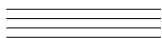


A B S E N T E E B A L L E T



B O R I S D R A L Y U K

Today I cast my absentee ballet.
Recast, I mean. It's in its umpteenth season.
I've added parts. I add parts every day.
The house lights dim and the new dancers breeze in –
so like the wispy, skeletal remains
of fallen leaves, those bare and brittle veins.
They take position, pirouette, jeté.
How could I turn a single one away?
And so it grows: a cast of thousands now.
The stage boards creak beneath tiptoeing figures
of memory. I whistle to the riggers:
the curtain drops. Time for a final bow.
Each day I scour the papers for reviews,
but find obituaries, crosswords, and old news.