S.HUROK PRESENTS

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THE STORY OF A GREAT IMPRESARIO'S ADVENTURES IN THE DANCE WORLD

S.HUROK PRESENTS



ANNA PAVLOVA
ISADORA DUNCAN
TAMARA KARSAVINA
MICHEL & VERA FOKINE
ARGENTINITA
MARTHA GRAHAM
LEONIDE MASSINE
TOUMANOVA

ANTON DOLIN
ALICIA MARKOVA
NINETTE DE VALOIS
MOIRA SHEARER
ROBERT HELPMANN
FREDERICK ASHTON
MARGOT FONTEYN
BALLET THEATRE

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

& Many Other Famous Dancers

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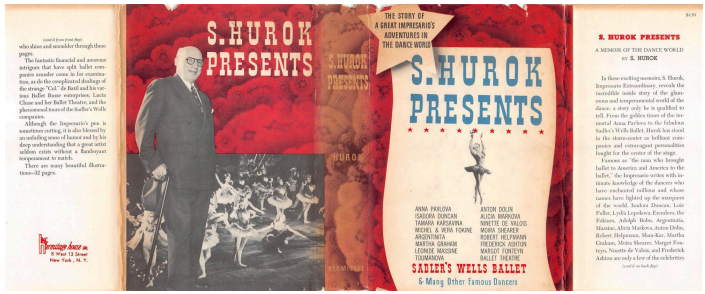
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List of Illustrations.

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$4.50

S. HUROK PRESENTS

A MEMOIR OF THE DANCE WORLD

BY **S. HUROK**

In these exciting memoirs, S. Hurok, Impresario Extraordinary, reveals the incredible inside story of the glamorous and temperamental world of the dance, a story only he is qualified to tell. From the golden times of the immortal Anna Pavlova to the fabulous Sadler's Wells

Ballet, Hurok has stood in the storm-center as brilliant companies and extravagant personalities fought for the center of the stage.

Famous as "the man who brought ballet to America and America to the ballet," the Impresario writes with intimate knowledge of the dancers who have enchanted millions and whose names have lighted up the marquees of the world. Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, Lydia Lopokova, Escudero, the Fokines, Adolph Bolm, Argentinita, Massine, Alicia Markova, Anton Dolin, Robert Helpmann, Shan-Kar, Martha Graham, Moira Shearer, Margot Fonteyn, Ninette de Valois, and Frederick Ashton are only a few of the celebrities

(*cont'd on back flap*)

(*cont'd from front flap*)

who shine and smoulder through these pages.

The fantastic financial and amorous intrigues that have split ballet companies asunder come in for examination, as do the complicated dealings of the strange "Col." de Basil and his various Ballet Russe enterprises; Lucia Chase and her Ballet Theatre; and the phenomenal tours of the Sadler's Wells companies.

Although the Impresario's pen is sometimes cutting, it is also blessed by an unfailing sense of humor and by his deep understanding that a great artist seldom exists without a flamboyant temperament to match.

There are many beautiful illustrations—32 pages.

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New York, N. Y.

S. HUROK PRESENTS

S. HUROK
Presents

A MEMOIR OF THE DANCE WORLD

By S. Hurok

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To
The United States of America:
Whose freedom I found as a youth;
Which I cherish;
And without which nothing that has
been accomplished in a lifetime
of endeavour could have come to pass

CONTENTS

1. Prelude: How It All Began 11
2. The Swan 17
3. Three Ladies: Not from the Maryinsky 28
4. Sextette 47
5. Three Ladies of the Maryinsky—and Others 66
6. Tristan and Isolde: Michel and Vera Fokine 92
7. Ballet Reborn in America: W. De Basil and his Ballets Russes De Monte Carlo 105
8. Revolution and Counter-Revolution: Leonide Massine and the New Ballet Russe De Monte Carlo 125
9. What Price Originality? The Original Ballet Russe 138

10. The Best of Plans ... Ballet Theatre 147
11. Indecisive Interlude: De Basil's Farewell and a Pair of Classical Britons 183
12. Ballet Climax—Sadler's Wells and After ... 208
13. Epilogue: Unborn Tomorrow 310
Index 323

List of Illustrations

[Added by the etext transcriber as it does not appear in the book.]

1. S. Hurok
2. Mrs. Hurok
3. Marie Rambert
4. Olga Preobrajenska in her Paris school
5. Lydia Lopokova
6. Tamara Karsavina
7. Mathilde Kchessinska
8. Michel Fokine
9. Adolph Bolm
10. Anna Pavlova
11. Alexandre Volinine in his Paris studio, with Colette Marchand
12. Ballet Pioneering in America: "Sasha" Philipoff, Irving Deakin, Olga Morosova, "Colonel" W. de Basil, Sono Osato

13. S. Hurok, “Colonel” W. de Basil and leading members of the de Basil Ballet Russe, 1933. Back row: David Lichine, Vania Psota, Sasha Alexandroff, S. Hurok; Center row: Leonide Massine, Tatiana Riabouchinska, Col. W. de Basil, Nina Verchinina, Yurek Shabalevsky; Front row: Edward Borovansky, Tamara Toumanova

14. Anton Dolin in *Fair at Sorotchinsk*

15. Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo: Alexandra Danilova as the Glove Seller and Leonide Massine as the Peruvian in *Gaîté Parisienne*

16. Tamara Toumanova

17. Alicia Markova

18. Scene from Antony Tudor’s *Romeo and Juliet*: Hugh Laing, Antony Tudor, Dmitri Romanoff, Lucia Chase, Alicia Markova

19. Ballet Theatre: Jerome Robbins and Janet Reed in *Fancy Free*

20. Ninette de Valois

21. David Webster

22. Constant Lambert

23. S. Hurok, Margot Fonteyn, Robert Helpmann

24. Irina Baronova and Children

25. Sadler’s Wells Ballet: Following the premiere of *Sylvia*—Frederick Ashton, Margot Fonteyn, S. Hurok

26. S. Hurok and Margot Fonteyn

27. Sadler’s Wells Ballet: Frederick Ashton, Ninette de Valois, Leonide Massine

28. Sadler’s Wells Ballet: Beryl Grey as the Princess Aurora

29. Sadler's Wells Ballet: Nadia Nerina in *Façade*

30. Roland Petit

31. Sadler's Wells Ballet: Margot Fonteyn and Alexander Grant in *Tiresias*

32. Sadler's Wells Ballet: John Field and Violetta Elvin

33. Sadler's Wells Ballet: *Le Lac des Cygnes*—John Field and Beryl Grey

34. Sadler's Wells Ballet: Last Act of *Le Lac des Cygnes*

35. Sadler's Wells Ballet: *Giselle*—Robert Helpmann and Margot Fonteyn

36. Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet: Elaine Fifield as Swanilda in *Coppélia*

37. Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet: David Blair and Svetlana Beriosova in *Coppélia*

38. Sadler's Wells Ballet: *A Wedding Bouquet*

39. Sadler's Wells Ballet: Act I. *The Sleeping Beauty*—The Princess falls beneath the spell of Carabosse

40. Agnes de Mille

41. John Lanchbery, Conductor, Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet

42. John Hollingsworth, Conductor, Sadler's Wells Ballet

43. Robert Irving, Musical Director, Sadler's Wells Ballet

44. The Sadler's Wells production of *The Sleeping Beauty*: Puss-in-Boots

45. Robert Helpmann as the Rake in *The Rake's Progress*

46. Sadler's Wells Ballet: Rowena Jackson as Odile in *Le Lac des Cygnes*

47. Colette Marchand

48. Moira Shearer

49. Moira Shearer and Daughter

50. Sadler's Wells Ballet: *Symphonic Variations*—Moira Shearer, Margot Fonteyn, Michael Somes, Pamela May

52. Sadler's Wells Ballet: America is closer: loading at Port of London

53. Sadler's Wells Ballet: Scenery and costumes start the trek for America

54. Antonio Spanish Ballet: Antonio

55. Antonio Spanish Ballet: *Serenada*

S. HUROK PRESENTS

1. Prelude: How It All Began

In the mid-forties, after the publication of my first book, a number of people approached me with the idea of my doing another book dealing with the dance and ballet organizations I had managed.

I did not feel the time was ripe for such a book. Moreover, had I written it then, it would have been a different book, and would have carried quite another burden. If it had been done at that time, it would have been called *To Hell With Ballet!*

In the intervening period a good deal has happened in the world of ballet. The pessimism that prompted the former title has given way on my part to a more optimistic note. The reasons for this change of heart and attitude will be apparent to the reader.

At any rate, this book had to be written. In the volume of

memoirs that appeared some seven years ago I made an unequivocal statement to that effect, when I wrote: "There's no doubt about it. Ballet is different. Some day I am going to write a book about it."

Here it is. It is a very personal account, dealing with dance and ballet as I have seen it and known it. For thirty-four years I have not only watched ballet, but have had a wide, first-hand experience of and contact with most of the leading dance and ballet organizations of the world. This book is written out of that experience.

Ballet on this continent has come a long way along the road since the night I bowed silently over the expressive hand of Anna Pavlova as she stood among the elephants in Charles B. Dillingham's Hippodrome. I like to think, with what I hope is a pardonable pride, that I have helped it on its journey. It has given me greater pleasure than any of the multifarious other activities of my managerial career. On that side of the ledger lies the balance. It has also given me a generous share of heartaches and headaches. But, if I had it all to do over again, there is little I would have ordered otherwise.

Because of these things, I believe my point of view is wider than that of the scholar, the critic, or the enthusiast. Ballet is glamourous. It is technical and complex; an exacting science. It is also highly emotional, on the stage, behind the scenes, and often away from the theatre. Temperament is by no means confined to the dancing artists.

During the course of these close contacts with the dance, a mass of material has accumulated; far too much for a single book. Therefore, I am going to attempt to give a panorama of the high spots (and some of the low spots, as well) of three-and-one-half decades of managing dance attractions, together with impressions of those organizations and personalities that have, individually and collectively, contributed to make ballet what it is today.

With a book of this kind a good resolution is to set down nothing one has not seen or heard for oneself. For the most part I shall try to stick to that resolution. Whenever it becomes necessary to depart from it, appropriate credit will be accorded. Without question there are times when silence is the wiser part of narration, and undoubtedly there will be times when, in these pages, silence may be regarded, I hope, as an indication of wisdom. However, there are not likely to be many such instances, since a devotion to candid avowal will compel the dropping of the curtain for a few blank moments and raising it again at a more satisfactory stage only to spare the feelings of others rather than myself.

One of the questions I have asked myself is where and how did this passionate interest in dance arise. I was, as almost every one knows, born in Russia. Dance and music are a part of the Russian. Russia was the home of a ballet that reached the highest perfection of its time: an organization whose influence is felt wherever and whenever a ballet slipper is donned. Yet, as a country lad, springing from an obscure provincial town, brought up in my father's village hardware business and on his tobacco plantation, I am unable to boast of having been bowled over, smitten, marked for life by being taken at a tender age to see the Imperial Ballet. No such heaven-sent dispensation was mine. I was a long-time American citizen before I saw ballet in Russia.

Nevertheless, I believe that the fact I was born in Russia not only shaped my ends, but provided that divinity that changed a common-or-garden-variety little boy into what I eventually became. Consciously or unconsciously the Russian adores the artist, denies the artist nothing. As a normal, healthy, small-town lad, in Pogar, deep in the Ukraine, I sensed these things rather than understood them. For it was in Pogar and Staradrube and Gomel, places of no importance, that I not only came into contact with the

Russian “adoration” of the artist; but, something much more important, I drank in that love of music and dance that has motivated the entire course of my life.

The Imperial Ballet was not a touring organization; and Pogar, Staradrube and Gomel were far too unimportant and inconspicuous even to be visited by vacationing stars on a holiday jaunt or barnstorming trip. But the people of Pogar, Staradrube and Gomel sang and danced.

The people of Pogar (at most there might have been five thousand of them) were a hard-working folk but they were a happy people, a fun-loving people, when days work was done. Above all else they were a hospitable people. Their chief source of livelihood was flax and tobacco, a flourishing business in the surrounding countryside, which served to provide the villagers with their means for life, since Pogar was composed in the main of tradesmen and little supply houses which, in turn, served the necessaries to the surrounding countryside.

Still fresh in my mind is the wonder of the changing seasons in Pogar, always sharply contrasted, each with its joys, each having its tincture of trouble. The joys remain, however; the troubles recede and vanish. Winter and its long nights, with the long hauls through the snow to the nearest railway station, forty frigid miles away: a two-day journey with the sleighs; the bivouacked nights to rest the horses. I remember how bitterly cold it was, as I lay in the sleigh or alternately sat beside the driver, wrapped in heavy clothes and muffled to my eyes; how, in the driving snow, horses and drivers would sometimes lose the road entirely, and the time spent in retracing tracks until the posts and pine trees marking what once had been the edges of the road were found. Then how, with horses nearly exhausted and our spirits low, we would glimpse the flickering of a light in the far distance, and, heading towards it, would find a cluster of little peasant huts. Once arrived, we would arouse these poor, simple people,

sometimes from their beds, and would be welcomed, not as strangers, but rather as old friends. I remember how, in the dead of night, still full of sleep, they would prepare warm food and hot tea; how they would insist on our taking their best and warmest beds, those on the stove itself, while they would curl up in a corner on the floor. Then, in the morning, after more hot tea and a piping breakfast, horses fed and refreshed, they would send us on our way with their blessing, stubbornly refusing to accept anything in the way of payment for the night's lodging.

This warm, human, generous hospitality of the Russian peasant has not changed through devastation by war and pestilence. Neither Tsardom nor Bolshevism could alter the basic humanity of the Russian people, who are among the kindest and most hospitable on earth.

The winter nights in Pogar, when the snow ceased falling and the moon shone on the tinselly scene, were filled with a magic and unforgettable beauty. The Christmas feasting and festivities will remain with me always. But the sharpest of all memories is the picture of the Easter fun and frolic, preceded by the Carnival of Butter-Week. Spring had come. It mattered little that Pogar's unpaved roads were knee-deep in mud; the sun was climbing to a greater warmth: that we knew. We knew the days were drawing out. It was then that music and dance were greater, keener pleasures than ever. Every one sang. All danced. Even the lame and the halt tried to do a step or two.

We made the *Karavod*: dancing in a circle, singing the old, time-honored songs. And there was an old resident, who lived along the main roadway in a shabby little house set back from the lane itself, a man who might have been any age at all—for he seemed ageless—who was a *Skazatel* of folk songs and stories. He narrated tales and sang stories of the distant, remote past.

The village orchestra, come Easter time, tuned up out of

doors. There was always a violin and an accordion. That was basic; but if additional musicians were free from their work, sometimes the orchestra was augmented by a *balalaika* or two, a guitar or a zither—a wonderful combination—particularly when the contrabass player was at liberty. They played, and we all sang, above all, we sang folk song after folk song. Then we danced: polkas without end, and the *Crakoviak*; and the hoppy, jumpy *Maiufess*, while the wonderful little band proceeded to outdo itself with heartrending vibratos, tremulous tremolos, and glissandos that rushed up and down all the octaves.

Spring merged into summer. The lilacs and the violets faded; but the summer evenings were long and the change from day to night was slow and imperceptible. It took the sun many hours to make up its mind to disappear behind the horizon, and even then, after the edge of the burning disk had been swallowed up by the edge of the Ukranian plain, its scarlet, orange and pink memories still lingered fondly on the sky, and on the surface of our little lake, as if it were reluctant to leave our quiet land.

It was then the music rose again; the *balalaikas* strummed, and I, as poor a *balalaika* player as ever there was, added tenuous chords to the melodies. From the near distance came the sound of a boy singing to the accompaniment of a wooden flute; and, as he momentarily ceased, from an even greater distance came the thin wail of a shepherd's pipe.

There was music at night, there was music in the morning. The people sang and danced. The village lake, over which the setting sun loved to linger, gave onto a little stream, hardly more than a brook. The tiny brook sang on its journey, and the rivulets danced on to the Desna; from there into the Sozh on its way to Gomel, down the Dnieper past the ancient city of Kiev, en route to the Black Sea. And in all the towns and villages it passed, I knew the people were singing and dancing.

This was something I sensed rather than knew. It was this background of music and dance that was uppermost in my thoughts as I left Russia to make my way, confused and uncertain as to ambition and direction. Despite the impact of the sumptuousness of the bright new world that greeted me on my arrival in America, I found a people who neither sang nor danced. (I am not referring to the melodies of Tin-Pan Alley or the turkey-trot.) I could not understand it. I was dismayed by it. I was filled with a determination to help bring music and dance into their lives; to make these things an important part of their very existence.

The story of the transition to America has been told. The transition was motivated primarily by an overwhelming desire for freedom. In 1904 I heard Maxim Gorky speak. Although it was six months later before I knew who Maxim Gorky was, I have never forgotten what he said. Yet, moved as I was by Gorky's flaming utterance, it was Benjamin Franklin who became my ideal.

It was some time during Russia's fateful year of 1905 that, somehow, a translation of *Poor Richard's Almanack* fell into my hands. Franklin's ideas of freedom to me symbolized America. There, I knew, was a freedom, a liberty of spirit that could not be equalled.

Although I arrived at Castle Garden, New York, after a twenty-three day voyage, in May, 1906, it was the fact that Philadelphia was the home of Benjamin Franklin that drew me to that city to make it my first American abiding place.

The evidence of these boyhood dreams of America has been proved by my own experience.

My dream has become a reality.

2. The Swan

IT was The Swan who determined my career in dance and ballet management. Whatever my confused aspirations on arriving in America, the music and dance I had imbibed at the folk fonts of Pogar remained with me.

I have told the story of the gradual clarification of those aspirations in the tale of the march forward from Brooklyn's Brownsville. The story of Music for the Masses has become a part of the musical history of America. I had two obsessions: music and dance. Music for the Masses had become a reality. "The Hurok Audience," as *The Morning Telegraph* frequently called it, was the public to which, two decades later, *The New York Times* paid homage by asserting I had done more for music than the phonograph.

Through the interesting and exciting days of presenting Chaliapine, Schumann-Heink, Eugene Ysaye, Mischa Elman, Efrem Zimbalist, Tetrazzini, Tito Ruffo, the question of the dance, my other obsession, and how to do for it what I had succeeded in doing for music, was always in my mind.

It was then I met The Swan.

Anna Pavlova is a symbol of ballet in America; nay, throughout the world. I knew that here in America were a people who loved the dance, if they could but know it. The only way for them to know it, I felt, was to expose them to it in the finest form of theatre dance: the ballet.

The position that ballet holds today in the affections of the American public is the result of that exposure, coupled with a strongly increasing enthusiasm that not only holds its devotees, but brings to it a constantly growing new audience. But it was not always thus. Prior to the advent to these shores of Anna Pavlova there was no continuous development. America, to be sure, had had theatrical dancing sporadically since the repeal of the anti-theatre act

in 1789. But all of it, imported from Europe, for the most part, had been by fits and starts. From the time of the famous Fanny Ellsler's triumphs in *La Tarantule* and *La Cracovienne*, in 1840-1842, until the arrival of Anna Pavlova, in 1910, there was a long balletic drought, relieved only by occasional showers.

America was not reluctant in its balletic demonstrations in the Fanny Ellsler period, when the opportunities for appreciation were provided. The American tour of the passionately dramatic Fanny Ellsler was made in a delirium of enthusiasm. She was the guest of President Van Buren at the White House, and during her Washington engagement, Congress suspended its sittings on the days she danced. She was pelted with flowers, and red carpets were unrolled and spread for her feet to pass over. Even the water in which she washed her hands was preserved in bottles, so it is said, and venerated as a sacred relic. Her delirious *Cachucha* caused forthright Americans to perform the European balletomaniac rite of toasting her health in champagne drunk from her own ballet shoes.

It is necessary now and then, I feel, to mark a time and place for purposes of guidance. Therefore, I believe that the first appearance of Anna Pavlova at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York on 28th February, 1910 is a date to remember, since it may be said to mark the beginning of the ballet era in our country.

That first visit was made possible by the generosity of a very great American Maecenas, the late Otto H. Kahn, to whom the art world of America owes an incalculable debt. The arrangement was for a season of four weeks. Her success was instantaneous. Her like never had been seen. The success was the more remarkable considering the circumstances of the performance, facts not, perhaps, generally remembered. Giulio Gatti-Cazzaza, the Italian director of the Metropolitan Opera House, was not what might be called exactly sympathetic to Otto Kahn's

determination to establish the Opera House on a better rounded scheme than the then prevalent over-exploitation of Enrico Caruso. As an Italian opera director, Gatti-Cazzaza was even less sympathetic to the dance, and was, moreover, extremely dubious that Metropolitan audiences would accept ballet, other than as an inconsequential *divertissement* during the course of an opera. So opposed to dance was he, as a matter of fact, that, although he eventually married Rosina Galli, the *prima ballerina* of the Metropolitan, he made her fight for ballet every inch of the way and, on general operatic principle, opposed everything she attempted to do for the dance.

Because of his "anti-dance" attitude, and in order to "play safe," Gatti ordained that Pavlova's American debut be scheduled to follow a performance of Massenet's opera *Werther*. The Massenet opera being a fairly long three-act work, its final curtain did not fall until past eleven o'clock. By the time the stage was ready for the first American appearance of Pavlova, it was close to eleven-thirty. The audience that had remained largely out of curiosity rather than from any sense of expectation left reluctantly at the end. The dancing they had seen was like nothing ever shown before in the reasonably long history of the Metropolitan. For her début Pavlova had chosen Delibes' human-doll ballet, *Coppélia*, giving her in the role of Swanilda a part in which she excelled. The triumph was almost entirely Pavlova's. The role of Frantz allowed her partner, Mikhail Mordkin, little opportunity for virtuoso display, the *corps de ballet* seems to have been undistinguished, and the Metropolitan conductor, Podesti, most certainly was not a conductor for ballet, whatever else he might have been.

Altogether, in this first season, there were four performances of *Coppélia*, and two of *Hungary*, a ballet composed by Alexandre Glazounow. Additional works during a short tour that followed, and which included

Boston and Baltimore, were the Bacchanale from Glazounow's *The Seasons*, and *La Mort du Cygne* (*The Dying Swan*), the miniature solo ballet Michel Fokine had devised for her in 1905, which was to become her symbol.

Such was the success, Pavlova returned for a full season in New York and a subsequent tour the following autumn, bringing Mordkin's adaptation of *Giselle*, and another Mordkin work, *Azayae*.

It was six years later that The Swan floated into my life. In 1916, Charles B. Dillingham, Broadway theatrical producer with a difference, was the director of the Hippodrome, the unforgettable Sixth Avenue institution. Dillingham was "different" for a number of reasons. He was a theatre man of vision; the Hippodrome, with its fantastic and colossal entertainments, if not his idea, was his triumph; he was perhaps the only Broadway manager who had been offered the post of business manager of the Metropolitan Opera Company, an offer he refused, but he did accept a commission to make a complete survey of the Metropolitan's business affairs.

For years I had stood in awe of him.

In 1916, Dillingham engaged Pavlova to appear at the Hippodrome, with her partner, Alexandre Volinine. Neither the auspices, the billing, nor the setting could, by any stretch of the imagination, be termed ideal. Dillingham's Hippodrome bore the subtitle "The National Amusement Institution of America," an appellation as grandiose as the building itself. The evening's entertainment (plus daily matinees), of which The Swan's appearance was a part, was billed as "The Big Show, the Mammoth Minstrels, and the Ice Ballet, The Merry Doll."

Every night I was there in my favorite place at the back of the house. I soon learned the time schedule. I could manage to miss the skaters, the jugglers, the "mammoth" minstrels, the acrobats, the jumbo elephants. I would arrive

a few minutes before Pavlova's entrance. I watched and worshipped from afar. I had never met her. "Who was I," I asked myself, "to meet a divinity?"

One night, as the falling curtain cut her off from my view, a hand fell on my shoulder. It was Dillingham, for whom my admiration remained but my awe of him had decreased, since, by this time, we were both managers. He looked at me with a little smile and said, "Come along, Sol. I'm going back to her dressing-room."

The long hoped for but never really expected moment had come. Long had I rehearsed the speech I should make when and if this moment ever arrived. Now the time was here and I was dumb. I could only look.

The Swan extended her hand as Dillingham presented me. She smiled. I bent low over the world's most expressive hand. At her suggestion the three of us went to supper in the Palisades Amusement Park outdoor restaurant, overlooking the Hudson and upper Manhattan.

I shall have a few things to say about Pavlova, the artist, about Pavlova, the *ballerina*. Perhaps even more important is Pavlova, the woman, Pavlova, the human being. These qualities came tumbling forth at our first meeting. The impression was ineradicable. As she ate a prodigious steak, as she laughed and talked, here was a sure and certain indication of her insatiable love of life and its good things. One of her tragedies, as I happen to know, is that fullness of life and love were denied her.

I already have described this night in detail. I mention it again because it sets a time and place: the beginnings of the realization of the other part of my dream. I was already happily embarked on my avowed purpose of bringing music to the masses. Although I may not have realized it, that night when we first dined and talked and laughed, when we rode the roller-coaster, and together danced the fox-trot at the Palisades Amusement Park, was the

beginning of my career in the world of the dance.

During Pavlova's Hippodrome engagement I doubt I missed a performance. I also saw a good deal of her off stage. A close friendship was formed and grew. Many suppers together, with Volinine, her partner, and Ivan Clustine, her ballet-master.

In the years that followed there developed a long and unforgettable association. Her first tour under my management, and large parts of others, we made together; and not, I may say, entirely for business reasons. Thus did I learn to know the real Anna Pavlova.

For those of a generation who know Pavlova only as a legend, there is a large library of books about her as artist and dancer. As for myself, I can only echo the opinion of J. L. Vaudoyer, the eminent French critic, when he said: "Pavlova means to the dance, what a Racine is to poetry; a Poussin to painting; a Gluck to music."

At the time of the Pavlova tours, the state of balletic appreciation in America was certainly not very high. Pioneering in ballet was hard, slogging work for all concerned, from every point of view. The endless travel was not only boring but fatiguing. It took all our joint and several wits to overcome the former, a strong constitution to endure the latter. Traveling conditions then were infinitely more primitive than now, making the strain of constant touring all the greater. The reason that Pavlova willingly endured these grinding tours year after year was because, in my belief, she simply could not live without working. These tours were not predicated upon any necessity. Twenty-five years of her life, at least one-half of it, she spent on trains and ships. Aside from Ivy House, in London, to which she made brief visits, hotel rooms were almost her only home. There was no financial necessity for this.

Then, in addition to all the vicissitudes of travel under

such conditions, there persisted another aspect: the aesthetic inertia of the public at the whistle-stops demanded every ounce and every facet of audience persuasion.

Among certain latter-day critics there exists a tendency not so much to belittle as to try to underrate Pavlova, the dancer, Pavlova, the artist; to negate her very great achievement Many of these denigrators never saw her; still fewer knew her. Let me, for the benefit of the doubters and those readers of another generation who are in the same predicament, try to sum her up as she was, in terms of today.

There exists a legend principally dealing with a certain intangible quality she is said to have possessed. This legend is not exaggerated. In any assessment of Anna Pavlova, her company, her productions, I ask the reader to bear in mind that for twelve years she was the only ballet pioneer regularly touring the country. She was the first to bring ballet to hundreds of American communities. I should be the first to admit that her stage productions, taken by and large, were less effective than are those of today; but I ask you, at the same time, to bear in mind the development of, and changes that have taken place in, the provincial theatre in its progress from the gas-light age, and to try to compare producing conditions as they were then, with the splendid auditoriums and the modern equipment to be found in many places today. Compare, if you will, the Broadway theatre productions of today with those of thirty-five years ago.

Anna Pavlova was a firm believer in the “star” system, firmly entrenched as she was in the unassailable position of the *prima ballerina assoluta*. Her companies were always adequate. They were completely and perfectly disciplined. They were at all times reflections of her own directing and organizing ability. Always there were supporting dancers of more than competence. Her partners are names to be

honored and remembered in ballet: Adolph Bolm, with whom she made her first tour away from Imperial Russia and its Ballet: Mikhail Mordkin, Laurent Novikoff, Alexandre Volinine, and Pierre Vladimiroff; the latter three, one in the American mid-west, one in Paris, and one in New York, still founts of technical knowledge and tradition for aspiring dancers.

In its time and place her repertoire was large and varied. Pavlova was acquainting a great country with an art hitherto unknown. She was bringing ballet to the masses. If there was more convention than experiment in her programmes, it must be remembered that there did not exist an audience even for convention, much less one ready for experimentation. An audience had to be created.

It should be noted that at this time there did not exist as well, so far as this continent was concerned, as there did in Europe, any body of informed critical opinion. The newspapers of the wide open spaces did not have a single dance critic. In these places dance was left to music and theatre reporters in the better instances; to sports writers on less fortunate occasions.

Conditions were not notably better in New York. Richard Aldrich, then the music critic of *The New York Times*, was completely anti-dance, and used the word "sacrilege" in connection with Pavlova and her performances. More sympathetic attitudes were recorded later by W. J. Henderson of *The Sun*, and by Deems Taylor. About the only New York metropolitan critic with any real understanding of and appreciation for the dance was that informed champion of the arts, Carl Van Vechten.

I have mentioned Pavlova's title as *prima ballerina assoluta*. She held it indisputably. In the hierarchy of ballet it is a three-fold title, signifying honor, dignity, and the establishment of its holder in the highest rank. With Pavlova it was all these things. But it was something more. Hers was a unique position. She was the possessor of an

absolute perfection, a perfection achieved in the most difficult of all schools—the school of tradition of the classical ballet. She possessed, as an artist, the accumulated wisdom of a unique aesthetic language. This language she uttered with a beauty and conviction greater than that of her contemporaries.

Unlike certain *ballerinas* of today, and one in particular who would like ballet-lovers to regard her as the protégé, disciple, and reincarnation of Pavlova rolled into one, Pavlova never indulged in exhibitions of technical feats of remarkable virtuosity for the mere sake of eliciting gasps from an audience. Hers was an exhibition of the traditional school at its best, a school famed for its soundness. Her balance was something almost incredible; but never was it used for circus effects. There was in everything she did an exquisite lyricism, and an incomparable grace. And I come once again to that intangible quality of hers. Diaghileff, with whom her independent, individualistic spirit could remain only a brief time, called her " ... the greatest *ballerina* in the world. Like a Taglioni, she doesn't dance, but floats; of her, also, one might say she could walk over a cornfield without breaking a stalk." The distinguished playwright, John Van Druten, years later, used a similar simile, when he described Pavlova's dancing "as the wind passing like a shadow over a field of wheat."

Does it matter that Pavlova did not leave behind any examples of great choreographic art? Is it of any lasting importance that her repertoire was not studded with experiments, but rather was composed of sound, well-made pieces, chiefly by her ballet-master, Ivan Clustine? Hers was a highly personal art. The purity and nobility of her style compensated and more than compensated for any production shortcomings. The important thing she left behind is an ineffable spirit that inhabits every performance of classical ballet, every classroom where classical ballet is taught. As a dancer, no one had had a

greater flexibility in styles, a finer dramatic ability, a deeper sense of character, a wider range of facial expressions. Let us not forget her successful excursions into the Oriental dance, the Hindu, the dances of Japan.

Above and beyond all this, I like to remember the great humanity and simplicity of Pavlova, the woman. I have seen all sides of her character. There are those who could testify to a very human side. A friend of mine, on being taken back stage at the Manhattan Opera House in New York to meet Pavlova for the first time, was greeted by a fusillade of ballet slippers being hurled with unerring aim, not at him, but at the departing back of her husband, Victor Dandré, all to the accompaniment of pungent Russian imprecations. Under the strain of constant performance and rehearsal, she was human enough to be ill tempered. It was quite possible for her to be completely unreasonable.

On the other hand, there are innumerable instances of her warmheartedness, her generosity, her tenderness. Passionately fond of children, and denied any of her own, the tenderness and concern she showed for all children was touching. This took on a very practical expression in the home she established and maintained in a *hôtel privé* in Paris for some thirty-odd refugee children. This she supported, not only with money, but with a close personal supervision.

Worldly things, money, jewelry, meant little to her. She was a truly simple person. Much of her most valuable jewelry was rarely, if ever, worn. Most of it remained in a safe-deposit vault in a Broadway bank in New York City, where it was found only after her death.

Money was anything but a motivating force in her life. I remember once when she was playing an engagement in Chicago. For some reason business was bad, very bad, as, on more than one occasion, it was. The public at this time was firmly staying away from the theatre. I was in a depressed mood, not only because expenses were high and

receipts low, but because of the effect that half-empty houses might have on Pavlova and her spirits.

While I tried to put on a smiling front that night at supper after the performance, Pavlova soon penetrated my poker-faced veneer. She leaned across the table, took my hand.

"What's wrong, Hurokchik?" she asked.

"Nothing," I shrugged, with as much gallantry as I could muster.

She continued to regard me seriously for a moment. Then:

"Nonsense." She repeated it with her usual finality of emphasis. "Nonsense. I know what's wrong. Business is bad, and I'm to blame for it.... Look here ... I don't want a penny, not a *kopeck*.... If you can manage, pay the boys and girls; but as for me, nothing. Nothing, do you understand? I don't want it, and I shan't take it."

Pavlova's human qualities were, perhaps, never more in evidence than at those times when, between tours and new productions, she rested "at home," at lovely Ivy House, in that northern London suburb, Golder's Green, not far from where there now rests all that was mortal of her: East Wall 3711.

Here in the rambling unpretentiousness of Ivy House, among her treasures, surrounded by her pets, she was completely herself. Here such parties as she gave took place. They were small parties, and the "chosen" who were invited were old friends and colleagues. Although the parties were small in size, the food was abundant and superlative. On her American tours she had discovered that peculiarly American institution, the cafeteria. After rehearsals, she would often pop into one with the entire company. Eyes a-twinkle, she would wait until all the company had chosen their various dishes, then select her own; after depositing her heavily laden tray at her own

table, she would pass among the tables where the company was seated and sample something from every dish. Pavlova adored good food. She saw to it that good food was served at Ivy House and, for one so slight of figure, consumed it in amazing abundance.

One of these Ivy House parties in particular I remember vividly, for her old friend, Féodor Chaliapine, that stupendous figure of the world of the theatre who had played such an important part in my own life and career, was, on this occasion, the life of the party. He was in a gargantuan mood. He had already dined before he arrived at Ivy House. I could imagine the dinner he had put away, for often his table abounded with such delicacies as a large salmon, often a side of lamb, suckling pigs, and tureens of *schchee* and *borscht*. But despite this, he did ample justice to Pavlova's buffet and bar. His jokes and stories were told to a spellbound audience. These were the rare occasions on which I have seen this great musician, with his sombre, rather monkish face, really relax.

This night Pavlova was equally animated, and Chaliapine and she vied with each other in story-telling. I studied them both as I watched them. Pavlova had told me of her own origins and first beginnings; about her father, her mother, her childhood poverty. Here she sat, sprung from such a humble start, the world's greatest dancer, the chatelaine of a beautiful and simple home, the entire world at her feet.

Facing her was another achievement, the poor boy of Kazan, who, in his early life, suffered the pangs of hunger and misery which are the common experience of the Russian poor. He had told me how, as a lad of seventeen in the town of Kazan without a kopeck in his pocket, day after day, he would walk through the streets and hungrily gaze into the windows of the bakers' shops with hopeless longing. "Hurok," he had said, "hunger is the most debasing of all suffering; it makes a man like a beast, it

humiliates him."

One of the few serious stories he told that evening was of the time when he and my childhood idol, Maxim Gorky, were working on the boats on the Volga and had to improvise trousers out of two pairs of old wheat-sacks which they tied round their waists. Gorky and Chaliapine were both from Kazan and of the same age. Tonight, as the party wore on, Chaliapine sang folk songs, gay songs, sad songs, ribald songs. Loving fine raiment, tonight he had worn a tall gray top hat. When he arrived and we had greeted him in the hallway, I caught him watching his reflection in the long mirror and getting great satisfaction out of it. Now, as he sang, he became a Tsar, and it was difficult to imagine that he had never been anything but a great Tsar all his life.

The party waxed even gayer, the hour grew late. We were all sitting on the floor: Pavlova, Chaliapine, his wife Masha, and the other guests. Chaliapine had been gazing at Pavlova for some time. Suddenly he turned and fixed his eyes on his wife appraisingly.

"Masha, my dear," he said, after a long moment, "you don't object to my having a child by Annushka?"

Masha smiled tolerantly and quickly replied:

"Why don't you ask her?"

Chaliapine, with all the dignity and solemnity of a Boris Godunoff, put the question to Pavlova. Pavlova's eyes fixed themselves on his, with equal gravity.

"My dear Fedya," she said, quite solemnly, "such matters are not discussed in public."

She paused, then added mischievously:

"Let us make an appointment. I am leaving for Paris in a day or two.... Perhaps I shall take you along with me...."

* * *

In all the dance, Pavlova was my first love. It was from

her I received my strongest and most lasting impressions. She proved and realized my dreams. To the Western World, and particularly to America, she brought a new and stimulating form of art expression. She introduced standards, if not ideas, that have had an almost revolutionary effect.

Anna Pavlova had everything, both as an artist and as a human being.

3. Three Ladies: Not From the Maryinsky

A. *A NEGLECTED AMERICAN GENIUS—AND HER "CHILDREN"*

ALTHOUGH my association with her was marked by a series of explosions and an overall atmosphere of tragi-comedy, it is a source of pride to me that I was able to number among my dance connections that neglected American genius, Isadora Duncan.

It was Anna Pavlova who spurred my enthusiasm to bring Isadora to her own country, in 1922, a fact accomplished only with considerable difficulty, as those who have read my earlier volume of memoirs will recollect.

Despite the fact they had little in common, Pavlova had a tremendous respect for this tall American dancer, who abhorred ballet.

Genius is a dangerous word. Often it is bandied about carelessly and, sometimes, indiscriminately. In the case of this long-limbed girl from California it could not be applied more accurately or more precisely, for she was a

genius as a person as well as an artist. She brought to Europe and to her own America, as well, a new aesthetic.

One of four children of a rebellious mother who divorced the father she did not love, Isadora's childhood was spent in a quasi-Bohemian atmosphere in her native San Francisco, where her mother eked out a dubious living by giving music lessons. Isadora was the youngest of the four. Brother Augustin took to the theatre; Brother Raymond to long hair, sandals, Greek robes, and asceticism; Sister Elizabeth eventually took over Isadora's Berlin School.

What started Isadora on the road of the dance may never be known; although it is a well established fact that she danced as a child in San Francisco, and early in her career traveled across the United States, dancing her way, more or less, to New York. I am reasonably certain that her dancing of that period bore little or no relation to that of her later period. Her early works were, for the most part, innocuous little pieces done to snippets of music by Romantic composers. Her triumphs were in monumental works by Beethoven, Wagner, César Franck.

Her battle was for "freedom": freedom in the dance; freedom in wearing apparel; freedom for women; freedom for the body; freedom for the human spirit. In the dance, ballet was to her a distortion of the human form. Personally, I suspect the truth was that the strict discipline of ballet was something to which Isadora could not submit. Inspiration was her guiding force. She wore Greek draperies when she danced; her feet were bare. Yet there are photographs of Isadora, taken in the later 'nineties, showing her wearing ballet slippers, and a costume in which considerable lace is to be seen. It was Europe, I feel, that "freed" her dance.

Isadora's was a European triumph. In turn she conquered Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Greece. She was hailed and fêted. There was no place in the

American theatre for Isadora's simplicity and utter artlessness. It was in Budapest that the tide turned for her, thanks particularly to an able manager, one Alexander Gross. While I never knew Mr. Gross, I believe he fulfilled the true manager's purpose and function. Gross made an audience for a great artist, an audience where one did not exist before, until, eventually, all Europe was her audience.

I have said that inspiration was Isadora's guide. She did, of course, have theories of dance; but these theories were, for the most part, expressed in vague and general, rather than in precise and particular, terms. They can be summed up in a sentence. She believed that dance was life: therefore, the expression of some inner impulse, or urge, or inspiration. The source of this impulse she believed was centered in the solar plexus. She also believed she was of tremendous importance. Her own ideas of her own importance were, in my opinion, sometimes inflated.

To her eternal credit it must be noted that she battled against sugary music, against trivial themes, against artificiality of all sorts. When her "inspiration" did not proceed directly from the solar plexus, she found it in nature—in the waves of the sea and their rhythms, in the simple process of the opening of a flower.

These frank and simple and desirable objectives, if they had been all, would not have excited the tremendous opposition that was hers throughout her lifetime. Nor did this opposition, I believe, spring solely from her unconventional ideas on love and sex. Isadora insisted on becoming a citizen of the world, a champion of the world's less fortunate, the underprivileged. In doing so she cleared the air of a lot of nonsense and a lot of nineteenth century prudery which was by way of being carried over into the twentieth.

In Europe, in each and every country she visited, she arrayed herself on the side of the angels, i.e., the revolutionaries. The same is true in her own country. She

shocked her wealthy patrons with demonstrations of her own particular brand of democracy.

There was an occasion, during one of her appearances at the Metropolitan Opera House, when she walked with that especial Isadorian grace to the footlights and gave the audience, with special reference to the boxholders, the benefits of the following speech:

"Beethoven and Schubert," she said, "were children of the people all their lives. They were poor men and their great work was inspired by and belongs to humanity. The people need great drama, music, dancing. We went over to the East Side and gave a performance for nothing. What happened? The people sat there transfixed, with tears rolling down their cheeks. That is how they cared for it. Funds of life and poetry and art are waiting to spring from the people of the East Side.... Build for them a great amphitheatre, the only democratic form of theatre, where everyone has an equal view, no boxes; no balconies.... Why don't you give art to the people who really need it? Great music should no longer be kept for the delight of a handful of cultured people. It should be given free to the masses. It is as necessary for them as air and bread. Give it to them, for it is the spiritual wine of humanity."

As for the ballet, she continued to have none of it. She once remarked: "The old-fashioned waltz and mazurka are merely an expression of sickly sentimentality and romance which our youth and our times have outgrown. The minuet is but the expression of the unctuous servility of courtiers at the time of Louis XIV and hooped skirts."

Isadora's European successes led to the establishment of schools of her own, where her theories could be expounded and developed. The first of these was in Berlin, and as her pupils, her "children," developed, she appeared with them. When she first went to Russia, the controversy she stirred up has become a matter of ballet history; and it is a matter of record that she influenced that father of the "romantic

revolution" in ballet, Michel Fokine.

Russia figured extensively in Isadora's life, for she gave seasons there, first in 1905, and again in 1907 and 1912. Then, revolutionary that she was, she returned to the Soviet in 1921, established a school there and, in 1922, married the "hooligan" poet, Sergei Essenin. Throughout her life, Isadora had denounced marriage as an institution, disavowed it, fought it, bore three children outside it, on the ground that it existed only for the enslavement of woman.

There had been three Duncan seasons in America before I brought her, in 1922, for what proved to be her final visit to her native country. The earlier American series were in 1908, when she danced with Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Orchestra, at the Metropolitan Opera House, prior to a tour; in 1911, when she again danced with Damrosch; again in 1916, when she returned to California, early the next year, after a twenty-two years' absence. She also visited New York, briefly, in 1915, impulsively renting a studio at Fourth Avenue and Twenty-third Street, with the idea of establishing a school. It was during this brief visit that she made history of a kind by suddenly improvising a dance to the French national anthem at the Metropolitan Opera House.

As I have pointed out, enlightened dance criticism, so far as the newspapers were concerned, in those days was almost non-existent. For those readers who might be interested, however, there are available, in the files of *The New York Times*, penetrating analyses of her performances by the discerning Carl Van Vechten.

The story of Isadora's intervening years is marked by light and shadow. Hers was a life that could not long retain happiness within its grasp. Snatches of happiness were hers in her brief association with England's greatly talented stage designer, that misunderstood genius of the theatre, Gordon Craig, the son of Ellen Terry, by whom

Isadora had a child; and yet another child by the lover who was known only as Lohengrin.

Her passionate love of children was touching. Never was it better exemplified than by her several schools, her devotion to the girls and her concern for them. Most of all was it apparent in her selflessness in her attitude towards her own two children. It is not difficult to imagine the depth of the tragedy for her when a car in which they were riding on their way to Versailles toppled into the Seine, and the children were drowned. A third child, her dream of comfort and consolation, died at birth.

It was in an attempt to forget this last tragedy that she brought her school to New York. That same Otto Kahn, who had made Pavlova's first visit to America possible, came to her rescue and footed the bills for a four weeks' season at the old Century Theatre, which stood in lower Central Park West, where Brother Augustin held forth with Greek drama and biblical verse, and Isadora and the "children" danced. The public remained away. There was a press appeal for funds with which to liquidate a $12,000 indebtedness and to provide funds with which to get Isadora and the "children" to Italy. Another distinguished art patron, the late Frank Vanderlip, and others came to the rescue with cash and note endorsements. Thus, once again, Isadora put her native America behind her in disgust. Her parting shot at the country of her birth was a blast at Americans living and battening in luxury on their war profits while Europe bled.

Her 1916-1917 visit to her home shores was no more auspicious than the others. She danced, as I have said, at the Metropolitan Opera House. Lover Lohengrin gave her a magnificent party following the performance, a soirée that ended in an expensive and scandalous debácle. Isadora sold her jewels piece by piece, and succeeded in establishing her school at Long Beach. Quickly the money disappeared, and Gordon Selfridge, the London equivalent

of Marshall Field, paid her passage to London. The "children," now grown up into the "Isadorables," remained behind to make themselves American careers.

It was after Isadora's departure for London, in 1917, that I undertook to help the six "children" to attain their desires. They were a half-dozen of the loveliest children imaginable.

For their American debut as an independent group, we first engaged George Copeland, specialist in the works of contemporary French and Spanish composers, and an artist of the first rank, and later, Beryl Rubinstein, American composer and teacher, and until his recent death director of the Cleveland Institute, as accompanists.

Smart New York had adopted the "Isadorables." The fashionable magazines had taken them up and had spread Dr. Arnold Genthe's photographs of Anna, Lysel, Gretl, Thérése, Erica, and Irma over their pages. Frank Crowninshield championed them. During a hot June they sold out a half-dozen performances in Carnegie Hall, which takes some doing at any time of the year. Following a successful tour, I presented them at the Metropolitan Opera House, this time with an orchestra.

The girls, charming, delightful, fresh, were a direct product of Isadora, for which she used herself as model. Theirs was a reproduction of Isadora's art. One of them functions actively today, Maria Thérésa, giving out a fine, strong, sturdy reflection of Isadora's training and ideas. Basically, as an individualist, Isadora was a solo artist. She made no great effort to build up group dances into a series of linked dances that result in some form of dance drama. Such mass dances as she arranged were in imitation of the Greek chorus. Broken down into simple elements, they were nothing more than lines of girls, all of whom repeated the same simple movements. Her own creative gifts, which were magnificent, found their expression in her solo dances, and it is in this respect Maria Thérésa splendidly

carries on.

It was in Germany that Isadora's ideas made the deepest impression, and any legacy she may have left finds its expression in the "free" school that comes out of that country. If she had no abiding place, Berlin saw more of her when she was at her best than any other country. It was there that the term "goddess" was attached to her. Even the sick were brought to see the performances of the *Göttliche Heilige* Isadora in order that they might be cured. The serious German writers were greatly impressed. Isadora expressed it thus: "The weekly receptions at our house in Victoria Strasse became the centre of artistic and literary enthusiasm. Here took place many learned discussions on the dance as a fine art; for the Germans take every art discussion most seriously, and give the deepest consideration to it. My dance became the subject of violent and even fiery debates. Whole columns constantly appeared in all the papers, sometimes hailing me as a genius of a newly discovered art, sometimes denouncing me as a destroyer of the real classic dance, i.e., the ballet."

In *Impresario* I have written about Isadora's last American tour, under my management, in all its more lurid aspects. In February, 1923, she returned to France, and in 1924 went back to Russia with her poet-husband, Essenin. Not long after, Essenin hanged himself to a hook on the wall of his room in the Hotel Angleterre, in Leningrad. In 1927, Isadora returned to Paris, and on 8th July gave her last concert at the Théâtre Mogador.

Her last conversation with me in Paris was of the "children." This time she was referring to the pupils at her school in Russia. As I listened, I could only feel that these "children" were to her but symbols of her own two children wastefully drowned in the Seine. She wanted me to bring her Russian "children" to America—a visit, as it were, of her own spirit to her native land which had refused to accept her.

I promised.

In 1928, I was able to fulfill that promise by bringing fifteen of them, chosen by Irma of the "Isadorables," for a tour. Irma came with them, presided over them; brought them back for a second tour. Irma now lives quietly in the Connecticut countryside.

A twisting scarf, caught in the wheels of the car in which she was riding, ended the earthly career of a misunderstood American genius. Was the end deliberate? I only know she longed to die, she with the passionate love for life.

A tremendous freedom-loving American, she may, I feel, be called the first American dancer, in the sense that she brought a new style and a new manner, away from the accepted form of ballet. I, for one, believe that Isadora did more than any one else I know for the dance in America, and received less gratitude and recognition for her contribution.

Now that she is dead, I feel for her exactly as I always felt. Though we do not love our friends for one particular quality but as a whole, there is usually an element which, while the friend is still with us, especially appeals to us, and the memory of which we most cherish when he or she is absent for a while or for ever. For me that element in Isadora was and is the extreme gentleness hidden in her heart of hearts. Those who knew her only as a combative spirit in the world of the dance may be astonished at that statement. Yet I hold that gentleness to have been absolutely fundamental in her character and that not a few of her troubles were attributable to continuing and exasperating outrage of it.

There was a superficial side of her that may seem to contradict that gentleness. She had exasperating eccentricities, stupid affectations. Her childishness and capriciousness, her downright wilfulness could drive me nearly to distraction. She could, and often did waste

infinite hours of my time, and her own and others' money. She lacked discipline in herself, her life, her work. She could have been less arbitrary in many things, including her condemnation of ballet. On the other hand, she had a quality of communication rare indeed in the theatre. Her faults were, as I have said, superficialities. At base she was a genuinely gentle person.

Just because she was gentle she could, her sympathy being aroused, exert herself to an extraordinary degree and after no gentle fashion on behalf of those things in which she believed, and of others, particularly artists. For the same reason, she frequently could not properly exert herself on her own behalf. She was weary (weary unto death at the last) when that spring of gentleness, in which some of her best work had its origin, failed her. Hers was an intellect, in my opinion, of wider range, of sterner mettle, of tougher integrity, of more persistent energy and of more imaginative quality than those of her detractors. I hold because of Isadora's innate gentleness, and the fact it was so fundamental a thing in her, being exasperated both by the events of her life and by her intellect's persistent commentary upon those events, she became towards the close so utterly weary and exhausted that any capacity for a rational synthesis was lost. Hers was a romantic nature, and a rational synthesis usually proceeds by the tenderness of the heart working upon the intellect to urge upon it some suspension of judgment, and not by the hardness of the intellect working upon the heart and bidding it, in reason's name, to cease expecting to find things other and better than they are: the hearts of other humans more tender and their heads one whit less dense.

A few words on what has been criticized by many as her "free living." Today an unthinking license prevails in many circles. If Isadora's life displayed "license" in this sense, it certainly was not an unthinking "license." Isadora strongly held theories about personal freedom of thought

and behavior and dared to act according to them. Those theories may be wrong. That is a problem I have not here space to discuss. But that, believing in those theories, Isadora acted upon them and did not reserve them merely for academic discussion, I hold to her eternal credit. That Isadora did others and herself damage in the process must be admitted. But I have observed that many "conventional" persons do others and themselves a great deal of damage without displaying a tithe of Isadora's integrity and courage, since they act crudely upon theories in which they no longer in their heart of hearts believe, or contradict their theories in captious action for lack of courage to discover new theories. Let us not forget that "few know the use of life before 'tis past." Isadora died before she was fifty, endowed with a temperament little calculated to make easy the paths of true wisdom, paths which, I venture to suggest, often contradict the stereotyped notions of them entertained by those who are unable or unwilling too closely to consider the matter. To her personal tragedies must be added the depressing influence of the unfathomable indifference of her countrymen to art and artists and to herself.

I take it I have said enough to indicate that such "conventional" solutions as may occur to some readers were inadmissible in Isadora's case, just as inadmissible in fact as they would be in a novel by Dostoievsky. In any event, she paid to the end for any mistakes she may have made, and it is not our duty to sit in judgment on her, whether one theoretically disapproves of her use of what sometimes has been called the "escape-road." It is one's duty to understand, and by understanding to forgive.

I have heard it remarked that there was a streak of cruelty in Isadora. Gentle natures of acute sensibility and strong intelligence, long exasperated by indifference and opposition to what they hold of sovereign importance in art and life, are apt to turn cruel and even vindictive at times. I

never witnessed her alleged cruelty or vindictiveness to any one and I will not go on hearsay.

One of the great satisfactions of a long career in the world of dance is that I was able to be of some service to this neglected genius. I can think of no finer summation of her than the words of that strange, aloof genius of the British theatre, Gordon Craig, when he wrote:

" .... She springs from the Great Race——
From the line of Sovereigns, who
Maintain the world and make it move,
From the Courageous Giants,
The Guardians of Beauty——
The Solver of all Riddles."

B. COLORED LIGHTS AND FLUTTERING SCARVES

It is a far cry from Isadora to another American dancer, whose "children" I toured across America and back, in 1926.

Loie Fuller, "the lady with the scarf," was at that period championed by her friend, the late Queen Marie of Roumania, when that royal lady embarked upon a lecture tour of the United States that same year. Loie Fuller was loosely attached to the royal entourage.

"La Loie" had established a school in Paris, and wanted to exhibit the prowess of her pupils. I was inveigled into bringing them quite as much by Loie Fuller's dynamic, active manager, Mrs. Bloch, as I was by the aging dancer herself.

Loie Fuller was something of a phenomenon. Born in Chicago, in 1862, her first fame was gained as a child temperance lecturer in the mid-west. According to her biographers, she took some dancing lessons, but found the lessons too difficult and abandoned them after a short time.

Switching to the study of voice, she gave up her youthful Carrie Nation attacks on alcohol and obtained a singing part in a stage production. As the story goes, while she was appearing in this stage role, a friend in India made her a gift of a long scarf of very light weight silk. Playing with her present, watching it float through the air with the greatest of ease, she found her vocation. It was as simple as that.

Here was something new: a dance in which a great amount of fluttering silk was kept aloft, the while upon it there constantly played variegated lights, projected by what in the profession is known as a "color-wheel," a circular device containing various colored media, rotated before an arc-lamp. Thus was born the *Serpentine Dance*.

Here was no struggle on the part of the artist to find her medium of expression, no seeking for a new technique or slogging effort perfecting an old one; no hours spent sweating at the *barre*; no heartache. Loie Fuller was not concerned with steps, with style, with a unique and individual quality of movement. Loie Fuller had a scarf. Loie Fuller had an instantaneous success. Her career was made on the *Serpentine Dance*. But she also had one other inspiration. A "sunrise" stage effect that she used was mistaken by the audience as a dance of fire, as the light rays touched her flowing scarves and draperies. "La Loie" was not one to miss a chance. She gathered her electricians about her—for in the early days of stage lighting with electricity nothing was impossible. The revolving "light-wheels" were increased in number, as were the spot-lights.

Since all this happened in Paris, Loie Fuller's *Danse de Feu* became to France what the *Serpentine Dance* had been to America. The French adopted her as their own. Widely loved, she became "La Loie." Her stage arrangements were often startling; they could not always be called dancing. The arms and feet of her "children" were always subordinated to the movements of the draperies. So tricky

was the business of the draperies that it is said that none of her designers or seamstresses were permitted to know more than a small part of their actual construction.

Her imitators were many, with the result that, for a time, the musical comedy stages of both Europe and America had an inundation of illuminated dry goods. It was the "children" who kept "La Loie's" serpentine and fire dances alive.

When Loie Fuller suggested the American tour, the idea interested me because of the novelty involved. It was, incidentally, my only "incognito" tour. I accepted an invitation from Queen Marie of Roumania to visit her at the Royal Palace in Bucharest to discuss the proposed tour with Her Majesty and Loie Fuller, who was a close friend and confidante of the Queen. The tour was in the interest of one of the Queen's pet charities and, moreover, it had diplomatic overtones. Naturally, under the circumstances, no managerial auspices were credited on the programmes.

In addition to the purely Loie Fuller characteristic numbers, the Loie Fuller Dancers, on this tour, offered *Some Dance Scenes from the Fairy Tale of Her Majesty Queen Marie's* "*The Lilly of Life*," as *presented at the Grand Opera, Paris*.

Apart from this, the "children" had all the old Loie Fuller tricks, and a few new ones. Their dance vocabulary was far from extensive, but there was a pleasant enough quality about it.

When I made the tour, in association with Queen Marie, the "children" were, to put it kindly, on the mature side; and it took a great deal of their dramatic, vital and dynamic managers drive to keep the silks fluttering aloft. Mrs. Bloch was a remarkable woman, who had handled the "children" for Loie Fuller a long time.

The tour of the Loie Fuller Dancers is not one of my proudest achievements; but I know the gay colours, the

changing lights brought pleasure to many.

Years later, on a visit to Paris, I received a telephone call from Mrs. Bloch, requesting an appointment. It was arranged for the following day. At the appointed hour I went down to the foyer of the Hotel Meurice to await her coming.

Some minutes later, I observed an elderly lady, supported by a cane, enter and cross the foyer, walking slowly as the aged do, and using her cane noticeably to assist her. I paid scant attention until, from where I sat near the desk, I overheard her explaining to the *conciérge* that she had a "rendezvous" with Monsieur Hurok.

I simply did not recognize the human dynamo of 1926. A quarter of a century had slipped by. Much of that time, she told me, she had spent in Africa. Despite the change in her physical appearance, despite the toll of the years, the flame still burned within her.

Her mission? To try to get me to bring the Loie Fuller Dancers to America for another tour.

As I observed the changes that had taken place in their manager, I could not help visualizing what twenty-five years must have done to the "children."

C. *A TEUTONIC PRIESTESS*

My dance associations in what I may call my "early middle" period led me into excursions far afield from that form of dance expression which is to me the most completely satisfying form of theatrical experience.

For the sake of the record, let us set the date of this period as 1930. Surely there have been few in the history of the dance whose approach to the medium was so foreign to and so different from the classical ballet, where lie my deepest interests and my chief delight, than that Teutonic priestess, Mary Wigman.

When I brought Wigman to America, shortly after the Great Crash, she was no longer young. She had been born in Germany, in 1886, and could hardly have been called a "baby ballerina." Originally a pupil of Emile Jacques Dalcroze, the father of Eurhythmics, whose pupils in a "demonstration" had kindled Wigman's interest in the dance, she did not remain long with him. Dalcroze himself, at this stage, apparently had little interest in dancing. However, he established certain methods which proved of interest to certain gifted dancers. The Dalcroze basis was musical, and his chief function was to foster a feeling for music in his pupils. Music frustrated, handicapped, restricted her, Wigman felt. Individualist that she was, she left her teacher in order to work out her own dance destiny. There followed a period of some uncertainty on her part, and, for a time, she became a pupil of the Hungarian teacher, Rudolf von Laban, who laid down in pre-war Germany the foundations for modern dance. Unlike Isadora Duncan, Laban had no aversion to ballet. As a matter of fact, he liked much of it, was influenced by it; was impressed by the Diaghileff Ballet, was friendly with Diaghileff, and became an intimate of Michel Fokine. His later violent reaction from ballet was certainly not based on lack of knowledge of it.

At the Laban school, Wigman collaborated with him, and having a streak of choreographic genius, was able to put some of Laban's theories into practical form. However, Mary Wigman's forceful personality was greater than any school and, in 1919, she broke away from Laban, and formed a school of her own. She abandoned what were to her the restricting influences of formal music, as Isadora had abandoned clothing restrictions. A dancer of tremendous power, like Isadora she had an overwhelming personality. Again, like Isadora, all this had a tendency to make her pupils only pale imitations of herself. Wigman's public career, a secondary matter with her, actually began

in Dresden, in 1918, with her *Seven Dances of Life*. Dresden was her temple. Here the Teutonic Priestess of the Dance presided over her personal religion of movement. German girls were joined by Americans. The disciples grew in number and spread out through Germany like proselyting missionaries. Wigman groups radiated the gospel until one found schools and factories and societies turning out *en masse* for "demonstrations" of the Wigman method. I have said that Wigman found music a deterrent to her method.

On the other hand, one of the most important features of her "school" was a serious, thorough, Germanic research into the question of what she felt was the proper musical accompaniment for dance. Her pupils learned to devise their own rhythmic accompaniment. In her show pieces, at any rate, Wigman's technique was to have the music for the dance composed simultaneously with the creation of the dance movements—certainly a new type of collaboration.

In addition to forming a "*schule*," where great emphasis was laid on "*spannungen*," perhaps best explained as tensions and relaxations, she also created a philosophical cult in that strange hot-house that was pre-war Germany, with an intellectualized approach to sex.

I had known about her and her work long before I signed a contract with her for the 1930-1931 season. Pavlova had talked to me about her and had aroused my curiosity and interest; but I was unable to imagine what might be America's reaction to her. I was turning the idea over in my mind, when there appeared at my office,—in those days in West Forty-second Street, overlooking Bryant Park,—a young and earnest enthusiast to plead her case. His name was John Martin.

In an earlier chapter I have pointed out the low estate of dance criticism of that period. In its wisdom, the *New York Times* had, shortly before the period of which I now write,

taken tentative steps to correct this deficiency by creating a dance department on the paper, with John Martin engaged to report the dance. Martin's earnest and special pleading on behalf of Mary Wigman moved me and, as always, eager to experiment and present something new and fresh, I decided to cast the die.

The effect of my first announcement of her coming was a bit disconcerting. The first to react were the devotees. There was a fanaticism about them that was disturbing. It is one thing to have a handful of vociferous idolaters, and quite another to be able to fill houses with paying customers night after night.

When I met Wigman at the pier on her arrival in New York, I greeted a middle-aged muscular Amazon, a rather stuffy appearing Teutonic Amazon, wearing a beaver coat of dubious age, and a hat that had seen better days. But what struck me more forcibly than the plainness of her apparel was the woman herself. She greeted me with a warm smile; her gray eyes were large, frank, and widely set; and from beneath the venerable and rather battered hat, fell a shock of thick, wavy brown hair. She spoke softly, deeply, in a completely unaccented English with a British intonation.

There was no ballet company with her, no ship-load of scenery, properties and costumes. Her company was made up of two persons in addition to herself: a lesser Amazon in the person of Meta Mens, who presided over Wigman's costumes—one trunk—and her percussion instruments—tam-tams, Balinese gongs, and a fistful of reedy wind instruments; the other, a lanky, pale-faced chap with hyper-thyroid eyes, Hanns Hastings, who composed and played such music as Wigman used.

On the day before the opening, I gave a party at the Plaza Hotel as a semi-official welcome on the part of our American dancers, among whom were included that great pioneer of our native contemporary dance, Martha

Graham, together with Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and, of course, that champion of the modern dance, John Martin.

Much depended upon Wigman's first New York performance. A tour had been arranged, but not booked. There is a decided difference in the terms. In the language of the theatre, a tour is not "booked" until the contracts have been signed. The preliminary arrangements are called "pencilling in." The pencil notations are inked only when signatures are attached to the contracts. If the New York *première* fizzled, there would be no inking. I had taken the Forty-sixth Street Theatre, and the publicity campaign under the direction of my good friend, Gerald Goode, had been under way for weeks.

It was a distinguished audience and a curious one that assembled in the Forty-sixth Street Theatre for the opening performance. It was an enthusiastic one that left at the end. I had gone back stage before the curtain rose to wish Wigman well, but the priestess was unapproachable. As she did before each performance, she entered the "silence." Under no circumstances did she permit any disturbance. She would arrive at the theatre a long time before the scheduled time of the curtain's rise, and, in her darkened dressing-room, lie in a mystic trance. Later she danced as one possessed.

If the opening night audience was enthusiastic, which it was, I am equally sure some of its members were confused. At later performances, as I stood in my customary position at the rear of the auditorium as the public left the theatre, I was not infrequently pressed by questions. These questions, however they may have been phrased, meant the same thing. "What do the dances mean?" "What is she trying to say?" "What does it all signify?" I am not easily embarrassed, as a rule. The constant reiteration of this question, however, proved an exception.

For the benefit of a generation unfamiliar with the Wigman dance, I should explain that her dances were, as she called them, "cycles." In other words, her performances consisted of groups of dances with an alleged relationship: a relationship so difficult to discern, however, that I suspect it must have existed only in Wigman's mind. The one dance that stands out most vividly in my mind is one she called *Monotonie*. In *Monotonie*, Wigman stood in the dead center of the stage. Then she whirled and whirled and whirled. As the whirling continued she was first erect, then slowly crouching, slowly rising until she was erect again; but always whirling, the while a puny four-note phrase was endlessly repeated. Through a sort of self-hypnosis, her whirling had an hypnotic effect on her. In a sort of mystic trance herself, Wigman succeeded, up to a point, in inducing a similar reaction on her public.

But what did it mean? I did not know, but I was determined to find out. Audience members, local managers, newspaper men were badgering me for an answer. To any query that I put to Wigman, her deep-throated reply was always the same:

"Oh, the meaning is too deep; I really can't explain it."

It was much later, during the course of the tour following the New York season, that I arrived at the "meaning" of Wigman's dances, and that will be told in its proper place.

After the tumult and the shouting had died that opening night at the Forty-fourth Street Theatre, I took Wigman to supper with some friends. As we left the theatre together, Wigman was still in her trance; but, as the food was served, she came out of it with glistening eyes and a rapid-fire sort of highly literate chatter, in the manner of one sliding back to earth from the upper world.

The party over and Wigman back in her hotel, I sat up to

await the press notices. They were splendid. No one dared describe her "meaning," but all were agreed that here was a dynamic force in dance that drove home her "message." The notice I awaited most eagerly was that of the *New York Times*. The first City Edition did not carry it, something which I attributed to the lateness of the final curtain. I waited for the Late City Edition. Still not a line about Wigman. I simply could not understand.

For years I had struggled to have the dance treated with respect by the press. Through the Pavlova days I talked and tried to convert editors to a realization of its importance. Any readers who are interested have only to turn up the files of their local newspapers and read the "reviews" of the period of the Pavlova and Diaghileff companies to find that ballet, in most cases, was "covered" by disgruntled music critics, who had been assigned, in many cases obviously against their wills, to review. You would find that the average music critic either overtly disliked ballet and had said so, or else treated it flippantly.

At the time of Wigman's arrival in America, the ice had been broken, as I have said, by the appointment of John Martin at the head of a full-time dance department at the *New York Times*. Mary Watkins, eager, enthusiastic, informed, was fulfilling a like function on the *New York Herald-Tribune*. Thus dance criticism was on its way to becoming professional; and the men and women of knowledge and taste and discernment who criticize dance today, I cannot criticize. For I have respect for the professional.

The *New York Times* review of Wigman's opening performance did not appear. Since John Martin had urged me to bring Wigman to America, it was the more baffling. Prior to Martin's engagement by the *New York Times*, that remarkable and beloved figure, William ("Bill") Chase, for so many years the editor of the music department of the *Times* and formerly the music critic of the *Sun*, and to the

end of his life my very good friend, had "reported" the dance. Since he insisted he knew nothing about it, he never attempted to criticize it. I had frequently suggested to "Bill" that the *Times* should have a qualified person at the head of a *bona fide* dance department. Eventually John Martin was engaged, and I am happy to have been able to play a part in the beginnings of the change on the part of the American press.

I have mentioned that the change was gradual, for Martin's articles at first were unsigned and had no by-line. In the early days, Martin merely reported on dance events. To be sure, at that time, there was little enough to report. Then Leonide Massine was brought to the Roxy Theatre by the late Samuel Rothapfel to stage weekly presentations of ballet; and then there was something about which to write. Since then John Martin has helped materially to spread the gospel of ballet and dance.

It was at approximately the Massine-Roxy stage of the dance criticism development that I searched the *Times* for the Wigman notice. Most of the newspapers carried rave reviews, and because they did, I was the more mystified, since in the *Times* there was not so much as a mention even that the event had taken place. However, out-of-town friends, including the late Richard Copley, well-known concert manager, telephoned me from New Jersey to congratulate me on the glowing review they had read in the Suburban Edition, and read it to me over the telephone. There were dozens of other calls from suburban communities to the same effect.

I called the editorial department of the *Times* to enquire about its omission from the New York City edition. There was some delay, but eventually I was informed that it would seem that the night city editor had read John Martin's story in the Suburban Edition, saw that it carried no by-line, no signature; read its glowing and enthusiastic account of the Wigman *première*; and because it was so

fulsome in its enthusiasm, assumed it was merely a piece of press-agent's ballyhoo, and forthwith pulled it out of all other editions.

Armed with this information, I proceeded to bombard the *Times* with protests. One of these was directly to the head of the editorial department, whom I asked to reprint the notice that had been dropped. I was rather summarily told I was not to try to dictate to the *Times* what it should print. By now utterly exasperated, I got hold of my friend "Bill" Chase, who drily counselled me to "keep my shirt on." Chase immediately went on a tour of investigation. He called me back to tell me that the Board of Editors at their daily meeting had gone into the matter but were unwilling to print the notice I had asked, since they had been "scooped" by the other newspapers and it was, therefore, no longer news: but, they had decided that, in the future, Martin would have a by-line. Then Chase added, with that wry New England humour of his for which he was famous, that, with the possession of a by-line, no editor would dare "kill" a review. It might, of course, be cut for space, but never "killed."

The next Sunday the readers of the *New York Times* read John Martin's notice of Mary Wigman's first performance, and it was uncut. But it was a paid advertisement, bearing, in bold-faced type, the heading: "*THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO REPRINT*."

As a result of the New York *première*, the "pencilled" tour was "inked," and I traveled most of the tour with the Priestess. Newspaper men continued to demand to know the "meaning" of her dances. Since Wigman, most literate of dancers, refused any explanation, I made up my own. I told a reporter that Wigman was continuing and developing the work of Isadora Duncan. The reporter wrote his story. It was printed. Wigman read it without comment. From then on, however, Wigman's reply to all queries on the subject was: "Where Isadora Duncan

stopped, there I began."

The quickly "inked" tour was a success beyond any anticipations I had had, and a second tour was booked and played with equal success. The mistake I made was when I brought her back for a third season, and with a group of her disciples. America would accept one Wigman; but twenty husky, bulky Teutonic Amazons in bathing suits with skirts were more than our public could take.

Moreover, the group was not typical of the Wigman "schule" at anything like its best. As a matter of fact, it was a long way from the Teutonic Priestess's highest standards.

It was after the war. Mrs. Hurok and I were paying our first post-war visit to Switzerland, and stopped off at Zurich. My right-hand bower, Mae Frohman, had come to Zurich to join us. We learned that Wigman was there as well, giving master-classes in association with Harald Kreutzberg. Our initial efforts to find her were not successful.

Mrs. Hurok, Miss Frohman and I were at dinner. We were unaware that another diner in the same restaurant was Mary Wigman. It was Miss Frohman who recognized her as she was leaving the room. Wigman had changed. Time had taken its inevitable toll. The meeting was a touching one. We all foregathered in the lounge for a talk. Things were not easy for her; nor was conversation exactly smooth. Her Dresden "*schule*" had been commandeered by the Nazis. She was now living in the Russian sector of Germany. It had been very difficult for her to obtain permission from the Russian authorities to come to Zurich for her master-classes. She was obliged to return within a fixed period. She preferred not to talk about the war. Conversation, as I have said, was not easy. But there are things which do not require saying. My sympathies were aroused. The great, strong personality could never be quite

erased, nor could the fine mind be utterly stultified.

I watched and remembered a great lady and a goodly artist. It is gratifying to me to know that she is now resident in the American zone of Berlin, and able to continue her classes.

4. Sextette

A. A SPANISH GYPSY

SUCH was the influence of The Swan on my approach to dance that, although she was no longer in our midst, I found myself being guided subconsciously by her direction. There were arrangements for a tour of Pavlova and a small company, for the season 1931-1932, not under my management. Death liquidated these arrangements. Had the tour been made, Pavlova was to have numbered among her company the famous Spanish gypsy dancer of the 1930's, Vicente Escudero, one of the greatest Iberian dancers of all time.

Pavlova had championed Duncan and Wigman. I had brought them. I determined to bring Escudero to help round out the catholicity of my dance presentations. Spanish dancing had always intrigued me, and I had a soft spot for gypsies of all nationalities.

Escudero, who had been the partner of the ineffable Argentina, had earned a reputation which, to understate, bordered on the picturesque. Small, wiry, dark-skinned, with an aquiline nose, he wore his kinky, glossy black hair long to cover a lack-lustre bald spot. He, like most Spanish gypsies, claimed descent from the Moors, and there was

about him more of the Arab than the Indian. As I watched him I could understand how he must have borne within him the stigma of the treatment Spain had meted out to his people; for it was not until the nineteenth century that the gypsies in Spain had any freedom at all. Until then, they were pariahs, hounded by the people, hounded by the law. Only within the last fifty-or-so years has the Spanish gypsy come into his own with the universal acknowledgment of being a creative artist, the originator of a highly individual and beautiful art.

Escudero was a Granada gypsy, a "*gitano*" from the white caves hollowed out in the Sacred Mountain. I point this out in order to distinguish him from his Sevillian cousins, the "*flamenco*." His repertoire ranged through the *Zapateado*, the *Soleares*, the *Alegrias*, the *Bulerias*, the *Tango*, the *Zamba*. His special triumph was the *Farruca*.

It was on the 17th January, 1932, that I introduced Vicente Escudero to New York audiences at the 46th Street Theatre, where Wigman had had her triumph. A number of New York performances were given, followed by a brief tour, which, in turn, was succeeded by a longer coast-to-coast tour the following year. His company consisted of four besides himself: a pianist, a guitarist; the fiery, shrewish Carmita, his favorite; and the shy, gentle-voiced Carmela.

But it was Escudero's sinister, communicative personality that drew and held audiences. His gypsy arrogance shone in his eyes, in the audacious tilt of his flat-brimmed hat, in his complete assurance; above all it stood out in his strutting masculinity. Eschewing castanets, for gypsy men consider their use effeminate, he moved sinuously but majestically, with the clean heel rhythm and crackling fingers that marked him as the outstanding gypsy dancer of his day and, quite possibly, of all time. For accompaniment there was no symphony orchestra, only the hoarse syncopation of a single guitar. Through half-parted

lips shone the gleaming ivory of small, perfectly matched teeth.

For two successful seasons I toured Escudero across America, spreading a new and thrilling concept of the dance of Spain to excited audiences, audiences that reached a tremendous crescendo of fervor at the climax of his *Farruca*. No theatrical *Farruca* this, but a feline, animal dance straight from the ancient Spanish gypsy camp.

I had been forewarned to be on my guard. However, though his arrival in America had been preceded by tall tales of his completely unmanageable nature, Escudero proved to be one of the simplest, most tractable artists I ever have handled. There was on his part an utter freedom from the all too usual fits of "temperament," a complete absence of the hysterics sometimes indulged in—and all too often—by artists of lesser talents. I happen to know, from other sources than Escudero, that he took a dim view of American food, hotels, and the railway train accommodations in the remoter parts of this great land. He never complained to me. Escudero had his troubles with Carmita and Carmela, as they vied with each other for position and his favors. But these troubles never were brought to my official attention. Like the head of a gypsy camp, he was the master. He ruled his little troupe and distributed both favors and discipline.

In 1935, Escudero made his last American appearance, when I presented the Continental Revue at the Little Theatre, now the New York Times Hall. Among those appearing with Escudero in this typical European entertainment were the French *chanteuse*, Lucienne Boyer, Mrs. Hurok, Lydia Chaliapine, Rafael, together with that comic genius, Nikita Balieff, as master of ceremonies.

Other and younger dancers of Spain continue to spread the gospel of the Iberian dance. I venture to believe that, highly talented though many of them are, I may say with

incontrovertible truth, there has been only one Escudero.

B. A SWISS COMEDIAN

In 1931, a slight, short Swiss girl named Trudi Schoop with the dual talents of a dancer and a comedienne—a combination not too common—organized a company in her native Switzerland. She named it the Trudi Schoop Comic Ballet.

The Paris *Archives Internationales de la Danse*, formed in 1931 by Rolf de Maré, the Swedish dance patron who was responsible for the Swedish Ballet in the early 'twenties, in 1932 sponsored the first International Choreographic Competition in Paris. The prize-winning work in this initial competition was won by Kurt Joos for his now famous *The Green Table*. The second prize went to this hitherto almost unknown Trudi Schoop, for her comic creation, *Fridolin*.

In 1936, I brought her with her company for their first tour. Here again was a fresh and new form of dance entertainment. Tiny, with a shock of boyishly cut blonde hair, Trudi Schoop had the body of a young lad, and a schoolboy's face alternating impishness with the benign innocence of the lad caught with sticky fingers and mouth streaked with jam.

Her repertoire consisted of theatre pieces rather than ballets in the accepted sense of the term. Trudi herself was a clown in the sense Charles Chaplin is a clown. Her range was tremendous. With a company trained by her in her own medium of gentle satire, she was an immediate success. Her productions had no décor, and there was a minimum of costume. But there was a maximum of effective mime, of wit, of satire. Her brother, Paul Schoop, was her composer, conductor, accompanist.

Trudi Schoop's outstanding success was the prize-

winning work, *Fridolin*. Schoop was Fridolin; Fridolin was Schoop. Fridolin was an innocent boy in a black Sunday suit and hat who stumbled and bumbled through a world not necessarily the best of all possible, wringing peals of laughter out of one catastrophe after another.

Other almost equally happy and successful works in her repertoire included *Hurray for Love*; *The Blonde Marie*, the tale of a servant girl who eventually becomes an operatic diva; and *Want Ads*, giving the background behind those particularly humorous items that still appear regularly in the "Agony Column" of *The Times* (London); you know, the sort of announcement that reads: "Honourable Lady (middle fifties) seeks acquaintance: object matrimony."

The critical fraternity dubbed her the "funniest girl in the world"; the public adored her, and theatre folk made her their darling. Prior to the outbreak of the war, I sent Trudi and her Swiss Comedians across America. When, at last, war broke in all its fury, Schoop retired to her native Switzerland and disbanded her company. She did not reassemble it until 1946; and in 1947 I brought them over again for a long tour of the United States and Canada. On this most recent of her tours, in addition to her familiar repertoire, we made a departure by presenting an evening-long work, in three acts, called *Barbara*. This was, so far as I know, the first full-length work to be presented in dance form in many cities and towns of the North American continent. Full length, of course, in the sense that one work occupied a full evening for the telling of its story. This is another form of dance pioneering in which I am happy to have played a part.

Today Trudi Schoop, who has retired from the stage, lives with her sister in Hollywood.

C. A HINDU DEITY

Back in 1924, in London, I had watched a young Hindu dancer with Pavlova in her ballet, *Hindu Wedding*. I was struck by the quality of his movement and by the simple beauty of the dance of India.

His name was Uday Shan-Kar. From Pavlova I learned that he was the son of a Hindu producer of plays, that he had been trained by his father, and had worked so successfully in collaboration with him in the production of native Hindu mimed dramas that Pavlova had persuaded Shan-Kar to return to London to assist her in the production of an Indian ballet she had in mind, based on the Radna-Krishna legend. Pavlova succeeded in persuading him to dance in the work as well.

Later I saw him at the Paris Colonial Exposition, where, with his company which he had organized in India, he made a tremendous impression, subsequently achieving equal triumphs in England, Austria-Hungary, Germany and Switzerland. At the Paris Exposition I saw long Hindu dramas, running for hours, beautifully and sumptuously produced, but played with the greatest leisure. Since I am committed to candor in this account of my life in the dance, I must admit that I saw only parts of these danced dramas, took them in relays, for I must confess mine is a nature that cannot remain immobile for long stretches at a time before a theatre form as unfamiliar as the Indian was to me then.

Gradually I came to know it, and I realized that in India formal mime and dance are much more a part of the life of the people than they are with us. With the Indian, dance is not only an entertainment, but a highly stylised stage art; it plays an important part in religious ritual; it is a genuinely communal experience.

As night after night I watched parts of these symbolic dance dramas of Hindu mythology, fascinated by them, I searched for a formula whereby they might be made palatable and understandable to American audiences. I was

certain that, as they were being danced in Paris, to music strange and unfamiliar to Western ears, going on for hours on end, the American public was not ready for them, and would not accept them.

I put the matter straight to Shan-Kar. I told him I wanted to bring him and his art to America. He told me he wanted to come. Possessed of a fine scholarship, a magnificent three-fold talent as producer, choreographer, and dancer-musician, he also possessed to a remarkable degree a sense of theatre showmanship and an intuition that enabled him to grasp and quickly understand the space and time limitations of the non-oriental theatre.

Shan-Kar's association with Pavlova, together with his own fine intelligence, made his transition from the dance theatre of the Orient to an adaptation of it acceptable to the West a comparatively simple task for him.

His success in America exceeded my most optimistic predictions. Until the arrival of Shan-Kar, America had not been exposed to very much of the dance of India. Twenty years before, the English woman known as Roshanara had had a vogue in esoteric circles with her adaptations of the dances of India and the East. On the other hand, the male dancing of India was virtually unknown. As presented by Shan-Kar, this was revealed in an expressive mime, with an emphasis on the enigmatic face, the flat hand, using the upper part of the body as the chief medium of expression, together with the unique use of the neck and shoulders, not only for expression, but for accentuation of rhythm. New, also, to our audiences were the spread knees, a type of movement exclusive to the male Indian dancer.

Here was an art and an artist that seemingly had none of the conventional elements of a popular success. About him and his presentations there was nothing spectacular, nothing stunning, nothing exciting. Colour was there, to be sure; but the dancing and the general tone of the entertainment was all of a piece, on a single level,

soothing, and with that elusive, almost indefinable quality: the serenity of the East.

Our associations, save for a brief period of mistrust on my part, have always been pleasant. In addition to the original tour of 1932, I brought him back in the season 1936-1937, and again in 1938-1939. The war, of course, intervened, and I was unable to bring him again until the season 1949-1950.

At the outbreak of the war, through the benefaction of the Elmhirst Foundation of Dartington Hall, England, an activity organized by the former Dorothy Straight, Shan-Kar was enabled to found a school for the dance and a center for research into Hindu lore, which he set up in Benares. One outcome of this research center was the production of a motion picture film dealing with this lore.

After seeing many of the Eastern dances and dancers who have been brought to Western Europe and the United States, I am convinced Uday Shan-Kar is still the outstanding exponent. I hope to bring him again for further tours, for I feel the more the American people are exposed to his performances, the better we shall understand the fine and delicate art of the East, and the East itself.

D. A SPANISH LADY

Although my taste for the dances of Spain had been whetted by my association with Escudero, I had long wished to present to America the artist whom I knew was the finest exponent of the feminine dance of the Iberian peninsula. The task was by no means an easy one, for her first American venture had been a fiasco. The lady from Spain was anything but eager to risk another North American venture.

Her name was Encarnacion Lopez. But it was as Argentinita that she was known to and loved by all lovers

of the dance of Spain, and recognized by them as its outstanding interpreter of our time. Her story will bear retelling. My enthusiasm, my utmost admiration for the Spanish dance, and for the great art of Argentinita is something that is not easy for me to express. Diaghileff is known to have said with that unequivocation for which he was noted: "There are two schools of dancing: the Classic Ballet, which is the foundation of all ballet; and the Spanish school."

I would have put it differently by saying that Classic Ballet and the Spanish school are the two types of dancing closest to my heart.

My first view of Argentinita was at New York's Majestic Theatre, in 1931, when she made her American *début* in Lew Leslie's ill-fated *International Revue*. This performance, coincidentally enough, also brought forth for his first American appearance, the British dancer, Anton Dolin, who later also came under my management and who, like Argentinita, was to become a close personal friend. For Dolin, the opening night of the *International Revue* was certainly no very conspicuous beginning; for Argentinita, however, it was definitely a sad one. This charming, quiet-voiced lady of Spain knew that she was a great artist. Thrust into the hurly-burly of an ineptly produced Broadway revue, where all was shouting and screaming, Argentinita continued her quiet way and, artist that she was, avoided shouting and screaming her demands.

I was present at the opening performance. Although she was outwardly calm, collected, restrained, I could sense the ordeal through which Argentinita was going. In order to insure proper rhythmic support, she had brought her own orchestra conductor from Spain. This gentleman was able to speak little, if any, English. From where I sat I could see the musicians poring over their parts and could hear them commenting to each other about the music.

Obviously the parts were in bad order and, equally obviously, there had been little or no rehearsal; and, moreover, it appeared the music was difficult to read at short notice.

It was one of those strange ironies of fate that ruined something that, properly handled, should and would have been a triumph. Yet it was not only the orchestra and the music that were at fault. Argentinita herself was shockingly presented, if she can honestly be said to have been presented at all. She made her entrance as a Spanish peasant, in a Spanish peasant costume which, though correct in every detail, was devoid of any effect of what the average audience thinks is Spanish. She was asked to dance in a peasant scene against a fantastic set purporting to be Spanish, surrounded by a bevy of Broadway showgirls in marvellous exotic costumes, also purporting to be Iberian, with trains yards in length, which were no more authentically Spanish, or meant to be, than were those of the tango danced by that well-known ball-room dancing team of Moss and Fontana, who came on later in the same scene.

Under such circumstances, success for Argentinita was out of the question. So bitter was her disappointment that she left the cast and the company two weeks after the opening. Later she gave a Sunday night recital in her own repertoire, and although I set to work immediately to persuade her that there was an audience for her in America, a great, enthusiastic audience, such were her doubts that it took me six years to do it. I knew she was a born star, for I recognized, shining in the tawdry setting of this revue, a vivacious theatre personality.

When Argentinita finally returned to America, in 1938, under my management, and made her appearance on 13th November of that year, at the Majestic Theatre, on the same stage where, seven years before, she had so utterly and tragically failed, this time to enthusiastic cheers and a

highly approving press, she admitted I had been correct in my judgment and in my insistence that she return.

There is little point in recounting at this time her subsequent triumphs all over America, for her hold on the public increased with each appearance, and she is all too close to the memories of contemporary dance lovers. I have said that Argentinita was a great artist. That will bear repeating over and over again. Every gesture she made was feminine and beautiful and, to my mind, she portrayed everything that was lovely and most desirable. While her castanets may not actually have sung, they spoke of many lovely things. Argentinita was a symbol of the womanhood of Spain, warm, rich-blooded, wholesome, and I always felt certain there were not enough hats in the world, least of all in Spain, to throw at her feet to pay her the homage that was her due.

Argentinita was born of Spanish parents in Buenos Aires, in 1898, and taken back to Spain by them when she was four years old. At that early age she commenced her training in the Spanish dance in all its varied forms and styles, for she was equally at home in the Spanish Classic dance as she was in the Gypsy or Flamenco dances. Those who saw the poem she could make from *las Soleares* of Andulasia, the basic rhythm of all Spanish gypsy dances, know how she gave them the magic of a magic land; or the gay *Alegrias*, performed in the sinuous manner, rich with contrasts of slow, soft, and energetic movements, with the characteristic stamping, stomping, sole-tapping, clapping, and finger-snapping. It was in the *Alegrias* that Argentinita let her fancy roam with the slow tempo of the music. The European dance analysts had noted that here, as also at other times and places, Argentinita danced to please herself. When the tempo quickened, her mood changed to one of gaiety and abandon.

It is a difficult matter for me to pin down my memories of this splendid artist and her work: *las Sevillianas*, the

national dance of Seville, danced by all classes and conditions of people, the Queen of Flamenco dances; or the *Bulerias*, the most typical of all gypsy dances, light and gay, the dance of the fiesta.

Argentinita was not only a dancer. She was an actress of the first order. She had been a member of Martinez Sierra's interesting and vital creative theatre in Madrid. She sang *Chansons Populaires* in a curiously throaty, plaintive little voice that could, nevertheless, fill the largest theatre, despite the cameo-like quality of her art, fill even the Metropolitan Opera House, with the sound, the color, the atmosphere of Spain.

Dancer of Spain that she was, her repertoire was not by any means confined to the dance and music and life of the peoples of the Iberian peninsula. She traveled far afield for her material, through the towns and villages of South and Central America. Yet she was no mere copyist. Works and ideas she found were transmuted into terms of the theatre by means of a subtle alchemy. She had a deep knowledge of the entire Spanish dance tradition, and knew it all, understood its wide historical and regional changes. In her regional works, from Spanish folk to the heart of the Andes, she kept the flavor of the original, but personalized the dances. About them all was a fundamental honesty; nothing was done for show. There were no heroics; no athleticism. In addition to the *Alegrias*, *Sevillianas*, *Fandangos*, *Jotas* of Spain, the folk dances and folk songs of Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and the remote places of Latin America and of its Indian villages were hers. None who ever saw her do it can ever quite obliterate the memory of *El Huayno*, implicit as it was with the stark dignity and nobility of the Inca woman, and called by one critic, "the greatest dance of our generation."

I have a particularly fond memory of *On the Route to Seville*, in which a smoothie from the city outwitted and outdid the gypsies in larceny; and also I remember fondly

that nostalgic picture of the Madrid of 1900, which she called, simply enough, *In Old Madrid*.

As our association developed and continued, I was happy to be able to extend the scope of her work and bring her from the solitary and non-theatrical dance recital platform on which, one after the other, from coast to coast, her journeys were a succession of triumphs, to the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Here, with her own ensemble, chief among which was her exceptionally talented sister, Pilar Lopez, I placed them as guests with one ballet company or another—with Leonide Massine in Manuel de Falla's *The Three-Cornered Hat* and in *Capriccio Espangnol*, by Rimsky-Korsakoff, on the choreography of which she collaborated with Massine.

In addition to these theatre adaptations of the dances of Spain, she danced in her own dances, both solo and with Pilar Lopez. She trained and developed excellent men, notably José Greco and Manolo Vargas. I am especially happy in having been instrumental in bringing to the stage two of her most interesting theatrical creations. One was the ballet she staged to de Falla's *El Amor Brujo*, which I produced for her. The other was the Garcia Lorca *El Café de Chinitas*. Argentinita had been a devoted friend of the martyred Loyalist poet, and to bring his work to the American stage was a project close to her heart and a real labor of love. Argentinita belonged to a close little circle of scholars, poets, and composers, which included Martinez Sierra, Jacinto Benavente, and the extraordinarily brilliant, genius-touched Garcia Lorca.

The production of *El Café de Chinitas* was made possible during a Spanish festival I gave, one spring, at the Metropolitan Opera House. For this festival I engaged José Iturbi to conduct a large orchestra composed of members of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Argentinita had succeeded in interesting the Marquis de Cuevas in the project. For *El Café de Chinitas* the Marquis

commissioned settings and costumes from Salvador Dali. The result was one of the most effective and best considered works for the theatre emanating from Dali's brush. Dali, like Argentinita, had been a friend of the martyred patriot-poet-composer. His profounder emotions touched, Dali designed as effective a setting as the Metropolitan Opera House has seen. The first of the two scenes was a tremendously high wall on which hung literally hundreds of guitars, a "graveyard of guitars," as Dali phrased it; while the second scene, the *Café de Chinitas* itself, revealed the heroic torso of a female dancer with her arms upstretched in what could be interpreted as an attitude of the dance, or, if one chose, as a crucifixion. From where the hands held the castanets there dripped blood, as though the hands had been pierced. In terms of symbols, this was Dali's representation of the crucifixion of his country by hideous civil war. This was Argentinita's last production, and one of her happiest creations.

A victim of cancer, Argentinita died in New York on 24th September, 1945. I was at the hospital at the end, together with my friend and hers, Anton Dolin. Her doctors had long prescribed complete rest for her and special care. But her life was the dance, and stop she could not. Heroically she ignored her illness. If there was one thing about her more conspicuous than another, it was her tiny, dainty, slippered feet. No longer will they dart delicately into the lovely positions on the floor.

In Argentinita there was never either bitterness or unkindness to any one. I have seen, at first hand, Argentinita's encouragement and unstinted help to others, and to lesser dancers. The success of others, whether it was the artists in her own programmes, or elsewhere, was a joy to her; nothing but the best was good enough. Her sister, Pilar Lopez, who survives her and who today dances with great success in Europe, carrying on her sister's work, is a magnificent dancer. When the two sisters danced together,

everything that could be done to make Pilar shine more brilliantly was done; and that, too, was the work of Argentinita. Her loyalty to me was something of which I am very proud.

Above all, it was the dignity and charm of the woman that played a great part in the superb image of the artist who was known as Argentinita.

E. A TERPSICHOREAN ANTHROPOLOGIST

The mixture of dance and song and anthropology, with a firm accent on sex, that struck a new note in the dance theatre, hailed from Chicago. Her name is Katherine Dunham. She is a dynamo of energy; she is elusive; she is unpredictable. She is a quite superb combination of exoticism and intellectuality.

Daughter of a French-Canadian and an American Negro, Katherine was born in Joliet, Illinois, in 1914. Her theatrical experience has ranged from art museums to night clubs, from Broadway to London's West End, to the *Théâtre des Champs Elysées* in Paris, to European triumphs. Her early life was spent and her first dancing was done in Chicago. She flashed across the American entertainment world comet-like. More recently she has confined her activities almost exclusively to England and Europe.

I had no part in her beginnings. By the time I undertook to manage her, she had assembled her own company of Negro dancers and had oscillated between the rarefied atmosphere of women's clubs and concert halls, on the one hand, to night clubs and road houses, on the other. The atmosphere of the latter was both smoky and rowdy. Katherine Dunham, I suspect, is something of a split personality, so far as her art is concerned. Possessor of a fine mind, it would seem to have been one frequently in

turmoil. On the one side, there is a keen intellectual side to it, evidenced by both a Bachelor of Philosophy and a Master of Arts degree from the University of Chicago, two Rosenwald Fellowships, and a Rockefeller Fellowship. Her Masters degree is in anthropology. These studies she pursued, as I have said, on the one hand. On the other, she studied and practiced the dance with an equal fierceness.

Her intellectual pursuits have been concerned, for the most part, with anthropological researches into the Negro dance. Her first choreographic venture was her collaboration with Ruth Page, in Chicago, in *La Guiablesse*, a ballet on a Martinique theme, with a score based on Martinique folk melodies by the American composer, William Grant Still, a work with an all-Negro cast, seen both at the Century of Progress Exhibition and the Chicago Opera House, in 1933. Dunham became active in the Federal Dance Theatre, and its Chicago director. It was when she was doing the dances for the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union depression-time revue, *Pins and Needles*, that she tried a Sunday dance concert in New York at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre. So successful was it that it was repeated every Sunday for three months.

Turning to the theatre, she added acting and singing to dancing and choreography, both on the stage and in films, appearing as both actress and singer in *Cabin in the Sky*. She intrigued me, both by the quality of her work, her exoticism, and her loyalty to her little troupe, for the members of which she felt herself responsible. I first met her while she was appearing at the Mark Hopkins Hotel, in San Francisco. She was closing her engagement. She was down and out, trying to keep her group together. I arranged for an audition and, after seeing her with her group, undertook to see what could be done. Present with me at this audition were Agnes de Mille, then in San Francisco rehearsing with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo what was to become her first choreographic triumph, *Rodeo*, together

with Alexandra Danilova and Frederick Franklin.

My idea in taking over her management was to try to help her transform her concert pieces into revue material, suitable not only to the country's concert halls, but also to the theatre of Broadway and those road theatres that were becoming increasingly unoccupied because of the paucity of productions to keep them open. Certain purely theatrical elements were added, including some singers, one of them being a Cuban tenor; and, to supplement her native percussion players, a jazz group, recruited from veterans of the famous "Dixieland Band."

We called the entertainment the *Tropical Revue*. The *Tropical Revue* was an immediate success at the Martin Beck Theatre in New York and, thanks to some quick work, I was able to secure additional time at the theatre and to extend the run to six weeks. This set up some sort of record for an entertainment of the kind. As an entertainment form it rested somewhere between revue and recital. Miss Dunham herself had three outstanding numbers. These were her own impressions of what she called different "hot" styles. These were responsible for some of the heat that brought on the sizzling of the scenery to which the critics referred. The first of her numbers was *Bahiana*, a limpid and languid impression of Brazil; then *Shore Excursion*, a contrasting piece, fast, hot, tough, and Cuban. The third was *Barrelhouse*, an old stand-by of hers, straight out of Chicago's Jungletown.

Tropical Revue, during its two years under my management, was in an almost perpetual state of flux. It was revised and revised, and revised again. As the tours proceeded, Dunham did less and less dancing and more and more impersonation. But while her "bumps" grew more discreet, there was no lessening of the heat. Dunham's choreography was best in theatricalized West Indian and Latin American folk dances, some of which approached full-scale ballets. The best of these, in my

opinion, was *L'Ag'ya*, a three-scened work, Martinique at core, the high light of which was the "*ag'ya*," a kicking dance. Here she was able to put to excellent use authentic Afro-Caribbean steps, and in the overall choreographic style, I would not feel it unfair to say that Dunham's style had been considerably influenced by the Chicago choreographer and dancer, Ruth Page, with whom Dunham had collaborated early in her career.

It did not take me long to discover the public was more interested in sizzling scenery than it was in anthropology, at least in the theatre. Since the *Tropical Revue* was fairly highly budgeted, it was necessary for us, in order to attract the public, to emphasize sex over anthropology. Dunham, with a shrewd eye to publicity, oscillated between emphasis first on one and then on the other; her fingers were in everything. In addition to running the company, dancing, singing, revising, she lectured, carried on an unending correspondence by letter and by wire, entertained lavishly, and added considerably, I am sure, to the profits of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. Columns were written about her, and fulsome essays, a good deal of which was balderdash.

The handling of this tour presented its own special set of problems. Not the least of these was the constantly recurring one of housing. We have come a long way in the United States in disposing of Jim Crow; but there is still a great deal to be done. Hotel accommodations for the artists of the *Tropical Revue* were a continual source of worry. One Pacific Coast city was impossible. When, after days of fruitless searching, our representative thought he had been able to install them in a neighboring town, the Chinese owner of the hotel, on learning his guests were not white, canceled the reservations.

A certain midwestern city was another trouble spot, where, in one of the city's leading hostelries, the employees threatened to strike because of the presence

there of some of the principal artists. This was averted by some quick work on the part of our staff. It should be noted, too, that these unfortunate difficulties were all in cities north of what we hoped was the non-existent Mason and Dixon Line.

Miss Dunham, quite naturally, was disturbed and exercised by this discrimination. In order to avoid this kind of unpleasantness, I had tried to restrict the bookings to northern cities. However, it became necessary to play an engagement in a southern border city. The results were not happy. At the time of making the booking, I did not realize that in this border state segregation was practiced in its Municipal Auditorium.

The house was sold out on the opening night. Owing to wartime transportation difficulties, the company was late in arriving. Just before the delayed curtain's rise, Miss Dunham requested four seats for some of her local friends. She was asked by the manager of the Auditorium if they were colored. Miss Dunham replied that they were; whereupon the manager offered to place chairs for them in the balcony, since colored persons were not permitted in the orchestra stalls. Miss Dunham protested, and objected to her friends being seated other than in the orchestra. The fact was there were no seats available in the stalls, since the house was sold out. However, had it not been for the segregation rule, four extra chairs could have been placed in the boxes.

The performance was enthusiastically received, with repeated curtain calls at its close. Miss Dunham responded with a speech. She thanked the audience for its appreciation and its warm response. Then, smarting under the accumulated pressures of discrimination throughout the tour, climaxed by the incident involving her friends, she paused, and added: "This is good-bye. I shall not appear here again until people like me can sit with people like you. Good-bye, and God bless you—and you may need it."

While there was no overt hostile demonstration in the theatre, there were those who felt Miss Dunham's closing words implied a threat. The press, ever alert to scent a scandal, demanded a statement about my attitude on segregation in theatres, and to know if I approved of artists under my management threatening audiences. It was one of those rare times when, for some reason, I could not be reached by telephone. Faced with the necessity of making some sort of statement, my representative issued one to the effect that Mr. Hurok deplored and was unalterably opposed to discrimination of any kind anywhere; but that, as a law-abiding citizen, however much he deplored such regulations, he was bound to conform to the laws and regulations obtaining in those communities and theatres where he was contractually obliged to have his attractions appear. But I have taken care never again to submit artists to any possible indignities, if there is any way of avoiding it.

I shall relate a last example of the sort of difficulties that arose on this tour and, to my mind, it is the most stupid of them all, if there can be said to be degrees of stupidity in such matters.

In addition to the large orchestra of conventional instruments we carried, Miss Dunham had four Guatemalan percussionists who dramatically beat out the Caribbean rhythms on a wide assortment of gourds, tam-tams, and other native drums, both with the orchestra and in several scenes on the stage.

It happened in a northern city. The head of the musicians' union local demanded to know if there were any "niggers" in our orchestra. My representative, who feels very strongly about such matters and who resents the term used by the local union president, replied that he did not understand the question. All members of the orchestra, he said, were members of the American Federation of Musicians, and had played as a unit across the entire

country, and such a question had never arisen. The local union official thereupon tersely informed him the colored players would not be permitted to play with the other musicians in the orchestra pit in that city; if they attempted to do so, he would forbid the white players to play. My representative, refusing to bow to such an ukase, appealed to the head office of the Musicians' Union, in Chicago—only to be informed by them that, however much headquarters disapproved of and deplored the situation, each union local was autonomous in its local rulings and there was nothing they could do.

Now comes the irony of the situation. My representative, on visiting the theatre, saw that the stage boxes abutted the orchestra pit on the same level with it "Why not place the percussionists there?" he thought. He proposed this to the union official, and was informed that this would be permitted, "so long as there is a railing between the white players and the black."

It was only later, on thumbing through the local telephone directory, my representative discovered there were two musicians' locals there. One of them was listed with the word "colored" after it, in parenthesis.

Yes, we still have a long road ahead in the matter of fair employment practices and equal opportunities for all.

Having had a satisfying taste of the theatre, Miss Dunham eventually turned to it as her exclusive medium of expression, and branched out into a full-fledged theatre piece, with plot and all, called *Carib Song*, which, transmuted into *Caribbean Rhapsody*, proved more successful on the other side of the Atlantic than it did in the States.

My association with Katherine Dunham seemed to satisfy, at least for the moment, my taste for the exotic. I cannot say it added much to my knowledge of anthropology, but it broadened my experience of human

nature.

I presented Katherine Dunham and her company in Buenos Aires and throughout South America during the season 1949-1950 when our association came to an end. In her artistic career Katherine Dunham has been greatly aided by the advice and by the practical help, in scenic and costume design, of her husband, the talented American painter and designer, John Pratt.

While the scope of Katherine Dunham's dancing and choreography may be limited by her anthropological bias, she has a first-rate quality of showmanship. She has studied, revived, rearranged for the theatre primitive dances and creole dances, which are in that borderland that is somewhere at the meeting point of African and Western culture. Anthropology aside and for the moment forgotten, she is a striking entertainer.

F. *AN AMERICAN GENIUS*

It may well be that, considered as an individual, the American Martha Graham is one of the greatest dance celebrities in the United States. There are those who contend she is the greatest. She is certainly the most controversial. There seems to be no middle school of thought concerning her. One of them bursts forth with an enthusiasm amounting almost to idolatry. The other shouts its negatives quite as forcibly.

My first love and my greatest interest is ballet. However, that love and that interest do not obscure for me all other forms of dance, as my managerial career shows. Having presented prophets and disciples of what, for want of a more accurate term, is called the "free" dance, in the persons of Isadora Duncan and her "children" and Mary Wigman, I welcomed the opportunity to present the American High Priestess of the contemporary dance.

This product of a long line of New England forbears was a woman past fifty when she came under my management. Yet she was at the height of her powers, in the full bloom of the immense artistic accomplishment that is hers, a dancer of amazing skill, a choreographer of striking originality, an actress of tremendous power.

The first and by far the most important prophet of the contemporary dance, Martha Graham was originally trained in the Ruth St. Denis-Ted Shawn tradition. A quarter of a century ago, however, she broke away from that tradition and introduced into her works a quality of social significance and protest. As I think over her choreographic product, it seems to me that, in general—and this is a case where I must generalize—her work has exhibited what may be described as two major trends. One has been in the direction of fundamental social conflicts; the other, towards psychological abstraction and a vague mysticism.

About all her work is an austerity, stark and lean; yet this cold austerity in her creations is always presented by means of a brilliant technique and with an intense dramatic power. I made it a point for years to see as many of her recital programmes as I could, and I was never sure what I was going to see. Each time there seemed to me to be a new style and a new technique. She was constantly experimenting and while, often, the experiments did not quite come off, she always excited me, if I did not always understand what she was trying to say.

I have the greatest admiration for Martha Graham and for what she has done. She has championed the cause of the American composer by having works commissioned, while she has, at the same time, championed the cause of free movement and originality in the dance. Yet, so violent, so distorted, so obscure, and sometimes so oppressive do I find some of her works that I am baffled. It is these qualities, coupled with the complete introspection

in which her works are steeped, that make it so extremely difficult to attract the public in sufficient numbers to make touring worthwhile or New York seasons financially possible without some sort of subsidy. I shall have something to say, later on in this book, on this whole question of subsidy of the arts. Meanwhile, Martha Graham has chosen a lonely road, and the introspectiveness of her work does not make it any less so. The more's the pity, for here is a great artist of the first rank.

Martha Graham completed my triptych of modern dancers, commencing with Isadora Duncan and continuing with Mary Wigman as its center piece. In many respects, Martha Graham is by far the greatest of the three; yet, to me, she is lacking in a quality that made the dances of Isadora Duncan so compelling. It is difficult to define that quality. Negatively, it may be that it is this very introspection. Perhaps it is that Martha Graham is no modernist at all.

Modernism in dance, I feel, has become very provincial, for it would seem that every one and her sister is a modernist. Isadora was a modernist. Fokine was a modernist. Mary Wigman was a modernist. Today, we have Balanchine and Robbins, modernists. Scratch a choreographer, scrape a dancer ever so lightly, and you will find a modernist. It is all very, very provincial.

Much of what is to me the real beauty of the dance—the lyric line, the unbroken phrase, the sequential pattern of the dance itself—has, in the name of modernism, been chopped up and broken.

Martha Graham, of all the practitioners of the "free" dance, troubles me least in this respect. Many of her works look like ballets. Yet, at the same time, she disturbs me; never soothes me; and, since I have dedicated myself in this book to candor, I shall admit I can take my dance without too much over-intellectualization. Yet, in

retrospect, I find there are few ballets that have so much concentrated excitement as Martha Graham's *Deaths and Entrances*.

The choreography, the dancing, the art of Martha Graham are greatly appreciated by a devoted but limited public. The lamentable thing about it to me is that it so limited. She has chosen the road of the solitary and lonely experimenter. Martha Graham, of all the dancers I have known, is, I believe, the most single-purposed, the most fanatical in her devotion to an idea and an ideal. About her and everything she does is an extraordinary integrity, a consummate honesty. Generous to a fault, Martha Graham always has something good to say about the work of others, and she possesses a keen appreciation of all forms of the dance. The high position she so indisputably holds has been attained, as I happen to know, only through great privation and hardship, often in the face of cruel and harsh ridicule. Her remarkable technique could only have been acquired at the expense of sheer physical exhaustion. In the history of the dance her name will ever remain at the head of the pioneers.

5. Three Ladies of the Maryinsky—And Others

UP to now I have dealt with those artists of the dance whose forms of dance expression were either modern, free, or exotic. All had been, at one time or another, under my management. The rest of this candid avowal will be devoted to that form of theatrical dance known as ballet. Since I regard ballet as the most satisfactory and satisfying form of civilized entertainment, ballet will occupy the

major portion of the book. Nearly two full decades of my career as impresario have been devoted to it.

For a long time I have been alternately irritated and bored by an almost endless stream of gossip about ballet, and by that outpouring of frequently cheap and sometimes incredible nonsense that has been published about ballet and its artists. Surprisingly, perhaps, comparatively little of this has come from press agents; the press agents have, in the main—exceptions only going to prove the rule, in this case—been ladies and gentlemen of taste and discretion, and they have publicized ballet legitimately as the great art it is, and, at the same time, have given of their talents to help make it the highly popular art it is.

But there has been a plethora of tripe in the public prints about ballet, supplied by hacks, blind hero-worshippers, self-abasing sycophants, and producers. The last are quite as vocal as any of the others. They are not, of course, "producers." They call themselves either "managers" or "managing-directors." I shall have something to say, later on, about this phase of their work. They talk, give interviews, often of quite incredible stupidity; and, instead of being managers, are masters of mismanagement. All are, in one degree or another, would-be Diaghileffs. They all suffer from a serious disease: a sort of chronic Diaghileffitis, which is spasmodically acute. If anything I can say or point out in this book can help, as it were, to add a third dimension to the rather flat pictures of ballet companies and ballet personalities, creative, interpretive, executive, that have been offered to the public, I shall be glad. For ballet is a great art, and my last thought would be to wish to denigrate, debunk, or disparage any one.

While "the whole truth" cannot always be told for reasons that should be obvious, I shall try to tell "nothing but the truth."

The ballet we have today, however far afield it may wander in its experimentation, in its "novelties," stems

from a profoundly classical base. That base, emerging from Italy and France, found its full flowering in the Imperial Theatres of Russia.

I cannot go on with my story of my experiences with ballet on the American continent without paying a passing tribute to the Ladies of the Maryinsky (and some of the Gentlemen, as well), who exemplified the Russian School of Ballet at its best; many of them are carrying on in their own schools, and passing on their great knowledge to the youth of the second half of the twentieth century, in whose hands the future of ballet lies.

I should like to do honor to many ladies of the Maryinsky. To do so would mean an overly long list of names, many of which would mean little to a generation whose knowledge of dancers does not go back much further than Danilova. It would mean a considerable portion of the graduating classes of the Russian Imperial School of the Ballet: that School, dating from 1738, whose code was monastic, whose discipline was strict, whose training the finest imaginable. Through this school and from it came the ladies and gentlemen of the Maryinsky, those figures that gave ballet its finest flowering on the stages of the Maryinsky Theatre in Petrograd and the Grand Theatre in Moscow.

Anna Pavlova, Mathilde Kchessinska, Olga Preobrajenska, Lubov Egorova, Tamara Karsavina, Lydia Kyasht, Lydia Lopokova. There were men, too: Michel Fokine, Mikhail Mordkin, Vaslav Nijinsky, Adolph Bolm, Theodore Kosloff, Alexandre Volinine, Laurent Novikoff. The catalogue would be too long, if continued. No slight is intended. The turn of the century, or thereabouts, saw most of the above named in the full flush of their performing abilities.

What has become of them? Six of the seven ladies are still very much alive, each making a valued contribution to ballet today. The mortality rate among the men has been

heavier; only three of the seven men are now alive; yet these three are actively engaged in that most necessary and fundamental department of ballet: teaching.

Because the present has its basic roots in the past, and because the future must emerge from the present, let me, in honoring those outstanding representatives of the recent past, pause for a moment to sketch their achievements and contributions.

MATHILDE KCHESSINSKA

In the early twentieth century hierarchy of Russian Ballet, Mathilde Kchessinska was the undisputed queen, a tsarina whose slightest wish commanded compliance. She was a symbol of a period.

Mathilde Kchessinska was born in 1872, the daughter of a famous Polish character dancer, Felix Kchessinsky. A superb technician, according to all to whom I have talked about her, and to the historians of the time, she is credited with having been the first Russian to learn the highly applauded (by audiences) trick of those dazzling multiple turns called *fouettés*, guaranteed to bring the house down and, sometimes today, even when poorly done. In addition to a supreme technique, she is said to have been a magnificent actress, both "on" and "off."

Hers was an exalted position in Russia. Her personal social life gave her a power she was able to exercise in high places and a personal fortune which permitted her to give rein to a waywardness and wilfulness that did not always coincide with the strict disciplinarian standards of the Imperial Ballet.

Although she was able to control the destinies of the Maryinsky Theatre, to hold undisputed sway there, to have everything her own way, all that most people today know about her is that she was fond of gambling, that the Grand

Dukes built her a Palace in Petrograd, and that Lenin made speeches to the mob from its balcony during the Revolution.

More rot has been told and written about her by those with more imagination than love of accuracy, than about almost any other person connected with ballet, not excepting Serge Diaghileff. In yarn upon yarn she has been identified with one sensational escapade and affair after another. None of these, so far as I know, she has ever troubled to contradict.

Mathilde Kchessinska was the first Russian dancer to win supremacy for the native Russian artist over their Italian guests. An artist in life as well as on the stage, today, at eighty, the Princess Krassinska-Romanovska, the morganatic wife of Grand Duke André of Russia, she still teaches daily at her studio in Paris, contributing to ballet from the fund of her vast experience and knowledge. Many fine dancers have emerged from her hands, but perhaps the pupil of whom she is the proudest is Tatiana Riabouchinska.

OLGA PREOBRAJENSKA

Sharing the rank of *ballerina assoluta* with Kchessinska at the Maryinsky Theatre was Olga Preobrajenska. Preobrajenska's career paralleled that of the Princess Krassinska-Romanovska; she was born in 1871, and graduated from the Imperial School in the class ahead of the Princess. Yet, in many respects, they were as unlike as it is possible for two females to differ.

Kchessinka was always *chic*, noted for her striking beauty, expressive arms and wrists, a beautifully poised head, an indescribably infectious smile. She was a social queen who used her gifts and her powers for all they were worth. It was a question in the minds of many whether

Kchessinska's private life was more important than her professional career. The gods had not seen fit to smile too graciously on Preobrajenska in the matter of face and figure. Her tremendous success in a theatre where, at the time, beauty of form was regarded nearly as highly as technique, may be said to have been a triumph of mind over matter. Despite these handicaps or, perhaps, because of them, she succeeded in working out her own distinctive style and bearing.

Free from any Court intriguing, Olga Preobrajenska was a serious-minded and noble person, a figure that reflected her own nobility of mind on ballet itself. Whereas Kchessinska's career was, for the most part, a rose-strewn path, Preobrajenska's road was rocky. Her climb from a *corps de ballet* dancer to the heights was no overnight journey. It was one that took a good deal of courage, an exhibition of fortitude that happily led to a richly deserved victory. Blessed with a dogged perseverance, a divine thirst for knowledge, coupled with a desire ever to improve, she forced herself ahead. She danced not only in every ballet, but in nearly every opera in the repertoire that had dances. In her quarter of a century on the Imperial stage she appeared more than seven hundred times. It was close on to midnight when her professional work was done for the day; then she went to the great teacher, Maestro Enrico Cecchetti, for a private lesson, which lasted far into the early hours of the morning. Hers was a life devoted to work. For the social whirl she had neither time nor interest.

These qualities, linked with her fine personal courage and gentleness, undoubtedly account for that unbounded admiration and respect in which she is held by her colleagues.

Preobrajenska remained in Russia after the revolution, teaching at the Soviet State School of Ballet from 1917 through 1921. In 1922, she relinquished her post, left Russia and settled in Paris. Today, she maintains one of the

world's most noteworthy ballet schools, still teaching daily, passing on to the present generation of dancers something of herself so that, though dancers die, dancing may live.

It was during her teaching tenure at the Soviet State School of Ballet, the continuing successor in unbroken line and tradition to the Imperial Ballet School from the eighteenth century, that a young man named Georgi Balanchivadze came into her ken. Georgi Balanchivadze is better known throughout the world of the dance today as George Balanchine. In the long line of pupils who have passed through Preobrajenska's famous Paris school, there is space only to mention two of whom she is very proud: Irina Baronova and Tamara Toumanova.

Frequently, I have had great pleasure in attending some of Preobrajenska's classes in Paris, and I am proud to know her. It was during my European visit in the summer of 1950 that I happened to be at La Scala, Milan, when Preobrajenska was watching a class being given there by the Austrian ballet-mistress, Margaret Wallman. This was at the time of the visit to Milan of Galina Ulanova, the greatest lyric ballerina of the Soviet Union. The meeting of Ulanova and Preobrajenska, two great figures of Russian ballet, forty-one years apart in age, but with the great common bond of the classical dance, each the recipient of the highest honors a government can pay an artist, was, in its way, historic.

I arranged to have photographs taken of the event, a meeting that was very touching. Ulanova had come to see a class as well. The two great artists embraced. Ulanova was deeply moved. Their conversation was general. Unfortunately, there was little time, for the Soviet Consular officials who accompanied Ulanova were not eager for her to have too long a conversation.

At eighty-two, Preobrajenska has no superior as a teacher. At her prime, she was a dancer of wit and

elegance, excelling in mimicry and the humorous. With her colleagues of that epoch, as with Ulanova, she nevertheless had one outstanding quality in common: a sound classicism.

LUBOV EGOROVA

Less exalted in the hierarchy of the Russian Imperial Ballet, since she never attained the *assoluta* distinction there, but, nevertheless, a very important figure in ballet, is Lubov Egorova (Princess Troubetzkoy).

Born some nine years later than Preobrajenska and eight later than Kchessinska, Egorova, who was merely a *ballerina* at the Maryinsky, was one of the first great Russian dancers to leave Russia; she was a member of the exploring group that made a Western European tour during a summer holiday from the Maryinsky, in 1908—perhaps the first time that Russian Ballet was seen outside the country.

In 1917, Egorova left Russia for good and, joining the Diaghileff Ballet, appeared in London, in 1921, dancing the role of Princess Aurora in the lavish, if ill-starred, revival of Tchaikowsky's *The Sleeping Beauty*, or, as Diaghileff called his Benois production, *The Sleeping Princess*. As a matter of fact, she was one of three Auroras, alternating the role with two other great ladies of the ballet, Olga Spessivtseva and Vera Trefilova.

In 1923, Egorova founded her own school in Paris, and has been teaching there continuously since that time. Many famous dancers have emerged from that school, dancers of all nationalities, carrying the gospel to their own lands.

The basic method of ballet training has altered little. Since the last war, there have been some new developments in teaching methods. Although the individual methods of these three ladies from the

Maryinsky may have differed in detail, they have all had the same solid base, and from these schools have come not only the dancers of today, but the teachers of the future.

TAMARA KARSAVINA

The Russian *emigré* dancers would seem to have distributed themselves fairly equally between Paris and London, (excluding, of course, those who have made the States their permanent home). While the three Maryinsky ladies I have discussed became Parisian fixtures, another trio made London their abiding place.

Most important of the London trio was Tamara Karsavina, who combined in her own person the attributes of a great dancer, a great beauty, a great actress, a great artist, and a great woman. John van Druten, the noted playwright, sums her up thus: "I can tell you that Tamara Karsavina was the greatest actress and the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, the incarnation of Shakespeare's 'wightly wanton with a velvet brow, with two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes,' and that I wrote sonnets to her when I was twenty."

Born in 1885, the daughter of a famous Russian dancer and teacher, Platon Karsavin, Karsavina, unlike the Ladies of the Maryinsky who have made Paris their home, was ready for change: that change in ballet that is sometimes called the Romantic Revolution. She was receptive to new ideas, and became identified with Fokine and Diaghileff and their reforms in ballet style.

Diaghileff had to have a *ballerina* for his company, and it soon became obvious to both Fokine and Diaghileff that Pavlova would not fit into their conception of things balletic. The modest, unassuming, charming, gracious, beautiful and enchanting Karsavina took over the *ballerina* roles of the Diaghileff Company. It was in 1910 that

Karsavina came into her own with the creation of the title role in *The Firebird*, and a revival of *Giselle*. Her success was tremendous. The shy, modest Tamara Karsavina became *La Karsavina*; without the guarantee of her presence in the cast, Diaghileff was for many years unable to secure a contract in numerous cities, including London.

All through her career, a career that brought her unheard of success, adulation, worship, Karsavina remained a sweet, simple, unspoiled lady.

She was not only the toast of Europe for her work with the Diaghileff Company, but she returned frequently to the Maryinsky, dashing back and forth between Petrograd and Western Europe. An aversion to sea travel in wartime prevented her visiting America with the Diaghileff Company on either of its American tours. She did, however, make a brief American concert tour in 1925, partnered by Pierre Vladimiroff. Neither the conditions nor the circumstances of this visit were to her advantage, and Americans were thus prevented from seeing Karsavina at anything like her best.

Karsavina has painted her own picture more strikingly than anyone else can; and has painted it in a book that is a splendid work of art. It is called *Theatre Street*. Tamara Karsavina's *Theatre Street* is a book and a portrait, a picture of a person and of an era that is, at the same time, a shining classic of the theatrical dance. But not only does it tell the story of her own career so strikingly that it would be presumptuous of me to expand on her career in these pages, but she shows us pictures of Russian life, of childhood in Russia that take rank with any ever written.

After the dissolution of a previous Russian marriage, Karsavina, in 1917, married a British diplomat, Henry Bruce, who died in 1950. Her son, by this marriage, is an actor and director in the British theatre. Karsavina herself lives quietly and graciously in London, but by no means inactively. She is a rock of strength to British ballet,

through her interest and inspiration. A great lady as well as a great artist, it would give me great pleasure to be able to present her across the American continent in a lecture tour, in the course of which illuminating dissertation she would elucidate, as no one I have ever seen or heard, the important and expressive art of mime.

LYDIA KYASHT

Classmate of Karsavina at the Imperial School, and born in the same year, is Lydia Kyasht, who was the first Russian *ballerina* to become a permanent fixture in London.

Kyasht's arrival in the British capital dates back to 1908, the year she became a leading soloist at the Maryinsky Theatre. There were mixed motives for her emigration to England. There were, it appears, intrigues of some sort at the Maryinsky; there was also a substantial monetary offer from the London music hall, the Empire, where, for years, ballet was juxtaposed with the rough-and-tumble of music hall comedians, and where Adeline Genée had reigned as queen of English ballet for a decade. Kyasht's Russian salary was approximately thirty-five dollars a month. The London offer was for approximately two hundred dollars a week.

Her first appearance at the Empire, in Leicester Square, long the home of such ballet as London had at that time, was under her own name as Lydia Kyaksht. When the Empire's manager in dismay inquired: "How *can* one pronounce a name like that?" he welcomed the suggestion that the pronunciation would be made easier for British tongues if the second "k" were dropped. So it became Kyasht, and Kyasht it has remained.

Kyasht was the first Russian dancer to win a following in London, and in her first appearances there she was

partnered by Adolph Bolm, later to be identified with Diaghileff and still later with ballet development in the United States.

The Empire ballets were, for the most part, of a very special type of corn. Kyasht appeared in, among others, a little something called *The Water Nymph* and in another something charmingly titled *First Love*, with my old friend and Anna Pavlova's long-time partner, Alexandre Volinine, as her chief support. There was also a whimsy called *The Reaper's Dream*, in which Kyasht appeared as the "Spirit of the Wheatsheaf," seen and pursued in his dream by a reaper, the while the *corps de ballet*, costumed as an autumn wheatfield, watched and wondered.

Most important, however, was Kyasht's appearance in the first English presentation, on 18th May, 1911, of Delibes' *Sylvia*. *Sylvia*, one of the happiest of French ballets, had had to wait thirty-five years to reach London, although the music had long been familiar there. Even then, London saw a version of a full-length, three-act work, which, for the occasion, had been cut and compressed into a single act. It took forty-one more years for the uncut, full-length work to be done in London, with the Sadler's Wells Ballet production, staged by Frederick Ashton, at Covent Garden, in the Royal Opera House, on 3rd of September, 1952. The original British Sylvia, Lydia Kyasht, was, by this date, a member of the teaching staff at the famous Sadler's Wells School.

Lydia Kyasht remained at the Empire for five years. At the conclusion of her long engagement, she sailed for New York to appear as the Blue Bird in a Shubert Winter Garden show, *The Whirl of the World*, with Serge Litavkin as her partner; Litavkin later committed suicide in London, as the result of an unhappy love affair (not with Lydia Kyasht).

Kyasht's American venture brought her neither fame nor glory. In the first place, a Shubert Winter Garden spectacle,

in 1913, was not a setting for the classical technique of Ballet; then, for better or worse, Kyasht was stricken ill with typhoid fever, a mischance that automatically terminated her contract. But before she became ill, still on the unhappier side, was the Shubertian insistence that Kyasht should be taught and that she should perfect herself in the 1913 edition of "swing," the "Turkey Trot." Such was the uninformed and uncaring mind of your average Broadway manager, that he wanted to combine the delicacy of the "Turkey Trot," of unhallowed memory, with what he elegantly characterized as "acrobatic novelties."

But Kyasht was saved from this humiliation by the serious fever attack and returned to London, where she made her permanent home and where, for the most part, she devoted herself to teaching. As a teacher able to impart that finish and refinement that is so essential a part of a dancer's equipment, she has had a marked success.

Today, she is, as I have said, active in the teaching of ballet department at that splendid academy, the Sadler's Wells School, about which I shall have something to say later on.

LYDIA LOPOKOVA

The third of the Maryinsky ladies to settle in England, to whom I cannot fail to pay tribute, is Lydia Lopokova.

Lopokova is the youngest of the three, having been born in 1891. Her graduation from the Imperial School was so close to the great changes that took place in Russian ballet, that she had been at the Maryinsky Theatre only a few months when, as a pupil of Fokine, she was invited to join the Diaghileff Ballet, at that time at the height of its success in its second Paris season.

Writing of Lopokova's early days at the Imperial

School, Karsavina says in *Theatre Street*: "Out of the group of small pupils given now into my care was little Lopokova. The extreme emphasis she put into her movements was comic to watch in the tiny child with the face of an earnest cherub. Whether she danced or talked, her whole frame quivered with excitement; she bubbled all over. Her personality was manifest from the first, and very lovable."

Of her arrival to join the Diaghileff Company in Paris, Karsavina says: "Young Lopokova danced this season; it was altogether her first season abroad. As she was stepping out of the railway carriage, emotion overcame her. She fainted right away on the piles of luggage. It had been her dream to be in Paris, she told the alarmed Bakst who rendered first aid; the lovely sight (of the Gare du Nord) was too much for her. A mere child, she reminded me again of the tiny earnest pupil when, in the demure costume of *Sylphides*, she ecstatically and swiftly ran on her toes."

Lopokova's rise to high position with the Diaghileff Ballet in England and Europe was rapid. But she was bored by success. There were new fields to be conquered, and off she went to New York, in the summer of 1911, to join the first "Russian Ballet" to be seen on Broadway. A commercial venture hastily rushed into the ill-suited Winter Garden, with the obvious purpose of getting ahead of the impending Diaghileff invasion of America, due at a later date. The popular American vaudeville performer, Gertrude Hoffman, temporarily turned manager, sparked this "Saison de Ballets Russes."

Hoffman, in conjunction with a Broadway management, imported nearly a hundred dancers, with Lydia Lopokova as the foremost; others included the brothers Kosloff, Theodore and Alexis, who remained permanently in the United States; my friend, Alexandre Volinine; and Alexander Bulgakoff. A word about the 1911 "Saison de

Ballets Russes" may not be amiss. The ethics of the entire venture were, to say the least, open to question. Among the works presented were *Schéhérazade*, *Cléopâtre*, and *Sylphides*—all taken without permission from the Diaghileff repertoire, and with no credit (and certainly no cash) given to Michel Fokine, their creator. All works were restaged from memory by Theodore Kosloff, and with interpolations by Gertrude Hoffman. The outstanding success of the whole affair was Lydia Lopokova.

When, after an unsuccessful financial tour outside New York, Lopokova and Volinine left the company, the "Saison de Ballets Russes" fell to pieces.

Venturing still farther afield, Lopokova joined Mikhail Mordkin's company briefly; then, remaining in America for five years, she toyed seriously with the legitimate theatre, and made her first appearance as an actress (in English) with that pioneer group, the Washington Square Players (from which evolved The Theatre Guild), at the Bandbox Theatre, in East 57th Street, in New York, and later in a Percy Mackaye piece called *The Antic*, under the direction of Harrison Grey Fiske.

Then the Diaghileff Ballet came to America; came, moreover, badly in need of Lopokova; came without Karsavina, without any woman star; came badly crippled. In New York, and free, was Lydia Lopokova. It was Lydia Lopokova who was the *ballerina* of the company through the two American tours. It was Lydia Lopokova who was the company's bright and shining individual success.

She returned to Europe with Diaghileff and was his *ballerina* from 1917 to 1919, earning for herself in London a popularity second to none. But, bored again by success, she was suddenly off again to America. This time, the venture was even less noteworthy, for it was a Shubert musical comedy—and a rather dismal failure. "I was a flop," was Lopokova's comment, "and thoroughly deserved it." In 1921, she returned to Diaghileff, and

danced the Lilac Fairy in his tremendous revival of *The Sleeping Princess*. During the following years, up to the Diaghileff Ballet's final season, Lopokova was in and out of the company, appearing as a guest artist in the later days.

After a short and unhappy marriage with one of Diaghileff's secretaries had been dissolved, Lopokova became Mrs. J. Maynard Keynes, the wife of the brilliant and distinguished English economist, art patron, friend of ballet and inspirer of the British Arts Council. On Keynes's elevation to the peerage, Lopokova, of course, became Lady Keynes.

Invariably quick in wit, impulsive, possessor of a genuine sense of humor, Lady Keynes remains eager, keen for experiment, restless, impish, and still puckish, always ready to lend her enthusiastic support to ventures and ideas in which she believes.

MARIE RAMBERT

One of the most potent forces in the development of ballet in England is Marie Rambert. She was a pioneer in British ballet. She still has much to give.

Marie Rambert—unlike her London colleagues: Karsavina, Kyasht, and Lopokova—was not a Maryinsky lady. Born Miriam Rambach, in Poland, she was a disciple of Emile Jacques Dalcroze, and was recommended to Diaghileff by her teacher as an instructor in the Dalcroze type of rhythmic movement. The Russians who made up the Diaghileff Company were not impressed either by the Dalcroze method or its youthful teacher. They rebelled against her, taunted her, called her "Rhythmitchika," and left her alone. There was one exception, however. That exception was Vaslav Nijinsky, who was considerably influenced by his studies with Rambert, an influence that

was made apparent in three of his choreographic works: *Sacre du Printemps*, *Afternoon of a Faun* (this, incidentally, the first to show the influence), and *Jeux*.

Despite the attitude of the Russian dancers, it was her contacts with the Diaghileff Ballet that aroused Rambert's interest in ballet. She had had early dancing lessons in the Russian State School in Warsaw; now she became a pupil of Enrico Cecchetti. In 1920, she established her own ballet school in the Notting Hill Gate section of London, and it was not long after that the Ballet Club, a combination of ballet company with the school, was founded, an organization that became England's first permanent ballet company.

Rambert's influence on ballet in England has been widespread. When, after the death of Diaghileff, the Camargo Society was formed in London, along with Ninette de Valois, Lydia Lopokova, J. Maynard Keynes, and Arnold L. Haskell, Rambert was a prime mover.

In her school and at the Ballet Club, she set herself the task of developing English dancers for English ballet. From her school have come very many of the young dancers and, even more important, many of the young choreographers who are making ballet history today. To mention but a few: Frederick Ashton, Harold Turner, Antony Tudor, Hugh Laing, Walter Gore, Frank Staff, William Chappell, among the men; Peggy van Praagh, Pearl Argyle, Andrée Howard, Diana Could, Sally Gilmour, among the women.

Rambert is married to that poet of the English theatre, Ashley Dukes. Twenty-odd years ago they pooled their individual passions—hers for building dancers, his for building theatres and class-rooms—and built and remodelled a hall into a simple, little theatre, which they christened the Mercury, in Ladbroke Road. Its auditorium is as tiny as its stage. Two leaps will suffice to cross it. The orchestra consisted of a single pianist. On occasion a

gramophone assisted. Everything had to be simple. Everything had to be inexpensive. The financial difficulties were enormous. Here the early masterpieces of Ashton and Tudor were created. Here great work was done, and ballets brought to life in collaboration between artists in ferment.

I cannot do better than to quote the splendid tribute of my friend, "Freddy" Ashton, when he says: "Hers is a deeply etched character, a potent bitter-sweet mixture; she can sting the lazy into activity, make the rigid mobile and energise the most lethargic.... She has the unique gift of awakening creative ability in artists. Not only myself, but Andrée Howard, Antony Tudor, Walter Gore and Frank Staff felt our impulse for choreography strengthen and become irresistible under her wise and patient guidance. Even those who were not her pupils or directly in her care —the designers who worked with her, William Chappell, Sophie Fedorovitch, Nadia Benois, Hugh Stevenson, to name only a few—all felt the impact of her singular personality."

The work Marie Rambert did with the Ballet Club and the Ballet Rambert in their days at the Mercury Theatre was of incalculable value. The company continues today but its function is somewhat different. Originally the Ballet Rambert was a place where young choreographers could try out their ideas, could make brave and bold experiments. During my most recent visit to London, in the summer of 1953, I was able to see some of her more recent work on the larger stage of the Sadler's Wells Theatre. I was profoundly impressed. Outstanding among the works I saw were an unusually fine performance of Fokine's immortal *Les Sylphides*, which has been continuously in her repertoire since 1930; *Movimientos*, a work out of the London Ballet Workshop in 1952, with choreography and music by the young Michael Charnley, with scenery by Douglas Smith and costumes by Tom Lingwood; Frederick Ashton's exquisite *Les Masques*, an old tale set to a

delicate score by Francis Poulenc, with scenery and costumes by the late and lamented Sophie Fedorovitch; and Walter Gore's fine *Winter Night*, to a Rachmaninoff score, with scenery and costumes by Kenneth Rowell. There was also an unusually excellent production of *Giselle*, which first entered her repertoire in its full-length form in 1946, with Hugh Stevenson settings and costumes.

While there was a period when Rambert seemed to be less interested in ballets than in dancers, and the present organization would appear to be best described as one where young dancers may be tested and proven, yet Rambert alumnae and alumni are to be found in all the leading British ballet companies.

In the Coronation Honours List in 1953, Marie Rambert was awarded the distinction of Companion of the British Empire.

MIKHAIL MORDKIN

Although he was under my management for only a brief time, I must, I feel, make passing reference to Mikhail Mordkin as one of the Russian *emigré* artists who have been identified with ballet in America. His contributions were neither profound nor considerable; but they should be assessed and evaluated.

Mordkin, born in Russia, in 1881, was a product of the Moscow School, and eventually became a leading figure and one-time ballet-master of the Bolshoi Theatre.

So far as America is concerned, I sometimes like to think his greatest contribution was his masculinity. Before he first arrived here in support of Anna Pavlova in her initial American appearance, the average native was inclined to take a very dim view indeed of a male dancer. Mordkin's athleticism and obvious virility were noted on every side.

Strange combination of classical dancer, athlete, and clown, Mordkin's temperament was such that he experienced difficulty throughout his career in adjusting himself to conditions and to people. He broke with the Imperial Ballet; broke with Diaghileff; split with Pavlova. These make-and-break associations could be extended almost indefinitely.

For the record, I should mention that, following upon his split with Pavlova, he had a brief American tour with his own company, calling it the "All Star Imperial Russian Ballet," and brought as its *ballerina*, the doyenne of Russian *ballerinas*, Ekaterina Geltzer. Again, in 1928, he returned to the States, under the management of Simeon Gest, with a company that included Vera Nemtchinova, Xenia Macletzova, and the English Hilda Butsova, along with Pierre Vladimiroff.

Mordkin's successes in Moscow had been considerable, but outside Russia he always lagged behind the creative procession, largely, I suspect, because of a stubborn refusal on Mordkin's part to face up to the fact that, although the root of ballet is classicism, styles change, the world moves forward. Ballet is no exception. Mordkin clung too tenaciously to the faults of the past, as well as to its virtues.

From the ballet school he founded in New York has come a number of first-rate dancing talents. The later Mordkin Ballet, in 1937-1938, and 1938-1939, left scarcely a mark on the American ballet picture. It lacked many things, not the least of which was a *ballerina* equal to the great classical roles. Its policy, if any, was as dated as Mordkin himself.

If there was a contribution to ballet in America made by Mordkin, it was a fortuitous one. Choreographically he composed nothing that will be remembered. But there was a Mordkin company of sorts, and some of its members formed the nucleus of what eventually became Ballet Theatre.

On 15th July, 1944, Mikhail Mordkin died at Millbrook, New Jersey.

VASLAV NIJINSKY

Nijinsky has become a literature and a legend. The story of his tragic life has been told and re-told. His feats as a dancer, his experiments as a choreographer, became a legend, even while he lived.

I regret I never knew him. Those who did know him and with whom I have discussed him, are, for the large part, idolators. That he was a genius they are all agreed. They insist he could leap higher, could remain longer in the air —but there is little point in dwelling on the legend. It is well-known; and legends are the angel's food on which we thrive.

Nijinsky's triumphs came at a time when there were great figures bursting over the horizon; at a time when there was so little basis for comparison; at a time when it was extremely difficult for the public to appraise, because the public had so little basis for comparison.

How separate fact from fiction? It is difficult, if not quite impossible. It was the time of the "greatests": Kubelik, the "greatest" violinist; Mansfield, the "greatest" actor; Irving, the "greatest" actor; Modjeska, the "greatest" actress; Bernhardt, the "greatest" actress; Ellen Terry, the "greatest" actress; Duse, the "greatest" actress.

It is such an easy matter when, prompted by the nostalgic urge, to contemplate longingly a by-gone "Golden Age." In music, it is equally simple: Anton Rubinstein, Franz Liszt, de Pachmann, Geraldine Farrar, Enrico Caruso ... and so it goes. Each was the "greatest." Nijinsky has become a part and parcel of the "greatest" legend.

Jan Kubelik, one of the greatest violinists of his

generation, is an example. When I brought Kubelik for his last American appearance in 1923, I remember a gathering in the foyer of the Brooklyn's Academy of Music at one of the concerts he gave there. The younger generation of violinists were out in force, and a number of them were in earnest conversation during the interval in the concert.

Their general opinion was that Kubelik had remained away from America too long; that he was, in fact, slipping. Sol Elman, the father of Mischa, listened attentively. When the barrage had expended itself, he spoke.

"My dear friends," he said, "Kubelik played the Paganini concerto tonight as splendidly as ever he did. Today you have a different standard. You have Elman, Heifetz, and the rest. All of you have developed and grown in artistry, technique, and, above all, in knowledge and appreciation. The point is: you know more; not that Kubelik plays less well."

It is all largely a matter of first impressions and their vividness. It is the first impressions that color our memories and often form the basis of our judgments. As time passes, I sometimes wonder how reliable the first impressions may be.

I am unable to state dogmatically that Nijinsky was the "greatest" dancer of our time or of all time. On the other hand, there cannot be the slightest question that he was a very great personality. The quality of personality is the one that really matters.

Today there are, I suppose, between five and six hundred first-class pianists, for example. These pianists are, in many cases, considerably more than competent. But to find the great personality in these five to six hundred talents is something quite different.

The truly great are those who, through something that can only be described as personality, electrify the public. The public, once electrified, will come to see them again

and again and again. There are, perhaps, too many good talents. There never can be enough great artists.

Vaslav Nijinsky was one of the great ones—a great artist, a great personality. There are those who can argue long and in nostalgic detail about his technique, its virtues and its defects. Artistry and personality transcend technique; for mere technique, however flawless, is not enough.

It must be borne in mind that Nijinsky's public career in the Western World was hardly more than seven years long. The legend of Nijinsky commenced with his first appearance in Paris in *Le Spectre de la Rose*, in 1912. It may have been started, fostered, and developed by Diaghileff, continued by Nijinsky's wife. It is quite possible this is true; but true or not, it does not affect the validity of the legend.

The story of Nijinsky's peculiarly romantic marriage, his subsequent madness, his alleged partial recovery, his recent death have all been set down for posterity by his wife. I am by no means an all-out admirer of these books; and I am not able to accept or agree with many of the statements and implications in them. Yet the loyalty and devotion she exhibited towards him can only be regarded as admirable.

The merit of her ministrations to the sick man, on the one hand, hardly condones her literary efforts, on the other. Frequently, I detect a quality in the books that reveals itself more strongly as the predatory female than as the protective wife-mother. I cannot accept Romola Nijinsky's reiterated portraits of Diaghileff as the avenging monster any more than I can the following statement in her latest book, *The Last Days of Nijinsky*, published in 1952:

"Undoubtedly, the news that Vaslav was recuperating became more and more known; therefore it was not surprising that one day he received a cable with an offer

from Mr. Hurok, the theatrical impresario, asking him to come over to New York and appear. My son-in-law, who had just arrived to spend the week-end with us, advised me to cable back accepting the offer, for then we automatically could have escaped from Europe and would have been able to depart at once. But I felt I could not accept a contract for Vaslav and commit him. There was no question at the time that Vaslav should appear in public. Nevertheless, I hoped that the impresario, who was a Russian himself and who had made his name and fortune in America managing Russian dancers in the past, would have vision enough and a humanitarian spirit in helping to get the greatest Russian dancer out of the European inferno. What I did not know at the time was that there was quite a group of dancers who had got together and who worked in silence to keep Nijinsky out of the United States and from public life. Illness had removed the artist with whom they could not compete. They dreaded his coming back."

While the entire paragraph tends to give a distorted picture of the situation, the last three sentences are as far from the truth as they possibly can be. The implied charge is almost too stupid to contradict or refute. Were it not for the stigma it imputes to many fine artists living in this country, I should ignore it completely. However, the facts are quite simple. It is by no means an easy matter to bring into the United States any person in ill health, either physical or mental. So far as the regulations were concerned, Nijinsky was but another alien. It was impossible to secure a visa or an entry permit. It was equally impossible to secure the proper sort of doctors' certificates that could have been of material aid in helping secure such papers.

I have a vivid memory of a meeting of dancers at the St. Regis Hotel in New York to discuss what could be done. Anton Dolin was a prime mover in the plan to give assistance. There was a genuine enthusiasm on the part of

the dancers present. Unfortunately, the economics of the dance are such that dancers are quite incapable of undertaking long-term financial commitments. But a substantial number of pledges were offered.

It certainly was not a question of "quite a group of dancers who had got together and who worked in silence to keep Nijinsky out of the United States and from public life." There was no question or suggestion that he should appear in public, incidentally. There was only the sheer inability to get him into the country. If there was any "dread" of "his coming back," it could only have been the dread that their former colleague, ill in mind and body, might be in danger of being exploited by the romantic author.

Nijinsky, the legend, will endure as long as ballet, because the legend has its roots in genius. Legend apart, no one from the Maryinsky stable, no one in the fairly long history of ballet, as a matter of fact, has given ballet a more complete service. And it should be remembered that this service was rendered in a career that actually covered less than a decade.

A QUARTET OF IMPERIALISTS

There is left for consideration a Russian male quartet, three of them still living, who, in one degree or another, have made contributions to ballet in our time, either in the United States or Europe. Their contributions vary in quality and degree, exactly as the four gentlemen differ in temperament and approach. I shall first deal briefly with the three living members of the quartet, two of whom are American citizens of long standing.

THEODORE KOSLOFF

I commence with one whose contributions to ballet have been the least. I mention him at all only because, historically speaking, he has been identified with dance in America a long time. With perhaps a single notable exception, Theodore Kosloff's contributions in all forms have been slight.

The best has been through teaching, for it is as a teacher that he is likely to be remembered longest. Spectacular in his teaching methods as he is in person, it has been from his school that has come a substantial number of artists of the dance who have made a distinctive place for themselves in the dance world of America.

Outstanding among these are Agnes de Mille, who has made an ineradicable mark with her highly personal choreographic style, and Nana Gollner, American *ballerina* of fine if somewhat uncontrolled talents, the latter having received almost all her training at Kosloff's hands and cane.

Theodore Kosloff was born in 1883. A pupil of the Moscow rather than the Petersburg school, he eventually became a minor soloist at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, appearing in, among others, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Daughter of Pharaoh*. When Diaghileff recruited his company, Kosloff and his wife, Maria Baldina, were among the Muscovites engaged. Kosloff was little more than a *corps de ballet* member with Diaghileff, with an occasional small solo. But he had a roving and retentive eye.

When Gertrude Hoffman and Morris Gest decided to jump the Russian Ballet gun on Broadway, and to present their *Saison de Ballets Russes* at the Winter Garden in advance of Diaghileff's first American visit, it was Theodore Kosloff who restaged the Fokine works for Hoffman, without so much as tilt of the hat or a by-your-leave either to the creator or the owner.

Remaining in the States after the demise of the venture, Kosloff for a time appeared in vaudeville with his wife, Baldina, and his younger brother, Alexis, also a product of the Moscow School. One of these tours took them to California, where Theodore settled in Hollywood. Here, almost simultaneously, he opened his school and associated himself with Cecil B. de Mille as an actor in silent film "epics." He was equally successful at both.

Kosloff's purely balletic activities thereafter included numerous movie-house "presentations"—the unlamented spectacles that preceded the feature film in the silent picture days, in palaces like Grauman's Egyptian and Grauman's Chinese; a brief term as ballet-master of the San Francisco Opera Ballet; and colossal and pepped-up versions of *Petroushka* and *Schéhérazade*, the former in Los Angeles, the latter at the Hollywood Bowl.

Today, at seventy, Kosloff pounds his long staff at classes in the shadow of the Hollywood hills, directing all his activity at perspiring and aspiring young Americans, who in increasing numbers are looking towards the future through the medium of ballet.

LAURENT NOVIKOFF

The three living members of this male quartet were all Muscovites, which is to say, products of the Imperial School of Moscow and dancers of the Bolshoi Theatre, rather than products of the Maryinsky. In Russian ballet this was a sharp distinction and a fine one, with the Maryinskians inclined to glance down the nose a bit at their Moscow colleagues. And possibly with reason.

Laurent Novikoff was born five years later than Theodore Kosloff; he graduated from the Moscow School an equal number of years later. He remained at the Bolshoi Theatre for only a year before joining the Diaghileff Ballet in Paris for an equal length of time. On his return to Moscow at the close of the Diaghileff season, he became a first dancer at the Bolshoi, only to leave to become Anna Pavlova's partner the next year. As a matter of fact, the three remaining members of the quartet were all, at one time or another, partners of Pavlova.

With Pavlova, Novikoff toured the United States in 1913

and in 1914. Returning once again to Moscow, he staged ballets for opera, and remained there until the revolution, when he went to London and rejoined the Diaghileff Company, only to leave and join forces once again with Pavlova, remaining with her this time for seven years, and eventually opening a ballet school in London. In 1929, Novikoff accepted an invitation from the Chicago Civic Opera Company to become its ballet-master; and later, for a period of five years, he was ballet-master of the Metropolitan Opera Company.

As a dancer, Novikoff had a number of distinguished qualities, including a fine virility, a genuinely romantic manner, imagination and authority. As a choreographer, he can hardly be classified as a progressive. While he staged a number of works for Pavlova, including, among others, *Russian Folk Lore* and *Don Quixote*, most of his choreographic work was with one opera company or another. In nearly all cases, ballet was, as it still is, merely a poor step-sister in the opera houses and with the opera companies, often regarded by opera directors merely as a necessary nuisance, and only on rare occasions is an opera choreographer ever given his head.

A charming, cultured, and quite delightful gentleman, Laurent Novikoff now lives quietly with his wife Elizabeth in the American middle west.

ALEXANDRE VOLININE

Alexandre Volinine was Anna Pavlova's partner for a longer time than any of the others. Born in 1883, he was a member of the same Moscow Imperial class as Theodore Kosloff, attained the rank of first dancer at the Bolshoi Theatre, and remained there for nine years.

In 1910, he left Russia to become Pavlova's partner, a position he held intermittently for many years. Apart from

being Pavlova's chief support, he made numerous American appearances. He was a member of Gertrude Hoffman's *Saison Russe*, at the Winter Garden, in 1911; and in the same year supported the great Danish *ballerina*, Adeline Genée, at the Metropolitan Opera House, in *La Danse*, "an authentic record by Mlle. Genée of Dancing and Dancers between the years 1710 and 1845."

Volinine returned to the United States in 1912-1913, when, after the historical break between Pavlova and Mordkin, the latter formed his "All-Star Imperial Russian Ballet," with Ekaterina Geltzer, Julia Sedova, Lydia Lopokova, and Volinine. This was an ill-starred venture from the start for no sooner had they opened at the Metropolitan Opera House than Mordkin and Sedova quarrelled with Geltzer and, so characteristic of Russian Ballet, the factions, in this case Polish and English *versus* Russian, took violent sides. Volinine was on the side of the former. As a result of the company split, the English-Polish section went off on a tour across the country with Volinine, who augmented their tiny salaries by five dollars weekly from his private purse. After they had worked their way through the Deep South and arrived at Creole New Orleans, the manager decamped for a time, and a tremulous curtain descended on the first act of *Coppélia*, not to rise.

By one means or another, and with some help from the British Consul in New Orleans, they managed to return to New York by way of a stuffy journey in a vile-smelling freighter plying along the coast. By quick thinking, and even quicker acting, including mass-sitting on the manager's doorstep, they forced that individual to arrange for the passage back to England, which was accomplished with its share of excitement; once back in England, Volinine returned to his place as Pavlova's first dancer.

Volinine was the featured dancer with Pavlova in 1916, when I first met her at the Hippodrome, and often

accompanied us to supper. As the years wore on, I learned to know and admire him.

As a dancer, Volinine was a supreme technician, and, I believe, one of the most perfect romantic dancers of his time. In his Paris school today he is passing on his rare knowledge to the men of today's generation of *premières danseurs*. His teaching, combined with his quite superb understanding of the scientific principles involved, are of great service to ballet. Michael Somes, the first dancer of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, is among those who go to Volinine's Paris studio for those refining corrections obtainable only from a great teacher who has been a great dancer.

"Sasha" Volinine has, perhaps, spent as much or more of his professional life in England, Australia, and other English-speaking countries, as any Russian dancer. On the other hand, he speaks and understands less English, perhaps, than any of the others.

Often in America and London we have gone out to dine, to sup, often with a group. "Sasha" invariably would be the first to ask the headwaiter or *maître d'hôtel* for a copy of the menu. Immediately he would concentrate on it, poring over it, giving it seemingly careful scrutiny and study.

All the others in the party would have ordered, and then, after long cogitation, "Sasha" would summon the waiter and, pointing to something in the menu utterly irrelevant, would solemnly demand: "Ham and eggs."

I am happy to count "Sasha" Volinine among my old friends, and it is always a pleasure to foregather with him when I am in Paris.

ADOLPH BOLM

If my old friend, Adolph Bolm, were here to read this, he probably would be the first to object to being classified

with this quartet of "Imperialists." He would have pointed out to me in his emphatic manner that by far the greater part of his career had been spent in the United States, working for ballet in America. He would have insisted that he neither thought nor acted like an "Imperialist": that he was a progressive, not a reactionary; and he would, at considerable length, have advanced his theory that all "Imperialists" were reactionaries. He would have repeated to me that even when he was at the Maryinsky, he was a rebel and a leader in the revolt against what he felt were the stultifying influences of its inbred conservatism. This would have gone on for some time, for Bolm was intelligent, literate, articulate, and ready to make a speech at the drop of a ballet shoe, or no shoe at all.

I have placed Bolm in this book among the "Imperialists" because he had his roots in the Imperial Russian Ballet, where he was conditioned as child and youth; he was a product of the School in Theatre Street and a Maryinsky soloist for seven years; he was a contemporary and one-time colleague of the three other members of this quartet, either in Russia or with the Diaghileff Ballet Russe.

Born in St. Petersburg in 1884, the son of the concert-master and associate conductor of the French operatic theatre, the Mikhailovsky, Bolm entered the School at ten, was a first-prize graduate in 1904. He was never a great classical dancer; but he had a first-rate sense of the theatre, was a brilliant character dancer, a superlative mime.

Bolm was the first to take Anna Pavlova out of Russia, as manager and first dancer of a Scandinavian and Central European tour that made ballet history. He was, I happen to know, largely responsible in influencing Pavlova temporarily to postpone the idea of a company of her own and to abandon their own tour, because he believed the future of Russian Ballet lay with Diaghileff. Although the Nijinsky legend commences when Nijinsky first leapt

through the window of the virginal bedroom of *Le Spectre de la Rose*, in Paris in 1911, it was *Prince Igor* and Bolm's virile, barbaric warrior chieftain that provided the greater impact and produced the outstanding revelation of male dancing such as the Western World had not hitherto known.

Bolm was intimately associated with the Diaghileff invasion of the United States, when Diaghileff, a displaced and dispirited person sitting out the war in Switzerland, was invited to bring his company to America by Otto H. Kahn. But, owing to the war and the disbanding of his company, it was impossible for Diaghileff to reassemble the original personnel. It was a grave problem. Neither Nijinsky, Fokine, nor Karsavina was available. It was then that Bolm took on the tremendous dual role of first dancer and choreographer, engaging and rehearsing what was to all intents and purposes a new company in a repertoire of twenty-odd ballets. The Diaghileff American tours were due in no small degree to Bolm's efforts in achieving what seemed to be the impossible.

After the second Diaghileff American tour, during which Bolm was injured, he remained in New York. Unlike many of his colleagues, his quick intelligence grasped American ideas and points of view. This was evidenced throughout his career by his interest in our native subjects, composers, painters.

With his own Ballet Intime, his motion picture theatre presentations of ballet, his Chicago Allied Arts, his tenure with the Chicago Opera Company, the San Francisco Opera Ballet, his production of *Le Coq d'Or* and two productions of *Petroushka* at the Metropolitan Opera House, he helped sow the seeds of real ballet appreciation across the country.

My acquaintance and friendship with Adolph Bolm extended over a long time. His experimental mind, his eagerness, his enthusiasm, his deep culture, his capacity

for friendship, his hospitality—all these qualities endeared him to me. If one did not always agree with him (and I, for one, did not), one could not fail to appreciate and respect his honesty and sincerity. During a period when Ballet Theatre was under my management, I was instrumental in placing him as the *régisseur general* (general stage director to those unfamiliar with ballet's term for this important functionary) of the company, feeling that his discipline, knowledge, taste, and ability would be helpful to the young company in maintaining a high performing standard. Unhappily, much of the good he did and could do was negated by an unfortunate attitude on the part of some of our younger American dancers, who have little or no respect for tradition, reputation, or style, and who seem actively to resent achievement—in an art that has its roots in the past although its branches stretch out to the future—rather than respect and admire it.

A striking example of this sort of thing took place when I had been instrumental, later on, in having Bolm stage a new version of Stravinsky's *Firebird*, for Ballet Theatre, in 1945, with Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin.

My last meeting with Bolm took place at the opening performance of the Sadler's Wells production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, in Los Angeles. I shall not soon forget his genuine enthusiasm and how he embraced Ninette de Valois as he expressed his happiness that the great full-length ballets in all their splendor had at last been brought to Los Angeles.

In his later years, Bolm lived on a hilltop in Hollywood; in Hollywood, but not of it, with Igor Stravinsky and Nicholas Remisoff as two of his closest and most intimate friends. One night, in the spring of 1951, Bolm went to sleep and did not wake again in this world.

His life had been filled with an intense activity, a remarkable productivity in his chosen field—thirty-five years of it in the United States, in the triple role of teacher,

dancer, choreographer. As I have intimated before, Bolm's understanding of the things that are at the root of the American character was, in my opinion, deeper and more profound than that of any of his colleagues. His achievements will live after him.

My last contacts with Bolm revealed to me a man still vital, still eager; but a little soured, a shade bitter, because he was conscious the world was moving on and felt that the ballet was shutting him out.

Before that bitterness could take too deep a root in the heart and soul of a gentle artist, a Divine Providence closed his eyes in the sleep everlasting.

6. Tristan and Isolde: Michel and Vera Fokine

IF ever there were two people who seemingly were inseparable, they were Michel and Vera Fokine. Theirs was a modern love story that could rank with those of Abélard and Heloïse, Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde. The romance of the Fokines continued, unabated, till death did them part.

The story of Michel Fokine's revolution in modern ballet has become an important part of ballet's history. The casual ballet-goer, to whom one name sounds very much like another, recognizes the name of Fokine. He may not realize the full importance of the man, but he has been unable to escape the knowledge that some of the ballets he knows and loves best are Fokine works.

The literature that has grown up around Michel Fokine and his work is fairly voluminous, as was his due. Yet, for those of today's generation, who are prone to forget too

easily, it cannot be repeated too often that had it not been for Michel Fokine, there might not have been any such thing as modern ballet. For ballet, wherein he worked his necessary and epoch-making revolution, was in grave danger of becoming moribund and static, and might well, by this time, have become extinct.

He was a profound admirer of Isadora Duncan, although he denied he had been influenced by her ideas. Fokine felt Duncan, in her concern for movement, had brought dancing back to its beginnings. He was filled with a divine disgust for the routine and the artificial practices of ballet at the turn of the century. He was termed a heretic when he insisted that each ballet demands a new technique appropriate to its style, because he fought against the eternal stereotype.

Fokine threw in his lot with Diaghileff and his group. With Diaghileff his greatest masterpieces were created. Both Fokine and Diaghileff were complicated human beings; both were artists. Problems were never simple with either of them. There is no reason here to go into the causes for the rupture between them. That there was a rupture and that it was never completely healed is regrettable. It was tantamount to a divorce between the parents of modern ballet. It was, as is so often the case in divorce, the child that suffered.

For a time following the break, the Fokines returned to Russia; and then, in 1918, together with their son Vitale, spent some time in and out of Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Conditions were not ideal for creation, and nothing was added to the impressive list of Fokine masterpieces.

In 1919, Morris Gest was immersed in the production of a gargantuan musical show destined for the Century Theatre: *Aphrodite*, based on an English translation of Pierre Louys' novel. Gest made Fokine an offer to come to America to stage a Bacchanal for the work. Fokine

accepted. *Aphrodite* was not a very good musical, nor was it, as I remember it, a very exciting Bacchanal; but it was a great success. Fokine himself was far from happy with it.

For a number of reasons, the Fokines decided to make New York their home. They eventually bought a large house, where Riverside Drive joins Seventy-second Street; converted part of the house into a dancing studio, and lived in the rest of the house in an atmosphere of nostalgic gloom, a sort of Chopinesque twilight. Ballet in America was at a very low ebb when Fokine settled here. There was a magnificent opportunity to hand for the father of modern ballet, had he but taken it. For some reason he muffed the big chance. Perhaps he was embittered by a series of unhappy experiences, not the least of which was the changed political scene in his beloved Russia, to which he was never, during the rest of his life, able to make adjustment. He was content, as an artist, for the most part to rest on his considerable laurels. There was always *Schéhérazade*. More importantly, there was always *Sylphides*.

Fokine's creative life, in the true sense, was something he left behind in Europe. He never seemed to sense or to try to understand the American impulse, rhythm, or those things which lie at the root of our native culture. In the bleak Riverside Drive mansion, he taught rather half-heartedly at classes, but gave much of his time and energy in well-paid private lessons to the untalented daughters of the rich.

From the choreographic point of view, he was satisfied, for the most part, to reproduce his early masterpieces with inferior organizations, or to stage lesser pieces for the Hippodrome or the Ziegfeld Follies. One of the latter will suffice as an example. It was called *Frolicking Gods*, a whimsy about a couple of statues of Greek Gods who came to life, became frightened at a noise, and returned to their marble immobility. And it may be of interest to note that

these goings-on were all accomplished to, of all things, Tchaikowsky's *Nutcracker Suite*. There was also a pseudo-Aztec affair, devised, so far as tale was concerned, by Vera Fokine, and called *The Thunder Bird*. The Aztec quality was emphasized by the use of a pastiche of music culled from the assorted works of Tchaikowsky, Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Balakirev, and Borodine.

It was during the winter of 1920, not long after the Fokines, with their son Vitale, had arrived here, that we came together professionally. I arranged to present them jointly in a series of programmes at the Metropolitan Opera House, with Arnold Volpe and his Symphony Orchestra.

Fokine came with me to see the Metropolitan stage. He arrived at what might have been a ticklish moment. Fokine was extremely sensitive to what he called "pirated" versions of his works. There was, of course, no copyright protection for them, since choreography had no protection under American copyright law. Fokine was equally certain that he, Fokine, was the only person who could possibly reproduce his works. As we entered the Metropolitan, Adolph Bolm was appearing in an opera-ballet version of Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Le Coq d'Or*. The performance had commenced.

As I have intimated, after he broke with Diaghileff, Fokine was so depressed that for some time he could not work at all. Then he received an invitation from Anna Pavlova to come to Berlin, where she was about to produce some new ballets. Fokine accepted the invitation, and when Pavlova asked him to suggest a subject, Fokine proposed a ballet based on the opera, *Le Coq d'Or*. Pavlova, however, considered the plot of the Rimsky-Korsakoff work to be too political, and also felt it unwise of her to offer a subject burlesquing the Tsar.

It was not until after Fokine temporarily returned to the Diaghileff fold that *Le Coq d'Or* achieved production.

Diaghileff agreed with Fokine on the subject, and Fokine was anxious that it should be mounted in as modern a manner as possible. The story of the opera, based on Pushkin's well-known poem, as adapted to the stage by V. Bielsky, requires no comment. Fokine's opera-ballet production was, in its way, quite unique. There were two casts, which is to say, singers and dancers. While one character danced and acted, the words in the libretto were spoken or sung by the dancing character's counterpart.

As a result of the Metropolitan Opera Company's wartime ban on anything German, in 1917, Pierre Monteux, the former Diaghileff conductor, was imported by the Metropolitan for the expanded French list. One of the results of Monteux's influence on the Metropolitan repertoire was *Le Coq d'Or*. Adolph Bolm, by that time resident in New York, having remained here after the last Diaghileff American season, was engaged by Otto H. Kahn to stage the work in the style of the Diaghileff production. Bolm, who had his own ideas, nevertheless based his work on Fokine's basic plan, and that of the Fokine-Diaghileff production. Bolm was meticulous, however, in insisting that credit be given to Fokine for the original idea, and it was always billed as "after Michel Fokine." The Metropolitan production, as designed by the Hungarian artist, Willy Pogany, whose sets were among the best the Metropolitan ever has seen, resulted in one of the most attractive and exciting productions the Metropolitan has achieved. Aside from the production itself, the singing of the Spanish coloratura, Maria Barrientos, as the Queen, the conducting of Monteux, and the dancing of Bolm as King Dodon, set a new standard for the Metropolitan.

On the occasion I have mentioned, we entered the front of the house, and Fokine watched a bit of the performance with me, standing in the back of the auditorium. He had no comment, which was unusual for him.

After watching for a time, I asked Fokine if he would

care to meet his old colleague. He said he would. Together we felt our way back stage in the dimly lighted passages. The pass-door to back-stage was even darker. I stood aside to let Fokine precede me. Then my heart nearly stopped. Fokine stumbled and nearly fell prostrate on the iron-concrete steps. He picked himself up, brushed himself off. "Mikhail Mikhailovitch," I said, half frightened to death, "you must be careful."

"It is nothing," he replied, "but why in hell isn't the place properly lighted?"

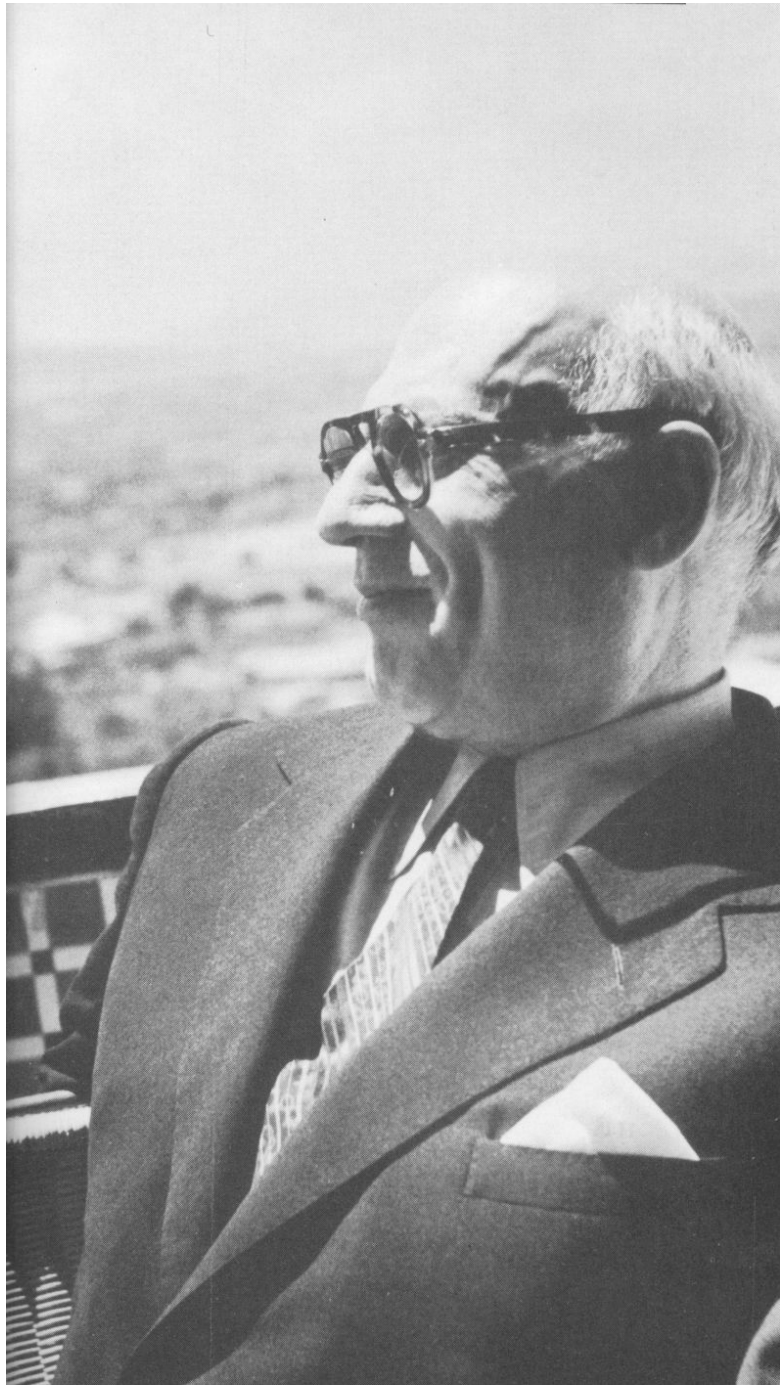
The meeting with Bolm, who had made Fokine's favorite ballet even more exciting than it actually was, was cordial enough, cool, and uneventful. Bolm was by far the more demonstrative. Their conversation was general rather than particular. Fokine and I looked over the stage, its size and its equipment. Fokine thanked Bolm, apologized for the interruption, and took his leave. As we felt our way out to the street, Fokine's only comment on *Le Coq d'Or* was, "The women's shawls should be farther back on the head. They are quite impossible when worn like that. And when they weep, they should weep."

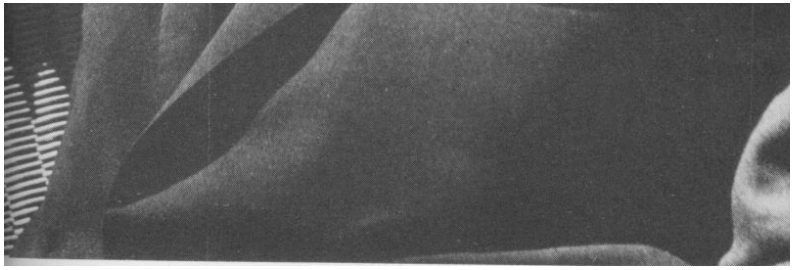
Fokine was a stickler for detail. In conversation about dancing, over and over again he would use two Russian words, "*Naslajdaites*" and "*laska*." Freely translated, those Russian words suggest "do it as though you enjoyed yourself" and "caressingly."

The programme for the appearances at the Metropolitan had been carefully worked out, balanced with joint performances, solos for each, with symphony orchestra interludes while Michel and Vera were changing costumes. For the opening performance it was decided that Michel and Vera would jointly do the lovely waltz from *Les Sylphides*; a group of Caucasian dances to music arranged by Asafieff; the Mazurka from Delibes' *Coppélia*; and a group of five Russian dances by Liadov. Fokine himself would do the male solo, the Mazurka from *Les Sylphides*,

and a Liadov *Berceuse*; while Vera's solo contributions would be *The Dying Swan*, and the arrangement Fokine made for her of Beethoven's "*Moonlight Sonata*."

The advertising campaign was under full steam ahead, and rehearsals were well under way. So well were things going, in fact, that I relaxed my habitual pre-opening tension for a moment at my home, which was, in those days, in Brooklyn. I even missed a rehearsal, since Fokine was at his very best, keen and interested, and the music was in the able hands of Arnold Volpe, a musician who worked passionately for the highest artistic aims, a Russian-born American





Baron

S. Hurok





Lucas-Pritchard

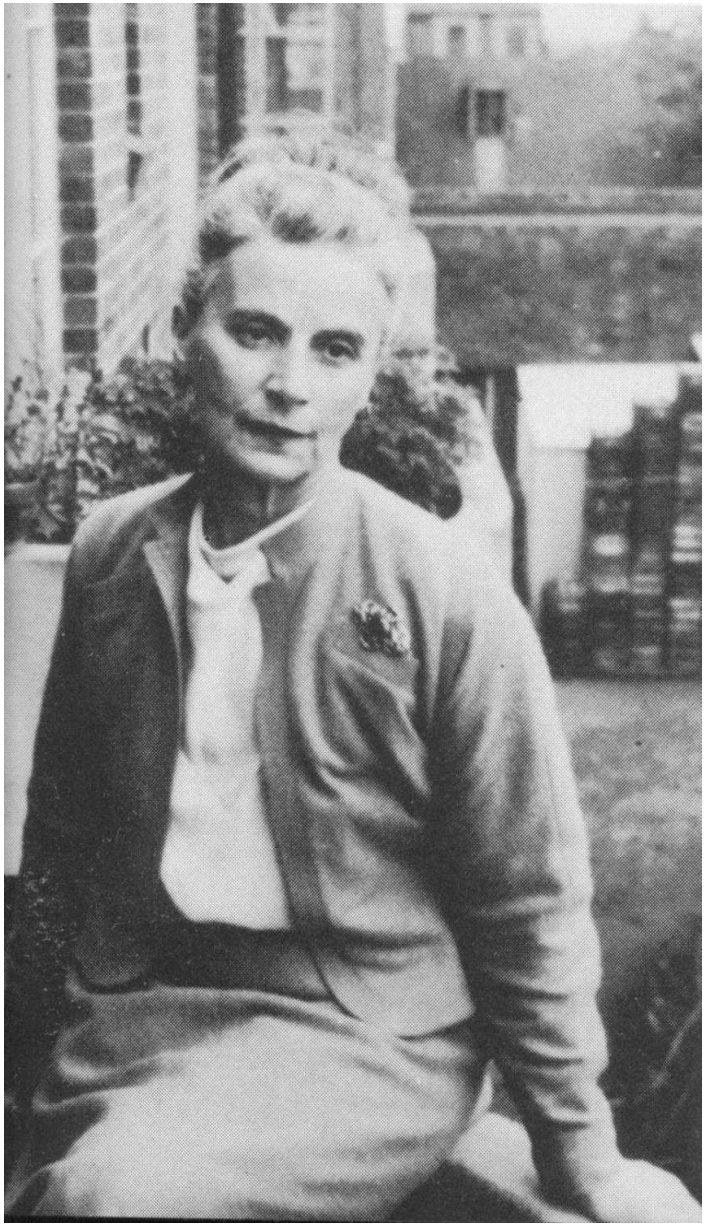
Mrs. Hurok





Lido

Lubov Egorova and Sola



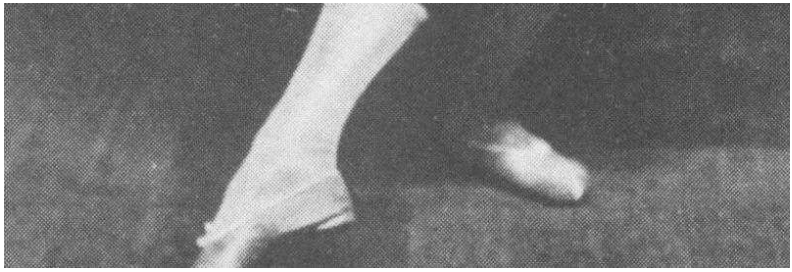
Marie Rambert



Lido

Olga Preobrajenska in he

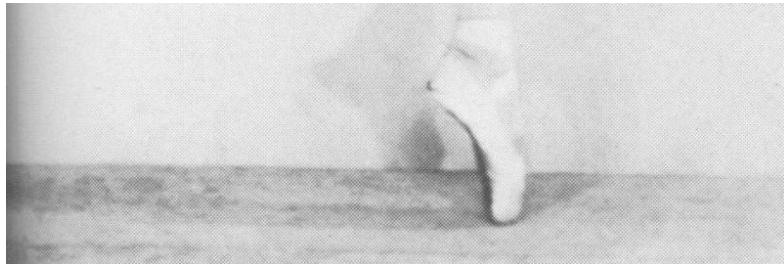




Lydia Lopokova

Hoppé





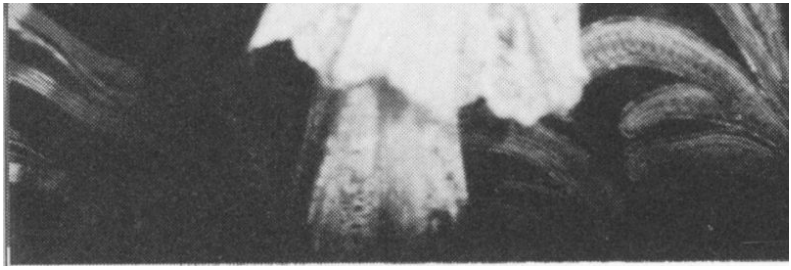
Tamara Karsavina



Mathilde Kchessi

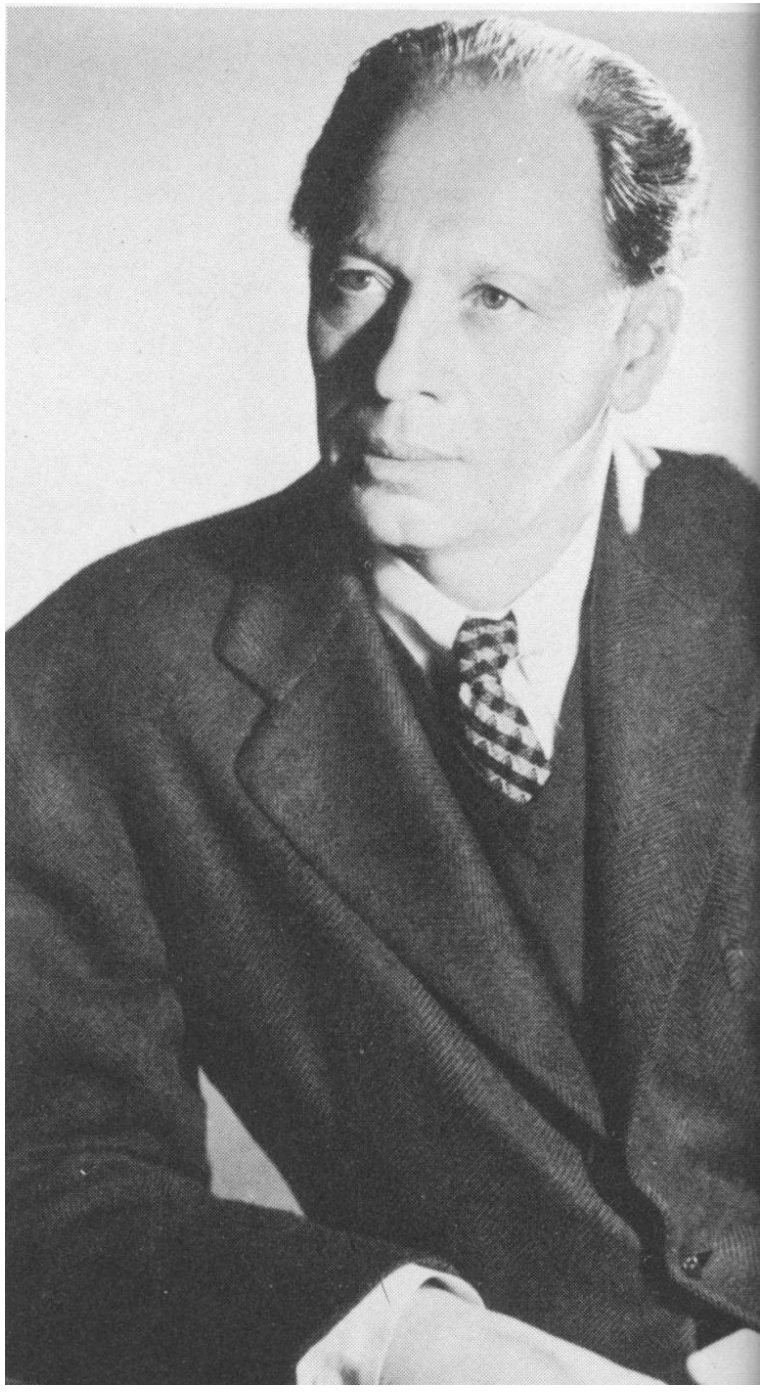
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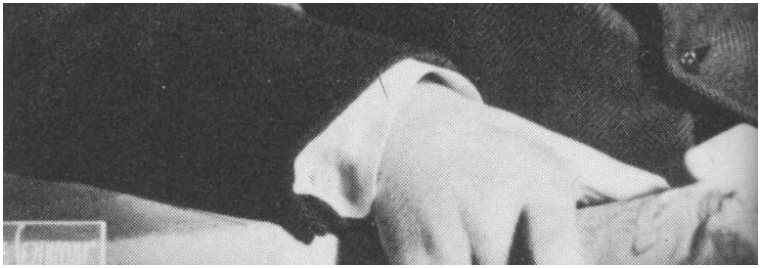




Maurice Goldberg

Michel Fokine





Adolph Bolm

Maurice Seymour





Acme

Anna Pavlova





Alexandre Volinine in his Paris studio,

Lido



Baker

Ballet Pioneering in America: “Sasha” Philipoff, Irving Deakin,



S. Hurok, "Colonel" W. de Basil and leading members of the de Basil Ballet Russe, 1
Center row: Leonide Massine, Tatiana Riabouchinska, Col. W. de Basil, Nina Verchinin
Nikoff

pioneer in music. Volpe devoted his entire life, from the time of his arrival in this country until his death, to the cause of young American musicians. He was an ideal collaborator for the Fokines. There was a fine understanding between Fokine and Volpe, and the performances, therefore, were splendid. I felt content.

But not for long. My peace of mind was shattered by a

telephone call. It was Mrs. Volpe. The news was bad. Fokine had suffered an injury during rehearsal. He had pulled a leg tendon. The pain was severe. The rehearsal had been abandoned.

I rushed to Manhattan and up to the old Marie Antoinette Hotel, famous as the long-time home of that wizard of the American theatre, David Belasco. Here the Fokines had made their temporary home, while searching for a house. Michel was in bed, with Vera in solicitous attendance. To understate, the news was very bad. The doctor, who had just left, had said it would be at least six weeks before he could permit Fokine to dance.

But the performance *had* to be given Tuesday night. It was now Sunday. There was all the publicity, all the advertising, and the rent of the Metropolitan Opera House had to be paid. This was not all. A tour had been booked to follow the Metropolitan appearance, including Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Richmond. Apart from my own expenses, there were the responsibilities to the various local managers and managements concerned. Something had to be done, and at once. The newspapers had to be informed.

The silence of the hotel bedroom, hitherto broken only by Vera's cooing ministrations, deepened. It was I who spoke. An idea flashed through my mind.

"Mikhail Mikhailovitch," I said, "could Vera Petrovna do a full programme on Tuesday night on her own?"

Michel and Vera exchanged glances. There was something telepathic in the communication between their eyes.

Fokine turned his head in my direction.

"Yes," he said.

Quickly the programme was rearranged. Fokine suggested adding a Chopin group, which he called *Poland —Three Moods: Happiness, Revolt, Sadness*.

We went into action. The orchestra seat prices were five dollars, and a five-dollar top was high in those days. Announcements were rushed out, informing the public in big type that Vera Fokina, *Prima Ballerina Russian Ballet*, would appear, together with the adjusted programme, which we agreed upon as follows: Arnold Volpe and his Symphony Orchestra would play Weber's *Oberon* Overture; Saint-Saens' Symphonic Poem, *Rouet d'Omphale*; Beethoven's *Egmont Overture*; Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Capriccio Espagnol*; Ippolitoff-Ivanoff's *Caucasian Sketches*; and the *Wedding Procession* from Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Le Coq d'Or*. Fokina had an evening cut out for her: the three Polish moods I have mentioned; *The Dying Swan*; *The "Moonlight" Sonata*; the *Danses Tziganes*, by Nachez; *Sapeteado*, a Gitano Dance, by Hartmann; two *Caucasian Dances*, to folk music arranged by Asafief; and four of Liadov's *Russian Folk Dances*.

A large sign to the same effect was installed in the lobby of the Metropolitan Opera House. The news spread quickly. But the public did not seem to mind. In this eleventh-hour shifting of arrangements, I was happy to have the whole-hearted cooperation of John Brown and Edward Ziegler, the administrative heads of the Metropolitan Opera Company.

The first performance was sold out; the audience was enthusiastic. Moreover, while in those days there were no dance critics, the press comment, largely a matter of straight reporting, was highly favorable. I should like to quote *The New York Times* account in full as an example of the sort of attention given then to such an important event, some thirty-odd years ago: *"FOKINA'S ART DELIGHTS METROPOLITAN AUDIENCE—Her Husband and Partner Ill, Russian Dancers Interest Throng Alone, with Volpe's Aid: Vera Fokina, the noted Russian dancer performed an unusual feat on February 11, when she kept a great audience in the Metropolitan keenly*

interested in her art for almost three hours. When it was announced that Mr. Fokine, her husband, was ill and therefore not able to carry out his part of the program, a murmur of dissatisfaction was audible. But the auditors soon forgot their disappointment and wondered at Mme. Fokina's graceful and vivid interpretations.

"*Among the best liked of her offerings was the 'Dying Swan,' with Saint-Saens's music. Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata, well played by an invisible pianist, Izia Seligman, and the Russian and Gipsy pieces. She was compelled to give many encores.*

"*Arnold Volpe and his orchestra took a vital part in the program, playing the music with a fine instinct for the interpretative ideas of the dancer. He conducted his forces through some of the compositions intended as the vehicles for the absent Mr. Fokine, and thus won an honest share in the success of the entertainment.*"

So much for ballet criticism in New York in 1920.

The tour had to go on with Fokina alone, although Fokine had recovered sufficiently to hobble about and to supervise and direct and oversee. A certain Mr. K. had associated himself as a sort of local representative. Mr. K. was not much of a local manager; but he did have an unholy talent for cheque-bouncing. It was not a matter of one or two, due to some error; they bounded and bounced all over the country in droves, and daily. If the gods that be had seen fit to give me a less sound nervous system than, happily, they have, K.'s financial antics could have brought on a nervous breakdown.

At the same time, Fokine, with his tremendous insistence on perfection, hobbled about, giving orders to all and sundry in a mixture of languages—Russian, French, German, Swedish, and Danish—that no one, but no one, was able to understand. Even up to the time of his death, English was difficult for Mikhail Mikhailovitch, and he

spoke it, at all times, with an unreproducible accent. His voice, unless excited, was softly guttural. In typically Russian fashion, he interchanged the letters "g" and "h." Always there was an almost limitless range of facial expressions.

On this tour, Fokine, being unable to dance, had more time on his hands to worry about everything else. His lighting rehearsals were long and chaotic, since provincial electricians were not conspicuous either for their ability, their interest, or their patience. During the lighting rehearsals, since he was immobilised by his injury, Fokine and Vera would sit side by side. He knew what he wanted; but, before he would finally approve anything, he would turn to her for her commendation; and there would pass between them that telepathic communication I often saw, and about which I have remarked before. Occasionally, if something amused them, they would laugh together; but, more often than not, their faces revealed no more than would a skilled poker-player's.

Fokine could manage to keep his temper on an even keel for a considerable time, if he put his mind to it. There was no affectation about Fokine, either artistically or personally. In appearance there was not a single one of those artificial eccentricities so often associated with the "artistic temperament." To the man in the street he would have passed for a solidly successful business man. At work he was a taskmaster unrelenting, implacable, fanatical frequently to the point of downright cruelty. At rest, he was a gentleman of great charm and simplicity, with a sense of humor and a certain capacity for enjoyment. Unfortunately, his sense of humor had a way of deserting him at critical moments. This, coupled with a lack of tact, made him many enemies among those who were once his closest friends. These occasional flashes of geniality came only when things were going his way; but, if things did not go as he wanted, his rages could be and were devastating,

all-consuming.

One such incident occurred in Philadelphia. As a matter of fact, Philadelphia was marked by incidents. The first was one I had with Edward Lobe, then manager of Philadelphia's Metropolitan Opera House, then at Broad and Poplar Streets. It had to do with some of the bouncing K.'s bouncing paper. This straightened out, I returned to the stage to find turmoil rampant. There was another crisis.

The crisis had been precipitated by the man whose job it was to operate the curtain. Fokine had shouted and screamed "*Zanovess! Zanovess!*" at the unfortunate individual. Now "*Zanovess*" is the Russian word for curtain. The curtain had not fallen. Fokine could not say "curtain." The operator did not have the vaguest idea of the meaning of "*zanovess*." Moreover, the stage-hand suspected, from the tone of Fokine's voice, his barked order, and the fierce expression of his face that he was being called names. When, finally, Fokine screamed "*Idyot!*" at him, the curtain-man knew for sure he had been insulted. The argument and hostility spread through his colleagues.

Eventually, I got them calmed down. Fokine insisted they were all idiots; they were all ignorant. This idea leaked through to the stage-hands, and that did not help matters. I finally suggested that, since neither of them could understand the other, the best procedure would be not to scream and shout and stomp—uttering strange mixed French and Russian oaths—but to be quiet and to show by gesture and pantomime, rather than to give unintelligible verbal orders. So, with only minor subsequent scenes, the rehearsal got itself finished.

Also, in Philadelphia, we had substituted *Salome's Dance of the Seven Veils*, done to Glazounov's score of the same name, in place of the *"Moonlight" Sonata.* It is hardly necessary to point out that the veils, all seven of them, are vastly important. Because of their importance,

these had been entrusted to the keeping of Clavia, Vera's Russian maid, instead of being packed with the other costumes. But, come performance time, Clavia could not be found. Hue and cry were raised; her hotel alerted; restaurants searched; but still no Clavia. She simply had to be found. I pressed Marie Volpe, Arnold Volpe's singer-wife, into the breach to act as maid for Vera, and to help her dress. But only Clavia knew where Salome's veils had been secreted. The performance started. The search continued.

Suddenly, there came a series of piercing screams emanating from an upper floor dressing-room. Haunted by visions of the Phantom of the Opera, I rushed up the stairs to find Clavia lying on the floor, obviously in pain. We managed to get her down to Fokina's room and placed her on the couch in what was known in Philadelphia as "Caruso's Room," the star dressing-room Fokina was using. As we entered, Fokina stood ready to go on stage, costumed for *The Dying Swan*. The situation was obvious. Clavia was about to give birth to a child. The labor pains had commenced. I pushed Vera on to the stage and Marie Volpe into the room—in the nick of time. Mrs. Volpe, a concert singer, pinch-hitting as a maid for Vera, now turned midwife for the first time in her life. By the time the ambulance and the doctor arrived, mother and infant were doing as well as could be expected.

Next morning Mrs. Volpe found herself a new role. A lady of high moral scruples, herself a mother, she had realized that no one had mentioned a father for the child. Mrs. Volpe had assumed the role of detective (a dangerous one, I assure the reader, in ballet), and was determined to run down the child's father. The newspaper stories, with the headline: "*CHILD BORN IN CARUSO'S DRESSING ROOM*," had not been too reassuring to Mrs. Volpe. I counselled her that she would be well advised to let the matter drop.

On our arrival in Baltimore, I was greeted by the news that my rubber-wizard of a local manager, the bouncing Mr. K., had decamped with the box-office sale, leaving behind only some rubber cheques. This, in itself, I felt was enough for one day. But it was not to be. Vera, as curtain time approached, once again was up to her usual business of exhibiting "temperament," spoiling her life, as she so often did in this respect, throughout her dancing career.

"What is it now?" I asked.

She waxed wroth with great volubility and at considerable length, with profound indignation that the stage floor-cloth was, as she said, "impossible." Nothing I could say was of any avail. Vera refused, absolutely, irrevocably, unconditionally, to dance. Mrs. Volpe was to help her into her street clothes, and at once. She would return to her hotel. She would return to New York. I must cancel the engagement, the tour, all because of the stage-cloth. And the audience was already filling the theatre.

I thought quickly and went into action. Calling the head carpenter and the property man together, I got them to turn the floor-cloth round. Then, going back to the dressing-room, where Vera was preparing to leave, I succeeded in convincing her by showing her that it was an entirely new doth that we had just got for her happiness.

Vera Fokina never danced better than that night in Baltimore.

Our farewell performance, with both Fokines dancing, took place at Charles Dillingham's Hippodrome, on Sunday evening, 29th May, 1920. For this occasion, the Fokines appeared together, by popular request, in the Harlequin and Columbine variation from his own masterpiece, *Carnaval*; Fokine alone danced the *Dagestanskaja Lezginka*, and staged a work he called *Amoun and Berenis*, actually scenes from his *Une Nuit d'Egypte*, which Diaghileff called *Cléopâtre*, adapted,

musically, from Anton Arensky's score for the ballet. I quote Fokine's own libretto for the work:

> Amoun and Berenis are engaged in the sport of hunting. She represents Gazelle, and he the hunter who wounds her in the breast. The engaged couple plight each other to everlasting love. But soon Amoun betrays his bride. He falls in love with Queen Cleopatra. Not having the opportunity of coming near his beloved queen, he sends an arrow with a note professing his love and readiness to sacrifice his life for her. Notwithstanding the tears and prayers of Berenis, he throws himself into the arms of Cleopatra, and, lured by her tenderness, he accepts from her hands a cup of poison, drinks it and dies. Berenis finds the corpse of her lover, forgives him and mourns his death.

The Hippodrome version consisted of "The Meeting of Amoun and Berenis" "The Entrance of Cleopatra," by the orchestra; "The Dance Before Cleopatra"; "The Betrayal of Amoun and the Jealousy of Berenis"; "The Hebrew Dance," by the orchestra; "The Death of Amoun and the Mourning of Berenis."

In 1927, I presented the Fokines with their "American Ballet," composed of their pupils, at the Masonic Auditorium, in Detroit, and on subsequent tours. Prominent professional dancers were added to the pupil roster.

That summer, with the Fokines and their company, I introduced ballet to the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts in New York, for three performances, to a record audience of forty-eight thousand people. I also presented them for four performances at the Century Theatre in Central Park West. The Stadium programmes included *Les Elves*, arranged to

Mendelssohn's *Overture to a Midsummer Night's Dream*, with the addition of the same composer's Andante and Allegro from the *Violin Concerto*. Also *Medusa*, a tragedy set to Tchaikowsky's *Symphonie Pathétique*, a work for four characters, the title role being danced by Vera Fokina, and the sea god Poseidon, who fell in love with the beautiful Medusa, danced by Fokine.

It was during one of the Stadium performances, I remember, I had occasion to go to the Fokines' dressing-room on some errand. I knocked, and believing I heard an invitation to enter, opened the door to discover the two Fokines dissolved in tears of happiness. So moved was Michel by Vera's performance of the title role in *Medusa*, that they were sobbing in each other's arms.

"Wonderful, wonderful, my darling!" Fokine was murmuring. "Such a beautiful performance; and to think you did it all in such a short period, with so very few rehearsals; and the really amazing thing is that you portrayed the character of the creature precisely as it is in my mind!"

In the love, the adoration, the romance of Michel and Vera Fokine, there was the greatest continuous devotion between man and wife that it has been my privilege to know.

Fokine's American ballet creations have been lost. Perhaps it is as well. For the closing chapter of the life of a truly great artist they were sadly inferior. Towards the end of his career, however, he staged some fresh, new works in France for René Blum's Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, including *Les Elements*, *Don Juan*, and *L'Epreuve d'Amour*. Then, for de Basil's Original Ballet Russe, *Cinderella*, or since he used the French, *Cendrillon*, to a commissioned score by Baron Frederic d'Erlanger, which might have been better. But choreographically *Cendrillon* was a return to the triumphant Fokine. There was also his triumphant re-staging of *Le Coq d'Or*. Perhaps his last

really great triumph was his collaboration with Serge Rachmaninoff on *Paganini*, a work that takes rank with Fokine's finest.

Fokine restaged *Les Sylphides* and *Carnaval* for Ballet Theatre's initial season. When Ballet Theatre was under my management, he created *Bluebeard*, in 1941, for Anton Dolin. In 1942, I was instrumental in having German Sevastianov engage Fokine to stage the nostalgic tragedy, *Russian Soldier*, to the music of Prokofieff.

While in Mexico, in the summer of 1942, working on *Helen of Troy*, for Ballet Theatre, Fokine contracted pleurisy, which developed into pneumonia on his return to New York, where he died, on 22nd August. For a dancer, he was on the youthful side. He was born in Mannheim-am-Rhine, Germany, 26th April, 1880, the son of Ekaterina Gindt. According to the official records of the St. Petersburg Imperial School, his father was unknown. He was adopted by a merchant, Mikhail Feodorovitch Fokine, who gave him his name. In 1898, he graduated from the St. Petersburg Imperial School. In 1905, he married Vera Petrovna Antonova, the daughter of a master of the wig-maker's Guild, who had graduated from the School the year before.

At the funeral service at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral, in New York, were assembled all of the dance world in New York in mid-summer, to do him honor.

Some of his works will live on, but they suffer with each passing year because, in most cases, they are not properly done. The Sadler's Wells and Royal Danish Ballet productions of the Fokine works are the exceptions. But all his works suffered continually during his lifetime, because Fokine had a faulty memory, and his restaging of the works was, all too often, the product of unhappy afterthoughts. Towards the end of his life he became more and more embittered. He, the one-time great revolutionary, resented the new developments in ballet, perhaps because

they had not been developed by Fokine.

This bitterness was quite unnecessary, for Fokine remains the greatest creator of modern ballet. His works, properly staged, will always provide a solid base for all ballet programmes. Despite the hue and cry, despite the lavish praise heaped upon each new experiment by modern choreographers, and upon the choreographers themselves, in all contemporary ballet there is no one to take his place.

Other ballet-masters, other choreographers, working with the same basic materials, in the same spirit, in the same language, often require detailed synopses and explanations for their works, in spite of which the meaning of them often remains lost in the murk of darkest obscurity. I remember once asking Fokine to supply a synopsis of one of his new works for programme purposes. I shall not forget his reply: "No synopsis is needed for my ballets. My ballets unfold their stories on the stage. There is never any doubt as to what they say."

I have visited Vera Petrovna Fokine in the castle on the Hudson where she lives in lonely nostalgia. But it is not quite true that she lives alone; for she lives with the precious memory of a great love, a tremendous reputation, the memory of a great artist, the artist who created *Les Sylphides*, *Prince Igor*, and *Petroushka*.

7. Ballet Reborn In America: W. De Basil and His Ballets Russes De Monte Carlo

THE last of the two American tours of Serge de Diaghileff's Ballets Russes was during the season 1916-1917.

The last American tour of Anna Pavlova and her

company was during the season 1925-1926.

Serge Diaghileff died at Venice, on 19th August, 1929.

Anna Pavlova died at The Hague, on 23rd January, 1931.

W. de Basil's Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo gave their first American performances at the St. James Theatre, New York, on 21st December, 1933.

Such ballet as America saw between Pavlova's last performance in 1926 and the first de Basil performance in 1933, may be briefly stated.

From 1924 to 1927, in Chicago, there was the Chicago Allied Arts, sometimes described as the first "ballet theatre" in the United States, sparked by Adolph Bolm.

In 1926 and 1927, there were a few sporadic performances by Mikhail Mordkin and his Russian Ballet Company, which included Xenia Macletzova, Vera Nemtchinova, Hilda Butsova, and Pierre Vladimiroff.

From 1928 to 1931, Leonide Massine staged weekly ballet productions at the Roxy Theatre, in New York, including a full-length *Schéhérazade*, with four performances daily, Massine acting both as choreographer and leading dancer. In 1930, he staged Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, for four performances in Philadelphia and two at the Metropolitan Opera House, in New York, with the collaboration of Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and with Martha Graham making one of her rare appearances in ballet, in the leading role.

That is the story. Hardly a well-tilled ground in which to sow balletic seed with the hope of a bumper crop. It is not surprising that all my friends and all my rival colleagues in the field of management prophesied dire things for me (presumably with different motives) when I determined on the rebirth of ballet in America in the autumn of 1933. Their predictions were as mournful as those of Macbeth's witches.

The ballet situation in the Western World, after the deaths of Diaghileff and Pavlova, save for the subsidized ballets at the Paris Opera and La Scala in Milan, was not vastly different. If you will look through the files of the European newspapers of the period, you will find an equally depressing note: “The Swan passes, and ballet with her” ... “The puppet-master is gone; the puppets must be returned to their boxes” ... and a bit later: “Former Diaghileff dancers booked to appear in revues and cabaret turns.” ...

In England, J. Maynard Keynes, Lydia Lopokova, Ninette de Valois, Marie Rambert, Constant Lambert, and Arnold L. Haskell had formed the Camargo Society for Sunday night ballet performances, which organization gave birth to Marie Rambert’s Ballet Club and the Vic Wells Ballet. In 1933, the glories of the Sadler’s Wells Ballet were hardly dreams, not yet a glimmer in Ninette de Valois’ eye.

In Europe there remained only the Diaghileff remains and a vacant Diaghileff contract at Monte Carlo. This latter deserves a word of explanation. Diaghileff had acquired the name—the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo—thanks to the Prince of Monaco, himself a ballet lover, who had offered Diaghileff and his company a home and a place to work.

René Blum, an intellectual French gentleman of deep culture and fine taste, took over the unexpired Diaghileff Monte Carlo contract. Blum was at hand for, at the time of Diaghileff’s death, he was at the head of the dramatic theatre at Monte Carlo. In fulfilment of the Diaghileff contract, for a time Blum booked such itinerant ballet groups as he could. Then, in 1931, he organized his own Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo. George Balanchine, who had staged some of the last of the Diaghileff works, became the first choreographer for the new company. For the Monte Carlo repertoire, he created three works. To it,

from Paris, he brought two of the soon-to-become-famous "baby ballerinas," Irina Baronova and Tamara Toumanova, both from the classroom of Olga Preobrajenska.

Early in 1932, René Blum joined forces with one of the most curious personalities that modern ballet has turned up, in the person of a gentleman who wished to be known as Col. W. de Basil.

De Basil had had a ballet company of sorts for some time. I first ran into him in Paris, shortly after Diaghileff's death, where he had allied himself with Prince Zeretelli's Russian Opera Company; and again in London, where the Lionel Powell management, in association with the Imperial League of Opera, had given them a season of combined opera and ballet at the old Lyceum Theatre. With ballets by Boris Romanoff and Bronislava Nijinska, de Basil had toured his little troupe around Europe in buses, living from hand to mouth; had turned up for a season at Monte Carlo, at René Blum's invitation. That did it. De Basil worked out a deal with Blum, whereby de Basil became a joint managing director of the combined companies, now under the title of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. A season was given in the summer of 1932, in Paris, at the *Théâtre des Champs Elysées*.

It was there I first saw the new company. It was then I took the plunge. I negotiated. I signed them for a visit to the American continent. A book could be devoted to these negotiations alone. It would not be believable; it would fail to pass every test of credibility ever devised.

I feel that this is the point at which to digress for a moment, in order to sketch in a line drawing of de Basil, with some of the shadows and some of the substance. Unless I do, no reader will be able to understand why I once contemplated a book to be called *To Hell With Ballet*!

To begin with, de Basil was a Cossack and a Caucasian. Neither term carries with it any connotation of gentleness

or sensitivity. De Basil was one of the last persons in the world you would expect to find at the head of an organization devoted to the development of the gentle, lyric art of the ballet. Two more dissimilar partners in an artistic venture than de Basil and Blum could not be found.

René Blum, the gentle, cultured intellectual, was a genuine artist: amiable, courteous, and fully deserving of the often misused phrase—a man of the world. His alliance with de Basil was foredoomed to failure; for one of René Blum's outstanding characteristics was a passion to avoid arguments, discussions, scandals, troubles of any sort. Blum commanded the highest respect from his artists and associates; but they never feared him. To them he was the kind, understanding friend to whom they might run with their troubles and problems. Blum's sensitivity was such that he would run from de Basil as one would try to escape a plague. René Blum, you would say, was, perhaps, the ivory-tower dilettante. You would be wrong. René Blum gave the lie to this during the war by revealing himself a man of heroic stature. On the occupation of France, he was in grave danger, since he was a Jew, and the brother of Léon Blum, the Socialist leader, great French patriot and one-time Premier. René, however, was safely and securely out of the country. But he, too, was a passionate lover of France. France, he felt, needed him. Tossing aside his own safety, he returned to his beloved country, to share its fate. His son, who was the apple of his father's eye, joined the Maquis; was killed fighting the Nazis. René Blum was the victim of Nazi persecution.

Let us look for a moment at the background of Blum's ballet collaborator. The "Colonel" was born Vassily Grigorievitch Voskresensky. In his native *milieu* he had some sort of police-military career. Although he insisted on the title "Colonel," he certainly never attained that rank in the Tsar's army. He was a lieutenant in the *Gendarmes*. After the revolution, in 1918, he turned up as a captain

with Bicherakoff's Cossacks. Later on he turned naval and operated in the Black Sea.

There is an interval in de Basil's life that has never been entirely filled in with complete accuracy: the period immediately following his flight and escape from Russia. The most credible of the legends surrounding this period is that he sold motor-cars in Italy. Eventually, he turned up in Paris, where my trail picked him up at a concert agency called *Zerbaseff*, which concerned itself with finding jobs for refugee artists. It was then he called himself de Basil.

At the time I met him, he had a Caucasian partner, the Prince Zeretelli whom I have mentioned, and who was a one-time manager of the People's Theatre, in St. Petersburg. It was this partnership that brought forth the *Ballet and Opéra Russe de Paris*, which gave seasons at the *Théâtre des Champs Elysées*, in Paris, and, as I have mentioned, at the Lyceum Theatre, in London.

Let me first set down the man's virtues. De Basil had great charm. By that I do not necessarily mean he was charming. His charm was something he could turn on at will, like a tap, usually when he was in a tight spot. More than once it helped him out of deep holes, and sticky ones. He had an inexhaustible fount of energy, could drive himself and others; never seemed to need sleep; and, aiming at a highly desired personal goal, had unending patience. With true oriental passivity, he could wait. He had undaunted courage; needless, reckless courage, in my opinion; a stupid courage compounded often out of equal parts of stubbornness and sheer bravado. He was a born organizer. He intuitively possessed a flair for the theatre: a flair without knowledge. He could be an excellent host; he was a *cordon bleu* cook. He was generous, he was simple in his tastes.

Yet, with all these virtues, de Basil was, at the same time, one of the most difficult human beings I have ever encountered in a lifetime of management. This tall, gaunt,

cadaver of a man had a powerful physique, a dead-pan face, and a pair of cold, astigmatic eyes, before which rested thick-lensed spectacles. He had all the makings of a dictator. Like his countryman, Joseph Stalin, he was completely impossible as a collaborator. He was a born intriguer, and delighted in surrounding himself with scheming characters. During my career I have met scheming characters who, nevertheless, have had certain positive virtues: they succeeded in getting things done. De Basil's scheming characters consisted of lawyers, hacks, amateur managers, brokers, without exception third-rate people who damaged and destroyed.

It would be an act of great injustice to call de Basil stupid. He was as shrewd an article as one could expect to meet amongst all the lads who have tried to sell the unwary stranger the Brooklyn Bridge, the Capitol at Washington, or the Houses of Parliament.

De Basil deliberately engaged this motley crew of hangers-on, since his Caucasian Machiavellism was such that he loved to pit them one against the other, to use them to build up an operetta atmosphere of cheap intrigue that I felt sure had not hitherto existed save in the Graustark type of fiction. De Basil used them to irritate and annoy. He would dispatch them abroad in his company simply to stir up trouble, to form cliques: for purposes of *chantage*; he would order them into whispered colloquies in corners, alternately wearing knowing looks and glum visages. De Basil and his entire entourage lived in a world of intrigue of their own deliberate making. His fussy, busy little cohorts cost him money he did not have, and raised such continuous hell that the wonder is the company held together as long as it did.

De Basil's unholy joy would come from creating, through these henchmen, a nasty situation and then stepping in to pull a string here, jerk a cord there, he would save the situation, thus becoming the hero of the moment.

I shall have more to say on the subject of the "Colonel" before this tale is told.

Now, with the contracts signed for the first American visit, we were on our honeymoon. Meanwhile, however, the picture of what I had agreed to bring was changing. Leonide Massine, his stint at the Roxy Theatre in New York completed, had met a former Broadway manager, E. Ray Goetz. Together they had succeeded in raising some money and planned with it to buy the entire Diaghileff properties. With this stock in hand, Massine caught up with de Basil, who was barnstorming through the Low Countries with his company in trucks and buses; and the two of them pooled resources. Although Massine's purchase plan did not go through entirely, because much of the Diaghileff material had disappeared through lawsuits and other claims, nevertheless Massine was able to deliver a sizable portion of it.

As the direct result of Massine's appointment as artistic director, a number of things happened. First of all, Balanchine quit, and formed a short-lived company in France, *Les Ballets 1933*, the history of which is not germane to this story. Before he left, however, Balanchine had created three works for the de Basil-Blum Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo: *La Concurrence*, *Le Cotillon*, and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Massine, as his first task, staged *Jeux d'Enfants* and *Les Plages*; restaged three of his earlier works, *The Three-Cornered Hat*, *Le Beau Danube* and *Scuola di Ballo*; and the first of his epoch-making symphonic ballets, *Les Présages*, to Tchaikowsky's Fifth Symphony. These were combined with a number of older works from the Diaghileff repertoire, including the three Fokine masterpieces: *Les Sylphides*, *Prince Igor*, and *Petroushka*.

Massine had strengthened the company. There were the former Diaghileff *régisseur general*, Serge Grigorieff, of long memory, as stage director; his wife, Lubov

Tchernicheva, a leading Diaghileff figure, for dramatic roles; the last Diaghileff *ballerina*, Alexandra Danilova, to give stability to the three "baby ballerinas": Baronova, Toumanova, and Tatiana Riabouchinska, the last from Kchessinska's private studio, by way of Nikita Balieff's *Chauve Souris*, where she had been dancing. There was the intriguing Nina Verchinina, a "different" type of dancer. There were talented lesser ladies: Eugenia Delarova, Lubov Rostova; a group of English girls masquerading under Russian names. Among the men, in addition to Massine, there were Leon Woizikovsky, David Lichine, Roman Jasinsky, Paul Petroff, Yurek Shabalevsky, and André Eglevsky.

A successful breaking-in season was given at the Alhambra Theatre, in London's Leicester Square. While this was in progress, we set about at the most necessary and vastly important business of trying to build a public for ballet in America, for this is a ballet impresario's first job. That original publicity campaign was, in its way, history-making. It took a considerable bit of organizing. No field was overlooked. In addition to spreading the gospel of ballet, there was a Sponsors' Committee, headed by the Grand Duchess Marie and Otto H. Kahn. Prince Serge Obolensky was an ever-present source of help.

It was a chilly and fairly raw December morning in 1933 when I clambered aboard the cutter at the Battery, to go down the Bay to board the ship at Quarantine. It is a morning I shall not soon forget. I was in ballet up to my neck; and I loved it. There have been days and nights in the succeeding two decades when I have seriously played with the notion of what life might have been like if I had not gone aboard (and overboard) that December morning.

I took with me the traditional Russian welcome: a tray of bread, wrapped in a white linen serviette, a little bowl of salt, which I offered to de Basil. I was careful to see that the reporters and camera men were in place when I did it.

De Basil's poker-face actually smiled as I handed him the tray, uncovered the bread, poured the salt. But only for a moment. A Russian word in greeting, and then there was an immediate demand from him to see the theatre. We were on our way. Driving uptown to the St. James Theatre, the arguments commenced. There was the matter of the programme. There was the matter of the size of de Basil's name; the question of the relative size of the artists' names; the type-face; the order in which they should be listed; what was to become the everlasting arguments over repertoire and casting. But I was in it, now.

I believed in the "star" system—not because I believe the system to be a perfect one, by any means, but because the American public, which had been without any major ballet company for eight years, and which had had practically no ballet activity, had to be attracted and arrested by something more than an unknown and heretofore unheard-of company and the photograph of a not particularly photogenic ex-Cossack.

The pre-Christmas *première* at the St. James Theatre, on the night of 21st December, marked the beginning of a new epoch in ballet, and in my career. It was going to be a long pull, an uphill struggle. I knew that. The opening night audience was brilliant; the house was packed, enthusiastic. But the advance sale at the box-office was anything but encouraging. Diaghileff had failed in America. The losses of his two seasons, paid for by Otto H. Kahn, ran close to a half-million dollars. I was on my own. Since readers are as human as I am, perhaps they will forgive my pardonable pride, the pride I felt sixteen years later, on reading the historian George Amberg's comment: "If it had not been for Mr. Hurok's resourceful management and promotion, de Basil would certainly not have succeeded where Diaghileff failed."

But I am anticipating. The opening programme consisted of *La Concurrence*, *Les Présages*, and *Le Beau*

Danube. Toumanova in the first; Baronova and Lichine in the second; Massine, Danilova, and Riabouchinska in the third. It was a night. The next day's press was excellent. It was John Martin, with what I felt was an anti-Diaghileff bias, who offered some reservations.

Following the opening performance, I gave the first of my many ballet suppers, this one at the Savoy-Plaza. It was very gala. The Sponsors' Committee turned up *en masse*. White-gloved waiters served, among other things, super hot dogs, as a native gesture to the visitors from overseas. The "baby ballerinas" looked as if they should have been in bed. That is, two of them did. One of them was missing, and there was some concern as to what could have happened to Tamara Toumanova. However, there was no necessity for concern for Tamara, since she, with her sense of the theatre, the theatrical, and the main chance, made a late and quite theatrical entry, with Paul D. Cravath on one arm and Otto H. Kahn on the other. The new era in ballet was inaugurated by these two distinguished gentlemen and patrons of the arts sipping champagne from a ballet slipper especially made for the occasion by a leading Fifth Avenue bootmaker.

The opening a matter of history, the publicity department went into action at double the record-breaking pace at which they had been functioning for weeks. The resulting press coverage was overwhelming and national.

But, however gratifying all this may have been, I had my troubles, and they increased daily. The publicity simply could not please all the people all the time. I mean the ballet people, of course. There was always the eternally dissatisfied de Basil. In addition, there were three fathers, nineteen mothers, and one sister-in-law to be satisfied. Then there were daily casting problems. The publicity department was giving the press what it wanted: feature stories on ballet, on artists, on the daily life of the dancer. It was then de Basil determined that all publicity must be

centered on his own august person. He had a point of view, I must admit. Dancers were here today, gone tomorrow. De Basil and his ballet remained. But no newspaper is interested in running repeated photographs of a dour, bespectacled male. They wanted "leg art." When de Basil insisted that he be photographed, the camera men would "shoot" him with a filmless or plateless camera.

In addition to having to contend with what threatened to become a chronic and incurable case of Basildiaghileffitis, I was losing a potful of money. The St. James Theatre is no better than any other Broadway house as a home for ballet. The stage is far too small either to display the décor or to permit dancers to move freely. The auditorium, even if filled to capacity, cannot meet ballet expenses. We were not playing to anything like capacity. There was a tour booked; but, thanks to a "stop clause" in the theatre contract—a figure above which the attraction must continue at the theatre—we could not leave. We had made the "stop clause" too low. There was only one thing to do in order to protect the tour. I decided to divide the company into two companies.

Forced to fulfil two sets of obligations at the end of the first month at the St. James Theatre, I opened a tour in Reading, Pennsylvania, with Massine, Danilova, Toumanova, the larger part of the *corps de ballet*, Efrem Kurtz conducting the orchestra, and all of the ballets in the repertoire except three.

The company remaining at the St. James had Baronova, Riabouchinska, Lichine, and Woizikovsky, with the corps augmented by New York dancers, and Antal Dorati as conductor. This company gave eight performances weekly of the Fokine masterpieces, *Les Sylphides*, *Petroushka*, and *Prince Igor*. The steadily increasing public did not seem to mind.

The response on the road and in New York was surprisingly good. When we finally left New York, the two

groups merged, and we played a second Chicago engagement, at the marvellous old Auditorium Theatre. All were there, save for Grigorieff, Alexandra Danilova, and Dorati, who returned to Monte Carlo to fulfil de Basil's contract with Blum for a spring season in Monaco.

There was a brief spring season in New York, preceded by a week at the Forrest Theatre in Philadelphia, where Massine's first "American" ballet had its dress rehearsals and first performances. This was *Union Pacific*, a four-scened work in which Massine had the collaboration of the distinguished American poet, Archibald MacLeish, on the story; Albert Johnson, on the settings; Irene Sharaff, with costumes; and a score, based on American folk-tunes, by Nicholas Nabokoff. It was the first Russian ballet attempt to deal with the native American scene and material, treating the theme of the building of the first transcontinental railway.

We gave its first performance on the night of April 6, 1934, and the cast included Massine himself, his wife Eugenia Delarova, Irina Baronova, Sono Osato, David Lichine, and André Eglevsky, in the central roles.

It was Massine's prodigious Barman's dance that proved to be the highlight of the work.

The balance of the company eventually returned to Europe for their summer seasons in London and Paris, and to stage new productions. Back they came in the autumn for another tour. The problem of a proper theatre for ballet in New York had not been solved; so I took the company from Europe to Mexico City for an engagement at the newly remodeled Palacio des Bellas Artes. There were problems galore. Once again I fell back on my right-hand-bower, Mae Frohman, rushed her to Mexico to clear them. Back from Mexico by boat to New York, with a hurried transfer for trains to Toronto, and a long coast-to-coast tour. The New York engagement that season was brief: five performances only. The only theatre available was the

Majestic, whose stage is no less cramped, and whose auditorium provides no illusion. During this brief season a new work by Massine was presented: *Jardin Public* (*Public Garden*). It was based on a fragment from André Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, in a scenario by Massine and Vladimir Dukelsky (Vernon Duke) who supplied the music. It was not one of Massine's most successful works by any means. But the *première* did provide an amusing incident. Danilova was cast as a wealthy woman; Massine and Toumanova as The Poor Couple. On the opening night, Danilova, who showed her wealthy status by dancing a particularly lively rhumba, lost her underpants while dancing in the center of the stage. The contretemps she carried off with great aplomb. But, on her exit, she did not carry off the underwear, which remained in the center of the stage as a large colored blob. Danilova's exit was followed by the entrance of Toumanova and Massine, clad in rags as befitted The Poor Couple. Toumanova, fixing her eyes on the offending lingerie, picked it up, examined it critically, and then, as if it were something from the nether world and quite unspeakable, dramatically hurled it off-stage in an attitude of utter disgust, as if it were a symbol of the thing she most detested: wealth.

Although the five performances were sold out, we could not cover our expenses. In the autumn of 1935, when the company returned for its third season, we were able to bring Ballet to the Metropolitan Opera House and, for the first time since its rebirth in America, the public really saw it at its best.

During this time we had made substantial additions to the repertoire: Massine's second and third symphonic ballets, the Brahms *Choreartium*, and the Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique*; Nijinska's *The Hundred Kisses*. In addition to Fokine's new non-operatic version of *Le Coq d'Or*, which I have mentioned, there were added Fokine's *Schéhérazade*, *The Afternoon of a Faun*, and Nijinsky's *Le*

Spectre de la Rose.

The gross takings of the fourth American season of the de Basil company reached round a million dollars.

By this time matters were coming to a head. All was not, by any means, well in ballet. Massine, by this time, was at swords' points with de Basil. I was irritated, bored, fatigued, worn out with him and his entourage. Since de Basil had lost his Monte Carlo connection, he had also lost touch with the artistic thought that had served as a stimulus to creation.

It is necessary for me to make another digression at this point. The opening chapter of the New Testament is, as the reader will remember, a geneological one, with a formidable list of "begats." It seems to me the course of wisdom to try to clear up, if I can, the "begats" of Russian Ballet since the day on which I first allied myself with it. I shall try to disentangle them for the sake of the reader's better understanding. There were so many similar names, artists moving from one company to another, ballets appearing in the repertoires of more than one organization.

In this saga, I have called this chapter "W. de Basil and his Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo." It is a convenient handle. The confusion that was so characteristic of the man de Basil, was intensified by the fact that the "Colonel" changed the name of the company at least a half-dozen times during our association. To attempt to go into all the involved reasons for these chameleon-like changes would simply add to the confusion, and would, I feel, be boring. Let me, for the sake of conciseness and, I hope, the reader's illumination, list the six changes:

In 1932, it was *Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo*.

From 1933 to 1936, it was *Monte Carlo Ballet Russe*.

In 1937, it was *Colonel W. de Basil's Ballet Russe*.

In 1938, it was *Covent Garden Ballet Russe*.

In 1939, it was *Educational Ballets*, Ltd.

From 1940 until its demise, it was *Original Ballet Russe*.

I have said earlier that the alliance between René Blum and de Basil was foredoomed to failure. The split between them came in 1936, both as a result of incompatibility and of de Basil's preoccupation with the United States to the exclusion of any Monte Carlo interest. Blum had a greater interest in Monte Carlo, with which, to be sure, he had a contract. So it was not surprising that René Blum organized a new Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, with Michel Fokine as choreographer.

De Basil and his methods became increasingly aggravating. His chicanery, his eternal battling, above all, his overweening obsession about the size of his name in the display advertising, were sometimes almost unbearable. He carried a pocket-rule with him and would go about cities measuring the words "Col. W. de Basil." Now electric light letters vary in size in the various cities, and there is no way of changing them without having new letters made or purchased at considerable expense and trouble. I remember a scene in Detroit, where de Basil became so obnoxious that the company manager and I climbed to the roof of the theatre and took down the sign with our own hands, in order to save us from further annoyance that day.

All of this accumulated irritation added up to an increasing conviction that life was too short to continue this sort of thing indefinitely, despite my love for and my interest and faith in ballet both as an art and as a popular form of entertainment.

As I have said, Leonide Massine's difficulties and relations with de Basil were becoming so strained that each performance became an ordeal. I never knew when an explosion might occur. There were many points of difference between Massine and de Basil. The chief bone of contention was the matter of artistic direction. Massine's contract with de Basil was approaching its

expiration date. De Basil was badgering him to sign a new one. Massine steadfastly refused to negotiate unless de Basil would assure him, in the contract, the title and powers of Artistic Director. De Basil as steadfastly refused, and insisted on retaining the powers of artistic direction for himself.

There was, as is always the case in Russian Ballet, a good deal of side-taking. Granted that, for his purposes, de Basil's insistence on keeping all controls over his company in his own hands, had a point. But let us also regard the issue from the point of view of ability and knowledge, the prime qualifications for the post. From the portrait I have given, the reader will gather the extent of the "Colonel's" qualifications. This would seem to be the time and place for a sketch of Leonide Massine, as I know him.

* * *

One day there must be a book written about Massine. Not that there is not already a considerable literature dealing with him; but there is yet to appear a work that has done him anything like justice. For me to attempt more than a line drawing would be presumptuous and manifestly unjust; but a sketch is demanded.

Leonide Massine was born in Moscow in 1894. He graduated from the Moscow Imperial School in 1912. It was a year later that Diaghileff, visiting Moscow, was taken by Poliakov, the famous Moscow dramatic critic, to see a play at the Ostrovsky Theatre. It happened that Massine was appearing in the play in the role of a servant. There is no record as to what Diaghileff thought of the play or the performance. The one fact that emerges from this chance evening Diaghileff spent at a theatre is that he was impressed by the manner in which the unknown boy, Massine, carried a tray. Diaghileff asked Poliakov to take him back-stage and introduce him to the talented young mime.

Artistically, Diaghileff was in the process of moving onward from the exclusively Russian tradition that was represented by Benois, Bakst, Stravinsky, and Fokine. He was moving towards a greater internationalism, a broader cosmopolitanism. He was in need of a creative personality who would carry forward this wider concept. Diaghileff's intuition told him this seventeen-year-old boy with the enormous brown eyes was the person. Diaghileff took Massine from Moscow into his company and fashioned him into a present-day Pygmalion. Diaghileff took over the boy's artistic education. As part of a deliberate plan, Diaghileff pushed a willing pupil into close contact with the world of modern painting and music, with the finest minds of the period. Picasso, Larionov, Stravinsky, and de Falla became his mentors; libraries, museums, concert halls, his classrooms. The result was a great cosmopolitan choreographer, perhaps the greatest living today.

An American citizen, he will always have strong Russian roots. Some of his best works are Russian ballets; but he is no slavish nationalist. He is as much at home in the cultures of Italy, Scotland, or Spain. His was a precocious genius, discovered by Diaghileff's intuition. Massine began at the top, and has remained there.

Massine is difficult to know, for he is shy, and he has a great wall of natural reserve that takes a long time to penetrate. Once penetrated, it is possible to experience one of life's greater satisfactions in the conversation, the intelligence, the knowledge of the mature Massine. Massine's poise and sense of order never leave him. There is a meticulousness about him and a neatness that indicate the possession of an orderly mind. Everything he reads which he feels may be of even the slightest value to him at some future time, he preserves in large clipping-books. About him is a calm that is exceptional in a Russian—a calm that is exceptional in any one associated with the dance, where the habit is to shout as loudly as possible at

the slightest provocation, or no provocation at all, and to become violently excited and agitated over the most unimportant things. There is about him none of the superficial "temperament" too often assumed to be the prerogative of artists. He has a sharp sense of humor; but it is a sense of humor that is keen and dry. His wit can be sharp and extremely cutting. He has not always been loved by his associates; but very few of them have ever really known him.

Filled with fire, energy, enthusiasm, his constant desire is to build something better.

As a dancer, he still dances, as no one else, the Miller in *The Three-Cornered Hat* and the Can Can Dancer in *La Boutique Fantasque*. Personally, I prefer only Massine in the roles he has created for himself. No other dancer can approach him in these.

I have mentioned his long sojourn at the Roxy Theatre, in New York. Under the conditions imposed—a new work to be staged weekly, to dance four times a day—masterpieces were obviously impossible; but the work he did was of vast importance in building a dance public in New York.

There are those today who chide Massine for his all too frequent re-creations of his old pieces, and lay it to Massine's obsession with money. It is true, Massine does have a concern for money. But, after all, he has a wife, two growing children, and other responsibilities. However, I do not believe finance is the sole reason, and I, for one, wish he would not be eternally reproducing his old works. *Le Beau Danube* will live forever as one of the finest *genre* works of all time. But it must be properly done. I remember, to my sorrow, seeing a recent production of the *Danube* Massine staged in Paris, with Roland Petit—with a company of only fourteen dancers. Further comment is not required.

I have a deep and abiding affection for Leonide Massine as a person—an affection that is very deep and real. As an artist, I believe he is still the greatest individual personality in ballet today—a choreographer of deep knowledge, imagination, and ability.

The composer of some sixty-odd ballets, it is the most imposing record in modern ballet's history, perfectly amazing productivity. No one but himself is capable of restoring them. When produced or restaged without his fine hand, they are a shambles.

I should like to offer my friend, Leonide Massine, a hope that springs from my heart. I can only urge him, for his own good and for the good of ballet which needs him, to rest for a time on his beautiful island in the Mediterranean and to spend the time there in study and reflection, crystallizing his ideas. Then he will bring to us new and striking creations that will come like a refreshing breeze clearing the murky atmosphere of much of our contemporary ballet scene. If Massine would only relax his constant drive and follow my suggestion, the real Massine would emerge.

After a summer on his island, he gave us one of his most recent creations (1952), an Umbrian Passion Play, *Laudes Evangelli*, to religious music of the Middle Ages. An interesting side-light on it is that the very first ballet he had in mind at the beginning of the Diaghileff association was based on the same idea.

At the height of his maturity, there is no indication of age in Massine. Age, after all, is merely a question of how old one feels. I remember, in the later days of his ballet, shortly before his death, Diaghileff was planning a special gala performance. At a conference of his staff, he suggested inviting Pavlova to appear. Some of his advisers countered the proposal with the suggestion that Pavlova was too old. My reply was brief and to the point.

"Pavlova will never age," I said. "Some people are old at twenty. But Pavlova, never; for genius never looks at the calendar."

What was true of Pavlova, is equally true of Leonide Massine.

* * *

The growth, the development, and the appreciation of ballet in America are the result of a number of things, both individually and in combination. There may exist a variety of opinions on the subject, but one thing, I know, is certain: the present state of ballet in America is not the result of chance. In 1933 I had signed a contract with de Basil to bring ballet to America; yet there was an element of chance involved in that my publicity director, vacationing in Europe, saw a performance of the de Basil company, and spontaneously cabled me an expression of his enthusiasm. Since this employee was not a balletomane in any sense of the word, his message served to intensify my conviction that then was the time to go forward with my determination to follow my intuition. Here ends any element of chance.

The basic repertoire of the first years was an extension of the Diaghileff artistic policies. The repertoire included not only revivals from the Diaghileff repertoire, but also new, forward-looking creations. I was certain that a sound and orthodox repertoire was an essential for establishing a genuine ballet audience in this country.

In 1933, there was no ballet audience. It was something that had to be created and developed through every medium possible. I had a two-fold responsibility—because I loved ballet with a love that amounted to a passion, and because I had a tremendous financial burden which I carried single-handed, without the aid of any Maecenas; I had to make ballet successful; in doing so, willy-nilly I had the responsibility of forming a taste where no aesthetic

existed.

For two decades I have had criticism levelled at me from certain places, criticism directed chiefly at my policies in ballet; I have been criticized for my insistence on certain types of ballets in the repertoires of the companies I have managed, and for my belief in adaptations and varying applications of what is known as the "star" system. The only possible answer is that I have been proven right. No other system has succeeded in bringing people to ballet or in bringing ballet to the people.

It will not be out of place at this time to note the repertoire of the de Basil company at the time of the breakdown of the relations between Massine and de Basil, which may be said to be the period of the Massine artistic direction and influence on the de Basil companies, from 1933 to 1937.

There were, if my computation is correct, and I have checked the matter with some care, a total of forty works, with thirty-four of them actively in the repertoire. Of these, there were two sound classics stemming from the Imperial Russian Ballet, creations by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanoff: *Swan Lake*, in the one-act abbreviation; and *Aurora's Wedding*, the last *divertissement* act of *The Sleeping Beauty* or *The Sleeping Princess*, both, of course, to the music of Tchaikowsky. There were three Russian works, i.e., ballets on Russian subjects: Stravinsky's *Petroushka*; the *Polovtsian Dances from Prince Igor*; and *Le Coq d'Or*, a purely balletic and entertaining spectacle, with the Rimsky-Korsakoff music rearranged for ballet by Tcherepnine. All of the foregoing were by Michel Fokine. Eight other Fokine works were included, all originally produced by him for Diaghileff: three, which might be called exotic works—*Cléopâtre*, to the music of Arensky and others; *Thamar*, to the music of Balakireff; and *Schéhérazade*, to the Rimsky-Korsakoff tone-poem. Five ballets typifying the Romantic Revolution: Stravinsky's

Firebird; *Carnaval* and *Papillons*, both by Robert Schumann; *Le Spectre de la Rose*, to the familiar Weber score; that greatest of all romantic works, *Les Sylphides*, the Chopin "romantic reverie."

There were two works by George Balanchine: *Le Cotillon* and *La Concurrence*, the former to music by Chabrier, the latter to music by Auric. A third Balanchine work, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, was necessarily dropped from the repertoire because the costumes were destroyed by fire.

The largest contributor by far to the de Basil repertoire was Massine himself. No less than seventeen of the thirty-four works regularly presented, that is, fifty per-cent, were by this prodigious creator. Eight of these were originally staged by Massine for Diaghileff; two were revivals of works he produced for Count Etienne de Beaumont, in Paris, in 1932. Seven were original creations for the de Basil company. The Diaghileff creations, in revival—in the order of their first making—were: *The Midnight Sun*, to music from Rimsky-Korsakoff's *The Snow Maiden*; *Russian Folk Tales*, music by Liadov; The *Good-Humored Ladies*, to the Scarlatti-Tommasini score; Manuel de Falla's *The Three-Cornered Hat*; *The Fantastic Toyshop*, to Rossini melodies; George Auric's *Les Matelots: Cimarosiana*; Vittorio Rieti's *The Ball*.

The two Beaumont works: *Le Beau Danube*, and the Boccherini *Scuola di Ballo*.

The creations for the de Basil company: the three symphonic ballets—*Les Présages*, (Tchaikowsky's Fifth); *Choreartium*, (Brahms's Fourth); *La Symphonie Fantastique*, (Berlioz). Also *Children's Games* (Bizet); *Beach* (Jean Francaix); *Union Pacific* (Nicholas Nabokoff); and *Jardin Public* (Dukelsky).

Two other choreographers round out the list. The young David Lichine contributed four; Bronislava Nijinska, two.

The Lichine works: Tchaikowsky's *Francesca da Rimini* and *La Pavillon*, to Borodin's music for strings, arranged by Antal Dorati. The others, produced in Europe, were so unsuccessful I could not bring them to America: *Nocturne*, a slight work utilising some of Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, and *Les Imaginaires*, to a score by George Auric.

The Nijinska works: *The Hundred Kisses*, to a commissioned score by Baron Frederic d'Erlanger; the *Danses Slaves et Tsiganes*, from the Dargomijhky opera *Roussalka*; and a revival of that great Stravinsky-Nijinska work, *Les Noces*, which, for practical reasons, I was able to give only at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

The following painters and designers collaborated on the scenery and costumes: Oliver Messel, Cecil Beaton, Etienne de Beaumont, Nathalie Gontcharova, Korovin, Pierre Hugo, Jean Lurçat, Albert Johnson, Irene Sharaff, Eugene Lourie, Raoul Dufy, André Masson, Joan Miro, Polunin, Chirico, José Maria Sert, Pruna, André Derain, Picasso, Bakst, Larionoff, Alexandre Benois, Nicholas Roerich, Mstislav Doboujinsky.

For the sake of the record, as the company recedes into the mists of time, let me list its chief personnel during this period: Leonide Massine, ballet-master and chief male dancer; Alexandra Danilova, Irina Baronova, Tamara Toumanova, Tatiana Riabouchinska, *ballerinas*; Lubov Tchernicheva, Olga Morosova, Nina Verchinina, Lubov Rostova, Tamara Grigorieva, Eugenia Delarova, Vera Zorina, Sono Osato, Leon Woizikovsky, David Lichine, Yurek Shabalevsky, Paul Petroff, André Eglevsky, and Roman Jasinsky, soloists; Serge Grigorieff, *régisseur*.

In our spreading of the gospel of ballet, emphasis was laid on the following: Ballet, repertoire, personnel. Since there were no "stars" whose names at the time carried any box-office weight or had any recognizable association, the concentration was on the "baby ballerinas," Baronova,

Toumanova, Riabouchinska, all of whom were young dancers of fine training and exceptional talents. They grew as artists before our eyes. They also grew up. They had an unparalleled success. They also had their imperfections, but it was a satisfaction to watch their progress.

Ballet was by way of being established in America's cultural and entertainment life by the end of the fourth de Basil season. On the financial side, that fourth season's gross business passed the million dollar mark; artistically, deterioration had set in. With the feud between Massine and de Basil irreconcilable, there was no sound artistic policy possible, no authoritative direction. The situation was as if two rival directors would have stood on either side of the proscenium arch, one countermanding every order given by the other. The personnel of the company was lining up in support of one or the other; factionism was rampant. Performances suffered.

Massine, meanwhile realizing the hopelessness of the situation so far as he was concerned, cast about for possible interested backers in a balletic venture of his own, where he could exercise his own talents and authority. He succeeded in interesting a number of highly solvent ballet lovers, chief among whom was Julius Fleischmann, of Cincinnati.

Just what Fleischmann's interest in ballet may have been, or what prompted it, I have not been able to determine. At any rate, it was a fresh, new interest. A man of culture and sensitivity, he was something of a dilettante and a cosmopolitan. When he was at home, it was on his estate in Cincinnati. His business interests, i.e., the sources that provided him with the means to pursue his artistic occupations, required no attention on his part.

Together with other persons of means and leisure, a corporation was formed under the name Universal Art. The corporation turned over the artistic direction, both in name and fact, to Massine, and he was on his own to choose the

policy, the repertoire, and the personnel for a new company.

Ballet in America was on the horns of a dilemma. And so was I.

8. Revolution and Counter-revolution: Leonide Massine and the New Ballet Russe De Monte Carlo

IN order that the reader may have a sense of continuity, I feel he should be supplied with a bit of the background and a brief fill-in on what had been happening meanwhile at Monte Carlo.

I have pointed out that de Basil's preoccupation with London and America had soon left his collaborator, René Blum, without a ballet company with which to fulfil his contractual obligations to the Principality of Monaco. The break between the two came in 1936, when Blum formed a new company that he called simply Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

Blum had the great wisdom and fine taste to engage Michel Fokine as choreographer. A company, substantial in size, had been engaged, the leading personnel numbering among its principals some fine dancers known to American audiences. Nana Gollner, the American *ballerina*, was one of the leading figures. Others included Vera Nemtchinova, Natalie Krassovska, Anatole Ouboukhoff, Anatole Vilzak, Jean Yasvinsky, André Eglevsky, and Michel Panaieff. A repertoire, sparked by Fokine creations, was in the making.

Back in America, the prime mover in the financial

organization of the new Massine company was Sergei I. Denham. It is hardly necessary to add that Denham and de Basil had little in common or that they were, in fact, arch-enemies.

Denham had no more previous knowledge of or association with ballet than de Basil; actually much less. I have been unable to discover the real source of Denham's interest in ballet. Born Sergei Ivanovich Dokouchaieff, in Russia, the son of a merchant, he had escaped the Revolution by way of China. His career in the United States, before ballet in the persons of Leonide Massine and Julius Fleischmann swam into his ken, had been of a mercantile nature, in one business venture or another, including a stint as an automobile salesman, and another as a sort of bank manager, none of them connected with the arts, but all of them bringing him into fringe relations with the substantially solvent.

No sooner did he find himself in the atmosphere of ballet than he, too, became infected with Diaghileffitis, a disease that, apparently, attacks them all, sooner or later.

It is one of the strange phenomena of ballet I have never been able to understand. Why is it, I ask myself, that a former merchant, an ex-policeman, or an heir to carpet factory fortunes, for some reason all gravitate to ballet, to create and perpetuate "hobby" businesses? I have not yet discovered the answer. As in the case of Denham, so with the others. Lacking knowledge or trained taste, people like these no sooner find themselves in ballet than down they come with the Diaghileffitis attack.

Russian intrigue quickened its tempo, increased its intensity. Denham, with the smooth, soft suavity of a born organizer, drove about the country in his battered little car, often accompanied by his niece, Tatiana Orlova, who was later to become the fourth Mrs. Massine, ostensibly to try to attract more backers, more money. More often than not, he followed the exact itinerary of the de Basil tour. Then

he would insinuate himself back-stage, place a chair for himself in the wings during the performances of the de Basil company, and there negotiate with dancers in an effort to get them to leave de Basil and join the new company. At the same time, he would exhibit what can only be described as a deplorable rudeness to de Basil, whose company it was.

On the other hand, de Basil increased and intensified his machinations to try to induce me to again sign with him. Not only did he step up his own personal barrage, but the intrigues of his associates were deepened. These associates were now three in number. Russian intrigue was having an extended field day. On the one hand, there was Denham intriguing for all he was worth against de Basil. On the other, de Basil's three henchmen were intriguing against Denham, against me, against each other, and, I suspect, against de Basil. It was a sorry spectacle.

It was the sort of thing you come upon in tales of Balkan intrigue. The cast of this one included a smooth and suave Russian ex-merchant, bland and crafty, easy of smile, oozing "culture," with an attractive dancer-niece as part-time assistant, and a former Diaghileff *corps de ballet* dancer, a member of de Basil's company, as his spy and henchwoman-at-large. Arrayed against this trio was the de Basil quartet: the "Colonel" himself, and his three henchmen. The first was Ignat Zon, a slightly obese organizer and theatre promoter from Moscow and Petrograd, who, after the Revolution, had turned up in Paris, where he allied himself with Prince Zeretelli, de Basil's former Caucasian partner. Zon was not interested in ballet; he was a commission merchant, nothing more. The other two were a comic conspiratorial pair. One was a Bulgarian lawyer, who had lived for some time in Paris, Jacques Lidji, by name. The other was an undersized, tubby little hanger-on, Alexander Philipoff, a fantastic little man with no experience of theatre or ballet, who neither

spoke nor understood a word of anything save Russian. Philipoff certainly was not more than five feet tall, chubby, tubby, rotund, with a beaming face and an eternally suspicious eye. The contrast between him and the tall, gaunt de Basil was ludicrous. Privately they were invariably referred to as Mutt and Jeff. Philipoff constantly sought for motives (bad) behind every word uttered, behind every facial expression, every gesture.

Both men were overbearing, and rather pathetic, at that. Neither of the pair could be called theatre people by any stretch of the imagination. Lidji, the lawyer, was quite as futile in his own way as Philipoff. As a pair of characters they might have been mildly amusing in *The Spring Maid* type of operetta. As collaborators on behalf of ballet, they were a trial and a bloody bore. Lidji, incidentally, was but one of de Basil's lawyers; others came and went in swift procession. But Lidji lasted longer than some, and, for a time, acted as a sort of under-director, as did Philipoff. Since Lidji was not, at the time, an American citizen, he was unable to engage in the practice of law in the States. When he was not otherwise engaged in exercises of intrigue, Lidji would busy himself writing voluminous reports and setting down mountains of notes.

I am convinced that the reason de Basil had so many legal advisers was that he never paid them. Soon one or another would quit, and yet another would turn up. I have a theory that, no matter how poor one may be, one should always pay one's doctor and one's lawyer; each can help one out of trouble.

My personal problem was relatively simple. With the Massine group raiding de Basil's company, which of the dancers would remain with the "Colonel"? This was problem number one. The other was, with de Basil dropping Massine, who was the creator and the creative force behind the de Basil company and who would, moreover, be likely to take a number of important artists

from de Basil to his own company, what would de Basil have in the way of playable repertoire, artists, new creations?

To annoyance and aggravation, now were added perplexity, puzzlement.

It was at about this time, on one of my European visits, I had had extended discussions with René Blum regarding my bringing him and his new company to America. I had seen numerous performances given by his company during their London season, and I had been impressed by their quality.

During this period of puzzlement on my part, Sergei Denham came to me to try to interest me in the new Fleischmann venture. Denham assured me he had ample financial backing for the new company. My chief concern at this time was the question of the artistic direction of the new organization. I told Denham that if he would secure by contract the services of Leonide Massine in that capacity, I would be interested in taking over the management of the company, and signed a letter to that effect.

Subsequently, the late Halsey Malone, acting as counsel for Universal Art, the corporate title of the Fleischmann group, secured Massine's signature and a detailed contract was drawn up.

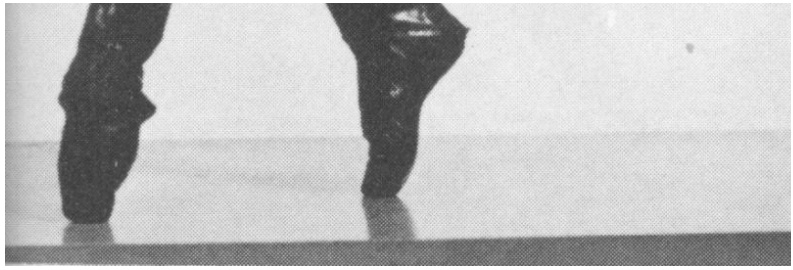
As matters stood, I had one more season to go with my contractual arrangements with de Basil, and Massine had the better part of another season with the former's company.

Massine's contract with de Basil expired while the company was playing in San Francisco, and the two parted company, with Massine, Danilova, and others leaving for Monte Carlo.

That repertoire consisted of five Fokine-Diaghileff revivals: *Carnaval*, *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *Les Sylphides*,

Prince Igor, and *Schéhérazade*.





Valente

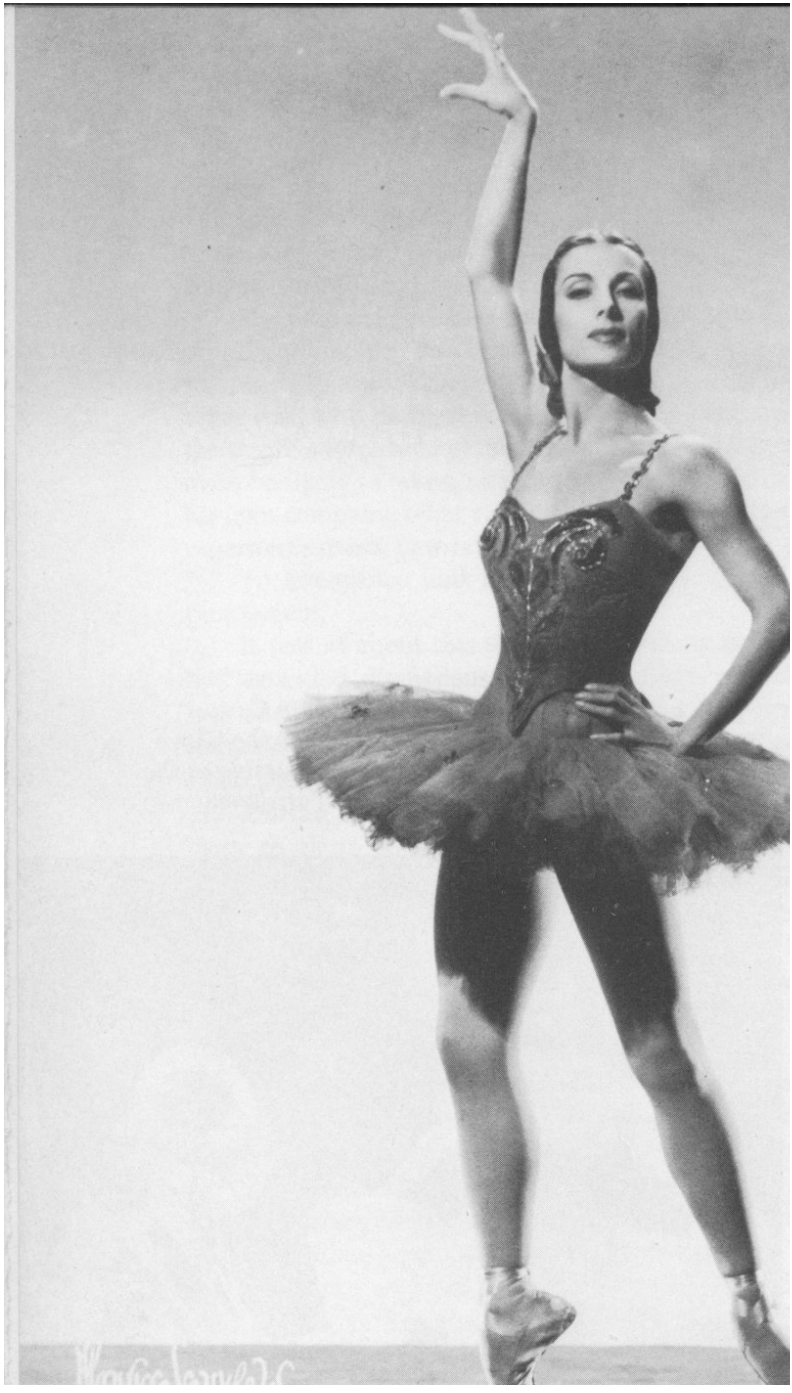
Anton Dolin in *Fair at Sorotchinsk*





Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo: Alexandra Danilova as the Glove Seller an

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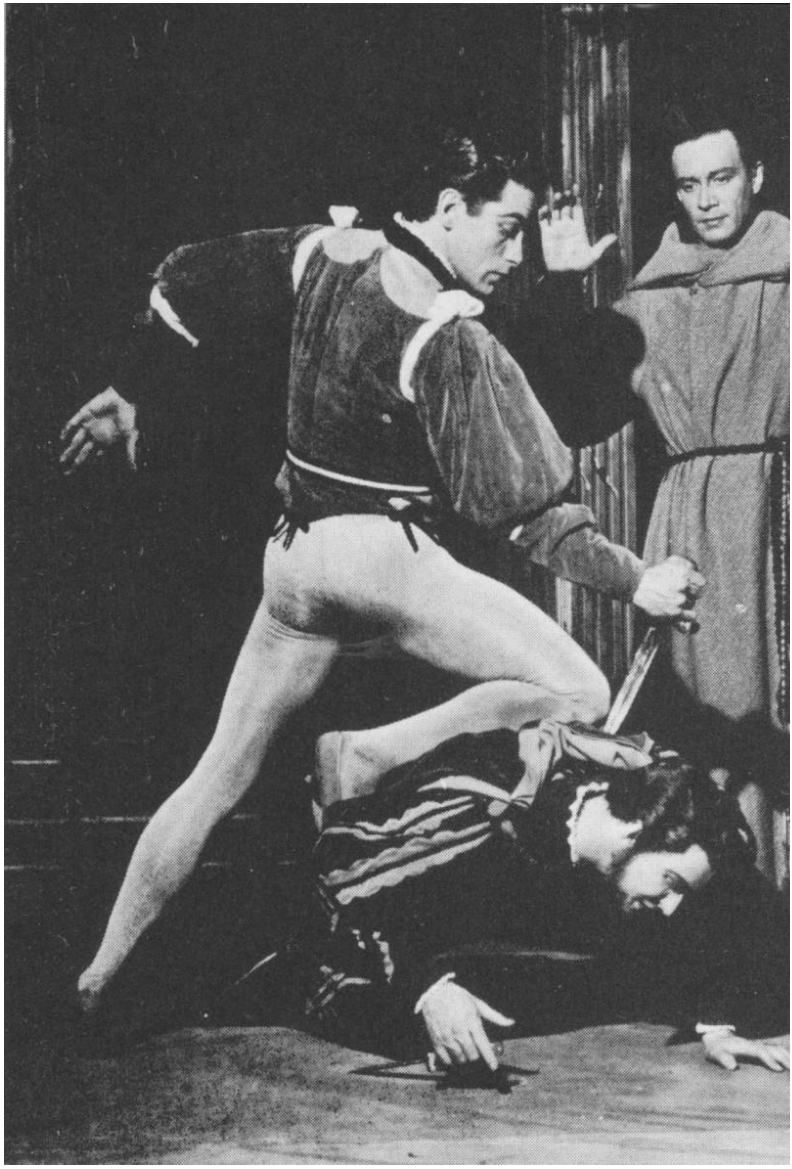
Tamara Toumanova





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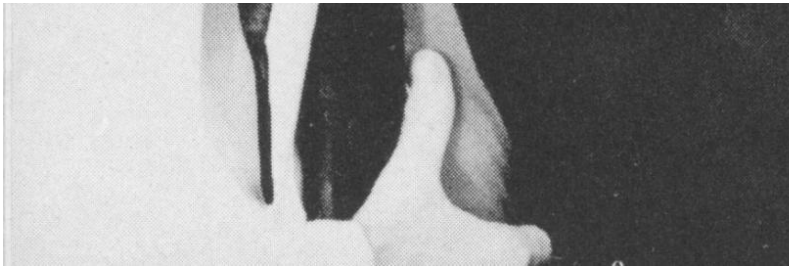
Alicia Markova



Valente

Scene from Antony Tudor's *Romeo and Juliet*: Hugh Laing, Antony





Ballet Theatre: Jerome Robbins and Janet Reed in *Fancy Free*

Valente

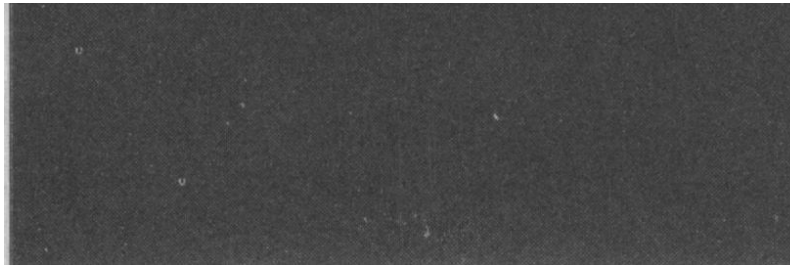




Gordon Anthony

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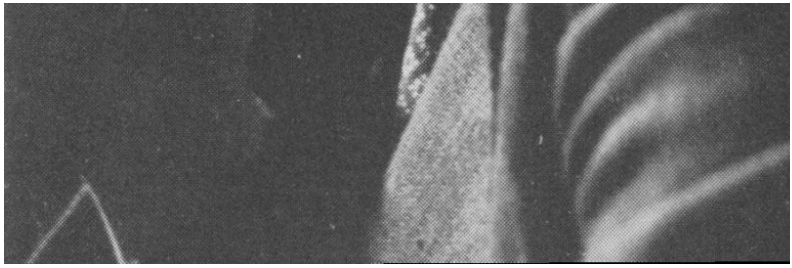




Angus McBean

David Webster





Constant Lambert

Baron



Magnum

S. Hurok, Margot Fonteyn, F



Irina Baronova and

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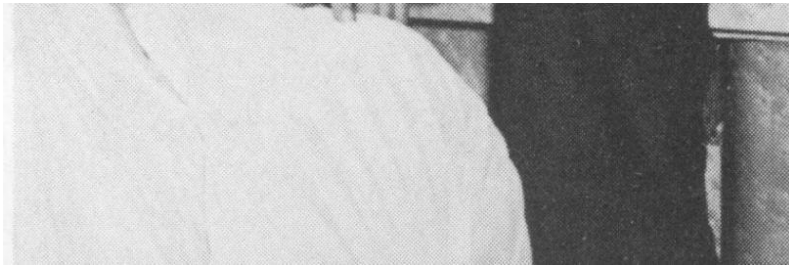




Felix Fonteyn

Sadler's Wells Ballet: Following the premiere of *Sylvia*—





S. Hurok and Margot Fonteyn

Felix Fonteyn

There was a production of Delibes's *Coppélia*, staged by Nicholas Zvereff; the *Swan Lake* second act; a version of *The Nutcracker*, by Boris Romanoff; and *Aubade*, to the music of Francis Poulenc, staged by George Balanchine.

Importantly, there were several new Fokine creations: *L'Epreuve d'Amour*, a charming "*chinoiserie*," to the music of Mozart; *Don Juan*, a balletic retelling of the romantic tale to a discovered score by Gluck; *Les Eléments*, to the music of Bach; *Jota Argonesa*, a work first done by Fokine in Petrograd, in 1916; *Igroushki*, originally staged by Fokine for the Ziegfeld Roof in New York, in 1921; *Les Elfes*, the Mendelssohn work originally done in New York, in 1924. The two other Fokine works were yet another version of *The Nutcracker*, and de Falla's *Love, the Sorcerer*, both of which were later re-done by Boris Romanoff.

Painters and designers included André Derain, Mariano Andreu, Nathalie Gontcharova, Dmitri Bouchene, Mstislav Doboujinsky, and Cassandre.

Massine's preparations went ahead apace. In Boston there were intensive researches and concentrated work on the score for what was destined to be one of the most popular works in modern ballet, *Gaîté Parisienne*. In a large room in the Copley Plaza Hotel were assembled all the extant scores of Offenbach operettas, procured from the Boston Public Library and the Harvard Library. There were two pianists, Massine, Efrem Kurtz, the conductor, copyists. The basic musical material for the ballet was

selected there, under Massine's supervision. Later, in Paris, it was put together and re-orchestrated by Manuel Rosenthal.

The de Basil company finished its American season and sailed for Europe. Meanwhile the deal was consummated between Fleischmann, Massine, Denham and Blum, and Universal Art became the proprietor of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Before the deal was finally settled, however, Fokine had left Blum and had sold his services to de Basil, whose company was playing a European tour. Massine was the new artistic director of the new Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, while Fokine had switched to de Basil.

Massine was now busily engaged in building up the dancing personnel of his new organization. On the distaff side, he had Alexandra Danilova, Eugenia Delarova, Tamara Toumanova, Lubov Rostova, from the de Basil company. From the Blum company he took Natalie Krassovska, Jeanette Lauret, Milada Mladova, Mia Slavenska, Michel Panieff, Roland Guerard, Marc Platoff, Simon Semenoff, Jean Yasvinsky, George Zoritch, and Igor Youskevitch, as principals. Of the group, it is of interest to note that three—Mladova, Guerard, and Platoff—were American. In addition, Massine engaged the English *ballerina*, Alicia Markova, then quite unknown to American audiences, although a first lady of British Ballet; Nini Theilade of plastic grace; and the English Frederick Franklin, yet another Massine discovery. Serge Lifar, the last Diaghileff dancing discovery and the leading dancer and spirit of the ballet at the Paris Opera, was added.

The new company was potentially a strong one. I was pleased. But I was anything but pleased at the prospect of the two companies becoming engaged in what must be the inevitable: a cut-throat competition between them. The split, to be sure, had weakened the de Basil organization; the new Monte Carlo company had an infinitely better balance in personnel. In some respects, the Massine

company was superior; but de Basil had a repertoire that required only careful rehearsing, correcting, and some refurbishing of settings and costumes. With Massine's departure, David Lichine had stepped into the first dancer roles. Irina Baronova had elected to remain with de Basil, in direct competition with Toumanova; others choosing to remain with the old company included Riabouchinska, Grigorieva, Morosova, Verchinina, Tchernicheva, Osato, Shabalevsky, Petroff, Lazovsky, and Jasinsky.

I envisaged, for the good of ballet and its future, one big ballet company, embracing the talents and the repertoires of both. I genuinely feared the co-existence of the two companies, being certain that the United States and Canada were not yet ready to support two companies simultaneously. I pleaded with both to merge their interests, bury their differences. I devoted all my time and energy in a concentrated effort to bring about this desired end. The problems were complicated; but I was certain that if there was a genuine desire on both sides, and good will, a deal would be worked out. It blew hot. It blew cold. As time went on, with no tangible results visible, my hopes diminished. It was not only the financial arrangements between the two companies that presented grave obstacles; there were formidable personality differences. The negotiations continued and were long drawn-out. Then, one day, the clouds suddenly thinned and, to my complete surprise, we appeared to be making progress. Almost miraculously, so it seemed, the attorneys for Universal Art and de Basil sat down to draw up the preliminary papers for the agreement to agree to merge. Through all this trying period there was helpful assistance from Prince Serge Obolensky and Baron "Nikki" Guinsberg.

At last the day arrived when the agreement was ready for joint approval, clause by clause, by both parties to the merger, with myself holding a watching brief as the prospective manager of the eagerly awaited Big Ballet.

This meeting went on for hours and hours. It opened in the offices of Washburn, Malone and Perkins, the Universal Art attorneys, in West Forty-fourth Street, early in the afternoon. By nine o'clock at night endless haggling, ravelled tempers, recurring deadlocks had, I thought reached their limit.

Food saved that situation. Prince Obolensky and my attorney, Elias Lieberman, fetched hamburgers. But, before they could be consumed, we were evicted from the offices of the attorneys by the last departing elevator man, who announced the building was being closed for the night, and the conference, hamburgers and all, was transferred to the St. Regis Hotel. At four o'clock the next morning, a verbal agreement was reached. The deed was done. I felt sure that now we had, with this combination of all the finest balletic forces extant in the Western World, the best as well as the biggest.

The "Colonel" departed for Berlin to join his company which was playing an engagement there. He was to have signed the agreement before sailing, but, procrastinator that he was, he slipped away without affixing his signature. Nor had he authorized his attorney to sign for him, and it took a flock of wireless messages and cables to extract from him the authority the attorney required. At last it came.

I had never been happier. Mrs. Hurok and I got ourselves aboard the *Normandie* for our annual summer solstice in Europe. On board we found the Julius Fleischmanns. At dinner the first night out, our joint toast was in thanks for the merger and to the Biggest and Best of all Ballets.

Although Fleischmann showed me one mildly disturbing wireless message, I had five days of peace. It was not destined to continue. When I stepped down from the boat train at London's Waterloo Station, I was greeted by the news that the merger was off.

The “Colonel” had changed his mind. Massine also had become resentful at a division of authority. Confusion reigned. As an immediate result, almost overnight de Basil lost control and the authoritative voice in his own company. Altogether, it was a complicated business.

A new holding company, calling itself Educational Ballets, Ltd., headed by Baron “Freddy” d’Erlanger, banker and composer, whose bank had a large interest in the de Basil company, had taken over the operation of the company, and had placed a new pair of managing directors in charge: Victor Dandré, Anna Pavlova’s husband and manager, jointly with “Gerry” Sevastianov, the husband of Irina Baronova. The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, which was to have been the scene of the debut of the Big Merged Company, had been taken for the original organization.

It was all a bad dream, I felt. This impression was intensified a hundred fold when I sat in the High Court in London’s Temple Bar, as be-wigged counsel and robed judge performed an autopsy on my dream ballet. Here, with all the trappings of legality, but no genuine understanding, a little tragicomedy was being played out. Educational Ballets, Ltd., announced the performance of all the Massine ballets in the de Basil repertoire. This spurred Massine into immediate legal action.

Massine went into court, not for damages, not for money, but for a declaratory judgment to determine, once for all, his own rights in his own creations. The court’s decision, after days of forensic argument, conducted with that understatement and soft but biting insult that is the prerogative of British learned counsel, was a piece of legalistic hair-splitting. Under British law, unlike the American, choreographic rights are protected. Would that the choreographic artist had a like protection under our system! By virtue of having presented the works in public performance, the court decided that de Basil had the right

to continue such presentation: any works Massine had created as an employee of de Basil, while receiving a salary from him, Massine could not reproduce for a period of five years. Only the three works he had originally created for Diaghileff: *The Three-Cornered Hat*, *The Fantastic Toy-Shop*, and *Le Beau Danube*, could be reproduced by him for himself or for any other company.

The court action was a fortnight's news-making wonder in London. Ballet was not helped by it. Ballet belongs on the stage, not in the musty atmosphere of the court room. De Basil and his lawyers, Massine and his lawyers, Universal Art and their lawyers. It is a silly business. *X* brings an action against *Y* over an alleged breach of a theatrical employment contract. Let us assume that *X* represents the employer, *Y* the artist-employee. Let us assume further that *X* wins the action. *Y* must continue in the employment of *X*. What, I ask you, is less satisfactory than an artist who is compelled by a court judgment to fulfil a contract? In ballet, the only persons who benefit in ballet lawsuits are the learned counsel. Differences of opinion, personality clashes are not healed by legal action; they are accentuated. Legal actions of this sort are instituted usually in anger and bitterness. When the legal decision is made, the final settlement adjudicated, the bitterness remains.

The merger off, my contract with Universal Art came into force. I was committed to the management of a London season. Since the traditional home of ballet, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, had been preempted by the old company, I took Old Drury, the historic Drury Lane Theatre, whose history is as long, whose beauty is equally famous, whose seating capacity is enormous.

The two houses are two short blocks apart. The seasons were simultaneous. Both were remarkably successful; both companies played to packed houses nightly. Nightly I had my usual table at the Savoy Grill, that famed London

rendezvous of theatrical, musical, balletic, and literary life. Nightly my table was crowded with the ebb and flow of departing and arriving guests. The London summer, despite my forebodings, was halcyon.

De Basil, at this period, was not a part of this cosmopolitanism and gaiety. Having been forced out of the control of his own company, at least for the moment, he became a recluse in a tiny house in Shepherd's Market, typically biding his time in his true-to-form Caucasian manner, reflecting on his victory, although it had been more Pyrrhic than triumphant. We met for dinner in his band-box house, most of which time I devoted to a final effort to effect a merger of the two companies. It was a case of love's labour lost, for the opposing groups were poles apart.

The summer wore on into the late English midsummer heat, when all London takes itself hence. The original company's season at Covent Carden slowed down, came to a stop; and a fortnight later, we rang down our final curtain at Drury Lane.

Before leaving for Paris, en route home to New York, there was a bit of straightening out to be done in London. The merger having failed to jell, a bit of additional adjustment was necessary. In other words, because of the changed situation, my contract with Universal Art had to be renegotiated. As in all matters balletic, it would seem, numerous conferences were required; but the new contract was eventually negotiated agreeably.

Back in New York, the day of the new Monte Carlo Ballet Russe opening approached. There were the usual alarums and excursions, and others not so usual. Markova, of course, was English. Moreover, she danced the coveted role, the title part in *Giselle*. She had already made this part quite personally something of her own. Her success in the role during the Drury Lane season, where she had alternated the part with Tamara Toumanova, had been

conspicuous. Although the role was shared between three *ballerinas*, Markova, Toumanova, and Slavenska, Massine and I agreed that, since the opening performance in New York was so important and because Markova was new to the country, it would provide her with a magnificent opportunity for a debut; she should dance Giselle that night.

Factionism was rampant. Pressures of almost every sort were put upon Massine to switch the opening night casting.

A threat of possible violence caused me to take the precaution to have detectives, disguised as stage-hands standing by; I eliminated the trap-door and understage elevator used in this production as Giselle's grave, and gave instructions to have everything loose on the stage fastened down. So literally were these orders carried out that even the lilies Giselle has to pluck in the second act and toss to her Albrecht while dancing as a ghost, were securely nailed to the stage floor. This nearly caused a minor contretemps and what might have turned out to be a ludicrous situation, when Markova had to rip them up by main force before she could toss them to Serge Lifar, who was making his first New York appearance with the company as Albrecht.

Lifar's brief association with the new Monte Carlo Ballet Russe was not a happy one for any of us, least of all for himself. He certainly did not behave well. In my earlier book, *Impresario*, I dwelt quite fully on certain aspects of his weird fantasies. There is no point in repeating them. Always excitable, here in New York at that time Lifar was unable to understand and realize he was not at the Paris Opera, where his every word is law.

Lifar's fantastic behavior in New York before we shipped him back to Paris was but an example of his lack of tact and his overwhelming egoism. He proved to be a colossal headache; but I believe much of it was due to a streak of self-dramatization in his nature, and a positive

delight he takes in being the central character, the focus of an "incident."

Under the influence of a genuine creative urge, Massine's directions of the new Monte Carlo Ballet Russe for two seasons richly fulfilled the promise it held at the company's inception. The public grew larger each season. At the same time, slowly, but none the less surely, that public became, I believe, more understanding. The ballet public of America was cutting its eye-teeth.

It was during the early seasons that Massine added three more symphonic ballets to the repertoire, with Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*; *Rouge et Noir*, to the brilliant First Symphony of Dmitri Shostakovich; and *Labyrinth*, a surrealist treatment of the Seventh Symphony of Franz Schubert. Christian Bérard provided scenery and costumes for the first of them; Henri Matisse, for the second; Salvador Dali, for the last. The Shostakovich work was the most successful of the three. Regrettably, all these symphonic ballets are lost to present-day audiences.

The outstanding comedy success was *Gaîté Parisienne*, the Offenbach romp, originally started in Boston before the company as such existed. The most sensational work was Massine's first surrealist ballet, *Bacchanale*, to the Venusberg music from Wagner's *Tannhauser*. A quite fantastic spectacle, from every point of view, it was a Massine-Dali joke, one that was less successful when the same combination tried to repeat it in *Labyrinth*.

There were lesser Massine works, produced under frantic pressure; examples: *Saratoga*, an unhappy attempt to capture the American spirit of the up-state New York spa, to a commissioned score by Jaromir Weinberger; *The New Yorker*, which was certainly no American *Gaîté Parisienne*, being Massine's attempt to try to bring to balletic life the characters, the atmosphere, and the perky humors of the popular weekly magazine, all to a pastiche of George Gershwin's music. A third work was one of his

last Monte Carlo Ballet Russe creations, *Vienna—1814*, an evocation of the spirit of the Congress of Vienna, to music by Carl Maria von Weber, orchestrated by Robert Russell Bennett.

Bogatyri, a colorful Russian spectacle, designed as a sort of successor to Fokine's *Le Coq d'Or*, had spectacular scenery and costumes by Nathalie Gontcharova, and was a long and detailed work utilising a movement of a Borodin string quartet and his Second Symphony. In cooperation with Argentinita, Massine staged a quite successful Spanish *divertissement* to Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Capriccio Espagnol*, using for it the set and costumes Mariano Andreu had designed for Fokine's *Jota Argonesa*.

In summing up Massine's creations for the new company, I have left his most important contribution until the last. It was *St. Francis*, originally done in our first season at London's Drury Lane, where it was known as *Noblissima Visione*. A collaboration between the composer, Paul Hindemith, and Massine, it may be called one of Massine's greatest triumphs and one of his very finest works. The ballet, unfortunately, was not popular with mass audiences; but it was work of deep and moving beauty, with a ravishing musical score, magnificent scenery and costumes by Pavel Tchelitcheff, and two great performances by Massine himself in the title role, and Nini Theilade, as Poverty, the bride of St. Francis.

For the record, let me note the other works that made up the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo repertoire under my management: Massine's productions of *The Three-Cornered Hat*, *The Fantastic Toy Shop*, and *Le Beau Danube*. George Balanchine staged a revival of *Le Baiser de La Fée* (*The Fairy's Kiss*) and *Jeu de Cartes* (*Card Game*), both Stravinsky works he had done before, and all borrowed from the American Ballet. There was a new production of Delibes's *Coppélia*, in a setting by Pierre Roy; and the Fokine-Blum works I have mentioned before.

I accepted as a new production a revival of Tchaikowsky's *The Nutcracker*, staged by Alexandra Fedorova, and a re-working of parts of Tchaikowsky's *Swan Lake*, also staged by Fedorova, under the title of *The Magic Swan*.

Three productions remain to be mentioned. One was *Icare*, staged only at the Metropolitan Opera House in the first season, a graphic and moving re-enactment of the Icarus legend, by Serge Lifar, to percussive rhythms only. The second was Richard Rodgers's first and only exclusively ballet score, *Ghost Town*, a *genre* work dealing with the California Gold Rush. It was the first choreographic job of a talented young American character dancer, Marc Platoff, born Marcel Le Plat, in Seattle. Not a work out of the top drawer, it was nevertheless a good try for a young choreographer.

The third work in this group is one I felt should have been given a better chance. It was *Devil's Holiday*, by Frederick Ashton, the leading choreographer of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, and his first all-balletic work to be seen on this side of the Atlantic. Done at the opening of our 1939-1940 season, at the Metropolitan Opera House, under the stress and strain of a hectic departure, and a hurried one, from Europe after the outbreak of the war, it suffered as a consequence. In settings and costumes by Eugene Berman, its score was a Tommasini arrangement of Paganini works. Ashton had been able only partially to rehearse the piece in Paris before the company made its getaway, eventually to reach New York on the day of the Metropolitan opening, after a difficult and circuitous crossing to avoid submarines. On arrival, a number of the company were taken off to Ellis Island until we could straighten out faulty visas and clarify papers. I am certain *Devil's Holiday* was one of Ashton's most interesting creations; it suffered because the creator was unable to complete it and, as a consequence, America was never able

to see it as its creator intended, or at anything like its best.

With the 1940-1941 season, deterioration had set in at the vitals of the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe, Massine had exerted tremendous efforts. The company he had created was a splendid one. But, as both leading dancer and chief choreographer, he had no time to rest, no time to think. The same sloughing off that took place with the de Basil company was now becoming apparent in this one. There was a creaking in the vessel proper, an obvious straining at the seams. The non-Massine productions lacked freshness or any distinctive quality. There were defections among some of the best artists. Massine was coming up against a repetition of his de Basil association. Friction between Massine and Denham increased, as the latter became more difficult.

I could not be other than sad, for Massine had given of his best to create and maintain a fine organization. He had been a shining example to the others. The company had started on a high plane of accomplishment; but it was impossible for Massine to continue under the conditions that daily became less and less bearable. Heaven knows, the "Colonel" had been difficult. But he had an instinct for the theatre, a serious love for ballet, a broad experience, was a first-class organizer, and an untiring, never ceasing, dynamic worker.

Sergei Denham, by comparison, was a mere tyro at ballet direction, and an amateur at that. But, amateur or not, he was convinced he had inherited the talent, the knowledge, the taste of the late Serge Diaghileff.

I had not devoted twenty-eight years of hard, slogging work to the building of good ballet in America to allow it to deteriorate into a shambles because of the arbitrariness of another would-be Diaghileff.

It was time for a change.

9. What Price Originality? The Original Ballet Russe

THE condition of the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe in 1941 being as I have described it, it became imperative for me to try to improve the situation as best I could. It was a period of perplexity.

The "Colonel," once more installed in the driver's seat of his company, with its name now changed from Educational Ballets, Ltd., to the Original Ballet Russe, had been enjoying an extended sojourn in Australia and New Zealand, under the management of E. J. Tait.

Although I knew deterioration had set in with the old de Basil company—so much so that it had been one of the salient reasons for the formation of the new Monte Carlo Ballet Russe, quite apart from the recurring personality clashes—I was now faced with a deterioration in the latter company, one that had occurred earlier in its history and that was moving more swiftly: a galloping deterioration. As I watched the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo company performances, I was acutely conscious not only of this, but I saw disruption actively at work. The dancers themselves were no longer interested. They day-dreamed of Broadway musicals; they night-dreamed of the hills of Hollywood and film contracts. Some were wistfully thinking in terms of their own little concert groups. The structure was, to say the least, shaky.

From the reports that reached me of the Original company's success and re-establishment in Australia, I sensed the possibility (and the hope) that a rejuvenation had taken place. Apart from that, there had been new works added to the repertoire, works I was eager to see and which I felt would give the American ballet-goer a fresh

interest, for that important individual had every right to be a bit jaded with things as they were.

Since I had taken the precaution to have the "exclusivity" clause removed from my Universal Art contract, I was free to experiment. I therefore arranged to bring de Basil and his Original Ballet Russe to America from Australia. They arrived on the Pacific Coast, and we played an engagement in Los Angeles, another in Chicago, yet another in Canada. Then I brought them to New York.

This was a season when the Metropolitan Opera House was not available for ballet performances. Therefore, I took the Hollywood Theatre, on Broadway, today rechristened the Mark Hellinger.

I opened the season with a four weeks' engagement of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, followed immediately by the Original Ballet Russe, making a consecutive period of about fifteen weeks of ballet at one house, setting up a record of some sort for continuous ballet performances on Broadway.

Christmas intervened, and, following my usual custom, I gave a large party at Sherry's in honor of Mrs. Hurok's birthday, which occurs on the 25th December, at which were gathered the entire personnel of the company, together with Katherine Dunham, Argentinita, and other distinguished guests.

If I should be asked why I again allied myself with the "Colonel," I already have given a partial answer. There was a sentimental reason, too. It was a case of "first love." I wanted to go back to that early love, to try to recapture some of the old feeling, the former rapture. I should have realized that one does not go back, that one of the near impossibilities of life is to recapture the old thrill. Those who can are among the earth's most fortunate.

This ten-week season was expensive. The pleasure of trying to recapture cost me $70,000 in losses.

There were, however, compensations: there was the unending circus of "Mutt and Jeff," the four-feet-seven "Sasha" Philipoff and the six-feet-two "Colonel."

There was a repertoire that interested me. It was a pleasure once again to luxuriate in the splendors of *Le Coq d'Or*, although the investiture had become a shade or two tarnished from too much travel and too little touching-up. It was refreshing to see Baronova and Toumanova in brisk competition again in the same company, for the latter had already become one of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo defections.

It is difficult for me to realize that Irina Baronova no longer dances. She was the youngest of the "baby ballerinas." Gentle, shy, with honey-colored hair, Irina was born in Leningrad, and eventually reached Paris, with her family, by way of the Orient. About her was a simple, classical beauty, despite the fact that she always found it necessary to disguise (on the stage) her rather impudent little nose in a variety of ways by the use of make-up putty. It was so when she started in as a tiny child to study with the great lady of the Maryinsky, Olga Preobrajenska, whose nose also has a tilt.

To George Balanchine must go the credit for discovering Baronova in Preobrajenska's School in Paris, when he was on the search for new talents at the time of the formation of the de Basil-Blum Les Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo. About her work there was always something joyful and yet, at the same time, something that was at once wistful and tender.

As a classical dancer there was something so subtle about her art that its true value and her true value came only slowly upon one. There was no flash; everything about her, every movement, every gesture, flowed one into another—as in swimming. But not only was she a great classical dancer, she was the younger generation's most accomplished mime.

I like to remember her as the Lady Gay, that red-haired trollop of the construction camps, in *Union Pacific*, with her persuasive, characteristic "come-up-and-see-me-sometime" interpretation; to remember her in the minor role of the First Hand in *Le Beau Danube*, carefree, innocent, flirting at the side of the stage with a park artist. I like to remember her in *Jeux d'Enfants*, as she ran through the gamut of jealousy, petulance, anger, and triumph; in *Les Présages*, as the passionate woman loving with her whole being, fighting off the evil that threatens love; in the mazurka in *Les Sylphides*; in *The Hundred Kisses*, imperious, sulky, stubborn, humorously sly; and as the Ballerina in *Petroushka*, drawing that line of demarcation between heartless doll and equally heartless flirting woman.

Performance over, and away from the theatre, another transformation took place; for Irina was never off-stage the *grande artiste*, the *ballerina*, but a healthy, normal girl, with a keen sense of humor.

After a turn or two as a "legitimate" actress and a previous marriage, Baronova now lives in London's Mayfair, the wife of a London theatrical manager, with her two children. The triumph of domesticity is ballet's loss.

I should like to set down from my memory the additions to the repertoire of the Original Ballet Russe while they had been absent from our shores.

There were some definitely refreshing works. Chief among these were two Fokine creations, *Paganini* and *Cendrillon*.

The former had been worked out by Fokine with Sergei Rachmaninoff, utilizing for music a slightly re-worked version of the latter's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*. Serge Soudeikine had designed a production that ranked at the top of that Russian designer's list of theatre creations. The entire ballet had a fine theatrical effectiveness. Perhaps

the whole may not have been equal to the sum of its parts, but the second scene, wherein Paganini hypnotized a young girl by his playing of the guitar and the force of his striking personality, thereby forcing her into a dance of magnificent frenzy, was a striking example of the greatness of Fokine. Tatiana Riabouchinska rose to tremendous heights in the part. I remember Victor Dandré, so long Pavlova's life-partner and manager, telling me how, in this part, Riabouchinska reminded him of Pavlova. Dandré did not often toss about bouquets of this type.

Cendrillon was Fokine's retelling of the Cinderella tale. The score, by Baron "Freddy" d'Erlanger, was certainly no great shakes, but Fokine illuminated the entire work with the sort of inventiveness that was so characteristic of him at his best. It would be unjust to compare this production with the later Frederick Ashton *Cinderella*, to the Prokofieff score, which he staged for the Sadler's Wells Ballet; the approach was quite different. The de Basil-Fokine production nevertheless had a distinct charm of its own, enhanced by a genuine fairy-tale setting by Nathalie Gontcharova.

A lesser contribution to the repertoire was a symbolic piece, *The Eternal Struggle*, staged by Igor Schwezoff, in Australia, to Robert Schumann piano music, orchestrated by Antal Dorati. It served the purpose of introducing two Australian designers to America: the Misses Kathleen and Florence Martin.

There was a duo of works by David Lichine, one serious and unsuccessful, the other a comedy that had a substantial audience success and which, since then, has moved from company to company. The former, *Protée*, was arranged to Debussy's *Danses Sacré et Profane*, in a Chirico setting and costumes. The latter, *Graduation Ball*, Lichine had staged during the long Australian stay. Its music was an admirable selection and arrangement of Johann Strauss tunes by Antal Dorati. Its setting and costumes were by

Alexandre Benois. Much of its humor was sheer horseplay and on the obvious side; but it was completely high-spirited, and was the season's comedy success.

A third work, credited to Lichine, was *The Prodigal Son*, a ballet that was the outstanding creation of the last Diaghileff season, in 1929. Set to a memorable commissioned score by Serge Prokofieff, by George Balanchine, with Serge Lifar, Leon Woizikovsky, Anton Dolin and Felia Dubrowska in the central roles, it had striking and evocative settings and costumes by Georges Rouault. De Basil had secured these properties, and had had the work re-done in Australia by Lichine. Lichine insisted he had never seen the Balanchine original and thus approached the subject with a fresh mind. However, Serge Grigorieff was the general stage director for both companies. It is not beyond possibility that Grigorieff, with his sensitive-plate retentive mind for balletic detail, might have transferred much of the spirit and style of the original to the de Basil-Lichine presentation. However it may have been, the result was a moving theatrical experience. My strongest memory of it is the exciting performance given by Sono Osato as the exotic siren who seduces the Prodigal during his expensive excursion among the flesh-pots.

During this Hollywood Theatre season we also had *Le Cotillon*, that had served originally to introduce Riabouchinska to American audiences. We also, I am happy to remember, had Fokine's Firebird, in the original choreography, and the uncut Stravinsky score, together with the remarkable settings and costumes of Gontcharova. Its opening performance provided a few breath-taking moments when Baronova's costume gave way, and she fought bravely to prevent an embarrassing exposure.

During their tenure of the Hollywood Theatre, we managed one creation. It was *Balustrade*. Its choreography was by George Balanchine. Its music was Igor Stravinsky's Violin Concerto, played in the orchestra pit

by Samuel Dushkin, for whom it was written. Stravinsky himself came on from California to conduct the work. As is so often the case with Balanchine, it had neither story nor theme nor idea; it was simply an abstraction in which Balanchine set out to exploit to the fullest the brittle technical prowess of Tamara Toumanova. The only reason I could determine for the title was that the setting, by Pavel Tchelitcheff, consisted of a long balustrade. Unfortunately, despite all the costs, which I paid, it had, all told, one consecutive performance.

The close of the season at the Hollywood Theatre found me, once again, in a perplexed mood. The de Basil organization, riddled by intrigue and quite out of focus, was not the answer. Its finances were in a parlous state. I disengaged my emotions and surveyed both the negligible artistic accomplishments and the substantial financial losses. I turned a deaf ear to de Basil's importunings to have me undertake another American tour, although I did sponsor engagements in Boston and Philadelphia, and undertook to send the company to Mexico and South America.

As matters stood, neither the company nor the repertoire was good enough. I still had one more season tied to the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and that, for the moment, was enough of trouble. I argued with myself that the Denham difficulties were sufficient unto one day, without deliberately and gratuitously adding those of the "Colonel."

Fresh troubles arose in Philadelphia, from which point the company was to depart for Mexico City. Tamara Toumanova's presence with the company was one of the conditions of the Mexican contract.

It will not be difficult, I think, for the reader to imagine my feelings when, on my arrival in Philadelphia, I was greeted by Toumanova with the news that she was leaving the company, that her contract with de Basil had expired,

and that nothing in her life had given her greater happiness than to be able to quit.

De Basil was not to be found. He had gone into hiding. I went into action. I approached "Gerry" Sevastianov and his wife, Irina Baronova, to help out the situation by agreeing to have Baronova go to Mexico in place of the departing Toumanova. She consented, and this cost me an additional considerable sum.

Having succeeded in this, de Basil emerged from his hiding place to hold me up once again by demanding money under duress. He had no money and had to have cash in advance before he would move the company to Mexico. Once there, he raised objections to the Baronova arrangements, did not want her to dance or as a member of the company; and there was a general air of sabotage, egged on, I have no doubt, by a domestic situation, wherein his wife wanted to dance leading roles.

Somehow we managed to get through the Mexico City engagement and to get them to Cuba. There matters came to a head with a vengeance. Because of de Basil's inability to pay salaries, he started cutting salaries, with a strike that has become a part of ballet history ensuing.

Once more I dispatched my trusty right hand, Mae Frohman, to foreign parts to try to straighten matters out. There was nothing she could do. The mess was too involved, too complicated, and the only possible course was for me to drop the whole thing.

De Basil, looking for new worlds to conquer, started for South America. His adventures in the Southern Hemisphere have no important place in this book, since the company was not then under my management. They would, moreover, fill another book. The de Basil South American venture, however, enters this story chronologically at a later point. Let it be said that the "Colonel's" adventures there were as fantastic as the man

himself. They included, among many other things, defection after defection, sometimes necessitating a recruiting of dancers almost from the streets; the performances of ballets with girls who had never heard of the works, much less seen them, having to rehearse them sketchily while the curtain was waiting to rise; the coincidence of performance with the outbreak of a local revolution; flying his little company in shifts, since only one jalopy plane, in a dubious state of repair, was available. I shall not go into his fantastic financing, this being one of the few times when, as I suggested at the beginning of this book, the curtain might be lowered for a few discreet moments, in order to spare the feelings of others rather than my own.

In the quiet of the small hours of the morning, I would lie awake and compare the personalities of the two "organizers," de Basil and Denham, reviewing their likenesses and their differences. As I dozed off, I came to the conclusion that most generalizations about personality are wrong. When you have spent hours, days, months, years in close association and have been bored and irritated by a flamboyant individual, you are apt to think that restraint and reticence are the only virtues. Until you meet a quiet fellow, who is quiet either because he has nothing to say or nothing to make a noise about, and then discover his stillness is merely a convenient mask for deceit.

Massine, unable to continue any longer with the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe management, severed his connection with the company he had made, in 1942. Save for a few undistinguished creations, de Basil was skating along as best he could on his Diaghileff heritage; classicism was being neglected in the frantic search for "novelties." Both companies were making productions, not on any basis of policy, but simply for expediency and as cheaply as possible. Existing productions in both companies were increasingly slipshod. While it is true that a good ballet is a

good ballet, it is something less than good when it receives niggardly treatment or when it is given one less iota than the strictest attention to detail.

That is exactly what happened when the companies split, and split again: the works suffered; this, together with the recurring internal crises, boded ill for the future of ballet. There was the ever-present need for money for new productions. Diaghileff had one Maecenas after another. By the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century, a Maecenas was becoming a rare bird indeed. Today he is as dead as the proverbial Dodo.

I had certain definite convictions about ballet, I still have them. One of them is that the sound cornerstone of any ballet company must be formed of genuine classics. But these must never take the form of "modern" versions, nor additionally suffer from anything less than painstaking productions, top-drawer performances, and an infinite respect for the works themselves. Ballet may depart from the classical base as far as it wishes to experiment, but the base should always be kept in sight; and psychological excursions, explorations into the subconscious, should never be permitted to obscure the fact that the basic function of ballet is to entertain. By that I do not mean to suggest ballet should stand still, should chain itself to reaction and the conservatism of a dead past. It should look forward, move forward; but it must take its bearings from those virtues of a living past, which is its heritage: all of which can be summed up in one brief phrase—the classical tradition.

There are increasingly frequent attempts to create ballets crammed with symbols dealing with various aspects of sex, perversion, physical and psychological tensions. In one of the world's great ballet centers there have been attempts to use ballet as a means to promulgate and propagandize political ideologies. I am glad to say the latter have been completely unsuccessful and they have

returned to the classics.

I should be the last person to wish to limit the choreographer's choice of subject material. That is ready to his hand and mind. The fact remains that, in my opinion, ballet cannot (and will not) be tied down to any one style, aesthetic, religion, ideology, or philosophy. Therefore, it seems to me, the function of the choreographer is to express balletic ideas, thought, and emotion in a way that first and foremost pleases him. But, at the same time, I should like to remind every choreographer of a distinguished authority, when he said, "Pleasure, and pleasure alone, is the purpose of art." But pleasure differs in kind according to the way that individuals and groups of individuals differ in mental and emotional make-up. Thus ballet provides pleasure for the intellectual and the sensualist, the idealist and the realist, the Catholic, the Protestant, the Atheist. And it will remain the function of the choreographer to provide this infinite variety of pleasure until such time that all men think, feel, and act alike.

Ballet was at a cross-road. I was at a cross-road in my career in ballet. It was at this indecisive point there emerged a new light on the balletic horizon. It called itself Ballet Theatre. It interested me very much.

10. The Best of Plans ... Ballet Theatre

DURING the very late 'thirties, Mikhail Mordkin had had a ballet company, giving sporadic performances on Sunday nights, occasionally on week-day evenings, and, now and then, some out-of-town performances. It was a small company, largely made up of Mordkin's pupils, of

which one, Lucia Chase, was *prima ballerina*. Miss Chase was seen in, among other parts, the title role of *Giselle*, in which she was later replaced by Patricia Bowman.

This little company is credited with having given the first performance on this continent of the full-length Tchaikowsky *Sleeping Beauty*. In order that the record may be quite clear on this point, the production was not that of the Petipa masterpiece, but rather Mordkin's own version. It was presented at Waterbury, Connecticut, in 1937. Waterbury is the home town of Lucia Chase. Lucia Chase was the Princess Aurora of the production. So far as the records reveal, there was a single performance.

The season of 1938-1939 was the Mordkin company's last. It was, as a company, foredoomed to failure from the very start, in my opinion. Its repertoire was meagre, unbalanced; it had no dancers who were known; it lacked someone of *ballerina* stature.

Towards the end of the company's existence, Mordkin had an associate, Richard Pleasant, whose interest in ballet had, in earlier days, caused him to act as a supernumerary in de Basil company productions, and who had an idea: an idea that has lurked in the minds of a number of young men I know, to wit: to form a ballet company. It is one thing to want to form a ballet company, another to do it. In addition to having the idea, one must have money—and a great deal of it.

In this case, idea and money came together simultaneously, for the Mordkin school and company had Lucia Chase, with ambitions and interest as well. Lucia Chase had money—a great deal of it—and she wanted to dance. She had substantially financed the Mordkin company. Pleasant went ahead with his plan for a grandiose organization—with his ideas and Chase's money. The Mordkin company was closed up; and a new company, on a magnificent scale, calling itself Ballet Theatre, was formed.

The Mordkin venture had been too small, too limited in its scope, too reactionary in thought, so Mordkin himself was pushed into the background, soon to be ousted altogether, and the tremendous undertaking went forward on a scale the like of which this country had never seen. In a Utopia such a pretentious scheme would have a permanent place in the cultural pattern, for the company's avowed policy, at the outset, was to act as a repository for genuine masterpieces of all periods and styles of the dance; it would be to the dance what a great museum is to the arts of sculpture and painting. The classical, the romantic, the modern, all would find a home in the new organization. The company was to be so organized that it could compete with the world's best. It should be large. It should have ample backing.

The company's debut at the Center Theatre, in New York's Rockefeller Center, on 11th January, 1940, was preceded by a ballyhoo of circus proportions. The rehearsal period preceding this date was long and arduous. The company's slogans included one announcing that the works were "staged by the greatest collaboration in ballet history." It was a "super" organization—imposing, diverse and diffuse. But it was a big idea, albeit an impractical one. Its impracticability, however, did not lessen the impact of its initial impression. More than thirteen years have elapsed since Ballet Theatre made its bow, and one can hardly regard its initial roster of contributors even now without an astonished blink of the eyes. There were twenty principal dancers, fifteen soloists, a *corps de ballet* of fifty-six. In addition, there was a Negro group numbering fourteen. There was an additional Spanish group of nineteen. The choreographers numbered eleven; an equal number of scene and costume designers; three orchestra conductors. Eighteen composers, living and dead, contributed to the initial repertoire of as many works.

Although the founders were American, as was the

backing, there was no slavish chauvinism in its repertoire, which was cosmopolitan and catholic. Only two of its eleven choreographers were natives: Eugene Loring and Agnes de Mille. The company was international. Three of the choreographers were English: Anton Dolin, Andrée Howard, and Antony Tudor. Four were Russian: Michel Fokine, Adolph Bolm, Mikhail Mordkin, Bronislava Nijinska.

Only five of the eighteen works that made up the repertoire of the introductory season of Ballet Theatre remain in existence: *Giselle*, originally staged, after the traditional production, by Anton Dolin, who had joined the venture after an Australian stint with de Basil's Original Ballet Russe; *Swan Lake*, in the one-act version, also staged by Dolin; Fokine's masterpiece, *Les Sylphides*; the oldest ballet extant, *La Fille Mal Gardée*, staged by Bronislava Nijinska; and Adolph Bolm's production of the children's fairy tale, *Peter and the Wolf*, to the popular Prokofieff orchestral work, with narrator.

It was significant to me that the outstanding successes of that first season were the classics. First, there was *Les Sylphides*, restored by the master himself. This, coupled with Dolin's *Swan Lake*, and *Giselle*, constituted the backbone of the standard repertoire.

The first four weeks' season was, perhaps, as expensive a balletic venture as New York has known, with the possible exception of the Ballet International of the Marquis de Cuevas, some four years later.

Following Ballet Theatre's introductory burst of activity, there was a hiatus, during which the company gave sporadic performances in Philadelphia, some appearances at the Lewisohn Stadium in New York, and appeared in Chicago in conjunction with the Chicago Opera Company.

Before Ballet Theatre embarked on its second season, trouble was cooking. There were indications Lucia Chase

and Pleasant were not seeing exactly eye to eye. The second New York season was announced to open at the Majestic Theatre, on 11th February, 1941. Now the Majestic Theatre is a far cry from the wide open spaces of the Center Theatre. It is the house where I had given a brief and costly season with de Basil's Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in the early days, on a stage so small that no justice can be done to dance or dancers, and where the capacity does not admit of meeting expenses even when sold out.

Pleasant's newest idea, announced before the season opened, was to present a "company." There were to be no distinctions or classifications of dancers. One of the time-honored institutions of ballet was also abolished; there was no general stage director, or *régisseur-general*, as he is known in the French terminology of ballet. Instead, the company was divided, like all Gaul, into three parts, to be known as "Wings," with Anton Dolin in charge of the "Classic Wing"; Antony Tudor, of the "English Wing"; Eugene Loring, of the "American Wing." Five new works were added to the repertoire, of which only two remain: Eugene Loring's *Billy the Kid*, to one of Aaron Copland's finest scores, and Agnes de Mille's *Three Virgins and a Devil*, to Ottorino Respighi's *Antiche Danze ed Arie*. Dolin's *Pas de Quatre*, produced at this time, has been replaced in the company's repertoire by another version.

The differences between Pleasant and Chase came to a head, and the former was forced to resign at the end of the four weeks' season, which resulted in more substantial losses.

It was at this time that I was approached on behalf of the organization by Charles Payne, seeking advice as to how to proceed. We lunched together in Rockefeller Plaza, and while I am unable to state that the final decision was wholly mine or that the terminal action was taken exclusively on my advice, I counselled Payne that, in my

opinion, the only course for them to follow would be to close down the company completely, place everything they owned into storage, and start afresh after reorganization. Receipts at the box-office having fallen as low as $319 a performance, there was no other choice. In any event, my advice was followed.

Reorganization was under way. In an organization of this magnitude and complexity, reorganization was something that took a great deal of both thought and time. It was by no means a simple matter. While the reorganization was in its early, indecisive stages, with protracted debates going on within the circle as to whether it should continue in any form or fold its wings in the sleep everlasting, Anton Dolin came to me to ask me to take over the management of the venture.

This was not a thing to be regarded lightly. The situation in ballet in general, and with the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe in particular, being as I have described it, I was interested in and attracted by the potential value of the company, if the proper sort of reorganization could be effected. Their Chicago season had been a complete fiasco at the box-office. There is a legend to the effect that, in an effort to attract a few people into the Chicago Opera House, members of the company stood outside the building as the office-workers from the surrounding buildings wended their way homeward to the suburban trains, passing out free tickets. The legend also has it that they managed to get some of these free tickets into the hands of a local critic who was one of the crowd.

I do not wish to bore the reader with the details of all the debates that highlighted those days. Sufficient is it to say that they were crowded and that the nights were often sleepless.

Anton Dolin was responsible for having German (“Gerry”) Sevastianov, no longer associated with de Basil, appointed as managing director, in succession to the

resigned Pleasant.

The negotiations commenced and were both long and involved between all parties concerned which included discussion with Lucia Chase and her attorney, Harry M. Zuckert. Matters were reaching a point where I felt a glimmer of light could be detected, when a honeymoon intervened, due to the marriage of Zuckert. Ballet waited for romance. Throughout the long drawn-out discussions and negotiations, Zuckert was always pleasant, cooperative, diplomatic, and evidenced a sincere desire to avoid any friction.

Among the first acts of Sevastianov, after taking over the directorship, was to engage his wife, Irina Baronova, as a leading ballerina, together with Antal Dorati, former musical director of the de Basil company, and today the musical director of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, to direct and supervise the music of Ballet Theatre. Later, through the good offices of Anton Dolin, Alicia Markova, whose contract with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo had terminated, became one of the two *ballerine* of the company.

The negotiations dragged on during the summer. Meanwhile, with the company and its artists inactive, Markova and Dolin, on their own, leased Jacob's Pillow, the Ted Shawn farm and summer theatre in the Berkshires, and gave a number of performances under the collective title of International Dance Festival. This was a quite independent venture, but Markova and Dolin peopled their season and school with the personnel of Ballet Theatre.

This summer in the Berkshires had a two-fold effect on the company: first, the members were thus able to work together as a unit; second, with three choreographers in residence, it was possible for them to lay out and develop the early groundwork of three works, subsequently to be added to the Ballet Theatre repertoire: *Slavonika*, by Vania Psota; *Princess Aurora*, by Anton Dolin; and *Pillar of*

Fire, by Antony Tudor.

Two of these were major contributions; one was pretty hopeless. Dolin's *Princess Aurora* was a reworking of the last act of Tchaikowsky's *The Sleeping Beauty*, a sort of *Aurora's Wedding*, with the addition of the *Rose Adagio*, giving the company another classic work that remains in the company's repertoire today, with some "innovations." *Pillar of Fire*, set to Arnold Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, revealed a new type of dramatic ballet which, in many respects, may be said to be Tudor's masterpiece. *Slavonika* was set by the Czech Psota to a number of Dvorak's *Slavonic Dances*, and was an almost total loss, from every point of view. The original version, as first produced, ran fifty-five minutes. I thought it would never end. But, as the tour proceeded, it was cut, and cut again. The last time I saw it was when I visited the company in Toronto. Then it was blessedly cut down to six minutes. After that, no further reduction seemed possible, and it was sent to the limbo of the storehouse, never to be seen again.

The deal between Ballet Theatre and myself was closed during the time the company was working at Jacob's Pillow, and I took over the company in November, 1941. It might be of interest to note some of the chief personnel of the company at that time. Among the women were: Alicia Markova, Irina Baronova, Lucia Chase, Karen Conrad, Rosella Hightower, Nora Kaye, Maria Karnilova, Jeanette Lauret, Annabelle Lyon, Sono Osato, Nina Popova, and Roszika Sabo; among the men were: Anton Dolin, Ian Gibson, Frank Hobi, John Kriza, Hugh Laing, Yurek Lasovsky, Nicolas Orloff, Richard Reed, Jerome Robbins, Dmitri Romanoff, Borislav Runanin, Donald Saddler, Simon Semenoff, George Skibine, and Antony Tudor, to list them alphabetically, for the most part. Later, Alicia Alonso returned to the organization. A considerable number had been brought as a strengthening measure by Sevastianov.

One of the company's weaknesses was in its classical and romantic departments. While there were Fokine's *Les Sylphides* and *Carnaval*, I felt more Fokine ballets were necessary to a balanced repertoire. Sevastianov engaged Fokine to re-stage *Le Spectre de la Rose* and *Petroushka*, and to create a new work for Anton Dolin and Irina Baronova. Fokine started work on *Bluebeard*, to an Offenbach score, arranged and orchestrated by Antal Dorati, with scenery and costumes by Marcel Vertes.

Meanwhile, I lived up to my contract with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and presented them, in the autumn of 1941, at the Metropolitan Opera House, and subsequently on tour.

In order to prepare the new works, Ballet Theatre went to Mexico City, returning to New York to open at the Forty-fourth Street Theatre, on 12th November, 1941. In addition to the existing Ballet Theatre repertoire, four works were added and had their first New York performances: Psota's *Slavonika*, and Dolin's re-creation of *Princess Aurora*, which I have mentioned, together with *Le Spectre de la Rose*, and Bronislava Nijinska's *The Beloved One*. The last was a revival of a work originally done to a Schubert-Liszt score, arranged by Darius Milhaud, for the Markova-Dolin Ballet in London. In the New York production it had scenery and costumes by Nicolas de Molas. It was not a success.

The season was an uphill affair. Business was not good, but matters were improving slightly, when we reached that fatal Sunday, the seventh of December. Pearl Harbor night had less than $400 in receipts. The world was at war. The battle to establish a new ballet company was paltry by comparison. Nevertheless, our plans had been made; responsibilities had been undertaken; there were human obligations to the artists, who depended upon us for their livelihood; there were responsibilities to local managers, who had booked us. There was a responsibility to the

public; for, in such times, I can conceive no reason why the cultural entertainment world should stand still. It is a duty, I believe, to see that it does not. In Russia, during the war, the work of the ballet was intensified; in Britain, the Sadler's Wells organization carried on, giving performances throughout the country, in camps, in factories, in fit-ups, as an aid to the morale both civilian and military. There could be no question of our not going forward.

Leaving New York, we played Boston, Philadelphia, a group of Canadian cities, Chicago. With such a cast and repertoire, it was reasonable to expect there would be large audiences. The expectation was not fulfilled. The stumbling-block was the title: Ballet Theatre. The use of the two terms—"ballet" and "theatre"—as a means of identifying the combination of the balletic and theatrical elements involved in the organization, is quite understandable, in theory. As a practical name for an individual ballet company, it is utterly confusing and frustrating. I am not usually given to harboring thoughts of assassination, but I could murder the person who invented that title and used it as the name for a ballet company. Ballet in America does not exist exclusively on the support of the initiated ballet enthusiast, the "balletomane"—to use a term common in ballet circles to describe the ballet "fan." The word "balletomane" itself is of Russian origin, a coined word for which there is no literal translation. Ballet, in order to exist, must draw its chief support from the mass of theatregoers, from the general amusement-loving public, those who like to go to a "show." The casual theatregoer, when confronted with posters and a marquee sign reading "Ballet Theatre," finds himself confused, more likely than not believing it to be the name of the theatre building itself. My own experience and a careful survey has demonstrated this conclusively.

My losses in these days of Ballet Theatre were

prodigious. Both Chase and Sevastianov were aware of them. Other managements, in view of such losses, might well have dropped the entire venture. In view of the heavy deficits I was incurring and bearing single-handed, I felt some assistance should be given.

An understanding was reached whereby I agreed to reduce the number of new productions to be furnished for the next season, in order that their expenses might be minimized. In consideration of this a certain amount was refunded. At that moment it was a help; but not a sufficient help to reduce my losses to less than $60,000. As a matter of fact, the agreement was beneficial to both sides. In my case, it temporarily eased the burden of meeting a heavy weekly payroll at a time when there were practically no receipts; as for Ballet Theatre, it substantially reduced their investment in new productions.

The continuing war presented additional problems. Personnel changes were frequent on the male side of the company owing to the war-time draft. There was an increasing demand for ballet; but a new uninformed, uninitiated public was not in the market for ballet companies, but for ballets—works about which they had somehow heard. I had two companies, Ballet Theatre and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and I presented them, one after the other, at the Metropolitan Opera House. In my opinion, many of the problems could have been solved by a merger of the two groups, had such a thing been possible, thus preserving, I believe, the best properties and qualities of each of them.

During the spring of 1942, two new works were presented: Tudor's *Pillar of Fire*, on which he had been working for a long time, and Fokine's *Russian Soldier*. The latter was done at a time when we were all thrilled by the tremendous effort the Russians were making in their battles, their heroic battles, against the Nazi invader. In discussing the idea with Fokine, himself Russian to the

core, we emphasized the symbolic intent of the tragedy, that of the simple Russian peasant who sacrifices his life for his homeland. Although we of course did not realize it at the time, this was to be the last work Fokine was to complete in his long list of balletic creations. *Russian Soldier* had some of the best settings and costumes ever designed by the Russian painter, Mstislav Doboujinsky. For music, Fokine utilized the orchestral suite devised by Serge Prokofieff from his score for the satirical film, *Lieutenant Kije*, which was extremely effective as music, but with which I was never entirely happy, since Prokofieff, the musical satirist, had packed it with his own very personal brand of satire for the satiric film for which the music was originally composed. At the same time, I doubt that any substantial portion of the audience knew the source of the music and detected the satire; the great majority found the work a moving experience.

Aside from being perhaps Tudor's most important contribution to ballet, *Pillar of Fire*—with its settings and costumes by Jo Mielziner, his first contribution as a noted American designer to the ballet stage—served to raise Nora Kaye from the rank and file of the original company to an important position as a new type of dramatic *ballerina*.

Leonide Massine, parting with the company he had built, joined Ballet Theatre as dancer and choreographer before the company's departure for a second summer season at the Palacio des Bellas Artes in Mexico City, as guests of the Mexican Government.

In addition to performances there, the company used the Mexican period as one of creation and rehearsal. Massine was in the midst of a creative frenzy, working on two new ballets. One was *Don Domingo*, which had some stunning scenery and costumes by the Mexican artist, Julio Castellanos; an intriguing score by Sylvestre Revueltas; a Mexican subject by Alfonso Reyes; *Don Domingo* was

prompted by the sincere desire to pay a tribute to the country south of the border which had played host to the company. That was Massine's intention. Unfortunately, the work did not jell, and was soon dropped from the repertoire.

The other work was *Aleko*, which takes rank with some of the best of Massine's creations. It was a subject close to his heart and to mine, the poetic Pushkin tale of the lad from the city and his tragic love for the daughter of a gypsy chieftain, a love that brings him to two murders and a banishment. As a musical base, Massine took the Trio for piano, violin, and violoncello which Tchaikowsky dedicated "to the memory of a great artist," Nicholas Rubinstein, in an orchestration by Erno Rapee. The whole thing was a fine piece of collaboration between Massine and the surrealist painter, Marc Chagall; and the work was deeply moving, finely etched, with a strong feeling for character.

I have particularly happy memories of watching Chagall and his late wife working in happy collaboration on the *Aleko* production in Mexico City. While he busied himself with the scenery, she occupied herself with the costumes. The result of this fine collaboration on the part of all the artists concerned resulted in a great Russian work.

The Ballet Theatre management was, to put it mildly, not in favour of *Aleko*. It was a production on which I may be said to have insisted. Fortunately, I was proved correct. Although it was dropped from the repertoire not long after Ballet Theatre and I came to a parting of the ways, it has now, ten years after its production, been crowned with success in London. Presented at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, by Ballet Theatre, in the summer of 1953, it has proved to be the outstanding hit of their London season, both with press and public. I cannot remember the unemotional and objective *Times* (London) waxing more enthusiastic over a balletic work.

During the Mexican hegira the company re-staged the Eugene Loring-Aaron Copland *Billy the Kid*, still one of the finest American ballets, although originally created in 1938. Certainly it is one of Copland's most successful theatre scores. Simon Semenoff also brought forth a condensed and truncated version of Delibes's *Coppélia*, as a vehicle for Irina Baronova, with settings and costumes by Robert Montenegro. It was not a success. It was a case of tampering with a classic; and I hold firmly to the opinion that classics should not be subjected to tampering or maltreatment. There is a special hades reserved for those choreographers who have the temerity to draw mustaches on portraits of lovely ladies.

Yet another Mexican creation that failed to meet the test of the stage was *Romantic Age*, a ballet by Anton Dolin, to assorted music by Vincenzo Bellini, in a setting and with costumes by Carlos Merida. An attempt to capture some of the balletic atmosphere of the "romantic age" in ballet, it was freely adapted from the idea of *Aglae, or The Pupil of Love*, a work by Philippe Taglioni, dating back to 1841, originally a vehicle of Marie Taglioni.

Michel Fokine and his wife Vera were also with the company in Mexico City, re-staging his masterpiece, *Petroushka*, and commencing a new work, *Helen of Troy*, based on the Offenbach *opéra bouffe*, *La Belle Hélene*. Unfortunately, Fokine was stricken with pleurisy and returned to New York, only to die from pneumonia shortly after.

Helen of Troy, however, promised well and a substantial investment had already been made in it. David Lichine was called in and worked with Antal Dorati on the book, as Dorati worked on the Offenbach music, with Lichine staging the work on tour after the Metropolitan Opera House season in New York. Still later, when Vera Zorina appeared with the company, George Balanchine restaged it for his wife. The final result was presumably a long way

from Fokine, but a version of it still remains in the Ballet Theatre repertoire today.

André Eglevsky joined the company during this season. Later on, Irina Baronova, under doctor's orders, left. Because there was no sound artistic direction and no firm discipline in the company, I urged Sevastianov to engage an experienced and able ballet-master and *régisseur-general* in the person of Adolph Bolm, to be responsible for the general stage direction, deportment, and the exercise of an artistic discipline over the company's dancers, particularly the dissident elements in it, which made working with them exceedingly difficult at times. Sevastianov discussed the matter with Miss Chase, who agreed. Before accepting, Bolm telephoned me from California seeking my advice and I could but urge him to accept because I felt this would go a long way toward stabilizing the company artistically.

It was at the close of the autumn season of 1942, at the Metropolitan Opera House, that I bade good-bye to the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Universal Art. There was a brief ceremony back-stage at the end of the last performance. Denham and I both made farewell speeches. It is always a sad moment for me to leave a company for whose success I have given so much of my time, my energy, and money. I felt this sadness keenly as I took leave of the nice kids.

The subsequent Ballet Theatre tour developed recurring headaches. They were cumulative, piling up into one big headache, and it will be less trying both to the reader and to myself to recount it later in one place, at one time.

With the spring of 1943, back we came to the Metropolitan for our spring season. There was a managerial change. German Sevastianov went off to war as a member of the United States Army, and J. Alden Talbot became managing director in his stead. This began the period of the wisest direction Ballet Theatre has known.

Janet Reed joined the company as a soloist, and Vera Zorina appeared as guest artist in *Helen of Troy*, and in a revival of George Balanchine's *Errante*. This was a work set to the music of Schubert-Liszt, originally done for Tilly Losch for *Les Ballets 1933*, in London, when Balanchine left de Basil, and one which the American Ballet revived at the Adelphi Theatre, in New York, two years later, with Tamara Geva. Balanchine also revived Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagète*, with André Eglevsky, Zorina, Nora Kaye, and Rosella Hightower, to one of Stravinsky's most moving scores.

The other work was history-making. It was Antony Tudor's *Romeo and Juliet*. It was a work of great seriousness and fine theatrical invention. On the opening night Tudor had not finished the ballet, although he had been at it for months. It was too late to postpone the *première*, so, after a good deal of persuading, it was agreed to present it in its unfinished state. The curtain on the first performance fell some twelve minutes before the end. I have told this tale in detail in *Impresario*. The matter is historic. There is no point in laboring it. Tudor is an outstanding creator in the field of modern ballet. *Romeo and Juliet* is a monument to his creative gifts. The pity is that it no longer can be given by Ballet Theatre, no longer seen by the public, with its sharp characterization, its inviolate sense of period, the tenseness of its drama sustained in the medium of the dance.

Tudor's original idea with *Romeo and Juliet* was to utilize the Serge Prokofieff score for the successful Soviet ballet of the same title. However, he found the Prokofieff score was unsuitable for his choreographic ideas. He eventually decided on various works by the English composer, Frederick Delius. Because of the war, it was found impossible to secure this musical material from England. Consequently, Antal Dorati, the musical director, orchestrated the entire work from listening to gramophone

recordings of the Delius pieces. How good a job it was is testified by Sir Thomas Beecham, the long-time friend of Delius and the redoubtable champion of the composer's music. I engaged Sir Thomas to conduct a number of performances of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Metropolitan Opera House, and he was amazed by the orchestration, commenting, "Astounding! Perfectly astounding! It is precisely as written by my late friend."

The list of Beechamiana is long; but here is one more item which I believe has the virtue of freshness. I should like to record an incident of Sir Thomas's first orchestral rehearsal of *Romeo and Juliet*. As I recall it, this rehearsal had to be sandwiched in between a broadcast concert rehearsal Sir Thomas had to make and the actual orchestral broadcast to which he was committed. There was no time to spare. Our orchestra was awaiting him at their places in the Metropolitan pit. The rehearsal was concise, to the point, with few stoppings or corrections on Sir Thomas's part. At the conclusion, Sir Thomas looked the men over with a pontifical eye. Then he addressed them as follows: "Ladies and gentlemen. I happen to be one of those who believes music speaks its own language, and that words about it are usually a waste of time and effort. However, a word or two at this juncture may not be amiss.... I happened to know the late composer, Mr. Delius, intimately. I am also intimately acquainted with his music. I have only one suggestion, gentlemen. Tonight, when we play this music for this alleged ballet, if you will be so good as to confine yourselves to the notes as written by my late friend, Mr. Delius, and not *improvise* as you have done this afternoon, I assure you the results will be much more satisfactory.... Thank you very much." And off he went.

That night the orchestra played like angels. The ballet was in its second season when I invited Sir Thomas to take over the performances. It was a joy to have him in command of the forces. Too little attention is accorded the

quality of the orchestra and the conductor in ballet. Quite apart from the musical excellence itself, few people realize of what tremendous value a good conductor and a good orchestra can be to ballet as a whole. *Romeo and Juliet* never had such stage performances as those when Sir Thomas was in charge. And this is not said in disparagement of other conductors. Not only was the Beecham orchestral tone beautifully transparent, but Sir Thomas blended stage action and music so completely that the results were absolutely unique. The company responded nobly to the inspiration. It was during this season, endeavoring to utilize every legitimate means to stimulate interest on the part of the public that, in addition to Sir Thomas and various guest dancing stars, I also brought Igor Stravinsky from California to conduct his own works during the Metropolitan Opera House engagement.

For the sake of the record, let me briefly cite the chronological tabulation of Ballet Theatre through the period of my management. In the autumn of 1943, at the Metropolitan Opera House, there were three new productions, one each by Massine, Tudor, and David Lichine: *Mademoiselle Angot*, *Dim Lustre*, and *Fair at Sorotchinsk*.

Massine took the famous operetta by Charles Lecocq, *La Fille de Mme. Angot*, and in a series of striking sets by Mstislav Doboujinsky, turned it into a ballet, which, for some reason, failed to strike fire. It is interesting to note that when, some years later, Massine produced the work for Sadler's Wells at Covent Garden, it was a considerable success. Tudor's *Dim Lustre*, despite the presence of Nora Kaye, Rosella Hightower, Hugh Laing, and Tudor himself in the cast, was definitely second-rate Tudor. Called by its creator a "psychological episode," this sophisticated Edwardian story made use of Richard Strauss's *Burleske*, an early piano concerto of the composer's, with a set and

costumes by the Motley sisters. Lichine's *Fair at Sorotchinsk* was a ballet on a Ukrainian folk tale straight out of Gogol, with Moussorgsky music, including a witches' sabbath to the *Night on a Bald Mountain*, with settings and costumes by Nicolas Remisoff. It was an addition to the repertoire, if only for the performance of Dolin as Red Coat, the Devil of the Ukraine, who danced typically Russian Cossack toe-steps and made toe-pirouettes. Had the Cossack "Colonel" de Basil seen this, he would, I am sure, have envied Dolin for once in his life. While *Fair at Sorotchinsk* did not have a unanimously favorable reception at the hands of the press, it was generally liked by the public, as evidenced by the response at the box-office.

After the 1943-1944 tour, two more works were added during the spring season at the Metropolitan Opera House, two sharply contrasted works by American choreographers: Jerome Robbins and Agnes de Mille. Robbins's *Fancy Free* was a smash hit, a remarkable comedy piece of American character in a peculiarly native idiom. As a result of this work, Robbins leapt into fame exactly as Agnes de Mille had done a couple of years before as the result of her delightful *Rodeo*. *Fancy Free* was a collaborative work between Robbins and the brilliant young composer and conductor, Leonard Bernstein, whose score was as much of a hit as was the ballet itself. Bernstein's conducting of the orchestra was also a telling factor, for his dynamism and buoyancy was transmitted to the dancers.

Agnes de Mille's work, *Tally-Ho*, was in a much different mood from her *Rodeo*. From present-day America, she leapt backwards to the France of Louis XVI, for a period farce-comedy, set to Gluck melodies, re-orchestrated by Paul Nordoff. The settings and costumes, in the style of Watteau, were by the Motleys, who had decorated her earlier *Three Virgins and a Devil*.

Combining old world elegance with bawdy humor, *Tally-Ho* had both charm and fun, and although the company worked its hardest and at its very best for Agnes, and although she put her very soul into it, it was not the success that had been hoped.

Only one *première* marked the autumn season at the Metropolitan. It was one done by Balanchine, called *Waltz Academy*, the first work he had created for Ballet Theatre, in contrast to numerous revivals I have mentioned. It was not a very good ballet, static in effect, although classical in style. Its setting was a reproduction of the ballet room at the Paris Opera, by Oliver Smith. The music was a dry orchestration of dance melodies, largely waltzes, by Vittorio Rieti, who composed a pair of latter-day Diaghileff works. A ballet that could have been entertaining and lively, just missed being either.

The lack of new works and the necessity to stimulate public interest made it necessary to add guest stars, particularly since Markova and Dolin had left the company to appear in Billy Rose's revue, *The Seven Lively Arts*. Consequently, Tamara Toumanova, Tatiana Riabouchinska, David Lichine, and André Eglevsky made guest appearances.

The subsequent tour compounded internal complications until the only ameliorating feature of my association was the wise and understanding cooperation of J. Alden Talbot, who was, I knew, on the verge of resigning his post, for reasons not entirely different from my own in considering writing a book to be called *To Hell with Ballet!*

On tour, during 1944-1945, Tudor rehearsed the only new work to be offered during the 1945 spring season at the Metropolitan. It was *Undertow*, the story of an adolescent's neurosis, suggested to Tudor by the well-known playwright, John van Druten. It was packed with symbols, Freudian and otherwise; and my own reaction to its murky tale dealing with an Oedipus complex, a bloody

bitch, a lecherous old man's affair with a whore, a mad wedding, a group of drunken charwomen, a rape of a nasty little girl by four naughty little boys, and a shocking murder, was one of revulsion. The score was specially commissioned from the present head of the Juilliard School, the American William Schuman. The settings and costumes, as depressing as the work itself, were by the Chicago painter, Raymond Breinin.

The rigors of war-time ballet travel were considerable, a constant battle to arrive on time, to be able to leave in time to arrive in time at the next city. Each day presented a new problem. But it had its comic side as well. We had played the Pacific Northwest and, after an engagement in Portland, there followed the most important engagement of the west thus far, that at the War Memorial Opera House, in San Francisco.

There was immense difficulty in getting the company and its properties out of Portland at all. It should be remembered, and there is no harm pointing out that the entire railway transportation system of our country from Portland, Oregon, in the far Northwest, to New Orleans, in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico, is in the hands of a single railway, thousands of miles of it single-track line, with no competition, and thus a law unto itself. For a long time, during this particular tour, this railway insisted, because of military commitments, it could not handle the company and its baggage cars from Portland to San Francisco in time for the first performance there.

The reader should know that there are no reduced fares or concessions for theatrical or ballet companies. First-class fares are paid, and full rates for Pullmans and food. My representative, with a broad experience in these matters, continued to battle, and it was eventually arranged that the company would be attached in "tourist" coaches to a troop train bound for the south, but with no dining facilities for civilians and no provision for food or drink.

At least, it would get them to San Francisco in time for the opening performance.

So, the rickety tourist cars were attached to the troop train and the journey commenced. The artists were carefully warned by my representative that this was a troop train, that no food would be available, and that each member of the company should provide himself enough food and beverage for the journey.

At daybreak of the next morning, cold and dismal, the train stopped at a junction point in the Cascades to add a locomotive for the long haul over the "divide." Opposite the station was a "diner." Twelve members of the company, including four principal artists, in nightclothes—pyjamas, nightgowns, kimonos, bed-slippers, with lightweight coats wrapped round them—insisted on getting down from the train and crossing to the little "diner" for "breakfast."

Our company manager warned them not to leave the train; told them that there would be no warning, no signal, since this was not a passenger train but a troop train, and that they risked missing the train altogether. He begged, pleaded, ordered—to no avail. Off they went in the cold of the dawn, in the scantiest of nightclothes.

Silently and without warning, as the manager had foretold, the train pulled out, leaving a dozen, including four leading artists, behind in an Oregon tank town without clothes or tickets.

By dint of a dozen telephone calls and as many telegrams, the nightgown-clad D.P.'s were picked up by a later train. After fourteen hours in day coaches, crowded with regular passengers, they arrived at the San Francisco Ferry, still in their nightclothes, thirty minutes before curtain time; they were whisked in taxis to the War Memorial Opera House. The curtain rose on time. The evening was saved.

It had its amusing side. It was one of the many hardships of wartime touring, merely one of the continuous headaches, although a shade on the unusual side. It was also yet another example of the utter lack of discipline and consideration in the company, and of the stubborn refusal of some of its members to cooperate in the cause of a fine art.

Another of the many incidents having to do with the difficulties of war-time touring was one in Augusta, Georgia, where no hotel or other housing accommodations could be found, due to the war-time overcrowding.

Most of the company slept, as best they could, in the railway station or in the public park. It is recorded that Alicia Markova spent the night sleeping on the sidewalk in the entrance-way to a grocer's shop, wrapped in newspapers and a cloak by the company manager, while that guardian angel spent the night sitting on the edge of an adjoining vegetable-stand, watching over her, smoking an endless chain of cigarettes.

This attitude was but an indication of the good sportsmanship the youngsters evidenced on more than one occasion, proving that, *au fond*, they were, on the whole, good "troupers."

While I had been prepared for the departure from the company of J. Alden Talbot, I was saddened, nevertheless, when he left. Lucia Chase and the scene designer, Oliver Smith, became joint managing directors, with the result that there was precious little management and even less direction. We played a summer season in California, at the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco, in conjunction with the City's Art Commission, and at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. In Hollywood we rehearsed some of the new works to be given in New York in the autumn. They were five in number, and unequal both in quality and appeal. Only one was a real success. The five works were by an equal number of choreographers: Simon Semenoff, Michael Kidd, John Taras, Jerome Robbins, and Adolph Bolm.

Semenoff's work, *Gift of the Magi*, was an attempt to make a ballet out of O. Henry's little short story of the same title, a touching tale of the pathos of a young married couple with taste and no money. For the ballet, young Lukas Foss wrote a workmanlike score, and Raoul Péne du Bois supplied a great deal of scenery, difficult to manipulate. Nora Kaye and John Kriza, as the young lovers, gave it a sweetness of characterization. But, despite scenery, costumes, properties, and sweet characterization, there was no real choreography, and the work soon left the repertoire.

Michael Kidd's first choreographic attempt for Ballet Theatre, and his first full-scale work as a matter of fact, was a theatre piece. A musical comedy type of work, it never seemed really to belong in a ballet repertoire. Kidd called it *On Stage!* For it Norman dello Joio provided a workable and efficient score, and Oliver Smith designed a back-stage scene that looked like back-stage. The costumes were designed by Alvin Colt.

Another first choreographic effort was young John Taras's *Graziana*, for which I paid the costs. Here was no

attempt to ape the Broadway musical comedy theatre. It was a straightforward, fresh, classical piece. Taras had set the work to a Violin Concerto by Mozart. He used a concise group of dancers, seventeen all told, four of whom were soloists. There was no story, simply dancing with no excuses, no apologies, no straining for "novelty," tricks, stunts, or gags. It was, in effect, ballet, and the public liked it. Just what the title meant I never knew. My guess is that Taras had to call it something, and *Graziana* was better than Number One.

The Robbins work came directly from Broadway, or the Avenue of the Americas, to be precise. It was called *Interplay*, and had originally been done for a variety show at the Ziegfeld Theatre. It was Robbins's second work. It was merely a piece of athletic fun. It was a genuine hit. For music it had Morton Gould's *Interplay Between Piano and Orchestra*, which he had originally written for a commercial radio programme as a brief concert piece for José Iturbi, with orchestra. The "interplay" in the dance was that between classical dance and "jive." Actually what emerged was a group of kids having a lot of fun. For once, in a long while, I could relax and smile when I saw it, for this was a period when I had little time for relaxation and even less cause to smile.

The production of Stravinsky's *Firebird* is something with which I shall deal separately. There was still another season to tour and a spring season at the Metropolitan Opera House, in 1946. In outlining the productions and chronology of Ballet Theatre during this period, I have tried to be as objective as possible so that the organization's public history may be a matter of record. Its private history, in so far as my relations are concerned, is quite another matter.

The troubles, the differences, the discussions, the intrigues of de Basil and his group, of Universal Art were, for the most part, all of a piece. I cannot say I ever got used

to them, but I was prepared for them. I knew pretty much the pattern they would follow, pretty much what to expect. Being forewarned, I was forearmed. With Ballet Theatre I had expected something different. Here I was not dealing with the involutions and convolutions of the Cossack and the Slavic mind. Here, I felt, would be an American approach. If, as a long-time American, I felt I knew anything about the American people, one of their most distinctive and noteworthy characteristics was their honesty of approach, their straightforwardness, directness, frankness. Alas, I was filled with disillusionment on this point. Ballet Theatre, in its approach to any problem where I was concerned, had a style very much its own: full of queer tricks, evasions, omissions, and unexpected twists of mind and character, as each day disclosed them.

There were two chief bones of contention. One was the billing. I have pointed out the lack of public interest in Ballet Theatre when I took it over and how the very title worked to its disadvantage. If ballet is to remain a great, universal entertainment in this country, and is, by the purchase of tickets at the box-office, to help pay its own way, at least in part, we must have a great mass audience as well as "devotees."

The other bone of contention, and the one which eventually caused the rupture of our association, was the matter of guest artists. The opposition to guest artists was maintained on an almost hysterical level. There were, as in every discussion, two sides to the question. Reasonably stated, Lucia Chase's argument could have been that Ballet Theatre was an organic whole; that it was an instrument with the sensitivity of a symphony orchestra, and "stars" damaged such a conception. As a matter of fact, it was her basic argument. The argument, plausible enough on the surface, does not, however, stand up under examination, for the comparison with a symphony orchestra does not hold.

Lacking the foresight and wisdom to keep the members of her company under contract, each season there were presented to Miss Chase a flock of new faces, new talents, unfamiliar with the repertoire, trained in a variety of schools with a corresponding variety of styles; it took them months to become a fully functioning and completely integrated part of Miss Chase's "organic whole." Great symphony orchestras hold their players together jealously year after year. Great symphony orchestras manage to reduce their colossal deficits to some extent by the engagement of distinguished soloists to appear with their "organic wholes." Such is the present state of musical appreciation in this country that it is an open secret that in many cities the way to sell out, or nearly sell out the house, is to engage soloists with box-office appeal. I do not here refer to such great symphonic bodies as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, but I do refer to those symphonic bodies in those many cities that are something less than metropolitan centers. Nor do I mean to suggest that this situation is one to be commended or applauded, or that it represents the ultimate desired *raison d'être* for the existence of a symphony orchestra. But I do suggest it is the only system feasible in the perilous situation today in which our symphonic bodies are compelled to operate.

The analogy between ballet and symphony in this view is not apposite. Again there was no attempt on Miss Chase's part to understand the situation; there was merely stubborn, unrelenting opposition after recrimination. It should be recorded that J. Alden Talbot during his tenure as general manager of Ballet Theatre fully realized and understood the situation and shared my feelings. I remember one day in Montreal when I had a conference with Lucia Chase to go over the entire matter of guest artists. I listened patiently to her mounting hysteria. I

pointed out that, as the company became better known throughout the country, as the quality of public ballet appreciation improved, the company of youngsters might be able to stand on their own *pointes*; but that, since the company and its personnel were as yet unknown, it would require infinite time, patience, and money to build them up in the consciousness of the public; and that, meanwhile, at this point in the company's existence, the guest stars gave a much needed fillip to the organization, and that, to put it bluntly, they were a great relief to some of the public, at any rate; for the great public has always liked guest stars and some local managements have insisted on them; of that the box-office had the proof. It was my contention that the guest star principle had been responsible for American interest in ballet. I hope the reader will pardon me if I link that system, coupled with my own love, enthusiasm, and faith in ballet, with the popularity that ballet has in this country today. There is such a thing as an unbecoming modesty, and I dislike wearing anything that is unbecoming.

TAMARA TOUMANOVA

It was during the 1945-1946 season, for example, that I engaged Tamara Toumanova as a guest artist. In addition to appearing in *Swan Lake*, *Les Sylphides*, and various classical *pas de deux*, I had Bronislava Nijinska stage a short work she called *Harvest Time*, to the music of Henri Wieniawski, orchestrated by Antal Dorati, in which Toumanova appeared with John Kriza, supported by a small *corps de ballet*. The association, I fear, was not too happy for any of us, including the "Black Pearl." There was a resentment towards her on the part of some of the artists, and Toumanova, over-anxious to please, almost literally danced her head off; but the atmosphere was not conducive to her best work.

Having watched Toumanova from childhood, knowing her as I do, it is not easy, nor is it a simple matter for me to draw an objective portrait of her, as she is today. One thing I shall *not* do, and that is to go very deeply into biographical background. That she was born in a box-car in Siberia, while her parents were escaping into China from the Russian Revolution, is a tale too often told—as are the stories of her beginnings as a dancer in Paris with Olga Preobrajenska, and an appearance at the Paris Trocadero on a Pavlova programme, at the age of five or so.

It was her father, Vadim Boretszky-Kasadevich, who called a temporary halt to the child prodigy business, by insisting that dance be suspended for a year until she could do some school work.

Discovered at Preobrajenska's school by George Balanchine, he placed her with the de Basil company, and for a half-dozen years she remained there, save for a brief interlude with Balanchine's short-lived *Les Ballets 1933*.

It was that same year that I brought the de Basil company to America the first time, where she joined the trinity of "baby ballerinas"—Baronova and Riabouchinska, of course, being the other two. It is a matter of history how Toumanova became the American rotogravure editors' delight; how America became Toumanova-conscious.

Strong, remarkably strong though her technique was even in those days, her performances were frequently uneven. Toumanova was a temperamental dancer then, as now, and to those who know only her svelte, slender, mature beauty of today, there may be some wonder that in those days she had to fight a recurring tendency towards *embonpoint*, and excessive *embonpoint*. But there were always startling brilliancies. In *Jeux d'Enfants* and *Cotillon*, I remember the dazzling *fouetées*. It is one of Toumanova's boasts that she was the first dancer to do thirty-two double *fouetées* and sixteen triples in actual

performance. I am not an authority on these technical matters and can, therefore, merely record the statement.

Her unsuccessful Broadway appearance (a musical called *Stars in Your Eyes*) was followed by a reunion with the de Basil Company in Australia and a short season with him at the Hollywood Theatre, in New York; and there was a later sojourn with the Massine Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Then Hollywood beckoned. There was one film in which she played an acting part, *Days of Glory*. The picture was certainly not much to talk about, but she married the producer-writer, Casey Robinson.

Since then, she has turned up as guest-artist with one organization after another: the Paris Opera Ballet, the Marquis de Cuevas company, Anton Dolin's Festival Ballet in London, the San Francisco Civic Ballet; a nomadic balletic existence, interrupted by another Hollywood film appearance, this time in the role of Pavlova in *Tonight We Sing*, based on my earlier book, *Impresario*.

As a person there is something about her that is at once naive and ingenuous and, at the same time, deep and grave and tragic. She cries still when she is happy, and is also able to cry when she is sad. She adores to be praised; but, unlike some other dancers I know, she is also anxious for criticism. She solicits it. And when she feels the criticism is sound, she does her best to correct—at least for the moment—the faults that have prompted it. Her devotion to her mother—"Mamochka"—herself an attractive, voluble, and highly emotional woman, is touching and sometimes a shade pathetic. Toumanova's whole life, career, and story have been, for the most part, the thrice-familiar tale of the White Russian *émigré*. Like all *émigré* stories, hers is extremely sentimental. Sentiment and sentimentality play a big part in Tamara's life.

She is, I feel, unbreakable, unquenchable. She is, in her maturity, even more beautiful than she was as a "baby

ballerina." She is, I suppose, precisely the popular conception of what a glamorous *ballerina* is, or at least should be. Her personality is that of a complete theatrical extrovert. The last row of the gallery is her theatre target. Hers is not a subtle personality. It is a sort of motion picture idea of a *ballerina assoluta*, a sort of reincarnation of the fascinating creatures from whose carriages adoring balletomanes unhitched the horses and hauled them to Maxim's for supper, dining the course of which the creatures were toasted in vintage champagne drunk from slippers. It doesn't really matter that her conception is a bit dated. With Toumanova it is effective.

Tamara's conception of the ballerina in these terms is deliberate. She admits her desire is to smash the audience as hard as she can. With her a straight line is veritably the shortest distance between two points, and no *ballerina* makes the distance between herself and her audience so brief. This conception has been known to lead to overacting and to the ignoring of the colleagues with whom she is dancing at the time.

There is with her, as ever, great charm, an eager enthusiasm, and I am happy to say, a fine sense of loyalty. This is a quality I particularly appreciate. It has been shown to me on more than one occasion. When I brought the Paris Opera Ballet for the New York City Festival, Tamara was not nor had she been at that time a member of the Paris Opera Company. She barely knew Lifar, yet it was she who became his champion in New York. It was a calculated risk to her career which she took, because she respected Lifar as an artist, did not believe the stories about him, and was interested in fair play.

As I watch Toumanova today, I see but an extension in time, space and years of the "baby ballerina" in her adult personality; there is still an extravagant and dazzling glamor; there is still steely technique; there is still a childlike naivete about her, even when she tries to be ever

so sophisticated; everything about her is still dramatic and dramatized. And there is still "Mamochka," in constant attendance, helping, criticizing, urging; and although Tamara has been happily married for a decade or so, "Mamochka" is still the watchdog. Many ballet "mamas" are not only difficult, but some of them are overtly disliked. Toumanova's mother is another category. She has been at all times a fine and constructive help to Tamara, both with practical assistance and theoretical advice.

Tamara's approach to the dance is beautiful to observe. Her devotion to ballet amounts almost to a religion. Nothing under the sun is more important to her than her work, her attendance at lessons. Nothing ever is permitted to interfere with these.

I firmly believe that such is her concentration and devotion to her work that, if a fire were to break out backstage during a performance while Tamara was in the midst of her fabulous *fouetées*, she would continue with them, completely unperturbed, more intent on *fouetées* than on fire.

The Montreal discussions with the Ballet Theatre direction on the subject of guest stars produced no understanding of the situation; only the tiresomely reiterated, "It's a sacrilege! It's a crime!"

What was a "crime" then, was a sheer necessity. Let us look, for a moment, at the Ballet Theatre situation today, after it is no longer under my management, but entirely on its own, responsible for its own destiny. During the last year of our association, following the resignation of J. Alden Talbot as managing director, as I have pointed out, Lucia Chase, who pays the bills, and Oliver Smith became joint managing directors. They were running the company when we came to a parting of the ways. It was they who protested most bitterly over the guest-star system. Now, with the company, after thirteen years of existence, presumably established, Miss Chase is firmly perpetrating

the same "crime" herself. I certainly do not object to it. But surely what was a "sacrilege," what was a "crime" at the time I was responsible for their perpetration, must, now that the Ballet Theatre is on its own, no longer be either sacrilegious or criminal.

Another recurring trouble source and the cause of many a contentious discussion was the question of new productions. The arguments and conferences over them were seemingly endless. Now the question of new productions is one of the most vital and important in ballet management, and one of the most pressing. All ballet management contracts call for a ballet company to supply a certain number of new works each year. The reason for this is that there must be a constant flow of new ballets in a repertoire in order to attract the attention of both the critics and the public. Standard works form the core of any repertoire and at least one is necessary on every programme. But ballet itself, in order to keep from becoming stagnant, must refresh itself by constantly expanding its repertoire. Frequently, in contrast to the undying classics, nothing can be deader than last years "novelty." My contractual arrangement provides that the management shall have the right either to accept or reject new work as being acceptable or otherwise.

As time went on, many of the new works produced, some of which were accepted by me against my sounder judgment, proved, as I feared, to be unacceptable to the general public throughout the country. It should be clearly understood that ballet cannot live on New York alone. America is a large continent, and the hinterland audiences, while lacking, perhaps, some of the quality of sophistication of metropolitan audiences, are highly selective and quite as critical today as are their New York counterparts. A New York success is by no means an assurance of a like reception in Kalamazoo or Santa Barbara. Ballet needs both Santa Barbara and Kalamazoo,

as it needs New York. The building of repertoire should be the joint task of the company direction and the management—since their desired ends are the same, viz., the successful continuation of the organization. Repertoire is a responsible and exceedingly demanding task.

It certainly required no clairvoyance on my part to discern a very definite antagonism toward any repertoire suggestions I offered. Certain types of ballets were badly needed and were not forthcoming. Perhaps I can most clearly illustrate my point by recapitulating the Ballet Theatre repertoire at the time we parted company.

There were: Fokine's heritage—*Les Sylphides*, *Carnaval*, (no longer in repertoire), *Petroushka* (no longer in repertoire), *Spectre de la Rose* (no longer in repertoire), plus two creations, *Bluebeard*, and *Russian Soldier* (no longer in repertoire). Andrée Howard had staged *Death and the Maiden* and *Lady Into Fox* (both dropped before I took over the company). Bronislava Nijinska had revived *La Fille Mal Gardée* and *The Beloved One* (no longer in the repertoire). Anton Dolin had revived *Swan Lake*, *Giselle* (now performed in a Balanchine version), *Princess Aurora* (now touched up by Balanchine), and had created *Quintet* (dropped after the first season), *Capriccioso* (dropped in the second season), *Pas de Quatre* (now done in a version by Keith Lester), and *Romantic Age* (no longer in the repertoire). Leonide Massine had revived *The Fantastic Toy Shop*, *Capriccio Espagnol*, and *The Three-Cornered Hat* (all out of repertoire). He had produced three new works, *Don Domingo*, *Aleko*, and *Mlle. Angot*, none of which was retained in the repertoire. Antony Tudor had revived *The Lilac Garden*, *Judgment of Paris*, *Dark Elegies*, *Gala Performance*, and had produced *Pillar of Fire*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Dim Lustre*, and *Undertow*, none of which remain. Agnes de Mille had produced *Black Ritual*, *Three Virgins and a Devil*, and *Tally-Ho*, none of which is actively in the repertoire. José Fernandez had

produced a Spanish work, *Goyescas*, which lasted only the first season. David Lichine had revived *Graduation Ball*, and had produced *Helen of Troy* and *Fair at Sorotchinsk* (the latter no longer in repertoire). Adolph Bolm had revived his *Ballet Mecanique* (first season life only), produced *Peter and the Wolf*, a perennial stand-by, and the short-lived version of *Firebird*. John Taras had contributed *Graziana*, and Simon Semenoff a version of *Coppélia* and *Gift of the Magi*, neither of the three existing today. Jerome Robbins's *Fancy Free* and *Interplay* remain while his *Facsimile* has been forgotten. Balanchine had revived *Apollo*, *Errante*, and had produced *Waltz Academy*, all of which have disappeared.

In order to save the curious reader the trouble of any computation, this represents a total of fifty-one ballets either produced during my association with Ballet Theatre or else available at the time we joined hands. From this total of fifty-one, a round dozen are performed, more or less, today. A cursory glance will reveal that the repertoire was always deficient in classical works. They are the backbone of ballet. It is to be regretted that the Tudor ballets, which were the particular glory of Ballet Theatre, have been lost to the public.

I shall not labor the point of our differences, save to cite one work as an example. That is the production of *Firebird*. This was the first Stravinsky ballet for Diaghileff, and was first revealed in Fokine's original production at the Paris Opera in the Diaghileff season of 1910, with Tamara Karsavina in the title role, Fokine himself as the handsome Tsarevich, Enrico Cecchetti as the fearsome Kastchei, and Vera Fokina as the beautiful Tsarevna whom the Tsarevich marries at the end. In later productions Adolph Bolm took Fokine's place as the Tsarevich. The original settings and costumes were by Golovine. For a later Diaghileff revival the immensely effective production by Nathalie Gontcharova was created. This was the

production revealed here by the de Basil company, a quite glorious spectacle.

Firebird had always been a popular work when well done. From a musical point of view it has been one of the most popular works in the Stravinsky catalogue, both in orchestral programmes and over the radio. One of the surest ways to attract the public to ballet is through musical works of established popularity. This does not mean works that are cheap or vulgar, for vulgarity and popularity are by no stretch of the imagination synonymous: it means *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Schéhérazade*, *Coppélia*, *Petroushka*, *Firebird*—I mention only a few—the music of which has become familiar, well-known, and loved through the medium of radio and gramophone recordings. This is the music that brings people to ballets of which it is a part.

Miss Chase was flatly opposed to *Firebird*. Her co-director had no choice but to follow her lead. I was insistent that *Firebird* be given as one of the new productions required under our contract for the season 1945-1946; and then the trouble began in earnest.

There were various dissident elements in the Ballet Theatre organization, as there are in all ballet companies. These elements had no very clear idea of what they wanted, or for what they stood. Their vision was cloudy, their aims vague, their force puny. The company lacked not only any artistic policy, but also a managing director capable of formulating one, and able to mould these various dissident elements into what Miss Chase liked to call her "organic whole."

With the exception of J. Alden Talbot and German Sevastianov, there had never been a managing director or manager worthy of the title or the post. During the Talbot regime, my relations with the Ballet Theatre were at their highest level. I always found Talbot helpful, understanding towards our mutual problems, cooperative, of assistance in

many ways. Because of his belief in the organization and his genuine love for ballet, Talbot gave his services as general manager without fee or compensation of any sort other than the pleasure of helping the company. It is almost entirely thanks to Talbot that *Fancy Free* achieved production. Talbot was also instrumental in founding and maintaining an organization known as *Ballet Associates*, later to become *Ballet Associates in America*, since the function of the society is to cultivate ballet in general in America in the field of understanding, and, more specifically and particularly, to encourage, promote and foster those creative workers whose artistic collaboration makes ballet possible, viz., choreographers, composers, and designers. The practical function of the society is very practical indeed, for it means finding that most necessary fuel: money. The organization, through the actively moving spirit of J. Alden Talbot, sponsored by substantial contributions no less than four Ballet Theatre productions: Tudor's *Pillar of Fire* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Agnes de Mille's *Tally-Ho*, and Dolin's *Romantic Age*. It was entirely responsible for Michael Kidd's *On Stage!*

A cultured, able gentleman of charm, taste, and sensitivity, J. Alden Talbot was the only person associated with Ballet Theatre direction able to give it a sound direction, since he was able not only to shape a definite policy, which is vastly important, but also to give it a sound business management.

Following Talbot's departure, there came frequent changes in management, changes seemingly made largely for purely personal reasons. At the time of the stresses and strains over the inclusion of *Firebird* into the repertoire, although Lucia Chase and Oliver Smith were the titular managing directors, there was no head to the organization and no director or direction, in fact. Actually, caprice was at the helm and Ballet Theatre had a flapping rudder, a faulty compass, with Chase and Smith taking turns at the

wheel trying to keep the badly listing ship into the wind. Acting as manager was a former stage-manager, without previous experience or any knowledge whatever of the intricate problems of business management. With the enthusiasm of an earnest Boy Scout, he commenced a barrage of bulletins and directives, and ludicrously introduced calisthenics classes for the dancers, complete with dumb-bells, down to the institution of his own conception of the "Stanislavsky" method of dramatic expression, the latter taking the form of setting the company to acting out charades on the trains while on tour.

Coincidental with this was increased intrigue and the outward expression of his theme song, which he chanted to all within earshot, the burden of which was: "How can we get rid of Hurok? How can we get rid of Hurok? Who needs him?"

The question of the *Firebird* production was, as I have suggested, the most contentious and controversial of any that arose in my relationships with Ballet Theatre.

Firebird was hounded by troubles of almost every description, as each day upturned them. Its production was marked by disputes, aggravations, and untold difficulties from first to last. If history is to be believed, that sort of thing has been its lot from its inception in the Diaghileff days of 1910.

The Adolph Bolm production eventually reached the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House, after a series of vicissitudes, on the night of the 24th October, 1945, with Alicia Markova in the title role, and Anton Dolin in the role of Ivan Tsarevich, originally danced in the Diaghileff production by Michel Fokine.

The *Firebird* is an expensive work to produce; there are numerous scenes, each requiring its own setting and a large complement of costumes. In order to help overcome some of the financial problems involved, I agreed with Ballet

Theatre to contribute a certain sum to the cost of production. I shall have something more to say about this a bit later.

As for the work itself, I can only say that the conception and the performance were infinitely superior to that which, in these latter days, is given by the New York City Ballet, to which organization, as a gesture, I gave the entire production for a mere token payment so far as the original costs to me were concerned.

Under my contractual arrangements with Ballet Theatre, the organization was obligated to provide a new second ballet for the season. I felt *Firebird* had great audience-drawing possibilities. Ballet Theatre insisted *Firebird* was too expensive to produce and countered with the suggestion that Antony Tudor would stage a work on the musical base of Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*. While this work would have been acceptable to me, I could discover no evidence that it was in preparation.

Pursuing the matter of *Firebird*, Ballet Theatre informed me they were not in a position to expend more than $15,000 in any production. I suggested they prepare careful estimates on the cost of *Firebird*. This was done—at least, they showed me what purported to be estimates—and these indicated the costs would be something between $17,000 and $20,000. Therefore, in order to ease their financial burden, I offered to pay the costs of the production in excess of $15,000, but not to exceed $5,000. And so it was, at last, settled.

We had all agreed on a distinguished Russian painter, resident in Hollywood, a designer of reputation, who not only had prepared a work for Ballet Theatre, but whose contributions to ballet and opera with other organizations had been considerable.

Despite these arrangements, as time went on, there were definite indications that *Firebird* would not be ready for

the opening date at the Metropolitan Opera House, which had been agreed upon. No activity concerning it was apparent, and Adolph Bolm, its choreographer, was still in Hollywood. On the 15th September, I addressed an official letter to Ballet Theatre concerning the delay.

While no reply to this was forthcoming, I subsequently learned that, without informing the original designer who had been engaged and contracted to design the scenery and costumes, and who had finished his task and had turned his designs over to the scene painters, without informing the choreographer, without informing me, Ballet Theatre had surreptitiously engaged another designer, who also was at work on the same subject. We were now faced with two productions of the same work which would, of course, require payment.

A telephone call from Ballet Theatre to one of my staff, however, added the interesting information that *Firebird* (in any production) would not be presented until I paid them certain moneys. The member of my staff who received this message, quite rightly refused to accept the message, and insisted it should be in writing.

It was not until the 23rd October, the day before the work was scheduled to be produced, that Oliver Smith, of the Ballet Theatre direction, threatened officially to delay the production of *Firebird* until I paid them the sum they demanded. In other words, Ballet Theatre would not present the Stravinsky work, and it would not open, unless I paid them $11,824.87 towards its costs. These unsubstantiated costs included those of *both* productions, all in the face of my definite limitation of $5,000 to be paid on *one* production, since it was impossible to imagine that there would be *two* of them.

Here was an ultimatum. The Metropolitan Opera House was already sold out to an audience expecting to see the new *Firebird*. All-out advertising and promotion had been directed towards that event. The ultimatum was, in effect,

no money, no production.

It was, in short, a demand for money under duress, for which there is a very ugly word. At any rate, here was a *bona fide* dispute, a matter to be discussed; and I suggested that Ballet Theatre submit the matter to arbitration, both disputants agreeing, of course, to be bound by the arbiter's decision.

Lucia Chase, Oliver Smith, and Ballet Theatre's new general manager refused to submit the matter to arbitration. The ultimatum remained: no money, no performance. The sold-out house had been promised *Firebird*. The public was entitled to see it.

I paid them $11,824.87, the sum they demanded, under protest, noting this money was demanded and paid under duress. *Firebird* had its first performance the next night, as scheduled. Meanwhile, the dress-rehearsal that afternoon had been marked by a succession of scenes that can only be characterized as disgraceful, the whole affair being conducted in an atmosphere of tensity, ill-feeling, carping, with every possible obstacle being placed in the way of a satisfactory performance and devoid of any spirit of cooperation.

It soon became apparent to me that the troubles attendant upon the *Firebird* production were merely symptomatic of something much larger, something much more sinister; something that was, in effect, a conspiracy to break the contract between us, a contract which was to continue for yet another season.

I learned through reliable sources that Ballet Theatre was surreptitiously attempting to secure bookings on their own with some of the local managers with whom I had booked them in the past, and with whom I was endeavoring to make arrangeents for them for the ensuing season. On the 28th February, I served official notice on the directorate of Ballet Theatre calling upon them to cease

this illegal and unethical practice, and, at the same time, notified all managers of my contract with the organization.

It was early in our 1946 spring engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House, and I was working alone one evening in my office. It was late, the staff having long since left, and I continued at my desk until it was time for me to leave for the Metropolitan Opera House. I had not dined, intending to have a bite in Sherry's Bar during one of the intervals. As I was crossing the by now deserted and partly darkened lower lobby of my office building, a stranger lunged forward from the shadows and thrust a sheaf of papers into my hand, then hurried into the street. Surprised, astonished, puzzled, I returned to my office to examine them.

The papers were a summons and complaint from Ballet Theatre. Although my contract with the organization had another year still to run, Lucia Chase and Oliver Smith were attempting to cancel the contract in mid-season. The grounds on which the action was based, as were subsequently proved, had no basis in fact.

But the company was slipping. It had no policy, no one capable of formulating or maintaining one. It was losing valuable members of its personnel, some of whom could no longer tolerate the whims and capriciousness of "Dearie," as Chase was dubbed by many in the company. Jerome Robbins had gone his way. Dorati, who gave the organization the only musical integrity and authority it had, had departed. Others, I knew, were soon to be on their way. Dry rot was setting in. As matters stood, with the direction as it was, I had no assurance of any permanent survival for it. The company continued from day to day subject to the whims of Lucia Chase. The result was insecurity for the dancers, with all of them working with a weather-eye peeled for another job. One more season of this company, I felt, and I would be responsible for dragging a corpse about the country, unless, of course, I

should myself become a corpse.

Ballet Theatre's lawyers and my trusted counsel of many years' standing, Elias Lieberman, arranged a settlement of our contract. Among its clauses was a proviso that the properties for *Firebird* remained my property, together with a cash payment to me of $12,000.

When the final papers were signed, we all shook hands. The parting between us may be described as "friendly."

* * *

What the future of Ballet Theatre may be, I have no way of knowing. I am not a prophet; I am a manager. Ballet Theatre's subsequent career has not been particularly eloquent; not especially fortunate. There has been a period when there was no ballet season, with the decision to spend a "sabbatical" coming so late that many artists were left with no employment at a time of the year when all other possibilities for work with other companies had been exhausted. My own feeling, while wishing them well, is that, so long as Ballet Theatre continues to have no categorical policy or practice, and so long as it attempts to continue with expediency dictating its equivocal programme, its future is circumscribed. It is an axiom that a ballet company's character is determined by the personality of its director.

However many collaborators Miss Chase may have on paper, Ballet Theatre is and will remain her baby. Co-directors, advisory boards, even the tax-exempt, non-profit organization called Ballet Theatre Foundation, formed in 1947, as a "sponsoring" group, do not alter the fact that Miss Chase is its sponsor. She pays the piper and the organization will dance to his melody. Sponsoring groups of the type I have mentioned have little value or meaning today. Ballet will not achieve health by dripping economic security down from the top. The theory that propping can be done by this method of dripping props from the top,

does not mean from the top of ballet, but, hopefully, from the top of the social and financial worlds.

Healthy ballet cannot come, in my opinion, from being treated as an outlet or excuse for parties, nor from parties as an adjunct to ballet. The patronage of the social world in such organizations is practically meaningless today. It was useful, in bygone days, to have a list of fancy names out of the Blue Book as patrons. The large paying audience which ballet must have, and which I have developed through the years, certainly pays no attention to social patronage today. As a matter of fact, I suspect they resent it. The only people conceivably impressed by such a list of names would be a handful of social climbers and society columnists. The only patrons worth the ink to print their names are those who pay for tickets at the box-office, average citizens, even as you and I.

Ballet cannot pay for itself, for new productions, for commissioned works, by its box-office takings, any more than can opera or symphony orchestras. The only future I can see is some form of Government subsidy for ballet and the other arts. Some of our leading spirits in the fields of art are opposed to this idea. This is difficult for me to understand. I cannot conceive how there could be any hesitancy on that score. We know that in Great Britain and in most countries of Europe the arts, including ballet, are subsidized by the Government. These countries are not Communist-dominated. Here in the United States many big businesses are subsidized by the Government in one form or another, at one time or another. There are the railways, the airlines, the shipping companies, the mine subsidies, the oil subsidies—and the something like twenty-seven-and-one-half percent deduction allowed annually on new buildings erected is also a form of subsidy.

In the United States only the arts and the artists are taboo when it comes to Government help. I do not suggest that any of the arts should be dependent upon charity,

either by individuals or foundations. I feel it is the plain duty of Government and of the lawmakers to finance and subsidize the arts: ballet, orchestras, opera, painters, sculptors, writers, composers.

A country with the tremendous wealth we have should not have to depend on charity or hobbyists for the advancement of culture and cultural activities.

Since we still lack what I feel is the only proper form of cultural subsidy, we needs must get on as best we can with the private hobbyist support. In this respect, Lucia Chase has been an extremely generous sponsor of Ballet Theatre. I have said that a ballet company's character is determined by the personality of its director. I should like to add, by the personality of its sponsor as well. Let us look at the personality of Lucia Chase.

With a fortune compounded in unequal parts of Yonkers Axminster and Waterbury Brass, her largess has been tossed with what has seemed akin to reckless abandon. A lady of "middle years," she was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, one of several children of a member of the Chase Brass Company clan. A cultured lady, she went to the "right" finishing school, did the "right" things, and, it is said, early evinced an interest in singing and in the theatre. She married Thomas Ewing, to whom the sobriquet, "the Axminster carpet tycoon," has been applied. On his death, Miss Chase was left with a fortune and two sons. Her distraction over the loss of her husband, so it is said, drove her to an early love as a possible means of assuaging her grief, viz., the dance. She took ballet lessons from Mikhail Mordkin; financed the newly formed Mordkin Ballet; in 1937, became its *prima ballerina*. So far as the record reveals, her debut was made in the Brass City of her birth, in no less a role than the Princess Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty*.

As a dancer, she is an excellent comedienne; yet for years she fancied herself as a classical *ballerina*. Her

insistence on dancing in such ballets as *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Giselle*, *Pas de Quatre*, *Petroushka*, *Princess Aurora*, and most of all, *Les Sylphides*, was so regrettable that it raises the question that, if she is so unconscious of her own limitations as a dancer, what are her qualifications for the directorship of a ballet company?

At the beginning of every venture, at the inception of every new idea, Lucia Chase bursts with a remarkable, pulsating enthusiasm. Then, after a time, turning a deaf ear to the voice of experience, and discovering to her astonishment that things have not worked out as she expected, she sulks, tosses all ideas of policy aside, and then turns impatiently and impulsively to something that is in the way of a new adventure. Off she goes on a new tack. Eagerly and rashly she grasps frantically at the next idea or suggestion forthcoming from any one who is, at that moment, in favor. So, she thinks, this time I have got it!... The pattern repeats itself endlessly and expensively.

It started thus, with her financing of the Mordkin Ballet, before the days of Ballet Theatre. With the Mordkin Ballet, aside from financing it, she danced; danced the roles of only the greatest *ballerinas*. This pleasure she had. So far as operating a ballet company is concerned, she still leaps about without a policy, and each time the result seems unhappily to follow the same disappointing pattern.

Above all, Lucia Chase has what amounts to sheer genius for taking the wrong advice and for surrounding herself with, for the most part, inexperienced, unqualified, and mediocre advisers. Her most successful years were those when, by happy chance rather than by any design, the organization was managed and directed by the able J. Alden Talbot, informed gentleman of taste and business ability. It was during the Talbot regime that Miss Chase had her smallest deficits and Ballet Theatre attained its period of highest achievement.

When left to her own devices, Miss Chase is, so far as

policy is concerned, uncertain, undetermined, irresolute, and meandering. The future of Ballet Theatre as a serious institution in our cultural life is questionable, in my opinion, because Miss Chase, after all these years, has not yet learned how to conduct or discipline a ballet company; has not learned that important policy decisions are not made because of whims. Because of these things, the organization as it stands, possesses no real and firm basis for sound artistic achievement, progress, or permanence. There is no indication of personality, or color, or any real authority in the company's conduct. More and more there are indications or intimations of some sort of middle-of-the-road policy—if it really is policy and not a temporary whim; even so there is no indication whatsoever of the destination towards which the vehicle is bound.

With lavish generosity, Lucia Chase has spent fantastic sums of money on Ballet Theatre and on its predecessor, the Mordkin Ballet. Since Ballet Theatre is a non-profit organization and corporation, a substantial part of this money may be said to be the taxpayer's money, since it is tax-exempt. Since the ultimate aim of the organization has not been attained, since it has not assumed aesthetic responsibility, or respected vital tradition, or preserved significant masterpieces of every style, period, and origin, as does an art museum, and as was announced and avowed to be its intention; since it has not succeeded in educating the masses for ballet; it must be borne in mind that the remission of taxes in such cases is largely predicated upon the educational facets of such an organization whose taxes are remitted.

I would be the last person to deny that Miss Chase has made a contribution to ballet in our time. To do so would be ridiculous. But I do insist that, whatever good she has done, almost invariably she has negated it and contradicted it by an impulsive capriciousness.

11. Indecisive Interlude: De Basil's Farewell and A Pair of Classical Britons

WITH Ballet Theatre gone its own way, I was placed in a serious predicament. According to a long established and necessary custom, bookings throughout the country are made at least a season in advance. This is imperative in order that theatres, halls, auditoriums may be properly engaged and so that the local managers may arrange their series, develop their promotional campaigns, sell their tickets, thus reducing to as great an extent as possible the element of risk and chance involved.

Since my contract with Ballet Theatre had had one more year to run, the transcontinental bookings for the Ballet Theatre company had been made for the entire season. It was necessary for me to keep faith with the local managers who had built their seasons around ballet and, since local managers have faith both in me and in the quality of the ballet I present, I was on a spot. The question was: what to do?

Something had to be done to fulfil my obligations. I had no regrets about the departure of Ballet Theatre, other than that personal wrench I always feel at parting company with something to which I have given so much of myself. The last weeks with Ballet Theatre added nothing but trouble. There was a ludicrous contretemps in the nation's capital. Jascha Horenstein, for some reason known only to himself, put down his baton before the beginning of the long coda at the end of *Swan Lake*, and walked out of the pit. As he departed, he left both the dancers and the National Symphony Orchestra players suspended in mid-air, with another five minutes left for the climax of the ballet. As a consequence, the performance ended in a debacle.

Matters balletic were in a bad way. It is times such as these that present me with a challenge. There is no easy solution; and frequently, almost usually, such solutions as there are, are reached by trial and error. This was no exception.

I began the trial and error period by building up, as an experiment, the Markova-Dolin company, with a group of dancers, including André Eglevsky and soloists, together with a *corps de ballet* largely composed of Ballet Theatre personnel that had broken away because of dissatisfaction of one sort or another. In addition to Markova, Dolin, and Eglevsky, the company included Margaret Banks, a Sadler's Wells trained dancer from Vancouver, Roszika Sabo, Wallace Siebert, and others, with young John Taras as choreographer and ballet-master. The reader who has come this far will realize some of the problems involved in building up a repertoire. Here we were, starting from scratch.

The two basic works were a *Giselle*, staged by Dolin, with Markova in her best role, and *Swan Lake*. In staging the second act of *Swan Lake*, Dolin used a setting designed by the Marquessa de Cuevas for the International Ballet. Dolin also mounted the last act of *The Nutcracker*. John Taras staged a suite of dances from Tchaikowsy's *Eugene Onegin*; and the balance of the repertoire was made up from various classical excerpts.

Milwaukee, Chicago, and Detroit were selected as try-out towns in the spring of 1946. The celestial stars that hung over the experiment cannot be called benign. The well-worn adage that it never rains but it pours, was hardly ever better instanced than in this case. It was the spring of the nation-wide railway strike, and the dates of our performances coincided with it. By grace of the calendar we managed to get the company to Milwaukee, where the company's first performances were given at the old Pabst Theatre. By interurban street-car and trucks we got the

company to the Chicago Opera House. There the difficulties multiplied. Owing to the firm restrictions placed upon the use of electricity in public places, in order to conserve the dwindling coal supply, it was impossible to light the Opera House auditorium or foyers, which were swathed in gloom, broken only by faint spots of dull glow emanating from a few oil lanterns. The current for the stage lighting was supplied from a United States Coast Guard vessel, which we had, with great difficulty, persuaded to move along the river side of the Opera House, to the engine-room of which vessel we ran cables from the stage. The ship could generate just enough "juice" for stage purposes only. That "just enough" might have been precisely that in computed wattage; but it was direct current. Our lighting equipment operated on alternating current, and, by the time the "juice" was converted, the actual power was limited to the point that, try as the technical staff did, the best we were able to obtain was a sort of passable low visibility on the stage.

To add to the general fun, the Coast Guard vessel broke loose from its moorings, floated across the Chicago River, destroyed some pilasters of the *Chicago Daily News* and jammed the Randolph Street drawbridge of the City of Chicago, adding to the general confusion, to say nothing of the costs.

When it came time for the company to move to Detroit, no trains were running, and buses and trucks would not cross state lines. It took some master-minding on the part of our staff to arrange to have the company, baggage cars and all, attached to a freight train, which was carrying permitted perishable fruits and vegetables. In Detroit, the slump had set in. The feeling of depression engendered by the darkened buildings and streets, the dimly-lighted theatres, the murk of stygian restaurants, together with the fact that the Detroit engagement had to be played at one of the "legitimate" theatres rather than at the Masonic Temple

which, for years, had been the local home for ballet, played havoc with the engagement; people, bewildered by the situation, one which was as darkness is to light, were discouraged and daunted. They remained away from the theatre in droves and the losses were fantastic.

Using the word in the best theatrical sense and tradition, it was a catastrophe. Perhaps it was as well that it was; somehow I cannot entirely reject the conviction that things more often than not work out for the best, for as the company and the repertoire stood, it would not fill the bill. Nor was there anything like sufficient time to build either a company or a repertoire.

The projected Markova-Dolin company was placed in mothballs. The problems, so far as the ensuing season was concerned, remained critical.

The Markova-Dolin combination was to emerge later in a different form. For the present it marked time, while I pondered the situation, with no solution in sight.

At this crucial moment an old friend, Nicholas Koudriavtzeff, entered the picture. An American citizen of long standing, by birth he was a member of an old aristocratic Russian family. His manner, his life, his thinking are Continental. A man of fine culture, he is an idealistic business man of the theatre and concert worlds; a gentle, kind, able person, with an irresistible penchant for getting himself involved, for swimming in waters far beyond his depth, largely because of his idealism, together with his warmheartedness and his gentleness. It is this very gentleness, coupled with a certain softness, that makes it almost impossible for him to say “no” to anyone.

He is married to a former Diaghileff dancer and de Basil soloist, Tatiana Lipkovska. They divide their homes between New York and Canada, where he is one of the leading figures in Montreal’s musical-balletic life, and where, on a gracious farm, he raises glorious flowers,

fruits, and vegetables for the Montreal market. His wife, in her ballet school, passes on to aspiring pupils the sound tradition of the classical dance. Koudriavtzeff had been mixed up in ballet, in one capacity or another, for years. There was a time when he suffered from that contagious and deplorable infliction: ballet gossip, in which he was a practiced practitioner; but there are indications that he is well on his way to recovery. He is a warm friend and a good colleague.

Koudriavtzeff and I have something, I suspect, in common. Attracted and attached to something early in life, a concept is formed, and we become a part of that idea. From this springs a sort of congenital optimism, and we are inclined to feel that, whatever the tribulations, all will somehow work out successfully and to the happiness of all concerned. In this respect, I put myself into the same category. I strongly suspect I am infected with the same virus as Koudriavtzeff.

One of my real pleasures is to linger over dinner at home. It is no particular secret that I am something of a gourmet and I know of no finer or more appropriate place to enjoy good food than at home. So, it is with something of the sense of a rite that I try, as often as the affairs of an active life permit, sometime between half-past six and seven in the evening to have a quiet dinner at home with Mrs. Hurok.

The telephone bell, that prime twentieth century annoyance, interrupted, as it so often does, the evening's peace.

"Won't they let you alone?" was Mrs. Hurok's only comment.

It was Koudriavtzeff.

"Call me back in half an hour." I said.

He did.

"I should like to talk with you, Mr. Hurok," he said in

the rather breathless approach that is a Koudriavtzeff conversational characteristic.

Since he was already talking, I suggested he continue—over the telephone. But no, this was not possible, he said. He must talk to me privately; something very secret. Could he come to my home, there and then? Was it a matter of business? I inquired. It was. I demurred. I had had enough of business for one day.

However, there was such urgency in Koudriavtzeff's voice, after making due allowance for an almost perpetual urgency with Koudriavtzeff, even in discussing the weather, that I agreed. He must have telephoned from a booth round the corner, for Koudriavtzeff arrived, breathless, almost as soon as I had put down the instrument.

We sat down over a glass of tea. For a few minutes the conversation concerned itself with generalities. Since I did not feel especially social, I brought the talk around to particularities.

"Well, what can I do for you?" I inquired.

The story came pouring out like water from a burst dam. It developed, as I pieced it together, that Koudriavtzeff was trying to make certain bookings for de Basil's Original Ballet Russe on the way back from South America. Although there were some bookings, he had not been able to secure sufficient dates and, under the arrangement he had made with the "Colonel," Koudriavtzeff was obliged to deliver. That was not all. Not only was he short with dates; he did not have the means with which to make the necessary campaign, even if he had obtained the dates.

I pondered the situation.

"Is de Basil in South America?" I asked.

"No," replied Koudriavtzeff. "He is here in New York."

Somehow, I could not regard this as good news.

I pondered the matter again.

After all I had gone through with this man, I asked myself, why should I continue to listen to Koudriavtzeff? If ever there was a time when I should have said, firmly, unequivocally "to hell with ballet," it was at this moment. But I continued to listen.

With one ear I was listening to the insistent refrain: "To hell with ballet." With the other, I was harking to my responsibilities to the local managers, to my lease with the Metropolitan Opera House.

Koudriavtzeff proceeded with his rapid-fire chatter. From it one sentence came sharp and dear:

"Will you please be so kind, Mr. Hurok? Will you, please, see de Basil?"

It could have been that I was not thinking as clearly and objectively as I should have been at that moment.

I agreed.

The next evening, de Basil, Koudriavtzeff, and I met.

Mrs. Hurok sounded the warning.

"I don't object to your seeing him," she said, "but you're not going in with him again?"

The meetings were something I kept from the knowledge of my office for several days.

As I have pointed out before, de Basil was a Caucasian. The Caucasians and the Georgians have several qualities in common, not the least of which is the love of and desire for intrigue, coupled with infinite patience, never-flagging energy, and nerves of steel. It was perfectly possible for de Basil to sit for days and nights on end, occasionally uttering a few words, silent for long, long periods, but waiting, patiently waiting. It is these alleged virtues that make the Caucasians the most efficient and successful members of those bodies whose job it is to practice the delicate art of the third-degree: the O.G.P.U., the N.K.V.D.

I had agreed to meet de Basil, and now I was in for it.

There was one protracted meeting after another, with each seeming to merge, without perceptible break, into the next. The "Colonel" had a "heart," which he coddled; he brought with him his hypochondriacal collection of "pills," some of which were for his "heart," some for other uses. With their help, he managed to keep wide awake but impassive through night after night. Discussion, argument; argument, discussion. As the conferences proceeded, de Basil reinforced his "pills" with his lawyers, this time the omnipresent Lidji and Asa Sokoloff.

No one could be more aware of the "Colonel's" inherent avoidance of honesty or any understandable code of ethics than I, yet he invariably commenced every conversation with: "Now if you will only be sincere and serious with me...."

Always it was the other fellow who was insincere.

Nearly all these meetings took place in the upper Fifth Avenue home of a friend of de Basil's, a former *Time* magazine associate editor, where he was a house-guest. I cannot imagine what sort of home life he and his wife could have had during this period when, what with the long sessions and the constant comings and goings, the place bore a stronger resemblance to a committee room adjacent to an American political convention than a quiet, conservative Fifth Avenue home. Not only was the place crowded with antiques, for de Basil's host was a "collector," but the "Colonel" had piled these pieces one on the top of another to turn the place into a warehouse. It was during the after-war shortage of food in Europe, whither the "Colonel" was repairing as soon as he could.

Here, in his host's home, the "Colonel" had opened his own package and shipping department. Box upon box, crate upon crate of bulky foods: mostly spaghetti. All sorts of foods: cost cheap, bulk large.

This was the first time in my ballet career that I had

written down a repertoire on cases of spaghetti. As these meetings continued, and took the toll of human patience and endurance, we were joined by my loyal adjutant, Mae Frohman, who was served a sumptuous dish of not particularly tasty but certainly very filling Russo-Caucasian-Georgian-Bulgarian negotiations.

It is not to be supposed that this period was brief. It went on for nearly three weeks, day and night.

One night progress was made; but before morning we were back where we started. Miss Frohman begged me to call off the entire business, to get out of it while the getting was good. The more she saw and heard, the more certain she was that her intuition was right; this was something to be given a wide berth. But I was in it now. There was no going back.

Time, however, was running out. I had booked passage to fly to Europe. The date approached, as dates have a way of doing, until we reached the day before my scheduled departure. Mrs. Hurok remonstrated with me over the whole business.

"What good can come from this?" she protested. "Are you mad?"

Perhaps I was.

"What are you trying to do?" she went on. "Trying to kill yourself?"

Perhaps I was.

It was not a matter of trying; but it could be.

While de Basil was working his way back from South America with his little band, he managed to secure another engagement in Mexico City. It was there that that interesting figure of the world of ballet and its allied arts, the Marquis de Cuevas, saw the de Basil organization. The Marquis, a colorful gentleman of taste and culture, is, perhaps, the outstanding example we have today of the sincere and talented amateur in and patron of the arts. He is

a European-American, despite his South American birth. He had a disastrous season of ballet in New York, in 1944, with his Ballet International, for which he bought a theatre, and lost nigh on to a million dollars in a two-months' season—which may, to date, be the most expensive lesson in how not to make a ballet. Today the Marquis's company functions as a part of the European scene. During his initial season in New York, he had created a reasonably substantial repertoire, including four works of quality I felt could be added to the de Basil repertoire in combination, in the event I succeeded in coming to terms with the "Colonel." These works were *Sebastian*, *The Mute Wife*, *Constantia*, and *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

After viewing the de Basil company in Mexico City, the Marquis had an idea that it might be wise for him to join up with the "Colonel." Returning to New York, the Marquis came to me to discuss the matter. I succeeded in dissuading him from investing and buying the worn-out scenery, costumes, and properties, which were, to all intents and purposes, valueless.

The Marquis departed for France. As the protracted negotiations with de Basil continued, I cabled the Marquis, informing him that I had parted with Ballet Theatre, and that I was negotiating with de Basil. Pointing out my obligations to the local managers, and to the Metropolitan Opera House, I asked the Marquis if he would participate, or contribute a certain amount of money, and add his repertoire to that of the "Colonel."

The final de Basil conference before my scheduled departure for Europe commenced early. The night wore on. We were again on the verge of reaching an agreement. By two o'clock in the morning the possibility had diminished and receded into the same vague, seemingly unattainable distance where it had so long rested. Then, shortly after four o'clock, the pieces suddenly all fell into place, with all of us, including Mae Frohman, in a state of complete

exhaustion, as the verbal agreement was reached. The bland, imperturbable, expressionless de Basil was the sole exception, at least to outward appearances.

Since my Europe-bound plane was departing within a few hours, it was necessary that all the voluminous documents be drawn up and signed before my departure. The lawyers, Lidji, Sokoloff, and my own legal adviser and friend, Elias Lieberman, worked on these as we sipped hot, black coffee, for the millionth time.

The sun was bright when we gathered round a table in the Fifth Avenue apartment where de Basil was a guest, and affixed our signatures.

It was six o'clock in the morning.

At twelve o'clock my plane rose over La Guardia and headed for Paris.

It was the first commercial plane to make the flight to Paris after the War. Mrs. Hurok, Mae Frohman, and Mr. and Mrs. Artur Rubinstein were at the field to wish me "bon voyage."

In Paris I met the Marquis and Marquessa de Cuevas, the latter a gracious lady of charm and taste. Food was short in Paris, hard to find, and of dubious quality. Somehow, the Marquessa had been able to secure a chicken from her farm outside Paris, and we managed a dinner. I explained the settlement I had made with de Basil to the Marquis, and urged his cooperation joining de Basil as Artistic Director, hoping that, as a result, something fine could be built, given time and patience. Such an arrangement would also permit at least some of the Marquis's repertoire from deteriorating in the store-house, and bring the works before a new and larger public.

Carerras, the manager for the Marquis at the time, was flatly opposed to de Cuevas cooperating in any way with the "Colonel," but eventually de Cuevas decided to do what, once again, proved to be the impossible, viz., to

collaborate with the Caucasian de Basil.

This much having been settled, I went on to London, where I saw the Sadler's Wells Ballet at Covent Garden for the first time; shortly afterwards I left for California, to spend a little time at my Beverly Hills home which I had maintained during the war.

On my arrival in California, there were messages from my office awaiting me. They were disturbing. Already troubles were brewing. The de Basil repertoire was in dubious condition. Something must be done, and at once. Moreover, despite de Basil's assurances, the repertoire was too small in size and was inadequately rehearsed. I left for New York by the first available plane.

On my arrival in New York, I quickly made arrangements to send John Taras, the young American who had been the choreographer and ballet-master for the Markova-Dolin experiment, to South America to whip the company into shape. With him went a group of American dancers to augment the personnel.

Meanwhile, as the days sped on, every conceivable difficulty arose over getting the de Basil company and its repertoire out of South America. There were financial troubles. As was so often the case, de Basil had no money. But he did have debts and other liabilities that had to be liquidated before the company could be permitted to move. One thing piled on another. When these matters had been straightened out, the climax came in the form of a general strike in Rio de Janeiro, with the situation out of hand and shooting in the streets. This prevented the company from embarking for New York; not only was it impossible for passengers to board the ship, but neither scenery, properties, nor luggage could be loaded. Further delay meant that they could not arrive in New York in time for the mid-October opening at the Metropolitan Opera House, which I had had engaged for months, and for which season the advertising was in full swing, the promotional work

done.

Once again, fast action was necessary to save the situation. In New York we had the de Cuevas repertoire, but no company. By long distance telephone I got John Taras to leave Rio de Janeiro for New York by plane. I engaged yet another group of artists here in New York, and Taras, immediately upon his arrival, commenced rehearsals with this third group on the de Cuevas repertoire, in order to have something in readiness to fulfil my obligations in the event that the de Basil company was unable to reach New York in time for the opening. It was, at best, makeshift, but at least something would be ready. The season could open on time, and faith would be kept.

While these difficulties and problems were compounding, the "Colonel" was far from the South American battlefield. He was safely in New York, stirring up the already quite sufficiently troubled waters.

I was more firmly convinced than ever before that to have two closely-linked members of the same family in the same field of endeavor is bad. Two singers in one family, I submit, is very bad. Two dancers in one family is very, very bad. But when a manager or director of a ballet company has a wife who is a dancer in his own company —that is the worst of all.

These profound observations are prompted by the marital complications that provided the chief contentious bone of this period of stress. These marital arrangements were two in number. De Basil's first wife, who had divorced him, had married the company's choreographer, Vania Psota, the creator of the late and unlamented *Slavonika*, of early Ballet Theatre days, and both Psota and his wife were with the company, soon, I prayed, to arrive in New York. De Basil, already in town, had married Olga Morosova, one of the company's artists. This was an additional complication, for, although Morosova was only a soloist, upon her marriage she had immediately been

promoted to the role of the company's *prima ballerina*. All leading roles, de Basil insisted, must now be danced by her.

The arguments were almost continuous, and only a Caucasian could have endured them, unscarred. The battle raged.

To sum up, I should like to offer a word of caution. If you who read these lines are a dancer, do not marry the manager. It cuts both ways: if you are a manager, do not marry a dancer. If, by chance these lines are read by one who has ambitions to become a ballet manager, do not allow yourself any romantic connection with a dancer in the company. It simply does not work, and it is not good for ballet, or for you.

All of these continuing, persisting discussions served merely to speed the days. Opening night was drawing perilously near, coming closer and closer, while de Basil's company and repertoire were still being held in Rio de Janeiro by the general strike. The "Colonel" again needed money. Unless the money he required was forthcoming, strike or no strike, the company would not embark. Once again I was being held up, with the gun at my back; on legal advice and out of sheer necessity, the money was forthcoming.

This type of blackmail, the demand for money under duress, was threatening to become a habit in ballet, I felt. But, after all, if I sought to allocate blame for the situation, there was no one to whom it could be charged except myself. It was my own fault for having consented to listen to the siren voice of Koudriavtzeff in the first place. No one can make greater trouble for one, I believe, than one's own self. I had agreed to the whole unhappy business against the considered advice of all those in whom I had confidence and faith. There was nothing to be done but to see it through with as much grace as I could muster. I determined, however, to take stock. This time I was

certain. I was, at last, satisfied that when this season finished, I was finished with ballet. No more. Never again.

* * *

The de Basil crowd eventually arrived at a South Brooklyn pier, barely in time, on a holiday afternoon before the Metropolitan opening. The rush, the drive, the complicated business of clearing through customs promised more headaches, more heartaches, and yet more unforeseen expense. We now had two companies merged for the Metropolitan Opera House engagement. In this respect we had been fortunate, for the de Basil scenery and costumes were in a pitiable state of disrepair. Since there was neither sufficient time nor money for their rehabilitation, we provided both, and, meanwhile, had the advantage of the de Cuevas works.

De Basil had been able to make but few additions to his repertoire during the lean and long South American hegira. These were *Yara* and *Cain and Abel*. *Yara* had been choreographed by Psota, to a score by Francisco Mignone. It was a lengthy attempt to bring to the stage a Brazilian legend. It had striking sets and costumes by Candido Portinari, and little else. *Cain and Abel* was a juicy tid-bit in which David Lichine perpetrated a "treatment" of the Genesis tale to, of all things, cuttings and snippets from Wagner's *Die Götter-Dammerung*. It was a silly business.

The four works from the Marquis de Cuevas repertoire were given a wider public, and helped a bad situation. *Sebastian*, with an excitingly dramatic score by Gian-Carlo Menotti, his first for ballet, had been staged by Edward Caton, in a setting by Oliver Smith. It made for a striking piece of theatre. *The Mute Wife* was a light but amusing comedy, adapted by the American dancer-choreographer, Antonia Cobos, from the familiar tale by Anatole France, *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*, to Paganini melodies, principally his *Perpetual Motion*, orchestrated by Vittorio Rieti. The third work, *Constantia*, was a

classical ballet by William Dollar, done to Chopin's *Piano Concerto in F Minor*, enlisting the services of Rosella Hightower, André Eglevsky, and Yvonne Patterson. Its title, confusing to some, referred to Chopin's "Ideal Woman," Constantia Gladowska, to whom the composer dedicated the musical work.

Thanks to Ballet Associates in America, there was one new work. It was *Camille*, staged by John Taras, in quite unique settings by Cecil Beaton, for Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin. It was a balletic attempt to tell the familiar Dumas tale. In this case, the music, instead of being out of Traviata by Verdi to use stud-book terminology, consisted of Franz Schubert melodies, orchestrated by Vittorio Rieti. It was not the success one hoped and, after seeing a later one by Tudor, to say nothing of one by Dolin, I am more and more persuaded that *Camille* belongs to Dumas and Verdi, to Rachel and Sarah Bernhardt, not to ballet. There was also an unimportant but fairly amusing little *Pas de Trois*, for Markova, Dolin, and Eglevsky, set by Jerome Robbins to the *Minuet of the Will o' the Wisps*, and the *Dance of the Sylphs*, from Berlioz' *The Damnation of Faust*. It was a burlesque, highlighted by the use of a bit of the *Rákoczy March* as an overture, loud enough and big enough to suggest that a ballet company of gargantuan proportions was to be revealed by the rising curtain.

The trans-continental tour compounded troubles and annoyances with heavy financial losses. The Original Ballet Russe carried with it the heavy liability of a legend to a vast new audience. This audience had heard of the symphonic ballets; there were nostalgic tales told them by their elders about the "baby ballerinas," Toumanova, Baronova, Riabouchinska. There were no symphonic ballets. The "baby ballerinas" had grown up and were in other pastures. The repertoire and the interpretations revealed the ravages of time. Perhaps the truth was that legends have an unhappy trick of falling short of reality.

While the long tour was in progress, the Marquis de Cuevas was making arrangements with the Principality of Monaco for a season at Monte Carlo with his own company. Immediately on getting wind of this, the "Colonel" did his best to try to doublecross the Marquis. This time, the "Colonel" did not succeed. For several seasons, the de Cuevas company, under the title Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo, largely peopled with American dancers, including Rosella Hightower, Marjorie Tallchief, Jocelyn Vollmar, Ana Ricarda, and others, and under the choreographic direction of John Taras, functioned there. When his Monte Carlo contract was at an end, the name of the company was changed to the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas.

In 1951, the Marquis brought his company to New York for a season at the Century Theatre. It was completely unsuccessful, and while the losses were less than the initial American season, when it was called Ballet International, since there were no production costs to be met, much less a theatre to be bought, it was indeed an unfortunate occasion. The debacle, I believe, was not entirely the fault of the Marquis, since the entire season was mismanaged and mishandled from every point of view.

The long, unhappy tour of the Original Ballet Russe dragged its weary way to a close. Nothing I could imagine would be more welcome than that desired event. When it was all over, I was happy to see them push off to Europe. The losses I incurred were so considerable that it still is a painful subject on which to ponder, even from this distance of time. Suffice it to say they were very considerable.

The Original Ballet Russe had been living on its capital far too long. In London, in 1947, the "Colonel" made an attempt to reorganize his company. Clutching at straws, the shrewd "Colonel," I am sure, realized that if he had any chance for survival, it would be on the basis of a successful London season, scene of his first triumphs. For this

purpose, he formed a new company, since almost none of the original organization survived. It was a failure.

Nothing daunted, in 1951, he was preparing to try again. Death intervened, and Vassily Grigorievitch Voskresensky, better known to the world of ballet as Colonel W. de Basil, was gathered to his fathers. I was shocked but not surprised when the news reached me. He had, I knew, been living a devil-may-care existence. We had quarrelled, argued, fought. We had, on the other hand, worked together for a common end and with a common belief and purpose.

He was truly an incredible man.

I was enjoying a brief holiday at Evian when the news came to me, through mutual friends, that de Basil was seriously ill.

"I am going to Paris to see him and to do what I can," I told them.

The next day I was at lunch when there came a telephone call from Paris. It was his one-time agent, Mme. Bouchenet, to tell me, to my great regret, that de Basil had just died.

We had had our continuing differences, but his had been a labor of love; he had loved ballet passionately. He had been a truly magnificent organizer. May he rest in peace.

De Basil was, I suppose, technically an amateur in the arts; but he managed to do a great service to ballet. By one means or another, he formed a great ballet company. He had the vision to sponsor one of the most revolutionary steps in ballet history since the "romantic revolution": Massine's symphonic ballets. In the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, he succeeded in keeping a company of warring personalities together for years. On the financial side, still an amateur, without the benefit of many guarantees from social celebrities or industrial magnates, he managed to keep going. His methods were, to

say the least, unorthodox; he was amazing, fantastic, and, as I have said, incredible. He was no Diaghileff. He was de Basil. Diaghileff was a man of deep culture, vast erudition, an inspirer of all with whom he came into contact. De Basil was a sharp business man, a shrewd negotiator, an adroit manager. He was a personality. In the history of ballet, I venture to suggest, he will be remembered as the man who was the instrument by which and through which new life was instilled in the art of the ballet at a time when it was in dire danger of becoming moribund. Why and how he came to be that instrument is of little importance. The important thing is that he *was*.

At the time of de Basil's death little remained save a memory. For four seasons, at least, by reason of his instinct, his drive, his collaborators, he presented to ballet something as close to perfection as is possible to imagine. For that, all who genuinely love ballet should be grateful.

* * *

Although I heaved a sigh of relief when the "Colonel" and his ragtag-bobtail band clambered aboard the ship bound for Europe, there were still serious problems to be considered. The uppermost questions that troubled me were merely two parts of the same query: "Why should I go on with this ballet business?" I asked myself. "Haven't I done enough?"

Against any affirmative answer I could give myself, were arranged two facts: one, the magnetic "pull" ballet exerted upon me; two, the existence of a contract with the Metropolitan Opera House, which had to be fulfilled.

So it was that, in the autumn of 1947, that I gave a short season of ballet there. It was not a season of great ballets, but of great artists. The programmes centered about Alicia Markova, Anton Dolin, André Eglevsky.

From this emerged a dance-group company, compact, flexible, the Markova-Dolin Company, which toured the

country from coast to coast with a considerable measure of success. This was not, of course, ballet in the grand manner. It was chamber ballet; a dozen dancers, a small, well-chosen group of artists, together with a small orchestra and musical director. In addition to the two stars, the company included Oleg Tupine, Bettina Rosay, Rozsika Sabo, Natalia Condon, Kirsten Valbor, Wallace Siebert, Royes Fernandez, George Reich, with Robert Zeller, young American conductor, protegé of Serge Koussevitsky and Pierre Monteux, as Musical Director.

The repertoire included three new works: *Fantasia*, a ballet to a Schubert-Liszt score, with choreography by Bronislava Nijinska; *Henry VIII*, a ballet by Rosella Hightower, to music of Rossini, arranged by Robert Zeller, and costumes by the San Francisco designer, Russell Hartley; *Lady of the Camellias*, another balletic version of the Dumas tale, choreographed by Anton Dolin to portions of Verdi's *La Traviata*, arranged and orchestrated by Zeller; the Jerome Robbins *Pas de Trois*, to the *Damnation of Faust* excerpts, in costumes by the American John Pratt; and two classical works, viz., *Famous Dances from Tchaikowsky's The Nutcracker*, staged jointly by Markova and Dolin, with costumes by Alvin Colt; and *Suite de Danse*, a romantic group, including some of *Les Sylphides*, in the Fokine choreography; a Johann Strauss *Polka*, staged by Vincenzo Celli; *Pas Espagnole*, to music by Ravina, by Ana Ricarda; *Vestris Solo*, to music by Rossini, choreographed by Celli; and Dolin's delicious *Pas de Quatre*.

Henry VIII, Rosella Hightower's first full work as a choreographer, was no balletic masterpiece, but it provided Dolin with a part wherein, as the portly, bearded, greatly married monarch of Britain, he was able to dance and act in the great tradition of Red Coat, Devil of the Ukraine, Bluebeard, Gil Blas, Tyl Eulenspiegel, Sganarelle, Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford, and all the other picaresque

heroes of ballet, theatre, and literature. While Dolin, of course, confined himself to the choreographer's patterning, I should not have been surprised if he had resorted to falling over sofas, squirting Elizabethan soda water syphons in the face of Katherine Parr, or being carried off to the royal bedchamber in a complete state of intoxication.

While such an organization is far from ideal for the presentation of spectacular ballet, which must have a large company, eye-filling stage settings, and all the appurtenances of the modern theatre, since ballet is essentially a theatre art, it nevertheless permitted us to take a form of ballet to cities and towns where, because of physical conditions, the full panoply of ballet at its most glamorous cannot be given.

The highlight of this tour occurred at the War Memorial Opera House, in San Francisco, where, because of an unusual combination of circumstances, an extremely interesting collaboration was made possible. The San Francisco Civic Ballet, an organization that promised much in the way of a civic supported ballet company of national proportions, had just been formed, and with the cooperation of the San Francisco Art Commission, and with the full San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, was undertaking its first season. At its invitation, it was possible for us to combine its first productions with those of the Markova-Dolin company, and, in addition to the San Francisco Civic Ballet creations, a splendid production of *Giselle* was made, staged by Dolin, with Markova, according to all reports, including that of the informed critic, Alfred Frankenstein, giving one of the most remarkable interpretations of her long career in the title role. This tribute is the more remarkable, since *Giselle* is one of Frankenstein's "blind spots" in ballet. No critic is entirely free from bias or prejudice, and since even I admit that—countless examples to the contrary notwithstanding—the critic is also a human being, why should he be

utterly free from those very human qualities or defects, as the case may be?

The artists of the Markova-Dolin company supplemented the San Francisco company, with the local company supplying the production, the two groups merging for substantial joint rehearsal. I have said the San Francisco Civic Ballet promised much. It is to be regretted that means could not be forthcoming to insure its permanence. Its closing was the result of the lack of that most vital element, proper subsidy. These things shock me.

The Markova-Dolin company was no more the ultimate answer to my balletic problem than was the Original Ballet Russe. It was, however, something more than a satisfactory stop-gap; it was also a very pleasant association.

Markova and Dolin are a quite remarkable pair. For years their stars were congruent. Until recently there were indications that they had become one, a fixed constellation, supreme, serene, sparkling. Those gods in whose hands lie the celestial disposition have seen fit to shift their orbits so that now each goes his or her separate course. I, for one, cannot other than express my personal regret that this is so. One complemented the other. I would go so far as to say that one benefited the other. Both as individual artists and in partnership, the distinguished pair of Britons are an ornament to their art and to their native land.

ALICIA MARKOVA

Alicia Markova, *née* Lilian Alicia Marks, was born in London, 1st December, 1910. Her life has been celebrated in perhaps as many volumes and articles as any other *ballerina*, if for no other reason than that the English seem to burst into print about ballet and to encase their words between solid covers more extensively than any other people I know, not excluding the French. It is almost a

case of scratch an Englishman and you will find a ballet author. Because of this extensive bibliography, the details of Markova's career need not concern me here, save to establish the highlights in a public life that has been extraordinarily successful.

When Markova arrived in this country to join the Massine Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, she already had behind her a high position in British ballet; yet she was, in a sense, shy and naive. Her father had died when Alicia was thirteen. There were three other sisters, and an Irish mother, who had adopted orthodox Judaism on her marriage to Alicia's father, all in need of support. Alicia became the head of and bread-winner for the family. The mother worked hard at the business of being a mother, but kept away from the theatre's back-stage. The story of the family life of the mother and the four daughters sounds like a Louisa M. Alcott novel, with theatre innovations and variations.

Before she became a pupil at the Chelsea studio of Seraphina Astafieva, late of the Imperial and Diaghileff Ballets, little Alicia had been a principal in a London Christmas pantomime and had already been labeled "the miniature Pavlova." It was in this studio that her path crossed that of one Sydney Francis Patrick Chippendall Healey-Kay, soon to have his name truncated and changed to Anton Dolin by Serge Diaghileff. It was Dolin who brought Alicia Marks to Diaghileff's attention, not, however, without some difficulty. Dolin's conversations with Diaghileff about "the miniature Pavlova" brought only disgust from the great founder of modern ballet. The pretentiousness and presumptuousness of such a title roused only repugnance in the great man.

Eventually, Dolin succeeded in bringing Diaghileff to a party at the King's Road studio of Astafieva, where little Miss Marks, at fourteen, danced. As a result, Diaghileff changed Marks to Markova, dropped the Lilian, and took

her, with governess, into his company, detailing one of his current soloists, Ninette de Valois by name, to keep a weather-eye out for the child. Markova was on her way rapidly up the ladder, with two Balanchine creations under her *pointes*, *The Song of the Nightingale* and *La Chatte*, when Diaghileff died.

This meant a complete change of focus for Markova, in 1929. She earned a living for herself and her family for a time dancing in the English music halls, dancing for Marie Rambert's Ballet Club and the Camargo Society for buttons. After two years at Marie Rambert's Ballet Club, where Frederick Ashton took her in hand, as coach and teacher, adviser, and mentor extraordinary, she became the leading *ballerina* of the Vic-Wells Ballet, the predecessor of Sadler's Wells, where, under the overall guidance of Ashton and de Valois, she danced the first English *Giselle*, the full-length *Swan Lake*, and *The Nutcracker*. Dolin was a guest star of the Vic-Wells in those days; their stellar paths again intertwined as they had at Astafieva's studio, and in the Diaghileff Ballet.

In the fall of 1935, Dolin and Markova formed the Markova-Dolin Ballet, with a full repertoire of classical works, playing London and touring throughout Great Britain.

Markova, if she is honest, and I have no reason to believe she is not, should be the first to admit her profound debt to three persons in ballet: Anton Dolin, who has projected her, protected her, and occasionally pestered her; Frederick Ashton and Marie Rambert who, jointly and severally, encouraged, advised, and guided her.

In 1938, I was instrumental in having Markova join the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, where she competed with Danilova, Toumanova, and Slavenska. Her London triumph in our season at Drury Lane was not entirely unexpected. After all, she was dancing on her home stage. Her performance in *Giselle*, on 12th October, 1938, at the

Metropolitan Opera House, made history.

There was an element in the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo direction, of which Leonide Massine was not one, that was not at all pleased with the idea of having Markova with the company. Despite her great London success, Alicia decided she would be wise not to come to America.

Alicia and her mother, I remember, came to the Savoy to see me about this. Mrs. Hurok and I urged her to reconsider her decision. She was determined to resign from the company. She did not feel "at home" in the organization. Although "Freddy" Franklin, who had been a member of the Markova-Dolin Company, had joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, Alicia felt alone, and she would be without Anton Dolin, and would miss her family.

Mrs. Hurok and I finally succeeded in dissuading her from her avowed intention, and in convincing her that a great future for her lay in the United States.

From the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo she came to Ballet Theatre, where, under my management, she co-starred with Dolin. Her roles with that company as guest star which I arranged and paid for, together with almost one-half of her salary at other times, for Lucia Chase did not take kindly to Alicia Markova as a member of Ballet Theatre, and the American tour of the Markova-Dolin company, all of these I have dealt with at length.

During one of the seasons of the London Festival Ballet, which was organized by Dolin for the two of them, the team came to a parting of the ways. Like so many associations of this kind, the break could have been the result of any one or more of a combination of causes. One who is sincerely interested in both of them, expresses the hope that it may be only a passing difference. Yet, pursuing a course I follow in the domestic lives of my personal friends, I apply it to the artistic lives of these two, and leave it to them to work out their joint and several

destinies. There are limits beyond which even a loyal and fond manager may not go with impunity.

One of the greatest *ballerinas* of our own or any other time, I cannot say that Markova's triumphs have not altered her. To be sure, although she still has a manner that is sometimes reserved, outwardly timid, I nevertheless happen to know that behind it all lurks a determined, stubborn, and sometimes downright blind willfulness, coupled with a good deal of unreasonability. It was not for nothing that she earned from Leonide Massine the sobriquet of "Chinese Torture"—as Massine used to put it, "like small drops of water constantly falling on the head."

As a dancer, Markova is in the straight and direct classical line, as Michel Fokine once observed to me, while watching her Giselle.

Bearing these things in mind, including the fact that the gods have been less than generous to her in matters of face and figure, I am deeply moved by her expertness, her ethereality, her precision, her simplicity. Yet, on the other hand, I can only deplore the stylization and mannered quality she brings to her latter-day performances. When she is at her best, Markova has something above and beyond technique: a certain evanescent, purely luminous detachment. All these things reinforce my conviction that Markova should confine herself to the great classical interpretations, and recognize her own physical limitations, even within this field. Her Giselle is in a class by itself. She has made the role her own. Personally, however, I do not find she gives me the same satisfaction as the Swan Queen, nor in Fokine's *Les Sylphides*. To my way of thinking, her Swan Queen, while technically precise, lacks both that deep plumbing of the emotions and the grand, regal manner that the role requires. Her Prelude in *Sylphides* is spoiled, in my opinion, by excessive mannerisms.

It is in *Giselle* and *The Nutcracker* that Markova can

bring joy and pleasure to an immense public, that joy the public always receives, whether they know the intricate details of ballet or not, by seeing a great classical *ballerina* at her best. One of Markova's best characterizations was that of Taglioni in Dolin's *Pas de Quatre*, a delightful cameo, yet today, or, at least, the last time I saw it, it, like her Prelude in *Sylphides*, suffered from an accretion of manner, until it bordered on the grotesque.

One of the qualities Markova has in common with Pavlova, some of whose qualities she has, is her agelessness. As I said of Pavlova, "genius knows no age," so might it be said of Diaghileff's "little English girl" now grown up. The great Russian painter and co-founder of the Diaghileff Ballet, Alexandre Benois, the most noted designer of *Giselle*, once asserted that Pavlova's ability to transmute rather ordinary and sometimes banal material into unalloyed gold was a theatrical miracle. It is in roles for which she is peculiarly and individually almost uniquely fitted that Markova, too, is able to work a theatrical miracle.

Under the proper direction, under which she will not be left to her own devices, and will not be required to make her own decisions, but will have them made for her by a wise and intelligent director conscious of her limitations, Markova will be able the better to fulfil her destiny. It is to that desired end that I have been deeply interested in the fact that she had secured an invitation from the Sadler's Wells Ballet, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, for her to become, once again, a member of the company, with certain freedoms of action outside the company when her services are not required. The initial step has been taken. It is in such a setting that she belongs.

I hope she will continue in this setting.

Always I have been her devoted friend from the beginning of her American successes, and shall continue to be.

It is *ballerinas* of the type of Alicia Markova who help make ballet the great art it is. There are all too few of them.

Often I have told Anton Dolin that the two of them, Markova and Dolin, individually and collectively, have been of immeasurable service and have done great honor to ballet both in England and throughout the world.

ANTON DOLIN

The erstwhile Sydney Patrick Chippendall Healey-Kay, metamorphosed into Anton Dolin whose star has so often paralleled and traversed that of Markova, was born at Slinfold, Sussex, 20th July, 1904. A principal dancer of the Diaghileff Ballet at an early age, he was unique as the only non-Russian *premier danseur* ever to achieve that position.

Leaving Diaghileff in 1926, he organized the Nemtchinova-Dolin Ballet, with which they toured England and Europe. Alternating ballet with the dramatic and musical theatre, he turned up in New York in Lew Leslie's unhappy *International Revue*, along with Gertrude Lawrence, Harry Richman, and the unforgettable Argentinita. On his return to London, Dolin became the first guest-star of the Vic-Wells Ballet before it exchanged the Vic for Sadler's.

In 1935, with the valued help of the late Mrs. Laura Henderson, he was indefatigable in the formation of the Markova-Dolin Ballet, one of the results of which was the laying of the foundation stones of ballet's popularity in Great Britain. A period with the de Basil company in Australia was followed by his extended American sojourn, with Ballet Theatre, the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, as guest artist, *The Seven Lively Arts*, the Original Ballet Russe, and again under my management with the Markova-Dolin company.

Without making too detailed a research, I should say that the Dolin literature is nearly as extensive as that about Markova, making due allowance for the fact that the glamorous *ballerina* always lends herself to the printed page more attractively than her male *vis-a-vis*. However, Dolin, often as busy with his pen as with his feet, has added four volumes of his own authorship to the list. *Divertissement*, published in 1931, and *Ballet-Go-Round*, published in 1938, were sprightly volumes of autobiographical reminiscence and highly personal commentary and observation. There has also been a slender volume on the art of partnering and, more recently, a biographical study of Markova entitled *Alicia Markova: Her Life and Art*.

My acquaintance and friendship with Dolin dates back to the Diaghileff season of 1925. It is an acquaintance and friendship I value. There is an old bromide to the effect that dancers' brains are in their legs. As in all generalizations of this sort, it contains something more than a grain of truth. Dolin is one of the shining exceptions to this role. Shrewd, cultured, with a fine background, he is the possessor of a poised manner, and something else, which is, I regret to say, rare in the dancer: a concern for ethics.

There is a weird opinion held in many parts of this country and on the continent of Europe, to the effect that the Englishman is a dull and humorless sort of fellow. This stupid charge is quite beyond the understanding of any one who has thought twice about the matter. I have had the pleasure and privilege of knowing England and the English for a great many years and, as a consequence, I venture to assume the pleasing privilege of informing a deluded world that, whatever else there may or may not be in England, there is more fun and laughter to the square acre than there is to the square mile of any other known quarter. My observation has been that even if an Englishman does

achieve a gravity alien to the common spirit about him, he is not able to keep it up for long. Dolin is the possessor of a brilliant sense of humour and much wit, both often biting; but he has a quality which invites visitations of the twin spirits of high and low comedy.

A firm believer in the classical ballet, in Russian ballet, if you will, Dolin, like his kinsmen in British ballet, gets about his business with, on the whole, a minimum of fuss. Socially, and I speak from a profound experience and a personal knowledge drawn from my own Russian roots, the Russians are unlike any other European people, having a large measure of the Asiatic disregard for the meaning and use of the clock, the watch, the sun-dial, or even the primitive hourglass. Slow movement and time without limit for reflection and conversation are vital to them, and unless they can pass a substantial portion of the day in discussions, they become ill at ease and unhappy. But, although deliberate enough in most things, they have a way of blazing out almost volcanically if annoyed or affronted or thwarted. In this latter respect only, the English-Irish Anton Dolin may be said to be Russian.

When Dolin's dancing days are finished, there will always be a job for "Pat" as an actor—at times, to be sure, with a touch of ham, but always theatrically effective. He is one of the few dancers who could ever be at home on the speaking stage.

In the early founding days of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, I was very anxious that he join Massine as one of the leading figures of the company. Dolin shared my desire, and was eager to become a member, but there did not appear to be any room for him; and, moreover, with Lifar and Massine in the company, matters were difficult in the extreme, and plagued by the winds of complexity.

Dolin's lovely mother, to whom he is devoted, lived with him in New York during the period of his residence here. Now that he is back in England, at the head of his

own company, the London Festival Ballet, she is with him there. It was she, a shrewd pilot of his career, who begged me to take "Pat" under my wing. A gracious, generous lady, I am as fond of her as I am of "Pat." When he was offered a leading dancing and choreographic post at the inception of Ballet Theatre, he sought my advice. I was instrumental in his joining the company; he helped me to take over the management of the company later on.

His "Russianness" that I have mentioned, releases itself in devastating flares and flashes of "temperament." These outbursts express themselves very often in rapid-fire iteration of a single phrase: "I shan't dance! I shan't dance! I shan't dance!" Yet I always know that, when the time comes for his appearance, "Pat" will be on hand. Neither illness nor accident prevents him from doing his job. There was an occasion on tour, in the far north and in the midst of an icy blizzard, when he insisted on dancing with a fever of one hundred three degrees. He may not have danced with perfection, but he danced.

Today, and in the past as well, there are and have been some who have not cared for his dancing. Certain sections of the press have the habit of developing a pronouncedly captious tone in dealing with Dolin the dancer. I would remind those persons of the perfectly amazing theatrical sense Dolin always exhibits. I would remind them that, in my opinion and in the opinion of others more finely attuned to the niceties of the classical dance, Dolin is one of the finest supporting partners it is possible for a *ballerina* to have. Markova is never shown to her best advantage with any other male dancer than Anton Dolin. My opinion, on which I make no concessions to any one, is that Dolin is one of the finest Albrechts in the world today. Without Dolin, *Giselle* remains but half a ballet.

As a *re*-creator, he has few peers and no superiors. I can think of no one better qualified to recreate a masterpiece of another era, with regard to the creator's true intent and

meaning, nor do I know of any choreographer who has a greater feeling, a finer sense, or a more humble respect for "period and tradition."

As a dancer, there are still roles which require a minimum of dancing and a maximum of acting. These roles are preeminently Dolin's, and in these he cannot be equaled.

As for Anton Dolin, the person, as opposed to Anton Dolin, the artist, he is that rare bird in ballet: a loyal friend, blessedly free from that besetting balletic sin—envy; generous, kindly, human, always helpful, ever the good comrade. Would that dance had more men of his character, his liberality, his broadmindedness, his ever-present readiness to be of service to his colleagues.

Although "Pat" is not above certain meannesses, certain capriciousness, he has an uncanny gift of penetrating to the heart of a matter, and his ability to hit the nail on the very centre of the head often gains for him the advantage over people who have the reputation of being experts in their particular callings.

On the very top of all is his ability to open the charm tap at will. On occasion, I have been of a mind to choke him, so annoyed have I been at him. We have parted in a cloud of aggravation and exacerbation. Yet, on meeting him an hour later, there was only an Irish smile with twinkling eyes, all radiating good will and genuine affection.

This is the Anton Dolin I know, the Dolin I like best.

As these lines are written, all concerned are working on a budget to determine if it is not possible to bring Dolin and his company to America for a visit. It is my hope that satisfactory arrangements can be made, for it would give me great pleasure to present "Pat" at the head of his fine organization. I can only say to Dolin that if we succeed in completing mutually agreeable conditions: "What a job we will do for you!"

12. Ballet Climax— Sadler's Wells And After....

SADLER'S WELLS—a name with which to conjure—had been a part of my balletic consciousness for a long time. I had observed its early beginnings, its growth from the Old Vic to Sadler's Wells to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, with the detached interest of a ballet lover from another land. I had read about it, heard about it from many people, but I had not had any first hand experience of it since the Covent Garden Opera Trust had invited the Sadler's Wells Ballet to move to Covent Garden from their famous ballet center, Sadler's Wells. This they did, early in 1946, leaving behind yet another company called the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet.

I arrived in London in April, 1946, at a time when I was very definitely under the impression that I would give up any active participation in ballet in any other form than as an interested member of the audience.

The London to which I returned was, in a sense, a strange London—a London just after the war, a city devastated by bombs, a city that had suffered grave wounds both physical and spiritual, a city of austerity.

It was also a London wherein I found, wherever I went, a people whose spirits were, nevertheless, high; human beings whose chins were up. The typical Cockney taxi-driver who brought me from Waterloo to my long-time headquarters, the Savoy, summed it all up on my arrival, when he said: "We'll come out of this orlrite. We weren't born in the good old English climate for nothin'. It's all a bit of a disappointment; but we're used to disappointments, we are. Why when ah was a kid as we 'ad a nice little

picnic all arranged for Saturday afternoon, as sure as fate it rained and the bleedin' picnic was put orf again.... We're goin' to 'ave our picnic one day; this 'ere picnic's just been put orf, that's all...."

As the porters were disposing of my luggage, the genial commissionaire at the Savoy, Joe Hanson, added his bit to the general optimism. After greeting me, he asked me if I had heard about the shipwreck in the Thames, opposite the Savoy. I had not, and wondered how I had missed the news of such a catastrophe.

"Well, it was like this, guv'nor," he said. "Churchill, Eden, Atlee and Ernie Bevin went out on the river in a small boat to look the place over. Just as they were a-passin' the 'otel 'ere, a sudden squall blew up and the boat was capsized."

He paused and blew his nose vociferously into a capacious kerchief. "Who do you think was saved?"

"Churchill?" I enquired.

He shook his head in the negative.

"Eden?"

He shook his head.

"Atlee?"

Again he shook his head.

"Bevin?"

Once more the negative.

"No one saved?" I could hardly believe my ears.

"Ah, there's where you're wrong, sir.... *England* was saved!"

The commissionaire's big frame shook with prideful laughter.

I freshened myself in my room and went down to my favorite haunt, my London H. Q., as I like to call it, the Savoy Grill, that gathering place of the theatrical, musical, literary, and balletic worlds of London. One of the Savoy

Grill's chief fixtures, and for me one of its most potent attractions, was the always intriguing buffet, with my favorite Scottish salmon. This time the buffet, while putting up a brave decorative front, was a little disappointing and, to tell the truth, a shade depressing.

But a glance at the entertainment advertisements in *The Times* (the "Thunderer," I noted, was now a four-page sheet) showed me that the entertainment world was in full swing, and there was excitement in the air.

I dined alone in the Grill, then returned to my room and changed to black tie and all, for it was to be a festive evening, and walked the short distance between the Savoy Hotel and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. I was going to the ballet in a completely non-professional capacity, as a member of the audience, going for the sheer fun of going, with nary a balletic problem on my mind.

I was to be the guest of David Webster, the Administrator of Covent Garden, who met me at the door and, after a brief chat, escorted me to my seat. My eyes traveled around the famous and historic Opera House, only recently saved from the ignominy of becoming a public dance hall. Here it was, shining and dignified in fresh paint, in damask, and in the new warm red plush *fauteuils*; poor though Britain was, the house had just been remodelled, redecorated, reseated, with a new and most attractive "crush bar" installed.

The depression I had felt earlier in the day vanished completely. Now that evening had come, there was a different aspect, a changed atmosphere. I looked at the audience that made up the sold-out house. From the top to the bottom of the great old Opera House they were a happy, relaxed, anticipatory people, ready to be entertained and stimulated. In the stalls, the audience was well-dressed and some of the evening frocks were, I felt, of marked splendor. But the less expensive portions of the house were filled, too, and I remembered something that great director,

Ninette de Valois, who had made all this possible, had said way back in 1937: “The gallery, the pit [American readers should understand that the “pit” in the British theatre is usually that part of the house behind the “stalls” or orchestra seats, and is not, as in the States, the orchestra pit where the musicians are placed] and the amphitheatre are the basis and backbone of the people s theatre.... That they are the most loyal supporters will be maintained with deep appreciation by those who control the future of the ballet.”

There was, as I have said, an anticipatory atmosphere on the part of the audience, as if the temper of the people had become graver, simpler, and more concentrated; as if, during the war, when the opportunities for recreation and amusement were more restricted, transport more limited, the intelligence craved and sought those antidotes to a troubled consciousness of which ballet and its allied arts are the most potent.

While I relaxed and waited for the rising curtain with that same anticipatory glow that I always feel, yet, somehow, intensified tonight, I reflected, too, on the miracle that had been wrought. I remembered David Webster had told me how, only the year before, the company was preparing for a good-will tour to South America, and how the sudden end of the war had made that trip impracticable and unnecessary. It had become more urgent to have the company at home. Negotiations had been initiated between the Sadler’s Wells Ballet, the British Arts Council, and Boosey and Hawkes, who had taken over the Covent Garden lease, for the Sadler’s Wells Ballet to make its headquarters at Covent Garden, where it would be presented by the Covent Carden Opera Trust. Having been turned into a cheap dance hall before the war, Covent Garden’s restoration as a theatre devoted to the finest in opera and ballet required very careful planning.

All of this whetted my appetite. My eyes traveled to the Royal Box, to the Royal Crest on the great curtains, to the

be-wigged footmen.... Slowly the lights came down to a dull glow, went out. A sound of applause greeted the entry into the orchestra pit of the conductor, the greatly talented musical director of the Sadler's Wells organization, Constant Lambert. In a moment, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, was filled with the magnificent sound of the overture to Tchaikowsky's *The Sleeping Beauty*, played as only Lambert could play it.

Then the curtain rose, revealing Oliver Messel's perfectly wonderful setting for the first act of this magnificent full-length ballet. Over all, about all, was the great music of Tchaikowsky. My eyes, my ears, my heart were being filled to overflowing.

The biggest moment of all came with the entrance of Margot Fonteyn as the Princess. I was overwhelmed by her entire performance; but I think it was her first entrance that made the greatest impact on me, with the fresh youthfulness of the young Princess, the radiant gaiety of all the fairy tale heroines of the world's literature compressed into one.

I was so enchanted as I followed the stage and the music that I forgot all else but the miraculous unfolding of this Perrault-Tchaikowsky fairy story.

Here, at last, was great ballet. The art of pantomime, so long dormant in ballet in America, had been restored in all its clarity and simplicity of meaning. The high quality of the dancing by the principals, soloists, and *corps de ballet*, the settings, the costumes, the lighting, all literally transported me to another world. I knew then, in a great revelation, that great ballet was here to stay.

"This is Ballet!" I said, almost half aloud.

After the performance, back at the Savoy Grill once more, at supper I met, once again, Ninette de Valois, whose taste and drive and determination and abilities have made Sadler's Wells the magnificent institution it is.

"Madame," I said to her, "I think you're ready to go to the States."

"Are we?"

"Yes," I replied, "you are ready."

The supper was gay and charming and animated. I was filled with enthusiasm and was a long time falling asleep that night.

After that evening, there was no longer any attitude of "to hell with ballet" on my part. Ballet, I realized, with a fresh conviction solidifying the revelation I had had the night before, was here to stay. "To hell with ballet" had given way to "three cheers for ballet!"

After breakfast, the next morning, I telephoned David Webster to invite him to luncheon so that I might discuss details of the proposed American venture with him. During the course of the luncheon we went into all the major points and problems. Webster, I found, shared my enthusiasm for the idea and agreed in principle.

But, in accordance with the traditionally British manner, the thought and care and consideration that is given to every phase and every department, every suggestion, every idea, such matters do not move as swiftly as they do in the States. Before I started out for my usual London "constitutional" backwards and forwards across Waterloo Bridge, from where one looks up the Thames towards the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, mother of all our freedoms, I sent flowers to Margot Fonteyn with a note of appreciation for her magnificent performance of the night before and for the great pleasure she had given me.

There followed extended discussions with Ninette de Valois, the Director of whom, perhaps, the outstanding characteristic is that her outlook is such that her greatest ambition is to see the Sadler's Wells Ballet become such an institution in its own right that, as she puts it, "no one will know the name of the director." However, before any

decisions could be reached, it became necessary for me to get home. So, with the whole business still very much up in the air, I returned to New York.

No sooner was I back in my office than there came an invitation from Mayor William O'Dwyer and Grover Whalen for me to take over the direction of the dance activities for the Festival for the One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration of the City of New York. I accepted the honor in the hope that I might be able to organize a completely international and representative Dance Festival, wherein the leading exponents of ballet and other forms of dance would have an opportunity to demonstrate their varied repertoires and techniques. To that end, I sent invitations in the name of the City of New York to all the leading dance organizations in the world, seeking their participation in the Festival. The response was unanimously immediate and enthusiastic; but, unfortunately, many of the organizations, possessing interesting repertoires and styles, were not in a position to undertake the costs of travel from far distant points, together with the heavy expenses for the transportation of scenery, equipment, and costumes. Among these was the newly-organized San Francisco Civic Ballet.

The Sadler's Wells organization accepted the invitation in principle, as did the Paris Opera Ballet, through its director, Monsieur Georges Hirsch. Ram Gopal, brilliant exponent of the dance of India, accepted through his manager Julian Braunsweg; and, in this case, I was able to assist him in his financial problems, by bringing him at my own expense. Representing our native American dance were Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, together with their company. I happen to feel this group is one of the most representative of all our native practitioners of the "free" dance, in works that often come to grips with the problems and conflicts of life, and which eschew, at least for the time, pure abstraction. Most notable of these works,

works in this form, is their trilogy: *New Dance—Theatre Piece—With My Red Fires* American dance groups were invited but for one reason or another were not able to accept.

As preparations for the Festival moved ahead, David Webster arrived from London to investigate the physical possibilities for the participation of the Sadler's Wells Ballet as the national ballet of Great Britain.

The logical place for a Dance Festival of such proportions and such significance, and one of such avowedly international and civic nature, would have been the Metropolitan Opera House. Unfortunately, the Metropolitan had commitments with another ballet company. My friend and colleague, Edward Johnson, the then General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera Company, regretted the situation and did everything in his power to remedy the position and free our first lyric theatre for such an important civic event. However, the other dance organization insisted on its contractual rights and refused to give way, or to divide the time in any way.

The only other place left, therefore, was the New York City Center, in West Fifty-fifth Street. Webster made a thorough inspection of this former Masonic Temple from front to back, but found the place entirely inadequate, with a stage and an orchestra pit infinitely too small, and the theatre itself quite unsatisfactory for a company the size of the Covent Garden organization and productions. As a matter of fact, it would be hard to find a less satisfactory theatre for ballet production.

As Webster and I went over the premises together, I sensed his feeling about the building, which I shared. Nevertheless, I tried to hide my disappointment when, at last, he turned to me and said: "It's no go. We can't play here. Let us postpone the visit till we can come to be seen on your only appropriate stage, the Metropolitan."

We had had preliminary meetings with the British Consul General and his staff; plans and promotion were rapidly crystallizing, and my disappointment was none the less keen simply because I knew the reasons for the postponement were sound, and that it could not be otherwise.

The Dance Festival itself, without Sadler's Wells, had its successes and left a mark on the local dance scene. The City Center was no more satisfactory, I am afraid, for the Ballet of the Opera of Paris, presented by the French National Lyric Theatre, under the auspices of the Cultural Relations Department of the French Foreign Ministry, than it would have been for the Covent Garden company. It was necessary to trim the scenery, omit much of it, and use only part of the personnel of the company at a time. But, on the other hand, it was a genuine pleasure to welcome them on their first visit to the United States and Canada. In addition to the Dance Festival Season in New York, we played highly successful engagements in Montreal, Toronto, and Chicago.

The company was headed by a distinguished French *ballerina* in the true French style, Yvette Chauviré. Other principal members of the company, all from the higher echelons of the Paris Opera, included Roger Ritz, Christiane Vaussard, Michel Renault, Alexandre Kalioujny, Micheline Bardin, and Max Bozzini, with Robert Blot and Richard Blareau as conductors. The repertoire included *Ports of Call*, Serge Lifar's ballet to Jacques Ibert's *Escales*; *Salad*, a Lifar work to a Darius Milhaud creation; Lifar's setting of Ravel's *Pavane*; *The Wise Animals*, based on the Jean de la Fontaine fables, by Lifar, to music by Francis Poulenc; *Suite in White*, from Eduardo Lalo's *Naouma*; *Punch and the Policeman*, staged by Lifar to a score by Jolivet; *Divertissement*, cuttings from Tchaikowsky's *The Sleeping Beauty*; *The Peri*, Lifar's staging of the well-known ballet score by Paul

Dukas; *The Crystal Palace*, Balanchine's ballet to Bizet's symphony, known here as *Symphony in C*; Vincent d'Indy's *Istar*, in the Lifar choreography; *Gala Evening*, taken from Delibes' *La Source*, by Leo Staats; Albert Aveline's *Elvira*, to Scarlatti melodies orchestrated by Roland Manuel; André Messager's *The Two Pigeons*, choreographed by Albert Aveline; the Rameau *Castor and Pollux*, staged by Nicola Guerra; *The Knight and the Maiden*, a two-act romantic ballet, staged by Lifar to a score by Philippe Gaubert; and *Les Mirages*, a classical work by Lifar, to music by Henri Sauguet.

Serge Lifar returned to America, not to dance, but as the choreographer of the company of which he is the head.

I happen to know certain facts about Lifar's behavior during the Occupation of France, facts I did not know at the time of the publication of my earlier book, *Impresario*. Certain statements I made in that book concerning Serge Lifar were made on the basis of such information as I had at the time, which I believed was reliable. I have subsequently learned that it was not correct, and I have also subsequently had additional, quite different, and reliably documented information which makes me wish to acknowledge that an error of judgment was expressed on the basis of inconclusive evidence. Lifar may not have been a hero; very possibly, and quite probably, he may have been indiscreet; but it is now obvious to any fair-minded person that there has been a good deal of malicious gossip spread about him.

Lifar was restored to his post at the head of the Paris Opera Ballet by M. Georges Hirsch, Administrator, Director of the French National Lyric Theatres, himself a war-hero with a distinguished record. The dancers of the Paris Opera Ballet threatened to strike unless Lifar was so restored; the stage-hands, with definite indications of Communist inspiration, to strike if he was. Hirsch had the courage of his convictions. I have found that Lifar did not

take the Paris Opera Ballet to Berlin during the Occupation, as has been alleged in this country, although the Germans wanted it badly; and I happen to know numerous other French companies did go. I also have learned that it was Serge Lifar who prevented the Paris Opera Ballet from going. I happen to know that Lifar did fly in a German plane to Kieff, his birthplace; as I happen to know that he did not show Hitler through the Paris Opera itself, as one widely-spread rumor has had it. As a matter of fact, stories to the effect that he did both these things have been widely circulated. I happen to have learned that Lifar made a tremendous effort to save that splendid gentleman, René Blum, but was unable to prevail against Blum's patriotic but unfortunately stupid determination to remain in Paris. I also happen to know that Lifar was personally active in saving many Jews and also other liberals from deportation. Moreover, I know that, as has always been characteristic of Lifar, because he was one who had, he helped from his own pocket those who had not.

The performances of the Ballet of the Paris Opera at the City Center were not the slightest proof of the quality of its productions or its performance. The shocking limitations of the playhouse made necessary a vast reduction of its personnel, its scenery, its essential quality. The Paris Opera Ballet is, of course, a State Ballet in the fullest sense of the term. It is an aristocratic organization, conscious of the great tradition that hangs over it. The air is thick with it. Its dancers are civil servants of the Republic of France and their promotion in rank follows upon a strict examination pattern. It would be interesting one day to see the company at the Metropolitan Opera House, where its original setting could be approximated, although I fear the Metropolitan has nothing comparable with the *foyer de la dance* of the Paris Opera.

Here is ballet on a big scale and in the grand manner,

with all the scenic and costume panoply of the art at its most grandiose. It is the sort of fine ballet that succeeds in giving the art an immense popularity with the masses.

As a matter of fact, I am negotiating with the very able Maurice Lehmann, the successor to Georges Hirsch as Director-General of the Opera, and I can think of no happier result than to be able to bring this rich example of the balletic art of France to America under the proper circumstances and conditions, if for no other reason than to compensate the organization for their previous visit.

* * *

The International Dance Festival over, my chief desire was to bring Sadler's Wells to this continent.

Perhaps it would be as well, for the sake of the reader who may be unfamiliar with its background and thus disposed to regard this as merely another ballet company, to shed a bit of light on the Sadler's Wells organization.

Following the death of Diaghileff, in 1929, we knew that ballet in Britain was in a sad state of decline, from which it might well never have emerged had it not been for two groups, the Ballet Club of Marie Rambert and the Camargo Society. Each was to be of vital importance to the ballet picture in Britain and, indirectly, in the world. The offspring of the Ballet Club was the Rambert Ballet; that of the Camargo Society, the Sadler's Wells Ballet. As a matter of fact, the Camargo Society, a Sunday night producing club, utilized the Ballet Club dancers and another studio group headed by the lady now known as Dame Ninette de Valois, D.B.E., D. Litt.

Back in 1931, at the time of the formation of the Camargo Society, the little acorn from which grew a mighty British oak, Dame Ninette, "Madame" as she is known to all who know her, was plain Ninette de Valois, who was born Edris Stannus, in Ireland, in 1898. She had joined the Diaghileff Ballet as a dancer in 1923, had risen

to the rank of soloist (a rare accomplishment for a non-Russian), and left the great man, daring to differ with him on the direction he was taking, something amounting to *lese majesté*. She had produced plays, in the meantime, at Dublin's famous Abbey Theatre and at Cambridge University's Festival Theatre; and had also formed a choreographic group of her own which she brought along to the Camargo Society to cooperate. When she did so, she was far from famous. As a matter of fact, she was, to all intents and purposes, unknown.

One Sunday night in 1931, two things happened to Ninette de Valois: she became famous overnight, which, knowing her as I do, was of much less importance to her than the fact that, quite unwittingly, she laid the foundation for a British National Ballet under her own direction.

The work she produced for the Camargo Society on this Sunday night in 1931 did it. It was not a ballet in the strictest or accepted sense of the word. Its composer called it *A Masque for Dancing*. The work was *Job*, a danced and mimed interpretation of the Biblical story, in the spirit of the painter and poet Blake, to one of Ralph Vaughan Williams's noblest scores.

From Biblical inspiration she turned to the primitive, in a production of Darius Milhaud's *Creation du Monde*, a noble subject dealing with the primitive gods of Easter Island, set to the 1923 jazz of the French composer.

Coincidental with the Camargo Society activities, Ninette de Valois was making arrangements with another great Englishwoman, Lilian Baylis, who had brought opera and drama to the masses at two theatres in the less fashionable parts of London, the Old Vic, in the Waterloo Road, and Sadler's Wells, in Islington's Rosebery Avenue. Lilian Baylis wanted a ballet company. Armed with only her own determination and high-mindedness, she had established a real theatre for the masses.

Ninette de Valois, for a penny, started in with her group to do the opera ballets at the Old Vic: those interludes in *Carmen* and *Faust* and *Samson and Delilah* that exist primarily to keep the dull businessman in his seat with his wife instead of at the bar. However, Lilian Baylis gave Ninette de Valois a ballet school, and it was in the theatre, where a ballet school belonged, a part of and an adjunct to the theatre. The Vic-Wells Ballet, soon to become the Sadler's Wells Ballet, was the result.

It was not nearly as easy and as simple as it sounds as I write it. It is beyond me fully to convey to the reader those qualities of tenacity of purpose, of driving energy, of fearless courage that this remarkable woman was forced to draw upon in the early years. There was no money; and before a single penny could be separated from her, it had to be melted from the glue with which she stuck every penny to the inside of her purse.

Alicia Markova joined the company. Anton Dolin was a frequent guest artist. It was, in a sense, a Markova company, with the three most popular works: *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Giselle*.

But, most importantly, Ninette de Valois had that vital requisite without which, no matter how solvent the financial backing, no ballet company is worth the price of its toe-shoes, viz., a policy. Ninette de Valois' policy for repertoire is codified into a simple formula:

1) Traditional-classical and romantic works.

2) Modern works of future classic importance.

3) Current work of more topical interest.

4) Works encouraging a strictly national tendency in their creation generally.

The first constitutes the foundation-stone, technical standard, and historical knowledge that is demanded as a "means test" by which the abilities of the young dancers are both developed and inspired.

The second, those works which both musically and otherwise have a future that may be regarded as the major works of this generation.

The third, the topical and sometimes experimental, of merely ephemeral interest and value, yet important as a means of balancing an otherwise ambitious programme.

The fourth is important to the national significance of the ballet. Such works constitute the nation's own contribution to the theatre, and are in need perhaps of the most careful guidance of the groups.

It was the classics which had, from the beginning, the place of priority: *Swan Lake (Act II)*, *Les Sylphides*, *Carnaval*, *Coppélia*, *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, and the full-length *Swan Lake*.

In 1935, Markova left Sadler's Wells to form her own company with Dolin. With Markova's departure, the whole character of the Sadler's Wells company changed. The Company became the Star. The company got along without a *ballerina* and concentrated on its own personality, on developing dancers from its school, and on its direction. Creation and development continued.

However, during this time, there was emerging not precisely a "star," but a great *ballerina*. *Ballerina* is a term greatly misused in the United States, where any little

dancer is much too often referred to both in the press and in general conversation in this way. *Ballerina* is a title, not a term. The title is one earned only through long, hard experience. It is attained *only* in the highly skilled interpretation of the great standard classical parts. Russia, France, Italy, Denmark, countries where there are state ballets, know these things. We in the United States, I fear, do not understand. A "star" is not one merely by virtue of billing. A *ballerina* is, of course, a "star," even in a company that has no "stars" in its billing and advertising. A true *ballerina* is a rare bird indeed. In an entire generation, it should be remembered, the Russian Imperial Ballet produced only enough for the fingers of two hands.

The great *ballerina* I have mentioned as having come up through the Sadler's Wells Company, as the product of that company, is more than a *ballerina*. She is a *prima ballerina assoluta*, a product of Sadler's Wells training, of the Sadler's Wells system, a member of that all-round team that is Sadler's Wells. Her name is Margot Fonteyn. I shall have something to say about her later on.

I have pointed out that the backbone of the Sadler's Wells repertoire is the classics. Therein, in my opinion, lies one of the chief reasons for its great success. There is a second reason, I believe. That is that, along with Ninette de Valois' sound production policy, keeping step with it, sometimes leading it, is an equally sound musical policy. Sitting in with de Valois and Frederick Ashton, as the third of the directorial triumvirate, was the brilliant musician, critic, and wit, Constant Lambert, who exerted a powerful influence in the building of the repertoire, and who, with the sympathetic cooperation of his two colleagues, made the musical standards of Sadler's Wells the highest of any ballet company in my knowledge and experience.

The company grew and prospered. The war merely served to intensify its efforts—and its accomplishments. Its war record is a brilliant, albeit a difficult one; a record of

unremitting hard work and dogged perseverance against terrible odds. The company performed unceasingly throughout the course of the war, with bombs falling. Once the dancing was stopped, while the dancers fought a fire ignited by an incendiary bomb and thus saved the theatre. The company was on a good-will tour of Holland, under the auspices of the British Council, in the spring of 1940. They were at Arnheim when Hitler invaded. Packed into buses, they raced ahead of the Panzers, reached the last boat to leave, left minus everything, but everything: productions, scenery, costumes, properties, musical material, and every scrap of personal clothing.

Once back in Britain, there was no cessation. The lost productions and costumes were replaced; the musical material renewed, some of it, since it was manuscript, by reorchestrating it from gramophone recordings. As the Battle of Britain was being fought, the company toured the entire country, with two pianos in lieu of orchestra, with Constant Lambert playing the first piano. They played in halls, in theatres, in camps, in factories; brought ballet to soldiers and sailors, to airmen, and to factory workers, often by candlelight. They managed to create new works. Back to London, to a West End theatre, with orchestra, and then, because of the crowds, to a larger West End playhouse.

It was at the end of the war, as I have mentioned earlier, that the music publishing house of Boosey and Hawkes, with a splendid generosity, saved the historic Royal Opera House, at Covent Garden, from being turned into a popular dance hall. A common error on the part of Americans is to believe that because it was called the Royal Opera House, it was a State-supported theatre, as, for example, are the Royal Opera House of Denmark, at Copenhagen, and the Paris Opéra. Among those Maecenases who had made opera possible in the old days in London was Sir Thomas Beecham, who made great personal sacrifices to keep it

open.

When Boosey and Hawkes took over Covent Garden, it was on a term lease. On taking possession they immediately turned over the historic edifice to a committee known as the Covent Garden Opera Trust, of which the chairman was Lord Keynes, the distinguished economist and art patron who, as plain Mr. John Maynard Keynes, had been instrumental in the formation of the Camargo Society, and who had married the one-time Diaghileff *ballerina*, Lydia Lopokova; this committee had acted as god-parents to the Sadler's Wells company in its infancy. The Arts Council supported the venture, and David Webster was appointed Administrator.

* * *

A word or two about the Arts Council and its support of the arts in Britain is necessary for two reasons: one, because it is germane to the story of Sadler's Wells, and, two, germane to some things I wish to point out in connection with subsidy of the arts in these troubled times, since I believe a parallel can be drawn with our own hit-and-miss financing.

Under the British system, there is no attempt to interfere with aesthetics. The late Sir Stafford Cripps pointed out that the Government should interfere as little as possible in the free development of art. The British Government's attitude has, perhaps, been best stated by Clement Atlee, as Prime Minister, when he said: "I think that we are all of one mind in desiring that art should be free." He added that he thought the essential purpose of an organized society was to set free the creative energies of the individual, while safeguarding the well-being of all. The Government, he continued, must try to provide conditions in which art might flourish.

There is no "Ministry of Fine Arts" as in most continental and South American countries. The

Government's interest in making art better known and more within the reach of all is expressed through three bodies: the Arts Council, the British Film Institute, and the British Council.

The Arts Council was originally known by the rather unwieldy handle of C. E. M. A. (The Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts), originally founded by a gift from an American and Lord De La Warr, then President of the Board of Education. In 1945, the Government decided to continue the work, changed the name from C. E. M. A. to the Arts Council of Great Britain, gave it Parliamentary financial support, and granted it, on 9 August, 1946, a Royal Charter to develop "a greater knowledge, understanding and practice of fine arts exclusively, and in particular to increase the availability of the fine arts to the public ... to improve the standard of the execution of the fine arts and to advise and cooperate with ... Government departments, local authorities and other bodies on matters concerned directly or indirectly with those objects."

Now, the Arts Council, while sponsored by the Government, is not a Government department. Its chairman and governors (called members of the Council) are appointed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer after consultation with the Minister of Education and the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Chancellor answers for the Council in the House of Commons. While the Council is supported by a Government grant, its employees are in no sense civil servants, and the Council enjoys an independence that would not be possible were it a Government department.

The first chairman of the Arts Council, and also a former chairman of C. E. M. A., was Lord Keynes. His influence on the policy and direction of the organization was invaluable. There are advisory boards, known as panels, appointed for three years, experts chosen by the Council

because of their standing in and knowledge of their fields. Among many others, the following well-known artists have served, without payment: Sir Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, Noel Coward, Peggy Ashcroft, J. B. Priestley, Dame Myra Hess, Benjamin Britten, Tyrone Guthrie, Dame Ninette de Valois, and Henry Moore.

While statistics can be dull, a couple are necessary to the picture to show how the Arts Council operates. For example, the Arts Council's annual grant from the British Treasury has risen each year: in 1945-1946, the sum was £235,000 ($658,000); in 1950-1951, £675,000 ($1,890,000).

Treasury control is maintained through a Treasury Assessor to the Arts Council; on his advice, the Chancellor of the Exchequer recommends to Parliament a sum to be granted. The Assessor is in a position to judge whether the money is being properly distributed, but he does not interfere with the complete autonomy of the Council.

The Council, in its turn, supports the arts of the country by giving financial assistance or guarantees to organizations, companies, and societies; by directly providing concerts and exhibitions; or by directly managing and operating a company or theatre. The recipient organizations, for their part, must be non-profit or charitable trusts capable of helping carry out the Council's purpose of bringing to the British people entertainment of a high standard. Such organizations must have been accepted as non-profit companies by H. M. Commissioners of Customs and Excise, and exempted by them from liability to pay Entertainments Duty.

An example of the help tendered may be gathered from the fact that in 1950, eight festivals, ten symphony orchestras, five theatres, twenty-five theatre companies, seven opera and ballet companies, one society for poetry and music, two art societies, four arts centers, and sixty-three clubs were being helped. In addition, two theatres,

three theatre companies, and one arts center were entirely and exclusively managed by the Arts Council. Some of the best-known British orchestras, theatres, and companies devoted to opera, ballet, and the drama are linked to the Arts Council: The Hallé Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, Covent Garden Opera Trust, Covent Garden Opera Company, and the Sadler's Wells Companies are among them. Also the Old Vic, Tennent Productions, Ltd., and the Young Vic Theatre companies.

Government assistance to opera in twentieth century Britain did not begin with the Arts Council. In the early 'thirties Parliament granted a small subsidy to the Covent Garden Opera Syndicate for some two years to help present grand opera in Covent Garden and the provinces at popular prices. A total of £40,000 ($112,000) had been paid when the grant was withdrawn after the financial crisis of 1931, and it was more than ten years before national opera became a reality.

In the meantime, some ballet companies and an opera company began to receive C. E. M. A. support. The Sadler's Wells Opera Company and Sadler's Wells Ballet Company, for instance, began their association with C. E. M. A. in 1943. C. E. M. A. was also interested in plans stirring in 1944 and 1945 to reclaim the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, as a national center for ballet and opera. I have pointed out how this great theatre in London, with a history dating back to the eighteenth century, was leased in 1944 by the international music firm of Boosey and Hawkes, who, in turn, rented it to the newly formed Covent Garden Opera Trust. The Trust, an autonomous body whose original chairman was Lord Keynes, is a non-profit body which devotes any profits it may make to Trust projects. Late in 1949, H. M. Ministry of Works succeeded Boosey and Hawkes as lessees, with a forty-two-year lease.

The Arts Council, in taking over from C. E. M. A., inherited C. E. M. A.'s interest in using Covent Garden for national ballet and opera. The Council granted Covent Garden £25,000 ($70,000) for the year ended 31 March, 1946, and £55,000 ($154,000) for the following year. At the same time, it was granting Sadler's Wells Foundation £10,000 ($28,000) and £15,000 ($42,000) in those years.

The Covent Garden Opera Trust, in the meantime, had invited the Sadler's Wells Ballet to move to Covent Garden from their famous ballet center, Sadler's Wells. This it did, early in 1946, leaving behind another company called the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet. Ninette de Valois continued to direct both groups.

It was a year later the Covent Garden Opera Company gave its first presentation under the Covent Garden Opera Trust, and the two chief Covent Carden companies, opera and ballet, were solidly settled in their new home.

The Trust continues to receive a grant from the Arts Council (£145,000 [$406,000] in 1949-1950), and it pays the rent for the Opera House and the salaries and expenses of the companies. So far as the ballet company is concerned, the Sadler's Wells Ballet pretty well pays its own way, except for that all-besetting expense in ballet, the cost of new productions. The opera company requires relatively more support from the Trust grant, as it has re-staged and produced every opera afresh, not using any old productions. Moreover, the attendance for ballet is greater than that for opera.

The aim of Covent Garden and its Administrator, David Webster, is to create a steady audience, and to appeal to groups that have not hitherto attended ballet and opera, or have attended only when the most brilliant stars were appearing. Seats sell for as little as 2s 6d (35¢), rising to 26s 3d ($3.67) and the ballet-and-opera-going habit has grown noticeably in recent years. It is interesting to note the audience for opera averaged eighty-three per cent

capacity, and for the ballet ninety-two per cent.

The two British companies alternately presenting ballet and opera provide most of the entertainment at Covent Garden, but foreign companies such as the Vienna State Opera with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, La Scala Opera, the Paris Opéra Comique, the Ballet Theatre from New York, the New York City Ballet Company, the Grand Ballet of the Marquis de Cuevas, and Colonel de Basil's Original Ballets Russes have had short seasons there.

The Arts Council is in association with the two permanent companies coincidentally operating at Sadler's Wells—the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet and the Sadler's Wells Opera Company. Other opera and ballet companies associated with the Arts Council are the English Opera Group, Ltd., and the Ballet Rambert, while the Arts Council manages the St. James Ballet Company.

All these companies tour in Britain, and some of them make extended tours abroad. The Ballet Rambert, for instance, has made a tour of Australia and New Zealand, which lasted a year and a half, a record for that area.

The Sadler's Wells Ballet has made long and highly successful tours of the European continent. Its first visit to America occurred in the autumn of 1949, when the Covent Garden Opera Trust, in association with the Arts Council and the British Council, presented the group at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City, and in various other centres in the United States and Canada, under my management. A second and much longer visit took place in 1950-1951, with which visits this chapter is primarily concerned.

Sadler's Wells has a ballet school of something more than two hundred students, including the general education of boys and girls from ten to sixteen. Scholarships are increasing in number; some of these are offered by various County Councils and other local authorities, and a number

by the Royal Academy of Dancing.

In addition to the Arts Council, I have mentioned the British Council, and no account of Britain's cultural activities could make any pretensions to being intelligible without something more than a mention of it. It should be pointed out that the major part of the British Council's work is done abroad.

Established in 1934, the British Council is Britain's chief agent for strengthening cultural relations with the rest of the British Commonwealth, Europe, the Middle East, the Far East, the United States, and Latin America. It is responsible for helping to make British cultural achievements known and understood abroad, and for bringing to the British, in turn, a closer knowledge of foreign countries.

Like many other British cultural bodies, the British Council derives its main financial support from the Government (through grants from the Foreign Office, plus certain sums on the Colonial and Commonwealth votes), and is a body corporate, not a Government organization. Its staff are not civil servants and its work is entirely divorced from politics, though the Council has a certain amount of State control because nine of the Executive Committee (fifteen to thirty in number) are nominated by Government departments.

The British Council's chief activities concern educational exchanges with foreign countries of students, teachers, and technicians, including arranging facilities for these visitors in Britain; they include supporting libraries and information services abroad where British books and other reading materials are readily available, and further include the financing of tours of British lecturers and exhibitions, and of theatrical, musical, and ballet troupes abroad. Sadler's Wells Ballet has toured to Brussels, Prague, Warsaw, Poznau, Malmö, Oslo, Lisbon, Berlin, and the United States and Canada under British Council

auspices with great success. The Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet has toured the United States and Canada, under my management, with equal success, and is soon to visit Africa, including Kenya Colony. The Old Vic Company, the Boyd Neel String Orchestra, and the Ballet Rambert toured Australia and New Zealand, and the Old Vic has toured Canada. John Gielgud's theatre company has visited Canada. In addition, the British Council has sponsored visits abroad of such distinguished musicians as Sir Adrian Boult, Sir John Barbirolli, Sir Malcolm Sargent, and Maggie Teyte.

One of the British Council's important trusts is the responsibility for the special gramophone recordings of distinguished musical works and of the spoken word. This promotion is adding notably to record libraries, and is helping to make the best music available to listeners all over the world. It is also the Government's principal agent for carrying out the cultural conventions agreed upon with other members of the United Nations. These provide, in general, for encouraging mutual knowledge and appreciation of each other's culture through interchanging teachers, offering student scholarships, and exchanging books, films, lectures, concerts, plays, exhibitions, and musical scores.

The relationship between the British Council and the Arts Council is necessarily one of careful collaboration. In the time of C. E. M. A. many tasks were accomplished in common, such as looking after foreign residents in Great Britain. Now the division of labor of the two Councils is well defined, with clear-cut agreement on their respective responsibilities for the various entertainment groups that come to or go from Britain. The British Council helps British artists and works of art to go ahead; the Arts Council assists artistic activities in Britain, including any that may come from abroad. Both bodies have a number of committee members in common, and the feeling between

the groups is close and friendly.

It is, I feel, characteristic of the British that, without a definite, planned, long-term programme for expanding its patronage of the arts, the British Government has nevertheless come to give financial aid to almost every branch of the art world. This has developed over a period of years, with accumulated speed in the last twelve because of the war, because the days of wide patronage from large private incomes are disappearing if not altogether disappeared, and also perhaps because of an increasing general realization of the people's greater need for leisure-time occupation.

In all of this I must point out quite emphatically that it is the British Government's policy to encourage and support existing and valuable institutions. Thus the great symphony orchestras, Sadler's Wells Ballet, Covent Garden Opera, and various theatre companies are not run by the Government, but given grants by the Arts Council, a corporation supported by Government money.

What is more, there is no one central body in Britain in charge of the fine arts, but a number of organizations, with the Arts Council covering the widest territory. Government patronage of the arts in Britain, as has frequently been true of other British institutions, has grown with the needs of the times, and the organization of the operating bodies has been flexible and adaptable.

The bodies that receive Government money, such as the Arts Council, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and the British Council are relatively independent of the Government, their employees not being civil servants and their day-to-day business being conducted autonomously.

There is no attempt on the part of the Government to interfere with the presentations of the companies receiving State aid, though often the Government encourages experimentation. A very happy combination of arts

sponsorship is now permissible under a comparatively recent Act of Parliament that allows local government authorities to assist theatrical and musical groups fully. Now, for instance, an orchestra based anywhere in Britain may have the financial backing of the town authorities, as well as of the Arts Council and private patrons.

While accurate predictions about the future course of relations between Government and the arts in Britain are not, of course, possible, it seems likely, however, that all of mankind will be found with more, rather than less, leisure in the years to come. In the days of the industrial revolution in Britain a hundred-odd years ago, the people, by which I mean the working classes, had little opportunity for cultivating a taste for the arts.

Now, with the average number of hours worked by British men, thanks to trade unionism and a more genuinely progressive and humanitarian point of view, standing at something under forty-seven weekly, there is obviously less time devoted to earning a living, leaving more for learning the art of living. It may well be that the next hundred years will see even more intensive efforts made to help people to use their leisure hours pleasantly and profitably. As long ago as the early 1930's, at a time when he was so instrumental in encouraging ballet through the founding of the Camargo Society, Lord (then J. Maynard) Keynes wrote that he hoped and believed the day would come when the problem of earning one's daily bread might not be the most important one of our lives, and that "the arena of the heart and head will be occupied, or reoccupied, by our real problems—the problems of life and of human relations, of creation and behavior and religion." Then, "for the first time since his creation," Lord Keynes continued, "man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem—how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure science and compound interest will have won for him to live wisely and agreeably

and well."

* * *

Stripped to the simplest explanation possible, Sadler's Wells leased its company to Covent Garden for a period of years. The move must have entailed a prodigious amount of work for all concerned and for Ninette de Valois in particular. Quite apart from all the physical detail involved: new scenery, new musical material, new costumes, more dancers, there was, most importantly, a change of point of view, even of direction. With a large theatre and orchestra, and large responsibilities, experimental works for the moment had to be postponed. New thinking had to be employed, because the company's direction was now in the terms of the Maryinsky Theatre, the Bolshoi, the Paris Opéra.

The keystone of the arch that is Sadler's Wells's policy is the full-length productions of classical ballets. The prime example is *The Sleeping Beauty*, my own reactions to which, when I first saw it, I have already recounted. In the production of this work, the company was preeminent, with Margot Fonteyn as a bright, particular star; but the "star" system, if one cares to call it that, was utilized to the full, since each night there was a change of cast; and it must be remembered that in London it is possible to present a full-length work every night for a month or more without changing the bill, whereas in this country, almost daily changes are required. This, it should be pointed out, required a good deal of audience training.

The magnificent production of *The Sleeping Beauty* cost more than £10,000, at British costs. What the costs for such a production as that would have been on this side of the Atlantic I dislike to contemplate. The point is that it was a complete financial success. Another point I should like to make is that while *The Sleeping Beauty* was presented nightly, week after week, there was no slighting of the other classical works such as the full-length *Swan*

Lake, *Coppélia*, *Les Sylphides*, and *Giselle*; nor was there any diminution of new works or revivals of works from their own repertoire.

It was in 1948 I returned to London further to pursue the matter of their invasion of America. It was my very dear friend, the late Ralph Hawkes of the music publishing firm of Boosey and Hawkes, the leaseholders of Covent Garden, who helped materially in arranging matters and in persuading the Sadler's Wells direction and the British Arts Council that they were ready for America and that, since Hawkes was closely identified with America's musical life, that this country was ready for them.

Meanwhile, Ninette de Valois grew increasingly dubious about full-length, full-evening ballets, such as *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*, in the States, and was convinced in her own mind that the United States and Canadian audiences not only would not accept them, much less sit still before a single work lasting three and one-half hours. Much, of course, was at stake for all concerned and it was, indeed, a serious problem about which to make a final, inevitable decision.

The conferences were long and many. Conferences are a natural concomitant of ballet. But there was a vast difference between these conferences and the hundreds I had had with the Russians, the Caucasians, the Bulgarians, and the Axminsters. Here were neither intrigues nor whims, neither suspicion nor stupidity. On the contrary, here was reasonableness, logic, frankness, fundamental British honesty. George Borodin, a Russian-born Englishman and a great ballet-lover, once pointed out that ballet is a medium that transcends words, adding "the tongue is a virtuoso that can make an almost inexhaustible series of noises of all kinds." In my countless earlier conferences with other ballet directorates, really few of those noises, alas, really meant anything.

At last, the affirmative decision was made and we

arrived at an agreement on the repertoire for the American season, to include the full-length works, along with a representative cross-section, historically speaking, of the Sadler's Wells repertoire of their shorter works. The matter settled, I left for home.

On my return to New York, still other problems awaited me. The Metropolitan Opera House, the only possible New York stage on which Sadler's Wells could appear, was faced with difficulties and perplexities, with other commitments for the period when the British visitors would be here.

However, thanks to the invaluable cooperation and assistance of Edward Johnson, Alfred P. Sloan, and Mrs. August Belmont, it was decided that a part of the season should be given to Sadler's Wells. Had it not been for their friendly, intelligent, and influential offices, New York might not have had the pleasure and privilege of the Sadler's Wells visit.

The road at last having been cleared, our promotional campaign was started and was limited to four weeks. The response is a matter of theatrical history.

Here, for the first time in the United States, was a company carrying on the great tradition in classical ballet, with timely and contemporary additions. Here was a company with a broad repertoire based on and imbedded in the full-length classics, but also bolstered with modern works that strike deep into human experience. Here were choreographers who strove to broaden the scope of their art and to bring into their works some of the richness of modern psychology and drama, always balletic in idiom, with freedom of style, who permitted their dramatic imaginations to guide them in creating movement and in the use of music.

By boat came the splendid productions, the costumes, the properties, loads and loads of them. By special

chartered planes came the company, and the technical staff, the entire contingent headed by the famous directorial trio, Ninette de Valois, Frederick Ashton, and Constant Lambert, with the executive side in the capable hands of David Webster, General Administrator. The technical department was magnificently presided over by Herbert Hughes, General Manager of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, and the late Louis Yudkin, General Stage Director.

It was an American *ballerina*, Nora Kaye, who hustled Margot Fonteyn from the airport to let her have her first peek at the Metropolitan Opera House. The curtain was up when they arrived, revealing the old gold and red auditorium. Margot's perceptive eyes took it all in at a glance. She took a deep breath, clasped her hands in front of her. "Thank goodness," she said, "it's old and comfortable and warm and rich, as an opera house should be." She paused for a reflective moment and added, "I was so afraid it would be slick and modern like everything else here, all steel and chromium, and spit and polish. I'm glad it's old!".

On an afternoon before the opening, my very good friend, Hans Juda, publisher of Britain's international textile journal, *Ambassador*, together with his charming wife, gave a large and delightful cocktail party at Sherry's in the Metropolitan Opera House for a large list of invited guests from the worlds of art, business, and diplomacy. Hans Juda is a very helpful and influential figure in the world of British textiles and wearing apparel. It was he, together with the amiable James Cleveland Belle of the famous Bond Street house of Horrocks, who arranged with British designers, dressmakers, textile manufacturers, and tailors to see that each member of the Sadler's Wells company was outfitted with complete wardrobes for both day and evening wear; the distaff side with hats, suits, frocks, shoes, and accessories; the male side with lounge suits, dinner jackets, shoes, gloves, etc. The men were also

furnished with, shall I say, necessaries for the well-dressed man, which were soon packed away, viz., bowler hats ("derbies" to the American native) and "brollies" (umbrellas to Broadway).

The next night was, in more senses than one, the *BIG* night: a completely fabulous *première*. The Metropolitan was sold out weeks in advance, with standees up to, and who knows, perhaps beyond, the normal capacity. Hundreds of ballet lovers had stood in queue for hours to obtain a place in the coveted sardine space, reaching in double line completely round the square block the historic old house occupies on Broadway, Seventh Avenue, Thirty-ninth and Fortieth Streets. The orchestra stalls and boxes were filled with the great in all walks of life. The central boxes of the "Golden Horseshoe," draped in the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack, housed the leading figures of the diplomatic and municipal worlds.

Although the date was 9 October, it was the hottest night of the summer, as luck would have it. The Metropolitan Opera House is denied the benefit of modern air-conditioning; the temperature within its hallowed walls, thanks to the mass of humanity and the lights, was many degrees above that of the humid blanket outside.

Despite all this, so long as I shall live, I shall never forget the stirring round of applause that greeted that distinguished figure, Constant Lambert, as he entered the orchestra pit to lead the orchestra in the two anthems, the Star Spangled Banner and God Save the King. The audience resumed their seats; there was a bated pause, and then from the pit came the first notes of the overture to *The Sleeping Beauty*, under the sympathetic baton of that finest of ballet conductors. So long as I shall live I shall never forget the deafening applause as the curtains opened on the first of Oliver Messel's sets and costumes. That applause, which was repeated and repeated—for Fonteyn's entrance, increasing in its roar until, at the end, Dame Ninette had to

make a little speech, against her will—still rings in my ears.

I have had the privilege of handling the world's greatest artists and most distinguished attractions; my career has been punctuated with stirring opening performances of my own, and I have been at others quite as memorable. However, so far as the quality of the demonstrations and the manifestations of enthusiasm are concerned, the *première* of the Sadler's Wells Ballet at the Metropolitan Opera House, on 9 October, 1949, was the most outstanding of my entire experience.

Dame Ninette de Valois, outwardly as calm as ever, but, I suspect, inwardly a mass of conflicting emotions, was seated in the box with Mayor O'Dwyer. As the curtains closed on the first act of *The Sleeping Beauty*, and the tremendous roar of cheers and applause rose from the packed house, the Mayor laid his hand on "Madame's" arm and said, "Lady, you're *in*!"

Crisply and a shade perplexed, "Madame" replied:

"In?... Really?"

Genuinely puzzled now, she tried unsuccessfully to translate to herself what this could mean. "Strange language," she thought, "I'm *in*?... In what?... What on earth does that mean?"

We met in the interval. I grasped her hand in sincere congratulation. She patted me absently as she smiled. Then she turned and spoke.

"Look here," she said, "could you translate for me, please, something His Lordship just said to me as the curtain fell? Put it into English, I mean?"

It was my turn to be puzzled. "Madame" was, I thought, seated with Mayor O'Dwyer. Had she wandered about, moved to another box?

"His Lordship?"

"Yes, yes, of course. Your Lord Mayor, with whom I am

sitting."

I hadn't thought of O'Dwyer in terms of a peer.

"Yes, yes," she continued, "as the applause, that very surprising applause rang out at the end, the Lord Mayor turned to me and said, 'Lady, you're *in*!' Just like that. Now will you please translate for me what it is? Tell me, is that good or bad?"

Laughingly I replied, "What do you think?"

"I really don't know" was her serious and sincere response.

The simple fact was that Dame Ninette de Valois, D.B.E., D. Litt., to whose untiring efforts Sadler's Wells owes its success, its existence, its very being, honestly thought the company was failing in New York.

This most gala of gala nights was crowned by a large and extremely gay supper party given by Mayor O'Dwyer, at Gracie Mansion, the official residence of the Mayor of the City of New York. It was a warm and balmy night, with an Indian Summer moon—one of those halcyon nights all too rare. Because of this, it was possible to stage the supper in that most idyllic of settings, on the spacious lawn overlooking the moon-drenched East River, with the silhouettes of the great bridges etched in silver lights against the glow from the hundreds of colored lights strung over the lawn. Beneath all this gleamed the white linen of the many tables, the sparkle of crystal, the gloss of the silver.

Two orchestras provided continuous dance music, the food and the champagne were ineffable. It was a party given by the Mayor: to honor the Sadler's Wells Ballet and to cement those cultural ties between the two great world centers, London and New York. What better means are there for mutual understanding and admiration?

There was, however, a delay on the part of the company in leaving the Metropolitan Opera House, a quite extended

delay. Three large buses waited at the stage door, manned by Police Department Inspectors in dress uniforms, with gold badges. But this was the first time the company had worn the new evening creations I have mentioned. It took longer to array themselves in these than it did for them to prepare for the performance. As a matter of fact, Margot Fonteyn and Moira Shearer were the last to be ready, each of them ravishing and stunning, the dark, flashing brunette beauty of Fonteyn in striking contrast to the soft, pinkish loveliness of Shearer.

Then it was necessary for our staff and the police to form a flying wedge to clear a path from the stage door to the waiting buses through the tightly-packed crowd that waited in Fortieth Street for a glimpse of the triumphant stars.

Safe aboard at last, off the cavalcade started, headed by a Police Department squad car, with siren tied down, red lights flashing, together with two motorcycle police officers fifteen feet in advance and the same complement, squad car and outriders, bringing up the rear of the procession, through the red traffic lights, thus providing the company with yet another American thrill.

There was a tense instant as the procession left the Metropolitan and the police sirens commenced their wail. The last time the company had heard a siren was in the days of the blitz in London, when, no matter how inured one became, the siren's first tintinnabulation brought on that sudden shock that no familiarity can entirely eradicate. It was Constant Lambert's dry wit that eased the situation. "It's all right, girls," he called out, "that's the 'all clear.'".

Heading the receiving line at Gracie Mansion, as the company descended the wide stairs into the festive garden, were the Mayor and Grover Whalen, Sir Oliver and Lady Franks, Sir Alexander Cadogan, the Honorable Trygve Lie, President Romulo. There was a twinkle in Mayor O'Dwyer's eye, as some of the *corps de ballet* girls

curtsied with a “Good-evening, your Lordship.”

Toasts were drunk to the President of the United States, the King of England, Dame Ninette de Valois, to the Mayor, to Margot Fonteyn, Moira Shearer, and the other principals. The party waxed even gayer. Dancers seem never to tire of dancing. It was three in the morning when the Mayor made a short speech to say “good-night,” explaining that he was under doctor’s orders to go to bed, but that the party was to continue unabated, and all were to enjoy themselves.

It was past four o’clock when it finally broke up, and the buses, with their police escorts, started the journey back through a sleeping Manhattan to deposit the company at their various hotels. Constant Lambert, the lone wolf, lived apart from the rest at an East Side hotel. All the rest of the company had been dropped, when three buses, six inspectors, two squad cars, four motorcycle officers, halted before the sedate hostelry after five in the morning, and Constant Lambert, the sole passenger in the imposing cavalcade, slowly and with a grave, seventeenth-century dignity, solemnly shook hands with drivers, motor police, and all the inspectors, thanked them for the extremely interesting, and, as he put it, “highly informative” journey, saluted them with his sturdy blackthorn stick, and disappeared within the chaste portals of the hotel, while the police stood at salute, and two bewildered milk-men looked on in wonder.

The New York season was limited only by the availability of the Metropolitan Opera House. We could have played for months. Also, the company was due back at Covent Garden to fulfil its obligations to the British taxpayer. Following the Metropolitan engagement, there was a brief tour, involving a special train of six baggage cars, diner, and seven Pullmans, visiting, with equal success and greeted by capacity and turn-away houses, Washington, Richmond, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago,

and Michigan State College at East Lansing; thence across the border into Canada, for engagements at Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, to honor the Commonwealth.

Before David Webster returned to London, we discussed the matter of an early return for a longer stay. I pointed out that, with such an evident success, Sadler's Wells could not afford to delay its return for still further and greater triumphs. Now, I emphasized, was the time to take advantage of the momentum of success; now, if ever, was the time, since the promotion, the publicity, the press notices, all were cumulative in effect.

Webster, I knew, was impressed. I waited for his answer. But he shook his head slowly.

"Sol," he said, "it's doubtful. Frankly, I do not think it is possible."

Meanwhile, I discussed the entire matter of the return with leading members of the company. All were of a single opinion, all of one mind. They were anxious and eager to return.

Such are the workings of the Sadler's Wells organization, however, that it was necessary to delay a decision as to a return visit until at least the 3rd or 4th of January, 1950, in order that the matter could be properly put before the British Arts Council and the British Council for their final approval.

It should not be difficult for the reader to understand the anxiety and eagerness with which I anticipated that date.

* * *

It seems to me that during this period of suspense it might be well for me to sum up my impression of the repertoire that made up the initial season.

The Sadler's Wells Ballet repertoire for the first American season consisted of the following works: *The Sleeping Beauty*; *Le Lac des Cygnes* (*Swan Lake*) in full; *Cinderella*, in three acts; *Job*; *Façade*; *Apparitions*; *The*

Rake's Progress; *Miracle in the Gorbals*; *Hamlet*; *Symphonic Variations*; *A Wedding Bouquet*; and *Checkmate*. The order is neither alphabetical nor necessarily in the order of importance. Actually, irrespective of varying degrees of success on this side of the Atlantic, they are all important, for they represent, in a sense, a cross-section of the repertoire history of the company.

The Sleeping Beauty, in its Sadler's Wells form, is a ballet in a Prologue and three acts. The story is a collaboration by Marius Petipa and I. A. Vsevolojsky, (the Director of the Russian Imperial Theatres at the time of its creation), after the Charles Perrault fairy tale. The music, of course, is Tchaikowsky's immortal score. The scenery and costumes are by Oliver Messel. The original Petipa choreography was reproduced by Nicholas Serguëeff.

It was the work which so brilliantly inaugurated the company's occupation of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on 20th February, 1946. Sadler's Wells had previously revived the work in 1939, on a smaller scale, under the title *The Sleeping Princess*.

My unforgettable memories of the present production are topped by the inspired interpretation of the title role by Margot Fonteyn, who alternated moods of subtlety and childlike simplicity with brilliant fireworks, always within the ballet's frame. There is the shining memory of Beryl Grey's magnificent Lilac Fairy, the memory of the alternating casts, one headed by Moira Shearer, entirely different in its way. There is, as a matter of fact, little difference between the casts. Always there were such ensemble performances as the States had never before seen. Over all shone the magnificence of Oliver Messel's scenery and costumes.

The full-length *Swan Lake* (*Le Lac des Cygnes*), actually in four acts, was a revelation to audiences for years accustomed to the truncated second act version. Its libretto,

or book, is a Russian compilation by Begitschev and Geltser. It was first presented by Sadler's Wells in the present settings and costumes by Leslie Hurry, with the original choreography by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov, reproduced by Nicholas Serguëeff, on 7th September, 1943.

This production replaced an earlier one, first done at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, on 20th November, 1934, with Alicia Markova as the Swan Queen, and the scenery and costumes by Hugh Stevenson.

On the 13th April, 1947, it came to Covent Garden, with an increased *corps de ballet*, utilizing the entire Covent Garden stage, as it does at the Metropolitan Opera House.

As always, Margot Fonteyn is brilliant in the dual role of Odette-Odile. In all my wide experience of Swan Queens, Fonteyn today is unequaled. With the Sadler's Wells company, there is no dearth of first-rate Swan Queens: Margot Fonteyn, Moira Shearer, Beryl Grey, Violetta Elvin. Altogether, in case the reader has not already suspected it, *Swan Lake* is, I think, my favorite ballet. It is not only a classical ballet; it is a classic. The haunting Tchaikowsky score, its sheer romanticism, its dramatic impact, all these things individually and together, give it its pride of place with the public of America as well as with myself. Here my vote is with the majority.

The third full-length work, so splendid in its settings and so bulky that its performances had to be limited by its physical proportions only to the largest stages, was *Cinderella*, which took up every inch on the great stage of the Metropolitan Opera House. *Cinderella* was the first full evening ballet in the modern repertoire of Sadler's Wells. A three-act work, with choreography by Frederick Ashton, to the score by Serge Prokofieff, its scenery and costumes are by the French painter, Jean-Denis Malclès.

Here was an instance where the chief choreographer of

Sadler's Wells, Frederick Ashton, had the courage to tackle a full-length fairy story, the veritable stuff from which true ballets are made in the grand tradition of classical ballet: a formidable task. The measure of his success is that he managed to do it by telling a beautiful and thrice-familiar fairy tale in a direct and straightforward manner, never dragging in spectacle for the sake of spectacle. Moreover, he was eminently successful in avoiding, on the one hand, those sterilities of classicism that lead only to boredom, and the grotesqueries of modernism, on the other.

For music, Ashton took the score Prokofieff composed for the Soviet ballet of the same name, but created an entirely new work to the music. The settings and costumes by Malclès could not have been more right, filled as they are with the glamor of the fairy tale spirit and utterly free from any trace of vulgarity.

I shall always remember the Ugly Sisters of Ashton and Robert Helpmann, in the best tradition of English pantomime. Moreover, the production was blessed with three alternating Cinderellas, each individual in approach and interpretation: Fonteyn, Shearer, and Elvin.

Job, the reader will remember, is not called a ballet but "A Masque for Dancing." The adaptation of the Biblical legend in the spirit of the William Blake drawings is the work of a distinguished British surgeon and Blake authority, Geoffrey Keynes. It was the first important choreographic work of Ninette de Valois. Its scenery and costumes were the product of John Piper; its music is one of the really great scores of that dean of living British composers, Ralph Vaughan Williams.

In the music, completely modern in idiom, Vaughan Williams has followed the overall pattern of the sixteenth and seventeenth century "Masques," using period rhythms (but not melodies) such as the *Pavane*, the *Minuet*, the *Saraband*, and the *Gaillard*.

The production itself is on two levels, in which all the earthly, material characters remain on the stage level, while the spiritual characters are on a higher level, the two levels being joined by a large flight of steps.

One character stands out in domination of the work. That is Satan, created by Anton Dolin, and danced here by Robert Helpmann. The climax of *Job* occurs when Satan is hurled down from heaven. The whole thing is a work of deep and moving beauty—a serious, thoughtful work that ranks as one of Ninette de Valois' masterpieces.

Façade represented the opposite extreme in the Sadler's Wells repertoire. There was considerable doubt on the part of the company's directorate that it would be acceptable on this side of the Atlantic, because of its essential British humor; it was also feared that it might be dated. As matters turned out, it was one of the most substantial successes among the shorter works.

Façade was originally staged by Ashton for the Camargo Society in 1931, came to the Sadler's Wells Ballet in 1935, was lost in the German invasion of Holland, and was restored in the present settings and costumes of John Armstrong in 1940. It is, of course, freely adapted from the Edith Sitwell poems, with the popular score by Sir William Walton.

Fresh, witty, and humorous throughout, there is no suggestion of either provincialism or of being dated. Its highlights for me were the Tango, superbly danced by Frederick Ashton and Moira Shearer, who alternated with Pamela May, and the Yodelling Song with its bucolic milkmaid.

Apparitions perhaps bore too close a resemblance in plot to Massine's treatment of the Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique*, although the former is a much earlier work, having been staged by Ashton in 1933. Its story is by Constant Lambert; its music, a Lambert selection of the

later music of Franz Liszt, re-orchestrated by Gordon Jacob. Cecil Beaton designed the extremely effective scenery and costumes. It was taken into the Sadler's Wells repertoire in 1936.

It provided immensely effective roles for Margot Fonteyn and Robert Helpmann.

Strikingly successful was Ninette de Valois' *The Rake's Progress*. This is a six-scene work, based on William Hogarth's famous series of paintings of the same name. Its story, like its music, is by Gavin Gordon. Its setting, a permanent closed box, subject to minor changes during the action, scene to scene, with an act-drop of a London street, is by the late Rex Whistler, as are the costumes, Hogarthian in style.

It is a highly dramatic work, in reality a sort of morality play, perhaps, more than it is a ballet in the accepted sense of the term, but a tremendously important work in the evolution of the repertoire that is so peculiarly Sadler's Wells.

Miracle in the Gorbals is another of the theatre pieces in the repertoire. The choreographic work of Robert Helpmann, it is based on a story by Michael Benthall, to a specially commissioned score by Sir Arthur Bliss. Its setting and costumes are by the British artist, Edward Burra. It was a wartime addition to the repertoire in the fall of 1944.

Like *The Rake's Progress*, *Miracle in the Gorbals* is also a sort of morality play, with strong overtones of a sociological tract. Bearing plot and theme resemblances to Jerome K. Jerome's *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, it puts the question: "What sort of treatment would God receive if he returned to earth and visited the slums of a twentieth century city?"

A realistic work, it deals with low-life in a strictly down-to-earth manner. As a spectacle of crowded tenement life,

it mingles such theatrical elements as the raising of the dead, murder, suicide, prostitution. The Bliss music splendidly underlines the action.

With all of its drama and melodrama, it was not, nevertheless, one of my favorite works.

The other Helpmann creation was *Hamlet*, staged by him two years before *Miracle in the Gorbals*, in 1942. Utilizing the Tchaikowsky fantasy-overture, its tremendously effective scenery and costumes are by Leslie Hurry.

Hamlet was not an attempt to tell the Shakespeare story in ballet form. Rather is it a work that attempts to portray the dying thoughts of Hamlet as his life passes before him in review. Drama rather than dance, it is a spectacle, linked from picture to picture by dances, a work in which mime plays an important part.

Symphonic Variations, set to César Franck's work for piano and orchestra of the same title, was Ashton's first purely dance work in abstract form.

A work without plot, it employed only six dancers, three couples, on an immense stage in an immensely effective setting of great simplicity by Sophie Fedorovich. The six dancers were: Margot Fonteyn, Moira Shearer, and Pamela May; Michael Somes, Henry Danton, and Brian Shaw. There is no virtuoso role. It is a lyric work, calm, ordered, in which the classical spirit is exalted in a mood of all for one, one for all.

A Wedding Bouquet is certainly the most genuinely witty work in all modern ballet repertoire. The work of that genuine wit and gentleman of impeccable taste in music, literature, and painting, the late Lord Berners, it was staged by Ashton in 1937. Utilizing a text by Gertrude Stein, spoken by a narrator seated at a table at the side of the stage, its music, its scenery, its costumes, all are by Lord Berners. At the Metropolitan Opera House, the narrator

was the inimitable Constant Lambert. In later performances, the role was taken over by Robert Irving, the chief conductor.

The work, a collaboration between Ashton, Berners, and Gertrude Stein, is the most completely sophisticated ballet I know. The amazing thing about it to me is that with its utterly integrated Stein text, it goes as well in large theatres as it does in the smaller ones. The text is as important as the dancing or the music.

For me, aside from the hilarity of the work itself, was the pleasure I derived from the performance of Moira Shearer as the thwarted spinster who loved her dog, and June Brae, who danced the role of Josephine, who was certainly not fitted to go to a wedding, as Gertrude Stein averred. As the Bridegroom, Robert Helpmann provided a comic masterpiece.

Checkmate was the first British ballet to have its *première* outside the country, having been first presented as a part of the Dance Festival at the International Exposition in Paris, in the summer of 1937. Both music and book are by Sir Arthur Bliss, with scenery and costumes by the Anglo-American artist, E. McKnight Kauffer.

The concerns of the ballet are with a game of chess, with the dancers pawns in the game. It appeals to me strongly, and I feel it is one of Ninette de Valois' finest choreographic achievements. It is highly dramatic, leading to a grim tragedy. Its music is tremendously fine and McKnight Kauffer's settings and costumes are striking, effective, and revolutionary. This is a work of first importance in all ballet repertoire.

I embarked upon a continuing bombardment of Ninette de Valois and David Webster by cables and long-distance telephone calls. I never for a instant let the matter out of my mind.

As I counted off the days until a decision was due, the old year ran out. It was on New Year's Eve, while working in my office, that I was taken ill. I had not been feeling entirely myself for several days, but illness is something so foreign to me that I laughed it off as something presumably due to some irregularity of living.

Suddenly, late in the afternoon of New Year's Eve, I found myself doubled up with pain. I was rushed to hospital. A hasty blood-count revealed the necessity for an immediate appendectomy. Before the old year was greeted by the new, I had submitted to surgery. The doctors said it was just in time—a case of "touch and go." A good many things in my life have been that.

A minimum of a week's hospitalization was imperative, the doctors said, and after that another fortnight of quiet recuperation. I remained in hospital the required week.

Very soon after, against the united wishes of Mrs. Hurok and my office, I was on a plane bound for London.

At the London airport I was met by David Webster, who took me as quickly and as smoothly as possible to my old stamping-ground, the Savoy Hotel, where, on Webster's firm insistence, I spent the next twelve hours in bed. There followed extended consultations with Ninette de Valois and Webster; but neither was able to give a definite answer on the all-important matter of the second American tour.

I pointed out to them that, in order to protect all concerned, bookings were already being made across the United States and Canada: bookings involving in many instances, definite guarantees. As I waited for a decision, my office was daily badgering me. I was at a loss what to reply to them. There were daily inconclusive trans-Atlantic telephone conversations with my office and daily inconclusive conversations with the Sadler's Wells directorate.

At last there came a glimmer. Webster announced that

he believed a final decision could be reached at or about 16th February. He required, he said, that much further time in order to be able to figure out the precise costs of the venture and to determine what, if anything, might be left after the payment of all the terrific costs. In other words, he had to determine and calculate the precise nature of the risk.... Figures, figures, and still more figures.... Cables backwards and forwards across the Atlantic, with my New York office checking and rechecking on the capacities of the auditoriums, theatres, opera houses, and halls in which the bookings had been made.

The 16th February passed and still no decision was forthcoming. On 19th February, all that could be elicited from Webster was: "I simply can't say at this juncture." He added that he appreciated my position and regretted the daily disappointments to which I was being subjected.

There came the 22nd of February, in the United States the anniversary of the birth of George Washington. This year in London, the 22nd of February was the eve of the General Election. Most of the afternoon I spent with Webster at his flat, going over papers. We dined together and, as we parted, Webster's only remark was: "See you at the performance."

Meanwhile the pressure on me from New York increased.

"What *is* going to happen?" became the reiterated burden of the daily messages from my office.

Other matters in New York were requiring my attention, and it had become necessary to inform Webster that it would be impossible for me to remain any longer in London and that I was sailing in the *Queen Mary* on Friday.

Election Eve I went to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, to watch another Sadler's Wells performance. In the main foyer I ran into Webster.

"Can you guarantee us our expenses *and* a profit?" he asked.

"I can."

"It's a deal."

It was eight-thirty in the evening of the 22nd February that the verbal deal was made. Five hours difference in time made it three-thirty in the afternoon in New York. I hurried back to the Savoy and called Mae Frohman.

"What's going to happen?"

"It's all set," I replied.

Back to Covent Garden I went. In the Crush Bar, Webster and I toasted our deal with a bottle of champagne.

During Election Day, Webster, "Madame," and I worked on repertoire and final details; but, for the most part, we gave our attention to the early returns from the General Election. After the performance that night at the Garden, David Webster and his friend James Cleveland Belle, joined me at the Savoy and remained until four in the morning, with one eye and one ear on the returns.

The next day I sailed in the good *Queen Mary* and had a lovely crossing, with my good friend, Greer Garson, on board to make the trip even more pleasant.

Mrs. Hurok, my daughter Ruth, Mae Frohman, and my office staff met me at the Cunard pier; and I told the whole story, in all its intricate detail, to them.

But there were still loose ends to be caught up, and April found me again back in London. The night following my arrival, I gave a big party at the Savoy, with Ninette de Valois, Margot Fonteyn, Moira Shearer and David Webster as the guests of honor. We toasted the success of the first American season; drank another to the success of the forthcoming and much more extended tour.

While in London, we clarified and agreed upon many details, including the final repertoire for the second

American venture—which was to reach, not only from coast to coast, but to dip into the far south as well as far to the north.

Back in New York for a brief stay and then, in June, Mrs. Hurok and I left for our annual sojourn in Europe. This time we went direct to London, where we revelled in the performances at Covent Garden.

I have always loved London and always have been a great admirer of London, the place, and of those things for which it stands as a symbol. I love suddenly coming upon the fascinating little squares, with their stately old houses, as often as not adorned with a fifteenth-century church. Although modernism sometimes almost encroaches, they still retain an old-fashioned dreaminess.

About all is the atmosphere of history, tradition, and the aura of a genuinely free people. The Royal Opera House itself has a particular fascination for me. So far as I am concerned, there is not the slightest incongruity in the fact that its façade looks out on a police station and police court and that it is almost otherwise surrounded by a garden market. A patina of associations seems to cover the fabric, both inside and out—whether it is the bare boards and iron rails of the high old-fashioned gallery, or the gilt and red plush and cream-painted woodwork, the thin pillars of the boxes, the rather awkward staircases, the "Crush" bar and the other bars, the red curtain bearing the coat of arms of the reigning Monarch. Then, lights down, the great curtain sweeps up, and once again, for the hundredth time, the tense magic holds everyone in thrall.

I love the true ballet lovers who are not to be found in the boxes alone or in the stalls exclusively. Many of them sit in the lower-priced seats in the upper circle, the amphitheatre, and in the gallery. The night before an opening or an important revival or cast change, a long queue, equipped with camp-chairs and sandwiches, waits patiently to be admitted to the gallery seats the following

evening.

There is one figure I miss now at Covent Carden, one that seemed to me to be a part of its very fabric. For years, going back stage to see Anna Pavlova, Chaliapine, others of my artists, and in the days of the de Basil Ballet, it was he who always had a cheery greeting. In 1948, Tom Jackson closed his eyes in the sleep everlasting, to open them, one hopes, at some Great Stage Door. He was the legendary stage door-keeper, was Tom Jackson, and certainly one of the most important persons in Covent Garden. He was a gentleman in the best sense of the word. Many were the celebrated artists he saw come and go during his long regime. Everybody spoke to him in their own tongue, although Jackson invariably replied in English. He was, I remember, in charge of the artists' mail, and knew everyone, and remembered every name and every face. Jackson was not only interested in his stage door, but took deep interest in the artistic aspect of Covent Garden. Immediately after a performance of either ballet or opera, he made up his mind whether it had been good or bad.

Sometimes it fell to Jackson's lot to regulate matters outside the Garden. The gallery queues, as is the London custom, attract all sorts of itinerant musicians and entertainers to the Floral Street side where they display and reveal their art to the patiently waiting galleryites. If the hurdy-gurdies and public acclamations grew so loud that they might disturb any in the offices above, Jackson, with infallible tact, stopped the disturbance without offending the queuers or the entertainers by his interference.

Jackson guarded the Garden inexorably and was relentless on questions of admission. With unerring instinct, he distinguished between friend and foe, and was renowned for his treatment of the yellow press and its columnists, with its nose for gossip and scandal. He is said once to have unceremoniously deposited an over-

enthusiastic columnist in the street, after having refused a considerable sum of money for permission to photograph a fainting *ballerina*. He was once seen chasing a large woman who was brandishing a heavy umbrella around the outside of the building. The large woman, in turn, was chasing Leonide Massine running at full tilt. The woman, obviously a crackpot, had accused Massine of stealing her idea for a ballet. Jackson caught the woman and disarmed her.

The London stage doorkeeper is really a breed unto himself.

I love opening nights at Covent Garden, when it becomes, quite apart from the stage, a unique social function in the display of dresses and jewels, despite the austerity. It is always a curious mixture of private elegance and public excitement. The excitement extends to all streets of the district, right down to the Strand, making a strange contrast with the cabbage stalls, stray potatoes, and the odor of vegetables lingering on from the early market. The impeccable and always polite London police are in control of all approaches, directing the endless stream of cars without delay as they draw up in the famous covered way under the portico. Ceremoniously they take care of all arriving pedestrians, and surprisingly hold up even the most pretentious and important traffic to let the pedestrian seat-holder through. The richly uniformed porters keep chattering socialites from impeding traffic with a stern ritual all their own, and announcing waiting cars in stentorian tones.... Ever in my mind Covent Garden is associated with that sacred hour back stage before a ballet performance, the company in training-kits, practising relentlessly. Only those who know this hour can form any idea of the overwhelming cost of the dancers' brief glamorous hour before the public.

Particularizing from the general, from the very beginning, in all contacts with the British and with Sadler's

Wells, the relations between all concerned have been like those prevailing in a kind and understanding family, and they remain so today.

And now at the Savoy is the best smoked salmon in the world—Scottish salmon. When I am there, a special large tray of it is always ready for me. It is a passion I share with Ninette de Valois, who insists it is her favorite dish. The question I am about to ask is purely rhetorical: Is there anything finer than smoked Scottish salmon, with either a cold, dry champagne or Scotch whiskey?

The repertoire for the second American-Canadian tour of the Sadler's Wells Ballet included, in addition to *The Sleeping Beauty*, the four-act *Le Lac des Cygnes* (*Swan Lake*), *Façade*, *A Wedding Bouquet*, *The Rake's Progress* and *Checkmate*, the following works new to America: their own production of *Giselle*, *Les Patineurs*, *Don Quixote*, and *Dante Sonata*.

Giselle, in the Sadler's Wells version, with its Adam score, has scenery and costumes by James Bailey, and was produced by Nicholas Serguëeff, after the choreography of Coralli and Perrot.

The original Wells production was at the Old Vic, in 1934, with Alicia Markova in the title role. The production for Covent Garden dates from 1946, with Margot Fonteyn as Giselle.

It requires no comment from me save to point out that Fonteyn is one of the most interesting and effective interpreters of the role in my experience, and I have seen a considerable number of Giselles.

Les Patineurs had been seen in America in a version danced by Ballet Theatre. The Sadler's Wells version is so much better that there is no real basis for comparison. This version, by Frederick Ashton, dates back to 1937. It has an interesting history. It is my understanding that the original idea was that Ninette de Valois would stage it. The story

has it that, one night at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, Ashton, whose dressing-room adjoined that of Constant Lambert, heard the latter working out dance rhythms from two Meyerbeer operas, *Star of the North* and *The Prophet*. The story goes on that Ashton was moved by the melodies and that because "Madame" was so occupied with executive and administrative duties, the choreographic job was given to him. Ashton states that he composed this ballet, which is exclusively concerned with skating, without ever having seen an ice-rink.

I find it one of the most charming ballets in the repertoire, with something in it for everyone. In these days of so-called "ice-ballets," which have little or no relation to ballet, however much they may have to do with ice, I find here an academic ballet, which is very close to skating.

Don Quixote was seen in but a few cities. It was the most recent work, at that time, to be shown. Choreographed by Ninette de Valois, it was a ballet in five scenes with both its scenario and its music by Robert Gerhard, with scenery and costumes by Edward Burra.

The story, of course, was the Cervantes tale. It was not a "dancing" ballet, in the sense that it had no virtuoso passages. But it told its story, nevertheless, through the medium of dance rather than by mime and acting. My outstanding impressions of it are the splendid score, Margot Fonteyn's outstanding characterization of a dual role, and the shrewdly observed Sancho Panza of the young Alexander Grant.

Dante Sonata was, in a sense, a collaborative work by Frederick Ashton and Constant Lambert. Its date is 1940. Its scenery and costumes are by Sophie Fedorovich. The music is the long piano sonata by Franz Liszt, *D'après une lecture de Dante*, utilizing the poem by Victor Hugo. The orchestration of the piano work by Lambert, with its use of Chinese tam-tam and gong, is singularly effective.

At the time of its production, there was a story in general circulation to the effect that Ashton found his inspiration for the work in the sufferings of the Polish people at the hands of the Nazi invaders. This appears not to have been the case. The truth of the matter seems to have been that at about the time he was planning the work, Ashton was deeply moved by the death of a close and dear relative. The chief influence would, therefore, seem to be this, and thus to account for the choreographer's savagery against the inevitability and immutability of death.

It is not, in any sense, a classical work, for Ashton, in order to portray the contorted and writhing spirits, went to the "free" or "modern" dance for appropriate movements. While, in the wide open spaces of America, it did not fulfil the provincial audiences' ideas of what they expected from ballet, nevertheless it had some twenty-nine performances in the United States and Canada.

The second American season opened at the Metropolitan Opera House, on Sunday evening, 10th September, 1950. Again it was hot. The full-length *Le Lac des Cygnes* (*Swan Lake*) was the opening programme. The evening was a repetition of the previous year: capacity, cheering houses, with special cheers for Fonteyn.

The demand for seats on the part of the New York public was even greater than the year before, with a larger number consequently disappointed and unable to get into the Metropolitan at all.

From the company's point of view, aside from hard work—daily classes, rehearsals, and eight performances a week—there was a round of entertainment for them, the most outstanding, perhaps, being the day they spent as the guests of J. Alden Talbot at Smoke Rise, his New Jersey estate.

The last night's programme at the Metropolitan season was *The Sleeping Beauty*. The final night's reception

matched that of the first. Ninette de Valois' charming curtain speech, in which she announced another visit on the part of the company to New York—"but not for some time"—couldn't keep the curtain down, and the calls continued until it was necessary to turn up the house lights.

Following the New York engagement, Sadler's Wells embarked on the longest tour of its history, and the most successful tour in the history of ballet.

The New York season extended from 10th September to 1st October. The company appeared in the following cities: Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Birmingham, New Orleans, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Denver, Lincoln, Des Moines, Omaha, Tulsa, Dallas, Oklahoma City, Memphis, St. Louis, Bloomington, Lafayette, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, Winnipeg, Boston, White Plains, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec.

Starting on the 10th September, in New York, the tour closed in Quebec City on 28th January, 1951.

In thirty-two cities, during a period of five months, the people of this continent had paid more than two million and one-half dollars to see the Sadler's Wells Ballet. On Election Eve in London, David Webster had asked me if I could guarantee them their expenses and a profit.

On the first tour the company covered some ten thousand miles. On the second tour, this was extended to some twenty-one thousand.

The box-office records that were broken by the company could only add to the burden of statistics. Suffice it to say, they were many. History was made: the sort of history that can be made again only by the next Sadler's Wells tour.

Some idea of the magnitude of the transportation and railroading problems involved in an extended tour of this sort may be gathered from the fact that the "Sadler's Wells Special" consisted of six Pullman sleeping cars, six

baggage cars, and two dining cars, together with a club-bar-lounge car on long journeys.

I made it a point to be with the company at all the larger cities. I left them at Philadelphia, and awaited their arrival in Los Angeles. Neither I nor Los Angeles has ever seen anything like the opening night of their engagement at the enormous Shrine Auditorium, or like the entire engagement, as a matter of fact.

Because of a company rule that, on opening nights and in the case of parties of official or semi-official greeting nature, the entire personnel of the company and staff should attend in a body, an unfortunate situation arose in Los Angeles. A Beverly Hills group had announced a large party to which some of the company had been invited, without having cleared the matter in advance. The resultant situation was such that the advertised and publicized party was cancelled.

The sudden cancellation left the company without a party with which to relieve the strain of the long trek to the Pacific Coast, and the tense excitement of the first performance in the world's film capital. As a consequence, I arranged to give a large party to the entire company and staff, in conjunction with Edwin Lester, the Director of the Los Angeles Civic Light Opera Association, and the local sponsor of the engagement. The party took place at the Ambassador Hotel, where the entire company was housed during the engagement, with its city within a city, its palm-shaded swimming-pool.

As master of ceremonies and guest of honor, we invited Charles Chaplin, distinguished artist and famous Briton. Among the distinguished guests from the film world were, among many others, Ezio Pinza, Edward G. Robinson, Greer Garson, Barry Fitzgerald, Gene Tierney, Cyd Charisse, Joseph Cotton, Louis Hayward.

Chaplin was a unique master of ceremonies, urbane,

gentle, witty. As judge of a ballroom dancing contest, Chaplin awarded the prize to Herbert Hughes, non-dancer and the company's general manager.

At the end of this phenomenal engagement, the company bade *au revoir* to Los Angeles and the many friends they had made in the film colony, and entrained for San Francisco for an engagement at that finest of all American opera houses, the War Memorial. I have an especial fondness for San Francisco, its atmosphere, its spirit, its people, its food. Yet a curious fact remains: of all the larger American cities, it is coolest in its outward reception of all forms of art. Even with Sadler's Wells, San Francisco followed its formal pattern. It was the more startling in contrast with its sister city in the south. The demonstrations there were such that they had to be cut off in order to permit the performances to continue and thus end before the small hours; the Los Angeles audiences seemed determined not to let the company go. By contrast, the San Francisco audiences were perfunctorily polite in their applause. I have never been able quite to understand it.

In the case of the Sadler's Wells *première* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, the company was enchanted with the building: a real opera house, a good stage, a place in which to work in comfort. The opening night audience had been attracted not only by interest in the company, but as charity contributors to a home for unmarried mothers. The bulk of the stalls and boxes were socially minded. They arrived late, from dinners and parties. *The Sleeping Beauty* must start at the advertised time because of its length. It cannot wait for late-comers. There was an unconscionable confusion in the darkened opera house as the audience rattled down the aisles, chattering, greeting friends, and shattering the spell of the Prologue, disturbing those who had taken the trouble to arrive on time as much as they did the artists on the stage.

My concern on this point is as much for the audience as for the dancers. A ballet, being a work of art, is conceived as an entity, from beginning to end, from the first notes of the overture, till the last one of the coda. The whole is the sum of its parts. The noisy and inconsiderate late-comers, by destroying parts, greatly damage the whole.

The War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco, although a municipal property, has a divided executive in that its physical control is in the hands of the local chapter of the American Legion, which make the rules and regulations for its operation. I do not know of any theatre with more locked doors, more red tape and more annoying, hampering regulations.

There is, to be sure, a certain positive virtue in the rule that forbids any unauthorized person to be permitted to pass from the auditorium to the stage by ways of the pass-door between the two. But, like any rule, it must be administered with discretion. The keeper of the pass-door at the War Memorial Opera House is a gentleman known as the "Colonel," to whom, I feel, "orders is orders," without the leavening of either discretion or plain "horse sense."

On the opening night of Sadler's Wells, a list of names of the persons authorized to pass had been given to this functionary by checking the names on the theatre programme. When Dame Ninette de Valois, D.B.E., D. Litt., Director of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, attempted to go back stage after the first act of *The Sleeping Beauty*, she was stopped at the pass-door by the guardian "Colonel."

Very simply she told him, "I am Ninette de Valois."

That meant nothing to the "Colonel."

"Madame's" name, he pointed out, was not checked off. It was not even printed on the "official" staff. In another part of the programme, there it was in small type. But the "Colonel" was adamant. Horatio at the bridge could not

have been more formidable. He was a composite of St. Peter at the gate and St. Michael with his flaming sword.

While all this was going on, I was in the imposing, marble-sheathed front lobby of the Opera House, in conversation with critics and San Francisco friends, sharing their enthusiasm, when I suddenly felt my coat tails being sharply pulled. The first tug I was sure was some mistake, and I pretended not to notice it. Then my coat tails were tugged at again, unmistakably yanked.

"What is it?" I thought. "*Who* is it?"

I turned quickly, and found a tense, white-faced "Madame" looking at me, as she might transfix either a dancer who had fallen on his face, or a Cabinet Minister with whom she had taken issue.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"The man," she said, pointing in the direction of the pass-door, "wouldn't let me through." Crisply she added, "He didn't know who I was. This is disgraceful, absolutely disgraceful. Unforgivable, I *must* say."

She turned quickly on her heel and disappeared.

I was greatly upset, and immediately took steps to have the oversight corrected. I was miserable.

I sent for "Bertie" Hughes, the able general manager of the Sadler's Wells Ballet company, told him what had happened, explained how distressed I was over the stupid incident.

Hughes smiled his quiet smile.

"Come on, have a drink and forget it," he said. "'Madame' will have forgotten all about it within five minutes of watching the performance."

As we sipped our drink, I was filled with mortification that "Madame," of all people, should have run afoul of a too literal interpreter of the regulations.

"Look here," said Hughes, "cheer up, don't be

disturbed."

But the evening had been spoiled for me.

A really splendid party followed, given by H. M. Consul General in honor of the company, at San Francisco's Bohemian Club. The Bohemian Club is one of San Francisco's genuine landmarks, a famous organization of artists, writers, professional and business men, whose "High Jinks" and "Low Jinks" in midsummer are among the cultural highlights of the area.

Dispirited, I went only from a sense of duty. It turned out to be one of the fine parties of the entire tour; but I was fatigued, distraught, and the de Valois contretemps still oppressed me. I helped myself to some food, and hid away in a corner. I was, to put it bluntly, in a vile mood.

Again I felt my coat tails being tugged. "Who is it this time?" I thought. It was not my favorite manner of being greeted, I decided, there and then.

Cautiously I turned. Again it was "Madame."

"What's the trouble?" she asked, now all solicitude. "Why are you hiding in a corner? You don't look well. Shouldn't you see a doctor?"

"I don't need a doctor."

"Surely, something is wrong with you. You look pale, and it's not the very least bit like you to be off sulking in a corner. What's the trouble?"

"The insult to you," I said.

I remembered what Hughes had said, when "Madame" replied: "Insult? Insult?... What insult? Did you insult me?... What on earth *are* you talking about?"

There was no point, I felt, in reminding her of the incident.

"When you want to speak to me," I said, "must you pull my coat off my back?"

"The next time I shall do it harder," she said with her

very individual little laugh. “Don’t you think we have been here long enough?... Come along now, take us home.”

This is Ninette de Valois.

* * *

Following the San Francisco engagement, the company turned east to the Rocky Mountain area, the South and Middle West, to arrive in Chicago for Christmas.

The Chicago engagement was but a repetition of every city where the company appeared: sold-out houses, almost incredible enthusiasm. *The Sleeping Beauty* was the opening programme. Because of the magnitude of the production, it was impossible to present it except in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and Boston. Both public and press were loud in their praises of the company, the production, the music.

Another delightful piece of hospitality was the party given at the Racquet Club in Chicago, following the first performance by Ruth Page, the well-known American dancer and choreographer, and her husband, Thomas Hart Fisher. Not only was there a wonderful champagne supper in the Club’s Refectory, at which the members of the company were the first to be served; but this was followed by a cabaret, the climax of which came when Margot, in a striking Dior gown of green, stepped down to essay the intricate steps of a new and unknown (to her) South American ball-room rhythm. She had never before seen or heard of the dance, but it was a joy to watch the musicality she brought to it.

It is not my custom to visit artists in the theatre before a performance, unless there has been some complaint, some annoyance, some trouble of some sort, something to straighten out. However, on this opening night in Chicago, I happened to be back stage in the Opera House on some errand. Since I was so close, I felt I wanted to wish the artists good-luck for their first Chicago performance, and,

passing, knocked at Margot's dressing-room door.

No reply.

I waited.

I knocked again.

No answer.

Puzzled, I walked away to return ten minutes later.

I knocked again.

Again no answer.

Worried, I opened the door.

"Don't you hear me, Margot?" I asked.

Without glancing up, there came two words, no more. Two words, bitten off, crisp and sharp:

"G-e-t O—u—t!"

It was utterly unlike her. What had happened? I could not imagine. We had dined together the night before, together with "Freddy" Ashton, "Bobby" Helpmann and Moira Shearer. It had been a gay dinner, jolly. Margot had been her witty, amusing self. She had, I knew, been eagerly awaiting a letter from Paris, a letter from a particular friend. Perhaps it had not come. Perhaps it had. Whatever it was, I reasoned, at least it was not my fault. I was not to blame.

We met after the performance at the party. I was puzzled.

"Are you angry at me?" I asked her.

"I?" She smiled an uncomprehending smile. "Why on earth should I be angry at you?"

"You didn't answer when I knocked at your door several times, and then, when I spoke, you told me, in no uncertain fashion, to get out."

"Don't you know that, before a performance, I won't talk to anyone?" she said sternly.

Then she kissed me.

"Don't take me too seriously," she smiled, patting me on the shoulder, "but, remember, I don't want to see *anyone* before I go on."

MARGOT FONTEYN

In Margot Fonteyn we have, in my opinion, the greatest *ballerina* of the western world, the greatest *ballerina* of the world of ballet as we know it. Born Margaret Hookham, in Surrey, in 1919, the daughter of an English businessman father and a dark-skinned, dark-haired mother of Irish and Brazilian ancestry, who is sometimes known as the Black Queen in the company, a reference to one of the leading characters in *Checkmate*. Margot was taken to China as a small child, where the family home was in Shanghai. There was also an interim period when she was a pupil in a school in such a characteristically American city as Louisville, Kentucky.

Margot tells a story to the effect that she was taken as a child to see a performance by Pavlova, and that she was not particularly impressed. It would be much better "copy," infinitely better for publicity purposes, to have her say that visit changed the whole course of her life and that, from that moment, she determined not only to be a dancer, but to become Pavlova's successor. But Margot Fonteyn is an honest person.

Her first dancing lessons came in Shanghai, at the hands of the Russian dancer and teacher, Goncharov. Back in London, she studied with Seraphina Astafieva, in the same Chelsea studio that had produced Markova and Dolin. At the age of fourteen, her mother took her, apparently not with too much willingness on Margot's part, up to the Wells in Islington, to the Sadler's Wells School. Ninette de Valois is said to have announced after her first class, in the decisive manner of "Madame," a manner which brooks no

dissent: "That child has talent."

Fonteyn, in the early days, harbored no ideas of becoming a *ballerina*. Her idealization of that remote peak of accomplishment was Karsavina, the one-time bright, shining star of the Diaghileff Ballet. All of which is not to say that Margot did not work hard, did not enjoy dancing. In class, in rehearsal, in performance, Fonteyn developed her own individuality, her own personality, without copying or imitating, consciously or unconsciously, any other artist.

It was after Markova left Sadler's Wells to form her own company in association with Dolin that Fonteyn began to come into her own. Ninette de Valois had a plan, to which, like all her plans, she adhered. She had been grooming Fonteyn to take Markova's place. The fact that she has done so is a matter of history, record, and fact. This is not the place for a catalogue of Fonteyn's roles, or a list of her individual triumphs. Margot Fonteyn is very much with us, before us, among us, at the height of her powers. She speaks for herself. I merely want to give the reader enough background so that he may know the basic elements which have gone into the making of Margot Fonteyn, *prima ballerina assoluta*.

As a dancer, I find her appeal to me is two-fold: first as a pure classical dancer; second as an actress-dancer, by which I mean a dancer with a fine ability to characterize. This is important, for it implies few, if any, limitations. Pavlova, as I have pointed out, was free from limitations in the same way and, I think, to a similar degree. Anna Pavlova had a wide variety: she was a superb dramatic dancer in *Giselle*; she was equally at home in the brittle, glamorous *Fairy Doll*; as the light-hearted protagonist of the *Rondino*; as the bright-colored flirt of the Tchaikowsky *Christmas*. Tamara Karsavina ranged the gamut from *Carnaval*, *Les Sylphides*, and *Pavillon d'Armide*, on the one hand, to *Schéhérazade*, *Thamar*, and the Miller's Wife

in *The Three-Cornered Hat*, on the other, doing all with equal skill and artistry. In the same way, Fonteyn ranges, with equal perfection from the Princess Aurora of *The Sleeping Beauty*, the title role of *Cinderella*, and *Mam'zelle Angot*, the Millers wife in *The Three-Cornered Hat*, the tragic Giselle, Swanilda in *Coppélia*, the peasant Dulcinia in *Don Quixote*, on the one hand, to the pure, abstract dancing appeal of her lyrical roles in ballets such as *Symphonic Variations*, *Scènes de Ballet*, *Ballet Imperial*, and *Dante Sonata*, on the other.

As a dancer, Fonteyn is freer of mannerisms than any other *ballerina* I have known, devoid of tricks and those stunts sometimes called "showmanship" that are so often mere vulgar lapses from taste. About everything she does there is a strange combination of purity of style with a striking individuality that I can only identify and explain by that overworked term, "personality." She has a superb carriage, the taut back of the perfect dancer, the faultless line and the ankles of the true *ballerina*. Over all is a great suppleness: the sort of suppleness that can make even an unexpected fall a thing of beauty. For *ballerinas* sometimes fall, even as ordinary mortals. One such fall occurred on Fonteyn's first entrance in the nation's capital, before a gala audience at the Washington *première* of Sadler's Wells, with an audience that included President Truman, Sir Oliver Franks, and the entire diplomatic corps.

The cramped, ill-suited platform of Constitution Hall, was an inadequate, makeshift excuse for a stage. As Fonteyn entered to the resounding applause of thousands, she slipped on a loose board and fell, but gracefully and with such beauty that those in the audience who did not know might easily have thought it was a part of the choreographer's design.

On the company's return to London, at the close of the tour, the entire personnel were the guests at a formal dinner tendered to them by H. M. Government. The late

Sir Stafford Cripps, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave the first toast to Fonteyn. Turning to her, Sir Stafford, in proposing the toast, said: “My dear lady, it has been brought to my attention that, in making your first entry into the American capital, you fell flat on your face.”

The Chancellor paused for an instant as he eyed her in mock severity, then added: “I beg you not to take it too much to heart. It is not the first time, nor, I feel sure, will it be the last, when your countrymen will be obliged to assume that same prostrate position on entering that city.”

To sum up my impressions of Fonteyn, the dancer, I should be



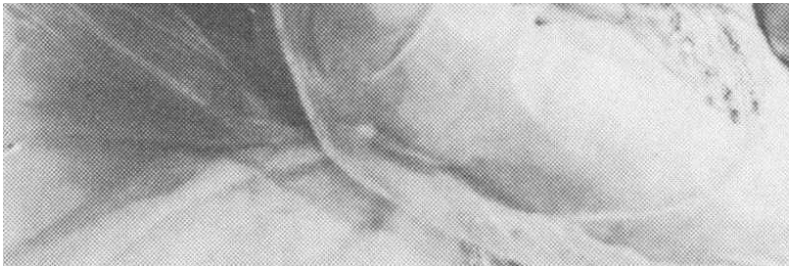




Angus McBean

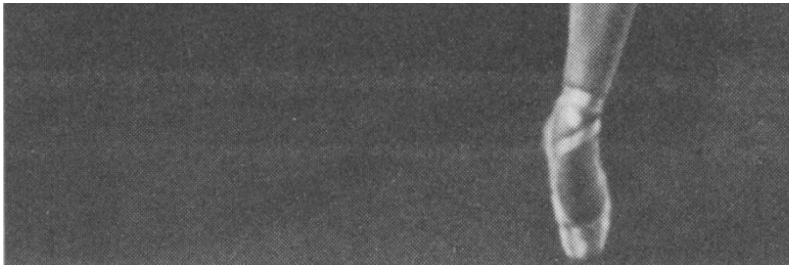
Sadler's Wells Ballet: Frederick Ashton, Ninette de Va





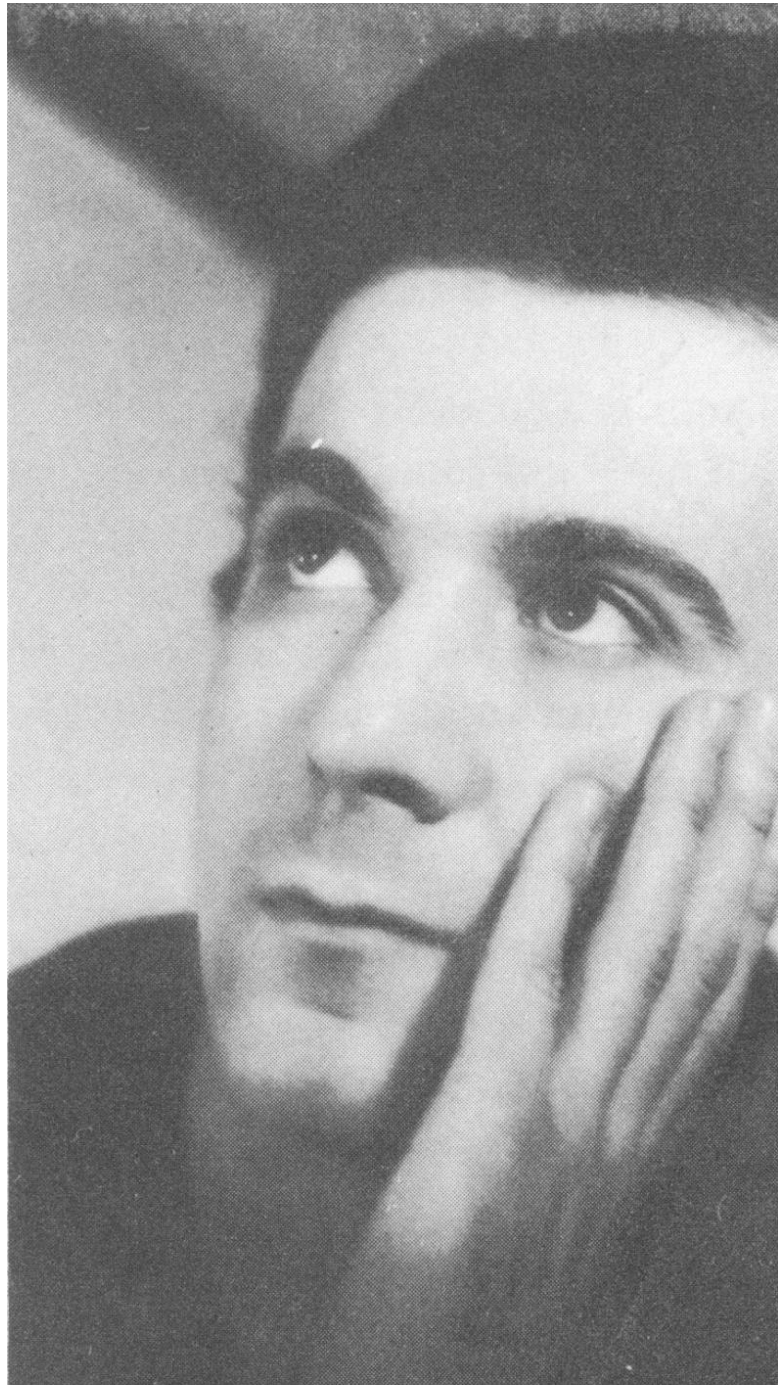
Sadler's Wells Ballet: Beryl Grey as the Princess

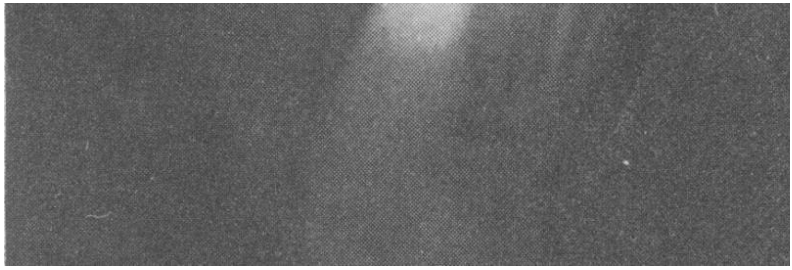




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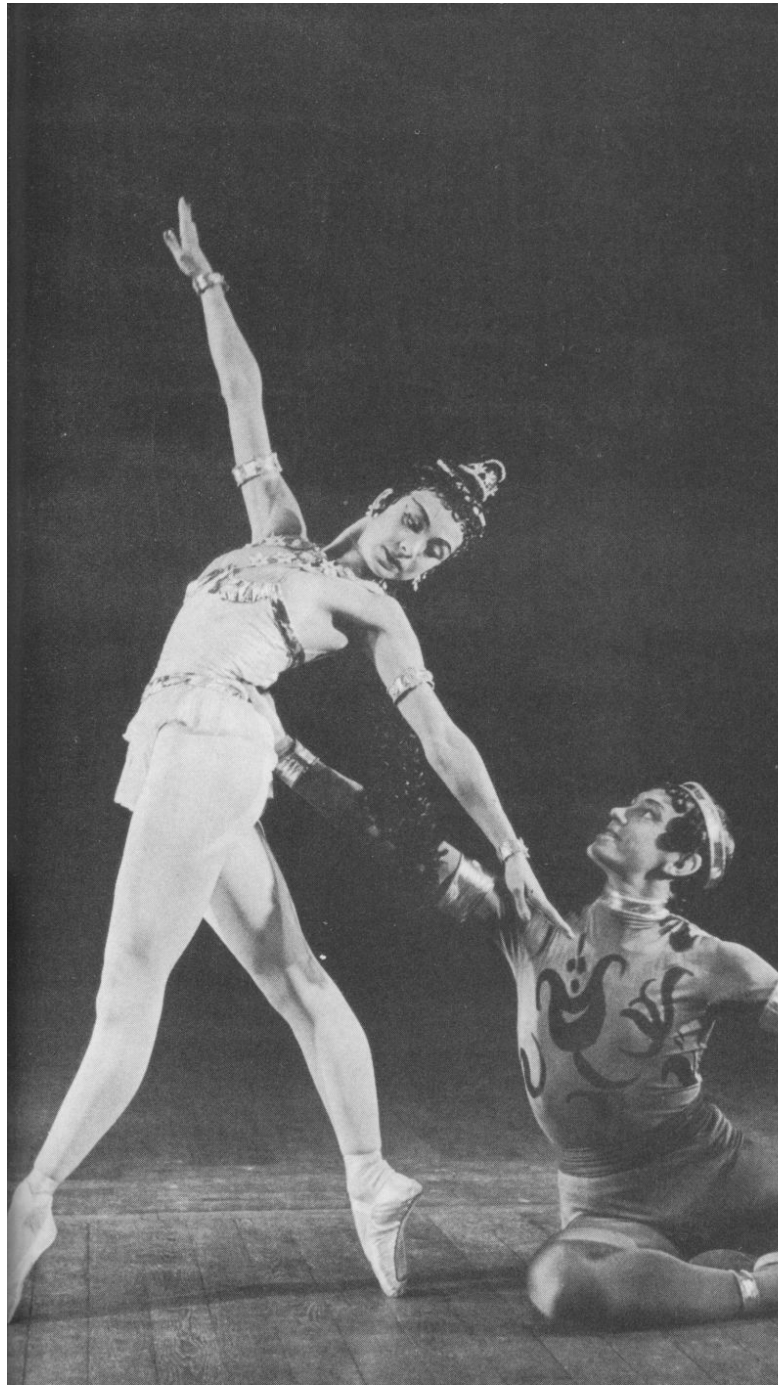
Sadler's Wells Ballet: Nadia Nerina in *Façade*

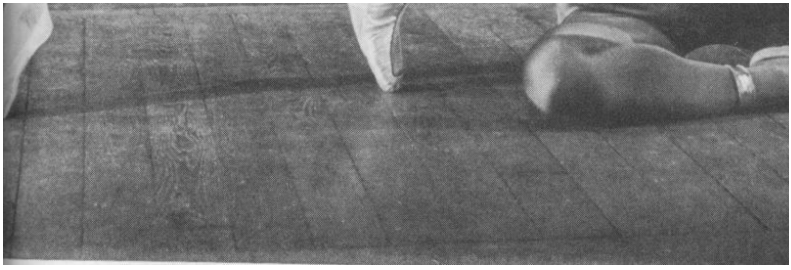




Roland Petit

Germaine Kanova





Roger Wood

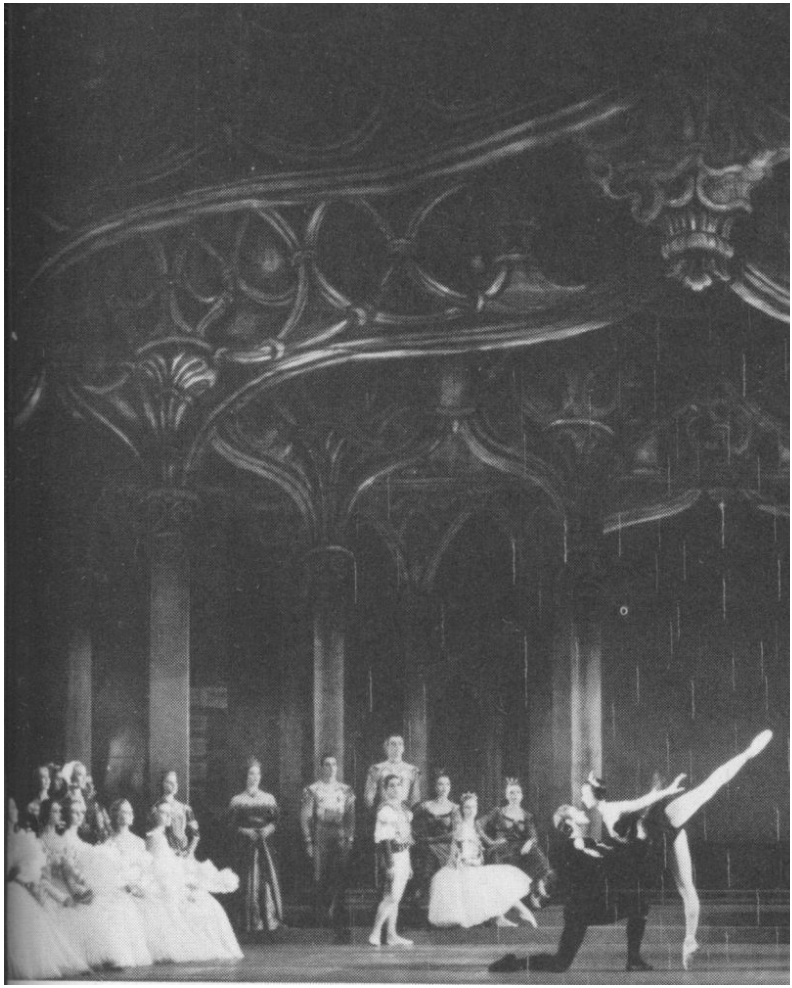
Sadler's Wells Ballet: Margot Fonteyn and Alexander Grant i





Magnum

Sadler's Wells Ballet: John Field and Violetta Elvin



Baron

Sadler's Wells Ballet: *Le Lac des Cygnes*



Sadler's Wells Ballet: Last Act o

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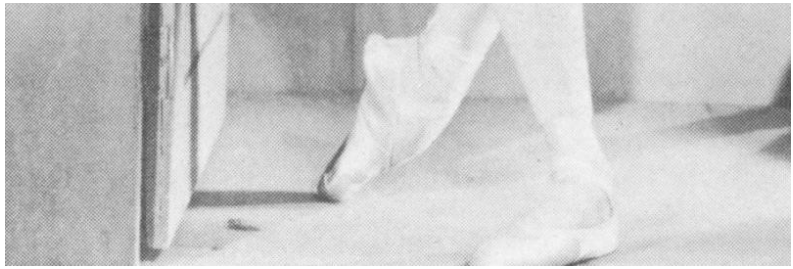




Magnum

Sadler's Wells Ballet: *Giselle*—Robert Helpmann and Margot

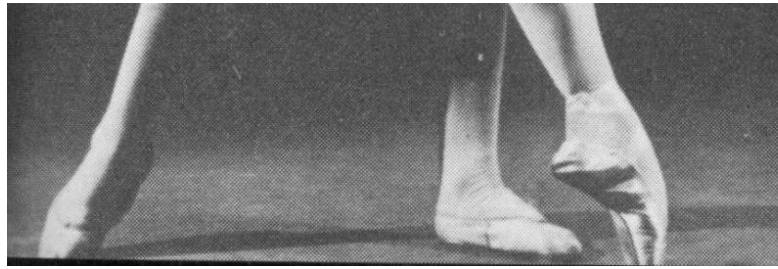




Baron

Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet: Elaine Fifield as Swanilda in *Coppélia*





Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet: David Blair and Svetlana Berios

Roger Wood



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Sadler's Wells Ballet: *A W*



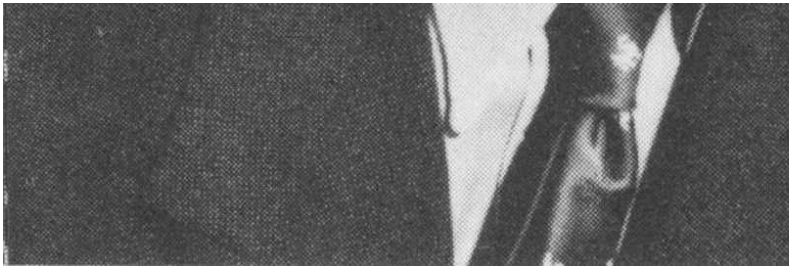
Sadler's Wells Ballet: Act I. *The Sleeping Beauty*—The *Baron*





Agnes de Mille

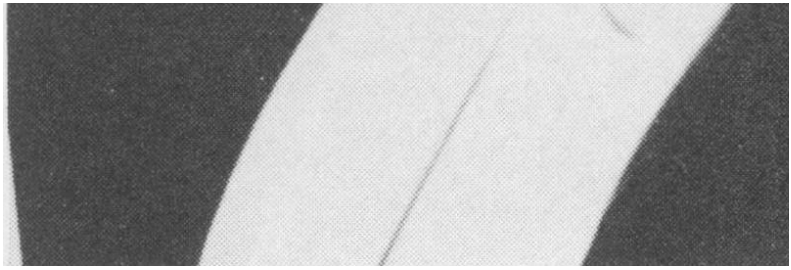




John Lanchbery, Conductor, Sadler's Wells

Denis de Marney

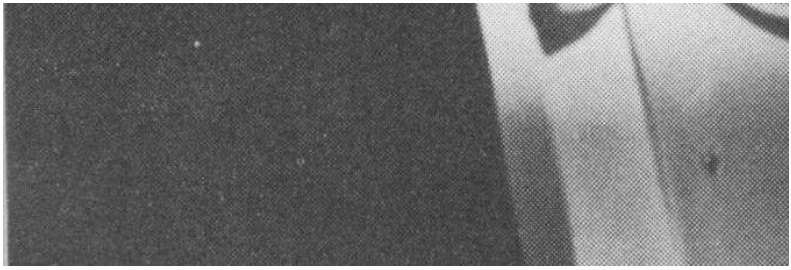




John Hollingsworth, Conductor, Sadler's Wells Bal

Maurice Seymour

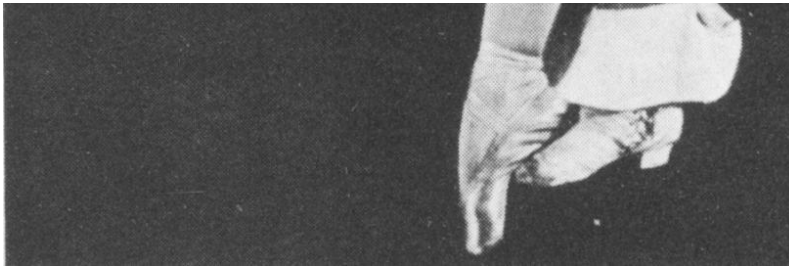




Robert Irving, Musical Director, Sadler's W

Baron





The Sadler's Wells production of *The Sleeping Beauty*: Puss-in-Bo

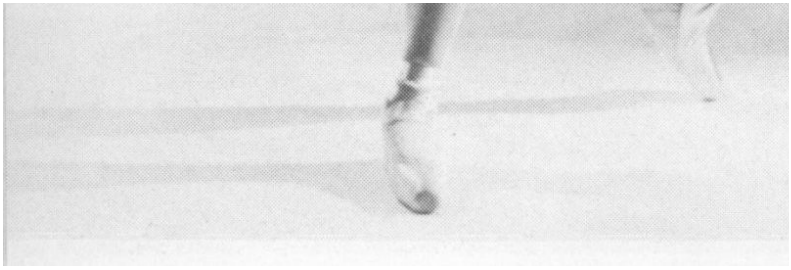




Robert Helpmann as the Rake in *The Rake's Progres*

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Sadler's Wells Ballet: Rowena Jackson as Odile in *Le Lac des Cygn*

Derek Allen

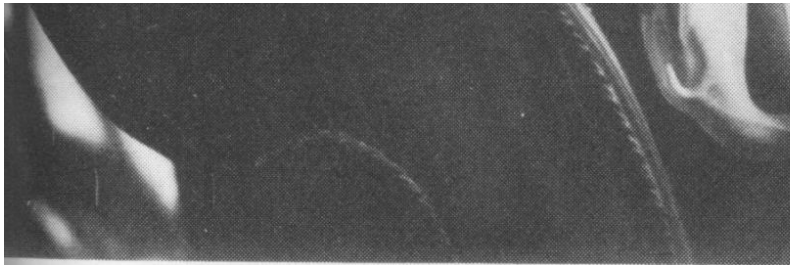




Colette Marchand

Lido





Baron

Moira Shearer



Moira Shearer and I

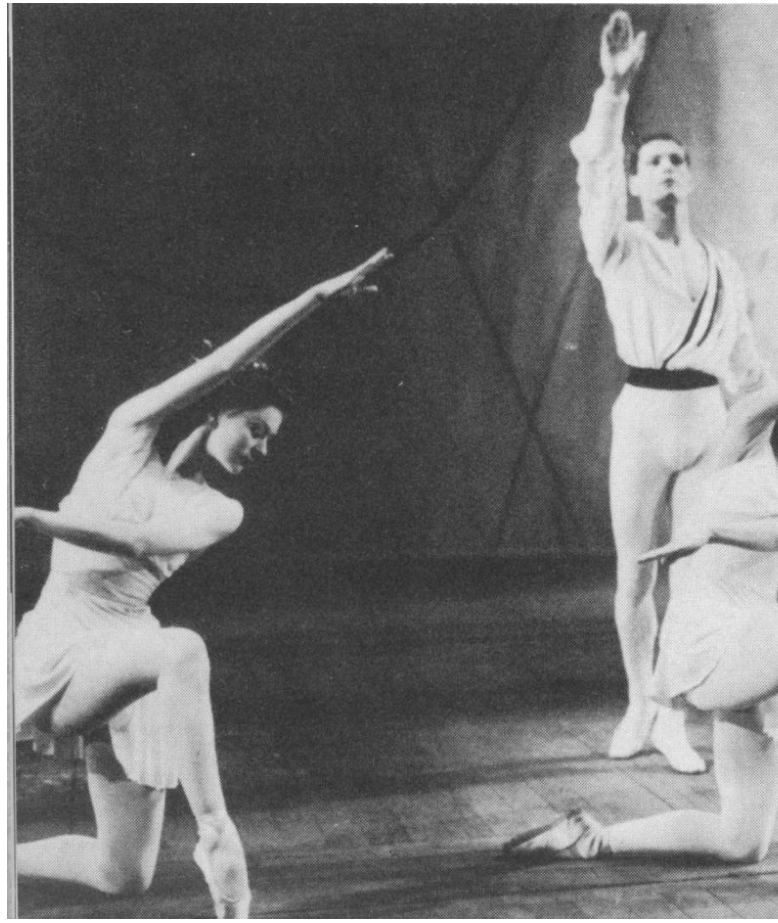
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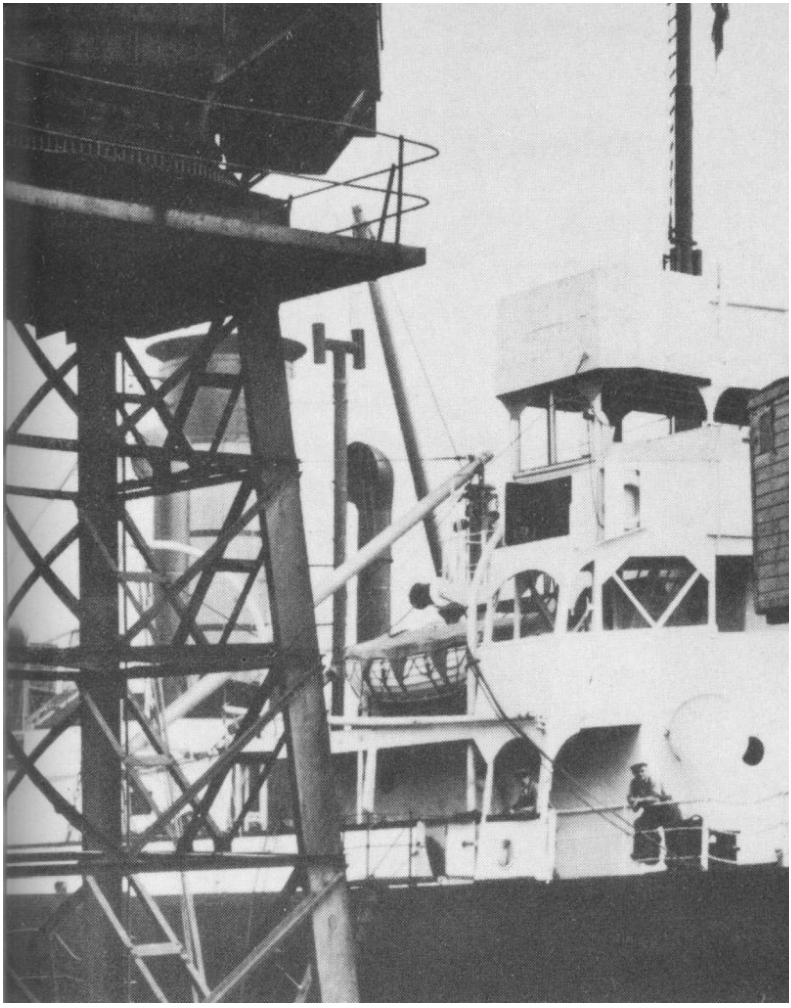




Baron

Sadler's Wells Ballet: *Symphonic Variations*—Moira Shearer, Margo





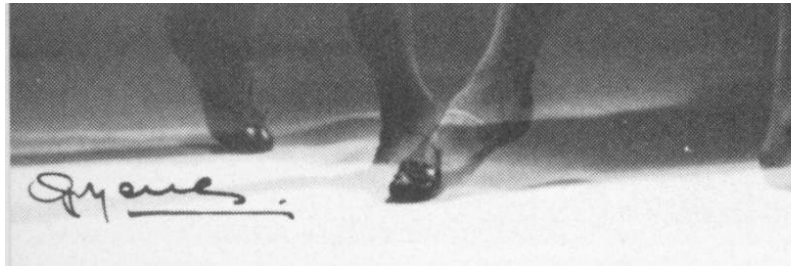
Sadler's Wells Ballet: America is closer



Sadler's Wells Ballet: Scenery and costu

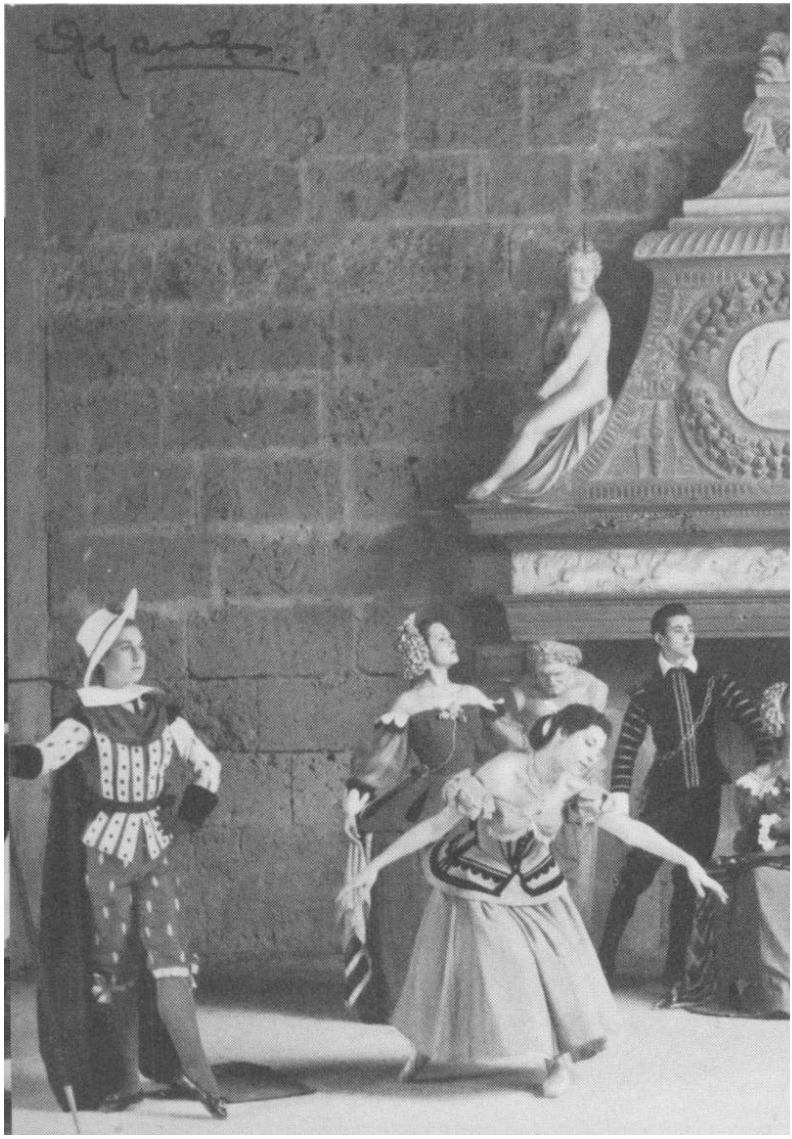
Acme-PA





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Antonio Spanish Ballet: Antonio



Antonio Spanish Ballet

Gyenes

doing her something less than justice if I failed to call attention to a supreme quality in her work, viz., that quality

of implied ease in all she does, bringing unstrained pleasure to the onlooker; coupled as it is with a spiritual quality with which her performances seem to shimmer. All these things, so far as I am concerned, add up to a *ballerina* absolutely unique in my experience.

Margot Fonteyn is, to me, the true artist, because a great dancer must be a human being before she is an artist; her art must, in the last resort, be the expression of her personal attitude to life. She is many-sided; and the wonder is that she is able to have this breadth of cultural outlook when so much of her time has had to be spent in acquiring technique, dealing with its problems and the means of expression.

No amount of technique, no amount of technical brilliance or recondite knowledge will hide the paucity of emotion or intellect in an artist's make-up. Technique, after all, is no more than the alphabet and the words of an art, and it is only the difficulty of acquiring a superlative technique that has led so many astray. But along what a fatal path they have been led! How often are we told that the true artist must devote her whole energies to her art, without the realization that art is the highest expression of mankind and has value only in so far as it is enriched with the blood of life.

As for Fonteyn, the person, whom I love and admire, I have no gossip to offer, few anecdotes, no whisperings. About her there is not the slightest trace of pose, pretentiousness, or pettiness. While she is conscious she is a great *ballerina*, one of the top-ranking artists in any art in the world today, she is equally conscious she is a human being. Basically, she is shy and quite humble. Splendidly poised, immaculately and impeccably groomed, chic in an international rather than in a Parisian sense, she is definitely an elegant person. The elegance of her private appearance she carries over into her appearance as a *ballerina*. Anna Pavlova, of all other dancers I have

known, had this same quality.

Usually Margot dresses in colors that are on the dark side, like her own personal coloring. Small-featured, small-boned, her clothes, exquisite in cut, are strikingly simple. She is not given to jewelry, save for earrings without which I cannot remember ever having seen her. She is remarkably beautiful, but not in the G.I. pin-up type sense. Again there is the similarity to Anna Pavlova, who would look elegant and *chic* today in any *salon* or drawing-room, because her elegance was timeless. By all this, I do not mean to suggest that Fonteyn's Christian Dior evening frocks and day dresses are not modish, but nothing she wears suggests the "latest word."

One more word about her actions. I have mentioned her complete lack of pretentiousness. I should like to emphasize her equal lack of apparent awareness of her exalted position in her chosen calling. With the company, she makes no demands, puts on no airs. There is no false grandeur and none of the so-called "temperament" that many lesser *ballerinas* feel called upon to display upon the slightest provocation, and often upon no provocation at all. She is one who submits to the discipline of a great and continuous and uninterrupted and secure company. Fonteyn works as hard, with daily classes and rehearsals, mayhap harder, as any other of the large personnel. Her relations with the company are on the same plane. When the company travels in buses, Margot piles into the buses with them, joins in with the company at all times, is a member of it and an inspiration to it. The company, individually and collectively, love her and have the highest respect for her.

Margot's warning to me not to try to disturb her before a performance had nothing to do with pose or "temperament." It is simply that in order to live up to her reputation she has a duty, exactly as she has a duty to the role she is to enact, and because of these things, she has the

artist's natural nervousness increased before the rise of the curtain. She must be alone and silent with her thoughts in order to have herself under complete control and be at her best.

In all ballet I have never known a finer colleague, or one possessed of a greater amount of genuine good-heartedness. The examples of this sort of thing are endless, but one incident pointing it up stands out in my mind.

A certain American *ballerina* was on a visit to London. Margot invited this American girl to go to Paris with her. "Freddy" Ashton was also coming along, she said, and it would be fun.

"I can't go," replied the American *ballerina*. "I've nothing to wear that's fit to be seen in Paris."

"Come, come, don't be silly," replied Margot. "Here, take this suit of mine. I've never worn it."

And she handed over a new Christian Dior creation.

Now Margot at that time was by no means too blessed with the world's goods, and could not afford a new Dior outfit too often.

On their arrival in Paris, the group telephoned me at the Meurice and came to see me. Turning to the American *ballerina*, a long-time friend of mine, I could not help admiring her appearance.

"Where *did* you get that beautiful suit?" I enquired.

"Margot gave it to me, isn't she sweet?" she replied, quite simply.

This is Margot Fonteyn: always ready to share with others; always thinking of others, least of all, of herself.

The following incident sums up the Margot Fonteyn I know and love. On the final night of the second American tour, after the last performance, I gave a farewell supper for the entire company at the Chateau Frontenac, in Quebec City. There were speeches, of which more later.

When they were over, a *corps de ballet* member spontaneously rose to propose a toast to Margot Fonteyn, on her great personal triumph in North America. The rounds of applause that followed the toast reminded me of the opening night at the Metropolitan in New York. That applause had come from an audience of paying customers, who had just witnessed a new dancer scoring a triumph in an exciting performance. The applause that went on for minutes and minutes, came from her own colleagues, many of whom had grown up with her from the School. My eyes were moist. After a long time, Fonteyn rose to thank them. In doing so, she reminded them that a *ballerina* was only as good as her surroundings and that it was impossible for a *ballerina* to exist without the perfect setting, which they provided.

Here was a great artist, the greatest living *ballerina* we of the western world know, with all her triumphs, all her successes about her, at the apex of her career; very much of the present, here was the true artist, the loyal comrade, the humble, grateful human being.

From Chicago, a long journey to Winnipeg for a four-day engagement to be filled at the request of the British Council and David Webster, following a suggestion from H. M. the King. Winnipeg had suffered shocking damage from floods, and His Majesty had promised Winnipeg a visit from the Ballet while it was in America as a gala to lift the spirits of the people.

Here the company had its first taste of real cold, for the thermometer dropped to thirty-two degrees below zero. The result was that when it came time to entrain for the journey half-way across the continent to Boston, the next point on the itinerary, the baggage car doors were so frozen that they had to be opened with blowtorches and charges of explosives.

It was a four-day and three-night journey from Winnipeg to Boston, in sub-zero, stormy weather. The intense cold

slowed the locomotives and froze the storage batteries, with the result that save for the lounge-bar car, the cars were in complete darkness and were dimly lighted at bed-time by a few spluttering candles. The severe cold had also caused the steam lines in the train to freeze, so that the temperature inside the cars was such that all made the journey wrapped in overcoats and blankets, wearing the heterogeneous collection of ear-lapped caps which they had purchased, even to North-west Canadian wool and fur shakos that blossomed in Winnipeg. Somewhere east of Chicago the "Sadler's Wells Special" got itself behind the wreck of a freight train which had blocked the tracks, necessitating a long detour over the tracks of another railway, causing still further delays. Nine hours late, the ice-covered train bearing a company that had gone through the most gruelling train adventure of the tour, limped into Boston's South Station.

There followed a tense period, for the minimum time required to set and light *The Sleeping Beauty* is twelve hours. It was another case of "touch and go." Two hours were required to get the train broken up and all the scenery cars placed for unloading; then the procession of great trucks from the cars to the Opera House commenced; there followed the unloading, the taking-in, the hanging, the setting, the installation of all the heavy and complicated lighting equipment, for the theatres of America, for the most part, are either poorly equipped or not at all, and the Boston Opera House is in the latter category. Hundreds of costumes had to be unpacked, pressed, and distributed. But such is the efficiency of the Sadler's Wells organization, its general stage director, the late Louis Yudkin, and our own American staff, together with the valued assistance of the Boston local manager, Aaron Richmond, that the curtain rose at the appointed minute.

I had gone to Boston for the duration of the engagement there. Bearing in mind the extensive travelling the

company had had, climaxed by the harrowing journey from Winnipeg, I was concerned about their fatigue and also how it might affect the quality of the performance. My memory of the Boston *première* of *The Sleeping Beauty* is that it was one of the very best I had seen anywhere. Sir Oliver Franks, the British Ambassador, and Lady Franks, together with Lord Wakehurst, head of the English-Speaking Union, one of the Governors of the Covent Garden Opera Trust, and now Governor-General of Northern Ireland, came to Boston for the opening, and greeted the company at a delightful supper and reception following the performance. Lord Wakehurst has been a veritable tower of strength in the development of international cultural relations during the Sadler's Wells tours; together with Lady Wakehurst, he is a charming host whose hospitality I have enjoyed in their London home.

The interest of Sir Oliver Franks, Lord Wakehurst, and the British Council as evidenced throughout the entire tour, together with the splendid cooperation of the English-Speaking Union, all helped in one of the main reasons for the tour, quite apart from any dollars the company might be able to garner. That was the extension of cultural relations between the two great English-speaking nations.

Cultural relations are basically a matter of links between individuals rather than links between governments, and such a tour as Sadler's Wells made, bringing the richness of British ballet to hundreds of thousands of individuals, helps develop those private relationships; and the sum of them presents a comprehensive picture of Britain to the world. In our struggle for peace in the world, nothing is more essential than cultural understanding. It should be pointed out that the British Council does not send overseas companies primarily for financial gain, and its policy in these matters is not dictated by financial considerations.

The charter of UNESCO states that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the

defenses of peace must be constructed. Personally, I am inclined to doubt if wars ever begin in the minds of men, but I should be the last to dispute that it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.

It was on the 28th January, 1951, that the greatest ballet tour in North American history came to an end in Quebec City. It was a night of mixed feelings. The company was, of course, eager to get home to London, and also had a longing to continue here. There were the tugs of parting on the part of our American staff. Our American Sadler's Wells Orchestra, forty-odd strong, the largest orchestra to tour with a ballet company in America, adored the company and the curtain had to be held on the last ballet on the programme, for the entire orchestra lined up to collect autographed photographs of their favorites, and refused to heed the orchestra personnel manager's frantic pleas to enter the pit before each musician had his treasured picture. It was quite unusual, I assure you, for musicians are not noted for their interest in a *ballerina*. A sentimental, romantic interest between a musician and a dancer is something quite different, and is not at all unusual.

Although it was Sunday night, when the "blue laws" of Quebec frown upon music, gaiety, and alcohol, we managed, nevertheless, to have a genuine farewell celebration, which took the form of an after-performance dinner at the Chateau Frontenac. The company got into their evening-clothes for the last time on this side of the Atlantic, piled into buses at the theatre and returned to the hotel, while the "Sadler's Wells Special" that was to take them back to Montreal, waited at the station. It waited a long time, for the night's celebration at the Chateau lasted until four-thirty in the morning. It was a festive affair, with as fine a dinner as could be prepared, and the wines and champagne were both excellent and ample. We had set up a pre-dinner cocktail room in one of the Chateau's private

rooms, and had taken the main restaurant, the great hall of the Chateau, for the dinner. Before the dancing commenced—yes, despite the long tour, despite the two days the company had spent skiing and tobogganing in Quebec, with three performances in an inadequate theatre, they danced—the dessert was served. I should like to list the entire menu, but the dessert will give an indication of its nature. The lights in the great dining room were extinguished, the orchestra struck a chord, and a long line of waiters entered each bearing flaming platters of *Omelette Norvegienne Flambée des Mignardires*.

The guests included the Premier of Quebec and officials of the Quebec Government. The only note that dimmed the gaiety of the occasion was the absence of Dame Ninette de Valois and David Webster, both in London preparing for the new season. It was not an occasion for long speeches; our hearts and our stomachs were too full. However, I expressed my sincere thanks to the entire organization and, in the absence of "Madame" and Webster, Herbert Hughes, the general manager of the Ballet, replied, and announced to the company the figures for the tour, amidst cheers. Then followed the touching incident of the toast to Fonteyn I have mentioned.

Before the dancing began, a sudden mania for autographs started, with everybody collecting every other person's autograph on the large, specially printed menus, which I had previously autographed. Apparently all wanted a menu as a souvenir of a venture that had gone down in the annals of ballet and entertainment as the greatest success of all time.

From then on the dancing was general, the gaiety waxed higher. I was doing a *schottische* with the two-hundred-fifty pound Cockney Chief Carpenter, Horace Fox, when one of my staff who was responsible for transportation slid up to the orchestra leader and whispered "The King!" We all stood silently at attention for the last time. It was well

past four in the morning, and it was to be yet another case of "touch and go" if the "Sadler's Wells Special" could make Montreal in time for the departure of the special BOAC planes which were to take the company back to London.

The company changed into traveling clothes as quickly as possible, and buses slithered down the steep slopes of Quebec to the Station, where harried railroad officials were holding the train. There was yet another delay for one person who was left behind on urgent business, finally to be seen coming, with two porters carrying his open bags and yet another bellboy with unpacked clothes and toilet articles. As the last of the retinue was pushed aboard, the train started. But it was long before sleep came, and for another two hours the party continued up and down the length of the train, in compartments, bedrooms, washrooms, as staff, orchestra, stage-hands broke all unwritten laws of fraternization.

All were asleep, however, when the train swayed violently and with groaning and bumping came to a sudden stop. It was the last journey and it, of course, simply had to happen. The flanges on the wheels of two of the baggage cars that had made the 21,000-mile journey gave way just as the train started the long crossing of the Three Rivers Bridge between Quebec and Montreal. Fortunately, we were moving slowly at the approach to the bridge, slowing down for the crossing, or else—I shudder to think what might have occurred if we had been trying to make up time —the greatest tour of history would have ended in a ghastly tragedy.

As a result of the derailment taking place on the bridge, we were hours late arriving in Montreal. But the tour was over!

Here was a tour where every record of every sort had been broken. It had reached the point where, if there was a pair of unoccupied seats in any auditorium from coast to

coast and back again, we were all likely to feel as if the end of the world was at hand. I have mentioned the mundane matter of the financial returns. From a critical point of view, I cannot attempt to summarize the spate of eulogy that greeted the company in every city. Cynics may have something to say about this, to the effect that the critics had been overpowered by size and glamor. But a careful consideration of it all, a sober analysis, disproves any suggestion that this was the result of any uncritical rush of blood to the head. On the contrary, it reveals that the critical faculty was carefully exercised and that the collective testimony to the excellence of Sadler's Wells was based on sound appreciation.

It is impossible for me to bring to a close this phase of the concise history of the association in ballet of which I am the proudest in my life without sketching an outline of the quartet that makes Sadler's Wells the great institution it is, together with a few of the outstanding personalities that give it color and are such an important part of it.

The list is long, and lack of space limits my consideration to a few. First of all, let me pay tribute to that directorial triumvirate to whom, collectively and individually, Sadler's Wells owes its existence and its superior place in the world of ballet in our time: Ninette de Valois, Frederick Ashton, and Constant Lambert. Lamentably, the triumvirate is now a duo, owing to the recent untimely passing of the third member.

NINETTE DE VALOIS

I have more than once indicated my own deep admiration for Ninette de Valois and have sketched, as best I can, her tremendous contribution. In all my experience of artists, I have never known a harder worker, a more single-purposed practical idealist, a more concentrated and

devoted human being. In addition to being the chief executive of Sadler's Wells, burdened with the responsibility for two ballet companies and a school, she is a striking creator.

Living with her husband-physician down in Surrey, she does her marketing before she leaves home in the morning for the Garden; travels up on the suburban train; spends long hours at her work; goes back to Surrey, often late at night, sometimes to prepare dinner, since the servant problem in Britain is acute; and has been known to tidy up her husband's surgery for the next morning, before herself calling it a day. All this, day in and day out, is done with zest and vigor.

An idealist she is and yet, at the same time, completely realistic. Without wishing to cast the remotest reflection on the feminine sex, I would say that Ninette de Valois has a masculine mind in her approach to problems artistic or business, and to life itself. She feels things passionately, and these qualities are apparent in everything she does. When her mind is made up, there is no budging her. In a less intelligent person this might be labelled stubbornness.

Like the majority of English dancers, prior to her establishment of a British national ballet, she was brought up in the traditions of Russian ballet. But it should be remembered that she was the first one to break up the foundation of the Russian tradition, utilizing its richness to create an English national school. At Sadler's Wells, in collaboration with Constant Lambert, she has devoted a great deal of attention to the music of our time, although this has never taken the form of any denial or repudiation of the tradition of the old Russian school—on the contrary, her work at Sadler's Wells has been a continuation and development of that school, using the new to enrich the old.

As a person with whom to work, I find her completely fascinating. I have never known any one even faintly like

her. Her magnificent sense of organization is but one aspect of what I have called her "masculinity" of mind. Figures as well as *fouettés* are a part of her life. She is adept at handling both situations and individuals. Her dancers obey the slightest lifting of her eyebrows, for she is a masterful person, although quite impersonal in her mastery. She possesses the art of the single withering sentence. Her superb organizing ability has enabled her to surround herself with a highly able staff; but the sycophantic "yes-man" is something for which she has no time. Hers is a rapid-working mind, often being several leaps ahead of all others in a conference. Sincere, honest criticism she welcomes; anything other, she detests. I remember an occasion when a certain critic made a comment based on nothing more than personal bias and a twisted, highly personal approach. Her response was acid, biting, withering, and I was glad I was not on the receiving end.

I am sure that Ninette de Valois was convinced of her mission early in her career. That mission—to found a truly national British ballet—she has richly fulfilled. Much of the work involved in this fulfilment has been the exercise of great organizing and executive ability: in the formulation of policy and plans as well as carrying them out; in the employment of a large number of talented and efficient people; in determining the scale on which the venture should be conducted.

I have spoken of "Madame's" ability to handle people. This has earned her, in some quarters, an undeserved reputation for being a forbidding and austere person. The fact that she is, as she must be, a strict disciplinarian with her company, does not mean that she cannot be a genuinely gay and amusing person. In certain respects, despite her Irish birth as Edris Stannus, she is a veritable English lady, in the best sense of the term, with an English lady's virtues (and they are numerous). These virtues

include, among others, a very definite, forceful, but quiet efficiency; more than average common sense; a passion for being fair; the inbred necessity for being economical. Against all this is set that quality of idealism that turned a dancing school into a great national ballet. Idealism dreamed it, practicality brought it to fruition.

In those far-off days before the second world war, when I used to visit the ballet in Russia, it was one of my delights to go to the classes of the late Agrippina Vaganova, one of the greatest of ballet teachers of all time, and to watch this wise and highly talented ballet-mistress at work.

I noted that it was Vaganova's invariable custom to open her classes with a two or three minute talk, in which she would compliment the company, and individuals in particular, on their work in the ballet performance the night before, closing with:

"I am proud of you. Thank you very much."

Then they would go to work in the class, subjected to the strictest discipline, and, sometimes, to the sharpest and most caustic sort of criticism imaginable. Then, at the end of the class, again came individual approbation and encouragement.

This is the sort of little thing I have never observed at Sadler's Wells. It may, of course, be there; and again, it may not.

The Sadler's Wells personnel love "Madame"; regard it as a high privilege to be a part of the Wells organization; do not look on their association merely as a "job."

It might be that "Madame" could advantageously employ Vaganova's method in this regard, use her example in her own relations with her company. Certainly, it could do no harm, as I see it. It may well be that she does. The point is that I have never seen it in practice.

In the better part of a lifetime spent in the midst of the

dance, I can remember no one with a greater devotion to ballet, or one willing to make more sacrifices for it, and for the spreading of its gospel.

Let me cite just one example of this devotion. It was during the second North American tour of the Sadler's Wells company that, despite all the demands made upon her time and energy, she was impelled to undertake a long lecture tour of Canada and the Northwest to spread the gospel of ballet and the British Council.

Herbert Hughes, the general manager, came to me to point out that since "Madame" had to do this, he felt we should send some one to accompany her, because she was unfamiliar with the country, and with the train and air schedules.

I fully concurred, in view of all he had said, and the possibility of inclement weather at that time of the year.

Together we approached "Madame" with the idea. It did not meet with her approval. It was quite unnecessary. She was quite able to take care of herself. She did not want any one "making a fuss" over her.

Of course, she would require funds for her expenses. Hughes prevailed upon her to accept $300 as petty cash. "Madame" stuffed the money into her capacious reticule.

When "Madame" rejoined the company, she brought back $137 of the $300. "This is the balance," she said to Hughes, "I didn't spend it."

This entire lecture tour, in which she covered thousands of miles, was but another example of her tirelessness and Ninette de Valois' single-track mind.

She was due to rejoin the company at the Ambassador Hotel, in Los Angeles, on the morning of the Los Angeles *première* of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, at which time we had arranged a large breakfast press-conference, over which "Madame" was to preside.

"Madame" was due by airplane from Vancouver early

the previous evening. Hughes suggested that he should go to the airport to greet her, or that some one should be sent; but I vetoed the idea, remembering that "Madame" did not want a "fuss" made over her. Although the plane was due round about nine o'clock in the evening, midnight had produced no "Madame." A telephonic check with the Terminal assured us the plane had arrived safely and on time. Hughes and I sat up until three-thirty in the morning waiting, but in vain.

I was greatly disturbed and exercised when, at nine the next morning, she had not put in an appearance. The press-conference was set for ten o'clock, and "Madame" was its most important feature. Moreover, I was concerned for her safety.

A few minutes before the start of the breakfast conference, unperturbed, unruffled, neat and calm as always, "Madame" entered the Ambassador foyer with her customary spirit and swift, sure gait.

We gathered round her. What had happened? Was she all right? Had anything gone wrong?

"Don't be silly. What *could* go wrong?"

But what had happened? We pressed for an explanation.

"The strangest thing, my dears," she said. "When I arrived last night, I looked in my bag for the piece of paper on which I had noted the name of this hotel. I couldn't find it; nor could I, for the life of me, remember it."

"What did you do?"

"Do? I went to sleep at the airport."

"And—?"

"And this morning I said to myself, 'Come, pull yourself together.' I tried an old law of association of ideas. I managed to remember the name of this hotel had something to do with diplomacy. 'Diplomacy—Diplomacy,' I said to myself.... 'Embassy?... No, that's not it.' I tried again.... 'Ambassador?' ... There, you have it.

And here I am.... Let us go, or we shall be late. Where is this press conference?"

That is Ninette de Valois.

Ninette de Valois' work as a choreographer speaks for itself. Her approach to any work is always professional, always intellectual, never amateur, never sentimental. Some of her works may be more successful than others, whether they are academic or highly original, but each bears the imprint of one of the most distinctive, able, and agile minds in the history of ballet.

So far as I have been able to observe, Ninette de Valois *is* Sadler's Wells. Sadler's Wells *is* the national ballet of Britain. In looking objectively at the organization, with its two fine companies, its splendid school, I pray that Ninette de Valois may long be spared, for, with all its splendid organization, Sadler's Wells and British national ballet are synonyms, and unless the dear lady has someone up her sleeve, I cannot, for the life of me, see a successor in the offing.

FREDERICK ASHTON

Frederick Ashton, the chief choreographer of the company, is the complete antithesis of his colleague. Where de Valois is realistic, "Freddy" is sentimental. Where "Madame" may sometimes be rigid, Ashton is adaptable. Some of his work is "slick" and smooth. He is a romantic, but by that I do not necessarily mean a "neo-romantic."

Ashton was born in Ecuador, in 1909, which does not make him Ecuadorian, any more than the fact that he spent his childhood in Peru, makes him Peruvian. His British parents happened to be living there at the time. It is said that his interest in dance was first aroused upon seeing Anna Pavlova dance in far-off Peru.

Moving to London with his parents, "Freddy" had the privilege of being exposed to performances of the Diaghileff Company, and he had his first ballet lessons from Leonide Massine. Massine turned him over to Marie Rambert when he left London. It was for Rambert that he staged his first work, *The Tragedy of Fashion*, for the Nigel Playfair revue, *Hammersmith Nights*, in 1926. An interim in Paris with Ida Rubenstein, Nijinska, and Massine, was followed by a long time with Marie Rambert and her Ballet Club. The Paris interlude with Nijinska and Massine affected him profoundly. He was a moving figure in the life of the Camargo Society, and in 1935 he joined the Vic-Wells (later to be known as the Sadler's Wells Ballet), as resident choreographer.

During the years between, Ashton has become England's great creator. He is also a character dancer of wide variety, as witness his Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty*, his shy and wistful Ugly Sister in *Cinderella*. His contribution to ballet in England is tremendous. Nigh on to a dozen ballets for the Ballet Rambert; something between twenty-five and thirty for the Sadler's Wells organization; *Devil's Holiday* for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, a work which, because of the outbreak of the war, he was unable to complete, and which was never seen in this country with its creator's full intentions; two works in New York for the New York City Ballet; and the original production of the Gertrude Stein-Virgil Thomson *Four Saints in Three Acts*, in New York.

It is interesting to note the wide variety of his creative work by listing some of his many works, which, in addition to those mentioned above, include, among others, the following: For the Ballet Club of Marie Rambert: *Les Petits Riens*, *Leda and the Swan*, *Capriol Suite*, *The Lady of Shalott*, *La Peri*, *Foyer de Danse*, *Les Masques*, *Mephisto Valse*, and several others.

For that founding society of contemporary British ballet,

which I have mentioned before, the Camargo Society: *Pomona*, *Façade*, *The Lord of Burleigh*, *Rio Grande* (originally known as *A Day In a Southern Port*), and other works.

I have already mentioned some of his outstanding works for the Sadler's Wells Ballet. Others include *Nocturne*, to Delius's *Paris*; *Apparitions*, to a Liszt-Lambert score; *Les Rendez-vous*, to a Constant Lambert score based on melodies by Auber, seen in America in the repertoire of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet; the delicious *A Wedding Bouquet*, to an original score by Lord Berners and a Gertrude Stein text; *Les Patineurs*, to melodies by Meyerbeer; Constant Lambert's *Horoscope*; *Dante Sonata*, to Liszt works arranged by Lambert; *The Wise Virgins*, to Bach arranged by Sir William Walton; *The Wanderer*, to Schubert; Walton's *The Quest*; *Les Sirènes*, by Lord Berners; the César Franck *Symphonic Variations*; the Coronation ballet of 1953—*Homage to the Queen*; and, in a sense, most importantly, the full length *Cinderella*, utilizing the Prokofieff score; and the full length production of Delibes' *Sylvia*.

Actually, I like to think of Ashton as a dance-composer, moving freely with dramatic or symbolic characters.

In all my experience of ballet and of choreographers, I do not believe there is any one more conscientious, more hard-working, more painstaking at rehearsals. While his eye misses nothing, he never raises his voice, never loses his temper. Corrections are made firmly, but quietly, almost in seeming confidence. Always he has a good word for something well done. On occasion, I have noticed something to be adjusted and have mentioned it to him.

"Yes, yes, I know," he would say.

"Aren't you going to tell them?"

"You tell them," Ashton would smile. "I can't tell them. Go on, you tell them."

This was in connection with a musical matter. The conductor in question was taking a portion of the work at a too rapid tempo. It involved "Freddy" telling the conductor the passage was being played too fast.

"No," repeated "Freddy," "it will work out. He will see it and feel it for himself. I don't want to upset him."

An extraordinarily conscientious worker, he is equally self-deprecating. Some of this self-deprecation can be found in his work, for there is almost always a high degree of subtlety about all of it. Among all the choreographers I know, there is none his superior or his equal in designing sheer poetry of movement. Ashton is able, in my opinion, to bring to ballet some of that quality of enchantment that, in the old days, we found only with the Russians.

This self-deprecating quality of "Freddy's" is at its strongest on opening nights of his works. It is very real and sincere.

"Everything I do is always a flop here in England, you know," he will say. "They don't like me.... I've done the best I can.... There you are."

Despite this self-deprecation, Ashton, once his imagination is stirred, his inspiration stimulated, throws off a certain indolence that is one of his characteristics, knows exactly what he wants, how to get it, and goes about it. Like all creative artists, during the actual period of creation, he can be alternately confident and despairing, determined and resigned. Despite the reluctance to exercise his authority, he can, if occasion demands, put his foot down firmly, and does.

Yet, in doing so, I am certain that never in his life has he hurt any one, for "Freddy" Ashton is essentially a kind person.

Three British *ballerinas* owe Ashton an immense debt: Margot Fonteyn, Moira Shearer, and Alicia Markova. It is due in large measure to Ashton's tuition, his help, his

sound advice, and his plastic sense that these fine artists have matured.

Every choreographer worthy of the name stamps his works with his own personality. Ashton's signature is always apparent in his work. No matter how characteristic of him his works may be choreographically, they are equally dissimilar and varied in mood.

One of my great pleasures is to watch him at rehearsal, giving, giving, giving of himself to dancers. Before the curtain rises, that final expectant moment before the screen between dancer and audience is withdrawn, Ashton is always on the stage, moving from dancer to dancer: "Cheer up".... "Back straight, duckie".... "Present yourself".... "Chin up, always chin up, darling." ...

Personally, "Freddy" is an unending delight. Shy, shy, always shy, shy like the shy sister he plays in *Cinderella*, he is always the good colleague, evincing the same painstaking interest in the ballets of others as he does in his own, something which I assure the reader is rare. I have yet to see "Freddy" ruffled, yet to see him outwardly upset. In his personal appearance he is always neat, carefully dressed. Even in the midst of hectic dress-rehearsals and their attendant excitements and alarums, I have never seen him anything but cool, neat, and well-groomed. There is never a fantastic "rehearsal costume" with "Freddy."

The picture of "Freddy" that is uppermost in my mind is of him standing in the "Crush Bar" at Covent Garden, relaxed, at ease, listening more than talking, laughing in his self-deprecatory way, always alert, always amusing.

Ashton lives in London in a house in a little street quaintly called Yeoman's Row, on the edge of Knightsbridge and Kensington. Here he often does his own cooking and here he works out his ideas. It is a tiny house, the work-center being a second-floor study, crowded with gramophone records, books, photographs and statuettes, all

of which nearly obscure the red wall-paper. The statuettes are three in number: Anna Pavlova, Fanny Ellsler, and Marie Taglioni. The photographs range from good Queen Alexandra, through bull-fighters, to dancers.

The Sadler's Wells hierarchy seems to travel in groups. One such group that seemed inseparable included Ashton, "Bobby" Helpmann, Margot Fonteyn, and Pamela May. Occasionally Constant Lambert would join in, to eat, to drink, to have fun. For "Freddy" is by no means averse to the good things of life.

"Freddy" Ashton is another of those figures of the dance who should never regard the calendar as a measure for determining his age. I believe the youthful spirit of Ashton is such that he will live to be a hundred-and-fifty; that, in 2075, he will be the last survivor of the founding of Sadler's Wells, and will then be the recipient of a grand gala benefit at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where, that night, he will share the Royal Box with the then reigning monarch.

CONSTANT LAMBERT

It is difficult for me to write without emotion of the third of the trio, Constant Lambert, whose loss is deeply mourned by all who knew him, and by many who did not.

A picturesque figure, Lambert was a great conductor, a great musician, a composer of superior talents, a critic of perception, a writer of brilliance and incisiveness, a life-long student of the ballet. Lambert's contribution to the making of the Sadler's Wells Ballet has, I suspect, been given less credit than it deserves. I have said that, in my three decades-and-more of ballet management, I have never known a ballet company with such high musical standards. These standards were imposed by Constant Lambert. Not only did he compose ballets for the

company, but when music of other composers was used, it was Lambert who provided the strikingly brilliant orchestral arrangements—witness, as a few examples: *Les Patineurs*, *Dante Sonata*, *The Faery Queen*, *Comus*, *Apparitions*, *Les Rendez-vous*, *Balabile*, in which he made alive for ballet purposes the assorted music of Meyerbeer, Liszt, Purcell, Auber, Chabrier, respectively.

Born in London, in 1905, the son of a painter, brother of a well-known sculptor, he spent a substantial part of his childhood in Russia, where his grandfather supplied the Trans-Siberian Railway with its locomotives. He was a living proof of the fact that it was possible for an Englishman to be a musician without being suspected of not being a gentleman. His was an incisive mind, capable of quick reactions, with a widely ranging emotional experience.

With the Camargo Society, Constant Lambert established himself not only as a conductor, but as the musical mind behind British ballet. However, it was not an Englishman who discovered him as a composer. That honor goes to a Russian, Serge Diaghileff, who, when Lambert was bordering on twenty-one, commissioned him to write a ballet for his company. No other English composer shared that honor before Diaghileff died, although Diaghileff did produce, but did not commission, Lord Berners' *The Triumph of Neptune*. And so Lambert stands isolated, with his *Romeo and Juliet*, which was first produced at Monte Carlo, in 1926, with Lifar and Karsavina as the protagonists; and his second ballet, *Pomona*, which Bronislava Nijinska staged at the Colon Theatre, Buenos Aires, in 1927.

Constant Lambert's English education was at Christ's Hospital. Early in his school days he underwent a leg operation that compelled him always to walk with a stick. All his life he was never entirely free from pain. At the Royal College of Music he was a pupil of Ralph Vaughan

Williams. Ballet came into his life at an early date, and remained there until his untimely passing. To it he gave the best years of his life in acting as a sort of hair-spring to Ninette de Valois' mainspring in the development of Sadler's Wells. On his sound musical foundation Sadler's Wells rests.

It is not within my province to discuss Lambert as a composer; but his accomplishments and achievements in this field were considerable. It is, of course, as a musician he will be remembered. But I could not regard Lambert as a musician pure and simple. He had a wide variety of interests, not the least of which was painting. Both painting and sculpture were in his family, and, from conversations with him I frequently got the notion that, had his technical accomplishments been other than they were, he would have preferred to have been a painter to a musician. Much of his music had a pictorial quality, witness his ballets, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Pomona*, *Horoscope*, and *Tiresias*; observe his *Piano Concerto*, *Rio Grande* ("By the Rio Grande, they dance no Sarabande"), *Music for the Orchestra*, *Elegiac Blues* (a tribute to the American Florence Mills), the *Merchant Navy Suite*, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, Hogarthian in color and treatment; and the work I shall always remember him conducting as a musical interlude in the first season in New York, the *Aubade Heroique*, the reproduction in sound of a Dutch landscape, a remembrance of that dawn in Holland when Lambert, a visiting conductor with Sadler's Wells, witnessed the invasion of The Hague by Nazi paratroopers.

It was as a conductor of Tchaikowsky that I feel he excelled. He was a masterly Tchaikowsky interpreter. I should have loved to hear him play the symphonies. I content myself, however, with his *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, and the realization of how much these two Sadler's Wells productions owe to him. Never was the music for an instant dull, for Lambert always conducted it

with a fine ear for contrasts of brisk with languid, happiness with *toska*.

Composer that he was, he devoted a large part of his life to conducting. His recordings are to be treasured. Conducting to him was not merely a source of livelihood, but a very definite form of self-expression, an important part of him. In my experience, I have found that composers are, as a rule, bad conductors, and conductors bad composers. Two exceptions I can name. Both British. Lambert was well nigh unique in his superlative capacity in both directions, as is Benjamin Britten today. Lambert, I feel, was not only one of the most gifted composers of his time, but also one of its finest interpretative artists. He had the unique quality of being able to enter wholeheartedly into the innermost essence of forms of art diametrically opposed to his own, even positively unsympathetic to him personally, and giving superlative performances of them.

Lambert was no calm liver, no philosophic hermit; a good deal of a hedonist, he met life considerably more than half way, and went out to explore life's possibilities to the fullest. Moreover, he richly succeeded in doing so. He was a brilliant wit, both in writing and in conversation. His book, *Music, Ho!*, remains one of the most stimulating books of musical commentary and criticism of our time. He was the collector and creator of an innumerable number of magnificent but unprintable limericks, in the creation of which he was a distinct poet. He had composed a series of fifty on one subject—double bishops, i.e., bishops having more than one diocese, like Bath and Wells. A friend of mine who has heard Lambert recite them with that gusto of which only he was capable, tells me that they are, without doubt, one of the most brilliant achievements in this popular form.

Wit is one thing; stout-hearted, robust humor is another. Lambert had both. There was also a shyness of an odd kind, when a roaring laugh would give way to a fit of

wanting to be by himself, wrapped in melancholy. His was a delicately poised combination of the introvert and the extravert, the latter expressing itself in the love of male company over pots of ale and even headier beverages. He had a keen appreciation of the good things of life.

This duality of personality was apparent in his physical make-up. There was something about his appearance that, in a sense, fitted in with the conventional portrait of John Bull. A figure of a good deal of masculine strength, he was big, inclined to be burly; his complexion was pink. He exhibited in himself a disconcerting blend of the most opposite extremes imaginable. On the one hand, a certain morbidity; on the other, a bluff and hearty roast-beef-and-Yorkshire Britishness. I have said that he resembled, physically, the typical drawing of John Bull. As a matter of fact, he bore an uncanny physical resemblance to Winston Churchill, and had elements in common with G. K. Chesterton. And a Hollywood casting director might have engaged him to play the role of the Emperor Nero, on strict type casting. He had an alert face on which humor often played good tunes, but on which, now and then, there used to settle a kind of stern gloom, not to be dispersed by any insensitive back-slapping.

He was as much at home in France as he was in England. His late adolescence and early manhood were spent in the hectic, feverish, restless 'twenties, with the Diaghileff Ballet and the French school of musical composition as the preponderant influences. As he grew older, his Englishness, if I may call it that, grew as well. The amazing thing to me was his ability to maintain such an even balance between the two.

Lambert had a passion for enigmas. He adored cats, and had a strange attraction to aquariums, zoos, and their fascinatingly enigmatic inhabitants. He was President of the Kensington Kittens' and Neuter Cats' Club, Incorporated. An important club, a club with a President

who knew quite a lot about cats. There is a story to the effect that there was once a most handsome cat at London's Albert Hall who was a close friend of Lambert's, a cat called Tiddleywinks, a discriminating cat, and a cat with a certain amount of musical taste. Lambert, the President, would never proceed with the job he had to do at the Albert Hall without a preliminary chat with Tiddleywinks. And all would be well.

Constant Lambert was working on, among other things, an autobiography, concerning which he one day inquired about completely inaccessible places left in our shrinking world, particularly since the last war and James Norman Hall have pretty well exposed the South Pacific islands. What he actually wanted to know was an inaccessible place to which to hie after its publication, "because," he said, "I'm telling the truth about everyone I know, including myself, and I shall have to flee the wrath of my 'friends,' and find a safe place where the laws of libel cannot reach me. You know, in my country at least, 'the greater the truth, the greater the libel.'"

There was an infinite variety in his "drive." He conducted ballet at Covent Garden; radio concerts at the British Broadcasting Corporation; symphony concerts, with special emphasis on Liszt and Sibelius, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra; made magnificent, definitive recordings; recited the Sitwell poems in *Façade* at every opportunity; composed fresh, vital works; made striking musical arrangements. He was at once composer, conductor, critic, journalist, an authority on railroad systems, trains, and locomotives, a student of the atom bomb, and a talker. There are those who insist he was not easy to get to know. It could be. He was, as I have said, shy. He was a highly concentrated individual, living a lot on his nerves. Despite this, to those who knew him, he was the friendliest of good companions, a perpetual stimulus to those who delighted in knowing him.

One had to be prepared, to be sure, to discover, in the middle of one of one's own sentences (and, frequently, one of his own) that he was—gone. He would tilt his chin in the air, stare suddenly into far distant spaces, turn on his heel with the help of his stick, as swiftly as a ballet-dancer in a *pirouette*, and silently vanish. He was a good listener —if one had anything to say. He did not suffer fools gladly, and to bores—that increasing affliction of our times —he presented an inflexible deafness akin to the switching-off of a hearing-aid, and a truly magnificent cast-iron rigidity of inattention. The bore fled. So did Lambert.

I have given some indication of the width of his interests. It was amazing. His gusto for life was unquenchable, and with it was a wise, shrewd appraisement of the human comedy—and tragedy. He was able to get through an enormous amount of work without ever seeming to do anything. Best of all, perhaps, he was able to enjoy a joke against himself. In this world of the arts and artists, where morbid egotisms and too exposed nerves victimize and vitiate the artist, it was a boon to him and an extraordinarily attractive characteristic.

Above all, he had an undying belief in British Ballet.

The last performance I saw Lambert conduct was the first performance of his last ballet, *Tiresias*, which was the occasion of a Gala in aid of the Ballet Benevolent Fund in the presence of H.M. the Queen and Princess Elizabeth, on the 9th July, 1951. *Tiresias* was a work on which Lambert had gone back to his collaboration with Frederick Ashton. The story he had made himself; it was a sort of composite of the myths about Tiresias; reduced to as much of a capsule as I can, it deals with the duality of Tiresias—as man and woman—and how he was struck blind by Hera, when Tiresias proves her wrong when she argues with Zeus that man's lot is happier than woman's. It was, this ballet, a sort of family affair in a sense; for Lambert's wife,

Isabel, designed scenery and costumes, setting the three-scened work on the Island of Crete.

After the first performance, we met at a large party to which I had gone with David Webster. Lambert and his wife, along with Ninette de Valois and Lady Keynes (Lydia Lopokova), joined us at supper. The ballet had been a long one, running quite a bit more than an hour, and there was general agreement among us that the work would benefit from judicious cutting. Lambert thoughtfully considered all the suggestions that were proffered; agreed that, conceivably, a cut or two might improve it, but the question was where and how, without damaging what he felt was the basic structure of the whole.

Not long after this, Lambert and I met at the door of Covent Garden, having arrived simultaneously. We had a brief chat, and he was his usual vastly courteous and amusing self.

A few days later, at the Savoy, my telephone rang quite early in the morning. "Madame's" secretary, Jane Edgeworth, at the other end, informed me Constant Lambert had just died. I was stunned.

It appeared that Lambert had been taken ill while at a party and had been rushed to London Clinic, one of London's most exclusive and finest nursing-homes, on Sunday evening, the 19th August. It was on Tuesday morning, the 21st August, that I received the news of his death. The funeral was quite private, since the entire Sadler's Wells company was away from London performing at the Edinburgh Festival. Lambert was buried from the Church of St. Bartholomew the Great, at Smithfield, in the City of London. So private was the service that almost no one was there, and there were no Pallbearers.

I was present at the Memorial Service, held at the famous Church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, at Charing

Cross, overlooking the National Gallery. There were gathered his sorrowing company, now returned from Edinburgh, headed by Ninette de Valois, Frederick Ashton, and David Webster. The address was given by the Reverend C. B. Mortlock. Robert Helpmann, an old colleague, read the Lesson. The chorus of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, sang Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. At the close, John Churchill, one of Britain's greatest organists and an old friend of Lambert's, played on the organ that elegiac work Lambert had composed at the rape of Holland, and which he had conducted so magnificently at the Metropolitan Opera House—his *Aubade Heroique*.

Here at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields his colleagues paid him honor. I was deeply moved. At the little funeral, I had been equally stirred. Here before me was all that remained of the great man who never took his greatness seriously; the man who would go to any trouble on behalf of those who tried, but who, for those who were lazy, or cynical, or thought themselves superior, and without justification, he had no use whatever. Here was a man about whom there was nothing of the academic recluse, but a man who loved life as he loved music, ballet, fully, strongly, with ever-growing zest and with ever-deepening understanding; the man who had done so much for ballet, its music, its standards; who had been of such vital importance in the fashioning of Sadler's Wells. My thoughts went back to his creations, his arrangements. I was actually conscious of his imprint on all ballet. Memories of his wit, his brilliance, crowded into my mind.

I expected, I think, that with the sudden passing of a man of such fame, there would be an outpouring of thousands for his funeral, to pay their last, grateful respects. I was surprised. This was not the case, as I have explained. A few close distinguished friends and colleagues gathered beside the coffin in the Church of St.

Bartholomew the Great, in the City: Sir William Walton, Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell, Sir Arthur Bliss, Edmund Rubbra, Alan Rawsthorne, Ninette de Valois, Frederick Ashton, and Robert Helpmann who had hurried down from Edinburgh.

The service was brief and hushed. I was indeed very sad, and my thoughts traveled out to the little chapel in Golder's Green, not so far as an angel flies, where lay all that was mortal of another genius of the dance and another friend, in the urn marked: "East Wall—No. 3711—Anna Pavlova."

As Lambert's body was borne from St. Bartholomew the Great's gothic pile, I bowed my head low as a great man passed, a very lovable man.

DAVID WEBSTER

I have dwelt at some length on my impressions of the artistic directorate of Sadler's Wells. Beyond and apart from the artistic direction of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, but very much responsible for its financial well-being, is David Lumsden Webster, the General Administrator of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

David Webster is not a head-line hunter. He is certainly not the press-agent's delight. He does not court publicity. He permits his work to speak for itself.

On more than one occasion I have been appropriately chilled by a reading of the impersonal factual coldness of the entries in that otherwise useful volume, *Who's Who*. The following quotation from it is no exception:

Webster, David Lumsden, B.A.—General Administrator Royal Opera House 1946—Born 3rd July, 1903—Educated Holt School, Liverpool University, Oxford University—President Liverpool Guild of Undergraduates, 1924-25—General Manager Bon Marché, Liverpool, Ltd., 1932-40—General Manager Lewis's Ltd., Liverpool, 1940-41—Ministry of Supply Ordnance Factories, engaged on special methods of developing production, 1942-44—Chairman Liverpool Philharmonic Society, June 1940-October 1945.

To be sure, the facts are there. Not only is it possible to elaborate on these facts, but to add some which may be implicit in the above summary, but not apparent. For example, I can add that David Webster is a cultured gentleman of taste, courage, and splendid business perspicacity. His early background of business administration, as may be gathered, was acquired in the fields of textiles and wearing apparel, and was continued, during the war, in the highly important field of expediting ordnance production.

Things that are not implicit or even suggested in *Who's Who* are the depth and breadth of his culture, his knowledge of literature and drama and poetry and music—his love for the last making him a genuine musical amateur in the best sense of the term. It was the last that was of immense value to him as Chairman of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society in building it into one of Britain's outstanding symphonic bodies. It is understandable that there was a certain amount of pardonable pride in the accomplishment, since Webster is himself a Liverpudlian.

At the end of the war, in a shell-shocked, bomb-blasted London, Webster was invited to take over the post of General Administrator at Covent Garden when the Covent Garden Opera Trust was formed at the time of the Boosey and Hawkes leasehold. Since 1946, David Webster has

been responsible for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden: for the Opera entirely, and for the Ballet, in conjunction with Ninette de Valois.

During this time, he has restored the historic house to its rightful place among the leading lyric theatres of the world; where private enterprise and the private Maecenas failed, Webster has succeeded. By his policies, the famous house has been saved from the ignominy of a public dance-hall in off-seasons, for now there are no longer any "off-seasons."

David Webster is uniquely responsible for a number of things at Covent Garden. Let me try to enumerate them. He has succeeded in establishing and maintaining the Royal Opera House, Covent Carden, as a truly national opera house, restoring this great theatre and reclaiming it as a national center for ballet and opera, on a year-round basis. He has succeeded in shaking off many of the hidebound traditions and conventions of opera production. While the great standard works of opera are an essential part of the operatic repertoire, he initiated a broad policy of experimentation both in the production of standard works and in new, untried operas. He has succeeded, through his invitation to the Sadler's Wells Ballet, in making ballet an integral and important part of the Opera House and has helped it to become a truly national ballet. In addition to striking national operas by Bliss and Vaughan Williams, it was Webster's courage that has provided a home for three unique operas, *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd* and *Gloriana*, great works by that brilliant young British composer, Benjamin Britten. While it is true the original commission for the former work came from the Natalie Koussevitsky Foundation in America, it was Webster who had the vision and courage to mount both great modern operas grandly. It was Webster who had the courage to mount the latter, based on Herman Melville's immortal story, with Britten as conductor; and a magnificent one he turned out to be.

Britten is indisputably at the very top among the figures of contemporary music. He is a young man of exceptional gifts, and it is Webster and the permanent Covent Garden organization that have provided the composer with exceptional opportunities for the expression of them. This is only possible through the existence of a national opera house with a permanent roof over its head.

As is the case with all innovators, it has not been all clear sailing for Webster; there were sections of the press that railed against his policy. But Webster won, because at the root of the policy was a very genuine desire to break away from stale conventions, to combat some of the stock objections and prejudices that keep many people away from opera. For Webster's aim is to create a steady audience and to appeal to groups that have not hitherto attended opera and ballet, or have attended only when the most brilliant stars were appearing.

In London, as in every center, every country, there are critics and critics. Some are captious; others are not. One of the latter variety in London once tackled me, pointing out his dislike for most of the things that were going on at Covent Garden, his disagreement with others. I listened for a time, until he asked me if I agreed with him.

My answer was simple and short.

"Look here," I said. "A few years ago this beautiful house had what? Shilling dances. Who peopled it? Drunken sailors, among others. Bow Street and the streets adjoining were places you either avoided like the plague; or else you worried and hurried through them, if you must.

"Today, you have a great opera house restored to its proper uses. Now you have something to criticize. Before you didn't."

It has been thanks to David Webster's sympathetic guidance that ballet has grown in popularity until its audiences are larger than are those for opera.

A man of firm purpose, few words, eclectic taste, and great personal charm, David Webster is a master of diplomatic skill. I can honestly say that some of the happiest days of my life have been spent working closely with him. Had it not been for his warm cooperation, his unquenchable enthusiasm, America might easily have been denied the pleasure and profit of Sadler's Wells, and our lives would have been the poorer.

The last time I was in Webster's office, I remarked, "We must prepare the papers for the next tour."

Webster looked up quickly.

"No papers are necessary," he said.

For the reader who has come this far, it should not be necessary for me to underline the difference between negotiations with the British and the years of wrangling through the intrigues and dissimulations of the Russo-Caucasian-Eastern European-New England mazes of indecision.

My respect for and my confidence in David Webster are unlimited. He is a credit to his country; and to him, also, must go much of the credit for the creation of a genuine national opera and for the solid position of the Sadler's Wells Ballet.

ROBERT HELPMANN

It was towards the end of the San Francisco engagement of the Sadler's Wells Ballet that there occurred a performance, gala so far as the audience was concerned, but which was not without its sadness to the company, to me, and to all those who had watched the growth and development, the rise to a position of pre-eminence on the part of British ballet. The public was, of course, completely unaware of the event. It is not the sort of thing one publicizes.

Robert Helpmann, long the principal male dancer, a co-builder, and an important choreographer of the company, resigned. His last performance as a regular member of the organization took place in the War Memorial Opera House. The vehicle for his last appearance was the grand *pas-de-deux* from the third act of *The Sleeping Beauty*, with Margot Fonteyn. It was eminently fitting that Helpmann's final appearance as a regular member of the company was with Margot. Their association, as first artists with the company, encompassed the major portion of its history, some fifteen years.

During this period, Helpmann had served in two capacities simultaneously: as principal dancer and as choreographer. An Australian by birth in 1909, his first ballet training came from the Anna Pavlova company when Pavlova was on one of her Australian tours. For four years he danced "down under," and came to Britain in 1933, studying with the Sadler's Wells Ballet School, while dancing in the *corps de ballet*. His first important role was in succession to Anton Dolin as Satan, in the de Valois-Vaughan Williams *Job*. From 1934, he was the first male dancer of the Sadler's Wells organization. Helpmann often took leaves of absence to appear in various plays and films, for he is an actor of ability and distinction. As a choreographer, his *Hamlet* and *Miracle in the Gorbals* are distinctive additions to any repertoire.

"Bobby" Helpmann has not given up ballet entirely. When he can spare the time from his theatrical and film commitments, he is bound to turn up as a guest artist, and I hope to see him again partnering great *ballerinas*. Always a good colleague, he has been blessed by the gods with a delicious sense of humor. This serves him admirably in such roles as one of the Ugly Sisters in *Cinderella*—I never can distinguish which one by name, and only know "Bobby" was the sister which "Freddy" Ashton was not. Both *Hamlet* and *Miracle in the Gorbals* revealed his

serious acting qualities.

Man of the theatre, he is resourceful. On the first night of *The Sleeping Beauty*, at the Metropolitan Opera House, there were a few ticklish moments at the beginning of the Transformation Scene, due to technical difficulties. The orchestra under Lambert went straight on. But the stage wait was covered by Helpmann's entrance, his sure hand, his manner, his style, his "line," his graciousness.

I have mentioned some of Helpmann's warm personal qualities. He is one of those associated with Sadler's Wells who has helped to number my Sadler's Wells' associations among my happiest experiences. Helpmann is one of those who, like the others when I am with them, compel me to forget my business interests and concerns and all their associated problems: just another proof that, with people of this sort, there is something else in life besides business.

There has been, perhaps, undue emphasis placed upon Helpmann, the actor, with a corresponding tendency to overlook his dancing abilities. From the point of view of sheer technical virtuosity, there are others who surpass him. But technical virtuosity is not by any means all of a dancer's story. I happen to know of dancers who, in my opinion, have excelled Nijinsky and Pavlova in these departments, but they were much lesser artists. It is the overall quality in a dancer that matters. Helpmann, I feel, is a dancer of really exceptional fluency, superb lightness, genuine musicality, and admirable control. He is one of the rare examples among male dancers to be seen about us today of what is known in ballet terminology as the *danseur noble*. It is the *danseur noble* who is the hero, the prince, of classical ballet. As a mime and an actor in ballet he may be compared with Leonide Massine, but the quality I have mentioned Helpmann as having is something that has been denied Massine, who is best in modern character ballets.

Sir Arthur Bliss, one of Britain's most distinguished

composers, and the creator of the scores to, among others, *Checkmate* and *Miracle in the Gorbals*, has said: "Robert Helpmann breathes the dust of the theatre like hydrogen. His quickness to seize on the dramatic possibilities of music is mercurial. I was not at all surprised to hear him sing in *Les Sirènes*. It would seem quite natural to see him walk on to the Albert Hall platform one day to play a violin concerto."

It is always a pleasure to me to observe him in his varied roles and to watch him prepare for them. He leaves absolutely nothing to chance. His approach is always the product of his fine intelligence. He experiments with expression, with gesture, with make-up, coupling his reading, his study of paintings, with his own keen sense of observation.

"Bobby" Helpmann and I have one great bond in common: our mutual adoration of Pavlova. Pavlova has, I know, strongly influenced him, and this influence is apparent in the genuine aristocracy of his bearing and his movement, in the purity of his style.

There is a pretty well authenticated story about the first meeting between Helpmann and Ninette de Valois, after the former had arrived in London from Australia, and was looking for work at Sadler's Wells. It was an audition. The choreographer at such times is personally concerned with the body of the aspirant, the extremities, the quality of movement, the technical equipment of the applicant, some revelation of his training and his style, if any. It is characteristic of Ninette de Valois' tendency to do the unexpected that, in Helpmann's case, she found herself regarding the "wrong end" of her subject. Her comment on this occasion has become historic.

"I can do something with that face," she said.

She did.

It has been a source of regret to me that on the 1953

American visit of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, "Bobby" Helpmann is not a regular member of the company. It is not the same without him.

I have said that perhaps undue emphasis has been put on Helpmann, the actor. If this is true, it is only because of "Bobby's" amazing versatility: as dancer, as choreographer, as actor, as stage-director. He can turn at will from one medium to the other. As actor, it should not be forgotten that he has appeared with equal success in revues (as a mimic); in Shakespeare (both on stage and screen); in plays ranging from Webster and Bernard Shaw to the Russian Andreyev.

Most recently, he has acted with the American Katherine Hepburn, and has scored perhaps his most outstanding directorial success to date in his superlatively fine mounting of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, at the Old Vic.

I am looking forward to bringing "Bobby" to America in the not too far distant future in a great production of a Shakespeare work which I am confident will make theatrical history.

"Bobby" Helpmann, as I have pointed out, is more than a dancer: he is a splendid actor, a fine creator, a distinguished choreographer, an intelligent human being.

His is a friendship I value; he is alive and eager, keen and shrewd, with a ready smile and a glint in his eye. For "Bobby" has a happy way with him, and whether you are having a meal with him or discussing a point, you cannot help reacting to his boyish enthusiasm, his zeal for his job, his flair for doing it. My memories of dinners and suppers with the "inseparables," to which I have often been invited, are treasured. The "inseparables" were that closely-linked little group: Fonteyn, Ashton, Helpmann, with de Valois along, when she was in town and free. The bond between the members of the group is very close.

It was in Chicago. It was mid-tour, with rehearsals and conferences and meetings for future planning. We were at breakfast. "Madame" suddenly turned to Helpmann.

"Bobby," she said, with that crisp tone that immediately commands attention. "Bobby, I want you to be sure to be at the Drake Hotel to give a talk to the ladies at one o'clock *sharp*. Now, be sure to come, and be sure to be there on time."

"How, in heaven's name," replied Helpmann, "can I possibly be in two places at one time? You told me I shall have to be at the Public Library at one sharp."

De Valois regarded him for a long moment.

"You astound me, Bobby," she finally said. "Did I tell you that? Very well, then, let it be the Public Library. I shall take the Drake Hotel. But watch out, make sure you are there on time."

Ninette de Valois not only did something with "that face." She also made good use of that intelligence.

I last saw "Bobby" Helpmann dance at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on Coronation Night, when he returned as a guest artist with the Sadler's Wells Ballet, to appear with Margot Fonteyn in *Le Lac des Cygnes*, Act Two.

What a pleasure it was to see him dancing once more, the true cavalier, with his perfect style and the same submerging of technique in the ebb and flow of the dance. I am looking forward to seeing him again, and, I hope, again and again.

ARNOLD L. HASKELL

Among my cherished associations with this fine organization, I cannot fail to acknowledge the contribution to ballet and the popularity of it, made through the media of books, articles, lectures, by the one-time ballet critic and

now Director and Principal of the Sadler's Wells School, Arnold L. Haskell.

Haskell, the complete *balletomane* himself, has done as much, if not more, to develop the cult of the *balletomane* in the western Anglo-Saxon world as any one else I know. Devoted to the cause of the dance, for years he gave unsparingly of his time and means to spread the gospel of ballet.

In the early days of the renaissance of ballet, Haskell came to the United States on the first visit of the de Basil company and was of immense assistance in helping to create an interest in and a desire to find out about ballet on the part of the American people. He helped to organize an audience. Later, he toured Australia with the de Basil company, preaching "down under" the gospel of the true art with the zeal of a passionate, proselyting, non-conformist missionary.

From his untiring pen has come a long procession of books and articles on ballet appreciation in general, and on certain phases of ballet in particular—books of illumination to the lay public, of sound advice to dancers.

Arnold Haskell's balletic activities can be divided into five departments: organizer, author, lecturer, critic, and educator. In the first category, he, with Philip J. S. Richardson, long-time editor and publisher of the *Dancing Times* (London), was instrumental in forming and founding the Camargo Society, after the death of Diaghileff. As lecturer, he delivered more than fifteen hundred lectures on ballet for the British Ministry of Information, the Arts Council, the Council for the Education of His Majesty's Forces. As critic, he has written innumerable critical articles for magazines and periodicals, and, from 1934 to 1938, was the ballet critic of the *Daily Telegraph* (London).

As critic, Haskell has rendered a valuable service to

ballet. His approach is invariably intelligent. He has a sound knowledge of the dancer as dancer and, so far as dancers and dancing are concerned, he has exhibited a fine intuition and a good deal of prophetic insight.

The fifth department of Arnold Haskell's activities, educator, is the one on which he is today most successfully and conspicuously engaged. As the active head of the Sadler's Wells School, established in its own building in Colet Gardens, Kensington, Arnold Haskell is in his element, continuing his sound advice directly; he is acting as wise and discerning mentor to a rising generation of dancers, who live together in the same atmosphere for at least eight years.

I have a feeling of warm friendship for Arnold Haskell, an infinite respect for him as a person, and for his knowledge.

The School of which he is the head, like all other Sadler's Wells activities, is carried on in association with the British Arts Council, thus carrying forward the Council's avowed axiom that the art of a people is one of its signs of good health. So it has always been in the world's history from Ancient Greece to France at the time of the Crusades, to Renaissance Italy and Elizabethan England. Each one of those earlier manifestations, whatever its excellence, was confined to a limited number of people, to the privileged and the elect. The new renaissance will inevitably be the emergence of the common man into the audience of art. He has always been a part of that audience when he has had the opportunity. Now the opportunity must come in such a way that none is overlooked and the result will be fresh vigour and self-confidence in the people as a whole.

The Sadler's Wells School is, of course, under the direct supervision of Dame Ninette de Valois, D.B.E. Its Board of Governors, which is active and not merely a list of names, numbers distinguished figures from the world of

art, music and letters.

The School was founded by the Governors of the Sadler's Wells Foundation, in association with the Arts Council, in 1947, to train dancers who will be fitted to carry on the high tradition of Sadler's Wells and generally to maintain and enhance the prestige of British Ballet. Over eighty-five per cent of the members of the ballet companies at both the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and at the Sadler's Wells Theatre are graduates of the Sadler's Wells Ballet School. The School combines a full secondary education and a highly specialized vocational training. Boys and girls are taken from the age of nine. Pupils are prepared for what is the equivalent on this side of the Atlantic of a complete High School education; in Britain, the General Certificate of Education, and the curriculum includes the usual school subjects of English language and literature, French, Latin (for boys only), history, geography, Scripture, mathematics, science, handicraft, music, and art work. The dance training consists of classical ballet, character dances, mime. Importance is attached to character formation and to the self-discipline essential for success on the stage.

There is also an Upper School, which is open to boys and girls above school-leaving age. After taking the General Certificate of Education, the American equivalent of graduation from high school, students from the Lower School pass into the Upper School if they have reached a standard which qualifies them for further training in the senior ballet classes. The Upper School is also open to students from other schools. Entry is by interview, and applicants are judged on general intelligence, physical aptitude, and standard attained. Entrants are accepted on one term's trial. Here the curriculum includes, in post-education: classes in English and French language and literature, history, art, music, lecture courses, and Dalcroze Eurhythmics. In ballet—the classical ballet, character

dances, mime, tuition in the roles of the classical ballets and modern works in the repertoire of the Sadler's Wells Ballet Companies. It is important to note that all ballet classes for boys are taken by male teachers.

The School is inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, and is licensed as a first-class educational institution. The pupils number about one hundred ten in the Lower School, with about thirty in the Upper School.

So splendidly has the School developed that now a substantial physical addition is being made to the premises in Colet Gardens, in the form of a new building, to provide dormitories and living quarters so that it may become a full-time boarding school, as well as a day-school; and thus obviate the necessity for many students to live outside the school, either at home or, as so often the case if the students come from distant places, in the proverbial London "digs."

One of the most interesting and significant things about the School to me is the number of boys enrolled and their backgrounds. Such is the feeling about male dancing in our Anglo-Saxon civilization that many of the boys have had to be offered scholarship inducements to enroll. The bulk of the boys come out of working-class families in the North of England and the Midlands. They are tough and manly. It is from boys such as these that the prejudice against male dancing will gradually die out, and the effeminate dancer will become, as he should, a thing of the past.

MOIRA SHEARER

Although, to my regret, due to personal, family, and artistic reasons, Moira Shearer is not present with the Sadler's Wells Ballet on its 1953-1954 North American tour, I know her devotion to the Sadler's Wells institution

remains unchanged.

The simple fact is that Moira Shearer is preparing to enter a new and different aspect of the theatre, a development with which I hope I shall have something to do in the near future.

Among the personalities of the company during the first two Sadler's Wells tours, American interest and curiosity were at their highest, for obvious reasons, in Moira Shearer. The film, *Red Shoes*, had stimulated an interest in ballet on the part of yet another new public, and its *ballerina* star had acquired the questionable halo of a movie star. This was something that was anything but pleasing to the gentle, intelligent Moira Shearer; and was, moreover, something she deplored.

Born in Dunfermline, Fifeshire, Scotland, in 1926, Moira Shearer came to ballet at an early age, having had dance lessons in Rhodesia as a child at the hands of a former Diaghileff dancer. It was on her return to England, when she was about eleven, that her serious studies began with Madame Nadine Nicolaeva-Legat. In 1940 she joined the Sadler's Wells Ballet School, remaining briefly, however, because of the blitz. But, early in 1941, she turned up with the International Ballet, another British ballet organization, dancing leading roles at the age of fourteen, another example of the "baby" *ballerina*. In 1942, she left that company to rejoin Sadler's Wells School.

In 1943, Shearer became a member of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, achieving an almost instant success and a marked popularity with audiences. What impresses me most about Moira Shearer, the dancer, is a fluidity of movement that has about it a definite Russian quality; she has a fine polish in her style, coupled with great spontaneity and a gentle, easy grace.

Distinctive not only for her Titian-coloring and her

famed auburn-haired beauty and her slender grace, Shearer is equally noteworthy for her poise and an almost incredible lightness; for her assurance and classical dignity; for her ability to dominate the stage. The "Russian" quality about her dancing I have mentioned, I suspect stems from her early indoctrination and her training at the hands of Madame Legat; there is something Russian about her entrances, when she immediately commands the stage and becomes the focus of all eyes. All of these qualities are particularly apparent in *Cinderella*.

Moira Shearer's reputation had preceded her across the United States and Canada, as I have pointed out, because of the exhibition of spontaneity, beauty and charm that had been revealed to thousands in the motion picture, *Red Shoes*. There is no denying this film was highly successful. I suppose it can be argued successfully that *Red Shoes* brought ballet to a new audience, and thus, in that sense, was good for ballet. Whatever it may have been, it was not a true, or good, or honest picture of ballet. I happen to know how Moira Shearer feels about it, and I share her feelings. Although she dislikes to talk or hear very much about *Red Shoes*, and was not very happy with it or about it, she was, I fancy, less disturbed by her role in *The Tales of Hoffman*, with "Freddy" Ashton, "Bobby" Helpmann, and Leonide Massine. Best of all her film excursions, Moira feels, was her sequence in *My Three Loves*, which Ashton directed for her in Hollywood.

Once, on introducing her to one of those characteristic, monumental California salads, her comment was: "My, but it's delicious; yet it looks like that Technicolor mess I should like to forget." Shearer feels *Red Shoes* was rather a sad mess, a complete travesty of the ballet life which it posed as portraying; that it was false and phoney throughout, and that, perhaps, the phoniest thing about it was its alleged glamor. On the other hand, she does not regard the time she spent making it wasted, for, as she

says, she was able to sit at the feet of Leonide Massine and watch and learn and observe the concentration with which he worked, the intelligence he brought to every gesture, and the vast ingenuity and originality he applied to everything he did.

I happen to know Shearer has no illusions about the film publicity campaign that made her a movie star overnight. She was amused by it, but never taken in, and was hurt only when the crowds mobbed for autographs and Americans hailed her as "*the* star" of Sadler's Wells.

Cultured and highly intelligent, Moira Shearer is intensely musical, both in life and in the dance. This musicality is particularly apparent in her portrayal of the Princess Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty*, and in the dual role of Odette-Odile in *Swan Lake*. Again it is markedly noticeable in a quite non-classical work, for of all the dancers I have seen dance the Tango in *Façade*, she is by far the most satiric and brilliant. She is well-nigh indispensable to *Wedding Bouquet*.

Aside from the qualities I have mentioned, there is also a fine romanticism about her work. Intelligence in a dancer is something that is rare. There are those who argue that it is not necessarily a virtue in a dancer. They could not be more wrong. It is, I think, Moira Shearer's superior intelligence that gives her, among other things, that power of pitiless self-criticism that is the hallmark of the first-class artist.

Moira Shearer has been as fortunate in her private life as in her professional activities. She lives happily in a lovely London home with her attractive and talented writer-husband, Ludovic Kennedy. During the second Sadler's Wells American tour, her husband drove across the continent from New York to Los Angeles to join Moira for the California engagement, discovering, by means of a tiny Austin, that there were still a great many of the wide-open spaces left in the land Columbus discovered.

In her charming London flat, with her husband, her books, her pictures, and her music, she carries out one of her most serious ambitions: to be a good mother; for the center of the household is her young daughter, born in midsummer, 1952.

The depth of Moira Shearer's sincerity I happen to know not only from others, but from personal experience. It is a genuine and real sincerity that applies to every aspect of her life, and not only in art and the theatre.

A loyal colleague, she has a highly developed sense of honor. As Ninette de Valois once remarked to me: "Anything that Moira has ever said or promised is a bond with her, and nothing of a confirming nature in writing is required."

A splendid artist, *ballerina*, and film star, it is my profound hope that Moira may meet with the same degree of success in her new venture into the legitimate theatre.

There seems little doubt of this, since I am persuaded that she will make good in anything she undertakes.

BERYL GREY

Another full-fledged *ballerina* of the company, is Beryl Grey, who alternates all *ballerina* roles today with Fonteyn, Violetta Elvin, Nadia Nerina and Rowena Jackson. Beryl Grey's American success was assured on the opening night of the first season at the Metropolitan Opera House, with her gracious and commandingly sympathetic performance of the Lilac Fairy in *The Sleeping Beauty*.

In a sense, Grey's and Shearer's careers have followed a similar pattern, in that they were both "baby ballerinas." Born Beryl Groom, at Muswell Hill, in London's Highgate section, in 1927, the daughter of a government technical expert and his wife, Beryl Grey's dancing studies began

very early in life in Manchester, and at the age of nine, she won a scholarship at the Sadler's Wells Ballet School. In 1941, she joined the company, and so rapid was her growth as an artist that she danced leading roles in some half-dozen of the one-act ballets in the repertoire, in place of Margot Fonteyn who had been taken ill. Even more remarkable is the fact that she danced the full-length *Swan Lake* in London on her fifteenth birthday.

The term, "baby ballerina," has become a part of ballet's language, due to its association with the careers of Baronova and Toumanova in the early 'thirties. In Grey's case, however, she was privileged to have a much wider experience in classical ballets than her *émigré* Russian predecessors. She was only seventeen when she danced the greatest of all classical roles in the repertoire of the true *ballerina*, Giselle.

My feeling about Beryl Grey, the dancer, is that she possesses strikingly individual qualities, both of style and technique. She has been greatly helped along the path to stardom by Frederick Ashton who, as I have pointed out, likes nothing better than to discover and exploit a dancer's talents. It was he who gave Grey her first big dramatic parts.

Beryl Grey is married to a distinguished Swedish osteopath, Dr. Sven Svenson, and they live in a charming Mayfair flat in London. Here again one finds that characteristic of fine intelligence coupled with an intense musicality. Also rare among dancers, Grey is an omnivorous reader of history, biography, and the arts. She feels, I know, that, apart from "Madame" and Ashton, who have been so keenly instrumental in shaping her career, a sense of deep gratitude to Constant Lambert for his kindness and help to her from her very early days; for his readiness to discuss with her any aspect of music; and she gratefully remembers how nothing was too inconsequential for his interest, his advice and help; how no conductor

understood what the dancer required from music more than he did. She is also mindful of the inspiration she had from Leonide Massine, of his limitless energy, his indefatigable enthusiasm, his creative fire; she learned that no detail was too small to be corrected and worked over and over. As she says: "He was so swift and light, able to draw with immediate ease a complete and clear picture." Also, she points out, "He was quiet and of few words, but had a fine sense of humor which was often reflected in his penetrating brown eyes. His rare praise meant a great deal."

Beryl Grey is the star in the first three-dimensional ballet film ever to be made, based on the famous Black Swan *pas de deux* from *Le Lac des Cygnes*.

From the point of view of a dancer, Beryl Grey had one misfortune over which she had to triumph: she is above average height. This she has been able to turn into a thing of beauty, with a beautifully flowing length of "line." Personally, she is a gentle person, with a genuine humility and a simple unaffected kindliness, and a fresh, completely unspoiled charm. Her success in all the great roles has been such as to make her one of the most popular figures with the public.

I find great pleasure in her precision and strength as a dancer, in her poised, statuesque grace, in her clean technique; and in her special sort of technical accomplishment, wherein nothing ever seems to present her any problems.

During the American tours of Sadler's Wells, she is almost invariably greeted with flowers at the station. She seems to have friends in every city. How she manages to do this, I am not sure; but I feel it must be a tribute to her genuine warmth and friendliness.

VIOLETTA ELVIN

Violetta Elvin, another of the talented *ballerinas* of the "fabulous" Sadler's Wells company, is in the direct line of Russian ballet, for she is a product of the contemporary ballet of Russia.

The daughter of a pioneer of Russian aviation, Vassili Prokhoroff, and his wife, Irina Grimousinkaya, a Polish artist and an early experimenter with action photography, Violetta Prokhorova became a pupil at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, at the age of nine. It is interesting to note that she was one of a class of fifty accepted out of five hundred applicants; it is still more interesting, and an example of the rigorous Russian training, that, when she finished the course nine years later, out of the original fifty there were only nine left: three girls and six boys. Of the three girls, Prokhorova was the only one who attained ballet's coveted rank of *etoile*.

Violetta finished her training at the time Moscow was being evacuated against the Nazi invasion, and was sent on a three-thousand mile journey to be a *ballerina* at the ballet at Tashkent, Russian Turkestan. Here, at the age of eighteen, she danced the leading roles in two works, *The Fountain of Bakchissarai*, based on Pushkin's famous poem, and *Don Quixote*, the Minkus work of which contemporary American balletgoers know only the famous *pas de deux*, but which I presented in America, during the season 1925-1926, staged by Laurent Novikoff, with settings and costumes by the great Russian painter, Korovin.

Another point of interest about Elvin is that she was never a member of the *corps de ballet*, for she was transferred from Tashkent to the Bolshoi Ballet, which had been moved, for safety reasons, to Kuibyshev, some five hundred miles from Moscow. In the early autumn of 1943, when the Nazi horde had been driven back in defeat, the Ballet returned to the Bolshoi, and Prokhorova danced important roles there.

It was in Moscow, in 1945, that Violetta Prokhorova married Harold Elvin, an architect associated with the British Embassy, and came with him to London. On her arrival in London she became a member of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, first as a soloist, and later as *ballerina*.

My own impressions are of a vibrant personality and a great beauty. Her feet are extraordinarily beautiful, and, if I am any judge of the female figure, I would say her body approximates the perfect classical proportions. In her dancing, her Russian training is at all times evident, for there is a charm of manner, a broad lyricism, coupled with a splendid poise that are not the common heritage of all western dancers.

It begins to sound like an overworked cliché, but again we have that rare quality in a dancer: intelligence. Once again, intelligence coupled with striking beauty. Elvin's interests include all the classics in literature, the history of art, philosophy, museums, and good Russian food.

Already Elvin has had a film career, two motion pictures to date: *Twice Upon a Time*, by the makers of *Red Shoes*, and the latest, the story of the great British soprano, Nellie Melba, the title role of which is played by Patrice Munsel.

While engaged on the second American tour of the Sadler's Wells company, Violetta met an American, whom she has recently married.

Talented far beyond average measure, Elvin is a true *ballerina* in the tradition of the Russian school and is ever alert to improve her art and to give audiences something better than her best.

NADIA NERINA

I cannot fail to pay my respects to the young Nadia Nerina, today another of the alternating *ballerinas* of the company, with full *ballerina* standing, whom I particularly

remember as one of the most delightful and ebullient soloists of the company on its two American visits.

An example of the wide British Commonwealth base of the personnel of the Sadler's Wells company, Nadia Nerina is from South Africa, where she was born in 1927. It was in Cape Town that she commenced her ballet studies and had her early career; for she was a winner of the *South African Dancing Times* Gold Medal and, when she was fifteen, was awarded the Avril Kentridge Shield in the Dance Festival at Durban. Moreover, she toured the Union of South Africa and, when nineteen, went to London to study at the Sadler's Wells School. Very soon after her arrival, she was dancing leading roles and was one of the *ballerinas* of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet.

Such was her success in Rosebery Avenue, and such the wisdom of Ninette de Valois, that, within the year, Nerina was transferred to Covent Carden. Today, as I have pointed out, she has been promoted to full *ballerina* status.

It is a well-deserved promotion, for Nerina's development has been as sure as it has been steady. I have seen her in *Le Lac des Cygnes* since her ascendancy to full *ballerina* rank, and have rejoiced in her fine technical performance, as I have in the quality of her miming—something that is equally true in Delibes' *Sylvia*.

It is characteristic of Ninette de Valois that she gives all her *ballerinas* great freedom within the organization. One is permitted to go to Denmark, Norway, Sweden. Another to La Scala, Milan. Yet another to films. An example of this desire on "Madame's" part to encourage her leading personnel to extend their experience and to prevent any spirit of isolation, is the tour Nerina recently made through her native South Africa, in company with her Sadler's Wells partner, Alexis Rassine, himself a South African.

The outstanding quality in Nerina's dancing for me is the sheer joy she brings to it, a sort of love for dancing for

its own sake. In everything she does, there is the imprint of her own strong personality, her vitality, and the genuine elegance she brings to the use of her sound technique.

ROWENA JACKSON

During the first two American tours of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, a young dancer who attracted an unusual amount of attention, particularly in the Ashton-Lambert *Les Patineurs*, for her remarkable virtuosic performance and her multiple turns, was Rowena Jackson.

Today, Rowena Jackson is the newest addition to the Sadler's Wells list of *ballerinas*.

Rowena Jackson is still another example of the width of the British Commonwealth base of the Sadler's Wells organization, having been born in Invercargil, New Zealand, on the 24th March, 1926, where her father was postmaster. Her first ballet training was at the Lawson-Powell School, in New Zealand. It was in 1947 that the young dancer joined the Sadler's Wells Ballet.

This rise of the British dancer more than fulfils the prophecy of The Swan. It was thirty years ago that Pavlova said: "English women have fine faces, graceful figures, and a real sense of poetry of dancing. They only lack training to provide the best dancers of the world." She went on: "If only more real encouragement were given in England to ballet dancers the day would not be far distant when the English dancer would prove a formidable rival to the Russians."

Now that the British dancer has been given the encouragement, the truth of Anna Pavlova's prophecy is the more striking.

As I have said, Rowena Jackson attracted attention throughout North America in *Les Patineurs*, gaining a reputation for a surpassing technical brilliance in turns.

These turns, known as *fouetées*, I have mentioned more than once. Legend has it that Jackson can do in excess of one hundred-fifty of them, non-stop. It is quite incredible.

Brilliance is one thing. Interpretation is another. When I saw Jackson in *Le Lac des Cygnes*, my admiration for her and for Ninette de Valois soared. Jackson's Swan Queen proved to me that at Sadler's Wells another *ballerina* had been born. (I nearly wrote "created"; but *ballerinas* are born, not made). As the Swan Queen she was all pathos and softness and tenderness and protectiveness; to the evil Black Swan, Odile, she brought the hard brittleness the role demands.

Rowena Jackson's future among the illustrious of the world of ballet seems assured, and I shall watch her with interest, as I am sure will audiences.

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE BALLET

While I was in London after the close of the first American tour of the Sadler's Wells Covent Garden Ballet, I paid a visit to the Sadler's Wells Theatre, the cradle of the organization.

The Sadler's Wells Theatre is in Rosebery Avenue, in the Borough of Islington, now a middle-class residential section of London, but once a county borough. For nearly three hundred years, the site of the Sadler's Wells Theatre has been used for entertainment purposes. Several theatres have stood on the site, and while the dance has always been prominent in its history, everything from tight-rope and wire-walking exhibitions to performing dogs and dance troupes has been seen there.

It was in 1683 that a certain Thomas Sadler, who was, apparently, a Highway Surveyor, lived there in what was then Clerkenwell, and found a well, actually a spring, having medicinal properties, in his garden. It soon was

regarded as a holy well, with healing powers attributed to it. Hither came the halt, the blind and the sick to be cured, and Mr. Sadler determined to commercialize his property. On his lawn he built his Musik House, a long room with a stage, orchestra and seats for those partakers of the waters who desired refreshments as well during their imbibing—and he also provided entertainment. The well is still there today, preserved under the present theatre, but is no longer used, and the theatre's water supply is from the municipal mains.

Rebuilt, largely by public subscription, the present theatre was opened in 1931, alternating opera and Shakespeare with the Old Vic, but eventually it became the exclusive home and base of the Sadler's Wells Opera Company and the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company. In 1946, when Ninette de Valois accepted the invitation of the Covent Garden Opera Trust to move the Sadler's Wells Ballet company to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, another company (actually the revival of another idea, the Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet) was established at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, and called the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet.

Here, in a fine, comfortable, modern theatre, I saw a fresh young company, with seasoned artists, first-class productions, and some first-rate dancing: a company I felt America should know.

There was an extensive repertoire of modern works by Frederick Ashton, Ninette de Valois, and the rising young John Cranko, and others. The Ashton works include *Façade*, the Ravel *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales*; *Les Rendez-Vous*, to Auber music arranged by Constant Lambert; and the charming *Capriol Suite*, to the music by Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock), inspired by Arbeau's *Orchesographie*. There were three works by Andrée Howard: *Assembly Ball*, to the Bizet Symphony in C; *Mardi Gras*; and *La Fête Etrange*. Celia Franka had an

interesting work, *Khadra*, to a Sibelius score, with charming Persian miniature setting and costumes by Honor Frost. The young South African John Cranko, who had been a member of the Covent Garden company in the first New York season, had a number of extremely interesting works, including *Sea Change*; and Ninette de Valois had revived her *The Haunted Ballroom*, to a Geoffrey Toye score, and the Lambert-Boyce *The Prospect Before Us*. There were also sound classics, including *Swan Lake*, in the second act version.

The company, under the direction of Ninette de Valois, had a fine dancer, Peggy van Praagh, as ballet mistress.

It occurred to me that, by adding new elements and reviving full length works, it would be an excellent thing to bring the company to the United States and Canada for a tour following upon that of the Covent Garden company.

I discussed the matter with Ninette de Valois and David Webster, both of whom were favorable to the idea; and, since it was impossible for the Covent Garden company to come over for a third tour at that time, they urged me to give further consideration to the possibility.

On my next visit to London, I went over matters in detail with George Chamberlain, Clerk to the Governors of Sadler's Wells, and himself the opposite number at the Sadler's Wells Theatre to David Webster at Covent Garden. I found Chamberlain equally cooperative and helpful, despite the fact he has a wide variety of interests and responsibilities, including the Sadler's Wells Opera Company, the Old Vic, and the Sadler's Wells School. We have become close friends. Following our initial conferences, we went into a series of them, in conjunction with Ursula Moreton, at the time "Madame's" assistant at Sadler's Wells, and Peggy van Praagh, the company's ballet mistress.

As a result of these discussions, it was agreed to increase

the size of the dancing personnel of the company from thirty-two to thirty-six, and to bring to North America a repertoire of fourteen ballets, including one full-length work, and to add to the roster one or two more principal dancers.

Handshakes all round sealed the bargain, and a contract was signed for a twenty-two week season for 1951-52.

It was on my return to London, in March, 1951, that I saw the *première* of the first of their new productions, *Pineapple Poll*, a ballet freely adapted from the Bab Ballad, "The Bumbeat Woman's Story," by W. S. Gilbert, with music by Arthur Sullivan, arranged by a young Australian, Charles Mackerras, a conductor at the Sadler's Wells Theatre. The scenery and costumes were by Osbert Lancaster, noted architectural historian and cartoonist, and the choreography by John Cranko, who had worked in collaboration with Lancaster and Mackerras.

The work had its first performance at the Sadler's Wells Theatre on the 13th March, 1951. The entire programme I saw that night was made up of Cranko works, and I found myself seated before a quartet of works, highly varied in content and style, all of which interested me, some, to be sure, more than others. The evening commenced with Cranko's *Sea Change*. A tragic work in a free style, a character ballet whose story was moving, but a ballet in which I never felt music and movement quite came together. The score was the orchestral piece, *En Saga*, by Jan Sibelius.

The new work, *Pineapple Poll*, was the second ballet of the evening. I was enchanted with it. I had always been a Sullivan admirer, and here were pieces from nigh on to a dozen of the Sullivan operas, woven together with great skill and brilliant orchestration into a marvelous integral whole by Charles Mackerras, a complete score in itself, as if it might have been directly composed for the ballet. I watched the dancers closely, and it was impossible for me

to imagine a finer interpretation. Elaine Fifield, in the title role, was something more than piquant; she was a genuine *ballerina*, with a fascinating sense of character, her whole performance highly intelligent. There was no "mugging," no "cuteness"; on the contrary, there were both humor and wit, and I noted she was a beautifully "clean" dancer. David Blair was a compelling officer, and his "hornpipe" almost on points literally brought the house down. Three other dancers impressed me: Sheillah O'Reilly, Stella Claire and David Poole. Osbert Lancaster's sets were masterful, both as sets and as architecture. This, I decided, was a Cranko masterpiece, and it impressed me in much the same way as some of Massine's gay ballets.

Pineapple Poll was followed by a delicate fantasy by Cranko, *Beauty and the Beast*, an extended *pas de deux*, set to some of Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite*, and beautifully danced by Patricia Miller and David Poole, who were, I learned, a pair of South Africans from the Sadler's Wells School.

The closing piece on the programme was another new ballet by Cranko, *Pastorale*, which had been given its first performance earlier in the season, just before Christmas. It was the complete antithesis of the Sullivan ballet. This was a Mozart work, his *Divertimento No. 2*, and choreography was Mozartian in feeling. It was a work of genuine charm, delicacy and real humor that revealed to me the excellence of a half-dozen of the principals of the company: Elaine Fifield and Patricia Miller, whom I have already mentioned, and young Svetlana Beriosova, the daughter of Nicholas Beriosoff, a former member of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Svetlana was born in Lithuania in 1932, and had been brought to America by her parents in 1940, when, off and on, she toured with them in the days of my management of the Massine company, and frequently appeared as the little child, Clara, in *The Nutcracker*. Now rapidly maturing, she had been seen by Ninette de Valois

in a small English ballet company, and had been taken into the Sadler's Wells organization. The three ballerinas had an equal number of impressive partners in *Pastorale*: Pirmin Trecu, David Poole and David Blair.

I decided that *Pineapple Poll*, *Pastorale* and *Beauty and the Beast* must be included in the repertoire for America, and that the first of these could be a tremendous American success, a sort of British *Gaîté Parisienne*.

In further conversations and conferences, I pressed the matter of a full-length, full-evening ballet. The work I wanted was Delibes' *Sylvia*. This is the famous ballet first given in Paris in 1876. I recognised there would be problems to be solved over the story, but the Delibes score is enchanting, delicate, essentially French; and is it not the score which Tchaikowsky himself both admired and appreciated? Moreover, a lot of the music is very well-known and loved.

We agreed upon *Sylvia* in principle, but "Freddy" Ashton, who was to stage it, was too occupied with other work, and it was at last agreed to substitute a new production of Delibes' *Coppélia*, in a full-length, uncut version, never seen in North America except in a truncated form. It was, however, difficult indeed to achieve any progress, since every one was occupied with work of one kind or another, and continuously busy. Moreover, Dame Ninette was away from London in Turkey and Jugoslavia, lecturing, teaching, and checking on the national ballet schools she has organized in each of those countries, at the request of their respective governments, with the cooperation of the British Council.

It was not until three o'clock one morning several weeks later that we all managed to get together at one time and place to have a conference on repertoire. The following day I saw another performance at the Wells, and was a bit distressed. It was clear to me that it was going to be necessary to increase the size of the company still further,

and also to be more selective in the choice and arrangement of the repertoire.

There followed a period of intense preparation on the part of the entire organization, with all of its attendant helter-skelter, and with day and night rehearsals. Meanwhile, I discussed and arranged for the production of a two-act production or version of *The Nutcracker*. The opening scene of this Tchaikowsky classic has always bothered me, chiefly because I felt it was dull and felt that, during its course, nothing really happened. There is, if the reader remembers, a rather banal Christmas party at which little Clara receives a nutcracker as a present, goes to bed without it, comes downstairs to retrieve it, and is forthwith transported to fairyland. I felt we would be better off to start with fairyland, and to omit the trying prologue. Moreover, I felt certain the inclusion of the work in this form would give added weight to the repertoire for the North American tour, since *The Nutcracker* and Tchaikowsky are always well-liked and popular, as the box-office returns have proven.

On this visit I spent three weeks in London, flying back to New York only to return to London three weeks later, to watch the company and to do what I could to speed up the preparations so that the company might be ready for the Canadian opening of the tour, the date of which was coming closer and closer with that inevitability such matters display.

The Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet and its entire organization showed really tremendous energy and application, and did everything possible to prepare themselves to follow the great American success of their sister company, something that was, admittedly, a very difficult thing to do.

Just before the company's departure for the North American continent, it gave a four-week "American Festival Season" at Sadler's Wells, consisting of the entire

repertoire to be seen on this side of the Atlantic. This season included another Cranko work I have not before mentioned. It is *Harlequin in April*, a ballet commissioned for the Festival of Britain by the Arts Council. While I cannot say that it is the sort of piece that appeals to audiences by reason of its clarity, there is no gainsaying that it is a major creation and a greatly to be commended experiment, and, withal, a successful one. The choreographic work of John Cranko, in collaboration with the composer, Richard Arnell, and the artist-designer, John Piper, it was that much desired thing in ballet: a genuine collaboration between those individuals responsible for each aspect of it.

Although there was no attempt to use it as a plot idea, for it is in no sense a "literary" work, the idea for *Harlequin in April* presumably stemmed from the following lines from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain....

I could not attempt to explain the work which, to me, consists solely of atmosphere. I liked Richard Arnell's score; but the ballet, as a ballet, is one I found myself unable to watch very many times. Perhaps the simplest answer is that it is not my favorite type of ballet. Nevertheless, the fact remains it is a work of genuine distinction and was warmly praised by discriminating critics.

The first nights of the two classical works came a week apart. *Coppélia* was the first, on the night of the 4th September. It was, indeed, a fine addition to the repertoire. There were, in the Sadler's Wells tradition, several casts; the first performance had Elaine Fifield, as Swanilda; David Blair, as Frantz; and David Poole, as Coppelius.

I was not too happy with the three settings designed by Loudon Sainthill, the Australian designer who had a great success at the Shakespeare Festival Theatre, always feeling they were not sufficiently strong either in color or design. However, as the first full-length, uncut version of the Delibes classic, it was notable, as it also was notable for the liveliness of its entire production and the zest and joy the entire company brought to it. Elaine Fifield was miraculously right as Swanilda, in her own special piquant style; David Blair was a most attractive Frantz; and David Poole was the first dignified Coppelius I had ever seen, with a highly original approach to the character. Alternate casts for *Coppélia* included Svetlana Beriosova as a quite different and very effective Swanilda, and Maryon Lane, another South African dancer of fine talent, with a personality quite different from the other two, as were Donald Britton's Frantz and Stanley Holden's Coppelius.

The 11th of September revealed the new *Nutcracker* I have mentioned. Actually, without the Prologue, it became a series of Tchaikowsky *divertissements*, staged with skill and taste under, as it happened, great pressure, by Frederick Ashton. It was a two-scene work, utilizing the Snow Flake and the Kingdom of Sweets scenes. Outstanding, to my way of thinking, were Beriosova as the Snow Queen; Fifield and Blair in the grand *pas de deux*; Maryon Lane in the Waltz of the Flowers. The most original divertissement was the *Danse Arabe*.

Following the first performance of *The Nutcracker*, I gave a large party in honor of both companies: the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden Company and that from the Sadler's Wells Theatre, at Victory Hall.

In this godspeed to the sister company, Margot Fonteyn was, as usual, very much on the job, always the good colleague, wishing Fifield and Beriosova the same success in the States and Canada as she and her colleagues of the Covent Garden company had enjoyed. From Covent

Garden also came David Webster, Louis Yudkin, and Herbert Hughes, "Freddy" Ashton, and Robert Irving, the genial and able musical director of the Ballet at Covent Garden, all to speed the sister company on its way, to give them tips on what to see, what to do, and also on what *not* to do.

The reader will, I am sure, realize what a difficult thing it was for the sister company to follow in the footsteps and the triumphant successes of the company from Covent Garden. A standard of excellence and grandeur had been set by them eclipsing any previously established standards that had existed for ballet on the North American continent.

It is a moot question just what the public and the press of America expected from the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet. For more than a year, in all publicity and promotion, with all the means at our command, we emphasized the differences between the two companies: in personnel, in principal artists, in repertoire. We also carefully pointed out the likenesses between them: the same base of operations, the same school, the same direction, the same moving spirit, the same ideals, the same purpose.

The success of the company throughout the entire breadth of the United States and Canada magnificently proved the wisdom of their coming. The list of cities played is formidable: Quebec, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Buffalo, Rochester, Cleveland, Detroit, East Lansing, Grand Rapids, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Omaha, Des Moines, Denver, Salt Lake City, Seattle, Portland, Vancouver, B.C., San Francisco, San José, Sacramento, Fresno, Bakersfield, Los Angeles, San Antonio, Waco, Houston, Dallas, Shreveport, Little Rock, Springfield, Mo., Kansas City, Chicago, St. Louis, Nashville, Knoxville, Atlanta, Birmingham, Montgomery, New Orleans, Daytona Beach, Orlando, Miami, and Miami Beach,

Columbia, Greensboro, Durham, Raleigh, Norfolk, Richmond, Washington—where for the first time ballet played in a proper theatre—Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Columbus, Toledo, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Syracuse, Troy, White Plains, Providence, Hartford, Boston, and New York City. Perhaps the most characteristic tribute to the company came from Alfred Frankenstein, the distinguished critic of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, who wrote: "This may not be the largest ballet company in the world, but it is certainly the most endearing." There is no question that the mounting demand for the quick return of the company on the part of local managers and sponsoring organizations and groups throughout the country is another proof of the warmth of their welcome when they next come.

The musical side of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet revealed the same high standards of the organization, under the direction of that splendid young British conductor, John Lanchbery. Lanchbery, a thorough and distinguished musician, not only was a fine conductor, but an extremely sensitive ballet conductor, which is not necessarily the same thing. So admired was he by the orchestra that, in San Francisco, the players presented him with a lovely gift in a token of appreciation.

During the entire association with the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet there was always the warm cooperation of George Chamberlain, and the fine executive ability and personal charm of their tour manager, Douglas Morris.

It is my sincere hope that, following the season 1953-54, they will be able to make an even more extended tour of this continent. By that time, some of the company's younger members will have become more mature, and the repertoire will have been strengthened and increased by the accretion of two years.

There is the seemingly eternal charge against ballet dancers. They are either "too young" or else "too old." The

question I am forced to ask in this connection is: What is the appropriate age for the personnel of a ballet company, for a dancer? My answer is one the reader may anticipate from previous references to the subject in this book: Artistry knows and recognizes no age on the stage. Spiritually the same is true in life itself.

It is, of course, possible that, by that time, there may be some who will refrain from referring to the members of the company as "juniors," and will realize that they are aware of the facts of life. Three years will have elapsed since their first visit. During all this time they will have been dancing regularly five or six times a week; will have behind them not only London successes, but their Edinburgh Festival and African triumphs as well.

At the close of the American Festival Season in Rosebery Avenue, the company entrained for Liverpool, there to embark in the *Empress of France*. It was a gay crossing, but less gay than had been anticipated. Originally, the *Empress* was to have carried H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth, and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, on their Royal Visit to the Dominion of Canada. The ship's owners, the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company, had constructed a specially equipped theatre on the top deck, where the company was to have given two performances for the Royal couple. H.R.H., Princess Margaret is the Honorary President of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, and there is considerable royal interest in ballet. Unfortunately, the serious illness of the King, and his operation, necessitated a last moment change of plans on the part of Princess Elizabeth and her husband, who made their crossing by plane. At the last moment before sailing, the theatre was dismantled and removed.

Two members of my staff made a long journey down the St. Lawrence, to clamber aboard the *Empress* at daybreak and to travel up the river with the company to Quebec, the opening point of the tour. I had gone on to Quebec to greet

them, as had our American staff and orchestra from New York. This was the same orchestra, the "American Sadler's Wells Orchestra," that had constituted the splendid musical side of the Covent Garden company's two American seasons. There was no cutting of corners, no sparing of expense to maintain the same high standards of production. For those with an interest in figures, it might be noted that the orchestra alone cost in excess of $10,000 weekly.

Heading the company, and remaining with it until it was well on its way, were Dame Ninette de Valois and George Chamberlain, with Peggy van Praagh as "Madame's" assistant, and ballet-mistress for the entire tour.

There were three days of concentrated rehearsal and preparation before the first performance in Quebec. Some difficulties had to be overcome, for Quebec City is not the ideal place for ballet production. Lacking a real theatre or opera house, a cinema had to be utilized, a house with a stage far from adequate for a theatre spectacle, an orchestra pit far too small for an orchestra the size of ours, and cramped quarters all around. Nevertheless, a genuine success was scored.

Following the Quebec engagement, the company moved to Ottawa by special train—this time the "Sadler's Wells Theatre Special." The night journey to Ottawa provided many of the company with their first experience of sleeping-car travel of the American-type Pullman. Passing through one of the cars on the way to my drawing-room before the train pulled out, I overheard one of the *corps de ballet* girls behind her green curtains, obviously snuggling down for the night, sigh and say: "Oh, isn't it just lovely!... Just like in the films!"

Ottawa was in its gayest attire, preparing for the Royal visit. The atmosphere was festive. The Governor General and the Viscountess Alexander of Tunis entertained the entire company at a reception at Government House, flew afterwards to Montreal officially to welcome the Royal

couple, and flew back to attend the opening performance, as the official representative of H.M. the King. Hundreds were turned away from the Ottawa performances, and a particularly gay supper was given the company after the final performance by the High Commissioner to Canada for Great Britain, Sir Hugh and Lady Clutterbuck.

Montreal, with its mixed French and English population, gave the company a wholehearted acceptance and warm enthusiasm, by no means second to that accorded the sister company.

So the tour went, breaking box-office records for ballet in many cities, including Buffalo, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Seattle, Portland, Vancouver (where, for the eight performances, there was not a seat to be had four weeks before the company's arrival), Los Angeles, the entire state of Florida, and Washington, where, as I have said, I had been successful in securing a genuine theatre, Loew's Capitol, and where, for the first time ballet was seen by the inhabitants of our national capital with all the theatrical appurtenances that ballet requires: scenery, lights, atmosphere, instead of the mausoleum-like Constitution Hall, with its bare platform backed only by a tapestry of the Founding Fathers.

So the tour went for twenty-two weeks in a long, transcontinental procession of cumulative success, with the finale in New York City. Here, because of the unavailability of the Metropolitan Opera House, since the current opera season had not been completed, it was necessary to go to a film house, the Warner Theatre, the former Strand, where Fokine and Anatole Bourman had, in the early days of movie house "presentations," staged weekly ballet performances, sowing the seeds for present-day ballet appreciation.

The Warner Theatre was far from ideal for ballet presentation, being much too long for its width, giving from the rear the effect of looking at the stage through

reversed opera glasses or binoculars. Also, from an acoustical point of view, the house left something to be desired as it affected the sound of the exceptionally large orchestra. But it was the only nearly suitable house available, and Ninette de Valois, who had returned to the States for the Boston engagement, and had remained through the early New York performances, found no fault with the house.

Among the many problems in connection with the presentation of ballet, none is more ticklish than that of determining on an opening night programme in any metropolitan center, particularly New York. Many elements have to be weighed one against the other. Should the choice be one of a selection of one-act ballets, there is the necessity for balancing classical and modern and the order in which they should be given, after they have actually been decided on. In the case of the Sadler's Wells companies, featuring, as they do, full-length works occupying an entire evening in performance, there is the eternal question: which one?

The importance of the first impression created cannot be overrated. More often than not, in arriving at a decision of this kind, we listen to the advice of everyone in the organization. All suggestions are carefully considered, and hours are spent in discussion and the exchange of ideas, and the reasons supporting those ideas.

What was good in London may quite well be fatal in New York. What New York would find an ideal opening programme might be utterly wrong for Chicago. San Francisco's highly successful and popular opening night programme well might turn out to be Los Angeles' poison.

Whatever the decision may be, it is always arrived at after long and careful thought; and, when reached, it is the best product of many minds. It usually turns out to be wrong.

If, as is often the case, the second night's programme turns out to be another story, there is the almost inevitable query on the part of the critics: "Why didn't you do this last night?" Many of them seem to be certain that there must have been personal reasons involved in the decision, some sort of private and individually colored favoritism being exercised....

I smile and agree.

The only possible answer is: "You're right.... I'm wrong."

Epilogue: Unborn Tomorrow

IN the minds of many I am almost always associated with ballet more frequently than I am with any other activity in the world of entertainment.

This simply is not true.

While it is true that more than thirty years of my life have been intensely occupied with the presentation of dance on the North American continent, these thirty-odd years of preoccupation with the dance have neither narrowed my horizon nor limited my interests. I have simultaneously carried on my avowed determination, arrived at and clarified soon after I landed as an immigrant lad from Pogar: to bring music to the masses. As an impresario I am devoted to my concert artists.

The greatest spiritual satisfaction I have had has always sprung from great music, and it has been and is my joy to present great violinists, pianists, vocalists; to extend the careers of conductors; to give artists of the theatre a wider public. All these have been and are leaders in their various fields. My eyes and ears are ever open to discover fresh

new talents in this garden for nurturing and development. At no time in the history of so-called civilization and civilized man have they been more necessary.

Throughout my career my interests have embraced the lyric and "legitimate" theatres: witness the Russian Opera Company, the German Opera Company, American operetta seasons, *revues* such as the Spanish *Cablagata*, and Katherine Dunham's Caribbean compilations, as but two of many; the Habima Theatre, in 1926, the Moscow Art Players, under Michael Tchekhoff, in 1935, as representative of the latter.

These activities have been extended, with increasing interest towards a widening of cultural exchanges with the rest of the world: witness the most recent highly successful season of the Madeleine Renault-Jean Louis Barrault repertory company from Paris. For two seasons, the distinguished British actor, director, and playwright, Emlyn Williams, under my management, has brought to life, from coast to coast, the incomparable prose of Charles Dickens in theatrical presentations that have fascinated both ear and eye, performances that stemmed from a rare combination of talent, dexterity, love, and intelligence.

I am able to say, very frankly, that I am one impresario who has managed artists in all fields.

All these things, and more, have been done. For what they are worth, they have been written in the pages of the history of the arts in our time. They have become a part of the record.

So it will be seen that only one part of my life has been concerned with ballet. To list all the fine concert artists and companies I have managed and manage would take up too much space.

It is quite within the bounds of possibility that I shall do a third book, devoted to life among the concert artists I have managed. It could, I am sure, make interesting

reading.

If art is to grow and prosper, if the eternal verities are to be preserved in these our times and into that unborn tomorrow which springs eternally from dead yesterdays, there must be no cessation of effort, no diminution of our energies. Thirty-odd years of dead yesterdays have served only to whet my appetite, to stimulate my eagerness for what lies round the corner and my desire to increase my contribution to those things that matter in the cultural and spiritual life of that unborn tomorrow wherein lies our future.

I shall try to outline some of the plans and hopes I have in mind. Before I do so, however, I should like to make what must be, however heartfelt, inadequate acknowledgement to those who have so generously helped along the way. If I were to list all of them, this chapter would become a catalogue of names. To all of those who are not mentioned, my gratitude is none the less sincere and genuine. Above all, no slight is intended. Space permits only the singling out of a few.

The year in which these lines are written has been singularly rich, rewarding, and happy: climaxed as it was by the production and release of the motion-picture film, *Tonight We Sing*, based on some experiences and aspects of my life. If the film does nothing else, I hope it succeeds in underlining the difference, in explaining the vast gulf that separates the mere booker or agent from what, for want of a better term, must be called an impresario, since it is a word that has been fully embraced into the English language. Impresario stems from the Italian *impresa*: an undertaking; indirectly it gave birth to that now archaic English word “emprise,” literally a chivalrous enterprise. I can only regard the discovery, promotion, presentation of talent, the financing of it, the risk-taking, as the “emprise” of an “impresario.”

The presentation of this film has been accompanied by

tributes and honors for which I am deeply and humbly grateful and which I cherish and respect beyond my ability to express.

None of these heights could have been scaled, none of these successes attained, without the help, encouragement, and personal sacrifice of my beloved wife, Emma. Her wise counsel in music, literature, theatre, and the dance all stem from her deep knowledge as a lady of culture, an artist and a musician, and from her studies at the Leningrad Conservatory, her rich experience in the world's cultural activities. Her sacrifices are those great ones of the patient, understanding wife, who, through the years, has had to endure, and has endured without complaint, the loneliness of days and nights on end alone, when my activities have taken me on frequent long trips about the world at a moment's notice, to the complete disruption of any normal family life.

To my wife also goes my grateful thanks for restraining me from undertakings doomed in advance to failure, as well as for encouraging me in my determination to venture into pastures new and untried.

At the head of that staff of loyal associates which carries on the multifarious details of the organization on which depends the fulfillment of much of what has been recited in these pages, is one to whom my deepest thanks are due. She is that faithful and indispensable companion of failures and successes, Mae Frohman.

She is known intimately to all in this world of music and dance. Without her aid I could not have been what I am today. It is impossible for me to give the reader any real idea of the sacrifices she has made for the success of the enterprises this book records: the sleepless nights and days; the readiness, at an instant's notice, to depart for any part of the world to "trouble-shoot," to make arrangements, to settle disputes, to keep the wheels in motion when matters have come to a dead center.

The devoted staff I have mentioned, and on whom I rely much more than they realize, receives, as is its due, my deep gratitude and appreciation. I cannot fail to thank my daughter Ruth for her understanding, her sympathy, her spiritual support. With all the changes in her personal life and with her own problems, there has never been a word of complaint. Never has she added her hardships to mine. It has been her invariable custom to present her happiest side to me: to comfort, to understand. In her and my two lovely grandchildren, I find a comfort not awarded every traveller through this tortuous vale, and I want to extend my sincere gratitude to her.

It would not be possible for any one to have attained these successes without the very great help of others. In rendering my gratitude to my staff, I must point out that this applies not only to those who are a part of my organization as these lines are written, but to those who have been associated with me in the past, in the long, upward struggle. We are still friends, and my gratitude to them and my admiration for them is unbounded.

During the many years covered in this account, my old friend and colleague, Marks Levine, and I have shared one roof businesswise, and one world spiritually and artistically. Without his warm friendship, his subtle understanding, his wholehearted cooperation, and his rare sense of humor, together with the help of his colleagues, and that of O. O. Bottorf and his colleagues, many of the successes of a lifetime might not have been accomplished.

At this point in my life, I look with amazement at the record of an immigrant lad from Pogar, arriving here practically penniless, and ask myself: where in the world could this have happened save here? My profoundest thanks go to this adopted country which has done so much for me. Daily I breathe the prayer: “God bless this country!”

In all that has been done and accomplished, and with

special reference to all of these wide-flung ballet tours, none of it could have been done singlehanded. In nearly every country and in nearly every important city there is a person who is materially responsible for the success of the local engagement. Local engagements cumulatively make or break a tour.

This person is the local manager: that local resident who is often the cultural mentor of the community of which he is an important member. It is he who makes it possible for the members of his community to hear the leading concert artists and musical organizations and to see and enjoy ballet at its best. In these days of increasing encroachment on the part of mechanical, push-button entertainment, it is the local manager to whom the public must look for the preservation of the "live" culture: the singer, the instrumentalist, the actor, the dancer, the painter, the orchestra.

In the early days of my managerial activities, when I did not have an office of my own, merely desk space in the corner of a room in the Chandler Building, in West Forty-Second Street, I shall never forget the "daddy" of all the local managers, the late L. H. Behymer, of Los Angeles, who traveled three thousand miles just to see what sort of creature it was, this youngster who was bringing music to the masses at the old New York Hippodrome. A life-long bond was formed between us, and "Bee" and his hard-working wife, throughout their long and honorable careers as purveyors of the finest in musical and dance art to the Southwest, remained my loyal and devoted friends.

This applies equally to all those workers in the vineyard, from East to West, from North to South, in Europe and South America. It is the friendly, personal cooperation of the local managers that helps make it possible to present so successfully artists and companies across the continent and the world we know. It is my very great pleasure each year, at the close of their annual meetings in New York, to meet

them, rub shoulders, clasp hands, and discuss mutual problems.

The music and ballet lovers of the United States and Canada owe these people a debt; and when readers across the breadth of this great continent watch these folk—men and women, often helped out by their wives, their husbands, their children, striving to provide the finest available in the music and dance arts for their respective communities—do not imagine that they are necessarily accumulating wealth by their activities. More often than not, they work late and long for an idea and an ideal for very little material gain.

Remember, if you will, that it is the industrious and enlightened local manager, the college dean, the theatre manager, the public-spirited women's clubs and philanthropic organizations that make your music and dance possible.

In the arts as in life, amidst the blaze of noon there are watchers for the dawn, awaiting the unborn tomorrow. I am of them. This book may, conceivably, have something of historical value in portraying events and persons, things and colleagues who have been, at one and the same time, motivating factors in the development and growth and appreciation of the dance in our sector of the western world. Though it has dealt, for the most part, with an era that is receding, I have tried not to look back either with nostalgia or regret. At the same time, I have tried not to view the era through rosy spectacles. As for tomorrow, I am optimistic. Without an ingrained and deeply rooted optimism much of what this book records could not have come to pass. Despite the lucubrations of certain Cassandras, I find myself unable to share their pessimism for the fate of culture in our troubled times. We shall have our ups and downs, as we have had throughout the history of man.

I hold stubbornly to the tenet that man cannot live by

bread alone, and that those things of the spirit, those joys that delight the heart and mind and soul of man, are indestructible. On the other hand, it is by no means an easy trick to preserve them. While I agree with Ecclesiastes that "the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth," I nevertheless insist that it is the supreme task of those who would profess or attain unto wisdom to exert their last ounce of strength to foster, preserve, and encourage the widest possible dissemination of the cultural heritage we possess.

As these closing pages are written, the Sadler's Wells Ballet from the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, is poised on the threshold of its third North American visit, with a larger company and a more varied repertoire than ever before. The latter, in addition to works I have noted in these pages, includes the new Coronation ballet, *Homage to the Queen*, staged by Frederick Ashton, to a specially commissioned score by the young English composer, Malcolm Arnold, with setting and costumes by Oliver Messel; *The Shadow*, with choreography by John Cranko, scenery and costumes by John Piper, and the music is Erno von Dohnanyi's *Suite in F Sharp Minor*, which had its first performance at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on 3rd March, 1953. Included, of course, is the new full-length production of *Le Lac des Cygnes*, with an entirely new production by Leslie Hurry; *The Sleeping Beauty*; *Sylvia*; *Giselle*, in an entirely new setting by James Bailey; *Les Patineurs*; a revival of Ashton's *Don Juan*; and Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*, staged by Ashton, making use of the full choral score for the first time in ballet in America.

Yet another impending dance venture and yet an additional aspect of dance pioneering will be the first trans-continental tour of the Agnes de Mille Dance Theatre. This is a project that has been in my mind for more than a decade: the creation of an American dance theatre, with

this country's most outstanding dance director at its head. For years I have been an admirer of Agnes de Mille and the work she has done for ballet in America, and for the native dance and dancer. In this, as in all my activities, I have not solicited funds nor sought investors.

It is the first major organization to be established completely under my aegis, for which I have taken sole responsibility, financially and productionwise. It has long been my dream to form a veritable American dance company, one which could exhibit the qualities which make our native dancers unique: joy in sheer movement, wit, exuberance, a sharp sense of drama.

It was in 1948 that Agnes and I began the long series of discussions directed toward the creation of a completely new and "different" company, one that would place equal accents on "Dance" and "Theatre."

For the new company Agnes has devised a repertoire ranging from the story of an Eighteenth-Century philanderer through Degas-inspired comments on the Romantic Era, to scenes from *Paint Your Wagon*, and *Brigadoon*. Utilizing spoken dialogue and song, the whole venture moves towards something new under the sun—both in Dance and in Theatre.

The settings and costumes have been designed and created by Peggy Clark and Motley; with the orchestrations and musical arrangements by Trudi Rittman.

With the new organization, Agnes will have freedom to experiment in what may well turn out to be a new form of dance entertainment, setting a group of theatre dances both balletic and otherwise, with her own personalized type of dance movement, and a group of ballad singers, all in a distinctly native idiom.

In New York City, on the 15th January, 1954, I plan to inaugurate a trans-continental tour of the Roland Petit Ballet Company, from Paris, with new creations, and the

quite extraordinary Colette Marchand, as his chief *ballerina*.

In February, 1954, I shall extend my international dance activities to Japan, when I shall bring that nation's leading dance organization, the Japanese Dancers and Musicians, for their first American tour. With this fine group of artists, I shall be able to present America for the first time with a native art product of the late Seventeenth century that is the theatre of the commoner, stemming from Kabuki, meaning "song-dance-skill."

The autumn of 1954 will see a still further extension of my activities, with the introduction of the first full Spanish ballet to be seen on the North American continent.

We have long been accustomed to the Spanish dancer and the dance concerts of distinguished Iberian artists; but never before have Americans been exposed to Spanish ballet in its full panoply, with a large and numerous company, complete with scenery, costumes, and a large orchestra. It has long been my dream to present such an organization.

At last it has been realized, when I shall send from coast to coast the Antonio Ballet Espagnol, which I saw and greatly admired on my visit to Granada in the summer of 1953.

On the purely musical side, there is a truly remarkable chamber ensemble from Italy, which will also highlight the season of 1954. It is I Musici, an ensemble of twelve players, ranging through the string family, including the ancient *viola di gamba*, and sustained by the *cymbalon*; and specializing in early Italian music, for the greater part. This organization has the high and warm recommendation of Arturo Toscanini, who vastly admires them and their work.

I have reserved, in the manner of the host holding back the most delectable items of a feast until the last, two

announcements as climactic.

I have concluded arrangements with England's Old Vic to present on the North American continent their superlative new production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, staged by Michael Benthall, with really magnificent settings and costumes by James Bailey.

The cast will include Robert Helpmann, as Oberon, and Moira Shearer, as Titania, with outstanding and distinguished British actors in the other roles; and, utilizing the full Mendelssohn score, the production will have a ballet of forty, choreographed by Robert Helpmann.

The production will be seen at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, in mid-September, 1954, for a season, to be followed by a short tour of the leading cities of the United States and Canada.

This will, I feel, be one of the most significant artistic productions to be revealed across the continent since the days of Max Reinhardt's *The Miracle*. It gives me great personal satisfaction to be able to offer this first of the new productions of London's famous Old Vic.

The other choice tid-bit to which I feel American dance lovers will look forward with keen anticipation is the coast-to-coast tour of London's Festival Ballet with Toumanova as guest star.

The Festival Ballet was founded by Anton Dolin for the British Festival, under the immediate patronage of H.H. Princess Marie Louise. Dr. Julian Braunsweg is its managing director.

It has grown steadily in stature and is today one of Europe's best known ballet companies. Under the artistic direction of Anton Dolin it has appeared with marked success for several seasons at the Royal Festival Hall, London; has toured Britain, all western Europe; and, in the spring of 1953, gave a highly successful two weeks'

season in Montreal and Toronto, where it received as high critical approval as ever accorded any ballet company in Canada.

There is a company of eighty, and a repertoire of evenly balanced classics and modern creations, including, among others, the following: a full-length *Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, *Petrouchka*, *Swan Lake*, (*Act I*), *Le Beau Danube*, *Schéhérazade*, *Symphonic Impressions*, *Pas de Quatre*, *Bolero*, *Black Swan*, *Vision of Marguerite*, *Symphony for Fun*, *Pantomime Harlequinade*, *Don Quixote*, *Les Sylphides*, *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *Prince Igor*, *Concerto Grosso*.

This international exchange of ballet companies is one of the bulwarks of mutual understanding and sympathy. It is a source of deep gratification to me that I have been instrumental in bringing the companies of the Sadler's Wells organization, the Ballet of the Paris Opera, and others to North America, as it is that I have been able to be of service in arranging for the two visits of the New York City Ballet to London. It is through the medium of such exchanges, presenting no language barriers, but offering beauty as a common bond, that we are able to bridge those hideous chasms so often caused by misunderstood and, too often, unwise and thoughtlessly chosen words.

In unborn tomorrows I hope to extend these exchanges to include not only Europe, but our sister republics to the South, and the Far East, with whom now, more than ever, cultural rapport is necessary. We are now reaching a time in America when artistic achievement has become something more than casual entertainment, although, in my opinion, artistic endeavor must never lose sight of the fact that entertainment there must be if that public so necessary to the well-being of any art is not to be alienated. The role of art and the artist is, through entertainment, to stimulate and, through the creative spirit, to help the audience renew its faith and courage in beauty, in universal ideals, in love,

in a richer and fuller imaginative life. Then, and only then, can the audience rise above the mundane, the mediocre, the monotonous.

During the thirty-odd years I have labored on the American musical and balletic scene, I have seen a growth of interest and appreciation that has been little short of phenomenal. Yet I note, with deep regret, that today the insecurities of living for art and the artist have by no means lessened. Truth hinges solely on the harvest, and how may that harvest be garnered with no security and no roof?

More than once in the pages of this book I have underlined and lamented the passing of the great, generous Maecenas, the disappearance, through causes that require no reiteration, of such figures as Otto H. Kahn, whose open-hearted and open-pursed generosity contributed so inestimably to the lyric and balletic art of dead yesterday. I have detailed at some length the government support provided for the arts by our financially less fortunate cousins of Great Britain, South America, and Europe. The list of European countries favoring the arts could be extended into a lengthy catalogue of nations ranging from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean, on both sides of that unhappy screen, the "Iron Curtain."

Here in the United States, the situation becomes steadily grimmer. Almost every artistic enterprise worth its salt and scene painter, its bread and choreographer, its meat and conductor, is in the perpetual necessity of sitting on the pavement against the wall, hat in hand, chanting the pitiful wail: "Alms, for the love of Art." Vast quantities of words are uttered, copious tears of regret are shed about and over this condition at art forums, expensive cocktail parties, and on the high stools of soda fountains. A great deal is said, but very little is done.

The answer, in my opinion, will not be found until the little voices of the soda fountain, the forums, the cocktail

parties, unite into one superbly unanimous chorus and demand a government subsidy for the arts. I am not so foolish as to insist that government subsidy is the complete and final cure for all the ills to which the delicate body is heir; but it can provide, in a great national theatre, a roof for the creative and performing artists of ballet, opera, theatre, and music. More than anything else, the American ballet artist needs a roof, under which to live, to create, and hold his being in security. Such a step would be the only positive one in the right direction.

It is only through governmentally subsidized theatres, or one type of subsidy or another, that ballet, opera, music, the legitimate theatre may become a living and vital force in the everyday life of the American people, may belong to the masses, instead of being merely a place of entertainment for a relatively small section of our population. We have before us the example of the success of government subsidy in the British Arts Council and in the subsidized theatres of other European countries. How can we profit by these examples?

A national opera house is the first step. Such a house should not, in my opinion, be in New York. It should, because of the size of the country, be much more centrally situated than in our Eastern metropolis. Since the area of Great Britain is so much smaller than the United States, our planning of government subsidy would, of necessity, be on a much larger scale. In many of the countries where ballet and music have the benefit of government subsidy, government ownership of industry is an accepted practice. Yet the government theatre subsidy is managed without stifling private enterprise.

I am quite aware that securing a national subsidy for the arts in this country will be a long, difficult and painful process. It will require, before all else, a campaign of education. We must have an increasing world-consciousness, a better understanding of our fellow

humans. We must develop a nation of well-educated and, above all, thinking people, who will do everything in their power to make a full-rounded life available to every man and woman in the nation.

Only during the days of the WPA, in the ’30’s, has the United States government ever evinced any particular interest in the arts. I cannot hope that the present materialistic attitude of our lawmakers will cause them to look with much favor on things of the spirit. The attitude of our government towards the arts is noteworthy only for its complete lack of interest in them or care for them. In the arts, and notably in the ballet, it has the most formidable means and potential material for cultural propaganda. The stubbornness with which it insists upon ignoring the only aspect of American cultural life that would really impress and influence Europe is something that is, to me, incredible. It is a rather sad picture. How long will it take us in our educational process to understand that in the unborn tomorrow we, as a nation, will be remembered only through our art rather than through our materialism and our gadgets?

Meanwhile, excellent and highly valuable assistance is being given by such Foundations as the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. The latter’s contribution to the New York City Center has been of inestimable help to that organization.

Certain municipalities, through such groups as the San Francisco Art Commission, financed on the basis of four mills on the dollar from the city tax revenues, the Art Commission of the County of Los Angeles, the City of Philadelphia, among others, are making generous and valuable contributions to the musical and artistic life of their communities.

There are still to be mentioned those loyal and generous friends of the arts who have contributed so splendidly to the appeals of orchestras throughout the country, of the

Metropolitan Opera Company, and the New York City Center.

But this, I fear, is not enough. The genuinely unfortunate aspect of the overall situation is that we are so pitifully unable to supply an outlet for our own extraordinary talent. For example, at an audition I attended in Milan, out of the twenty-eight singers heard, sixteen of them were Americans. This is but further evidence that our American talent is still forced to go to Europe to expand, to develop, and to exhibit their talents; in short, to get a hearing.

In Italy today, with a population of approximately 48,000,000, there are now some seventy-two full-fledged opera companies.

In pre-war Germany with an approximate population of 70,000,000, there were one hundred forty-two opera houses, all either municipally or nationally subsidized.

Any plan for government subsidy of the arts must be a carefully thought out and extensive one. It should start with a roof, beginning slowly and expanding gradually, until, from beneath that roof-tree, companies and organizations would deploy throughout the entire country and, eventually, the world. Eventually, in addition to ballet, music, opera, and theatre, it should embrace all the creative arts. Education in the arts must be included in the subsidization, so that the teacher, the instructor, the professor may be regarded as equal in importance to doctors, lawyers, engineers, and politicians, instead of being regarded as failures, as they so often regrettably are.

Until the unborn tomorrow dawns when we can find leaders whose understanding of these things is not drowned out by the thunder of material prosperity and the noise of jostling humanity, leaders with the vision and the foresight to see the benefit to the country and the world from this kind of thing, and who, in addition to understanding and knowing these things, possess the

necessary courage and the indispensable stamina to see things through, we shall have to continue to fight the fight, to grasp any friendly hand, and, I fear, continue to watch the sorry spectacle of the arts squatting in the market-place, basket in lap, begging for alms for beauty.

So long as I am spared, I shall never cease to present the best in all the arts, so that the great public may have them to enjoy and cherish; so that the artists may be helped to attain some degree of that security they so richly deserve, against that day when an enlightened nation can provide them a home and the security that goes with it.

With all those who are of it, and all those whose lives are made a little less onerous, a little more tolerable, to whom it brings glimpses of a brighter unborn tomorrow, I repeat my united hurrah: Three Cheers for Good Ballet!

INDEX

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, Y, Z

Abbey Theatre (Dublin), 217
Academy of Music (Brooklyn), 81
Adam, Adolphe, 246
Adelphi Theatre (New York), 158
Aglae or The Pupil of Love, 157
Aldrich, Richard, 23
Alegrias, 48, 55, 56
Aleko, 156, 172
Alexander of Tunis, Viscount and Viscountess, 307
Alhambra Theatre (London), 111
Alice in Wonderland, 318
Alicia Markova, Her Life and Art, 205
All Star Imperial Russian Ballet, 80, 87
Alonso, Alicia, 152
Ambassador (a publication), 231
Ambassador Hotel (Los Angeles), 249
Amberg, George, 112
American Ballet, 136, 158
American Federation of Musicians, 62
Amoun and Berenice, 102
André, Grand Duke of Russia, 69
Andreu, Mariano, 129, 135
Andreyev, Leonide, 285
Antic, The, 76
Antiche Danze ed Arie, 150
Antonio Ballet Espagnol, 317
Aphrodite, 93
Apollon Musagète, 158, 172
Apparitions, 236, 239, 270, 273
Apres-Midi d'un Faune, L' (*Afternoon of a Faun*), 78, 115
Arbeau, Thoinot, 298
Archives Internationales de la Danse, 49
Arensky, Anton, 102, 121
Argentina, 47
Argentinita (Encarnacion Lopez), 53-58, 135, 139, 204

Argyle, Pearl, 78
Armstrong, John, 239
Arnell, Richard, 302, 303
Arnold, Malcolm, 315
Art Commission of the County of Los Angeles, 321
Asafieff, Boris, 96, 98
Ashcroft, Peggy, 222
Ashton, Frederick, 74, 78, 79, 136, 137, 141, 201, 220, 230, 237, 238, 239, 240, 246, 247, 254, 258, 264, 268-272, 277, 278, 279, 283, 285, 290, 292, 296, 298, 301, 303, 304, 315, 316
Astafieva, Seraphine, 200, 201, 255
Atlee, Clement, 221
Aubade, 129
Aubade Heroique, 274, 278
Assembly Ball, 298
Auber, Francois, 270, 273, 298
Auditorium Theatre (Chicago), 114
Auric, Georges, 121, 122
Aurora's Wedding, 121, 152
Avril Kentridge Medal, 295
Aveline, Albert, 215
Azayae, 19

Bacchanale, 135
Bach, Johann Sebastian, 129, 270, 278
Bahiana, 60
Bailey, James, 246, 316, 317
Baiser de la Fée (*The Fairy's Kiss*), 136
Bakst, Leon, 76, 118, 123
Bal, Le (*The Ball*), 122
Balabile, 273
Balakireff, Mily, 94, 121
Balanchine, George (Georgi Balanchivadze), 65, 70, 107, 110, 121, 129, 136, 140, 142, 143, 157, 158, 161, 168, 172, 201, 215

Baldina, Maria, 85
Balieff, Nikita, 49, 111
Ballet and Opera Russe de Paris, 108, 109
Ballet Associates in America, 174, 195
Ballet Benevolent Fund, 277
Ballet Club (London), 78, 79, 106, 201, 217, 269
Ballet Go-Round, 205
Ballet Imperial, 256
Ballet Intime, 90
Ballet Mecanique, 172
Ballet Rambert, 79, 217, 225, 226, 269
Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, 59, 103, 107, 110, 125, 129, 130, 134, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, 143, 145, 150, 151, 153, 154, 157, 168, 200, 201, 202, 204, 206, 269, 301
Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo (special reference; de Basil), 105, 106, 116
Ballets 1933, Les, 110, 158, 168
Ballet Theatre Foundation, 179
Ballet Theatre (known in Europe as "American National Ballet Theatre"), 81, 90, 103, 146, 147-182, 183, 184, 190, 193, 202, 204, 206, 225, 246
Balustrade, 142
Bandbox Theatre (New York), 76
Banks, Margaret, 184
Barbara, 50
Barbiroli, Sir John, 226
Bardin, Micheline, 215
Baronova, Irina, 70, 107, 111, 112, 114, 123, 130, 132, 140, 142, 143, 144, 151, 152, 153, 156, 157, 168, 195
Barrault, Jean Louis, 311
Barrelhouse, 60
Barrientos, Maria, 95
Bartok, Bela, 175
Baylis, Lilian, 218
Beaton, Cecil, 122, 195, 239
Beau Danube, Le, 110, 112, 119, 122, 132, 136, 140, 318

Beaumont, Count Etienne de, 122
Beauty and the Beast, 300, 301
Beecham, Sir Thomas, 159, 160, 221
Beethoven, Ludwig von, 29, 30, 96, 98, 135
Begitchev, 237
Behymer, Mr. and Mrs. L. H., 314
Belasco, David, 97
Belle Hélene, La, 157
Belle, James Cleveland, 231, 243
Bellini, Vincenzo, 157
Belmont, Mrs. August, 230
Beloved One, The, 153, 172
Benavente, Jacinto, 57
Bennett, Robert Russell, 135
Benois, Alexandre, 71, 118, 123, 142, 203
Benois, Nadia, 79
Benthall, Michael, 239, 317
Bérard, Christian, 135
Berlioz, Hector, 115, 122, 195, 239
Beriosoff, Nicholas, 301
Beriosova, Svetlana, 301, 303, 304
Berman, Eugene, 137
Berners, Lord, 240, 270, 273
Bernhardt, Sarah, 81, 195
Bernstein, Leonard, 161
Bielsky, V., 95
Billy Budd, 281
Billy the Kid, 150, 156
Bizet, Georges, 122, 215, 298
Black Ritual, 172
Black Swan, 318
Blair, David, 300, 301, 303, 304
Blake, William, 218, 238
Blareau, Richard, 215
Bliss, Sir Arthur, 239, 240, 241, 279, 281, 284
Bloch, Mrs. (Manager Loie Fuller), 37, 38, 39

Blonde Marie, The, 50
Blot, Robert, 215
Bluebeard, 103, 153, 171
Blum, Léon, 108
Blum, René, 103, 106, 107, 108, 110, 114, 116, 125, 128, 129, 136, 140, 216
Boccherini, Luigi, 122
Bogatyri, 135
Bolero, 318
Bolm, Adolph, 74, 88-91, 94, 95, 96, 105, 149, 157, 164, 172, 173, 175, 176
Bolshoi Theatre (Moscow), 67, 80, 85, 87, 228, 294
Boosey and Hawkes, 211, 220, 221, 224, 229, 280
Boretzky-Kasadevich, Vadim, 168
Borodin, Alexander, 94, 122
Borodin, George, 230
Boston Opera House, 260
Boston Public Library, 129
Boston Symphony Orchestra, 166
Bottord, O. O., 313
Bouchene, Dmitri, 129
Bouchenet, Mme., 196
Boult, Sir Adrian, 226
Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Le, 110, 121
Bourman, Anatole, 308
Boutique Fantasque, La, 119, 122, 132, 136, 172
Bowman, Patricia, 147
Boyce, William, 298
Boyd Neel String Orchestra, 226
Boyer, Lucienne, 49
Bozzini, Max, 215
Brae, June, 241
Brahms, Johannes, 115, 122
Braunsweg, Julian, 213, 318
Breinin, Raymond, 162
Brigadoon, 316

British Arts Council, 77, 211, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 236, 287, 288, 302, 320
British Broadcasting Corporation, 227, 276
British Council, 220, 221, 225, 226, 227, 236, 259, 261, 267, 301
British Film Institute, 221
British Ministry of Information, 287
Britten, Benjamin, 222, 274, 281
Britton, Donald, 303
Brown, John, 98
Bruce, Henry, 73
Bulerias, 48, 55
Bulgakoff, Alexander, 76
Burleske, 160
Burra, Edward, 239, 247
Butsova, Hilda, 80, 105

Cabin in the Sky, 59
Cablagata, 311
Cadogan, Sir Alexander, 234
Cain and Abel, 194
Cachucha, 18
Camille, 195
Carib Song (*Caribbean Rhapsody*), 63
Carmela, 48, 49
Carmen, 218
Carmita, 48, 49
Carnaval, 102, 103, 121, 128, 152, 171, 219, 255
Camargo Society (London), 78, 106, 201, 217, 218, 221, 228, 238, 269, 273, 287
Capriccio Espagnol, 56, 98, 135, 172
Capriccioso, 172
Capriol Suite, 269, 298
Carnegie Hall (New York), 33
Caruso, Enrico, 18, 81, 101
Cassandre, 129

Castellanos, Julio, 155
Chagall, Marc, 156
Castle Garden (New York), 16
Castor and Pollux, 215
Caton, Edward, 194
Caucasian Dances, 98
Caucasian Sketches, 98
Cecchetti, Enrico, 70, 78, 172
Celli, Vincenzo, 198
C. E. M. A., 222, 223, 224, 226
Cendrillon, 103, 141
Center Theater (New York), 148, 149
Century of Progress Exhibition, 59
Century Theatre (New York), 32, 93, 102, 196
Chabrier, Emanuel, 121, 273
Chaliapine, Feodor, 17, 25, 26, 27, 242
Chaliapine, Lydia, 49
Chaliapine, "Masha," 26, 27
Chamberlain, George, 299, 305, 306
Chansons Populaires, 55
Chaplin, Charles, 50, 249
Chappell, William, 78, 79
Charisse, Cyd, 249
Chauve Souris, 211
Chase, Lucia, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 154, 157, 164, 166, 167, 170, 173, 174, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 202
Chase, William ("Bill"), 44, 45
Cimarosiana, 122
Charnley, Michael, 79
Chateau Frontenac (Quebec), 259, 262
Chatte, La, 201
Chauviré, Yvette, 215
Checkmate, 241, 246, 254, 284
Chesterton, G. K., 275
Chicago Allied Arts, 90, 105
Chicago Civic Opera Company, 86

Chicago *Daily News*, 185
Chicago Opera Company, 90, 149
Chicago Opera House, 59, 151, 184, 185, 253
Chicago Public Library, 286
Chirico, 122, 142
Chopin, Frederic, 97, 121, 195
Choreartium, 115, 122
Christ's Hospital (London), 273
Christmas, 255
Church of St. Bartholomew the Great (London), 278, 279
Church of St. Martin's in-the-Fields (London), 278
Churchill, John, 278
Churchill, Sir Winston, 275
Cinderella, 141, 236, 237, 256, 269, 270, 271, 283, 290
City of Philadelphia, 321
Claire, Stella, 300
Clark, Peggy, 316
Clustine, Ivan, 21, 24
Clutterbuck, Sir Hugh and Lady, 307
Cléopatre 76, 102, 121
Cleveland Institute, 33
Cobos, Antonio, 194
Colon Theatre (Buenos Aires), 273
Colonel de Basil's Ballet Russe, 116
Colt, Alvin, 164, 198
Comus, 273
Concerto for Orchestra, 175
Concerto Grosso, 318
Concurrence, La, 110, 112, 121
Condon, Natalia, 198
Conrad, Karen, 152
Constantia, 190, 194
Constitution Hall (Washington, D.C.), 256, 307
Continental Revue, 49
Copeland, George, 32
Copland, Aaron, 150, 156

Copley, Richard, 44
Copley-Plaza Hotel (Boston), 129
Coppélia, 19, 87, 96, 129, 136, 156, 172, 173, 219, 229, 256, 301, 303
Coq d'Or, Le, 90, 94, 95, 96, 98, 103, 115, 121, 135, 140
Coralli, Jean, 246
Cotillon, Le, 110, 121, 142, 168
Counterfeiters, The, 115
Council for the Education of H. M. Forces, 287
Cotten, Joseph, 249
Covent Garden Ballet Russe, 116
Covent Garden Opera Company, 223, 224, 227
Covent Garden Opera Syndicate, 223
Covent Garden Opera Trust, 208, 211, 223, 224, 225, 261, 280, 298
Coward, Noel, 222
Cracovienne, La, 18
Craig, Gordon, 31, 36
Cranko, John, 298, 299, 300, 302, 315
Cravath, Paul D., 112
Creation du Monde, La, 218
Cripps, Sir Stafford, 221, 256
Crowninshield, Frank, 33
Crystal Palace, The, 215

Dagestanskaya Lesginka, 102
Daily Telegraph (London), 287
Dalcroze, Jacques, 39, 77, 288
Dali, Salvador, 57, 135
Damnation of Faust, The, 195, 198
Damrosch, Walter, 31
Dancing Times (London), 287
Dandré, Victor, 24, 132, 141
Danilova, Alexandra, 59, 67, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 122, 128, 129, 201
Dance of the Sylphs, 195

Danse de Feu, 38
Danse, La, 87
Danses Sacré et Profane, 142
Danses Slaves et Tsiganes, 122
Danses Tziganes, 98
Dante Sonata, 246, 247, 256, 270, 273
Danton, Henry, 240
Daphnis and Chloe, 316
D'après une lecture de Dante, 247
Dargomijsky, Alexander, 122
Dark Elegies, 172
Darrington Hall, 52
Daughter of Pharaoh, 85
Day in a Southern Port, A, 270
Days of Glory, 168
Death and the Maiden, 171
Deaths and Entrances, 65
de Basil, Colonel W., 103, 105, 107, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 148, 151, 158, 160, 165, 168, 173, 183, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 204, 244, 289
Debussy, Claude, 142
de Cuevas, Marquessa, 184, 191
de Cuevas, Marquis Georges, 57, 149, 168, 190, 191, 192, 194, 195, 196
Degas, 316
de la Fontaine, Jean, 215
Delarova, Eugenia, 111, 114, 123, 129
De La Warr, Lord, 222
Delibes, Léo, 19, 74, 96, 129, 136, 156, 215, 220, 296, 301, 303
Delius, Frederick, 158, 159, 270
dello Joio, Norman, 164
de Maré, Rolf, 49

de Mille, Agnes, 59, 85, 149, 150, 160, 161, 172, 174, 316
de Mille, Cecil B., 85
de Mille Dance Theatre, Agnes, 316
de Molas, Nicolas, 153
Denham, Sergei I., 125, 126, 127, 128
129, 137,143, 144, 157
de Pachmann, Vladimir, 81
Derain, André, 123, 129
de Valois, Ninette, 78, 90, 106, 201, 210, 212, 217, 218,
220, 222, 224, 228, 229, 230, 232, 233, 234, 238, 239, 241,
243, 246, 247, 248, 251, 252, 253, 255, 262, 264, 268, 269,
273, 277, 278, 279, 280, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 292, 293,
296, 297, 298, 299, 301, 306, 308
Devil's Holiday, 136, 137, 269
Diaghileff Ballets Russes, 40, 43, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77,
78, 86, 89, 105, 200, 201, 203, 204, 217, 255, 269
Diaghileff, Serge, 23, 40, 53, 67, 69, 71, 72, 74, 76, 77, 78,
80, 82, 85, 89, 90, 93, 94, 95, 102, 105, 106, 107, 110, 111,
112, 117, 118, 120, 121, 122, 127, 128, 130, 132, 137, 142,
145, 161, 172, 173, 175, 186, 197, 200, 201, 203, 204, 205,
217, 221, 273, 275, 287, 289
Dickens, Charles, 311
d'Indy, Vincent, 215
Dior, Christian, 258
Dillingham, Charles B., 12, 19, 20, 102
Dim Lustre, 160, 172
Divertissement, 205
Divertissement (Tchaikowsky), 215
Dixieland Band, 59
Doboujinsky, Mstislav, 122, 129, 155, 160
Dohnanyi, Erno von, 315
Dolin, Anton, 53, 57, 84, 90, 103, 142, 149, 150, 151, 152,
153, 157, 160, 161, 168, 172, 174, 175, 184, 195, 198, 199,
200, 201, 202, 203, 204-207, 218, 219, 238, 255, 283, 318
Dollar, William, 194
Don Domingo, 155, 172

Don Juan, 103, 129, 316
Don Quixote, 86, 294, 318
Don Quixote (Gerhard), 246, 247
Dorati, Antal, 114, 122, 141, 142, 151, 153, 157, 159, 167, 178
Dostoevsky, 36
Drake Hotel (Chicago), 285, 286
Drury Lane Theatre (Royal) (London), 133, 134, 136, 201
Dubrowska, Felia, 142
Dufy, Raoul, 122
Dukas, Paul, 215
Dukelsky, Vladimir (Vernon Duke), 115, 122
Dukes, Ashley, 78
Dumas, Alexandre, 195, 198
Duncan, Augustin, 29, 32
Duncan, Elizabeth, 29
Duncan, Isadora, 28-36, 37, 40, 45, 47, 64, 65, 93
Duncan, Raymond, 29
Dunham, Katherine, 58-63, 139, 311
Duse, Eleanora, 81
Dushkin, Samuel, 142
Dvorak, Antonin, 152

Edgeworth, Jane, 278
Edinburgh Festival, 278, 306
Educational Ballets, Ltd., 116, 132, 138
Eglevsky, André, 111, 114, 123, 125, 157, 158, 161, 184, 195, 198
Egmont, 98
Egorova, Lubov, 67, 71-72
El Amor Brujo, 56, 129
El Café de Chinitas, 56, 57
Elegiac Blues, 274
Elements, Les, 103, 129
El Huayno, 56
Eliot, T. S., 285, 303

Ellsler, Fanny, 18, 272
Elman, Misha, 17, 82
Elman, Sol, 81
Elmhirst Foundation, 52
Elves, Les, 103, 129
Elvin, Harold, 294
Elvin, Violetta, 237, 238, 292, 294-295
Elvira, 215
Empire Theatre (London), 73, 74
English Opera Group, Ltd., 225
English-Speaking Union, 260, 261
En Saga, 300
Epreuve d'Amour, L', 103, 129
Erlanger, Baron Frederic d', 103, 122, 132, 141
Errante, 158, 172
Escales, 215
Escudero, Vicente, 47-49, 53
Essenin, Serge, 31, 34
Eternal Struggle, The, 141
Eugene Onegin, 184
Ewing, Thomas, 180

Façade, 236, 238, 246, 269, 276, 291, 298
Facsimile, 172
Faery Queen, The, 273
Fair at Sorotchinsk, 160, 172
Fairy Doll, 255
Falla, Manuel de, 56, 118, 122
Fancy Free, 160, 161, 172, 174
Fandango, 56
Fantasia, 198
Farrar, Geraldine, 81
Farruca, 48
Faust, 218
Federal Dance Theatre, 59
Fedorova, Alexandra, 136

Fedorovitch, Sophie, 79, 240, 247
Fernandez, José, 172
Fernandez, Royes, 198
Festival Ballet (London), 158, 202, 206, 318
Festival Theatre (Cambridge University), 217
Fête Etrange, La, 298
Field, Marshall, 32
Fifield, Elaine, 200, 202, 304
Fille de Madame Angot, La, 150
Fille Mal Gardée, La, 149, 172
Firebird (*L'Oiseau de Feu*), 72, 90, 121, 142, 165, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178
First Love, 74
Fisher, Thomas Hart, 253
Fiske, Harrison Grey, 76
Fitzgerald, Barry, 249
Fleischmann, Julius, 123, 124, 126, 128, 129, 131
Fokine American Ballet, 102
Fokine, Michel, 19, 31, 40, 65, 68, 72, 76, 79, 89, 92-104, 110, 114, 115, 116, 118, 121, 125, 128, 129, 135, 136, 141, 142, 149, 152, 153, 155, 157, 171, 172, 173, 175, 198, 202, 203, 308
Fokina, Vera, 92, 104, 157, 173
Fokine, Vitale, 93, 94
Fonteyn, Margot, 211, 212, 229, 231, 232, 234, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 243, 246, 248, 253, 254-259, 271, 272, 282, 285, 286, 292, 304
Ford Foundation, 321
Forrest Theatre (Philadelphia), 114
Forty-eighth Street Theatre (New York), 59
Forty-fourth Street Theatre (New York), 153
Forty-sixth Street Theatre (New York), 42, 43, 48
Foss, Lukas, 184
Fountains of Bakchisserai, The, 294
Four Saints in Three Acts, 269
Fox, Horace, 263

Foyer de Danse, 269
Franca, Celia, 298
Francaix, Jean, 122
France, Anatole, 194
Francesca da Rimini, 122
Franck, César, 29, 240, 270
Frankenstein, Alfred, 199, 305
Franklin, Benjamin, 16
Franklin, Frederick, 59, 130, 202
Franks, Sir Oliver and Lady, 234, 256, 260, 261
French National Lyric Theatre, 214, 215
Fridolin, 49
Frohman, Mae, 46, 114, 144, 189, 191, 243, 312, 313
Frolicking Gods, 94
Frost, Honor, 298
Fuller, Loie, 37-39

Gaîté Parisienne, 129, 135, 301
Gala Evening, 215
Gala Performance, 172
Galli, Rosina, 18
Garson, Greer, 243, 249
Gatti-Cazzaza, Giulio, 18, 19
Gaubert, Phillipe, 215
Geltser, 237
Geltzer, Ekaterina, 80, 87
Genée, Adeline, 73, 87
Genthe, Dr. Arnold, 33
Gerhard, Robert, 247
German Opera Company, 311
Gershwin, George, 135
Gest, Morris, 85, 93
Gest, Simeon, 80
Geva, Tamara, 158
Ghost Town, 136
Gibson, Ian, 152

Gide, André, 115
Gielgud, John, 222, 226
Gift of the Magi, 164, 172
Gilbert, W. S., 299
Gilmour, Sally, 78
Gindt, Ekaterina, 104
Giselle, 19, 72, 79, 134, 147, 149, 172, 180, 184, 199, 201, 203, 207, 218, 219, 229, 246, 255, 256, 292, 315, 318
Gladowska, Constantia, 195
Glazounow, Alexandre, 19, 100
Glinka, Mikhail, 94
Gloriana, 281
Gluck, Christopher Willibald von, 129, 161
Goetz, E. Ray, 110
Gogol, Nikolai, 150
Gollner, Nana, 85, 125
Golovine, 173
Gontcharova, Nathalie, 122, 129, 135, 141, 173
Goode, Gerald, 42
Good-Humoured Ladies, The, 122
Gopal, Ram, 213
Gordon, Gavin, 239
Gore, Walter, 78, 79
Gorky, Maxim, 15, 16, 26
Götter-dammerung, Die, 194
Gould, Diana, 78
Gould, Morton, 165
Goyescas, 172
Graduation Ball, 142, 172
Graham, Martha, 42, 63-65, 106, 213
Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo, 195
Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas, 196, 225
Grant, Alexander, 247
Grauman's Chinese Theatre (Hollywood), 85
Grauman's Egyptian Theatre (Hollywood), 85
Graziana, 164, 172

Greco, José, 56
Green Table, The, 49
Grey, Beryl, 236, 237, 292-294
Grigorieva, Tamara, 123, 130
Grigorieff, Serge, 111, 114, 123, 142
Grimousinkaya, Irina, 294
Gross, Alexander, 29
Guerard, Roland, 130
Guerra, Nicola, 215
Guiablesse, La, 58
Guinsberg, Naron "Nikki," 131
Guthrie, Tyrone, 222

Habima Theatre, 311
Hall, James Norman, 276
Hallé Orchestra, The, 223
Hamlet, 236, 240, 283
Hammersmith Nights, 269
Hanson, Joe, 209
Harlequin in April, 302, 303
Hartley, Russell, 198
Hartmann, Emil, 98
Harvard Library, 129
Harvest Time, 167
Heseltine, Philip (Peter Warlock), 298
Haskell, Arnold L., 78, 106, 286-289
Hastings, Hanns, 41
Haunted Ballroom, The, 298
Hawkes, Ralph, 229
Hayward, Louis, 249
Heifetz, Jascha, 82
Helen of Troy, 103, 157, 158, 172
Helpmann, Robert, 238, 239, 240, 241, 254, 272, 278, 279, 282-286, 290, 317, 318
Henderson, Mrs. Laura, 204
Henderson, W. J., 23

Henry VIII., 198
Henry, O., 164
Hepburn, Katherine, 285
Hess, Dame Myra, 222
Hightower, Rosella, 152, 158, 160, 195, 198
Hindemith, Paul, 136
Hindu Wedding, 51
Hippodrome (New York), 12, 19, 20, 21, 88, 94, 102, 314
Hirsch, Georges, 213, 215, 216
H. M. Ministry of Works, 224
Hobi, Frank, 152
Hoffman, Gertrude, 76, 85, 87
Hogarth, William, 239, 274
Holden, Stanley, 303
Hollywood Bowl, 85, 164
Hollywood Theatre (New York), 139, 142, 143, 168
Homage to the Queen, 270, 315
Hooray for Love, 50
Horenstein, Jascha, 184
Horoscope, 270, 274
Horrocks, 231
Hotel Meurice (Paris), 39, 259
Howard, Andrée, 78, 79, 149, 171, 298
Hughes, Herbert, 239, 249, 251, 252, 262, 267, 304
Hugo, Pierre, 122
Hugo, Victor, 247
Humphrey, Doris, 42, 213
Hundred Kisses, The, 115, 122, 140
Hungary, 19
Hurok, Mrs. (Emma), 46, 49, 131, 139, 187, 188, 190, 191, 202, 241, 243, 312
Hurry, Leslie, 237, 240, 315
Hyams, Ruth, 243, 313

Ibert, Jacques, 215
Icare, 136

Igroushki, 129
Imaginaires, Les, 122
Imperial League of Opera (London), 107
Imperial School of Ballet (Moscow), 80, 85, 86, 87, 117
Impresario, 33, 134, 158, 168, 215
I Musici, 317
In Old Madrid, 56
International Ballet (London), 290
International Ballet, 149, 184, 190, 196
International Choreographic Competition (Paris), 49
International Dance Festival, 151
International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 59
International Revue, 53, 204
Interplay, 165, 172
Ippolitov-Ivanov, Mikhail, 98
Irving, Robert, 240, 304
Irving, Sir Henry, 81
"Isadorables" (Anna, Lysel, Gretl, Thérése, Erica, Irma), 32, 33, 34
Istar, 215
Iturbi, José, 57
Ivanoff, Lev, 121, 237
Ivy House (London), 21, 25, 26

Jackson, Tom, 224
Jackson, Rowena, 292, 296-297
Jacob, Gordon, 239
Jacob's Pillow, 151, 152
Japanese Dancers and Musicians, 317
Jardin aux Lilas (*Lilac Garden*), 172
Jardin Public (*Public Garden*), 115, 122
Jasinsky, Roman, 111, 123, 130
Jerome, Jerome K., 239
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring, 278
Jeux, 78
Jeux d'Enfants (*Children's Games*), 110, 122, 140, 168

Jeux des Cartes (*Card Game*, *Poker Game*), 136
Job, 218, 236, 238, 283
Johnson, Albert, 114, 122
Johnson, Edward, 214, 230
Jolivet, André, 215
Joos, Kurt, 49
Jota, 56
Jota Argonese, 129, 135
Juda, Hans, 231
Judgment of Paris, 172

Kahn, Otto H., 18, 32, 89, 95, 111, 112, 319
Kaloujny, Alexandre, 215
Karnilova, Maria, 152
Karsavina, Tamara, 67, 72-73, 75, 77, 89, 172, 255, 273
Karsavin, Platon, 72
Kauffer, E. McKnight, 241
Kaye, Nora, 152, 155, 158, 160, 164, 231
Kchessinsky, Felix, 68
Kchessinska, Mathilde, 67-69, 71, 111
Kennedy, Ludovic, 291
Keynes, Geoffrey, 238
Keynes, J. Maynard (Lord Keynes), 78, 106, 221, 222, 224, 228
Khadra, 298
Kidd, Michael, 164, 174
Knight and the Maiden, The, 215
Korovin, 122, 294
Kosloff, Alexis, 76, 85
Kosloff, Theodore, 68, 76, 84-85, 86, 87
Koudriavtzeff, Nicholas, 186, 187, 188, 194
Koussevitsky, Serge, 198
Krassovska, Natalie (Leslie), 125, 129
Kreutzberg, Harald, 46
Kriza, John, 152, 164, 167
Kubelik, Jan, 81, 82

Kurtz, Efrem, 113, 129
Kyasht, Lydia (Kyaksht), 67, 73-75, 77

Laban, Rudolf von, 40
Labyrinth, 135
Lac des Cygnes (Full length), 201, 219, 229, 236, 246, 248, 291, 292, 293, 296, 297, 315
Lady Into Fox, 171
Lady of the Camellias, 198
Lady of Shalot, 269
L'Ag'ya, 60
Laing, Hugh, 78, 152, 160
Lalo, Eduardo, 215
Lambert, Constant, 106, 211, 220, 231, 232, 234, 235, 239, 240, 246, 247, 264, 265, 270, 272-279, 283, 293, 296, 298
Lancaster, Osbert, 299, 300
Lanchbery, John, 305
Lane, Maryon, 303, 304
Larianov, Michel, 118, 123
Last Days of Nijinsky, The, 83
Laudes Evangelli, 120
Lauret, Jeanette, 129, 152
Lawrence, Gertrude, 204
Lawson-Powell School (New Zealand), 296
Lazovsky, Yurek, 130, 152
Lecocq, Charles, 160
Leda and the Swan, 269
Lehmann, Maurice, 216
Lenin, Nicolai, 68
Leningrad Conservatory, 312
Leslie, Lew, 53, 204
Lester, Edwin, 249
Lester, Keith, 172
Levine, Marks, 313
Lewisohn Stadium (New York), 102, 103, 149
Liadoff, Anatole, 96, 98, 122

Lichine, David, 111, 112, 114, 122, 123, 130, 142, 157, 160, 161, 172, 194
Lidji, Jacques, 127, 189, 191
Lieberman, Elias, 131, 178, 191
Lie, Honorable Trygve, 234
Lieutenant Kije, 155
Lifar, Serge, 130, 134, 136, 142, 169, 206, 215, 216, 273
Lingwood, Tom, 79
Lipkovska, Tatiana, 186
Litavkin, Serge, 74
Little Theatre (New York Times Hall), 49
Liszt, Franz, 81, 153, 158, 198, 239, 247, 270, 273, 276
Liverpool Philharmonic Society, 280
Lobe, Edward, 100
Local managers, 314-315
Loew's Theatre (Washington, D.C.), 307
London Ballet Workshop, 79
London Philharmonic Orchestra, 223, 276
London Symphony Orchestra, 223
Lopez, Pilar, 56, 57, 58
Lopokova, Lydia (Lady Keynes), 67
75-77, 78, 87, 106, 221, 277
Lorca, Garcia, 56, 57
Lord of Burleigh, The, 270
Loring, Eugene, 149, 150, 156
Los Angeles Civic Light Opera Association, 249
Losch, Tilly, 158
Lourie, Eugene, 122
Louys, Pierre, 93
Lurçat, Jean, 122
Lyon, Annabelle, 152
Lyceum Theatre (London), 107, 109

Mackaye, Percy, 76
MacLeish, Archibald, 114
Macletzova, Xenia, 80, 105

Mlle. Angot, 160, 172, 256
Magic Swan, The, 136
Maclès, Jean-Denis, 237, 258
Malone, Halsey, 128
Majestic Theatre (New York), 53, 54, 114, 149
Manhattan Opera House (New York), 24
Mansfield, Richard, 81
Manuel, Roland, 215
Man Who Married a Dumb Wife, The, 194
Mardi Gras, 298
Marie Antoinette Hotel (New York), 97
Maria Thérésa, 33
Marie, Grand Duchess of Russia, 111
Marie, Queen of Rumania, 37, 38
Mark Hopkins Hotel (San Francisco), 59
Markova, Alicia, 90, 130, 134, 151, 152, 161, 163, 175, 184, 195, 198, 199, 200-204, 207, 218, 219, 237, 246, 255, 271
Markova-Dolin Ballet Company, 163, 184, 186, 192, 198, 199, 201, 202
Martin Beck Theatre (New York), 59
Martin, Florence and Kathleen, 141
Martin, John, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 112
Maryinsky Theatre (Russia), 67, 68, 71, 72, 73, 77, 84, 86, 89, 140, 228, 236
Masques, Les, 79, 269
Masonic Auditorium (Detroit), 102, 185
Massenet, Jules, 19
Massine, Leonide, 44, 56, 106, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 128, 129, 130, 132, 134, 135, 136, 137, 145, 155, 156, 160, 172, 197, 200, 201, 202, 206, 245, 269, 284, 290, 291, 300, 301
Masson, André, 122
Matelots, Les, 122
Matisse, Henri, 135
May, Pamela, 239, 240, 272

Medusa, 103
Melba, Dame Nellie, 295
Melville, Herman, 281
Mendelssohn, Felix von, 103, 122, 129, 317
Menotti, Gian-Carlo, 194
Mens, Meta, 40
Mephisto Valse, 269
Merchant Navy Suite, 274
Mercury Theatre (London), 78, 79
Merida, Carlos, 157
Messager, André, 215
Messel, Oliver, 122, 211, 232, 236, 315
Metropolitan Opera Company, 20, 86, 95, 98, 214, 321
Metropolitan Opera House (New York), 18, 19, 30, 31, 32, 33, 55, 56, 57, 87, 90, 94, 96, 97, 98, 106, 115, 122, 136, 139, 153, 154, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 165, 175, 176, 177, 188, 190, 192, 194, 197, 201, 214, 216, 225, 230, 231, 232, 233, 235, 237, 240, 247, 248, 259, 278, 283, 292, 293, 307, 318
Metropolitan Opera House (Philadelphia), 100
Meyerbeer, Giacomo, 246, 270, 273
Midnight Sun, The, 122
Midsummer Night's Dream, A, 103, 122, 317
Mielziner, Jo, 155
Mignone, Francisco, 194
Mikhailovsky Theatre (St. Petersburg), 89
Miller, Patricia, 300
Milhaud, Darius, 153, 215, 218
Mills, Florence, 274
Minkus, Leon, 294
Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, 151
Minuet of the Will o' the Wisps, 195
Miracle, The, 318
Miracle in the Gorbals, 236, 239, 240, 283, 284
Mirages, Les, 215
Miro, Joan, 122

Mladova, Milada, 129
Modjeska, Helena, 81
Monotonie, 42
Montenegro, Robert, 156
Monteux, Pierre, 95, 198
Monte Carlo Ballet Russe, 116
"*Moonlight Sonata*," 96, 98, 100
Moore, Henry, 222
Mordkin Ballet, 80, 180, 181
Mordkin, Mikhail, 19, 22, 68, 76, 79-81, 87, 105, 147, 148, 149, 180
Morning Telegraph, The (New York), 17
Morosova, Olga, 123, 130, 193
Morris, Douglas, 305
Mort du Cygne, La (*The Dying Swan*), 19, 96, 98, 101
Mortlock, Rev. C. B., 278
Moreton, Ursula, 299
Moscow Art Players, 311
Moss and Fontana, 54
Mother Goose Suite, 300
Motley, 160, 161, 316
Moussorgsky, Modeste, 160
Movimientos, 79
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, 129, 164
Munsel, Patrice, 295
Murder in the Cathedral, 285
Music for the Masses, 17
Music for the Orchestra, 274
Music Ho!, 274
Mute Wife, The, 190, 194
My Three Loves, 290

Nabokoff, Nicholas, 114, 122
Nachez, Twadar, 98
Natalie Koussevitsky Foundation, 281
National Gallery (London), 278

National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, D.C.), 184
Nation, Carrie, 37
Naouma, 215
Nemtchinova-Dolin Ballet, 204
Nemtchinova, Vera, 80, 105, 125
Nerina, Nadia, 292, 295-296
New Dance—Theatre Piece—With My Red Fires (trilogy), 213
New York City Ballet, 175, 225, 269, 318
New York City Center, 214, 321
New York City Festival, 169, 213, 214, 217
New York Herald-Tribune, 44
New York Philharmonic Orchestra, 57, 166
New York Symphony Orchestra, 31
New York Times, The, 17, 23, 31, 40, 43, 44, 98
New Yorker, The, 135
Nicolaeva-Legat, Nadine, 289, 290
Night on a Bald Mountain, 160
Nijinska, Bronislava, 107, 115, 122, 149, 153, 167, 171, 198, 269, 273
Nijinska, Romola, 82, 83
Nijinsky, Vaslav, 77, 81-84, 89, 115, 284
Noces, Les, 122
Nocturne, 122, 270
Nordoff, Paul, 161
Novikoff, Elizabeth, 87
Novikoff, Laurent, 22, 68, 86, 87, 294
Nuit d'Egypte, Une, 102
Nutcracker, The, 129, 136, 173, 184, 201, 203, 218, 219, 301, 302, 303, 304, 318
Nutcracker Suite, 94, 198

Oberon, 98
Obolensky, Prince Serge, 111, 131
Oboukhoff, Anatole, 125
O'Dwyer, William, 213, 232, 233, 234

Offenbach, Jacques, 129, 135, 153, 157
Old Vic Theatre (London), 208, 218, 223, 226, 246, 298, 299, 317, 318
Olivier, Sir Laurence, 222
On Stage!, 164, 174
On the Route to Seville, 56
Orchesographie, 298
O'Reilley, Sheilah, 300
Original Ballet Russe, 103, 116, 138-146, 149, 187, 195, 196, 199, 204, 225
Orloff, Nicolas, 152
Orlova, Tatiana (Mrs. Leonide Massine), 126
Osato, Sono, 114, 123, 130, 142, 162
Ostrovsky Theatre (Moscow), 117

Pabst Theatre (Milwaukee), 184
Paganini, 103, 140
Paganini, Niccolo, 82, 137, 141, 194
Page, Ruth, 58, 60, 253
Paint Your Wagon, 316
Palacio des Bellas Artes (Mexico City), 114, 155
Palisades Amusement Park (New York), 20, 21
Panaieff, Michel, 125, 130
Pantomime Harlequinade, 318
Papillons, Les, 121
Paris, 270
Paris Colonial Exposition, 51
Paris Opéra, 106, 130, 134, 151, 172, 216, 228
Paris Opera Ballet, 168, 169, 213, 214, 215, 216, 318
Paris Opéra Comique, 225
Paris Opéra Company, 169
Pas de Quatre, 150, 172, 180, 198, 203, 318
Pas des Espagnole, 198
Pas de Trois, 195, 198
Passing of the Third Floor Back, The, 239
Pastorale, 200, 201

Patineurs, Les, 246, 270, 273, 296, 297, 316
Patterson, Yvonne, 195
Pavane, 215
Pavillon, La, 122
Pavillon d'Armide, 255
Pavlova, Anna, 11, 12, 12-27, 28, 32, 41, 43, 47, 51, 52, 67, 72, 74, 80, 86, 87, 88, 89, 94, 95, 105, 106, 120, 132, 141, 168, 203, 243, 254, 255, 257, 269, 272, 283, 284, 297
Payne, Charles, 150
Péne du Bois, Raoul, 164
People's Theatre (St. Petersburg), 109
Peri, La, 215, 269
Perpetual Motion, 194
Perrault, Charles, 211, 236
Perrot, Jules, 246
Peter and the Wolf, 149, 172
Peter Grimes, 281
Petipa, Marius, 121, 236, 237
Petit, Roland, 119
Petit, Roland, Ballet Company, 317
Petits Riens, Les, 269
Petroff, Paul, 111, 123, 130
Petroushka, 85, 90, 104, 110, 114, 121, 140, 153, 157, 171, 173, 180, 318
Philadelphia Orchestra, 106, 166
Philipoff, Alexander ("Sasha"), 127, 139
Piano Concerto (Lambert), 274
Piano Concerto in F Minor (Chopin), 195
Picasso, Pablo, 118, 123
Pictures at an Exhibition, 190
Pillar of Fire, 152, 155, 172, 174
Pineapple Poll, 299, 300, 301
Pins and Needles, 59
Pinza, Ezio, 249
Piper, John, 238, 302, 315
Plages, Le, (*Beach*), 110, 122

Platoff, Mark, 130, 136
Playfair, Nigel, 269
Pleasant, Richard, 148, 149, 150, 151
Podesta, 19
Pogany, Willy, 95
Poland—Three Moods: Happiness, Revolt, Sadness, 97
Poliakov, 117, 118
Polka, 198
Polunin, Vladimir, 122
Pomona, 269, 273, 274
Poole, David, 300, 301, 303
Poor Richard's Almanack, 16
Popova, Nina, 152
Portinari, Candido, 194
Ports of Call, 215
Poulenc, Francis, 79, 129, 215
Powell, Lionel, 107
Pratt, John, 63, 198
Preobrajenska, Olga, 67, 69-71, 107, 140, 167, 168
Présages, Les, 110, 112, 140
Princess Aurora, 152, 153, 172, 180
Prince Igor, 89, 104, 110, 114, 121, 128, 318
H.H. Prince of Monaco, 106
Prodigal Son, The (*Le Fils Prodigue*), 142
Prokhoroff, Vassili, 294
Prokofieff, Sergei, 103, 141, 142, 149, 155, 158, 237, 238, 270
Prophet, The, 246
Prospect Before Us, The, 298
Protée, 142
Pruna, 122
Psota, Vania, 152, 153, 193, 194
Punch and the Policeman, 215
Purcell, Henry, 273
Pushkin, Alexander, 95, 156, 294

Quest, The, 270
Quintet, 172

Rachel, 195
Rachmaninoff, Sergei, 79, 103, 141
Rafael, 49
Rakoczy March, 195
Rake's Progress, The, 236, 239, 246
Rambert, Marie, 77-79, 106, 201, 217, 269
Rameau, 215
Rapee, Erno, 156
Rassine, Alexis, 269
Rawsthorne, Alan, 279
Ravel, Maurice, 215, 298, 300, 316
Ravina, Jean, 198
Reaper's Dream, The, 74
Red Shoes, 289, 290, 295
Reed, Janet, 158
Reed, Richard, 152
Reich, George, 198
Reinhardt, Max, 318
Remisoff, Nicholas, 91, 160
Renault, Madeline, 311
Renault, Michel, 215
Rendez-vous, Les, 270, 273, 298
Respighi, Ottorino, 150
Revueltas, Sylvestre, 155
Reyes, Alfonso, 155
Rhapsody on the Theme of Paganini, 141
Riaboushinska, Tatiana, 69, 111, 112, 114, 123, 130, 141, 161, 168, 195
Ricarda, Ana, 195, 198
Richardson, Philip, J. S., 287
Richman, Harry, 204
Richmond, Aaron, 260
Rieti, Vittorio, 122, 161, 194, 195

Rimsky-Korsakoff, Nicolas, 56, 94, 95, 98, 121, 122, 135
Rio Grande, 270, 274
Rittman, Trudi, 316
Ritz, Roger, 215
Robbins, Jerome, 65, 152, 160, 161, 164, 165, 172, 178, 195, 198
Robinson, Casey, 168
Robinson, Edward, G., 249
Rockefeller Foundation, 321
Rodeo, 59, 161
Roerich, Nicholas, 123
Rogers, Richard, 136
Romanoff, Boris, 107, 129
Romanoff, Dmitri, 152
Romantic Age, 157, 172, 174
Romeo and Juliet, 158, 159, 172, 174, 273, 274
Romulo, 234
Rondino, 255
Rosay, Berrina, 198
Roshanara, 52
Rose, Billy, 161
Rosenthal, Manuel, 129
Rossini, Gioacchino, 122, 198
Rostova, Lubov, 11, 123, 129
Rothapfel, Samuel, 44
Rouault, Georges, 142
Rouet d'Omphale, 98
Rouge et Noir, 135
Roussalka, 122
Rowell, Kenneth, 79
Roxy Theatre (New York), 44, 106, 110, 119
Roy, Pierre, 136
Royal Academy of Dancing (London), 225
Royal College of Music, 273
Royal Danish Ballet, 104
Royal Festival Hall (London), 318

Royal Opera House (Copenhagen), 221
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, 74, 132, 133, 156, 160, 191, 204, 208, 210, 211, 221, 223, 224, 228, 229, 235, 236, 237, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 272, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 286, 298, 304, 315
Rubbra, Edward, 279
Rubenstein, Ida, 269
Rubinstein, Anton, 81
Rubinstein, Mr. & Mrs. Arthur, 191
Rubinstein, Beryl, 33
Rubinstein, Nicholas, 156
Ruffo, Tito, 17
Runanin, Borislav, 152
Russian Folk Dances, 98
Russian Folk Lore, 86
Russian Folk Tales, 122
Russian Imperial Ballet, 13, 68, 71, 80, 121, 200, 219
Russian Imperial School of the Ballet (St. Petersburg), 67, 69, 70, 73, 75, 85, 89, 104
Russian Opera Company, 310
Russian Soldier, 103, 155, 171
Russian State School (Warsaw), 78

Sabo, Roszika, 152, 184, 198
Sacre du Printemps, Le (*Rite of Spring*), 78, 106
Saddler, Donald, 152
Sadler, Thomas, 298
Sadler's Wells Ballet, 74, 88, 90, 104, 106, 136, 141, 153, 160, 191, 201, 203, 204, 208, 211, 212, 213, 214, 217, 218, 219, 221, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 232, 233, 235, 236, 237, 238, 242, 246, 248, 249, 250, 251, 255, 256, 261, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 272, 273, 278, 279, 280, 282, 283, 284, 285, 288, 290, 291, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 315, 318
Sadler's Wells Foundation, 288
Sadler's Wells Opera Company, 223, 225, 298, 299

Sadler's Wells School, 74, 75, 184, 220, 225, 255, 259, 283, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 292, 296, 299, 300
Sadler's Wells Theatre, 79, 208, 218, 237, 246, 288, 297, 298, 299
Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, 208, 223, 224, 225, 226, 270, 296, 297, 309, 318
St. Denis, Ruth, 64
St. Francis (*Noblissima Visione*), 136
St. James Ballet Company, 225
St. James Theatre (New York), 105, 111, 112, 113, 114
Sainthill, Loudon, 303
St. Regis Hotel (New York), 83, 84, 131
Saint-Saens, Charles Camille, 98
"Saison des Ballets Russes," 76, 85, 87
Salad, 215
Salome's Dance of the Seven Veils, 100
Samson and Delilah, 218
San Francisco Art Commission, 164, 199, 321
San Francisco Chronicle, 305
San Francisco Civic Ballet, 168, 199, 213
San Francisco Opera Ballet, 85, 90
San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, 199
Sapeteado, 98
Saratoga, 135
Sargent, Sir Malcolm, 226
Sauguet, Henri, 215
Savoy Hotel (London), 133, 202, 209, 210, 212, 241, 243, 246, 277
Savoy-Plaza Hotel (New York), 112
Scala, La (Milan), 70, 106, 225, 296
Scarlatti, Domenico, 122, 215
Scènes de Ballet, 256
Schönberg, Arnold, 152
Schoop, Paul, 50
Schoop, Trudi, 49-50
Schéhérazade, 76, 85, 94, 106, 115, 121, 128, 173, 255,

318
Schubert, Franz, 30, 130, 153, 158, 195, 198, 270
Schumann-Heink, Ernestine, 17
Schumann, Robert, 121, 141
Schuman, William, 162
Scuola di Ballo, 110, 122
Schwezoff, Igor, 141
Sea Change, 298, 300
Seasons, The, 19
Sebastian, 190, 194
Sedova, Julia, 87
Selfridge, Gordon, 32
Seligman, Izia, 98
Semenoff, Simon, 130, 152, 156, 164, 172
Serguëef, Nicholas, 236, 237, 246
Serpentine Dance, 37, 38
Sert, José Maria, 122
Sevastianoff, German, 103, 132, 143, 151, 152, 153, 157, 158, 173
Seven Dances of Life, 40
Seven Lively Arts, The, 161, 204
Seventh Symphony, 135
Sevillianas, 55, 56
Shabalevsky, Yurek, 111, 123, 130
Shadow, The, 315
Shakespeare Festival Theatre (Stratford), 303
Shakespeare, William, 285, 298, 317
Shan-Kar, Uday, 51-53
Sharaff, Irene, 114, 122
Shaw, Bernard, 282
Shaw, Brian, 240
Shawn, Ted, 64, 151
Shearer, Moira, 234, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 243, 254, 271, 289-292, 317
Shostakovich, Dmitri, 135
Shore Excursion, 60

Shrine Auditorium (Los Angeles), 249
Sibelius, Jan, 276, 298, 300
Siebert, Wallace, 184, 198
Sierra, Martinez, 55, 57
Sirènes, Les, 270, 284
Sitwell, Edith, 239, 276
Sitwell, Sir Osbert, 279
Sitwell, Sacheverell, 279
Skibine, George, 152
Slavenska, Mia, 130, 134, 201
Slavonic Dances, 152
Slavonika, 152, 153, 193
Sleeping Beauty, The (*Sleeping Princess, The*), 71, 77, 85, 90, 121, 147
152, 173, 180, 211, 215, 220, 232, 236, 246, 248, 250, 251, 253, 256, 260, 269, 274, 283, 291, 292, 315
Sloan, Alfred P., 230
Smith, Douglas, 79
Smith, Oliver, 161, 164, 170, 173, 174, 176, 177, 178, 194
Snow Maiden, The, 122
Sokoloff, Asa, 189, 191
Soleares, 48, 55
Somes, Michael, 88, 240
Song of the Nightingale, The, 201
Soudeikine, Serge, 141
Source, La, 215
South African Dancing Times, 295
Soviet State School of Ballet, 70
Spectre de la Rose, Le, 82, 89, 115, 121, 128, 152, 153, 171, 318
Spessivtseva, Olga, 71
Staats, Leo, 215
Staff, Frank, 78, 79
Star of the North, 246
Stars in Your Eyes, 168
Stalin, Joseph, 109

Stein, Gertrude, 240, 241, 269, 270
Stevenson, Hugh, 79, 237
Still, William Grant, 59
Stokowski, Leopold, 106
Straight, Dorothy (Mrs. Elmhirst), 52
Strauss, Johann, 142, 198
Strauss, Richard, 160
Stravinsky, Igor, 90, 91, 106, 118, 121, 122, 136, 142, 158, 160, 165, 172, 173, 176
Suite de Danse, 198
Suite in F Sharp Minor (Dohnanyi), 315
Suite in White, 215
Sullivan, Sir Arthur, 299, 300
Summer's Last Will and Testament, 274
Sun, The (New York), 23, 44
Svenson, Sven, Dr., 293
Swan Lake (One act version), 121, 129, 136, 149, 167, 172, 173, 184, 218, 219, 286, 299, 318
Sylphides, Les, 76, 79, 94, 96, 103, 104, 110, 114, 121, 128, 140, 149, 152, 167, 171, 180, 198, 203, 219, 229, 255, 318
Sylvia, 74, 270, 296, 301, 315
Symphonic Impressions, 318
Symphonic Variations, 236, 240, 256, 270
Symphonie Fantastique, 115, 122, 239
Symphonie Pathétique, 103
Symphony for Fun, 318
Symphony in C, 215, 298

Taglioni, Marie, 23, 157, 203, 272
Taglioni, Philippe, 157
Tait, E. J., 138
Talbot, J. Alden, 158, 161, 164, 166, 170, 173, 174, 181, 248
Tales of Hoffman, 290
Tallchief, Marjorie, 195

Tally-Ho, 161, 172, 174
Tango, 48
Tannhauser, 135
Tarantule, La, 18
Taras, John, 164, 172, 184, 192, 195
Taylor, Deems, 23
Tchaikowsky, Peter Ilytch, 71, 94, 103, 110, 121, 122, 136, 147, 152, 156, 184, 211, 215, 236, 237, 240, 255, 274, 301, 302, 303
Tchekhoff, Michael, 311
Tchelitcheff, Pavel, 136, 143
Tcherepnine, Nicholas, 121
Tchernicheva, Lubov, 111, 123, 130
Tennent Productions, Ltd., 223
Terry, Ellen, 31, 81
Tetrazzini, Eva, 17
Teyte, Maggie, 226
Thamar, 121, 255
Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, 58, 107, 109
Théâtre Mogador, 34
Theatre Street, 73, 75
Theilade, Nini, 130, 136
Thomson, Virgil, 269
Three-Cornered Hat, The (*Le Tricorne*), 56, 110, 119, 122, 132, 136, 172, 255, 256
Three Virgins and a Devil, 150, 161, 172
Thunder Bird, The, 94
Tierney, Gene, 249
Times, The (London), 156, 209
Tiresias, 274, 277
Tommasini, Vincenzo, 122, 137
Tonight We Sing, 168, 312
Toscanini, Arturo, 317
Toumanova, Tamara, 70, 107, 111, 112, 113, 115, 123, 129, 130, 134, 140, 143, 161, 167-170, 195, 201, 318
Toye, Geoffrey, 98

Tragedy of Fashion, The, 269
Traviata, La, 195, 198
Trecu, Pirmin, 301
Trefilova, Vera, 71
Triumph of Neptune, The, 273
Trocadero (Paris), 168
Tropical Revue, 59, 60
Trudi Schoop Comic Ballet, 49
Truman, Harry S., 256
Tudor, Antony, 78, 79, 149, 150, 152, 155, 158, 160, 161, 172, 174, 175, 195
Tupine, Oleg, 198
Turner, Jarold, 78
Twice Upon a Time, 295
Two Pigeons, The, 215

Ulanova, Galina, 70, 71
Undertow, 161-162, 172
U.N.E.S.C.O., 261
Union Pacific, 114, 122, 140
Universal Art, Inc., 124, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133, 134, 139, 157, 165
University of Chicago, 58

Vaganova, Agrippina, 266
Valbor, Kirsten, 198
Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, 298
Van Buren, Martin (President of U.S.A.), 18
Vanderlip, Frank, 32
Van Druten, John, 24, 72, 161
Van Praagh, Peggy, 78, 299, 306
Van Vechten, Carl, 23, 31
Vargas, Manolo, 56
Vaudoyer, J. L., 21
Vaussard, Christiane, 215
Verchinina, Nina, 111, 123, 130

Verdi, Giuseppi, 195, 198
Verklärte Nacht, 152
Vertes, Marcel, 153
Vestris Solo, 198
Victory Hall (London), 304
Vic-Wells Ballet, 106, 201, 204, 218, 269
Vienna 1814, 135
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, 225
Vienna State Opera, 225
Vilzak, Anatole, 125
Vision of Marguerite, 318
Vladimiroff, Pierre, 22, 73, 80, 105
Volinine, Alexandre, 20, 21, 22, 68, 74, 76, 87, 88
Vollmar, Jocelyn, 195
Volpe, Arnold, 94, 96, 97, 98, 100
Volpe, Mrs. Arnold, 97, 100, 101
Vsevolojsky, I. A., 236

Wagner, Richard, 29, 135, 194
Wakehurst, Lord & Lady, 260, 261
Wallman, Margaret, 70
Walton, Sir William, 239, 270, 279
Waltz Academy, 161, 172
Wanderer, The, 270
Want-Ads, 50
War Memorial Opera House (San Francisco), 162, 163, 164, 199, 250, 251, 282
Warner Theatre (New York), 308
Washburn, Malone & Perkins, 131
Washington Square Players (The Theatre Guild), 76
Waste Land, The, 303
Water Nymph, The, 74
Watkins, Mary, 44
Watteau, 161
Weber, Carl Maria von, 98, 121, 135
Webster, David, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 221, 224, 231,

235, 241, 242, 243, 248, 259, 262, 277, 278, 279-282, 299, 304
Wedding Bouquet, A, 236, 240, 246, 270, 291
Weidman, Charles, 42, 213
Weinberger, Jaromir, 135
Werther, 19
Whalen, Grover, 213, 234
Whistler, Rex, 239
Whirl of the World, The, 74
Wigman, Mary, 39-46, 47, 48, 64, 65
Wieniawsky, Henry, 167
Williams, Emlyn, 311
Williams, Ralf Vaughan, 218, 238, 273, 281, 283
Winter Garden (New York), 74, 75, 76, 85, 87
Winter Night, 79
Wise Animals, The, 215
Wise Virgins, The, 270
Woizikowsky, Leon, 11, 114, 123, 142
Works Progress Administration, 320

Yara, 194
Yazvinsky, Jean (Ivan), 125, 130
Young Vic Theatre Co., 223
Youskevitch, Igor, 130
Ysaye, Eugene, 17
Yudkin, Louis, 231, 260, 304

Zamba, 48
Zapateado, 48
Zeller, Robert, 198
Zerbaseff, 108
Zeretelli, Prince, 107, 108, 127
Ziegfeld Follies, 94
Ziegfeld Roof (New York), 129
Ziegfeld Theatre, 165
Ziegler, Edward, 98

Zimbalist, Efrem, 17
Zon, Ignat, 127
Zorich, George, 130
Zorina, Vera, 123, 157, 158
Zuckert, Harry M., 151
Zvereff, Nicholas, 129

Typographical errors corrected by the etext transcriber:

This was, so far is I know=> This was, so far as I know {pg 50}

necessary and funadmental=> necessary and fundamental {pg 68}

heirarchy of the Russian=> hierarchy of the Russian {pg 71}

there continously since=> there continuously since {pg 71}

The pre-Chrismas=> The pre-Christmas {pg 112}

organizer and threatre promoter=> organizer and theatre promoter {pg 127}

others chosing to remain=> others choosing to remain {pg 130}

dissident elements in its=> dissident elements in it {pg 157}

existing today. Jerome Robbin's=> existing today. Jerome Robbins's {pg 172}

to make arrangments=> to make arrangements {pg 177}

engagment at the Metropolitan=> engagement at the Metropolitan {pg 177}

a temporay whim=> a temporary whim {pg 181}

the Diaghleff Ballet=> the Diaghileff Ballet {pg 204}

the times comes for his appearance=> the time comes for his appearance {pg 206}

the spirt of the painter=> the spirit of the painter {pg 218}

A Beverley Hills group=> A Beverly Hills group {pg 249}

the threatre programme=> the theatre

programme {pg 251}

make him Ecuardorian=> make him Ecuadorian {pg 269}

edge of Knightbridge and Kensington=> edge of Knightsbridge and Kensington {pg 272}

Elegaic Blues=> Elegiac Blues {pg 274}

early indocrination=> early indoctrination {pg 290}

considearble royal interest=> considerable royal interest {pg 306}

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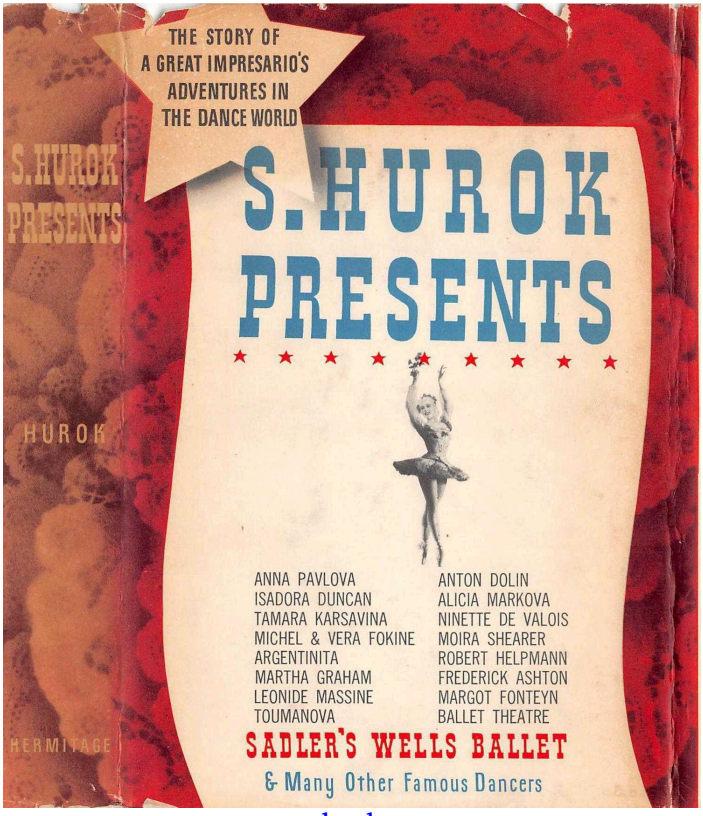
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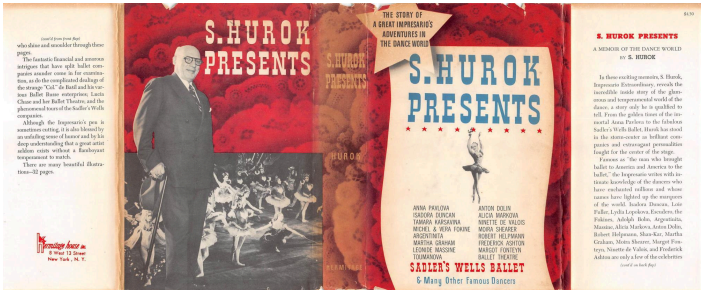
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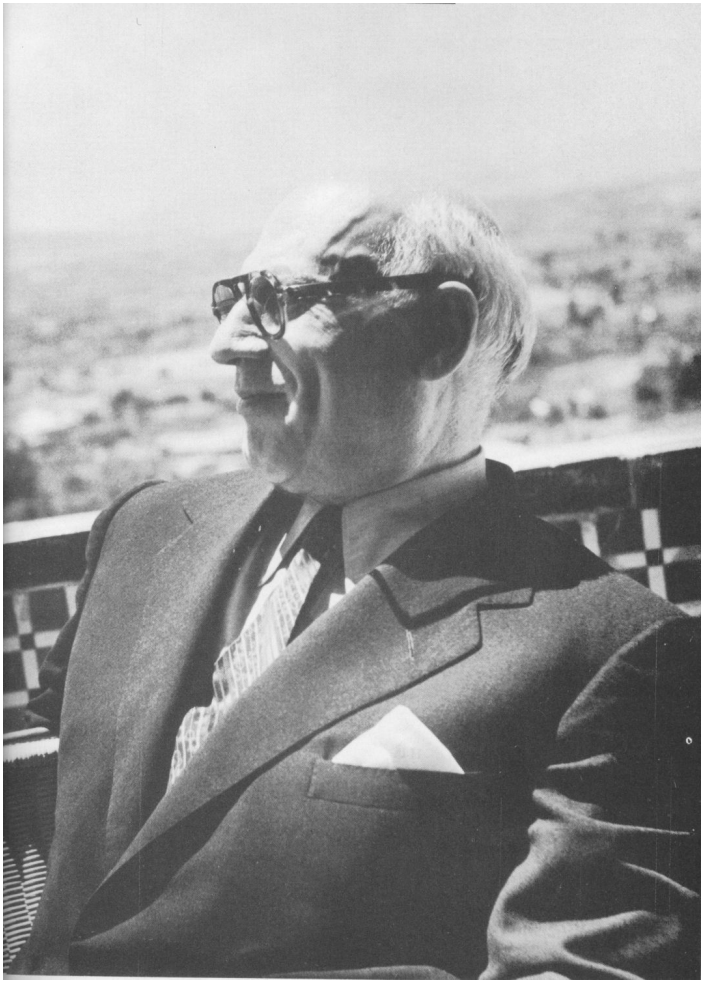
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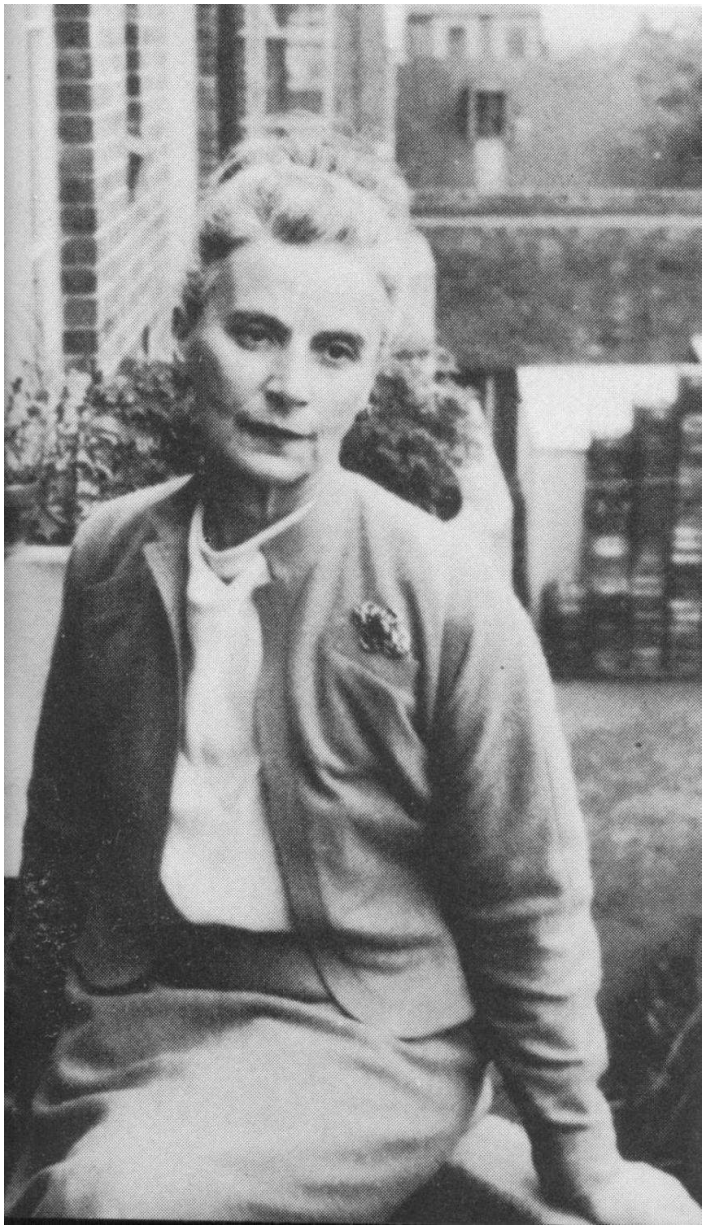
back



back



back



back



back



back



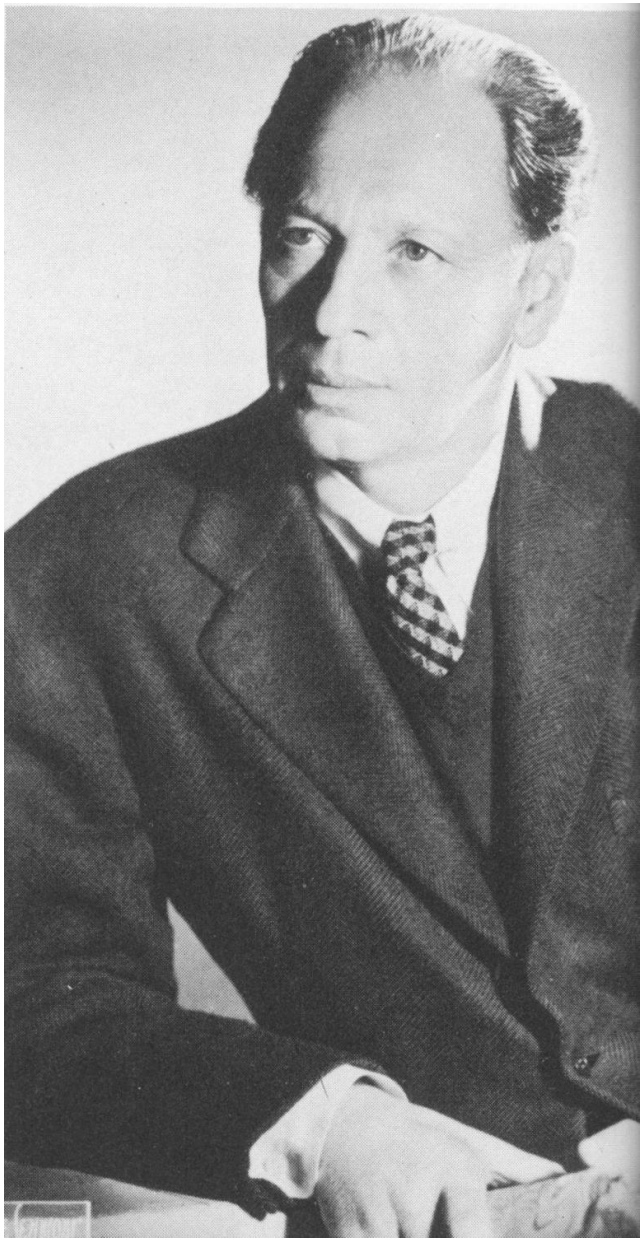
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back



back



back



back



back



back



back



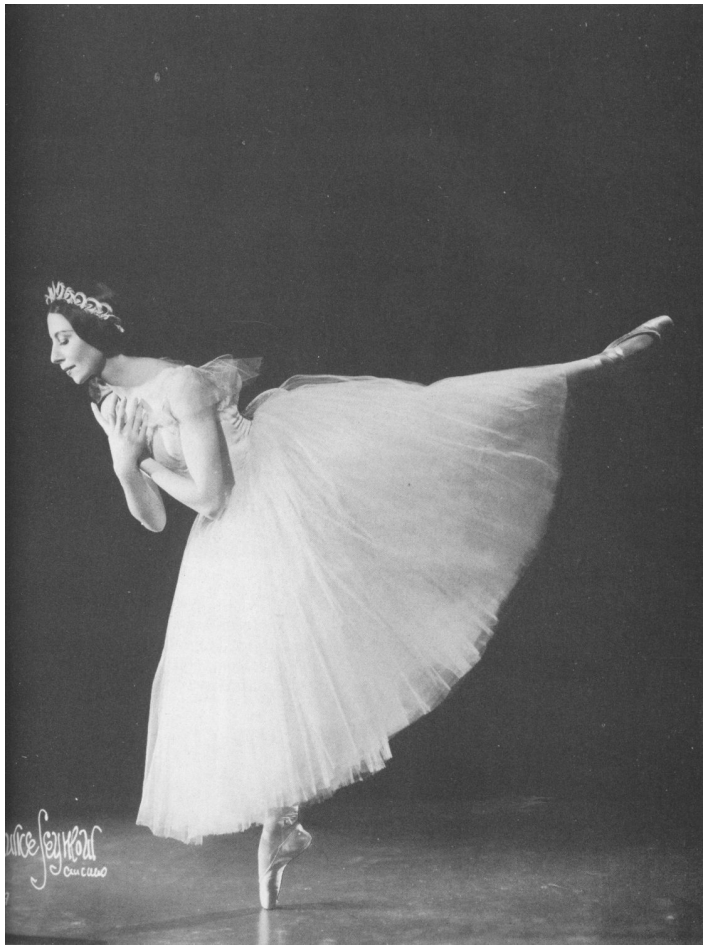
back



back



back



back



back



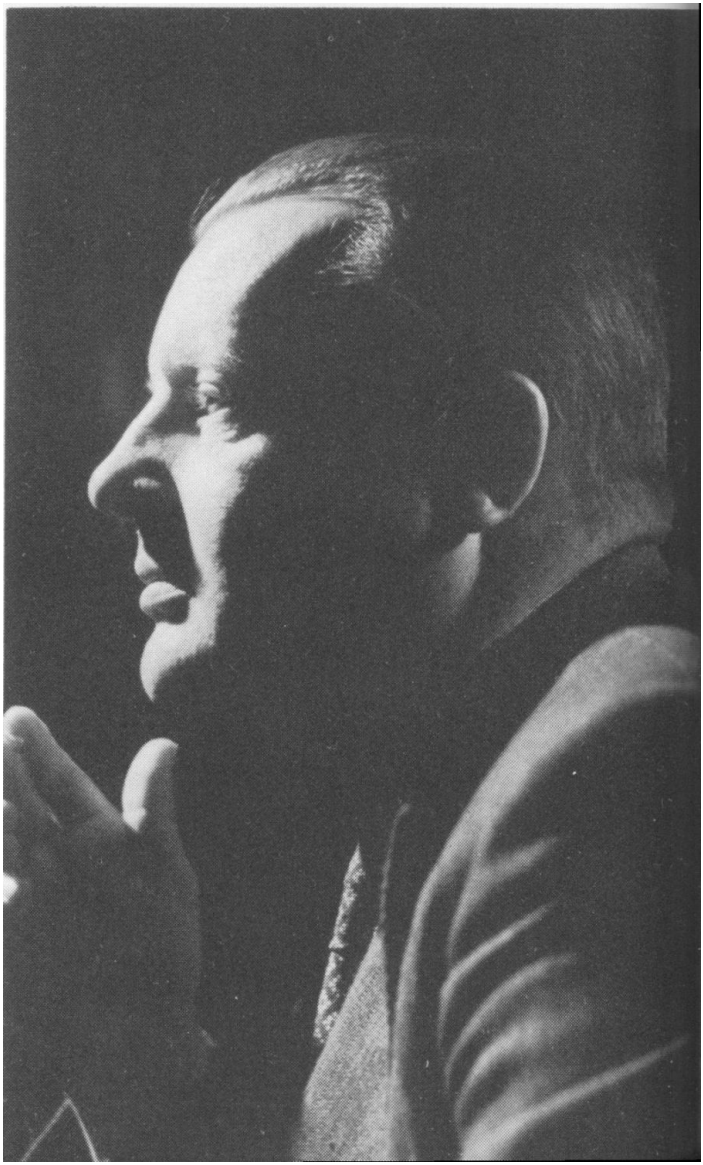
back



back



back



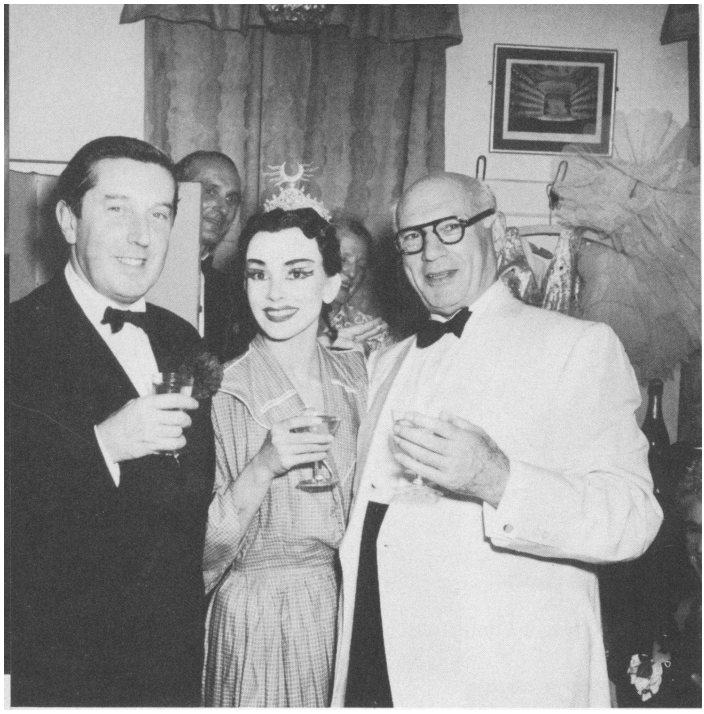
back



back



back



back



back



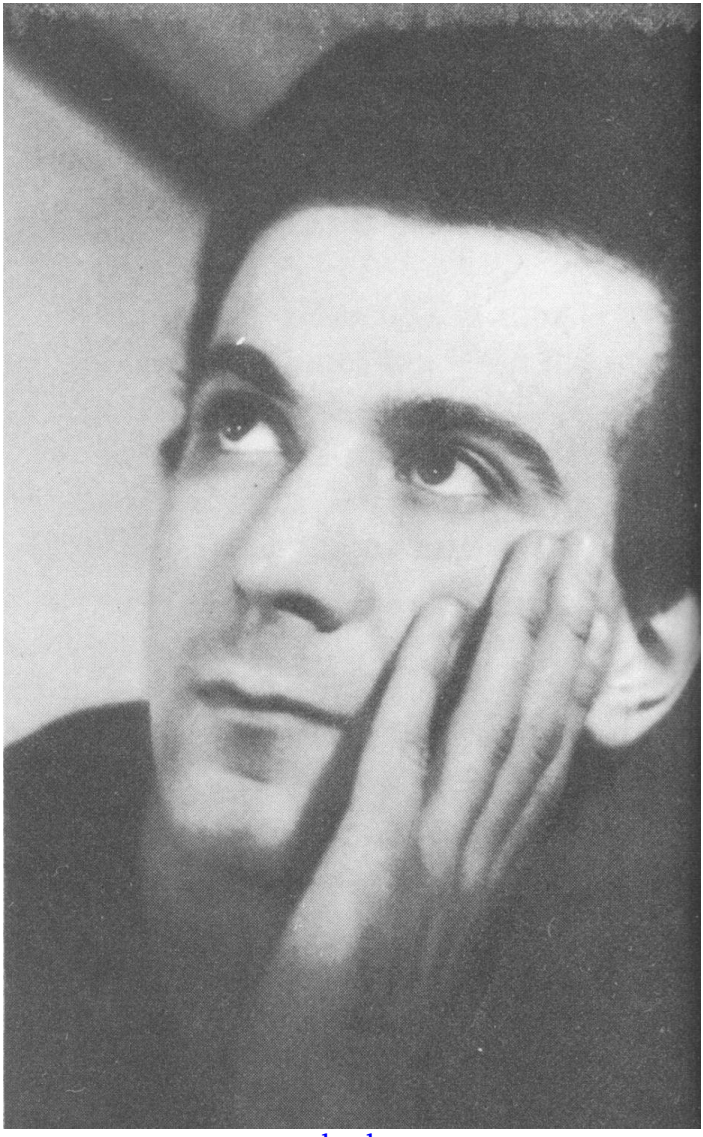
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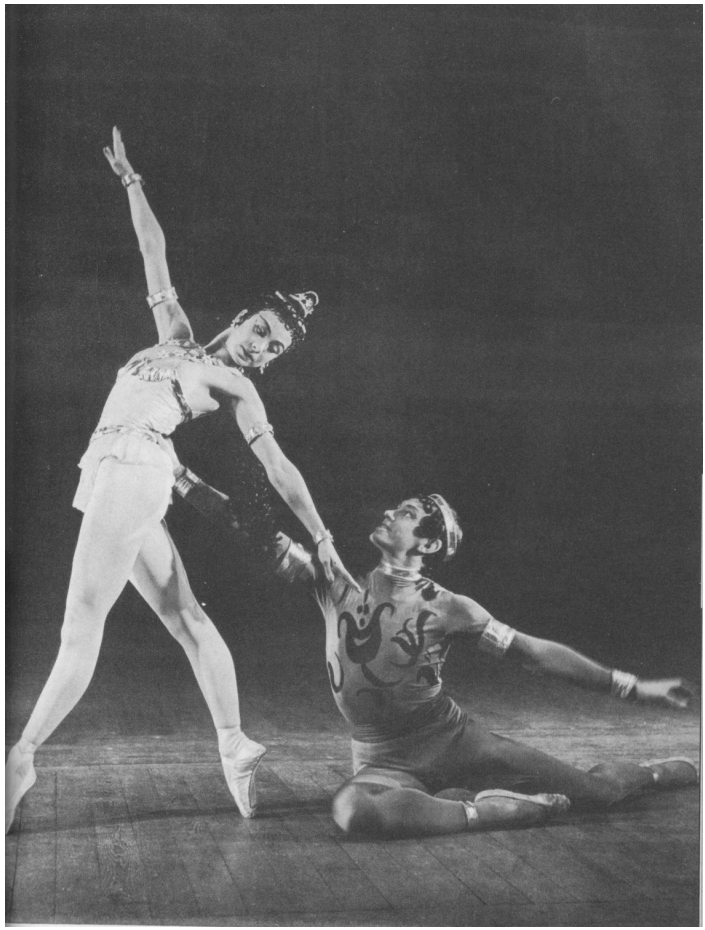
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back



back



back



back



back



back



back



back



back



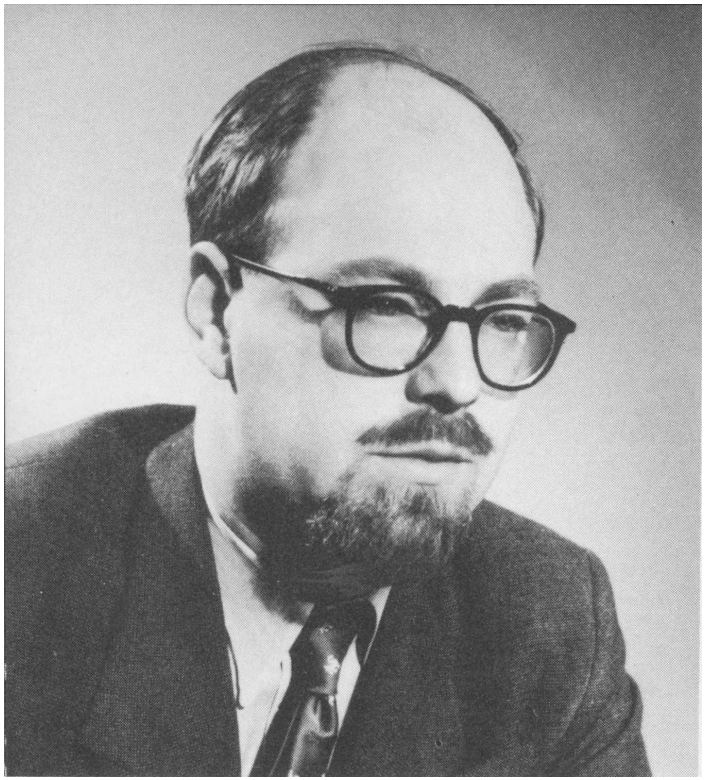
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back



back



back



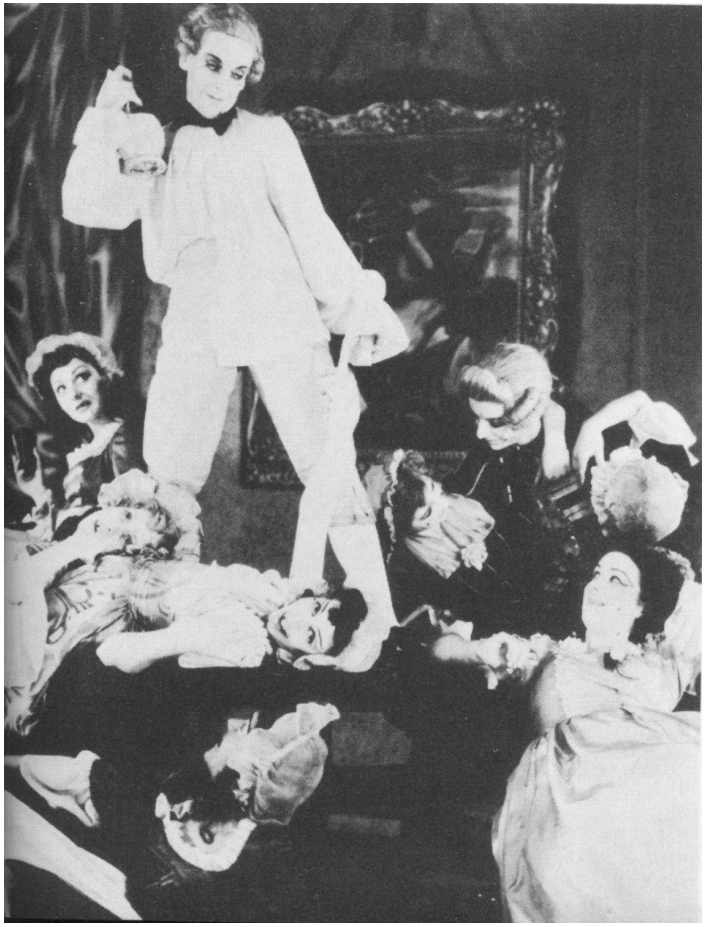
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back



back



back



back



back



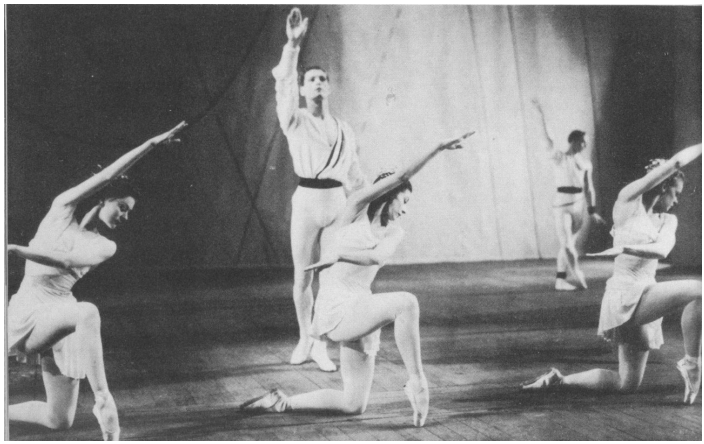
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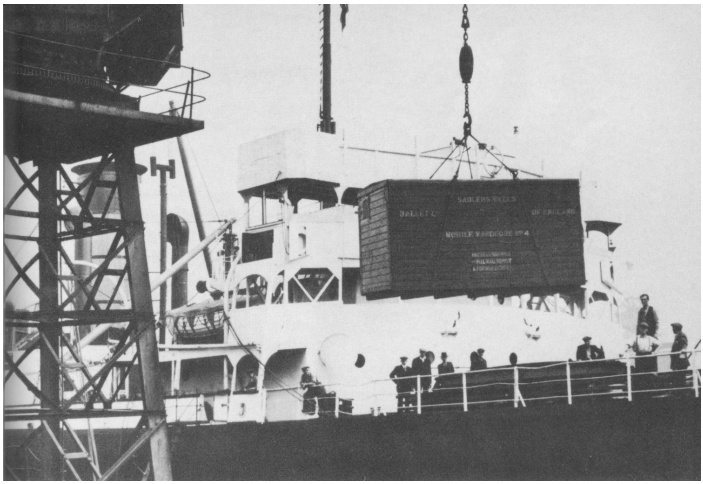
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back



back



back



back



back



back