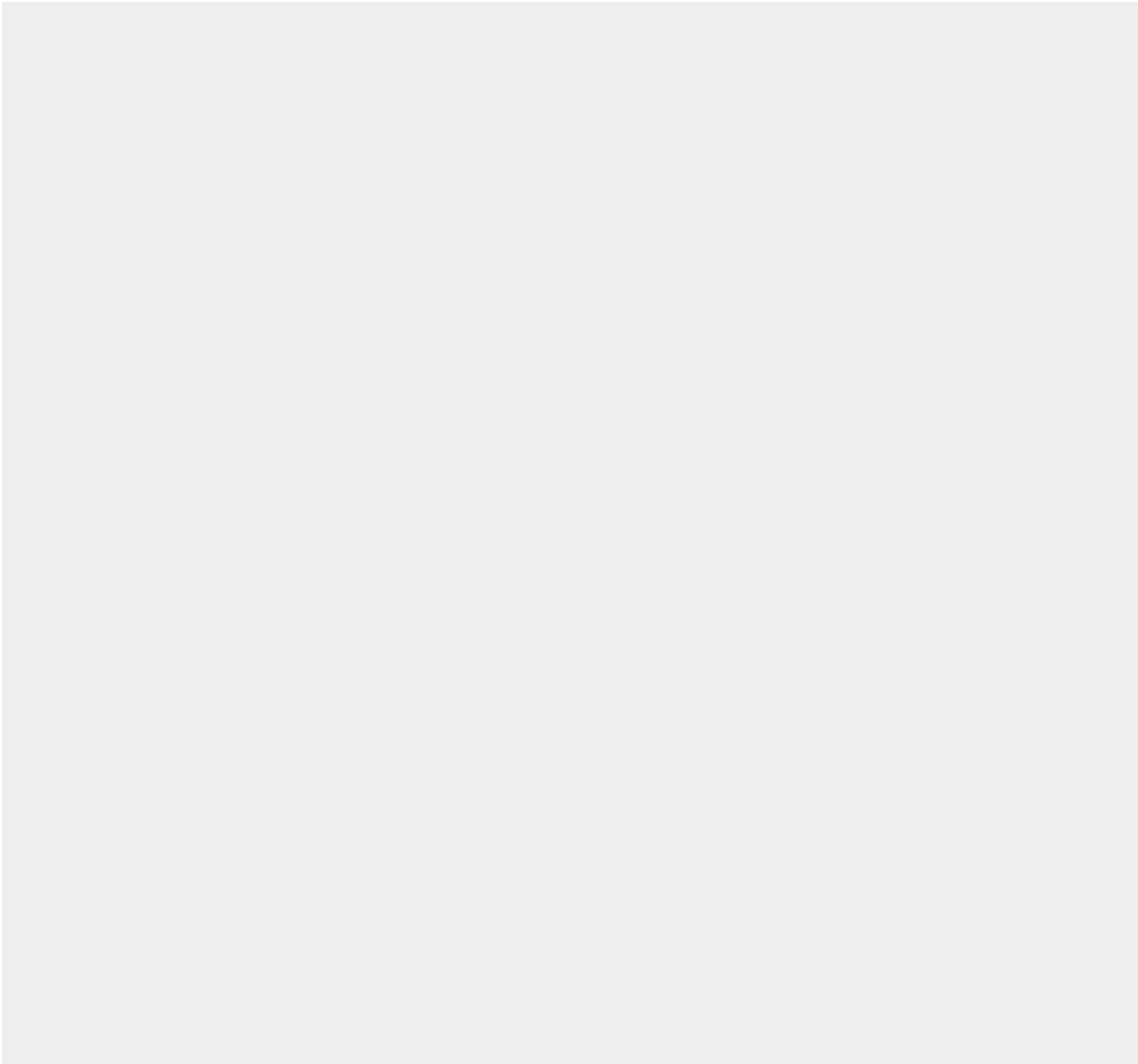
Yet he maintained his faith in the young ballerina and later that year asked her to dance the sensuous Siren who seduces the Prodigal Son (played by Nureyev) in Balanchine's *The Prodigal Son*, and he cast her as young Miranda in his new ballet *The Tempest*.

But his attention did not last, and when in 1984 he returned to La Bayadère at Covent Garden again, he took the leading role with the rising French ballerina Elisabeth Platel and relegated Bryony Brind to a subsidiary role among the Shades. Although Bryony Brind took the leading role on another night, it was prophetic of the rollercoaster her subsequent career would become.

Born on May 27 1960 in Plymouth, Bryony Jane Susan St John Brind was the elder child of Major Roger Brind of the Royal Marines and Jennifer (née Grey), and trained at the Royal Ballet School, where, with her androgynous body, she seemed to herald a fresh new kind of ballerina.

She and her contemporary and then lover Ashley Page (later a resident choreographer at the Royal Ballet and Scottish Ballet's director) were fast-tracked into leading roles,

sparkling in Jerome Robbins's *Afternoon of a Faun*, and then being chosen by the American choreographer, Glen Tetley, to head his athletic new creation for the Royal Ballet, *Dances of Albion: Dark Night Glad Day*.



Following her Swan Lake debut and the attention brought to her by Nureyev, the young Bryony seemed set for an exciting career and was promoted to principal rank at 24.

She made patchy progress, however, which some observers blamed on an inattentive Royal Ballet management failing to nurture her through the tests of classical repertoire. She was gradually eclipsed by her contemporaries, the more dramatic Alessandra Ferri and the more classically versatile Fiona Chadwick, both of whom were favoured by the choreographer Kenneth MacMillan for his psychodramatic ballets.

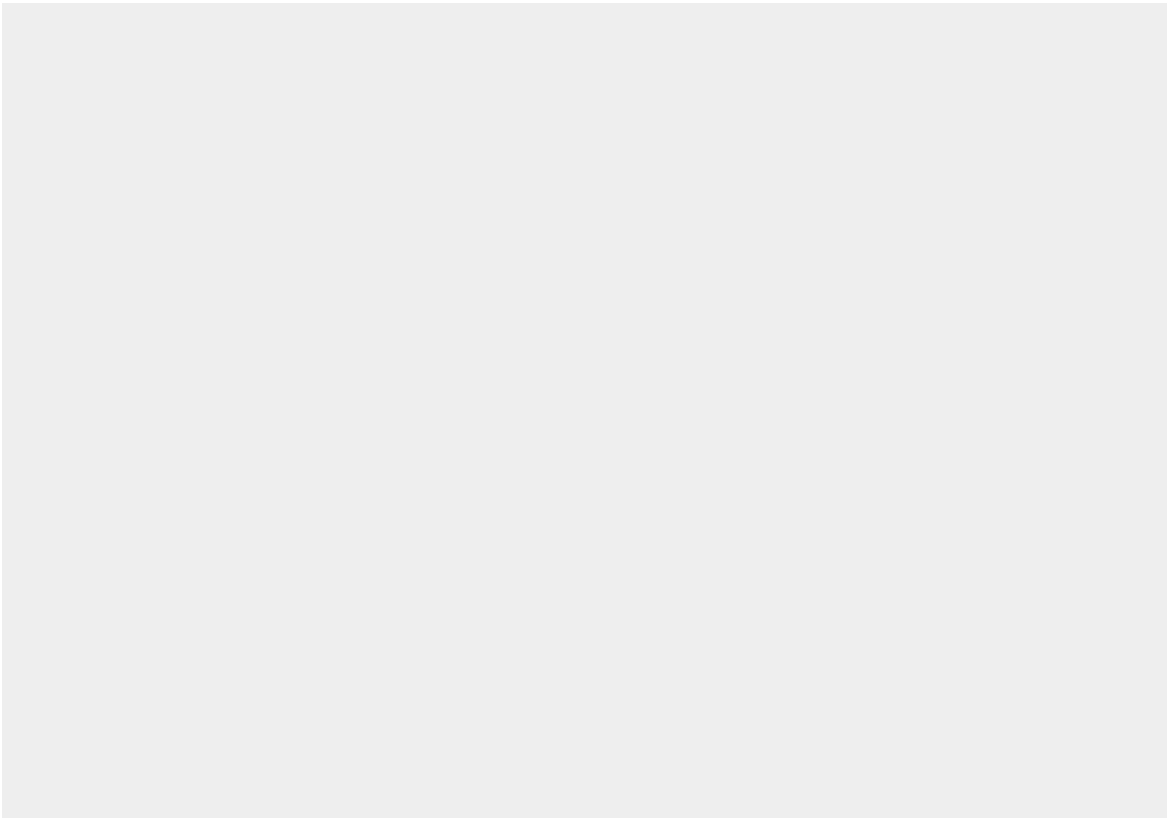
Bouts of ill health emphasised her striking thinness and some critics noted in 1987 that she had lost strength when she danced the leads in Giselle and Swan Lake after a period away.

The arrival at the Royal Ballet in 1989 of the brilliant young Paris star Sylvie Guillem and the emergence of Darcey Bussell created further competition, and in 1992 Bryony Brind left the Royal Ballet aged 31.

She branched out into film, dancing in Malcolm McLaren's eccentric musical *The Ghosts of Oxford Street*, which featured the celebrated Kirsty MacColl/Pogues ballad *Fairytale of New York*. She also made an impact as the spectral Miss Jessel in Rusty Lemorande's film of Henry James's horror story *The Turn of the Screw*. Her dance performance in a Glyndebourne Opera production of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* was filmed, and she occasionally appeared as an actress.

Her social life was a popular topic in gossip columns and she had a much speculated-upon friendship with Prince Michael of Kent in the 1990s – she protested that he was “only my walker” – and her marriages to two men both 22 years older than herself generated fascinated coverage.

Bryony Brind's first marriage, in 1997, to the Anglo-Greek businessman Skevos Theodorou, suffered the “curse” of *Hello!* magazine by collapsing within a year of the official photo-shoot of the nuptials.



Three years later she made a happy marriage to Ian McCorquodale, the younger son of Barbara Cartland. But in 2002 her husband suffered two strokes, paralysing one side. He paid tribute to his wife's character: "I've been so lucky with Bryony, who looks after me beautifully. She went from being a newly-wed to a carer. My mother loved Bryony – she saw her as a Cartland heroine."

Bryony Brind appeared from time to time as a presenter and speaker at ballet events, and two years ago gave an interview to The Daily Telegraph in which she lamented the loss of the "English" accent at the Royal Ballet owing to the increasing predominance of international recruits.

A racehorse named Bryony Brind was briefly successful in the late 1990s in France, and a striking photo-portrait of the ballerina by Jillian Edelstein now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.

Her husband survives her.

Bryony Brind, born May 27 1960, died December 2 2015



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