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Footnotes to

The Ballet

Diaghileff and Lifar

Footnotes to

The Ballet

assembled by

Caryl Brahms

A book for

Balletomanes

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FOREWORD

DEAR MISS BRAHMS,

It is with the greatest pleasure that I write to wish you and your "Company" luck with *Footnotes to the Ballet.*

There are two parties who collaborate to make any production into a complete and harmonious success: the company of dancers and artists, and the general public who watch their efforts. The more expert that public becomes, the more it learns to discriminate between good and bad, between the flashy and the truly brilliant, the better we can perform our task. Nothing inspires a dancer or choreographer more than the knowledge that the public is aware of the subtleties of their art. The birth of the Ballet in Russia was enormously facilitated by the critics who made an expert public. To-day London has clearly become the true centre of all ballet activity, and the appearance of such a book as this, the work of eminent authorities, is of immense value both to us and to our public.

I am working as the director of one particular company, but I speak sincerely when I say that I welcome all good ballet from whatever source it comes. Success benefits us all, while a failure damages even the best. A sincere and informed critic, even when he finds fault with work that has

called for great thought and effort, is our very best friend, for by giving to the public certain critical standards he ensures the final triumph of what is best in our art and minimises the damage that can be caused to the whole of ballet by one unfortunate season.

I particularly appreciate the fine quality of the work that has been done and is being done here by the "Vic-Wells" and the Ballet Club. The mutual help that we can give to one another in increasing the public for ballet is enormous.

Russian ballet is the least chauvinist of all institutions. Within our ranks we have members of many different nationalities, all of whom look upon London as a second home. Both my company and myself therefore extend a warm welcome to this book, which makes so many of our problems clearer. We welcome applause, but we welcome it still more when it is the result of sound knowledge.

W. de Basil
(Director: Colonel W. de Basil's Ballet Russe)

February 1936

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INTRODUCTION

THE history of the Ballet can be seen reflected in the history of its followers. When ballet was the delight of the Russian Imperial Court circles, it had to be groomed and trained in those formal avenues which its public demanded for the proper conditioning of their pleasures. Later the ballet was brought to Western Europe, where its movement, its colour, its music and—one likes to think—its line, took a public as yet unacquainted with the sophisticating influences of the screen, and innocent of the canned adjacency of broadcast and recorded music. The public clamoured for its coloured circuses, and it was given *Igor*, *Scheherazade* and *Thamar*.

Then came the restless twenties. By this time the public had absorbed all the colour it needed and it was beginning to think in the flat, two-toned terms of the screen. It wanted distraction, not instruction. It was ready to fall in love with the new, with the experimental. And the "amusing" ballet of the period was the result.

The year 1933, when Colonel W. de Basil brought his company to the Alhambra, marks the beginning of a renaissance not only in the art of the ballet but in the taste of its London following. The public began to clamour for the best work of every ballet period. It had learnt a great deal of the charm of

light and movement from the screen. The B.B.C. had equipped it with a tolerably facile musical idiom. The two young *ballerine*, Baronova and Toumanova, had shown what line wedded to emotion might mean. A notable classical dancer, Alicia Markova, appearing regularly at Sadler's Wells, drew a public that wished to see the *ballerina* extended at her best in the formal patterns of the Maryinsky productions. The present-day public demands new works. But it demands, in addition, the best creations of other conditions.

Whatever the direction, and whoever the dancers, in a last analysis it will be found that it is the public that dictates the nature of its entertainment. An informed public is as necessary to the ballet as an instructed audience to the musical life of a city.

London ballet-goers have always been a staunch and enthusiastic body; and if they are not so well-informed in the minutiae of the art that makes so strong an appeal to them, it is because the opportunity to acquire such knowledge and appreciation has only recently been available to them.

At the time of writing, the ballet is enjoying a notable vogue. At Sadler's Wells, London is able to maintain a fine and permanent organisation. In addition to this we have our welcome visitors. Colonel de Basil's Russian Ballet fills the Royal Opera House for many months each season. Markova and Dolin, Woizikovski and Nemchinova, at the head of their companies, and the Ballet Jooss,

all draw upon the hospitality of the Metropolis. The Ballet Club gives its twice-weekly performances to packed houses.

Ballet is a highly organised fusion of several separate and sophisticated arts. To discuss these arts in the object of this book.

The book is in the nature of an analysis of the ballet, and is divided into six sections—each one dealing with a facet of the ballet, and each written by a craftsman or by a professional analyst of the subject under discussion.

The book is not intended to teach, nor yet to prove any particular theory of the dance. In it a number of experts discuss various aspects of ballet from the angle of their own particular subject.

It will be found that the writers are not always in agreement over a few vexed questions (the Choreographical Symphonies are a case in point), for there has been no editorial guidance or discipline in the matter. But these differences are inevitable—and, indeed, healthy—when a complex art is reviewed from a number of different and equally important angles.

Mr. Arnold Haskell, who writes on The Dancer, needs no introduction to any ballet public the world over. He has followed the ballet in Europe and America with an informed appreciation. There can be no writer more fitted to discuss the dancers.

The Editor writes on the Choreography of the ballets. Her articles on the ballet in *Time and Tide*

have been known to the readers of that journal for many years.

Music, which plays so vital a part in the conditioning of ballet, has been treated from two angles and by two writers. Mr. Basil Maine discusses the scores and Mr. Constant Lambert deals with action in relation to them. Mr. Maine is known to the public as a musical analyst of distinction both in England and in America. In addition to books of criticism and biography, and articles in the national and weekly Press, Mr. Maine is an exponent of that highly specialised feature, broadcast talks on Musical Appreciation. Mr. Lambert, composer, critic and musical director to Sadler's Wells, is qualified to discuss music in a dual capacity. One who has composed so brilliantly both for the concert-hall and for the ballet is so obviously fitted to discuss their salient differences that further comment would be redundant.

Alexandre Benois, doyen of the ballet, who has given Petrouchka his fair-ground, and who, in *Les Sylphides*, has summoned the Taglionis to their moonlit pleasance, discusses Décor and Costume; and this, too, is fitting from one whose designs for *Pavillon d'Armide* sent all Paris raving when Diaghileff first brought the Ballet Russe to Western Europe. This section has been translated from the Russian by Mr. S. J. Simon.

The filmic possibilities in ballet have been little explored as yet, and Mr. Anthony Asquith, well

known as one of the most brilliant of the younger Film directors, has treated this subject in a mos interesting and illuminating manner.

The importance of the dancer's approach to the rôle is perhaps not fully appreciated by followers of the ballet. That great artist, Lydia Sokolova, one of the supreme female instruments of ballet-realisation of our time, who herself created for Diaghileff many of the rôles which we now take for granted in regular repertoire, discusses The Rôle. Herself a dancer, and one who is teaching others to become dancers, her section will have an additional value for those who are exponents of the dance, as well as for the general public to whom it is primarily addressed.

By way of a footnote to these *Footnotes*, Captain R. C. Jenkinson, a faithful and distinguished follower of the ballet, is writing from the standpoint of ballet from the front of the house. This appendix will be found to be a fascinating record of personal experience by an informed lover of the art.

CARYL BRAHMS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Editor would like to thank all contributors to this book for their helpful and willing collaboration, and in particular: Mr. Arnold Haskell, wise counsellor and good colleague; Colonel W. de Basil, who has accorded the Editor every facility for witnessing and studying the ballets; Mr. Anthony Hankey, whose charming photograph of *Les Sylphides* taken *sur la scène* adorns the spine of the dust-cover, and whose action-photographs make such interesting documents in the body of this book; Mr. William Chappell, whose line drawings embellish the cover, title-page and text; and Madame Sokolova who, with Mr. Arnold Haskell, laid waste her wall to garnish the book with some rare and interesting photographs.

THE DANCER

By Arnold L. Haskell

FOR

BOBBIE JENKINSON

I

THE DANCER

By Arnold L. Haskell

§ 1. THE PLACE OF THE DANCER IN BALLET

THE dancer is but one of the many elements that compose ballet, a fraction of a highly complex structure. If we define choreography as the orchestration of dancing, then each individual dancer is but a note. This sounds logical enough, yet it is a fallacy, for stated thus the function of the dancer appears to be a purely passive one, and some might deduce—and to do so on paper is easy—that the dancer is merely a puppet in the choreographer's hands or in the hands of such a genius as Diaghileff, since the term "puppet master" has been so often and so erroneously applied to him.

The conception of the dancer as a puppet is very far removed from the truth; and the dancer actually has a much greater opportunity to express her individuality than the actress, who is not only controlled in movement by her producer, but who is compelled to speak an author's set lines which have a definite and very concrete meaning.

However competent mechanically a dancer may be, if she is lacking in artistry she will not succeed in enchanting the public even with the most brilliantly conceived choreography, the result of a

careful collaboration between master minds in music and the plastic arts; for those master minds require the dancer to give the final expression to their ideas, to convey them to the public, as well as to inspire them in the first place. A dancer of genius, however, can sometimes hold her audience entranced by creating something out of nothing, that is, merely by expressing herself. "Pavlova dansait la danse de toujours comme jamais"; she turned tinsel into gold by the alchemy of her personality.

In considering the dancer's share in ballet, therefore, all thoughts of the puppet, the passive instrument, must be completely dismissed from the mind. More reasonably—and Fokine himself has stated it —the dancer is an equal partner with the composer and artist. Actually, however, in practice the dancer is very much the senior partner, if not directly and obviously, in a hundred and one subtle ways. When at certain periods choreography has sought to use the dancer as a marionette it has failed, for ultimately it is the dancer who suggests the direction of the art.

La Camargo (1721) took a justifiable pride in her shapely legs, shortened her skirt, and modern ballet was born; Heinel (1766) evolved a new step, the *pirouette*, that enriched the whole scope of choreography; Taglioni (1821) was frail and ethereal, and so for a generation and more ballet became very much an expression of her physique and temperament, moreover she shone so brightly that the male

was soon degraded to the rôle of *porteur* from which Nijinsky finally rescued it; Legnani and the Italians brought back virtuosity; Pavlova took ballet from technical devices to lead it back again to moonlit groves; the "biblical Rubinstein"[1] turned it towards the exotic; finally, a thirteen-year-old Toumanova, because of her ability, among other attributes, to spin on one leg an indefinite number of times, ushered in the new virtuosity.

No artistic principles are invoked here; no comparison is intended between the dancers I have mentioned; and many more names could be added. This is just a bare recital of historical fact that shows beyond dispute how the physique, temperament and technical prowess of individual dancers largely dictate the lines that ballet should follow. The choreographer, himself inevitably a dancer, must by the very nature of things think in terms of the individuals in his company, and much as he educates them and uses them, in the end it is they who guide him. Can one conceive of a *Spectre de la Rose*, in the form we know it, without Nijinsky?

Choreographers vary intensely in their methods and reactions, from the definitely personal approach of a Balanchine to the more objective attitude of a Massine; but the choreographer can only use the material available, and can only succeed when that material has quality and individuality.

It is only when we have thoroughly grasped the

[1] The phrase is Diaghileff's.

importance of the dancer as an individual that we can really approach ballet. The great dancer must be thought of as we think of the great instrumentalist, a Menuhin or a Horowitz. Such was the attitude in Russia, Stravinsky has told me, and it is only in Western Europe that the term "dancer" has taken on a frivolous and often a derogatory sense that places her very far below the actress of the legitimate stage.

The great dancer is a rare and valuable national possession. She is potentially a living and progressive museum of plastic art, as well as an entire conservatoire of music. Karsavina popularised in Western Europe all the glories of Russian music; she revealed to us Bakst, who so completely revolutionised the whole of decorative art; she also brought to us the immediate reaction from his barbaric splendour with Picasso and the French school. Diaghileff with Fokine and Massine conceived these things. Karsavina revealed them to a vast public and made them live.

§ 2. ESSENTIALS

It is obvious that the truly great dancer who can accomplish these things, who can add to the tradition as well as draw from it, is a rarity. No generation has more than some half-dozen; and some generations have their blanks when pessimists say that ballet is dying, and go on shaking their

heads until some small girl proves them wrong, some small girl who is supremely unconscious of her destiny, even though she may have a mighty good opinion of herself.

I have often outlined the many attributes required by the dancer, but I must pass them in review once again here, since they are the reason for the great dancer's rarity, and the full realisation of them alone can give us the essential respect for the dancer as an individual artist. If we were allotting marks, as in school or according to the latest psychological intelligence tests, the following are the points which we should have to consider:

1. Beauty
2. Personality
3. Mechanical ability
4. Technique
5. Musicality
6. Dramatic ability
7. Character and outlook.

Some are obvious, while others need elaboration. Since there are no absolute standards of perfection it is quite impossible to allot marks, though it might stimulate the critical faculties to do so, and show us at any rate why we admired a certain dancer rather than her rival.

Beauty, the perfect physical instrument, is the first, the basic requirement. Ideas of beauty vary, but every great ballerina has been called beautiful

by a large section of the public, and term "a plain ballerina" rings as an impossible contradiction. There is no absolute definition of beauty. Charm may well take its place; America (*via* Elinor Glyn) may use the word *It*. . . . No matter; we can argue and argue, but the public knows well enough.

Personality is the next. Here again the public knows, and for once the public is never wrong. We cannot of course define it, but we can very readily gauge its absence, and without it no dancer emerges from the *corps de ballet*, though she may possess an astonishing mastery of mechanics that enables her to complete a record series of *fouettés* and *entrechats*.

I know of one dancer (*I forget her name*) who has the strongest mechanical aptitude I have ever seen, that is all; but *I forget her name*, and only a handful of admiring relatives remember it. They say that it is unjust; perhaps they are right. In any case it is a very sad story.

For the moment I will leave the questions of mechanics and technique. They are more complex and require a section to themselves.

Musicality means two things: both the ear to seize and follow rhythm, and the comprehension of the atmosphere and content of the music. Strangely enough, many famed dancers are sadly deficient in the first and have even to be counted for in the wings; far fewer in the second, which

ultimately means the ability to mime, to convey to the audience what has been understood of the atmosphere and content of the music.

The average ballet dancer with a good ear all too often reduces the whole musical problem to one of counting and is in consequence far too rigid in movement. This is an accusation that opponents of ballet are always raising; but it is not the system that is at fault, merely the application of it in the hands of unimaginative people, teachers and their pupils.

Finally, as an essential to true greatness come questions of character—the will to work and to succeed; questions of culture and intelligence; and points common to every profession, such as health and opportunity. Each could be expanded at length; the perfect ballerina requires a high all-round aggregate of marks, and it is quite obvious that it is easier by far to become a Cabinet Minister or a captain of industry than a great dancer.

A word on the economic aspects, under the heading of opportunity.

The young dancer must live in a constant atmosphere of pure ballet. *Any coquetting with films, music-hall or musical comedy may easily prove fatal to her whole artistic progress. At its best* ballet can offer from £15 to £20 per week, the music-hall some £200 for short periods, the films astronomic sums. It is clear that the dancer requires enormous will-power and respect for her art to refuse such offers.

I know of four cases in which they have been turned down—and indignantly.

Artistic Pedigree

Under the same heading of opportunity there is one point that applies especially to the dancer, that of artistic pedigree.

Dancing is an aristocratic art, an art where tradition is a living force, where the past dictates to the present and the future unto the fifth generation and more. The full working out of the pattern will be seen when I come to deal with the history of the past fifty years. The dancer is the daughter of her teacher, and in comparatively few generations it is possible to trace the pedigree back to the very origins of the classical dance; one weak link in the chain and something indispensable is missing. *No dancer taught by a nonentity has ever been anything but a nonentity herself.* From the very first steps in the classroom the dancer's fate is being decided. (Parents, please note and beware: this is your responsibility, and even if little Mary or diminutive Agatha is not a genius, she should be given a fair chance at the start.)

Digression I: On use of the word "ballerina"

I have used the word *ballerina* frequently here. It is not, as is popularly supposed, synonymous with "ballet dancer." It has or should have a very precise significance, both aesthetically, as denoting

a certain quality of dancer,[1] and as an indication of rank.

In Russia *ballerina* was a definite rank, no more to be usurped by any one than the rank of general, which was certainly many hundred times more common. (Since the revolution the number of ci-devant ballerinas[2] like the number of generals has mysteriously trebled.) This rank, bestowed officially, and obviously earned by public success as well, carried with it a certain fixed emolument and a good pension on retirement. Outside of Russia, apart from such state institutions as the Paris Opéra, where once again the title had its precise significance, the rank is rather *de facto* than *de jure*, signifying the "star" of a particular company, who dances certain leading rôles—*Swan Lake*, *Aurora* and the like. This also gives us an indication of the precise aesthetic significance of the title. It is possible to be a very great dancer without being a ballerina, *which denotes a special type of dancer*, an undisputed leader of the classical type of dancer. Dancing has its divisions as has singing, bull-fighting, or for that matter, football: there is the character dancer who may specialise in the miming of comic rôles or in villainous miming (usually also comical) or in national dancing; there is the *demi-caractère* dancer, where the technique is classical, but the character has a definitely acting rôle as well, usually

[1] We even grade our eggs to-day.

[2] I know this is incorrect, but I don't care. It looks better.

a *soubrette* as in *The Good-humoured Ladies* or *Carnaval*; and finally there is the classical dancer, who technically embraces everything, and who may perform every rôle, as did Karsavina, or only the purely classical, as does Spessiva.

Digression II: On the meaning of Classicism[1]

"It would be impossible to find an organisation which has given to the world more *classical* dancers of different and varying talents than the Imperial Russian Ballet."

It is with these words that the late Valerian Svetloff, the great Russian critic, begins his exceedingly interesting study of Anna Pavlova. It is the word "classical" in this phrase that strikes one most. Kchesinska, Trefilova, Pavlova, Karsavina, Egorova, Preobrajenska, all have this one thing in common: they are "classical" dancers, though in every other respect they differ, each having a clearly defined personality. Fortunately, the majority are now teaching and have formed the dancers of to-day in their image. Trefilova is the classical dancer *par excellence*, an inspired interpreter of Tchaikovsky; Pavlova was more dream-like, more sentimental,

[1] Classicism here must not be confused with the attempt to revive the Greek dance, which has found so much favour in England, where, under the remote influence of Duncan, groups of girls in tunics pose loosely round the Parthenon and are then photographed. The true Greek dance cannot exist without the true Greek music, but the "feel" of it has been recovered by Fokine and Nijinsky.

using the word in its best sense; while Karsavina has made her name rather in the Fokine Ballet as a romantic actress of power and versatility; and Preobrajenska, who has given so many dancers, including Toumanova and Baronova, to the contemporary stage, excels in the humorous and in *mimique*. Each one of these great artists is entirely different, yet each one has this common grounding of "classicism," and it is this classicism that has permitted each dancer to express her particular personality. It is interesting, therefore, to inquire into the exact nature of this classicism without which the dancer of the ballerina class cannot exist. I do not intend to treat the question from a dance technique point of view, but from a wider and more easily understood aspect. The word can easily be translated without any reference to the sister arts, though as will be appreciated without much difficulty, classicism in painting, music, and ballet are very closely connected.

Firstly, I would translate "classicism" very freely to mean "pure dancing" (Noverre has said in his famous letters: "Pure dancing is like the mother tongue"); the "classical dancer" to mean a dancer of perfect technique who has sought no short cuts to proficiency; and the "classical ballet" as a ballet designed first and last for the dancer. Such definitions are necessarily incomplete, but they give us an approach to the truth, which we can reach by elaborating them. Firstly, by "pure dancing" I

mean that dancing which has been based on the five positions, which produces long, graceful lines, and which is neither acrobatic nor in any way violent and lacking in dignity. The classical dancer has a definite system, built up by years of study, and it is only when this system has been thoroughly learned, has become second nature, that the dancer is ready to be seen by the public. The opponent of classicism shows great ignorance of the subject by the argument that the *pirouette*, *pas de chat*, etc., are monotonous and meaningless, and that the modern public requires something significant. Apart from the sheer abstract beauty of a well-executed step, a quality that is entirely missing in what the opponents of classicism would give us as a substitute, the classical dance can be full of character. The steps of a dance are like the musical notes, they are limited in number, and the effect depends on how those notes are combined and executed.

The mistake that is always made by the opponents of ballet dancing—and I am speaking of dancing here and not ballet—arises either from a totally incorrect view of what is actually happening, or from the fact that they have never seen a first-class ballerina. They make the great mistake of thinking that the dancer is expressing "classicism," instead of taking it as it really is, that classicism is helping the dancer to express herself. They would probably understand the argument if applied to the pianist or violinist, and if the word "classicism"

were replaced by "school." Just as without "correct fingering" no would-be pianist, however bright the fire of genius burned within him, would be able to express himself, so it is with the dancer. Once the technique has been conquered, the artist can express his personality. He may specialise in Bach, Beethoven, or Chopin, and what is more, he may interpret his chosen composer in a manner that has never been tried before. This is much more the case with the dancer, who is not bound down to such a great extent by the choreographer.

The whole Russian school of dancing is the gradual result of the interpretation of the Italian and French methods of dancing by such purely Russian dancers as Pavlova, Kchesinska or Trefilova. A simple *pirouette* may be danced by any number of dancers of equal technical ability, and produce an equal number of entirely different sensations. Firstly, it may be danced by the brilliant technician, and, beyond the admiration her virtuosity calls for, it may leave the spectator cold and bored; a certain tightness in the movements may make it vulgar and irritating; it may be taken poetically, aristocratically, passionately, mischievously, in as many different manners as there are differences of character. There is nothing great about the *pirouette* itself; it is merely a note in a melody, a step in a choreographic creation; yet it can be made great by a great executant, and from an abstract point of view it is a thing of intense beauty. Ballet, like every

art, requires close study. It is not the mere idle entertainment that some would have it. Taken as such, without a knowledge of the technique or an analysis of the art of the *prima ballerina*, it may quite conceivably be less exciting than the more immediately obvious dances that are offered to us daily.

§ 3. MECHANICS AND TECHNIQUE

We now come to a very difficult question, not so much of fact as of nomenclature, and in some recent discussions with La Nijinska, a deep thinker as well as an inspired creator, the matter has, for the present at any rate, become clear to the present writer.

"Technique" is generally used to indicate the ability to perform certain steps and combinations of steps. Nijinska would give to it a far wider meaning, making it inclusive of the first, which she calls "mechanical ability," and bringing in as well stage-craft and the adequate exploitation of that mechanical ability. There is a case where technique may even disguise a failure in mechanical ability, the brilliant recovery from a slip or error, the disguising of some mechanical lacuna.

This insistence on accurate definition may seem to be hair-splitting, but it is of definite practical value in our assessment of dancers, for it enables us straightaway to distinguish between the acrobat and

the classical virtuoso.[1] If the latter possess merely a mechanical aptitude, then there is nothing to distinguish her from the acrobat; if she has dance technique then her presentation will remove her work from that sphere; if she is an artist as well . . .?

The Dance Conception

I used to divide *artistes* mentally into two groups: the artists and the dancers, but through various discussions with Nijinska and others I now know that it is altogether too loose and too inaccurate.

There are three groups: artists, dancers and the majority, those who perform isolated steps and movements with more or less brilliance.

The first group, the artists, is a rarity. There are at most three or four in a generation.[2] It would be putting our art too low to think otherwise. They add enormously to the attractions of a company, but they are not indispensable. If they were, ballet would soon be a dead thing. Artistry can be cultivated to a great extent, and it must be cultivated in the classroom. That is the function of the higher technique of teaching.

The second category is rare, too—the dancer.

[1] There is an enormous difference of intention between acrobat and dancer. Each may perform the identical sequence of steps, but the acrobat stresses the difficulty, while the dancer uses them as a means to an end, which she makes clear through her dance technique.

[2] Of those dancing regularly to-day I would put Leonide Massine alone into that class.

There are many to-day famous as dancers, who have not an elementary conception of the dance. It is for that that we must revise our whole worn-out notions of technique to get at the true dance conception. The word *technique* as it is loosely used suggests the solving of a difficult problem of physical movement, a definition that, as I have shown, might equally well apply to the acrobat or the athlete. It is too incomplete to include the dancer.

Russia, in her combination of France and Italy, discovered the truth in practice. To dance is not to perform a series of difficult movements well, not just that; it is also to make the spectator forget that there is a series at all. The true dance conception comes in the junction between movement and movement, in the elimination of obvious preparation. The average school adheres to the first definition, so that the average pupil never learns the true lesson of movement flowing into movement that alone makes true dancing. To-day we are so used to the *staccato* that we applaud it in the mistaken belief that it constitutes a strong technique. It is easy to see why we applaud it, because its difficulties are underlined instead of being eliminated.

What for instance does the phrase "meaningless arms" convey in a dance that has no meaning that can be put into words? It conveys just that, lack of a true dance conception, arms that are *obviously* preparing the dancer for the next movement and

that are out of the picture of the dance as a whole. There is a type of dancer who enjoys immense popularity and then suddenly "dates." Kchesinska tells me:

> "Many of the dancers of my youth enjoyed immense popularity, but gradually, as I began to understand, I saw something comical about them, and now when I look back on them I cannot imagine them dancing to-day. They would provoke laughter and not admiration."

The *artiste* who "dates" is the one who cannot really sustain a dance.

Virginia Zucchi danced in old-fashioned ballets, in old-fashioned costumes, to ridiculous music. Yet it was she who first made Alexandre Benois and Prince Wolkonsky into *balletomanes* and who inspired Kchesinska herself. She would not "date," because she understood the dance, quite apart from her gifts as an artist.

§ 4. PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS: SIX YOUNG DANCERS

So far I have tried to lay down as objectively as possible the standards by which the dancer may be judged, and later I will deal with the dancer historically; but it would not be out of place to give a more personal interpretation of these standards, and to show how I myself have applied them.

All criticism of any artistic subject is made up of a compound of knowledge, experience and taste.

The appreciation of a human being, an individual dancer, can certainly never be reduced to a mathematical formula. "I like X because she's so graceful," says the tyro; "I like X because of such-and-such-and-such," says the expert, and he has just a little chance of greater truth, because he has ceased to be amazed at the fact that X can stand on the tips of her toes, having seen A and B and C doing precisely the same.

I advance my opinions confidently because I believe in them, but I never forget Fokine's reply to a rash question of mine: "There is no greatest dancer, only greatest for certain rôles and moods."

There are six dancers at the present day[1] who seem to me to be outstanding, but I will not insist any more here than to say that it is they who have given me the most pleasure and who have come nearest to my ideals, and to a greater or lesser degree they all possess this dance conception; moreover, when watching others dance they frequently intrude themselves on my mind—a test at any rate of personality. They are: Tamara Toumanova, Irina Baronova, Tatiana Riabouchinska, and in another category Ruth Chanova, Natalia Leslie and Margot Fonteyn. The first three, especially Toumanova, I shall have to consider at some length in the historical section.

Tamara Toumanova is the most brilliant of modern dancers, Baronova the most poetically

[1] I limit my field to the 1933 and post-1933 class.

subtle, Riabouchinska the lightest and most ethereal.

All have technique (Toumanova has showmanship and stage-craft to a surprising extent), and mechanics so varied that one no longer discusses them. Toumanova shines, Baronova glows, Riabouchinska glitters. Toumanova always makes one gloriously aware of herself, Baronova investigates her rôle more closely and submerges herself in it,[1] while Riabouchinska has something fey. In common, as in the case of all truly classical ballerinas, Baronova and Toumanova share a rare versatility that enables them to go from the cold perfection of *Aurora* to the Miller's Wife of *Le Tricorne* or the "Mae West" Lady Gay of *Union Pacific*. They are rivals who meet in the great classical rôles.

The fourth, Ruth Chanova, is on a different plane; less experienced with, at present, less scope or mechanical equipment, she enchants especially in the romantic rôles of Fokine and in the works of her discoverer, Nijinska, for rarely have I seen any one who brings out more vividly my points about music. With her it is not a question of a good ear, but of something magnificently positive, of an absolute identification of herself with the content of the music. If an arm drops, it seems as if the music were no longer able to support it.

[1] Cf. Bernhardt and Duse, Pavlova and Karsavina. An endless opportunity for futile but interesting discussion on the aims of the actress.

In *Carnaval* hers is the true porcelain mischief of the period;[1] in the Prelude from *Sylphides* she is a wraith conjured up by the music; in *Le Spectre de la Rose* a dream-haunted maiden, sister to Karsavina herself. Chanova's interpretations are so personal and her personality so very strong that it is possible to like or dislike her intensely, to disagree about her more keenly than about any other dancer.

The first three are the big figures in the world of ballet to-day, they have already made history. Chanova, the young Natalia Leslie (who has been insufficiently seen and then not well presented), and Margot Fonteyn of Sadler's Wells,[2] a dancer of strong personality, brilliance and charm who already has a remarkable performance of *Lac des Cygnes* to her credit, are, if given the chance to develop, potentially so.

§ 5. NATIONALITY IN DANCING

This is not so much a difficult question as a touchy one, which chauvinism has a tendency of answering without due regard to fact, and where the chauvinist is forced to retort: "Admiration of foreigners is a form of artistic snobbery and nothing else—so there."

[1] She was badly handicapped both in the rôle and in *Le Spectre de la Rose* by an unsuitable costume and a jumbled background.

[2] Since writing this I have been delighted by the dancing of another Wells *artiste*, Elizabeth Miller, who shows immense promise, especially in *demi-caractère*.

At the present day and for the last half-century at least the supremacy of the Russian dancer as a complete artist is unquestionable, and *the recent history of ballet and the development of the ballerina is the history of Russian ballet.* The Russians maintained the ballet when elsewhere it was artistically sterile, and under the guidance of Pavlova and of Diaghileff spread a love and knowledge of it throughout the entire world. Later we shall see how they themselves acquired this mastery.

The English have long had a marked aptitude for dancing, and as audiences have certainly been the most receptive and understanding of dancing, if not of ballet as an entity. There have been and are fine English performers, but there is as yet no English school with easily recognisable characteristics. The great dancers England has produced in themselves amply prove that point. Lydia Sokolova, by far the greatest of all, came under Russian influence[1] when she was fourteen, and made her great career as a Russian. Consequently her assumption of a Russian name went far deeper than a mere masquerade for business reasons. She assumed a new artistic nationality, with all that it implied. To use the name of Sokolova to prove that an English school exists is an absurdity.

Alicia Markova, a distinguished ballerina, who of late has made her name, largely known as an English

[1] That of Cecchetti and Fokine among many others.

dancer, was Russian-trained[1] from the age of seven; she came under the influence of the finest Russian company, and nothing can alter the fact, implied by her very name, that she is a Russian dancer. To-day even when she sponsors and appears with her own English company, her greatest successes are in Russian works—*Les Sylphides*, *The Swan Lake*, *The Blue Bird* and *Giselle*—mounted by a Russian *régisseur*, Sergeeff. The English works in her repertoire could not possibly have shown her gifts to a large public. The same is the case with the first, and so far the only, great English *premier danseur classique*. Anton Dolin is a Russian dancer, made by Russian masters,[2] excelling in a Russian repertoire. It is because any misapprehension of this point is dangerous that I insist so strongly.

English girls can and do dance admirably, but when they succeed it is invariably as Russian dancers under Russian control and supervision, and the teachers who have produced the finest results with them are the Russians most intimately associated with the great tradition.[3]

[1] A pupil of the late Seraphine Astafieva, who was trained in the Imperial Schools and was an early member of the Diaghileff Ballet. Later Markova worked with Cecchetti and Tchernicheva.

[2] A pupil of Seraphine Astafieva. Later studied with Nijinska, Cecchetti, Legat and Tchernicheva.

[3] Ninette de Valois, Hilda Bewicke, Vera Savina, and more recently Serova, Nelidova, Strogova; and in English Ballet, Margot Fonteyn, trained by Astafieva, and Ninette de Valois, Pearl Argyle (Marie Rambert), Diana Gould (Marie Rambert), etc.

Danilova, Baronova and Massine
in a Danse Russe

Leonide Massine in *Union Pacific*

In spite of what may be thought and said to the contrary, an English girl in a Russian company has an equal chance with the Russians of getting to the top. Sokolova proved it in the great days of Fokine, when the doors of the Maryinsky were open wide and competition was twice as intense as it is to-day. If they do not rise to the top, then it is only because of the lack of something in themselves. Tradition may be at the basis of that, but there is also a strong psychological factor, arising both out of a sense of that tradition and out of certain national characteristics.

The Russian girl has an innate humility in her approach to her art. Such humility must not be confused with modesty. It is a humility towards the immensity of the art itself. Call a young Russian dancer by the stupid phrase "a second Pavlova" and she will not be flattered. She will immediately assume, and very rightly so, that you are grossly ignorant, for she knows only too well the vast heights reached by Anna Pavlova, and at the same time she wishes to preserve her personality intact. Pay the same idiotic compliment to an average English girl, she may dissemble, but she will be pleased just the same. It is the "freaks," the Sokolovas, who really know and have succeeded just as much on account of that attitude as for any other of their gifts. Karsavina in writing of Sokolova stressed that very point.

Another difference in attitude, this time purely

§ 6. THE BIRTH OF RUSSIAN BALLET (HISTORICAL)

The Russian Imperial Ballet School was founded by the Empress Anne in 1735. Wealthy nobles had spread a love of the art by their private companies of serf dancers, many of whom gained considerable fame. Virtuosity had always been a feature of national Russian dancing, Cossacks and soldiers generally being able to perform with ease many of the most difficult feats in the male repertoire, as well as using the points of their toes without the block shoes of the ballerina. Dancing came perfectly naturally to these people, but it was only in 1801 that the true science settled in Russia with Didelot, a French dancer and *maître de ballet*, who began to foster native talent. Already Russia had produced a great ballerina, Istomina, immortal to-day in Pouchkine's verses, and some time later Andreyanova, the first Russian to interpret the great rôle of *Giselle*,[1] a favourite with every ballerina. But the Russian ballet as we know it to-day began with the advent in Russia of a great dancer from Marseilles, Marius Petipa (1847), and his appointment eleven years later as *maître de ballet*. His reign extended nearly till his death in 1910 and every great dancer passed through his hands; and to-day still the young generation is formed through his immortal dances in *The Swan Lake* and *Aurora's Wedding*, and no one is truly ballerina without having essayed their

[1] First created by Grisi in 1841.

leading rôles. He it was who substituted grace for mechanics and who first very timidly began to treat a *corps de ballet* as something human rather than as so much scenery. Together with Johannsen, a Dane, pupil of the Bournonvilles, he taught them the pure French tradition, which, as Legat—himself a major influence in the development of teaching—says, had been forgotten by the French themselves.

The Russian dancers most in vogue during the middle period were Vasem and Sokolova,[1] but Russian talent was not yet developed and the public grew weary of seeing them in a long succession of rôles. Moreover, there was something still lacking in the Russian dancer. Grace she had in plenty, but a somewhat limited strength and no great aptitude for the fireworks that have enchanted every public at every period, and that rightly or wrongly will continue to do so. This lack of virtuosity was rendered all the more noticeable by the visits to small outlying theatres of Italian troupes that excelled in those very difficulties yet unexplored by the Russians.

One of these Italian visitors, Virginia Zucchi, a name to be for ever honoured in the annals of ballet, brought with her a quite exceptional artistry. She could make those to whom ballet was a fundamentally inartistic thing cry by the sincerity and power

[1] The dancer from whom our own Hilda Munnings took her name.

of her miming, even in the most absurd works that would surely have made them laugh under any other circumstances. Zucchi[1] won to ballet many disciples who were to play a considerable rôle in its renaissance, showing, as Pavlova was to show years later, the strength and independence of the great dancer, the triumph of the individual.

But in addition to Zucchi and many others there came a man, Enrico Cecchetti, who as well as being a great dancer and a great mime, possessed an inborn knowledge of all the Italian technique, a legacy from Giovanni Lepri, with its strength and extended repertoire of movement. The director of the Imperial Theatres at the time, Vsevolojsky, realising that without some drastic change of direction ballet was a lost art, boldly engaged him, amidst considerable opposition from the more chauvinistic among *balletomanes*, although as can be seen, the Russians have always been freer than any other nationals from artistic chauvinism.

Russia and the material at his disposal must have changed many of Cecchetti's views and led him to modify a system that was inborn and instinctive; so that he was able, by bringing Italian methods to Russia and wedding them to the existing French school, to develop the modern Russian school; the maximum strength plus the maximum grace. The term "Russian ballet" now had a meaning far more

[1] "There is more poetry in Zucchi's back," said the critic Skalkovsky, "than in all the modern poets of Italy."

Lifar Diaghileff Cecchetti

Colonel W. de Basil

"Double Work" in a class of the de Basil Company

Tatiana Riabouchinska at her lesson with Mathilde Kchesinska

precise than before, when it could have been described merely as ballet in Russia.[1]

Russian ballet, the Russian style of dancing, is a blend of French and Italian methods adapted for the Russian physique and temperament and developed by a series of great individual artists.

For a certain time the Italian dancer excelled and held undisputed sway; Carlotta Brianza and Pierrina Legnani were the queens of the dance and held audiences enthralled by such technical tricks as the multiple *fouetté*.[2] Many Russian dancers affected to despise this showy trick as unworthy and inartistic, and doubtless at the time they were justified, but nevertheless they tried in every way to discover the secret and make it their own. The first to succeed in this was the *prima ballerina assoluta*, Mathilde Kchesinska. Her success was almost a national event, and this, added to her remarkable gifts in every direction, soon made her the undisputed ruler both of Russian dancing and of dancing in Russia. At the same time another dancer of strong personality and technique gained great popularity, when Olga Preobrajenska became a *prima ballerina*. These two may be rightly called the first of the modern Russian ballerinas, and to-day, as we shall see, they are still making history and are moulding the Russian dance to an

[1] The last is the case in England to-day.

[2] Turning on the toe of one foot while making a whipping motion with the other.

even greater extent than when they were receiving the plaudits of the Maryinsky *balletomanes*. To-day their triumphs are not national but world-wide.

Anna Pavlova

Zucchi had gained many converts to ballet from among the musical and artistic public, and now again (*circa* 1905) there was a young dancer, Anna Pavlova, who could move a different and a wider public from that of the habitual *balletomane*. She was delicate and ethereal, bringing back memories of the romantic era of Taglioni, and round her there centred all the hopes of those who saw in ballet the perfect fusion of the arts. She came at the time of a sensational artistic revolution,[1] was not merely the perfect instrument for the revolutionaries but also very much their inspiration. Fokine made a perfect place for her, where Petipa might have found her lacking in orthodox strength and conventional *brio*, and the young Diaghileff talked of her in Paris as a part of his dreams for a Russian ballet conquest of the West. She was to be the standard-bearer of a new aesthetic.

Through reasons of her particular temperament this did not come about. She was the inspiration of the vision, but others fulfilled the reality. In spite of that fact, in spite of her early separation from the main trend of the art, Anna Pavlova, more

[1] For a full account of The World of Art see the author's *Diaghileff*, pp. 108–129.

than any one, has spread a love and a knowledge of dancing. Where Diaghileff made his converts in thousands, she did in millions, till her name has become magic and has given ambition and strength to dancers all over the globe.

Some time ago I visited with a young dancer the Pavlova exhibition at the *Archives Internationales de la Danse* in Paris. One corner of the hall was arranged as her dressing-room, with the dressing-table exactly as it had been during her lifetime, her slippers and the Swan dress waiting to be put on. It was so living that at any moment she might have entered and begun her make-up, and yet, because we knew, it was as lifeless as only an empty theatre can seem.

I was deeply moved, remembering the unique thrill that this matchless artist had always given me. I was grateful for the number of times I had seen her; angry with myself for the performances I had missed. All that is left, I thought, is this lonely dressing-room and memories that in a few years will gradually become dimmed and distorted. I turned to my companion, but I could see that her reactions were entirely different from mine. Her imagination too was stirred, but she was happy.

"This isn't all that remains. Pavlova isn't immortal just because her name is remembered. She lives to-day in every classroom and in every performance."

She was right. She was a dancer and she knew. I thought then of her own story.

She had been taken as a child of four to see Pavlova in Shanghai, and from that moment nothing else mattered. She was able to convince her parents, and her career had begun. Four years later she made her début, appropriately at a gala performance in which Pavlova appeared.

She was just one among the many hundreds the world over to whom Pavlova had conveyed an irresistible message that bade them overcome every difficulty, make every sacrifice until they danced; and now this child and those nameless others had something of Pavlova in them, which they in their turn would carry through the world.

Pavlova herself may be dead, but every dancer of the generations following carries on to the stage something that was hers. She lives not merely as an inspiration, but also in a sense that is far more tangible. The inspiration of Pavlova alone has altered the whole history of the dance.

Diaghileff himself was strengthened in his resolve to show Western Europe the wonders of Russian ballet because of Anna Pavlova. The new romanticism was largely dictated by her physique and temperament.

Camargo, Taglioni, Zucchi, Pavlova were great and are still living because they have added something positive to the dance, technically and spiritually.

Without such pioneer spirits ballet would long have become a museum art; all that remained would have been the sad and rapidly fading memories stimulated by that empty dressing-room.

Nijinsky and the Male Dancer

Vaslav Nijinsky occupied much the same position in the new movement as Pavlova, with the important difference that he popularised male dancing and raised its whole artistic status, altering considerably the orchestration of dancing. Previously, since Taglioni, the classical male dancer had been a partner and a background, now he came fully into his own. Petipa had not stressed the male rôle to any great extent in his ballets, but Fokine now created for himself and for Nijinsky a whole succession of dazzling rôles; and this new freedom has been retained until the present day, when so brilliant a dancer as Serge Lifar enjoys a popularity that can be compared to Nijinsky's alone.

For countless reasons the male classical dancer is a rarity; for there are attributes he requires in addition to those of the ballerina: greater physical strength, yet without muscular over-development, grace and softness with character and virility, an extraordinary tact that enables him to efface himself at times to enhance the ballerina's appearance. Moreover, his life as a dancer is usually shorter than that of the woman. He is not interesting to watch

until he is fully mature, and he ages more rapidly on account of the muscular effect of lifting.

During this whole Diaghileff period, apart from Fokine and Nijinsky, but few names of classical male dancers come to mind; Vladimiroff, Wilzak (finest of all partners), Idzikovski, Dolin and Lifar, now in his prime, while in Russian ballet to-day there is a blank that may possibly be filled by André Eglevsky or Igor Yuskevitch.

Brilliant character dancers are more numerous by far: Adolf Bolm, who in *Prince Igor* started the vogue of Russian ballet in Western Europe; Massine, the most complete and artistic of all dancers, who at times touches classicism in his wide scope; Leon Woizikovski, Bolm's successor as a brilliant interpreter of national dances; and the new comers, David Lichine, wavering between classicism and character, and Yurek Shabelevsky. There are obviously many outstanding talents omitted from this cursory survey.

The Maryinsky Galaxy

Apart from the dancers I have already mentioned, the Maryinsky and the Balchoi Theatre of Moscow produced a galaxy of talent, many of the artists never being seen in Western Europe, but two in particular play a big rôle in this story: Vera Trefilova and Lubov Egorova, both of whom Diaghileff presented in *The Sleeping Princess* in 1921, when he gave his greatest dancing lesson to the

world. Trefilova was perhaps the most purely classical of any dancer, brilliant and restrained, seemingly cold but infinitely temperamental. She set a standard of classical perfection for all who saw her. Both Trefilova and Egorova have established studios in Paris. Many beginners and most of the finished artists have received guidance from Egorova.

Diaghileff and Karsavina

With the failure of Pavlova to realise his dreams (because she too had dreams) Diaghileff found in Thamar Karsavina the perfect standard-bearer for his new ideals. Rarely have so many gifts been centred in one person, all of them enhanced by an intelligence and an erudition astonishing it any one; consequently the rôle she played in the new ballet was a highly conscious one. When we consider the case of Karsavina we can see the difference in aesthetic between Maryinsky and Diaghileff as it affected the dancer.

Karsavina fulfilled a dual rôle, that of ballerina in Russia in the orthodox classical repertoire and ballerina for Diaghileff in his new art. The difference between her two functions must have been enormous; for the first the stress would have been strongly on technique, for the second on interpretation. Karsavina it was who extended the whole acting scope of the dancer, who blended classicism, *demi-caractère* and *caractère*, to reveal the complete dancer.

Diaghileff, the inspirer and most active figure of a new group that had hit upon ballet as its most complete medium of self-expression, had no quarrel with the rigid system of classical ballet training. On the contrary he could conceive of no other, and held the works of Petipa in the greatest admiration; and not a platonic admiration, for he played and lost his all in *The Sleeping Princess*. Only he laid stress on the fact that classicism was a means and not an end, that it was the finest means for every type of movement, from the savage folk dances of *Prince Igor* to the acrobatics of *The Blue Train*. The Diaghileff dancer required all those attributes with which I have dealt, with the musicality underlined; the Diaghileff dancer had to be infinitely supple and adaptable.

The whole Diaghileff aesthetic undoubtedly brought about a change in the type of dancer, greatly accelerated and even exaggerated by the artificial barriers that war and revolution had placed between him and the reservoirs of the Imperial Schools.

According to the Opera House tradition, the ballerina counted above all, the work itself was subservient to her, while according to the new aesthetic the dancer was one of a team of collaborators whose aim it was to perfect the work. Consequently the tendency was for the gradual disappearance of the great ballerina. Pavlova and her company were the last survival of the Opera House

tradition that died with her, while the Diaghileff ideal still flourishes and gains new strength. Therefore in lauding the many brilliant young dancers of to-day, while using much the same language of praise, it must be clearly understood that there is no possibility of a direct comparison with such a figure as Pavlova, who stood for something different and who danced in a different world.

Even before the war, Diaghileff had made use of a number of brilliant and diverse talents that might never have been fully exploited at home: of Lydia Lopokova, fey, mischievous, the eternal Columbine; of Lubov Tchernicheva, tall, stately, with a highly developed sense of the building up of a dramatic rôle; and Bronislava Nijinska, a genius in her way, whose work defies description and who surely required a Diaghileff to understand and develop her.

All the artists of this period had been trained in the orthodox manner; it was Diaghileff who revealed them to themselves and others.

Then with the war and revolution he was forced to complete the training as well as to develop it; under his guidance a brilliant Sokolova emerged. She had joined him half trained in the pre-war period and was beginning already to hold her own in the greatest days of all. Nemchinova slowly and surely found her way from the *corps de ballet*, ready one day to become his ballerina, while early revolutionary Russia gave him his most admired dancer,

Spessivtseva, who had already appeared with his company in America during the war. Doubrovska, and his last ballerina, Danilova, learnt stage-craft with the company rather than joining it fully fledged; following the example of the Imperial Director Vsevolojsky of two generations before, it was Cecchetti, the veteran ballet master, who was nearly always at his side training and developing the dancers, giving them strength and stage-craft.

From the dancing point of view, during his quarter-century, *Diaghileff had harnessed individuality to create a consistent and logical whole.* Undoubtedly during his last phase the importance of the dancer was at its lowest ebb;[1] the dancer was only too often used as a marionette to express the latest craze of the latest painter or musician, cramped by costume, cramped by décor, cramped by music, a fact that Diaghileff himself was one of the first to recognise. When Diaghileff died he left behind him a company of lost dancers unable to find their way amongst the complexities of art and finance. After a few abortive attempts they speedily disbanded, spreading their influence and Diaghileff's message throughout the whole world.[2] Had any one succeeded in keeping them together it would merely have meant a postponement of the end. His name had stood for a

[1] The last "heroic performance" of the Diaghileff régime was Sokolova's in *Le Sacre du Printemps* on 1929, a solitary survival of great dancing days.

[2] See note at end of article.

particular artistic formula that no one but he could produce, and of late he himself had followed so difficult and tortuous a path that he alone knew its direction. Even if others had understood, no one possessed sufficient will and prestige to wean the public suddenly from modernistic excesses, back to these paths of classicism that have since been found little by little by each one of his disciples in turn. A new group, to succeed, must turn back to the tradition for guidance and build up a new public. Save in England the Diaghileff public had vanished, becoming acutely hostile to the very word "ballet" that they had confidently buried with him in Venice.

Then unexpectedly there came the skipping of a whole generation, the influx of new blood, the day of the new virtuosity.

§ 7 THE PARIS STUDIOS AND THE EMERGENCE OF TOUMANOVA, BARONOVA, RIABOUCHINSKA

The scene shifts from the stage to the dance studios of Paris, where Preobrajenska, Kchesinska, Egorova, Trefilova and Volinine had established themselves; and, proof of the positive strength of the tradition, their pupils were for the most part Russians, small children of the emigration. Often insufficiently clad and under-nourished, they walked for considerable distances to their lessons, their parents making enormous sacrifices for the privilege. The story of many of these children is one of

a heroic struggle against a stupendous handicap, added to the many difficulties that confront the dancer under the most normal conditions. By 1930 the oldest of them was ready to emerge, and the first to do so was Tamara Toumanova, pupil of Olga Preobrajenska. Almost immediately she caused a sensation in the dancing world. She was not only exquisitely beautiful, but she could perform technical feats such as an endless number of *fouettès* that her elders had found impossible, and, moreover, she could perform them with an altogether disarming ease. This by itself did not mean that she was a great artist, but it drew immediate attention to her and indicated her as a remarkable instrument for the choreographer, greatly enlarging his scope In 1929 Toumanova, aged 10, appeared as guest artist at the Paris Opéra in *L'Eventail de Jeanne.* This success turned the thoughts of hundreds of parents to the studios and proved to them that economically the young dancer could earn her keep some four years earlier than they had bargained for originally.

Then when Balanchine was selecting a company for Colonel W. de Basil to take to Monte Carlo, he saw her in the studio and immediately "discovered" her. For her he created *Cotillon* and *Concurrence,* both of them calling for a new virtuosity that exploited the *fouetté* rationally and poetically instead of merely sensationally.

At the same time and in the same studio there

was another prodigy, Irina Baronova, while Kchesinska had produced Riabouchinska. With these three a new era of ballet began, and the late André Levinson, an apostle of classicism, bitterest opponent of the final Diaghileff phase, acclaimed all three in *Comoedia.*

The Russian ballerinas of yesterday have saved ballet to-day; but one must give every credit to Colonel de Basil, who was fearless and far-sighted enough to realise that only by composing his company of these children and entrusting them to the guidance of experienced artists could ballet become a possibility. Where others discussed, praised or blamed, he built, so that his achievement has grown with the children in whom he believed. All honour to him.

In what exactly lies their power to enchant; what different element do they bring to ballet?

They possess a greater and more extended mechanical repertoire than their predecessors.

Their contact with life is such that it increases their contact with the audience, making ballet more human and less formal.

Their constant progress from performance to performance makes them a particularly fascinating study.

They bring instructive and original interpretations to rôles so well known as to be taken almost for granted.

But there is a reverse side to these advantages

that is serious: they lack stage-craft and finish, the ability to build up a rôle from minute details, and this they may never gain since they have little time to develop the mind. Overwork and inevitably irregular hours at a critical period will rob many of them of fulfilling all their promise; certainly they will not last as long as the great figures who have taught them. The golden age of a dancer was from twenty-five to thirty-two, with twenty or more years of utility to follow; now it may well be from twenty to twenty-five with a very rapid failing after that.

The Future

Once again the dancer has saved ballet, and, healthy sign, the ballerinas' studios are full of young talent. The danger that threatens ballet is not a lack of dancers but the absence of choreographers. Since the Diaghileff régime not one has emerged in Russian ballet.[1] Fortunately Massine, Balanchine and Nijinska show no signs of exhaustion, but we are faced with the possibility of a generation of magnificent dancers and with no one to make them dance. It is from their ranks that the new choreographer must come, but their time is too taken up for them to develop intellectually, and it is that vexed question of overwork that may prevent the birth of a choreographer from the ranks of the

[1] We in England have been more fortunate, with such fine talent in Frederick Ashton and Ninette de Valois, and the promise shown by Anthony Tudor.

new dancers,[1] in addition to preventing the full flowering of their art.

Teaching problems have been solved; the next problem is one of the economics of keeping together a large and permanent company.

NOTE

The Diaghileff tradition and its major influences to-day

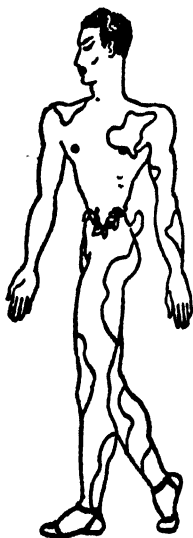
L. Massine . . .	With de Basil Ballet.
B. Nijinska . . .	,, ,,
S. Grigorieff . . .	,, ,,
L. Tchernicheva . .	,, ,, (Have toured England, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, U.S.A., Mexico.)
G. Balanchine . .	American Ballet Company and Metropolitan Opera, N.Y.
A. Wilzak . . .	American Ballet Company and Metropolitan Opera, N.Y.
L. Woizikovski . .	With his own company. (London, Paris, Berlin, Spain.)
Serge Lifar . . .	Opera, Paris. (Tours in France, America, South America.)

[1] In 1934–5 the de Basil ballet toured 96 towns in the U.S.A. in the period of seven months: in 1935–6 101 towns, dancing daily including Sundays. Unfortunately the economics of ballet may demand this, but it is clearly not in the best interests of the art.

Constantine Tcherkas .	Opéra Comique, Paris.
Ninette de Valois . .	Sadler's Wells, London.
Marie Rambert . .	(Attached for a time to Diaghileff Company and trained by Cecchetti.) Trained her own company and many of the outstanding dancers of to-day.

Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin: their own company.

This is but a brief list, but the break-up of the Diaghileff Company in 1929 supplied dancers to the entire world, save Russia, which has carried on its own Maryinsky tradition.



II

THE CHOREOGRAPHY

By Caryl Brahms

TO

TIME AND TIDE

II
THE CHOREOGRAPHY

By Caryl Brahms

§ 1

PRIMARILY, the function of the ballet is to tell a story. The story need not necessarily progress to its appointed end with the dispatch that we associate with a tale told through the medium of the film.

It may, for instance, be delayed by dancing cadenza, as it was in the old ballets, when the story was conveyed in long passages of mime, and subsequently embroidered, coloratura-like, by the *Ballerina* and the *Danseur Noble* in a sort of Swedish sandwich composed of four sets of *variations* and a *pas de deux*.

Before Diaghileff—that inspired accoucheur of the arts—in giving the young Fokine his head, put an end to the spacious days of the ballet, there was always a vast display of hand-on-the-heart, heavily-eyebrowed mime. This would be frozen into periods of delightful immobility while the ladies and gentlemen of the ballet performed their choreographical roulades, cutting, in their serenely oblivious inversion, the hosses, and getting down to the cackle.

But with the creation of *Scheherazade*, *L'Oiseau de Feu* and *Petrouchka*, the Theme in ballet became

more and more important. Dancing coloratura was being replaced by "atmosphere." Dancing cadenza was harnessed firmly to the scenarist, or tethered in the wings to make way for, in *L'Oiseau de Feu*, the embroidered imagery of the folk-tale, and, in *Petrouchka*, for the tear-bright symbol of the satirist. (For *Petrouchka* holds not only the ostensible content of Fair-ground, Magician and Puppet; it has a definite philosophical counterpoint in which the Fair-ground becomes Life; the inarticulate puppet, Man; the Magician, his Destiny, and the cell, the general cussedness of things.) Choreographical invention was there, but only under the discipline of an applied idea. *Les Sylphides* was the last work of dancing in the absolute (of dancing cadenza inserted for the sake of its own beauty) in the enduring repertory of the ballet, until its reincarnation as a "choreographic line" added to a symphonic score, as in *Les Présages* and *Choreartium.* And even here, as later discussion will show, there was the applied literary line that is inseparable from any work of *pastiche. Sylphides* is more than just a suite of dances. It is the moonlit evocation of a sigh—a sigh made manifest in a romantic mould and with a literary finish.

There have, of course, been later examples in the neo-romantic genre, of which the Ashton ballet *Les Rendezvous*, to be seen in London at Sadler's Wells, springs readily—and happily—to the mind.

But from the point of view of development,

Sylphides saw the last of the dancer extended for dancing's sake. With *Petrouchka* the feeling for choreographic invention—the crystallisation of the character or situation in the *pas*—became a focus point. No longer was the motif obscured by the trill. The Theme, in its progress from Cinderella to, as it were, Centreforward, needed a medium for its swift conveyance—the choreographer supplied this medium by introducing emotional nuance to movement. What formerly had expressed the high points of passion only—Love, Despair, Death, Transfiguration, neatly tricked out in the distraught *développé*, the fond *pirouette* ending in a passionate *arabesque* and Utter Desolation in the Fourth Position—was now modified into a less clearly defined, more subtle scale of emotion. Wit, malice, annoyance, amusement, doubt, the amorous (natural and unnatural), the sophisticated and the *chic* became implicit in the dancer's *pas*, according to whatever point in narrative or characterisation the choreographer had reached. Dancing cadenza persisted (for what is the rôle without its expression in detached movement, and what the character that does not emerge from its background?) but the Theme had come into its own and the choreographer, its mouthpiece, had broken through the hierarchy of disguised *divertissements*.

But "arrivist" though the Theme might be, it still found time for its old friend, the dancing cadenza, though it took a Massine to bring this to

its most satisfying modern manifestation. Later, that master of the *pas seul*, in the Miller's Dance (*farruca*) in *Le Tricorne*, in the Bar-Tender's Dance in *Union Pacific*, in the poignant *pas de deux* of the Poor Lovers in *Jardin Public*, and in the dances for the three sailors in *Les Matelots*, was to repay the Theme a thousandfold for what it usurped in action-time.

Massine has made the *pas* the servant to his wit—the very coin of his imagination. And before him, Fokine made the *pas* the servant to the plot.

Then Nijinsky, a dancer first, an inspired interpreter and a superb executant, but no creative innovator, started a back-to-the-urn choreography. Nijinsky reduced the stage to a fresco, presented the dancer with a profile and left us *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*. He worked out, too, the rhythmically complicated ritual of *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

And so to the early days of the Massine Age. In the first period we find the Massine of *Contes Russes*, those grave, bright, peasant tales, empty of wit (for fun springs freshly from the soil of this ballet, and wit and fun are rarely to be found upon the self-same stem). We find, too, the Massine of *Les Boutique Fantasque*—a sortie in the satiric, but what satire! The satire that combines the kindly and the simple with the poignant and the complex. The kindliness of the Shopkeeper—tyrant only to his "lad." The nice satiric wit that so neatly snatches the *can-can* from the *boite-de-nuit* and translates it,

frou-frou, grand écart, nostalgie de la boue, and all, into the ballet idiom. The *fausse-naiveté* of the "mechanical" toys and their shrewd comment upon the living types they represent. The simplicity of the large-hearted Russian Merchant. The complexity of the Little Girl, who is no little girl but a ballet dancer being a little girl, and, quite comprehensibly to the follower of the ballet, so much the more "Little Girl" than any little girl could ever be. The poignancy of the love story of the Can-can Dancers. All this is the very bone of the orchestration of satire as purveyed by the ballet medium. (It is, moreover, of interest to note that in *Jeux d'Enfants*, a later Massine toy-ballet, the satire is confined to the human child, who becomes the *chic* symbol of a *mondaine* childhood while the toys merely mirror their own activities *qua* toys, whereas in *Boutique* the toys are the satiric media—commenting in their ballet-idiom upon various aspects of living creation.)

And in the early Massine Age we find, too, that masterly *pastiche*, *Le Tricorne*, a high-spirited work in which the Spanish atmosphere of the Alarcon text has been reflected—a trifle pertly, but with complete artistic unanimity—by two Spaniards and a Russian refusing to take each other seriously. The décor (Picasso), the music (Falla) and the choreography—in a Spanish patois translated into the idiom of the ballet—together make up the sum of an inspired joke: Spain mirrored in the Russian temperament.

Massine harnessed the *pas* to his wit and kept, in these early days, both subservient to his Theme. His invention at this time was fresh. He did not need to search outside the bounds of the situation for a modish effect or an "amusing" twist. In these days the ballet was still taking itself seriously. It had its lighter moments—notably in *Tricorne*. When the Corregidor's men, for instance, come to carry the Miller off to gaol (to the Fate-knocking-on-the-door *motif* of the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven), and the Miller's Wife is left, hands fluttering, alone, swearing undying faithfulness, while from a neighbouring grove the song of the cuckoo (notoriously a cynic) falls on the attentive ear. But within the limits of its symbolic, satiric, or mirrored world, the Ballet Russe retained its integrity. It believed in itself, so compelling its public to believe with it. It was fulfilling its function of telling a story and in this fulfilment it achieved its perfection.

But the line of enchantment from *L'Oiseau de Feu* and *Petrouchka*, through *Les Sylphides* and *Boutique Fantasque* to *Le Tricorne* was not to last.

The spirit of restlessness that pervaded the middle twenties was soon to be caught and mirrored in its ballet. An emaciated cerebration was to disseminate a sclerosis of the *chic* in the spine of its thematic material. And the internal integrity of the Ballet Russe—the grave telling of some bright tale that gives the ballet its roots and the dancer her heritage—was ousted by the Amusing.

It is so perilously easy to be "amusing" in ballet. The Ballet Russe took to laughing at itself and the world laughed back at it.

This change in the spirit of Ballet Russe was caused partly by its financial and partly by its geographical conditioning, and is easy enough to understand.

When Diaghileff presented his new and "outrageous" *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, with its rejection of the turned-out line—the keystone of classicism—its rigidly controlled but undoubted allusion to Duncanism and (final *èpatism*) the crowning act of onanism, he achieved a *succès de scandale*. That is the kind of failure an impresario practically prays for. But when he nearly ruined himself, his friends and his entire organisation, by reviving the Maryinsky ballet *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, with its colossal cast of *ballerine*, its devastating overheads and its return to the spacious stage of the lordly Maryinsky manner, the public stayed away altogether.

Here was a failure no impresario could afford. The times were out of joint with the spacious—they were attuned only to the episodic, the brief and the modish. For once Diaghileff's flair for the psychological moment had failed him. And so he planted what was left to him of his vast organisation in the rewarding soil of France, partly because this ensured an engagement for at least four months of the year for his company. He established his organisation at Monte Carlo and, in accordance

with his policy of uniting the young experimenters in the arts that go to make the ballet, he surrounded himself with young Latins, so that what before had been purely Slav in Ballet Russe now developed a Latin tinge. And since wit is the very coin of satire, and the Latin temperament turns to wit as the German to philosophy and the British to the open air, the Russian ballet began to laugh at its own effects with a superimposed Latin levity that destroyed for a time its great Slavonic gift of taking itself seriously—of believing its own make-believe.

The Ballet Russe now concerned itself mainly with the *chic* and the *épatant*. Its function changed from assertion to comment. The challenge "Once upon a time" no longer found an idiomatic response in the vocabulary of the choreographer. Instead it translated a situation into the idiom of the ballet and made its choreographical comments thereon with a bland and amiable acceptance; holding emotion, as it were, up to the light and smiling at the pattern it threw upon the back-cloth.

Two choreographers proved themselves to be particularly sympathetic to the artificial conditioning of the new Cloud-cuckoo-land. Nijinsky's sister, Bronislava Nijinska, and Georges Balanchine adapted the elegant to their imaginative needs. Their work will be discussed later.

Famous dress-designers from Paris houses were called in to do costumes for the ballet at this period. Fashionable leaders of the intelligentsia were

enlisted in its service. In France, Jean Cocteau, Matisse, Picasso, Auric, Satie; in England, the Sitwells, Lord Berners, the young promising Constant Lambert.

Massine, who had left the company for some seasons, returned to the fold to excel his own invention in *Le Pas d'Acier*, turning the stage into a gigantic workshop and the artists of the ballet into the revolving parts of a machine, within a constructivist set and to a Prokofieff score.

The Ballet Russe had laid aside its coloured peasant-toys. It had arrived at the "showing-off" age—it was "being clever."

With a revival of *Lac des Cygnes* (in a shortened version) and, worse still, with *La Belle au Bois* Diaghileff tried (and failed) to tempt the public he had led away to a Hamelin tune (played on a trombone) back to the spacious portals of the Maryinsky. Possibly he feared that the revolution, which had swept away so much, might sweep away too the glorious ballet tradition. Or perhaps it was just the knowledge that the lush Tchaikovsky music (so helpful to the dancer) and the lovely unfolding of the ballerina in the old Petipa pose and poise, were things that the real connoisseur of the ballet would turn to for themselves, as a collector will turn to a period piece.

And when his public, observing the tenets that he had instilled in them himself, turned away from Tchaikovsky (even though he was being tricked

out and re-fitted by Stravinsky), Diaghileff was assiduous in giving them only the very newest of the new.

(That Diaghileff actually was in advance of public taste and not lagging jaded and dejectedly behind, is proved by the renewal of interest in the *ballets blancs*, *Giselle* and *Lac des Cygnes*, and in the Maryinsky spectacle *Coppélia*, to be seen at Sadler's Wells. Not only did *Lac des Cygnes* find a wide and appreciative public when it was staged in its entirety for Markova at the Wells, but *Giselle*, *Coppélia* and *Casse Noisette* have drawn enthusiastic houses. Yet in Diaghileff's day it was a commonplace to find the house filling after *Lac des Cygnes* or *Cimarosiana*—a dance suite *pastiche* in the Polish manner, in which the *épatant* was notable only by its absence—or *Les Sylphides* had been presented. As always, the impresario was just a little ahead of his time.)

But odd as it may seem, though consistently diverting, there was nothing very new about "the new." And so far as the trend of the ballet is concerned, the middle period—from 1921 to 1929—once the key of the *mondaine* had been established, had nothing fresh to show.

Then Diaghileff died and his company disbanded. They distributed themselves about the cities of the world; here a little lost under the heavy paraphernalia of opera, there a little cramped as an "act" in some fashionable revue. But whether

they were being not quite slick enough in vaudeville or not quite staid enough in musical spectacle, the dancers of the Russian ballet wore the lost, unprotected air of those whose guidance has been removed.

The choreographer too was shut out of his Eden. He was left to drift undirected through the opera houses of Europe, or forced to acclimatise his thought to the quick pattern of the episodic in revue. If by chance some Rubinstein or Spessivtseva commissioned a work, it was to one end only—the suspending of the star dancer in the light that best drew out her particular qualities as a personality. What the choreographer missed was the co-ordination of the ballet machine—the perfect unison of collective impulse that comes only from concerted work over long periods.

Then Colonel de Basil, from the nucleus of a company of dancers engaged for the season by the Opera House at Monte Carlo, founded the organisation that was to bring the world back its ballet.

Diaghileff had often gone the rounds of the dancing schools of London and Paris in search of talent while it was young. Colonel de Basil too went the rounds—and collected his company while it was even younger.

And it is owing a great deal to the youth of his *ballerine* that the tendency of the Ballet Russe was to undergo a further modification in his régime.

The Ballet Russe began taking itself seriously

once more. Partly, no doubt, as a reaction from the frightening years of scrappiness in revue and variety, and partly, no doubt, because the mainspring of its inspiration—the *ballerine* for whom the ballets were being created—was at the stage of development that takes itself most seriously.

The young dancers enjoyed dancing in their own ballets. But they enjoyed too dancing the great rôles. There is a strong sense of heritage in the ballet, and a dancer is both humble and hopeful when she is given a rôle with a tradition behind it. This is why a Toumanova can stand petrified in the wings, waiting her cue for the *jetées ouvertes* of her first entrance as the Fire-Bird at a matinée performance. And why a Baronova—of all the dancers in the de Basil company, the one with the strongest sense of her heritage—finds place, for all her air of the ballerina taking her stage, for a real humility when she dances Princess Aurora, or appears in *Sylphides*, or gravely awaits her rescuer in the shadow of enchantment as the Princess in *Contes Russes*.

The young *ballerine* take themselves very seriously. And their choreographers are compelled to take them seriously.

There is nothing flippant about the choreography for the *pas de deux* in the second movement of *Présages*, which Baronova and Lichine interpret so poignantly. There is nothing "amusing" about the *pas de deux* of the Poor Lovers in *Jardin Public*,

danced most movingly in London by Toumanova and Massine. There is nothing self-conscious in the Nijinska work, *Les Cents Baisers*.

And not only their choreographers but their public also accepted these young *ballerine* at their own valuation.

It was, of course, in a great part a public who knew not its Diaghileff tradition with the emphasis of glamour that rested on the male dancer. Massine, Woizikovski, Lifar, Dolin, Idzikovski—these were the names that used to be shouted from the distant parts of the auditorium (not without a certain amount of lingual manipulation, it is to be supposed). Toumanova, Baronova, Danilova—a deep breath . . . Riabouchinska—these are the names that come drifting down to the stage under the de Basil ægis. Massine, Lichine and Shabelevsky all have their following—but now they have to share the plaudits with the *ballerine* of the company.

After Lopokova left Diaghileff, the public began taking their *ballerine* very much for granted. They had their delectable Nemchinova, their adored Sokolova, and their gay, piquant and witty Danilova. Yet the ballerina was for the most part nothing but the merest female inflection in the accomplished male phrases.

But the new ballet public is supremely ballerina-conscious. The old ballets, created round Karsavina and Nijinsky, have been revived and acclaimed.

The new ballets, created round Toumanova and Baronova, have come into the permanent repertory. In the service of Theme, the choreographer now uses the ballerina as his supreme expression.

§ 2

But though with the death of Diaghileff the chain of Ballet Russe had been severed—at one time it seemed past all mending—two interesting offshoots of the dance had taken root and flourished in the pause.

The Central European school of Movement to Music began to spread its branches, and (in London) appeared a species of Chamber Ballet, bearing the same relation to the ballet spectacle as works of chamber music bear to orchestral symphonies.

The Central European theory of movement to music, under the discriminating direction of a Jooss, can be an excellent vehicle for the choreographical lampoon and satire. At its most pretentious (and least impressive) it often declines to a spineless sublimation of a great deal of misplaced self-confidence. This comes under the heading—a warning in itself—of Self-expression.

The greater part of the dancing literature of the Central European school is of transitory material in the form of a personal record of mood or emotion devised by the interpreter. Most of these mood chronicles, being entirely personal and arbitrary,

are evanescent. The choreographical approach is subjective and not—as in Ballet Russe—objective.

Supposing the Ballet Russe and the Central European school of Dance Expression to be two methods of an animated shorthand, it will be found that the dancer in the Russian ballet is the symbol for a type—the characteristic example of some special kind of person, isolated in the detachment of the ballet world, and endowed with the expression of the ballet-idiom, shown under the stress of some particular situation. The dancer in Russian ballet is not a photographic reflection of an individual, but a symbol of all that is essential in the conditioning of the type that she is representing. (The horrid little boy in *Boutique Fantasque* is not in the least like any horrid little boy in material actuality, but he has all the characteristics of every horrid little boy that has ever been, and is the more horrid for being the symbol of horridness: rather than its photographic representation.)

The ballet world is not a camera reproduction of the geographically conditioned world, but an abstract, condensed and conditioned by the necessities of Theme-projection. In the Ballet Russe system of shorthand notation, the sentence is animated objectively.

But in the Central European system of shorthand notation, the dancer is not a type nor a symbol for an abstraction but an individual—a particular personality shown under the stress of artificially

conditioned emotion. The shorthand sentence is animated emotionally and from some inner avenue of approach—subjectively.

This avenue of subjective approach has been greatly modified by Jooss, who has found, in satiric expression, the perfect mould for this form of dance.

The other dance form, which was to take root at first rather gingerly but later was to flourish with a more assured upthrust in the somewhat unlikely soil of Notting Hill Gate, was the Chamber Ballet.

Chamber Ballet was the direct result of a notable lack of space wedded to a notable bent for makeshift.

The Ballet Club, where these intimate works are to be seen, draws its company from the Marie Rambert school of dancing, reinforced by guest artists of whom the most eminent has been Alicia Markova. Its ballets are presented upon a minute stage in what once must have been a church hall; the dressing-rooms, the Sunday-school classrooms.

It soon became apparent that the most successful type of ballet was one that fitted easily into the restricted space of the miniature stage; a work that required for its proper projection an intimacy of space and atmosphere, as opposed to a rather squashed apology for an opera house spectacle. Out of the limitations of the Ballet Club was born the Chamber Ballet.

The stage was small and so the *lieu* of the ballet became compressed. Subjects that fitted into ante-rooms—village greens as opposed to prairies,

individuals instead of groups, character dancers in place of *corps de ballet*—were found to be more successful in the genre. A neat chamber-idiom began to be evolved. Frederick Ashton became the chief choreographer (his work will be discussed later), and soon wit took the place of student earnestness.

The technique of the student dancers was limited, and so situation became more important than dancing pyrotechnics. Not only did the Ballet Club admit its limitations: it went one further—it wore them proudly.

It must be admitted that the Ballet Club is not always content with fulfilling its function. From time to time there are bad outbreaks of awkwardness among Aurora's Wedding guests, epidemics of *pas seuls* and *pas de deux* torn from their classical context, or a sudden rush of heavy-handed Sylphides to the programme. But that it has a function and a proper place in the development of the ballet there can be no doubt.

An interesting proof of this has been furnished by the farewell matinée given to Phyllis Bedells by the Royal Academy of Dancing at the London Hippodrome in November 1935.

Bar aux Folies Bergères—a Ballet after Manet, devised for the Ballet Club by Ninette de Valois to a suite of pieces by Chabrier and with décor by William Chappell—was the Ballet Club's offering to the occasion. The work is one of the best

examples of the chamber genre. It animates the Manet picture of the bar with its fair-haired barmaid staring blankly from behind her marble counter, and holds all of disillusion in its gas-lit interior. At the Ballet Club this work is stimulating. Its décor is witty; its atmosphere evocative and cleverly observed, and its event is amusing. Its golden-haired barmaid is one of the most haunting of ballet characters.

But its compactness was dissipated by the spaciousness of the stage. It became fragmentary and uncompelling, like a passage of music that assaults the ear without engaging the attention. It was devised for a smaller *galère* and could not survive a surplus of space and height. A chamber work needs for its proper projection the limitations and conditioning of a chamber presentation.

For the perfection of the medium it still lacks the collaboration of the composer. It is to be hoped that the enterprising direction will repair this lack before long.

Somewhere between Central European Expression and Chamber Ballet comes the dance recital. Here the *pas* is utilised to convey a story. Line, as an independent focus-point, does not exist. Agnes de Mille is the best-known exponent of the genre in England. Her approach is entirely literary. She has a story to tell and she tells it in movement. Her movement is the turned-out classical movement because she happens to be trained as a

classical dancer. And here again the literature is too personal to the interpreter to be permanent.

§ 3. FOKINE

Fokine tore choreography from the trance of clockwork dance cadenza that had been its rigid ploy at the Maryinsky, and in any consideration of modern ballet his work must be the first to come under discussion.

Four qualities are to be found in the work of Fokine, on which his approach to his subject is invariably based:

A supreme understanding of the dancer's needs and of the dancing line.

A great gift of gravity—a gravity springing from a deep source of real simplicity.

A strong emotional content.

A sense of fun.

First and always Fokine is a child of the great Maryinsky tradition. The tradition that took the figure of a ballerina, froze it with a rigid classical technique into lines of supreme beauty, and animated it in more or less formal avenues of progression, so that it moved from one outline of loveliness to another, embroidering all with a limited vocabulary of expression—this was the cradle of the choreographer who was born to resolve these dancing cadences.

And though he may lay aside the traditional

mould and use, as in *Petrouchka*, a more fluid choreography, in order to convey Petrouchka's dumb despair on finding himself so nearly—and so little—human, his work is never flaccid. The hard spine of the line is there even though the limbs are temporarily softening its outline. Except for the animating of his crowd scenes (and even here, from a height, some form of modification of line in moving patterns is usually to be discovered), Fokine never moves far from the idea of line. Sometimes he distorts it, as in *Igor*, when the ferocity of the warrior is projected not only in leaps and spins but in the free movement of the entire body. Sometimes he burlesques it, as in the *pas de deux* of Doll and Moor in *Petrouchka*, when the doll pivots on one *pointe* like any Maryinsky ballerina (excepting that her body is thrown a little out of angle), while her air is that of one who is gloriously ignoring the untoward fact that her balance is endangered, and her partner crouches down and manages to get her round with a great deal of clumsy trampling. And again in *L'Oiseau de Feu*, when the Prince is dancing with the Fire-Bird, he advances down-stage, heel to the floor, toe in the air (as opposed to a ballerina's advance *sur les pointes*, toe to the ground, heel off the ground and turned outwards and away from the direction in which she is travelling)—a reminder that he is a Prince in a Russian fairy tale and none of your Franco-Italian, Cinderella-bemused, curled and gartered princelings. Sometimes Fokine will

soften a line, as in the *pas seul* for the man in *Spectre de la Rose*. In a conversation with Mr. Arnold Haskell,[1] Fokine states that in this instance it was because of Nijinsky's particular style that the male rôle in *Spectre* became softened—less masculine—"quite different from what I myself made of it." Sometimes the line is frozen in its pristine classical purity and used as a thing in itself, as in *Les Sylphides*. Sometimes it is modified into rhythm built from a series of movements. Sometimes it is isolated in a group or pose. (A memorable arrangement springs to mind from *Carnaval*, when Columbine is extended upon the sofa, one leg following its line, and Harlequin kneels at her feet, one leg extended in continuation of the Columbine line on a lower plane, the bridge of his body leading the eye from sofa to floor.) Look for line in a Fokine ballet and it is always to be found.

What special qualities make *Les Sylphides* the swan-song of the Romantic period?

For to the discerning eye it is something more than just a romantic reverie decorating a borrowed Chopin's score. It is more even than a choreographic sigh for a mood that has been lost to the world. It is the evocation of a period—a period shorn of its inessentials and seen through the temperament of a poet, holding a world of implication—romantic and philosophical—in its content. And all the more for being a *pastiche*—a conscious sortie in a

[1] *Balletomania* (Victor Gollancz).

manner of another age—rather than a straightforward expression of a present attitude of mind.

The glade, in which the Sylphs are—surprised would be too vigorous an expression—disclosed, is well known to followers of the ballet. It may hold a studied enchantment, as when the Diaghileff company were presented in it. Or it may hold a content of other-worldliness, as it does when Baronova, Toumanova and Riabouschinska appear in it under Colonel de Basil's direction. Or it may have a fresh and youthful earnestness such as it wears when the Vic-Wells ballet or the young dancers of the Woizikovski company are dancing it. To this extent it is a chameleon ballet. The suite of dances is known as a piece of music is known. The difference lies only in the inflection of the personality of the executant. But whatever her position (whether she be ballerina or chorina), the dancer is extended at her best in this work.

Diaghileff once said that even the members of the *corps de ballet* are soloists in the ensembles of *Les Sylphides*. Fokine, who composed the choreography with no particular dancer in mind,[1] scored it for every dancer—every dancer of quality, that is.

For nothing shows up the bad dancer so inimically as this suite of dances made up of *enchaînements* of classical movements and danced in long, soft *tu-tus*.

[1] "I never conceive works for particular artists but the particular artist does lead me to make modifications."—*Balletomania*, Arnold Haskell.

There is no place in *Les Sylphides* for the ballerina who has no *arabesque*, and none for the dancer without *elevation*. "Dancing class" arms marred for some time the most notable dancing of the Valse that I have ever seen—that of Alicia Markova. The soloist with no *developpé* has no place in the moonlit glade, nor has she any who cannot command a lightness, a tenderness and a purity of line.

In *Sylphides* the dancer becomes an instrument scored in a passage of a familiar symphony. Any deviation in timbre, phrasing or timing, comes out to the audience like a fumbling of the horns in a Brahms symphony. A heavy ballerina can cast a shadow dark as a stain on the white perfection of the mood.

Followers of the ballet who have seen the *Sylphides* of Toumanova, Baronova and Riabouchinska, die a death at the end of each *variation*. "I shall never see *Les Sylphides* danced in quite this way again. Perfection will falter or it will still be there, but the response to it will be lacking in myself." Yet this miracle of loveliness is created anew each time. You may prefer Baronova's *Valse* with its feeling of a heritage accepted, or you may prefer Toumanova in the rôle because of the perfection of her line; you may sit amazed at Riabouchinska's lovely and imaginative Prelude, or you may prefer Toumanova's interpretation with its content of the foredoomedness of an Eve who is soon to lack her Eden. But these are the signs of a perfection that

crowns its own achievement in bestowing the illusion of choice, and establishes the follower of the ballet in the happy position of one who lingers on the steps of the National Gallery: "Now, shall I look at the Vermeer to-day, or go *straight* to the Michelangelo?"

In spite of the fact that *Les Sylphides* is an abstract ballet, with mood taking the place of theme, there is a range of definite characterisation to be found in it.

The Danseur Noble is a symbol of the tears that lie behind beauty—a sigh made manifest for a loveliness that must pass. He serves the Ballerina, lifts her, extends and exhibits her. Though he has a *variation* to himself, his real existence in the ballet is to be her inalienable background. Neither figure is complete without the other; together they form a satisfactory whole.

The Ballerina of the *pas de deux* Valse crowns the ballet with a graceful acceptance of her pedestal. She exists to be beautiful and she decorates the glade with the pure line of her loveliness.

The Prelude is a grave dance and it is usual to inflect it with a tender, tragic nuance. Riabouchinska, however, gives quite a different reading of this rôle. She is a rapt and ethereal Saint Joan, listening to her voices.

The first Valse and Mazurka are cascades of gaiety, rising upon *jetées ouvertes*, *relevés*, and outstretched arms that highly cleave the air. They

call for a brilliance in the dancer's wit to match the brilliance they demand in her execution.

And the *corps de ballet* pins all to the earth in a moonlit glade; a lost glade, but a glade that once belonged to the world—or so the Poet deludes himself. That is why, in default of a Bakst back-cloth, any attempt to stylise the trees is a mistake.

Each movement of each dancer in the *corps de ballet* must be as considered and pointed (or rather, as extended and rounded) as a word in a sentence. There is no such thing as relaxing *sur la scène* in *Les Sylphides*. Every *enchaînement* leads to its appointed pose. Every pose is achieved and sustained.

Line, as a quality in itself, is an integral part of Fokine's invention—in *Les Sylphides* he has erected its shrine.

Gravity is the second quality that is to be found in Fokine's work, a gravity that is to be found not only in the outward expression but in the evidences of his approach.

Massine, too, has his points of gravity—memorably in his treatment for the girl *can-can* dancer in the second part of *Boutique* (in which Danilova has brought many a follower of the ballet near to tears), in his approach to *Contes Russes*, and in his late Franco-American ballet, *Jardin Public* which, based on a theme from André Gide's *Les Faux Monnayeurs*, was put together during the trekking and tracking, the packing and changing, the one-night stands and the three- or four-days-long journeys, that are

what America means to the *Ballets Russes de Col. W. de Basil.* Here, in the *pas de deux* for the Poor Lovers, which the choreographer himself dances with Toumanova and which is an amazingly apt vehicle for her tragic dancing temperament, they speak for all wretched, ragged, inarticulate, exposed and unsecluded lovers.

But for the main part Massine is content to observe life and mock it deftly. His is the type of vision that turns round and laughs at itself. But Fokine's vision is grave and it derives from his strong feeling for "period."

Every choreographer (and almost every dancer) has this sense of period—this ability to enter the world through an avenue of another age and reconstruct its manner. They are a band of *pasticheurs*, creating now after one manner, now after another, Spanish, Hungarian, Russian, what we in England term Victorian, until idiomatic conditioning passes into their subconscious process. The Massine ballet, *Le Tricorne*, is an excellent example of the Spanish idiom as adapted to the Russian temperament.

Fokine, however, is not content merely to pay his period a *pas*-service. He does not, as so many choreographers do, entertain the audience in an "amusing" aside ("This is the way they used to behave. Isn't it screamingly funny? Now just watch how I catch the implication and give it this naughty twist!") He condenses the period within

the limits of his medium and reconstructs its essence with a perfect gravity.

Take, as an instance of this gravity of approach, his ballet, *L'Oiseau de Feu.* Let us examine his treatment of a fairy tale and compare it with the treatment of some other choreographers.

The curtain rises on a darkened grove in "Skazki"—the Russian "Once-Upon-A-Time." In it grows a tree bearing a crop of golden apples. The grove is shadowy and full of the mistiness of damp leaf and the rustling of tree-life. A flaming bird flies from shadow to shadow diagonally across the stage in *jetées ouvertes.* She is the magical one. She will move *sur les pointes* throughout the ballet. Presently Prince Ivan climbs over the domain wall. He is a Russian Prince in embroidered coat and high red leather Russian boots. Throughout, his movements will be simple, strong and traditional movements. Even when he is partnering the Fire-Bird in the *pas de deux*, when she pleads with him for her release, his movements have a minimum of mannered elegance (though Massine has endowed the rôle with a fine natural dignity, and Lifar used to dance it for Diaghileff with a superimposed elegance that sat oddly upon the Russian fable).

In token of her release the Fire-Bird gives him one of her plumes of flame—a magic plume that he has only to wave to summon her.

Then thirteen Enchanted Princesses come out to play with the golden apples in the moonlight.

They are led by a young and lovely maiden, the beautiful Tsarevna. She shakes the branches of the tree and down fall the apples in a shower that is mirrored in the musical scoring of the work, even though the crop of painted fruit stays obstinately upon the tree *sur la scène*. (At least, this is so of the Gontcharova décor.) The maidens are Russian Princesses and they wear long white robes embroidered in gold, and on their heads the traditional Russian coronel. They are the captives of the wizard Kotschei, whose castle walls surround the glade and whose gates flank one side of the stage. Like Prince Ivan, they are mortal creatures and they dance with bare feet, so that the *pointe* is used exclusively for the fairy passages of the Fire-Bird. Throughout the ballet the choreography for the Princesses is simple. Running steps, varied by the *chassé* and the *sauté arabesque* defines its scope. It is interesting to note that the patter of the bare feet of the dancers as they traverse the stage adds a line of choreographic sound to the Stravinsky score. This effect in a modified form is frequently to be found in ballet—chiefly in Spanish and Italian and traditional Russian dancing, wherever the music is annotated with the dancer's stamp. Recently it was exploited with great effect in the Massine revision of *Le Bal* in the *Italian Entrée*, when the hard *pointes* of the ballerina fell like hail upon the stage as, bending back over her partner's arm, she tapped her way rapidly to and fro.

Throughout the ballet the demeanour of the beautiful Tsarevna is that of a gracious personality set apart. She dances alone, or the Princesses encircle her. She is young and aloof, and for all her gaiety she seems to be treading the fore-ordained mazes of a purpose. Prince Ivan and the beautiful Tsarevna fall wonderingly in love in one of the most simple and moving passages of ballet. They do a grave and ceremonial dance, first separated and then drawn together by the enchanted Princesses. And the wonder and astonishment, and the grave little ceremony of their dawning love, is a sacrament. Russian ballet is doing the thing it does best of all—it is telling a story, so gravely, so simply and so intently that it believes itself in its own make-believe.

When the time comes for the enchanted Princesses to return to Kotschei's castle—for they are under the compulsion of a spell that only the death of Kotschei can break—Prince Ivan follows them. He forces the gate that has closed behind them and, as they part, a great and unearthly alarm of gongs and bells summons a hoard of savage warriors and fantastic creatures.

Here the choreography is straightforward. Horror has been relegated to the outward form of Kotchei's minions. Fokine has created a strongly rhythmical choreography, with a great deal of force and crowd-frenzy; but the macabre quality of mask and make-up is not mirrored in the *pas*—the choreographer

has been content to allow the theme to convey its own sense of horror.

Kotschei himself appears—a macabre figure with the enchantment of ages hardening his curious shell. He is more eagle than animal, more animal than human.

Just as he is about to turn Prince Ivan to stone, the Prince waves his plume of flame and calls upon the Fire-Bird to help him.

An interesting parallel to what follows is to be found in the Mozart opera, *Die Zauberflöte.* Here Papageno—half man, half bird—plays on his bell, and Monostaso's slaves are compelled to dance to their music and to retire while dancing. And since the voice is the conveying medium in opera, Monostaso's minions sing their dance. In *L'Oiseau de Feu*, the Fire-Bird—part woman, part bird—leads Kotschei's court astray in a maze of movement, till all sink exhausted to the ground and the Fire-Bird weaves with a lullaby a spell of sleep over them. And since movement is the conveying medium of the ballet, the Fire-Bird dances her slumber song.

While all sleep, Prince Ivan discovers the magic egg which contains the life of Kotschei. He tosses it in the air, then dashes it to the ground. The egg is shattered and with it the life of Kotschei. Darkness dissolves the scene.

The ballet ends in a processional. Against a background of ivory towers and scarlet turrets mass

the subjects of the beautiful Tsarevna. The stage fills with a grave procession of Princes and Princesses in ceremonial Russian robes. Priests bless the scene. The air is full of the sound of bells and Prince Ivan is crowned King of the liberated realm.

With his final clasping and measured lowering of the sceptre, the ballet gives its benedictional "And they all lived happily ever after."

This is a fairy story as Fokine animates it. It is, incidentally, the one ballet that Diaghileff had entirely redecorated. The original Golovin sets to *L'Oiseau de Feu* were destroyed by rain, on a shunting line off Nice, at the same time as most of the settings for *Le Belle au Bois Dormant.* Gontcharova designed those with which the London follower of the ballet is familiar and has wonderfully conveyed the spirit of "Holy Russia" in the piled-up towers and domes of the processional back-cloth.

But how have other choreographers parted the veils of Once-Upon-A-Time?

Well within the memory of the London *balletomane* lies the Balanchine revision of *Le Chant du Rossignol.* It was notable for its Matisse setting, for the "amusing" loan of arms and legs by the *corps de ballet* who, hidden beneath the dais and behind a sweeping brocaded train, lent them to the Emperor for his greater glorification, and—possibly most memorable of all—for being the means of presenting Alicia Markova in her first important rôle.

Few lovers of the ballet privileged to assist at her début will forget the slight, skimpy, little figure doing the light, almost brittle turns which symbolised the mechanical song of the Nightingale, and how she was overshadowed by that great artist, Lydia Sokolova, at the height of her artistic maturity, who calmly proceeded to add to her considerable achievements as a character dancer by refusing, as it were, to let a horrid scarlet costume (*genus* Pantomime Demon) get her down. The slight white figure of the Nightingale, carried on in her golden cage, her slightness underlined by the artistic maturity of the scarlet Death, are the impressions that have come down through the years.

But, strictly speaking, neither of these contents can be laid to the choreographer's count.

Balanchine did no more than trick out Hans Andersen in the fashionable jargon of the choreographic day. He angularised the court of the Emperor, putting the courtiers through their daily dozen, and devising "amusing" attitudes for them. The old sick Emperor, immobile upon his daïs, and the mechanical Nightingale—these are all that was left of Hans Andersen. It must be admitted that the musical score to which the choreographer had to work was allusive rather than evocative, while there have been more literal period decorators than Matisse. The ballet was given three times, and after that London did not see it again.

Nijinska, too, has animated a fairy tale from Hans

Michael Fokine

Alicia Markova
in *Le Chant du Rossignol*

Anton Dolin
in *Le Train Bleu*

Andersen—*Les Cents Baisers.* It is to be discussed more fully hereafter. But there is none of the *épatant* about her work. She took her theme and established it straightway in the realm of Once-Upon-A-Time (admittedly in a stylish province of the State) in spite of an ungrateful décor. And being given a spoilt Princess, a stylish court with *chic* ladies-in-waiting, and a frosty, inimical King, she animated them with the *pas* and pose that proved her to be in direct succession to the Maryinsky choreographers. Her Princess was an ill-tempered first cousin to the beautiful Tsarevna of the Fokine work. She was spoilt and wilful where the Russian Princess was gay and set apart. She had a feminine sophistication where the Russian Princess had only a trustful simplicity. But within the limits of a certain stylish artificiality that is Bronislava Nijinska's very signature, she was as authentically a Cross Princess (particularly when Baronova takes the rôle—it suffers a modification towards the modish when Riabouchinska dances it) as the beautiful Tsarevna was a Gracious Princess.

Prince and Swineherd are here. The Prince is romantic and compelling; the Swineherd is independent and averse from patronage. There is a bird in this ballet too—but its song is danced for it by a bird-catcher. In its gravity of treatment the work comes very near to that of Fokine. And it provides us with yet another method of conveying bird-song in ballet. Fokine's method was to let

the bird dance and, in her dancing, weave her slumber song. Balanchine's way with nightingales—mechanical ones at any rate—is to pick them thin and to set them spinning across the stage. And it is interesting to note that had *Le Chant du Rossignol* been written round Baronova or Toumanova, the mechanical nightingale would most probably have been set spinning in *fouéttes*—the *pas* that was used by Massine for the Spinning Top in *Jeux d'Enfants*, where it belonged, quite legitimately, to ballet, since it was the means of expressing the mechanical function of the top and was not inserted simply because it was a good stunt.

Massine too has told his fairy tales, notably in *Contes Russes*, that early work of his First Diaghileff Period. But his treatment has been episodic. He took a number of peasant legends and set them with a most effective simplicity upon the stage. The tales were of sturdy descent and are animated with a sturdy choreography. For once Massine allows Theme to speak for itself and refrains from commenting upon it by pose or antic.

Like every choreographer of note (and incidentally a good many dancers), Massine has a fine sense of period, and the Once-Upon-A-Time of *Contes Russe* was set in an age of fun rather than wit. Comment was redundant here, and Massine—that master of choreographical summing-up—used a treatment of sturdy statement entirely untrimmed either by choreographic cadence or by modish

virtuosity. As a result the work has gained an inner integrity of its own. It is a brightly coloured and firm piece of peasant imagery, that surprises and delights in much the same way as a shiny painted wooden toy will amuse and please.

While the choreographical counterpoint of a typical Massine ballet is based upon the foundations of his amused observation, that of a Fokine work springs from a quality of deep emotion.

There is a type of vision which looks out upon the world and sees it working miraculously, set within a ring of tears. The Slav temperament is particularly prone to this type of vision. In it tears and laughter are so closely akin that there are times when they usurp each other's function.

Take, as an instance, the creative vision of a Chekhov. Everywhere he looks, he sees human endeavour drowned by a thick wave of lassitude. He sees his puppets posturing and mouthing at its very edge. And as they grandiosely abandon themselves to the flood of calamity, Chekhov, because he is weeping for them, has to laugh at them; and, because in spite of their pathetic helplessness they strike a chord of the comic and are the more endearing for it, he weeps for them, and we with him.

Fokine shares with him this proneness to emotion. He stares into the small worlds given him to animate and he sees them most gay, most comical, yet each is set within a ring of tears.

pointes and a delicately suggested play of mime. The *pas* alone marks her as own sister to Papillon, though her step is more controlled, more self-conscious and more sophisticated.

The tears of the frieze are gathered in the white shape of Pierrot—luckless lover and unhappy chaser of phantoms. He is the most delicately suggested of all these *commedia dell' arte* etchings. There is a moment when Pierrot throws his cone-shaped hat over what he imagines to be the butterfly symbolised by Papillon. He hugs himself in an ecstasy of expectation. This high moment is followed by a drop to the depths of despair when he unfolds his hat upon emptiness. These two time points hold the whole of expectation and disappointment within their narrow span.

It would have been easy for Fokine to be "obvious" in his treatment of Pierrot. Indeed a lesser choreographer would have overlaid the fragile frieze with heavy humours of a crinolined *coquetterie*. The masqueraders would have wriggled, giggled and ogled their way through the romantic Schumann score, with the heavy innuendo of a German *prima donna*. But Fokine has not only evoked a period from a few names set at the top of some Schumann pianoforte *morceaux*, he has thrown in as a kind of artistic make-weight one of the loveliest of *adages* to be found in the whole of the literature of the ballet—the *pas de trois* for Chiarina and two girls to the reverie marked *Chopiniana* in the score. It is

a *pas de trois* of a supreme simplicity, composed of a gentle advance *sur les pointes* with opening arms and shoulders a little to the side, an encircling figure and then a quiet return. Yet it is a choreographic lyric that can rank with the Prelude in *Les Sylphides* and with Constanza's dance in the Massine ballet, *Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur.*

But it is in his treatment of *Petrouchka* that Fokine reaches his highest emotional achievement. In this Russian tale of the puppet who is too nearly human to be a doll, too nearly puppet to be a man, Fokine draws the attentive heart from the very body of his audience and places it in the puppet's breast. Fokine knows his Russian peasant. He sets his story in the midst of a Fair. The Moor, the Doll and the Puppet Petrouchka fight out their tragedy in the inner core of the ballet. Outside, the bustle of the fair is still going on. More than any other ballet in the repertoire *Petrouchka* stands and falls by its crowd scenes. In these Fokine's sense of fun (as opposed to "wit") and pity (as opposed to amused observation) are to be found in every event. The fair is in full swing when the curtain rises. The crowd is a good-humoured Russian crowd, boisterous and curious. Street dancers go through their routine (to the tune of "*O les fraises et les framboises*," ingeniously orchestrated so that it is as though it were being played from a particularly wheezy and ancient barrel-organ). Coachmen reel into a traditional dance. Nursemaids *chassé* across

the scene, doing a traditional dance with coloured neckerchiefs. Fun is suspended before the antics of a tamed bear lumbering across the stage, the chained victim of a begging-cup. Rich merchants, gipsies, peasant women, children, and figures of carnival with the heads of monstrous birds and animals, make up the outer texture of the tragedy.

In the core of the ballet are the three rooms of the Puppet Show, where the puppets live their real lives. The Doll prettily apes the Ballerina; she assumes the air of a great lady—but puppet-transposed and wide-eyed. She moves stiffly. When she faints it is with one leg stiff in the air. Of the three puppet characters she is the most puppet-like. Then the Blackamoor, worshipping his coconut. The feeling of nostalgia, of a longing for African sun and scenes, this puppet brings in its wake, in spite of its awkwardness of action and its comical propensities. And last, Petrouchka. The puppet with none of the puppet's resignation. The white-faced clown who can never be reconciled to the sawdust in his veins. The eternal symbol of man's rebellion against Fate: the Magician having bestowed upon Petrouchka an awareness of humanity that makes him conscious that he is nothing but a puppet. Here is the core of the tragedy, stated with a fluency of movement and a shifting of crowd groupings in a malleability never before to be found in the ballet and never since equalled. The pity of the crowd when Petrouchka is slain by the jealous

Les Cent Baisers (A Nijinska ballet)

Carnaval. Décor by Bakst

Moor; their childlike relief when the Magician, called hastily to the scene, turns him back into an inanimate sawdust doll with swinging arms and drooping head. And Petrouchka's final mocking gesture as his soul escapes for ever from the enchantments of the Magician: high above the roof of his abhorred booth, he mimes his swan-song of triumph, while the Magician stands rooted to the darkening stage. These sequences could only have been devised by Fokine, who sees his world the brighter for its ring of tears.

Another choreographer might have forced the theme into a rigid form of dancing cadenza, or, with antic and attitude, he might have mocked Petrouchka, or he might have observed Petrouchka instead of feeling with him—observed him and commented upon him with ingenious *pas* and virtuistic *pas seul*, exhibiting him as the stylised symbol of a puppet aping a man—a Massine treatment *par excellence*. Or he could have taken the theme and set it on some plane of actuality available only to ballet, making the Fair a cerebral skeleton of a fair in the same way that Picasso, Massine and Auric transplanted the sailor-town of *Les Matelots* on to a mental plane where the "idea" of a port became perfectly translatable into ballet idiom.

But Fokine, without apparent difficulty or recourse to self-conscious analysis, took his human scenes from the life and made them just representations. He took his puppets and endowed them

with a philosophy; he showed them to us as the symbols that they are. And the two manners—the representational and the symbolic—woven together by a thread of pity and stitched with a flashing needle of fun, make a perfect unity of intention.

Finally, and by way of rounding off this rondo of honour, the signature of a Fokine work is to be found in its line, in its complete ministering to a dancer's technical requirements, in an integrity of treatment of its theme, in a great gift of emotion. And in a sense of fun.

§ 4. MASSINE

Any analysis of Massine's work as a choreographer must be considered in the light of his personal virtuosity as a stylist, technician and interpreter of rôle. Massine's work falls into three clearly definable cycles: First Diaghileff Period, Second Diaghileff Period, and the present de Basil Period.

A choreographer establishes the *pas* by which a thematic situation shall become apparent to the audience. And the intonation of these choreographical sentences—the manner and inflection of the personal quality of the dancer upon the *pas*—is one of the most fascinating studies of the dance.

A line of girls in a production number of a musical play will do a routine of identical steps, in a time-adjustment to the musical beat, which

will pass as "perfect ensemble dancing." Yet each girl will inflect every movement with some subtle nuance of personality—some difference that is composed partly of angle and partly of an individual manner of moving, that takes the eye and holds the interest; so that the line becomes centred, as it were, in the movements of the unit. Each unit is choreographically identical, but each unit is individually different.

It is much the same with the rôle in a ballet. In spite of numerous new creations for various organisations presenting ballet, the permanent repertoire of the ballet—that upon which organisations in every country draw—is limited. Soon the thematic content of a work will be grasped by the audience, and the choreographical line will be learnt, just as the scoring of the passages of a symphony will be recognised by the expectant ear, even without the stimulus of the musical score. Once the choreographical content of a work has been grasped, the interest of the audience is apt to become engaged by the interpretation of the rôle; though a good choreography will retain its power to move, to stimulate and to astonish, which, in the end, becomes the acid test of the endurance of a work. With the possible exception of *Scheherazade*, all the well-known works of Fokine's Diaghileff period have "worn well." Actually *Scheherazade* has an historical importance which serves as its safe-conduct in any programme, for in it mime and dancing action are fused for the

Can-can Dancer in *Boutique*, from the memory of Massine's appearances in the rôle—the perfect symbol of the rather tired band-box sophistication of the period. It is impossible to think (fortunately) of *Union Pacific*—that crude and somewhat surprising outbreak of Hands-across-the-sea-ism that occurred in his third period—without the simple but supremely effective figure of the Barman dancing a balletic transcription of the cake-walk. And though in *Le Tricorne* Woizikovski is more sturdily Alarcon (or less magnificently Picasso), in the *farruca* the Massine aura remains about the rôle.

If Massine had not been so fine a technician himself, it is doubtful whether his works would have borne so clearly the impress of his personality. The present writer is of the opinion that as his powers as a dancer decline, the inventiveness of his choreography will decline also. But this is in the nature of a theory, and (again fortunately) need not yet be put to the test.

Although the works of Massine fit very snugly into a three-period division (with the exception of the choreographic symphonies, which must be considered by themselves) there are certain qualities that are common to all three periods of Massine's choreographical works.

The most important feature in a Massine work of any period is the elasticity and invention in the *pas*.

The *pas*, to Massine, is what the line is to Fokine.

The situation, to Massine, is what the theme is to Fokine. The virtuosity of the dancer, to Massine, is what the characterisation of the rôle is to Fokine. And an amused observation, a nice sense of malice, and a pretty wit, replace in Massine the sense of the tears that lie at the base of beauty, that is so implicit in the work of Fokine.

Fokine, scoring choreographically for the whole body, cleared the way for Massine's inventiveness. But this was only to come to its fullest powers in the second (or *épatant*) period, when to be amusing in the *pas* became an end in itself, and the choreographer's part in ballet changed from the intent telling of a tale, to amused comment upon it.

In his First Diaghileff Period Massine had a story to tell, and most ingeniously, most divertingly, he gave it its head. *Boutique Fantasque* and *Le Tricorne* are the most successful works in this period. They retain their pristine powers of astonishment, no matter how often they are performed. In both these works the *pas* is inventive, but this invention is always harnessed to the situation and never treated as an end in itself.

In *Boutique Fantasque* Massine's particular genius for grouping begins to be seen.

The grouping in a Massine ballet is almost invariably that of dancers caught in action, held for a minute and then the action resumed.

Groups in a Fokine ballet are those of dancers come finally and easily to rest. The grouping in a

work by Balanchine is indicative of a great deal of manœuvring to get the dancers into some unexpected cluster (often illumined by really lovely line), followed immediately by more manœuvring to get the dancers out of the cluster. Nijinska tends to treat her groups in units. Ashton closely follows Massine in his treatment of groups of dancers. Here, again, the dancer is found arrested in a movement shortly to be resumed. It is in the very certainty of this resumption of movement, as opposed to the calm, static treatment of a Fokine grouping, that the signature of Massine is to be found. Both in *Boutique* and *Tricorne*, however, it is the theme that is the choreographer's first consideration. In both he has assimilated a period. In *Le Tricorne* he transcribes the Spanish manner into a kind of Russian ballet shorthand, but the manner is subservient to the matter (with the possible exception of the famous *farruca*) all the time.

In *Contes Russes* the themes show so sturdy a vitality of their own that the choreographer had no need to underline them either in the *pas* or in the grouping.

Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur is another work in which the period restrained, to a certain extent, the inventiveness of the *pas*, and the *pas* and the pose grew naturally out of the Goldoni situation. The ballet was not, at this time, being eclectic or tiresomely self-conscious. Its choreographic contents had been freed from the bonds of the dancing

cadenza and flowed, freshly and naturally, into the channels of the theme. And though in *Contes Russes*, Diaghileff might scrap a real horse and bring on his hero astride a property animal, because artistically the symbol was more suitable to Russian ballet (and because, too, the symbol was so much easier to manage), the ballet was still concerned mainly with telling its story as nearly and as clearly as it could.

In connection with the substitution of the representational for the actual horse, it is interesting to note that in the Balanchine ballet, *La Chatte*, the villain of the piece, a clockwork mouse, was scrapped as being "artistically unnecessary," after a certain amount of public and mechanical insubordination. The miming of the cat was taken to be sufficient indication to the audience that a mouse had run on to the stage. And before this, a large red heart, formally the property of Harlequin in the Fokine work, *Carnaval*, was jettisoned as "inartistic" when the choreographer left the company, and Harlequin had to lay a purely mimetic heart at Columbine's feet, in much the same way that Columbine had enacted all the tremors of her own organ before her antic swain. Yet another instance of "artistic deletion" is provided by *Les Matelots*. Diaghileff was much taken by a street-musician who produced a curious rhythm by playing spoons partly as *castagnettes* and partly by impact with his person. He enrolled him as a temporary member of his

London company. But later the spoon-player was superseded by a dancer playing a phantom rhythm with empty hands.

Into the intricate design of the Goldoni situation of *Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur*, Massine has woven the bright choreographical chatter of young girls, until the stage is full of their laughter. And in this gay period he has embedded one of the most moving *adages* in the literature of the ballet, when a young wronged wife comes out upon the dim stage to dance a puzzled little *pas seul sur les pointes*.

In this ballet Massine serves his author more closely than his composer—Scarlatti-and-Amplification. (Later he was to readjust the balance with the two choreographical symphonies that are the subject of so many keenly fought battles.)

La Boutique Fantasque can be taken as the peak ballet of the peak period. In this work Massine, Derain and Rossini-Respighi combine to make a balletic unity that has never been surpassed.

The action of the ballet takes place in 1866, in a spacious toy-shop situated upon the quay-side of Nice. Not the rather apologetic rococo survival almost entirely given over to the Franco-Italian *petit bourgeoisie* which is the *Nice de nos jours*, but a golden Mecca for the leisure of the whole world, gay beyond description—*chic* beyond dreams and frequented by tourists.

An English Old Maid (complete with lorgnette, parasol and stride), her friend, an American

Tourist, with his wife and small son and daughter, a Russian Merchant with his family—these are the clients for whom the Shopkeeper and his red-cheeked Assistant bring out their dolls. The human interest is centred on these nicely satirised figures, and throughout the action their medium of expression is a lively kind of danced mime without cadenza or *variation* which serves to differentiate between the human world and the doll-*motif*.

With the exception of two dolls that stand on the side of the stage upon a pedestal, turning with small flat shuffling steps and raising and lowering their arms, the toys—two Tarantella dancers, the King and Queen of Hearts and Spades, a Snob and a Melon Vendor, Cossacks, and a Camp Follower, dancing Poodles, and two Can-can Dancers—have no purely toy-like functions. They are the representation of living creatures, brought in with a charming stiffness and relapsing back into it when their dances are done. Only the Snob and the Melon Vendor have any mechanical action. The *divertissements* danced by the toys are witty and expressive. After countless times of witnessing the ballet, each repetition comes to the audience as freshly as on the very first occasion of seeing the work. The ballet has no manner—or rather mannerism—to date it.

The emotional content of the ballet is centred in the Can-can Dancers, man and girl, who are being parted by different purchasers, after dancing the

famous number in which the Ballet Russe takes the familiar steps of the *Haute Ecole Bal Tabarin*, and reflects it in its own particular idiom. Before the dolls are due to be delivered to their different destinations, twelve friends (attired charmingly in white *tu-tus* trimmed with scarlet flowers) come to bid them farewell. Massine has devised for them the kind of *enchaînements* that might have come straight out of *Coppélia*. Charming, sturdy choreography built upon the traditional lines of *developpé* and *arabesque sur les pointes*. The Can-can Dancers do a *pas de deux* that is most moving in its rather helpless loveliness, and the girl comes out to do a *pas seul pizzicato*, with little hops *sur les pointes* and knife-edged *pirouettes*, which is in itself a choreographical pearl. (And when that charmer, Alexandra Danilova, wittiest artist that the ballet of to-day can boast, takes the rôle, the *pas seul* gains an emotional content—that moving quality of poignancy that so often lurks behind perfection.) Finally the Can-can Dancers decide to fly together. Led by the Snob, the dolls plan a revolt against the disappointed customers. And the curtain descends as all return to live happily in the shop again.

A simple little theme, yet the means of conveying a dozen unforgettable ballet images. And so apt is the characterisation that each rôle in the work is coveted by the company—with the possible exception of the arduous dancing exercises of the Tarantella pair.

And every *tableau* opens a window on to a little world of its own. A world that strongly resembles our own world, caught at a ballet angle, and secured by it in our consciousness for ever.

The Russian ballet, never happier than when it is telling some tale of dolls (with their charming stiffness of line and bland countenances that so nearly fit the essential conditioning of a ballet world, which is built upon the straight stiff lines from thigh to *pointe* and the assumed expression), delights in its new ability to tell, so variously and so gaily, a tale.

Only once again was Massine to find so happy a *milieu* for his observation, as the Derain toy-shop with its Rossini-Respighi conditioning. The next time that we are to see him entirely (and brilliantly) at home is in a crazy Picasso world, set spinning by Manuel de Falla, for the antics of the Miller and his Wife in the Alarcon tale *Le Tricorne.* Twice more he will recapture this feeling of a world pinned upon an independent plane, and viewed from a ballet angle—in *Les Matelots* and in *Beau Danube*—but never quite so completely, quite so invulnerably.

Le Tricorne sets a little world upon the stage. The people that move about in it have been living there for a long time. When they leave the stage it is to continue their lives in the wings. These are no "balletic symbols"; they differ only from people in an actual world by the brevity of their impact upon us and by the intensity of their rate of living.

The Picasso bridge that spans the back-cloth measures the span of a whole world in little, wherein dwell the jealous Miller, his vivacious young wife, the wicked Corregidor and their friends and minions. And here the eternal triangle adopts the Spanish tricolour. Here, too, is to be found the characteristic time-precision of Spanish rhythms translated into Ballet Russe. And here, too, is the perfect situation for the play of Massine's wit. The ballet has one moment of supreme poignancy, and that is when the young Miller's Wife is left alone upon the darkening stage (for the Miller has been consigned to the Corregidor's dungeons) and, in the deserted shadow of the little bridge, she flutters her hands behind her in a very ecstasy of Spanish loneliness.

There are many lovely things in this work—most memorably, of course, the Miller's dance (*farruca*), one of the most effective of male *pas seuls* in the whole of the literature of the modern dance.

In a voting census of modern ballet, Fokine's *Les Sylphides* would probably come first, followed undoubtedly by Massine's *La Boutique Fantasque*, and with *Le Beau Danube* (that delightful sepia-toned carnival of old Vienna) as a popular third. *Le Tricorne* (in spite of the fact that it is not a *pointe* ballet—a hindrance to the popularity of the work among ballet-goers until the salad days of their first few seasons have come to a judicious close) would find fourth place in popular esteem, now that the

first wild enthusiasm that greeted *Les Présages* (the animate abstraction to the Fifth Symphony of Tchaikovsky) has suffered considerable modification. Apart from the two pressing problems (*a*) of whether it be permissible to add a dancing line to a choreographic score, and (*b*) whether abstractions (Death, Passion, Folly, Action) are innately balletic, the choreographic stuff of *Les Présages* has worn very thin in the three years of its presentation.

But *Boutique Fantasque* does not wear thin—and neither does *Le Tricorne.* This is due both to the vitality of Massine's inspiration at this period, and to the perfect unity of décor, music and theme; and partly, too, because it was still the eye, the ear, and the emotions that formed the compass points of the scope of Ballet Russe at this time.

Soon the mind was to usurp the function of the emotions, and the eye and the ear were to be challenged and amused—not enthralled. The golden age of the dance was about to succumb to a fever of cerebral Latinitis.

§ 5

There is a break of four years (1920-24) between the first and second Massine Ages. This was filled with fragmentary work outside the ægis of the Diaghileff organisation, tangible reminders of which are the ballet *Mercure*, a choreographical quip that failed to find favour with the public when Diaghileff took it over in 1924, and *Le Beau Danube*

which Massine re-scored and adapted to the choreographic needs of the personnel of the de Basil Company. And these four years were key years in the trend of Russian ballet.

It is a curious reflection upon the whirligig of time and its revenges, that it was Diaghileff's effort to produce that kind of ballet—from the bonds of which he had delivered ballet in the days of the Maryinsky—that caused the second or cerebral period of Ballet Russe.

The Sleeping Beauty, staged by Diaghileff as the apotheosis of the Tchaikovsky ballet, brought the whole edifice of the organisation crashing about the impresario's head. Financially it was a failure upon a colossal scale. It left him broken in spirit, and financially crippled, and it took two years to restore his courage and his enterprise.

But Ballet Russe was to have a renaissance and a Latin renaissance at that.

French and Spanish modernist painters, French musicians and men of letters, were to find, in the ballet media, the tissues that were admirably fitted to convey their wit. The day of the representational was over. Stage design became a modernistic embellishment. Love themes were played in italics—and upon the trombone. Line no longer flowed in curves but was arrested at the angle. The *pas* became more and more "amusing," more and more inventive; the pose became more and more "surprising"; the theme more and more sophisticated,

more and more tenuous. And it was to this world of wit and *chic* that Massine returned to create two of the masterpieces that were its glory and its excuse.

One of these masterly ballets remains in the de Basil repertoire—*Les Matelots*. The other, *Le Pas d'Acier*, soon vanished from the Diaghileff repertoire; but an impressive memory remains of a brilliant choreography, which transposed the personnel of the company into the wheel, cogs and pistons of a great machine.

The works of the Middle Massine Age were temporarily stimulating, if not permanently improving. They include *Cimarosiana*—a suite of dances to the music of Cimarosa which dwell delightfully in the memory (the work, incidently, included a *pas de deux* by Nijinsky), and *Ode*, an unreadable comment upon the text of Lomonossoff, interesting for its variations of line and for its contrast of wired figures with the figures of the *corps de ballet*, and for some lovely movements softened by gauze curtains. Light entered into the choreography in a new and exciting way.

W. A. Propert[1] reminds us that

"Light played a great part in it, and most strikingly perhaps in a scene called 'Flowers and Mankind,' in which intricate and lovely figures of flowers and men were projected on to a deep blue background, while in front of it Nature and the 'Light Speck' played ball with an immense crystal

[1] *The Ballet in Western Europe* (Bodley Head).

sphere that glittered with all the colours of the prism; and again in the closing scene when the final catastrophe was heralded by quivering tongues of flame on the pearl-grey sky. Then there was a scene," he continues, "in which masked women in wide silver dresses were multiplied endlessly by lines of receding puppets, while in front of them, with white cords patterning the whole height of the stage, took place a dance of white figures, also masked."

In fact the production was attractive but rather involved.

During this period the star appeal of the ballet was centred about its male dancers. "Nijinska has done a new ballet for Dolin." . . . "Balanchine has done a new ballet for Lifar." . . . These were the commonplaces of the foyer, just as now "Nijinska has written a new ballet for Baronova," . . . "Massine has done a ballet for Toumanova," greet the ear.

The centring of choreographic interest upon the male dancing cadenza, with only a perfunctory *pas seul* for the ballerina, with an "amusing" implication and a *chic* virtuosity, banished for a time the clockwork mechanics of the ballerina.

Massine is at his happiest in scoring for the male dancer. His inventive faculty embroiders the rôles with a fine tracery of wit, while his own virtuosity as a dancer colours the rôles. Massine is no "Fool's Choreographer." He demands much of his dancers

—just as much as he gives—and only the creator of the rôle can know how much this can be.

There is an interesting etching of his producing method in a letter written to me by a young English dancer who was with the de Basil Company during the period of its gestation at Monte Carlo, when Baronova was dancing in the *corps de ballet* of *Sylphides* and Toumanova was co-ballerina with Doubrovska, Blinova and Riabouchinska; when Morosova was taking what the dancers call "bits and pieces" and before Verchinina had joined the company.

"Massine," wrote this English girl, "is most inspiring to work for. At rehearsal he drifts about on his toes and you are never quite sure whether he is showing you something or trying something over for himself. He is very patient. Everything is worked out before he comes to rehearsal. When we were doing *Jeux* he took each section of the toys separately and we did not come together until the dress rehearsal. Yet, in the finale, every dancer found her right place upon the small stage of the Monte Carlo Opera House without a hitch."

In the middle period it was not the Danilovas, the Tchernichevas, the Sokolovas, the Doubrovskas and the Nikitinas, who upheld the choreographic spine for the Master; they were the pleasant feminine inflection that gave the Gallic *soupçon* to the Russian dish. It was the Lifars, the Dolins, the Idzikovskis and the Woizikovskis who fed the *èpatism* of the illustrated-paper public.

In *Les Matelots* the method achieves its perfection. The story of the sailor who tests his love by the time-honoured device of a disguise lends itself superbly to ballet. Massine achieved a perfection of characterisation in his scoring for the Three Sailors, the Faithful Maiden and her Confidante, and each mood is caught and mirrored in the *pas*. Moreover, in his scoring for the Three Sailors, Massine has devised sequences which, even when torn from their context and from their Pruna frame, retain their freshness and their quality of completeness.

And indeed, it is this quality of completeness that gives the key to the ballet. There it is, this world of sailors and their loves, established in a Marseilles that is perfectly suggested by the Pruna decorations, backed by brothel or bar, and conditioned by plaintive little airs in the modern idiom of Auric. In spite of "amusing" treatment, both scenically (a painted disc revolves on one side of the stage to suggest a change of scene) and musically, the work is strangely moving, as for instance when the faithful Betrothed dances her loneliness and shuts her ears to the easy advising of her friend.

Furthermore, the ballet has made history. In it Lifar was given his first acclamation by English audiences, and Nemchinova cemented her already considerable reputation when she followed the gala appearance of Lopokova in the rôle.

Lydia Sokolova, great artist, magnificent mime,

inalienable child of the ballet, danced the rôle of Confidante in this ballet when Diaghileff first presented it, and the memory of her conception of the rôle—a slow-witted, staring slyness—adds interpretatively to the choreographer's design. And when Danilova, wittiest artist of the modern régime, dances the Faithful Maid, bringing a sense of tears to the *pas seul* in which, shawl around head, she mourns her absent love, the ballet for just that space is miraculously balanced upon a tear-drop.

§ 6

Although the "Choreographical Symphonies"—the Fifth Symphony of Tchaikovsky and the Fourth of Brahms—fall into the Third Period category, it is more convenient to consider them separately.

Many successful ballets have been devised to borrowed scores. *Carnaval*, *Les Sylphides*, *The Gods Go a-Begging*, *Le Beau Danube*—these are works that artistically have justified a musical misdemeanour.

In each case, however, the choreographic scoring has conveyed some period, mood, or story, that is altogether outside the content of pure music. The result in each case has been excellent ballet. Of the three, the abstraction *Les Sylphides* more nearly approximates to *Les Présages* and *Choreartium*. But there is a basic difference between the two objectives. In *Les Sylphides* Fokine set a reverie above the Chopin score, in much the same way as a composer may set an instrumental *obbligato* above a song.

Fokine took the essence of the music and expressed it in movement. But he made no attempt to translate the notation into any form of dance. The dancing phrasing does not necessarily approximate to the musical phrase, and no attempt is made to take a series of notes or chords and fit to them a series of movements. The music has been accepted by the choreographer as an independent artistic entity which he has interpreted in movement, and no attempt has been made to approximate a choreography to the several parts.

But with the Choreographical Symphonies, Massine set out to add a choreographical line to the musical works. He has sought to add something to the symphony, taking what before was a musical whole and treating it passage by passage, until a choreography has been built that fits the sound texture of the symphony.

The Tchaikovsky Symphony was the first essay in this manner. To it has been added a conveniently vague visual programme—Action, Temptation, Movement, Passion, Fate (or Anxiety Complex, to use the ideology of the day), Destinies, Frivolity—these set the visual key to the aural impulse. But the ballet is ill at ease with literary abstracts. It is so much happier arguing from the particular to the general (which is what, upon inspection, the symbolic appears to be) than dallying with some non-balletic concept that can better be conveyed through some other medium.

Sometimes, almost in spite of himself, one would say, Massine achieves the balletic. The *pas de deux* in *Présages* is one of the most moving in the literature of the dance. But this is because the choreographer has become interested in his young lovers. They are unmistakably the ballet symbol for all young love that is under a cloud.

And again, in the *allegretto* movement of the Brahms Fourth Symphony, which has a still less definite thematic programme (though each movement has a visual programme which is more or less definite), Massine achieves ballet, forsaking the letter of the music for the spirit.

In the estimation of the writer, it is justifiable to add a choreographic line to music only when the mood of the work is treated. The first duty of the choreographer is to create "good ballet." The mere translation of musical beat and sequence into dancing beat and sequence is not sufficient justification for the borrowing of a major work, such as the Brahms, and the allying of it to a naïve series of movement approximation, ruining the performance for the musician; for the symphony is stripped of all subtlety of variations of tempi, and all the light and shade of delicate tonal balance and emphasis, that go to the making of an interpretation of the work in a concert hall.

Admittedly such experiment shows a quickening in the life of the ballet. And Massine has always sought to bring something new to the art—some

increase in idiom, some new manner of grouping or treatment. More than any other choreographer he has sought to capture periods and situations and set them triumphantly within the ballet concept. But balletically the symphonies evade him. And it is the contention of the writer that it is right that this should be so.

§ 7

The works in the third Massine period, with the triumphant exception of *Le Beau Danube* (which owed its first inception to an earlier commission) show a falling-off in artistic unity.

Set Massine to work with Manuel de Falla, Rossini (Respighi-ce), Liadov, Auric or Prokofieff, and with Picasso, Derain, or Pruna, and an artistic fusion of theme, music and décor is assured. But in his third period Massine has been less fortunate with his collaborators.

Taking the Strauss ballet *Le Beau Danube*, with its borrowed score and its delicious sepia Polunin-Guys setting, as the peak work of the third period, we find a triumph of choreographic realisation of music, décor and period.

One of the determining influences of the middle Massine period was the domination of the male dancer. Works were inspired by male virtuosity and ballets were devised for the male personality.

A determining factor in the third period is the virtuosity and personality of the young *ballerine*—

Baronova, Toumanova, Riabouchinska. Ballets are devised for their personalities. (The Poor Lovers in *Jardin Public*, for Toumanova and Massine; the Young Girl in *Le Beau Danube*, beautifully modified for Tatiana Riabouchinska; the gay little *midinette* whom nobody can interpret save Baronova, with her delicate and exquisite mime and her gay firm *fouettés*).

In *Le Beau Danube* Massine has served his cast to perfection. The rounded movements that lie so sweetly upon the Strauss valse rhythms, his scoring for Danilova, Baronova and Riabouchinska, combine the maximum of choreographic realisation of their separate personalities with a complete harmony of period and thematic material. And finally, since he has danced the part himself, the Hussar is another of the rôles with the Massine aura—the patina of style—that lifts the ballet right up and establishes it upon some plane of the quintessence of ballet-interpretation. (It is interesting to note in this connection that when Lichine—excellent character dancer, with a truly amazing pace—takes the rôle, it falls from its position of central focus and the accent of interest moves to the *ballerine*. The feeling is that he is a dancer in the rôle of a Hussar, and not, as when Massine takes the rôle, a Russian ballet symbol of a Hussar in a ballet: a subtle difference, but in this difference lies the whole of the balance between representation and realisation.)

Jeux d'Enfants is one of the earliest works of the period. It deals with the happiest of all ballet material, children's toys, and treats them in a modernist manner. The result is some amusing *divertissements*, with some interesting movement and sophisticated humour of the *fausse-naïve* genre. But the stylized Miro setting, the unforced strains of the Bizet *Petite Suite*, and the sophisticated Massine humour do not create a fusion.

Again Massine has served his dancers well. He found and formed a new Riabouchinska, modishly angular, delightfully balletic, as the modern child. He incorporated that self-conscious and slightly dubious element, the *fouetté*, into a rightful part of the choreography, giving it a status as a *pas sérieux* in using it legitimately for the Top; so releasing a useful step from its invidious position of choreographical pyrotechnics, used mainly to enrapture the gallery and confound the company.

But for us, the last word has been said about toys in *Boutique Fantasque*—perhaps for all time. Familiar décor, infectious score, delightfully unforced choreography—all are here, and all go to make a perfect fusion.

Two other works call for consideration from this third period. *Union Pacific*—a rather raw ballet, manifestly made for an American public and dealing episodically with the building of the Union Pacific Railway—is notable only for being the frame

to the remarkable Massine *pas seul*, the Barman's dance. The rest of the work might well have been devised by Balanchine in a less inspired moment.

Everything goes on just a little too long in this work. It is fragmentary and obvious, relies upon the broad humours of pioneering prayer-meetings and rough-houses. The work achieves ballet three times in its long action. Once when Baronova takes the floor as the Mae of the Golden West, and when the Barman does his ballet-transposed cake-walk, and the short sequence in which the *corps de ballet* are used as sleepers and riveted to the line, is ballet being "amusing."

Jardin Public is the latest work of this period, and again we feel the lack of some unifying direction.

The ballet is notable for some interesting movements and for the *pas de deux* of the Poor Lovers, which gets a rather cinematic effect, as though the dance were being done upon a screen in a slowed motion and from a close-up. The film has contributed to this ballet and with its contact has enriched the idiom. There is no more moving *pas de deux* in the literature of the modern dance. But the work as a whole oscillates between the balletic and the cinematic, with a touch of what the present writer begs leave to describe as the Charlot-ic thrown in. Condensed and vocalised, the whole park with all its frequenters might very well form a part of a light topical revue. Only the dance of the nursemaids remains to remind us that we are at the

ballet—the Russian ballet that has given us *Petrouchka* and *Igor*.

To sum up: In a Massine ballet, look for an amazing wealth of inventiveness in the *pas*, a finely developed sense of period, unusual and arresting grouping, a comprehensive knowledge of a dancer's choreographic needs, and, playing over all, the revealing light of his wit. A Massine work may be a much-discussed work—it never will be a dull work.

§ 8. NIJINSKA

If classicism can be said to be the spine of Bronislava Nijinska's choreography (and no follower of the ballet who has seen her magnificent *pastiche* in *Le Mariage d'Aurore*—all that remains of *La Belle au Bois Dormant*—and the interesting choreographical treatment in *Les Cents Baisers*, will hold this fact in doubt) it must be added that hers is a classicism that can be dressed and expressed in the mode and mood of the day.

In *La Belle au Bois*, Nijinska was called in to reflect and burnish the spacious manners of a Petipa ballet on a grand scale. Everything that could be augmented to enhance the glory of this lovely survival—the orchestral score, the section of *divertissements*, even the ballerina—underwent an eightfold apotheosis. And Nijinska set her eight *ballerine* spinning upon the stage with all the frozen classical loveliness that is at once so formal and so moving.

But when the Ballet Russe became the toy of the intellectuals, Nijinska reflected the mood in the movement of the moment. *Les Biches*, with its Marie Laurencin décor, its Poulenc score, and its witty relapse into the unnatural, is a case in point. Here, "le shocking" became, as it were, disinfected by *le chic*.

Anton Dolin joined the Ballet Russe and brought with him a new element. And in devising *Le Train Bleu* for him, Nijinska blandly embraced in her stride a species of balleticised acrobatics.

Le Train Bleu is that remarkable work of which the programme stated:

"The first point about *Le Train Bleu* is that there is no blue train in it. This being the age of speed, it has already reached its destination and disembarked its passengers. These are to be seen on a beach which does not exist, in front of a casino which exists still less. Overhead passes an aeroplane that you do not see, and the plot represents nothing. And yet when it was presented for the first time in Paris everybody was unaccountably seized with the desire to take the Blue Train to Deauville and perform refreshing exercises. Moreover, this ballet is not a ballet. It is an *operette dansée*. The music is by Milhaud. It is danced by the real Russian Ballet, but it has nothing to do with Russian ballet. It was invented for Anton Dolin, a classical dancer who does nothing classical. The scenery is painted by a sculptor and the costumes

are by a great arbiter of fashion who has never made a costume."

(This persuasive scenario was by Cocteau. H. Laurens did the décor, and there was a *rideau* by Picasso. The costumes were by Chanel.)

The young and brilliant Constant Lambert wrote a ballet for Diaghileff, *Romeo and Juliet*; la Nijinska neatly latinised its humours in the best neo-Ballet-Franco-Russe manner.

Colonel de Basil needed a ballet for his young company—in *Les Cents Baisers* Nijinska resorted to the interesting *enchaînement* and perfection of grouping that denotes her triumphant return to her first love, classicism. A welcome return, both from the point of view of thus being assured of seeing the dancer extended at her very best, and—for this was devised during that creatively tiresome season when the only new Massine work was his cinematic *Jardin Public*, and the emasculated and rather tortured re-scoring of *Le Bal*, the Rietti-Chirico work—of seeing her in a work that was triumphantly balletic. For the follower of ballet can feel certain, in entering into any world that has been devised by Nijinska, that all will be of, from, and stated in, "excellent ballet."

Like the work of Fokine, Nijinska's *enchaînements* are built upon a profound understanding of a dancer's requirements. And she looks to the classroom to supply these. There can be very little in the choreography of *Les Cents Baisers* that is not to be

found in the centre-practice of every serious ballet school. It is in her selection and placing of the *pas* and in the classical purity of her line that the charm of a Nijinska *enchaînement* is to be found. Her scoring for the male dancers in the work is strong, economical and academic. Her treatment for her ballerina is classical, interesting and full of character. Her grouping treats the dancers individually as well as plastically, and states, in a Degas-like manner, the beauties of instep, thigh, and *tu-tu* in a dancer at rest and *sur le scène*.

The story of the spoilt Princess who buys the Swineherd's crock with a hundred kisses lends itself superbly to translation into ballet event and ballet sequel. And all the humours of the little work, all the pride, all the pain, and all the tears, the chatter, the wrath, and the astonishment are realised in the classroom *pas*, so that when the Princess finds the gates of her father's palace closed to her for ever, her despair is caught and expressed in a single slow, extended *ronde de jambe tendu*—one of the loveliest crystallisations of situation within *pas* that the ballet can boast.

Nijinska is very much the child of the occasion; but given an occasion of quality she has never yet been known to fail.

§ 9. BALANCHINE

The problem of Georges Balanchine is the problem of Peter Pan—the problem of the child

who does not want to be a grown-up: the problem of a man who cannot bear to deny himself his childish toys. The toys of Balanchine's nursery days were the gymnastic movement, the angular line, and the italicised grouping. And now that he has arrived at the years of a choreographic discretion he finds it hard to put away these nineteen-twentyish baubles.

Balanchine will create an arbitrary world upon a purely balletic plane. He will people his world with rare and exciting creatures; he will then, as likely as not, proceed to manœuvre them into some manner of involved and difficult suspension. Often the action in a Balanchine ballet will be left to its own devices, while the entire company is occupied with inserting itself into some "amusing" position from which subsequently it will have the greatest difficulty in extricating itself. All the event in his little world holds, as it were, its breath, until the protagonists are once more disentangled from whatever anguished involution they have been at such great pains to adopt.

Yet the exciting and very lovely grouping in *Appollon Musagettes* made that otherwise rather arid production a notable work. Balanchine's *pas* inclines towards the angular—*vide* the strong lines of the male dancers in *La Chatte*, the Profligate's sequences in *Le Fils Prodigue*, and the shoulder movements of the girls in *Concurrence*. Yet when he uses the curve in the *pas* he obtains fluent line and

exquisite movement—the lovely rounded movements of the fondant-clad guests in that esoteric work *Le Cotillon* is a case in point.

He has achieved two supremely successful ballets —*La Chatte* (the work in which Lifar finally emerged as a fully formed dancing personality), and *The Gods Go a-Begging*, a charming *pastiche* thrown hastily together at the end of a London season—more as a gesture to Sir Thomas Beecham who had been conducting that season for Diaghileff, and who had arranged the music, than for any other reason.

Against an old Bakst back-cloth, the Gods—simply and very charmingly animated by Balanchine—met and danced together to the music of the Handel Suite. Danilova and Woizikovski, the Gods of this production, served their choreographer as faithfully as he served his composer, and the result was a notable whole—a little uninventive as to *pas*, perhaps, but gaining in simplicity what it lacked in invention. Balanchine has also devised a number of semi-successful works—such as *Neptune*, *Fils Prodigue* (in which the moving touched cheeks with the amusing), *Appollon*, *Concurrence*, and *Cotillon*: works which are memorable, each for some particular sequence, but which either fail, in the last analysis, to convince, or are involved, or are over long about their weaving, or fail to "come off" for some reason that is hard to define. Yet his qualities of design persist, and his concept is always a balletic

concept, however far removed from the plane of actuality it may be. And because his conception is invariably balletic, he can summon our emotion at his will.

No lover of ballet, privileged to see the final sequence of his *Fils Prodigue*—that El Greco-like return of the son to his father's house, that was danced by Lifar with an unprecedented intensity—will ever forget the emotion that the shattered body, dragging across the stage from point to point with the support of a staff, centred in its passage. And in *La Concurrence*, who can forget the closing scene, when the strange young girl sinks sadly to the floor and sleeps upon the faint and lonely stage?

Whatever the defects of a Balanchine work, it will bear the unmistakable imprints of a master's touch. It cannot be said of Balanchine that he has never found his true collaborators, for he seems happy enough in any company that he is called upon to keep. Can it be that he has never really found himself?

§ 10. ASHTON AND N. DE VALOIS

There are two choreographers of note working in London: Frederick Ashton and N. de Valois. Both are, to some extent, pioneers. Ashton's work is notable for its wit—a wit that, like the wit of Massine, is embedded in the very spine of the *pas*. An Ashton conception is almost always a balletic

conception. He has founded and consolidated the form of ballet which I will call Chamber Ballet. His work *Le Foyer*, an animation of the dancers of the Opera after Degas, is a notable contribution to the genre. But his most important work is the outrageously successful *Façade*, which he has recently revived and revised for the company at Sadler's Wells. This work is in the nature of a satiric romp, and is excellent Ashton, in addition to being excellent ballet. It catches perfectly the implications of the William Walton score—originally devised as an orchestral *obbligato* to the poems of Edith Sitwell. It is the one example of the literary ballet that can be said to be entirely successful.

In *Les Rendezvous*, an essay in the romantic manner, he has conveyed an effect of *ballon* that is not to be found in ballet since the days of Fokine. But the romantic manner in *Les Rendezvous* is modified by its reflection in the Ashton temperament, that cannot resist placing the world within the inverted commas of a comment. It is notable for its *ballon*, its infectious gaiety, and an attractive *pas de trois* that could be inserted (though the writer is not suggesting that it *should* be inserted) in *Cimarosiana* without bringing the blush of shame to its gay little cheek. The grouping in an Ashton ballet resembles Massine's, inasmuch as it is the pose of suspended motion—motion that has been arrested, and that will soon be taken up again, rather than the pose of stillness of a

dancer at rest, that is so characteristic of a Fokine group.[1]

Wit is the essence of an Ashton ballet, but line, and arresting orchestration are other qualities to be found in his work. In fact the only thing about Frederick Ashton that is not "good ballet" is his name.

N. de Valois' most important work lies outside the scope of her choreography. Yet so great a part in her development and modification as a choreographer has her Sadler's Wells company played, that it must be considered in any analysis of her ballets.

Madame de Valois is ballet-mistress to Sadler's Wells. That this organisation has won a place for itself in the national life of the theatre must be regarded as her major triumph.

London followers of the ballet have watched the Salder's Wells company emerge from its earnest chrysalis of dancing-school endeavour, not only to become the background for a brilliant young dancer, Alicia Markova, but to become an instrument capable of producing its own future star—Margot Fonteyn.

For the first time England has an institution that approximates, less dazzlingly, less rigidly, but still

[1] Since writing the above Mr. Ashton had proved, with the Ashton-Lambert-Liszt work, *Apparitions*, that he can control a large canvas and produce a choreography that is at the same time interesting to the dancer and to the musician.

quite recognisably, to the Maryinsky State Ballet organisation. For the first time England has been given the chance to produce a literature of dance that is characteristically its own.

Naturally, in scoring for this company, the choreographer's attention must frequently be modified. The idiom of Ballet Russe as it is evolved in the de Basil Company is different from the idiom as it is recognised at Sadler's Wells; for the company lacks artistic maturity in its approach to the rôle, and its members have none of the brilliance of the born Russian dancer, or of the English dancer who passes early into the service of the Russian Ballet, such as Lydia Sokolova, Anton Dolin, and Alicia Markova. And this, perhaps, is why N. de Valois turns to literature for her theme, and to a Dickensian richness in her characterisation.

It is this richness of character, coupled with the feeling for the *chic* that she has in common with Nijinska, and a nervous intensity that is all her own, which make her ballets exhausting to watch. The orchestration of the backgrounds is so thorough, the figures in the foreground are so arresting, the event so lightly achieved, so quickly dropped, that the audience is at full stretch all the time.

In *Job*, and in *The Haunted Ball-room*, the choreographer has stripped the restlessness from her work, but *Job* is "bad ballet" (though it cannot be denied that the work is "magnificent Vaughan Williams and very excellent William Blake"), and *The*

Haunted Ball-room is not a good ballet, and so the game has not been worth the sacrifice of the choreographical candle.

The Rake's Progress is possibly the best de Valois ballet that Sadler's Wells has produced: in this, and in her Ballet Club *Bar aux Folies Bergères*, the choreographer has been so faithful to her décor that an enchanting and stimulating whole has been achieved, and two unforgettable manners—the Hogarth and the Manet—have been animated and transposed into ballet.

This brief survey of the choreographic content of the Ballet Russe from 1907 to 1936 must end upon a note of grave inquiry:

Where are the choreographers of the future? Where are the successors to Fokine, Massine, Nijinska, and Balanchine? To the follower of the ballet the answer will be of the first importance.

III (A)

THE SCORE

By Basil Maine

TO

LADY ROSEBERY

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I ENTER this team of writers with some reluctance; for I am one of those who believe that Terpsichore is not enhanced, except in a few instances, by the literature which courts her. The more her charms and graces are sung, the more elusive do they prove, and the more foolishly superfluous does the singer appear. I understand, however, that this team is to be one of secretaries rather than of swains. As a secretary, I thought, I will join; but not as a swain. Did I possess the airy technique of the male in *Les Sylphides*, still would I not consent to try my wings as a lover of that enchanting but dangerous Muse. To enter her service as a recorder pleases me well enough.

For she has always required such services; and as early as the sixteenth century the Abbé Jean Tabourot, realising this, took pains to follow and transcribe her movements. My task here, I am glad to learn, is not to attempt that. I am not asked to work as a dance-typist and transcribe movements, but rather to give some account of their source and sustenance. That the music of a ballet can be so treated as a separate element is evidence

in itself of the comparative immaturity of the art and of the wide field that still remains for development. Most of the outstanding ballets of the past have been outpourings of choreographic ideas into ready-made vessels. For these it can be said that they have opened up a region in the interpretation of music which was closed to instrumentalists and conductors, and that their achievement has depended upon the musical sensibility of the choreographer. But ballet has occupied little of that larger ground which is available to the composer and choreographer working in consort. Nor must we forget the painter and the dancers. Conceivably, they also would be active partners in the evolving of the perfect ballet.

In my own judgment, one of the great attainments in multiple authorship is *The Three-Cornered Hat*. Falla, Massine and Picasso have here brought about a remarkable coincidence of spirit, and with them I shall always associate Sokolova and Woizikovski for their skilful expositions of the Andalusian idiom. For this and no better reason, I have chosen *The Three-Cornered Hat* as the first ballet to be examined here in its musical aspect. Already a warning must be given; for this method of study inevitably upsets the balance of elements which is essential to an ideal experience of any ballet, and which in *The Three-Cornered Hat*, as I have said, is so exceptionally satisfying. However, since this is one of a number of related essays, the responsibility of

adjusting the balance lies more with the reader than with myself.

Balance of elements is also Falla's particular accomplishment in the music of *The Three-Cornered Hat.* Howbeit, I recall that in my first experience of the score, its vital, various rhythms made the outstanding impression. At a later time, the peculiar freshness of its harmonic invention began to steal over the senses, and through that the significance of those wry little tunes was made plain. But these were unripe occasions. Not till the several components fell into position did I perceive that the essential quality of this music is its brilliant clarity. Every phrase, every tone, every accent is given an edge such as can be seen when a dark cloud begins to efface the sun.

The themes, curt and to the point, are obviously to be associated with characters and ideas in the enactment. Thus, the Miller is represented by a three-four figure in the bass (taken from the accompaniment of one of the composer's *Seven Spanish Songs*), and the Corregidor is provided with a clownish bassoon tune for his visiting-card. Mr. J. B. Trend points out[1] that the Miller's Wife, coming from Navarre, is given a snatch from a *jota* of that region—a device which assumes that the spectator is uncommonly quick in the uptake. Falla spaces his score so that a few more evocative themes are heard at the outset, the Miller whistling (A

[1] In *Manuel de Falla and Spanish Music.*

major), as one example, the four-note tune for the entry of the Corregidor with the police, as another, and the staccato three-eight phrase (F major) as another. This last is perhaps intended to help the spectator to enjoy the humour of the situation. Some of the incidents of the action have called forth corresponding incidents in the musical invention. Among the more graphic of these are the passage coinciding with the encounter between the Corregidor and the Miller's Wife, and that which accompanies the commotion after the lecherous schemer has fallen into the mill-race. But the most brilliant writing of all is found in the solo dancers into which the action is led, as the action in Italian opera is led to the culminating point of an aria. Whether the Miller's *farruca* or his Wife's *fandango* is preferred, it must be admitted that both throw into prominence the characteristics of Falla's art, its rhythmic resource and control, its meticulous workmanship and its beautifully judged dissonances.

If we now seek the sharpest possible contrast to *The Three-Cornered Hat*, where shall we find it? Perhaps in *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, or *Les Sylphides*. But to analyse the music of *L'Après-midi* would seem to be almost a sacrilege. This is not a ballet that takes kindly to the analytical method. None other is so intangible. To describe it as a dream is to leave some of its qualities out of account—its choreographic form, for instance. The Faun and Nymph are not nebulous in their movements. They

lapse not, neither do they swoon. Yet, for all the clear outline of their expression, they are less real than any creature we encounter in dreams. It is the music that makes them so—that haze of sound which stands like a quivering veil between us and them. An occasional tremor from the flute revives our immediate senses, but the veil never lifts, and through it we see, not darkly, but altogether strangely.

Imagination is similarly held by *Les Sylphides*. If, no less than the other Fokine creations, it reveals the limitations of emotional ballet, it is so perfectly enclosed by these confines that it never fails to cast a spell. But here familiarity with the music permits a bolder approach. Fokine first conceived this ballet when at a music-shop he discovered a suite called *Chopiniana*, consisting of four of Chopin's works in an orchestration by Glazounov.[1] But the ballet now most commonly danced under this title embodies a sequence of seven compositions by Chopin, in Rieti's orchestration. Apart from a few miscalculated asperities, Rieti plays his part with commendable reticence. Before curtain-rise we hear the Prelude, Opus 28, No. 7. How well chosen this is appears as soon as the moonlit scene is disclosed. Or rather the scene persuades us that it is harmonious with the overture; for that Prelude, after all, can draw our fancy in this or that direction, and with Cortot we may have been dreaming

[1] See *Michel Fokine and his Ballets*, by Cyril Beaumont.

of a dead delight. But we are not now to dream of dead things; the Nocturne (Opus 32, No. 2) begins to draw these sylphs into the air, into a disembodied movement. All this is a preparation for the first solo dance which rests lightly, almost devoid of substance, upon a Waltz (Opus 70, No. 1). The next is a surprise. Encased in this moon-world we did not think to meet with anything so turbulent as the figure which breaks in upon the scene, leaping and striding to a Mazurka rhythm (Opus 33, No. 3). "I am not of your element," her dancing seems to say. But another element (the male) appears, and by extending the expression of the former dance, brings conciliation. This male dancer also moves to a Mazurka (Opus 67, No. 3) and to one in the same key (C major). Both rhythm and tonality, therefore, assist the sense of continuity and extension.

At the very moment when we seem to be escaping into daylight, there steals in the music of that Prelude which first steeped us in this dream. We are caught again and held. This, too, is a solo dance, but so enchanted is it that it hardly touches our immediate senses. But when the music is lifted from A major to C sharp minor (the Waltz, Opus 64, No. 2), the enchantment is drawn a little nearer, as if, having first adjusted them, we had taken opera glasses to look at the moon. To this Waltz is danced the *pas de deux* which in this ballet is the peak of magical invention. The Finale is also danced to a

Waltz (Opus 18), but here the choreographer is more conscious of the exigence of form. Even so, he is master enough to trace his patterns upon the music without disturbing the dreamer.

We think of *Les Sylphides* as a ballet by Fokine, but of *The Fire-Bird* as a work by Stravinsky. In his *Stravinsky's Sacrifice to Apollo*, Mr. E. W. White surmises that Stravinsky had completed the first version of *The Fire-Bird* before he had conferred with Fokine as to the details, and that the interpolations which appear in the second version of the score were the result of the choreographer's suggestions. It is the second version which later on was made the basis of the concert-hall suite. The ballet, which is in two tableaux and is founded on a Russian legend, was first performed in Paris on June 25, 1910.

How familiar is the opening of this music, that figure droned by 'cellos and basses, yet how imbued with mystery it always is! We are again to be led away into enchantment, but unlike the world of *Les Sylphides*, this garden of the Demon King is a dark, uncanny place. Scene and music are not so much interpenetrating (as in *Les Sylphides*) as mutually reinforcing. They are counterparts. In the half-light of the stage background is the outline of the castle walls. The rest is dark. The garden is full of trees that dimly show their outline against the deep blue tint of the night sky. Below the trees are tangled bushes. All this sinister scene is repainted

by the orchestra, and in the process the spectator's apprehension increases.

In order to intensify the sensation, Stravinsky does not hesitate to go his own way. On his palette are unusual pigments. The E string of each first violin for instance, is tuned to D. The half-lights fitfully appear in the mixed tones of trumpets and bass wood-wind. There is a warning sound, a horn-call. The spectator prepares himself. For what? For some vision, it seems, for the subdued, vibrating strings fill the air with mystery. Then the vision is flashed upon the darkness. The Fire-Bird, in a transfiguring light, flutters through the garden. The light that surrounds her reveals Prince Ivan, hiding in the bushes. He watches her ecstatically as she dances. She is the loveliest thing he has ever seen. The music here shows innumerable little glittering surfaces. Broken *arpeggio* figures appear and re-appear in points of piercing light over a surface of more normal brightness. It is as if we were looking along the path made by the low-lying sun's reflection in the sea. No choreographer or dancer or inventor of stage-lighting can hope to match the kaleidoscope of tone-colours and harmonies. It holds the spectator in thrall as he watches the Prince, greatly daring, emerging from the shadow to capture the Fire-Bird.

For the entry of the Princesses and their play, the face of the music is wholly changed. Being re-assembled, the orchestra is now more amenable to

melodic utterance; and the melody is none the less welcome for not being the composer's own, for his treatment is altogether delectable. The impression, however, is that here he is playing for time, holding himself in reserve for the next scene into which he can pour more of his essential self. This is the Infernal Dance of King Kotschei's subjects. In the force of its rhythmic invention this music is prophetic of Stravinsky's later achievements, especially of *The Rite of Spring* and *Les Noces*.

First, the Prince breaks through the castle gate. The light changes and the demons enter. Their procession is an emotional crescendo leading to the superb entrance of their King (the kind of moment that was always so well managed by Mr. Matheson Lang). By his command, the intruding Prince is thrown at his feet. The demons' dance is, in effect, the exercising of his power over them. The orchestra is no less under his spell. Stravinsky's impersonation of the Demon King is much to be applauded. A point to note is the crash at the outset. The chord is A minor, but the crash will recur on other tonalities (B and E), so that the music will seem to be moving in a circle, in the way the witches in *Macbeth* move hand in hand round the cauldron. The rhythm is set by bass strings and drums, while the irregular theme of the dance is enunciated by bassoons and brass. After the crash on the B major chord, the same rhythm is exploited in a contrasted colour, *pizzicato* strings,

pianoforte and flute. Another loudly accented chord marks the first completion of the circle, a return to A minor. Now the course is changed. The measure which was of three beats is now of two. Strings and wood-wind are engaged in this episode, which leads back to the punctuating chord (now in E) by way of the opening theme. Stravinsky now plays the demon by loosening the reins a little. This badinage on the xylophone is tantalising. When the Demon King becomes playful, we wonder what will happen next. Still more do we wonder when the strings begin singing a tune. When the blow does fall, it is venomous indeed. We recover to find ourselves beginning the circle again, hurriedly now and to an increasingly complex rhythm. The episode leads to a moment which is both terrifying and a relief. All that has been pent up is released. The composer's only concern is now to gather up the fragments and build a gateway for the music's exit. He does this with extraordinary skill, directing every accent, every colour, every colour-relation towards a telling effect, and basing the structure upon the original keynote.

For the final ritual, the marriage of Prince and Princess, Stravinsky resorts to a Russian chorale. The melody, being smoothed out into regular beats and richly harmonised, carries the impression of chimes and a procession, and also makes a heightened contrast with the angular rhythm of the Infernal Dance. If this music brings no incident

in its train, neither is there any incident upon the stage, unless we remark the transport and stillness of the Prince. We may also remark the bright, hard colours of Stravinsky's harmony and their agreement with the colours before our eyes.

After completing *The Fire-Bird*, Stravinsky, possibly with the final scene of that ballet in mind, wrote a Ritual Dance. This was intended as part of a symphonic composition. Meanwhile a "Concertstück" for pianoforte and orchestra engaged his attention. This, incidentally, was afterwards used for the second tableau of *Petrouchka*. The fact is noted to explain the important rôle assumed by the pianoforte in that scene, and its almost complete withdrawal in the later scenes. About a year later the composer, returning to his Ritual Dance, conceived a symphonic work with this as the Finale. This was to be *The Rite of Spring*. From this the ballet by Stravinsky, Roerich and Nijinsky was born; but, because the music was originally an abstract conception, the first choreography was dropped in favour of one devised by Massine.

In its original form the *The Rite* is symbolical of Primitive Man's idea of the elemental conflict between earth and sun. Adoration of the Earth is the first tableau; the second is The Sacrifice. Stravinsky has told us that his aim was "to express the sublime welling-up of Nature as she renews herself." The first Prelude is an expression of "that great awe which weighs on every sensitive mind

when contemplating creative force, a feeling, obscure yet tremendous, which possesses all things at the time when Nature renews her manifold self; the vague yet profound disquiet of the universal approach to adolescence." Orchestration and the interplay of melody are to be the vehicles of this evocation. Especially will the wood-wind colours, their peculiarity and their proximity, be explored. The seeds from which this movement grows are an *arpeggio* phrase played by solo bassoon, and a shorter, but clearly related phrase, for clarinet. This melodic line is developed with a careful avoidance of all harmony which is commonly associated with vocal expression. Stravinsky, that is to say, is already shying at over-expression, an attitude which has since led him to write an orchestral work without violins, and, in general, to his neo-classical phase. The prominence of the wood-wind in the Prelude is another sign of this puritanising process. That group is favoured here because of its crispness and clarity; also because of its lack of facile expression.

In the composer's mind, the growing volume of the music is the growing urgency of Spring. Each family of instruments is a branch, each instrument a bud, put forth by an old and firmly rooted tree. In a moment the curtain will rise and the rhythm becomes increasingly insistent. It is as if every bud were beating in unison to break into life. These beats are the auguries of Spring. Here, in the

La Boutique Fantasque. Décor by Derain

original version a group of maidens come up from the river and form a ring. Their dance is founded on a staccato figure (in two-four time) and on a chant sounded by trumpets. (Note the four B flats at the beginning of this theme and its implication of the "augury" rhythm.) The brief, violent third section foreshadows a theme (in quick nine-eight time) which is made more important in the fifth section. This third section, called Jeu du Rapt, was originally made to fit the enactment of an abduction. A choral dance follows. Against the trilling flutes the clarinet sings a kind of folk-tune. (This is in irregular measure of five-four, seven-four and four-four.) The modal nature of this and other themes is, of course, deliberate; is, in fact, an example of Stravinsky's primitive sophistication. From beginning to end *The Rite of Spring* is, from this point of view, a self-contradiction, since it represents a return to the stark essentials of Nature by way of the most elaborate organisation of tonal and rhythmic thought. Therefore we expect no inspired melody. Anything which has a semblance of melody in this work is, we can be sure, a conscious denial of lyrical impulse. It will have been formed by a reasoning process; so there is no possibility of true thematic development. That lack has been noted as a fault by some critics; but, accepting the premises from which the composition of *The Rite* began, we cannot mark it as a fault. It is inherent. An example occurs during this fourth section,

where the chant-theme (associated with the Maidens' Dance) is re-introduced; but it leads to no development, only to a violent harmonisation by the full orchestra.

The nine-eight theme suggested in Section 3, now plays its complete part in the episode called Games of the Rival Communities. Towards the end of this the tubas are blaring a short theme which tells of the approach of the Oldest of the Tribe, who comes to bless the earth that it may be eternally productive. The theme is terrifying in its insistence. But a still greater fear fills us when the Earth Dance begins. What a "corybantic rupturing of laws" is this! It may have sprung from the inferno of the Demons' Dance in *The Fire-Bird*, but by comparison that earlier composition is a lullaby.

At the beginning of the second part is another Prelude to which the composer has given the title Pagan Night. For sheer certainty of expression this is an outstanding episode. Although there is thematic material (note the two-part figure for trumpets), the heavy solitude is induced chiefly by harmonic and instrumental colour. In the following section, Mystic Rounds of the Maidens, the two-part figure reappears, but dressed in strange harmony. Look back to the beginning of the work, to the clarinet theme, and note how it vacillates between major and minor. Now note the harmonisation at the beginning of the Mystic Rounds. There is that same hesitancy; but here the problem

is more acute, since major and minor chords are sounded together. Seemingly the composer is attempting to nullify their difference. This is an extreme example of primitive sophistication. Stravinsky seeks to bring about a new birth by dealing a death-blow. He has tasted blood. There is no stopping him now.

Intoxicated, he moves on to the next episode, in which is an extraordinary release of energy; then to the Evocation of the Ancestors, another barbaric chant, enunciated by wind instruments and accompanied by strings. Rhythm here is so irregular that no accent comes unexpectedly; but in the succeeding episode, the Ancestors' Ritual, the regularity of the measure is in itself a surprise. Only for a short space does the thematic material succeed in breaking the step of the *pizzicato* chords.

When we arrive at the final section, the Sacrificial Dance, we have returned in effect to the source of this exceptional composition; for this, the reader will recall, was the first part to be written. If we had imagined that the Earth Dance had exhausted the composer's power of rhythmic invention, this comes near to persuading us that that power in him is inexhaustible. In intensity the Sacrificial Dance can almost be said to bear the same relation to the Earth Dance that the latter bears to the Demons' Dance in *The Fire-Bird*. It is the difference between white heat and red. No analysis of this Sacrificial Dance can give a shadow of an idea of its impact

upon the senses. We can cite the tightly reined rhythm of the first passage (in measures of five, three and four semi-quavers), or the earthquake shudders of the next passage, or the overwhelming effect of the *ostinato*, or concentrate upon details of harmony or orchestration—still shall we be immeasurably removed from the direct experience. Even a few hours after hearing this music, imagination cannot come near to re-creating the sensations which, "with pitiless pomp and pain of sacred springs," it engenders.

Ritual is again the underlying idea of Stravinsky's *Les Noces*. In this instance the composer was concerned to discover an expression in music of the rites accompanying a Russian rural wedding. He would do this by portraying the bride, bridegroom, parents, families and friends. One of the composer's best interpreters explains his achievement thus: "with music expressing the living reality, the transcendent character of the action becomes clear."

Here I pause to consider the reader's convenience. Possibly, and even probably, he feels that a survey of *The Rite of Spring* followed by another of *Les Noces* is trying him too far. This appears to be the moment for an interlude. Now I have been at pains to choose one which is also closely relevant to the context. As I see it, the following passage, written in the year 1771, has a direct bearing upon these works of Stravinsky. "No one will, I believe, at present deny the necessity of discord in the

composition of music in parts; it seems to me to be as much the essence of music, as shade is of painting; not only as it improves and meliorates concord by opposition and comparison, but, still further, as it becomes a necessary stimulus to the attention, which would languish over a succession of pure concords. It occasions a momentary distress to the ear, which remains unsatisfied, and even uneasy, till it hears something better; for no musical phrase can *end* upon a discord; the ear *must* be satisfied at last. Now, as discord is allowable, and even necessarily opposed to concord, why may not *noise*, or a seeming jargon, be opposed to fixed sounds and harmonical proportion? Some of the discords in modern music, unknown till this century, are what the ear can but just bear, but have a very good effect as to contrast. The severe laws of preparing and resolving discord, may be too much adhered to for great effects; I am convinced that provided the ear be at length made amends, there are few dissonances too strong for it."

Perhaps the reader is inclined to dispute this open-minded opinion of Dr. Burney. With *The Rite of Spring* and (especially) *Les Noces* in mind, he may object that Stravinsky makes use of discord, not as a contrast to concord, but to the complete exclusion of concord as we have hitherto recognised it. If so, he must be prepared to admit the possibility that, in Stravinsky's mind, many of the discords had already been resolved before he began

to compose those works, that they had become, in fact, part of his normal vocabulary. It is true that the creative artist must take care not to leave his audience too far behind. Otherwise he will be speaking in vain. He will resemble a telephone bell ringing in an empty house; there will be no reply. But it can at least be said that Stravinsky, in the course of his remarkable career as a composer, has always been careful to keep in touch with his audience; and if exchange has informed him that there is no answer, or no answer to speak of, rather than abandon the call he has tried another line, then another and another.

Les Noces represents an attempt to call up the peasant soul of Russia. When it was produced, the public response was so fiercely confused that even a writer like Mr. H. G. Wells, who hitherto had shown no special sympathy with music, was persuaded to come forward as a champion. The text of the work is drawn from a collection of Russian folk-poetry which, in the score, is reflected by a number of songs invented by Stravinsky in the peasant style. Since the music was written on the shores of Lake Geneva, there is reason to think that it was not uninfluenced by the composer's impressions of Vaudoise country life. The work was the result of long deliberation. Having considered it for three years, Stravinsky came to grips with the actual composition in 1917. Even then he could not decide upon its medium. After

experimenting with mechanical pianos, and making and discarding two scores, he at length decided (in 1923) on a version for chorus, four solo singers, four pianofortes, xylophones and a formidable array of percussion.

The ballet is fourfold: Tableau 1 is the ceremony of dressing the Bride's hair; the next is the blessing of the Bridegroom by his parents; then follows the Bride's departure. This ends the first part; but there is no break between it and the second which consists of one tableau showing the wedding feast. Although none of the soloists has any assigned rôle, the Bride occasionally expresses herself in the soprano part, and the Mother in the mezzo-soprano. It is in the vocal writing that the essence of the music is to be found. At first, this may appear to be a reversal of the puritanising process which, in *The Rite of Spring*, led Stravinsky to eschew all harmony associated with voice music. Actually, it is a continuation of that process. The very fact that the composer has chosen percussion and, in the pianos, still more percussion, to accompany the voices reveals his harmony-phobia. The harmony in the pianofortes may not in fact be arbitrary, as one critic is inclined to think; but it is wilfully intended to appear so. Anything to be rid of the conventional ideas of lyrical expression! The vocal writing itself thoroughly routs those ideas. There are songs and snatches of songs, yes; but they are subservient to the central purpose

of the whole adventure, which in its cold, rigorous pursuit of rhythmic patterns is a very polar expedition.

If the reader be ready to surrender to this music (as Nijinska in her choreographic interpretation has done) he will not need a map of its course, so much will the experience take hold of him. But he will perhaps permit me to call attention to three incidents; first, the phenomenal climax which is built up when the Bridegroom's parents, seeing him go, call out "God bless you"; next, the contrasted lamentation and great joy when the Bride leaves her family; lastly, the underlying rhythm of Tableau 4 with its tumult of songs, gossip, merriment and bells. That strange rhythm, from which the Finale springs, had an origin no less strange. Stravinsky has disclosed that he marked it down on one occasion when he was listening to the conversation of two drunken peasants in a train. How awestruck those peasants would be to think that they had been an innocent source of one of the most significant compositions of our time! How embarrassed to know that they had been the indirect cause of a babble of critical tongues that even a prophet among us could not silence!

Unless we pass straight from *Les Noces* to *Job* or *Choreartium*, we can hardly avoid a sense of anti-climax where the music of later ballets is concerned. Of some of the post-war ballets I confess I remember almost nothing. Dolin's *Beau Gosse* in *Le Train Bleu*

makes a ghostly entry upon memory's stage, and accompanying him is a faint echo of Milhaud's rakish music. Of the Balanchine ballets I best remember *The Cat*, based on an Aesop fable to music by Sauguet. In his light way Jean Cocteau once said that music is designed for a variety of functions: sometimes it serves as a tight-rope, sometimes as a race-horse, sometimes as a chair. Sauguet's music for *The Cat*, it appeared to me, was designed as a divan on which at any moment the ballet could lie until the next idea arrived. I recall the setting—circles, segments, ellipses and rectangles in mysterious arrangement, and made more mysterious by the use of talc and American leather. The end, too, I well remember for its outstanding solemnity: the Young Man dies—a rigidly horizontal death—and over his body his friends perform certain rites, involving a complete set of geometrical instruments, as who should say: "We will bury him with the things he loved best."

Adjacent in its conception was Balanchine's *Anna Anna*. The same greyness pervaded the décor, and in the choreography was discovered the same grey matter. Anna's dual nature was represented by the beautifully lyrical dancing of Tilly Losch and by Lotte Lenja, a shrill singer of the blues. For this Anna was a native of the Mississippi country. She was betrayed, however, by the Wagnerian cadence in Kurt Weill's blue music, although the two elements were not unpleasingly mingled.

Of these latter-day ballets, one did impress me as being excellently served by its composer. This was *Pomona*, danced to Constant Lambert's music. The first production (by Nijinska) was in 1927 at the Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires. My own first experience of it was at Oxford in 1931, when the Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music was held there. Simple and especially apt for dancing, the action shows Pomona, goddess of fruits, being wooed by Vertumnus; his boldness and her fright and escape; the ruse by which he finally wins her and the consequent joy of nymphs and immortals. The music is cast in the form of a suite. The discovery of the goddess and her nymphs in an orchard serves as the Intrata, after which seven movements follow. With an ingenious economy of means the music reflects the *naïveté* of the action. The quality of charm is not strained at any point. Rather is the impression one of austerity, and, because of the instrumentation and the skilful contrapuntal writing, of extreme clarity. The Minuet (nymphs enticed by immortals) and the Siciliana (a *pas de deux* for Pomona and Vertumnus) are especially happy instances of music and choreography in harmonious relation.

It was on this same occasion that I first saw *Job* as a ballet, although I had heard Vaughan Williams's music in a concert version at the Norwich Festival the year before. In spite of its coming at the end of a long morning programme, that concert

performance was an intense experience. The music was a pageantry in itself, a well-ordered progression of sober colour and decorous movement. Just as the possibility of translating Blake into music appeared remote before this composition came into being, so the realisation of the music's imagery in dance seemed well-nigh impossible, more especially in those memorable episodes of the score, Elihu's Dance of Youth and Beauty, and the Pavane of the Heavenly Host. That the problem was faced at all stands greatly to the credit of the Camargo Society, and, in particular, to Mr. Geoffrey Keynes who invented the masque, to Madame Raverat for her scenery and costumes, and to Miss Ninette de Valois for her production. This collaboration, which also had the advantage of Dolin's magnificent Satan, revealed an awareness of the deeper significance as well as the outward show of Blake's illustrations. Here, one thought, is a sign-post for English ballet. Out of a poet's vision has leapt music's flame, which again is reflected in the gravely dramatic conduct of the dance. But it is the intense heat of the composer's imagination which is the supreme factor in the experience.

Job is a composition in nine scenes. The first shows Job and his family, prosperous and content, the entry of Satan and his appeal to heaven. Four episodes in the music are devoted to this enactment —an Introduction, a Pastoral Dance, music for Satan's entrance (based on descending two-note

figures embodying sevenths, ninths and tenths), and the Saraband of the Sons of God. The last, a three-two theme for strings, conveys its austere beauty by the simplest of means. In the second scene Satan, seeing the empty throne of God, dances in ecstasy and ends by sitting upon it himself. The dance is a three-four measure and, in contrast with Satan's first entry, begins with an ascending figure moving in intervals of seconds and thirds. "Then came a great wind and smote the four corners of the house" is the superscription of the third scene, which is built upon a Minuet similar, in the gravity of its deportment, to the Saraband. To this Job's sons and daughters are dancing when Satan appears and destroys them. Then follows Job's dream: first a smooth theme in the bass expresses his quiet sleep; then an irregular theme, centred round the tonic and dominant of C, evokes the terrible visions with which Satan disturbs him. Now come the messengers to tell Job that his wealth will be destroyed and that death will take his children. They are brought in with a theme (in four-four measure) which, beginning on a high C, steals down by semitones. But for all the calamity they speak, Job still blesses God. Two main themes are the basis of the next scene; the first in alternating major and minor thirds, is associated with three hypocritical comforters which Satan brings to Job; the second is the theme of Job's curse, a stark tonic-dominant motive in C, in which major and

minor thirds are now sounded together. We have been prepared for this climax by the gradual changing of the comforter's words from simulated sympathy to rebuke and anger. "Let the day perish wherein I was born"—mark in these words the extremity of Job's wrath and pessimism, then mark the music's direct expression of this. Mark it by imagining (for the sake of comparison, not of disparagement) how this extremity would have been encompassed by Stravinsky or Béla Bartók or Alban Berg.

After the curse, Job, invoking his vision of God, is shown God's throne with Satan upon it. This is immediately followed by the appearance of the young and beautiful Elihu and by another vision wherein God is restored to his throne. In this episode the composer's imagination, which has not failed or faltered since the beginning of the work, moves to its highest plane, achieves its utmost serenity. Elihu's Dance in itself is an inspiration, but its effluence into the Pavane of the Heavenly Host is an attainment of the rarest kind. If there is a drop from this to the succeeding Galliard (danced by the Sons of the Morning), it is hardly perceptible. The Sons are driving out Satan and their theme is composed of the same intervals (seconds and thirds) that go to the making of Satan's theme during the ecstatic dance of Scene 2: only here the motive is flowingly diatonic. For the Altar Dance which follows the measure is changed to

six-eight, a happy device for conveying the joy of Job's household without in the least suggesting a rollicking country-dance. Thence we pass to the Epilogue in which Job, old and humbled and again surrounded by his family, gives his benediction.

Unswerving, single-minded music, such as is found in *Job* from first page to last, is not easily matched by the choreographer's art. In my opinion, the complete choreographic counterpart to this composition is yet to be accomplished, perhaps by continuing the lines of the existing ballet to a still higher attainment, perhaps by making a fresh start. I do not feel that *Job* as a ballet has the balance of interest that, for instance, *Choreartium* has. In both structures the music is the very life of the building as well as its rock-foundation; but that life moves to greater purpose in the dance-invention of *Choreartium* than in that of *Job*. This is not to subscribe to the view that the former is the perfect choreographic translation of Brahms's Fourth Symphony. It may well be doubted whether such a translation of such a composition is possible at all. Can music's thought, of which movement is but one component, be translated wholly into movement itself? Massine's creation, masterly as it is as such, cannot be regarded as being more than a version of this deeply reflective symphony, and even so, the word "version" cannot be as precisely applied as in the case of (say) a novel turned into a play. Let us therefore describe *Choreartium* as an

attempted parallel, and an uncommonly close one, to the Fourth Symphony of Brahms.

I am always at a loss to understand how Massine was led from Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony (in *Les Présages*) to this most self-sufficient of all symphonic works, unless, indeed, it was the coincidence of key. Can it be that he is never so inspired as when dancing in E minor? We may permit the fancy. Tonality does appear to have played a part in the conception. Something of the key-feeling of the opening movement is reflected (or paralleled) by the autumnal colouring and the pervading mood of the corresponding episode in the ballet. But whatever the actual reason may have been for Massine's choice of this particular symphony, the fact remains that he has thereby raised a perplexing problem. For, if we can be certain of anything in this world, we can be sure that Brahms conceived and wrote the work as a coherent and complete expression in itself; as a work that required no gratuitous elucidation through the medium of another art; in short, as a symphony to be played by an orchestra. He was simple enough to believe that to interpret this music he needed only a band of players and an understanding conductor. He did not even feel the necessity of calling in a choral society to help him out, although there was good example for that. If it had been suggested to him that, to avoid possible misunderstanding as to his symphony's meaning, he had better employ the

paraphernalia and extremely complex technique of the ballet, he would have considered the suggestion to be either crazy or insulting. For it had ever been his ideal to grasp form more and more closely (as Goethe had advised), to grasp it so that expression became increasingly clear and concise; and we may well think that, in this respect, he had never been more successful than in the Fourth Symphony. If that be so, no true follower—let us say, no true disciple—of Brahms could look upon a choreographic representation of the work as anything but an intrusion. To invite that disciple to confuse his aural conception of the symphony by watching Massine's visual conception during its performance would be equal to inviting a disciple of Socrates to seek pure thought through bodily desire, after he had discovered the truth of his master's contrary teaching. In the Fourth Symphony Brahms vindicated the Socratic doctrine of sublimated thought to a degree that was quite remarkable at that stage of music's development. Continually his problem was to strike a balance between musical thought and sense impressions; and those who best know and love this work believe that never did Brahms achieve the balance more convincingly than here. In the E minor Symphony he was, as it were, completely himself.

How great, then, is the responsibility of any who would seek to extend the conception of such a work! I do not say that *Choreartium* is, in any sense of the

Adolf Bolm

Leon Woizikovski

Petrouchka (A contrast in interpretation)

Alicia Markova, at Sadler's Wells

word, irresponsible; that charge could not possibly be supported against a creation so harmonious and so directly inspired by the music itself. The question is: what service has the choreographer rendered the composer? In the eyes of the disciples, he has rendered none. But it is often argued that *Choreartium* has attracted many who are not specially drawn to Brahms and even some who are temperamentally averse. Conceivably (so the argument runs) these have been led to discover and appreciate the workings of the composer's mind by following its visual counterpart. We are to think of Massine, in fact, as conducting an original and exceedingly attractive Appreciation Class. These unwilling or lukewarm learners are to have the greatness of the Fourth Symphony thrust upon them. Misguided zeal! Brahms of all composers and this of all his symphonies are the last to be understood by such methods. Only one course is open if we would witness *Choreartium* with an untroubled mind. It is to regard the choreographic creation, not as interpreting, but as being interpreted by the symphony. That is the course taken by Mr. Adrian Stokes[1] and, although he uses much else besides the symphony for expounding and poetising the ballet, his eloquence is the more plausible for being in touch with Tovey's analysis.

My purpose here is not to add one more analysis of Brahms's Fourth Symphony to those already in

[1] In his *Russian Ballets* (Faber & Faber).

existence. So far as the disciples are concerned, it would be superfluous; and if among the *balletomanes* there be any desiring to learn more about the symphony than *Choreartium* can show, they may be referred to Tovey or Niemann or Specht, but, in my own view, to no one more truly enlightening than Dr. H. C. Colles in Volume VII of *The Oxford History of Music*. I have cited this volume also because its theme is the organic nature of symphonic music. Symphony is organic music: the more clearly *balletomanes* perceive that fact, the more reluctant will they be to countenance the translation of symphony into dance. I confess that as a choreographic creation, *Choreartium* excites my utmost admiration. Indeed, I am prepared to agree with Mr. Stokes's opinion that it overtops all other examples of the art. But when he states that it adds new ranges to choreography, I suggest that he would wish to press more symphonies into the service of ballet. And since for the moment I myself am in the service of the Muse, I am bound to set down my conviction that symphony is constitutionally unsuited to the rôle; and the further conviction that the new ranges of ballet are not to be gained in this direction but, as I suggested at the beginning of this essay, through the closer collaboration of composer and dance-creator.

III (B)

MUSIC AND ACTION

By Constant Lambert

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MUSIC, though the most subtle of all arts in its powers of suggestion, is the most clumsy in its powers of definition. It can suggest some nostalgic half-shade of emotion with an almost mathematical precision denied to literature, yet it is incapable of the simple distinction between "He said" and "He thought" without which the art of the novel would be impossible. (Even in the works of writers like Joyce and Faulkner, who exalt the interior monologue at the expense of the action, the distinction between the two is as firmly established as in the case of Dickens.) But although music is incapable of making this distinction in so many words, or rather so many notes, it would be a great mistake to imagine that this distinction does not exist.

We use the word "music" to cover the world of ordered sound in general, often without realising that music can be divided into as many distinct branches as literature—poetic drama, prose drama, novels, belles-lettres, travel books and the like. No one would dream of making a play out of Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial* or Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, yet some of the recent choreographic

assaults on famous pieces of music have not been less absurd in their misunderstanding of medium. The crude distinction between music actually written for the stage and music written for the concert-hall is naturally appreciated; but it is not so often realised that a similar distinction can exist as regards two pieces of concert-hall music—I mean the difference between what may be called direct or present action, and what may be called recollected or imaginary action.

The difference can most clearly be seen if we compare two pieces apparently in the same genre and sharing certain similarities of style: Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Scheherazade* and Balakireff's *Thamar*, two evocative orchestral works both of which were eventually turned into ballets. I am not alone in considering Balakireff's work greatly superior from the purely musical point of view, and I expect many will agree with me in preferring Fokine's choreography and Bakst's décor in *Thamar* to their work in *Scheherazade*, considered again as separate artistic elements. Yet *Scheherazade* is to me the more successful and satisfying ballet of the two, for the simple reason that the music has the direct two-dimensional quality of present action, while Balakireff's work has the more subtle quality of imagined or recollected action. The success is all the more remarkable when we remember that the scenario of *Thamar* follows closely the Lermontoff poem round which Balakireff wrote his symphonic

poem, while the scenario of *Scheherazade* has nothing in common with the stories round which Rimsky-Korsakoff wrote his symphonic suite. The point, I think, is this: Rimsky-Korsakoff's formal outlook being as simple and direct as the narrative methods of the *Arabian Nights* themselves, his music lends itself to any tale of a type similar to those he actually chose to illustrate. Balakireff, on the other hand, approaches his subject with something of the formal subtlety of a Conrad, and hence even the most painstaking realisation of his tale does a certain violence to the musical content. There is in *Thamar* none of the obvious physical climax which lends itself so successfully to action in the closing scene of *Scheherazade*. Instead we are given an emotional summing-up after the action is over. As a result the actual murder of the Prince on the stage is too strong an action for the music, while on the other hand the epilogue is choreographically speaking too weak.

Conrad, to whom I have compared Balakireff, provides us with a particularly good example of the difference between direct and recollected action which it is so important for the choreographer to realise when dealing with music. It is a platitude to point out that although Conrad's plots, considered as a dramatic framework, are melodramatic, his books are never melodramatic because of his oblique approach to the more theatrical incidents. When, however, he tried to turn his novels and

tales into plays they became just melodramas and rather bad ones at that. It is as though someone had re-written a Greek tragedy and shown us the messenger's speech in terms of action; made us see Jocasta committing suicide, Oedipus gouging his eyes out. Such a play would be an outrage on taste, but is it less of an outrage when Massine represents the personal tragedy which lies behind the slow movement of Tchaihovsky No. 5 by a bogy-man with pantomime wings breaking in on a pair of lovers? Choreography by its very nature is denied the oblique approach to narrative or action open to the writer or composer. Hence the necessity for the choreographer and scenario-writer to exercise the utmost discrimination and reticence in the choice of a ballet theme.

To return to *Thamar*, which provides a peculiarly apt test-case for our argument. Though less suited to action than *Scheherazade* because of its emotional-cum-formal subtlety, it is, on the other hand, well suited to action because of its narrative time-sense. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that although the composer is forced to adopt time as his medium he does not always approach time in the same way. Sometimes his themes succeed each other in dramatic sequence like the acts of a play, sometimes their sequence and their position in time is dictated by purely formal reasons. In a symphonic poem by Liszt or Strauss the former is the case. The triumphant apotheoses or pathetic death-scenes

which end their works are definitely the last act of the play and represent the final word on the subject in hand. But this is not so in the case of a Mozart symphony. We have it on his own authority that Mozart conceived a symphony in its full form in one moment of time. It stands to reason, then, that the return of a theme in his works can have no narrative or dramatic significance. The recapitulation balances the exposition, much as a tree on one side of a picture might balance one on the other. We do not look at a picture "reading from left to right" as in a society photograph, but take in its design as a whole; and though we inevitably have to listen to a Mozart symphony from left to right, as it were, we should try as far as possible to banish this aspect of the work from our minds and try to see it as the composer conceived it, in one moment of time.

The trouble with any choreographic interpretation of a classical symphony (as opposed to a romantic symphonic poem) is that the dancing is bound to emphasise the least important aspect of the music—its time-sequence. Let us suppose that a choreographer wished to set Mozart's G minor quintet as a ballet. (A hideous thought, but not more hideous than many recent choreographic conceptions.) Any one who appreciates this masterpiece must also appreciate the fact that the final movement, though more light-hearted in tone than the rest of the work, represents not a final "winning

through" or "triumph over adversity" but a facet of experience only, no more important than the others through its being placed at the end. But if it were presented on the stage we would be bound to feel during the finale that after a *mauvais quart d'heure* the dancers were cheering up considerably. Perverse though the idea may seem, a complicated *tableau-vivant* would actually be a closer interpretation of Mozart's thought than any ballet.

It is true that there are many symphonies of a later date into which narrative element and dramatic time-sequence enter and which therefore are more suited than Mozart's symphonies to choreographic interpretation. In fact it may safely be said that the worse the symphony the more likely it is to make a good ballet. But that does not alter the fact that the symphony, of all musical forms the most concentrated, intellectual, and withdrawn from present action (as opposed to emotional retrospect), is of all musical forms the least suited to physical or dramatic expression.

That certain symphonic movements are "dance-able" is really beside the point. A poem may be musical in the extreme and yet be totally unsuited to musical setting (the greater part of Keats for example). The choice of music for dancing may well be compared to the choice of words for music. The most suitable poems for music are either short lyrics definitely written for the purpose, such as the songs in the Elizabethan dramas which impose

their own treatment, or rather loosely written poems with more poetic suggestion than form, such as the poems of Walt Whitman. Fletcher's "Sleep" from *The Woman Hater* is a moving poem when read in the study, but it is doubly moving when heard in Warlock's setting. Whitman's poems, or rather rough drafts for poems, become complete works of art only when supported by the music of Delius or Vaughan Williams. In each case the poem gains. But it is obvious that a speech from *Hamlet* or *The Duchess of Malfi*, an intellectual non-lyrical poem by Donne, or one of Keats's odes can only lose by any association with music because they are already complete works of art in themselves. If the music parallels their concentration and richness it will only distract our attention from the words; if it remains in the background allowing the words to speak for themselves then it is superfluous.

Exactly the same situation can be observed in the world of ballet. Tchaikovsky's short dance tunes or *variations* may be compared to madrigal verse. They "dance themselves", in the way an Elizabethan lyric "sings itself." For all their charm they are only heard to full advantage when in collaboration with the dance. (Imagine the flat effect of a concert performance of the brilliantly conceived *Blue Bird* numbers.) The music of the impressionist composers (in which I would include, of course, early Stravinsky) provides the equivalent

of the loosely written *vers libre* of the Whitman type, even when it is specificially written for stage action. That is to say it has more pictorial suggestion than form and does not achieve artistic completeness until defined and pinned down by action. *Petrouchka* is meaningless in the concert-hall unless one knows the ballet. *L'Oiseau de Feu* is only possible when reduced to suite form and even then loses half its effect.

One is in no way decrying these composers by pointing this out. Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky are undoubtedly the two greatest composers the ballet has seen, the one representing the classical opera side of ballet, the other the music-drama side. They would indeed have failed as ballet composers were their work to be satisfying in the concert-hall. But a Beethoven symphony, like a speech in *Hamlet* or an ode by Keats, satisfies us completely in its present form. Any action which might accompany it would either be an irritating distraction or a superfluous echo.

That the greatest of stage composers were thoroughly conscious of the difference between real and imagined action, between statement and reflection, can be seen clearly if we look at the work of two composers who divided their attention equally between the concert-hall and the theatre, Mozart and Tchiakovsky. While it would not be quite true to say that the essential style of their music changes when they write for the theatre,

it is certainly true that the physique of their music changes. I can think of no tune in any Mozart opera which Mozart could have used as the first or second subject in a symphony, and the same is true of the tunes in Tchaikovsky's ballets. In such a dance as the *pas de deux* in *Lac des Cygnes*, Act II, the very shape of the fiddle solo is determined by the "lifts" in the choreography. We find no such melodic figuration in his symphonies, still less in any classicial symphonies. It is most interesting to compare the minuets Mozart actually wrote for dancing with the symphonic minuets in which the dance form merely crystallises some phase of emotion and does not call to action. It is even more interesting to compare the valses in Tchaikovsky's ballets with the valses in his Third and Fifth symphonies.

Impure symphonist though he was, Tchaikovsky only once included in his symphonies a movement more suited to the theatre than the concert-hall. I refer to the finale of the Second Symphony, a straightforward peasant dance which, apart from some sequential passages of development, is no more symphonic in style than the *Kazatchok* of Dargomizhky which it emulates. This movement, by the way, was the only piece of symphonic music (technically speaking) ever used by Diaghileff. The phrase "symphonic suite" as aplied to *Scheherazade* has very little meaning, and it is worth noticing that the first movement, which most nearly

approaches to symphonic style, was used as an overture only.

To say to the choreographer that he should restrict himself to ballet music written specifically as such by a master of the art like Tchaikovsky or Stravinsky is obviously a vain counsel of perfection. To start with, the supply of such music is by no means equal to the demand. The days when the greatest composers turned naturally and easily to ballet seem to be gradually passing (it is a sign of the times that Stravinsky should have written only one true piece of ballet music since the war—*Le Baiser de la Fée*), and a large number of the ballets written by contemporary composers approach the art from far too literary and operatic a point of view. This is particularly true of the miming scenes where the average composer tries to suggest in the score each inflection of the action. He would be well advised to take a leaf out of Tchaikovsky's book. Tchaikovsky's miming scenes are always admirable because he is content to establish only the general atmosphere of the scene, and does not try to emphasise imaginary words in operatic recitative style. How tiresome by contrast is the opening of *The Three-Cornered Hat* where the music underlines every little detail in the scenario. Falla's ballet (admittedly a first-rate work when viewed as a whole) does not get really going until the dance of the neighbours, which though inessential from the dramatic point of view

is good theatre for the simple reason that it is good ballet.

The supply of true ballet music, then, being so inadequate it is only natural that at least half the ballet repertoire should be founded on music written for its own sake. When this music is suited to the dance in texture and rhythm, and not too introspective or philosophical in mood, it can often be as satisfactory as ballet music written for the purpose: witness *Les Sylphides* among classical ballets, and *Cotillon* among modern ballets. But the question of arranging ballets to classical or non-dramatic music immediately raises the most important problem of all for the choreographer: How closely should the dancing follow the music?

There seems to be a growing theory that dancing which represents visually the formal devices and texture of the music must of necessity be pleasing to the musical mind. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am sure there must be innumerable musicians beside myself who experience the same feeling of exasperation when the choreographer turns the stage into a vast lecturer's blackboard and, by associating certain dancers with certain themes, proceeds to underline obvious formal devices in the music which any one of average intelligence can appreciate with half an ear. Literal translations from one language into another are always unsatisfactory and usually ridiculous. "Symphonic" ballets are no exception to this rule.

Moreover, the choreographer is debasing his art if he thus makes dancing a mere visual *exposé* of the music. The dance should not be a translation of the music but an interpretation of it. It should not slavishly imitate the musical texture but should add a counter-subject of its own. Choreography which does this is truly contrapuntal, whereas choreography which interprets a fugue in the Dalcroze manner is merely a species of choreographical "vamping," far more harmonic than contrapuntal in feeling.

It is significant that Balanchine, who undoubtedly has the greatest technical knowledge of music among present-day choreographers, is also the most free in his treatment of the music. He is one of the few choreographers with the intelligence to realise that visual complexity is not the most suitable accompaniment to aural complexity. The reverse, surely, is the case. (I am not speaking now of dramatic, narrative ballets where the purple patches in the choreography must inevitably coincide with the purple patches in the story and music.) A complicated fugue occupies, or should occupy, so much of our aesthetic concentration that we cannot assimilate an equal elaboration of physical design at the same time. On the other hand a simple valse tune lends itself to the richest and most complex design on the stage.

I hope I may be pardoned a personal reference in pointing to two highly successful examples of the

choreographic counterpoint I am trying to define. One was Ashton's treatment of a three-part *fugato* in *Pomona* as a lyrical dance for a *solo* dancer; the other was the astonishing choreographic fugue which Nijinska arranged to a purely homophonic passage in the finale of *Romeo and Juliet.* We can find examples of the same kind of thing even in the ballets of Massine, who for all his brilliant and indeed unsurpassed sense of purely choreographic design shows only a mechanical and superficial appreciation of musical design. The finales of *Amphytrion* and *Le Pas d'Acier*, for example, where he erects a choreographic structure of remarkable complexity on a comparatively simple musical basis, are to my mind far more successful than the finale of *Choreartium*, which rivals the music in complexity but never in intensity. These two ballets, however, were composed before he had started the vogue for "symphonic" ballet, which marks the nadir of the collaboration between music and the dance.

In a brief essay such as this it is impossible to do more than to adumbrate a few lines of approach to a highly controversial subject which as yet has received little serious attention. I have not attempted to propound anything in the nature of an aesthetic theory. The art of ballet is still too young for that. Ballet did not reach its Wagnerian stage until the pre-war Diaghileff days, and though it has made up since for lost time it is still inclined

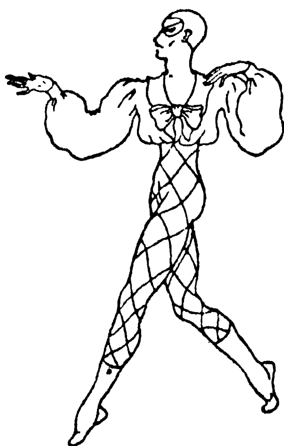
to lag behind. It will lag still farther behind if choreographers, instead of finding new forms inspired by their own medium, pin themselves to forms which belong essentially to another medium, forms, moreover, which (save in a few rare instances) have already outlived their period of aesthetic significance.

IV

THE DÉCOR AND COSTUME

By Alexandre Benois

Translated from the Russian by S. J. Simon



IV

THE DÉCOR AND COSTUME

By Alexandre Benois

IT is essential in ballet to differentiate between theory of décor and theory of costume. Admitted that the ultimate aim of any spectacle (and more especially ballet) is the preservation of mood or atmosphere, to which all the component parts should contribute, it follows that décor and costume must blend together into the common harmony. Nevertheless, the conditions governing décor differ from those governing costume. Décor plays no immediate part in the action—in the actual performance of the players—yet the main essential of ballet lies in its action, whether dance or pantomime; and outside action, ballet, as such, does not exist. This, then, is the somewhat independent attitude of décor. Décor is the "background" in front of which something is performed—that something being nearly always detached from it.[1] Costume, on the other hand, takes a part in the performance itself and aids the actor in creating the character demanded by the context.

Nevertheless, though not participating in the

[1] Décor takes a part in the action only in such instances as when a player makes his exit through a door cut in the scenery, looks out of a window, etc.

action, décor plays a substantial rôle in ballet, at any rate in the traditional classical ballet, which to a considerable number of followers, including the writer, is the only real ballet. I am not referring here to suites of dances, *divertissements* and such: we are talking of ballet, and by that word I mean that particular and separate form of theatrical spectacle in which all the varied elements must blend into a whole to constitute what Wagner called "Gesamtkunstwerk." It was with this "real" ballet that I fell in love, ardently and irrevocably, on the very day when I first witnessed it, when, being still a child, I was quite incapable of any theoretical appreciations. It is to this "real" ballet that I have remained faithful all my life, and it is to its service that I have dedicated the greater part of my creative power. Lastly, it was this "real" ballet that we took, with Diaghileff, to show to Europe—to that Europe where it was first born and reared but which, at the time of our arrival, had contrived to lose with it all vital relationship.

It is for this real traditional ballet that I, with all my soul, wish further prosperity and progress. But do not imagine that my feelings are prompted by that conservative inertness so easily attributed to people who have reached a certain age—or, if you prefer it, dotards. I am not antagonistic to new form; it is inconceivable that I should desire to turn a live art like ballet into a sort of museum relic. Ballet must live and progress. But all the same

ballet must remain ballet—that is, in the theatrical form that was evolved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and which to its followers is immeasurably precious. To protect that form ballet must remain "Gesamtkunstwerk," that is, maintain in its entirety all its combining elements, among which, of equal importance with music and dancing, is scenery—i.e., décor.

Décor is that content which achieves the transformation of a ballet into a picture. Through décor "Gesamtkunstwerk" ballet becomes a branch of painting—a branch at once enchanting and exciting. If so many artists, painters (not merely professional decorators), have bent their forces to ballet, then the explanation of the phenomenon lies in the fact that ballet offered the painter an exceptionally wide field for his fantasy. Here he could create canvases gigantic and imposing, but besides this the artist found in ballet the most complete fulfilment of his dreams. He was present while the portrait created by his brush awoke and blossomed into music-pulsating life.

The purpose of décor is to fix the time and place of the action. As the curtain rises it informs the spectator *à quoi s'en tenir*—when and where the action passes and also the type of spectacle that he may expect. Décor is the introduction to spectacle, the creator of the desired poetic atmosphere. But of course not all scenery achieves this somewhat

ambitious effect. It succeeds only in those cases where it is the product of a genuine aesthetic emotion, and further (and more particularly) of a painstaking concentration by the creating artist upon his problem. On the whole, the perfect ballet décor can be achieved only by an artist who understands ballet. He must study its specialised interests with no less attention than its actual interpreters. The problem of designing décor for a ballet is a difficult and responsible problem; however, when one does succeed in solving it, the result is sheer beauty, and the first to rejoice in that beauty is the creator himself—the artist.

What then is this décor of ballet, and in what way does it differ from the décor of drama, opera, and other theatrical spectacle? The difference is fairly obvious. The ordinary drama deals in the main with problems of psychology, and aims, in the majority of cases, at portraying real life. When, however, drama leaves this realist basis it loses its specific form and its décor may then borrow qualities that strictly speaking belong to the décor of ballet or opera. Plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Tempest* call for the type of décor that is styled "operatic or ballet." On the other hand, *Henry VIII*, *Tartuffe*, *The School for Scandal*, *The Government Inspector*, or *La Puissance de Tenêbres* can only be performed amid scenery that conveys an impression of reality. In plays it is the

text that dominates; ballet is built upon poetry and music, and enacted on a plane that bears but a vague relation to the material world. Opera falls half-way between ballet and drama—which explains why some operas are performed with scenery equally suitable for plays (e.g., *Carmen*), while others (*Faust*, *Aida*) are performed in décor that could also serve for ballet. In opera both words and music are significant; there are operas that approximate to Drama (and Realist Drama at that), and there are operas, built on verse and fantasy, in which Realism has no part. It is possible to add many shades to this somewhat rough-and-ready classification, and it might be interesting to draw up a list of operas, subdivided according to their tendency of approach to the kingdoms of Thalia and Melpomene, or the kingdom of Terpsichore. Entering this last kingdom we, in any case, find ourselves in an absolutely separate domain.

The décor of ballet, as such, undeniably exists, and stands out as far more definite and clear-cut than the décor of opera, which falls half-way between the décor of drama and ballet. On the other hand, to define the particular points that distinguish the décor that is essentially ballet is not easy. Generally, in art, definitions are dangerous, dangerous even in those cases when in making use of some verbal expression we quite clearly envisage the meaning we are trying to convey. In no other art is

the explanation of established technical terms quite so difficult as in ballet. Every *balletomane* is conscious of the images called up in his mind by the use of any particular technical term, but to formulate these images into words is at once cramping and undesirable, like the contact of something coarse to something delicate and fragile.

Much the same may be said regarding the problem of décor for ballet. A sort of abstract theory of décor, with an undefined ideal, indubitably exists; but any attempt to confine that ideal within the bounds of a rigid verbal formula would be restricting. Incidentally many styles of décor approach and even conform completely to this undefined ideal. Charming, for instance, as portrayals of ballet décor, were the baroque fantasies of Bibben, Gaspar and Valerian. Delightful, the ballet of the Romantic Epoch, with the settings of Cicéri, Quaglio and Roller. In quite another vein were the scenic inventions of Gonzalo, Sanquirico and Corsini in the Imperial Epoch. And in yet another vein, bold in conception, sonorous in colour, the décors of the early twentieth century. Certain décors are almost over-rich with innumerable details; in others, in accordance with the conception of the artist, everything is reduced to the simplest synthesis. The décor of ballet can also be created with the aid of the system originated by Appia, in which painted décor is replaced by plastic forms, terraces, platforms, columns, staircases, etc.

But all the same the mirage of ballet undoubtedly blends better with painted scenery, which gives the artist full scope for his imagination and leaves the stage unencumbered for dancing.

The subdivision of the types of ballet décor hinges on the subdivision of the types of ballet. Some ballets demand the heroic note in their décor, others an elegiac languidness, others tenderness. There are even ballets that call for a certain amount of realism or the grotesque, foreign to the majority of ballets. But though we may feel that there is something in common uniting all these diversities, yet we cannot define that "common," even as we cannot define which type of music is essentially "ballet music." Why, even the condition that the music should lend itself to dancing—i.e. be subordinate to a distinct rhythm—can no longer be considered "irrevocable," as many ballets have been composed during the past few years where the music could not be accurately described as such. And yet these ballets can be ranked as successful and even included among those conforming to the ballet "idea."

To me, at any rate, it seems an undeniable assertion that any ballet spectacle must include décor, and further that such décor must possess its own individual character. Possibly some people may find in this a sort of propaganda—*pro doma sua* —possibly they will imagine that the decorator is defending his own professional interests. But the

point is that I am not a professional decorator—merely a man passionately in love with theatre and more passionately still in love with ballet. Even if part of my life has been devoted to the design of décor (by the way not only ballet décor, but also the décor of opera and drama), yet always in the foreground of my life I have been primarily a spectator—one of the audience. My assertion that décor must exist is based on my experience as a spectator, inasmuch as I could only extract complete satisfaction from ballet in those cases where décor played a significant part in the formation of some complete exciting impression.

I have nothing against the so-called dance-recitals, and I willingly admit of having been impressed by the dances of Loie Fuller, Isadora, Sakharoff, and other dancers or troupes of dancers performing against a neutral background—a background that depicts nothing. I do not deny that these dancing recitals come within the kingdom of aesthetics. But they are not ballet, and the pleasure I derive from them differs sharply from the specialised type of pleasure I extract from ballet. Ballet, real ballet, is that type of stage spectacle which, even though it budded among the people of the very distant past, and passed through many stages of experiment, did not flower into full form until the second half of the eighteenth century—a flowering due to the so-called "reform" of Noverre, which in reality was not so much a reformation as

the uncovering of a submerged ideal. This ideal, having at last crystallised into a distinct form, has survived to this day, adapting itself to the changing tastes, but remaining true to its fundamental doctrine. Into this form of ballet, into whose component parts enter rhythmic movement (dancing), dramatic action (pantomime), and music, must enter also design (décor). Among the primary conditions of the ideal "Gesamtkunstwerk" is the equal right of all these parts to expression, though any and all of them must be subjugated to the mutual idea. When all these conditions are fulfilled, only then is the result real ballet and only then do we get that miracle which for lack of a better term I call "balletic suggestion."

I repeat that I became a *balletomane* from my very first contact with ballet; and it seems to me that my capacity for this spontaneous enthusiasm was due to my immediate instinctive understanding of ballet, which lay not in the separate evaluation of this or that element entering into its composition, but in the blend of all these elements into a harmonious conjunction. The impression made on me in 1887 by *La Bayardère*, that dear old ballet of romantic dreams and exotic fantasy, was so powerful that I actually fell ill with ecstasy, and in my delirium raved of processions with multi-handed idols, angels in muslin dresses and palm-surrounded temples. On my subsequent visits to ballet (I was taken to

the theatre comparatively often, and twice a year, at Christmas and Easter without fail, to the ballet) I came to appreciate more and more that charm particular to ballet that I could find in no other spectacle, even though I derived considerable pleasure from both comedy and opera. Gradually, and without in any way becoming conscious of it, I began to understand ballet, so that with the arrival of Virginia Zucchi in 1885, though only a boy of fifteen, I merited the title of *balletomane* in the fullest sense of the word. My balletomania infected the friends of my Gymnasia and University days, which was not surprising, as my ardour for ballet was combined with the fiercest propaganda on its behalf. Deriving, as I did, such unique sensations from ballet, I endeavoured by every means in my power to persuade my friends into sharing these sensations, and it needed only my urging to stimulate their latent appreciation not only of the theatre as a whole but of ballet in particular. In that period (*Sturm und Drang*) I developed an antipathy to many quite harmless and even talented young men, whose attitude to ballet suggested to me a certain obstinacy, and even parted with those of them who persisted in regarding ballet as something not quite dignified. Remember that at that time the majority of Russians looked upon ballet as one of the manifestations of the senseless, depraved luxuries that characterised the Tsarist régime. It is interesting to note that Serge Diaghileff, arriving from the provinces in 1890,

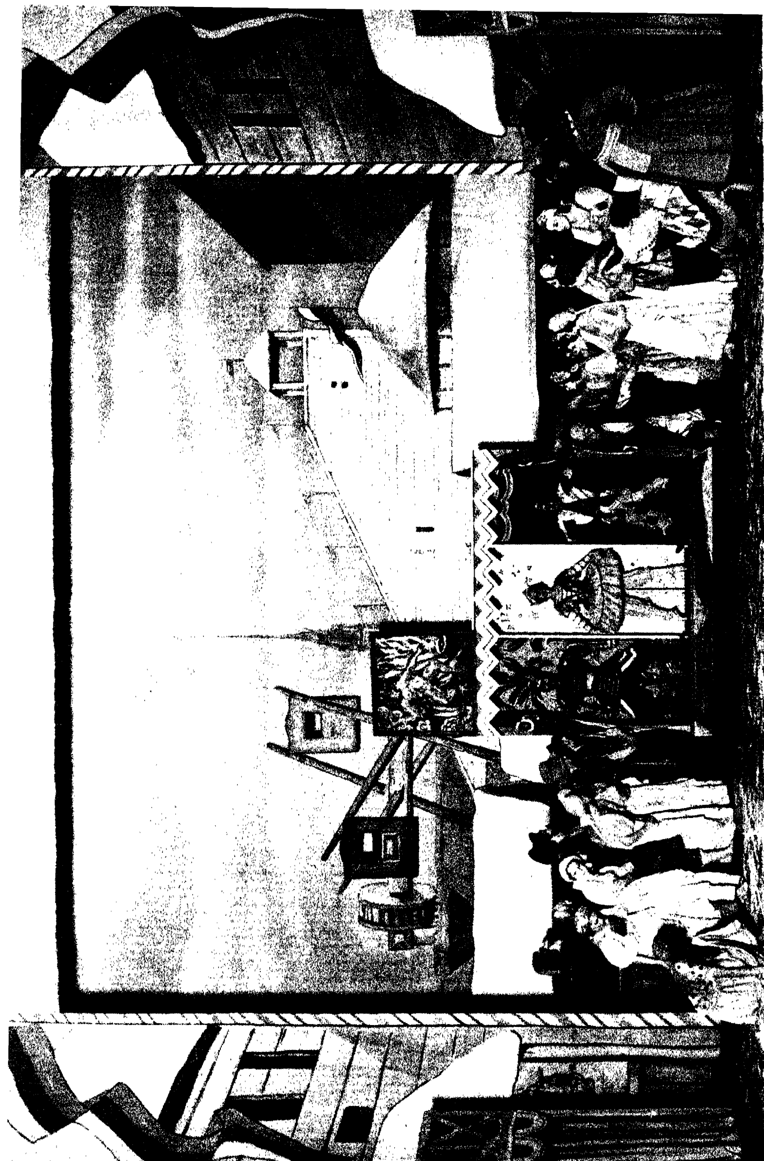
more or less shared this outlook on ballet and was only gradually infected by our enthusiasm, so that finally he caught balletomania but without suspecting the enormous part he was destined to play in its future history.

However, after Diaghileff had joined us, eighteen years had to elapse before that momentous day when our balletomania took on a creative character. Our first entry into the public arena was as critics of our journal *Mir Isskustva* (The World of Art), a journal which during the six years that it flourished exerted an enormous influence on Russian art and culture in general. It was under our keen collaboration and criticism that there emerged what gradually became known as Russian Ballet. Off we went to show Europe that towards which we all (though now grown from raw youngsters into mature adults) still retained the enthusiasm of youth. Off we went to show the world not merely the art of Russian dancing, not merely our gifted Russian artists, not merely our wonderful Russian music, but ballet—ballet in its entirety—real ballet.

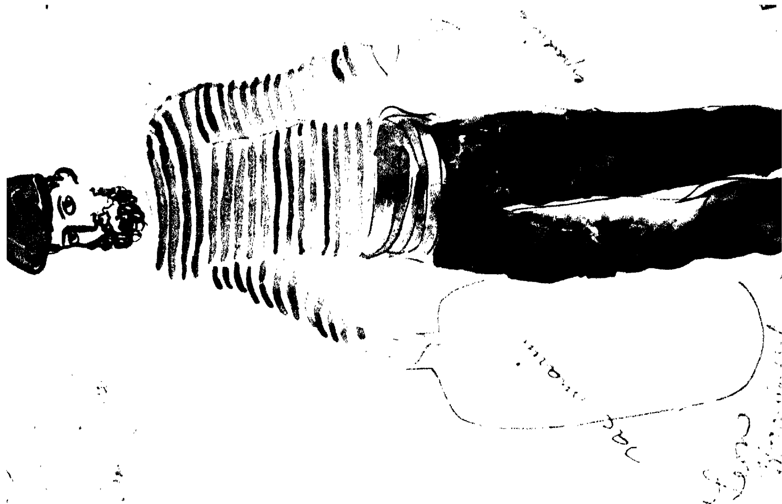
However, having undertaken the job of exporting a so-called Russian ballet, we had little desire to show Europe something ready-made, something already in existence, something that had already delighted us for many years. Instead we preferred to create something quite fresh, something more nearly approximating to the ideal fixed in our minds, and it was with such ballet, complete in every

detail, and as yet unperformed in its native land, that we ventured abroad in 1909. Included in our project of acquainting the world with Russian ballet, on a par with dancing and music, was painting-décor—the ensemble of a theatrical picture. The main initiative of the whole undertaking came from the artists, and these artists were not professional decorators but emancipated painters, whose outlook on art and the theatre was unhampered by any professional tradition or routine.

Incidentally one of the ballets with which we opened in Paris had already been performed on the stage of the Maryinsky Theatre. This was my ballet *Le Pavillon d'Armide.* Its ultra-romantic plot was the conception of Théophile Gautier, its expressive music composed by Tcherepnin, to whom I was allied by our cult of Terpsichore. But the fact that *Le Pavillon* had already been included in the repertoire of the Imperial theatres does not contradict what I have already written. *Le Pavillon* was first presented to the world only a year before our Paris invasion, and its décor then appeared somehow as the prelude to the adventure. While designing *Le Pavillon* I was stimulated by the desire to acquaint the public with my own conception of ballet, which differed slightly from the then existing tradition. I was what is known as "*plus royaliste que le roi,*" a more fanatical follower of ballet than the orthodox *balletomane*; the latter being wholly in accord with



Fair scene from *Petrouchka*



Pruna's design for Woizikovski's costume

Décor by Pruna in *Les Matelots*

all that which in our glorious St. Petersburg ballets suggested to me a certain decline and decay. In my ballet everything had to be somehow essentially "balletic" and conform to that ideal that I had for so many years carried next to my heart. As a great lover of pantomime I assigned to pantomime the major part in the development of my subject. *Le Pavillon d'Armide* begins with pantomime and ends with pantomime. The middle part of the ballet, however, is devoted to the art of dancing, constituting in its essentials a large-scale *divertissement*, representing the celebrations with which Armide fêtes Rinaldo. But even this fête as a whole assumes a melancholy and, towards its close, almost a nightmarish character, as it takes place in the enchanted gardens of King Hydraot, with its surging fountains and the grandiose castle in the distant background. Towards the end of the fête the shadows of black clouds trail across the brilliant colours of the groups of courtiers, while glowing lanterns penetrate this *crépuscule*, trailing a sort of funereal note across the whole festival. The uniting link between this finale to the fête and the subsequent tragic development of the story, was a symphonic number depicting in the manner of the *pastorale* the coming of dawn dispersing the shadows of the night. . . .

Being at the same time both the author and the artist responsible for the setting of my ballet, I endeavoured by strictly picturesque means to

interpret the same diversity, the same succession of moods as was imprisoned in the context. Of the three scenes, two took place in the magnificent but neglected arbour of the middle eighteenth century, in the shelter of which a traveller overtaken by the storm finds refuge. The middle scenes were entirely given over to the joyous visions dreamt by this youth, in which by the error of a goblin, he finds himself the betrothed of daemon beauty. The contrast in décor corresponded with the contrast in costume. The pantomime—the prologue and epilogue—were played in the ordinary costumes of the Restoration period: the hero was dressed in a travelling raglan with tall top-hat and jack-boots; his servants were in livery. On the other hand in the inner scenes everything shone with gold, silver and precious stones, everything was reminiscent of the court of the Versailles Masquerade. Heads were adorned in golden-curled wigs. Innumerable Arab boys in green caftans lent an Oriental note. The satins of *robe ronde* and *pannier* worn by the ladies of the court were thickly embroidered with baroque designs. Crusaders in silver coats of mail wore high plumage in their helmets. Heralds trailed enormous trains behind them.[1]

[1] Diaghileff ranked this scene from *Le Pavillon* as the most magnificent of his then existing repertoire, and had it produced at the gala performance at Covent Garden on the occasion of the coronation of His Majesty King George V in 1911. For this performance all the costumes were renovated and, in addition, I designed a few further effects of super-magnificence.

My greatest difficulty was in judging how far I had succeeded in realising my own dreams of ballet. At that time I was inclined to consider much of it as still far removed from my idea of perfection. But nevertheless its performance on the St. Petersburg stage proved a dazzling success—and that in spite of the ill-natured intrigues of my enemies, and the shocked comments of the orthodox critics. It made a profound impression on the whole circle of my friends, among them Diaghileff. Our plan for the presentation of Russian ballet abroad dates from that success, when it was decided to show *Le Pavillon d'Armide* to Europe. It was also the production of *Le Pavillon* that saw the beginning of my acquaintance with Fokine, who I afterwards introduced into our circle, and with V. Nijinsky, who had then just concluded his training in the Ballet School. When it became clear that the antagonistically inclined directorate of the Imperial theatres were hardly likely to lend us the scenery and costumes that we had just created for them, we decided that for Paris we would re-create the same *Le Pavillon* in its entirety, a decision that I personally welcomed, as I hoped in this second edition to avoid the mistakes that my inexperience had occasioned in the first. Actually this second Paris version of *Le Pavillon* emerged more complete, more sharply defined in every sense. In context and music the improvement was due mainly to a certain amount of "cutting" and an even more

notable improvement was achieved in décor and costume.

In the first St. Petersburg version, both décor and costume suffered to some extent from overloading. This was the result of my effort to instil into my "baby" everything that seemed of interest. I could not in this, my first effort, ward off the temptation to be different—to "show them." In the Paris version of *Le Pavillon* I succeeded in achieving a better harmony, a greater calm, and at the same time more vitality, and as in form, so in colour. This version corresponded far more nearly to my ideal.

Many people may fail to understand why we, the fanatical worshippers of Russian ballet[1]—the ballet

[1] The subject is a highly debatable one, inasmuch as what is to-day held to be Russian ballet is actually something that is nationally Russian. In Russia and only in Russia till the end of the nineteenth century survived inviolate the classic form of ballet, originated and evolved on the stages of Italy, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna; which, by some miracle, remained intact under the Russian Tsars, while fading out in the places where it had been born. In reality we showed Paris their own child, where its presentation towards the close of the nineteenth century had become obscured by all sorts of blind prejudices and mutilating routine—in fact all that to which people refer as "tradition." The distinguishing note of Russian ballet was that it managed to preserve all the real tradition, practically unhampered by routine, and for this preservation of authentic tradition full credit must be given to that director of the Imperial theatres, who being himself a genuine lover of ballet, brought Russian ballet to life during the whole of his twenty-year management. I am referring to Ivan Alexandrovitch Vsevolojsky. In 1880 his influence was already apparent, and as his influence grew stronger and took on a more constructive

that we admired on the stage of the Maryinsky Theatre—did not, in addition to *Le Pavillon*, select one or two of the ballets which we professed to love so much, for example, *The Sleeping Beauty*, or *Raymonda*. I imagine that if we could have conceived the bold project of showing Russian ballet to Europe at the time when these ballets were first staged, then it is probable that we should have chosen these very ballets, and that without making a single change in any of them. We would have performed an act of simple piety towards that which we at the time worshipped almost unconditionally.

But by 1909, nineteen years after the production of *The Sleeping Beauty* and ten years after the production of *Raymonda*, we had had time to grow up, our sense of values had become more mature. And in any case the settings for these ballets, governed like everything else in theatre by the merciless law of perishability, had decayed to a considerable extent. The scenery was faded, the costumes falling to pieces. Further, assuming that we were prepared to renovate the settings for this ballet, assuming even that we were in accord with their music, ideas, and style, we were far from being in accord with their past manner of presentation, and especially with the past décor—a décor that was the product

form so did my own enthusiasm develop. Ivan Vsevolojsky is really the man responsible for the awakening of Russian ballet, and the culminating point of this awakening was his production in 1889-90 of *The Sleeping Beauty* with music by Tchaikovsky.

of a professional routine, dull, vain and tasteless. And as it was out of the question to transport that which was still dear to us but "unpresentable," it became a temptation to create for ourselves something quite new—not a "neo" to startle everybody by its originality but a "neo" to embody all the beloved old with a fresh and stimulating manner of presentation. This was also much more "amusing" (in the modern use of the word), and the "amusing" in general influenced us largely in all our undertakings.

It must be added that, in addition to their faded sceneries, the Moscow and Maryinsky also possessed some new ones. However, we did not care to make use of these either. All that was old and dear to our hearts could not be shown, as it had decayed and withered. The new displeased us—although we were the first to admire the purely technical merits of two Moscow artists, Korovin and Golovin, with both of whom our relations were friendly and whose work we admired, defending it from the attacks of both the public and Press. They were accused of leanings towards decadence, an accusation which by the way was also frequently levelled against us—that is myself, Bakst, Serov, Roerich and Doboujinsky. Korovin and Golovin occupy an entirely unique niche in the annals of scenic painting. With them, dating from their work, for the independent opera of *S. Mamontoff*, began the attraction to scenic design of the outside artists—and

it was their work that was largely responsible for revealing the aesthetic potentialities of décor. Korovin and Golovin directed a blast of fresh air on to the stage; under their brushes colours rang out, sang with a new element of sonorousness, and even their style, which consisted of reducing décor to the greatest simplicity—to the barest essentials—contained in itself some quality of deliberate fascination.[1]

But Korovin and Golovin, though achieving triumph after triumph in designing sets for opera and drama, could not scale anything like these heights when it came to ballet. Much as they delighted us by their picturesque settings for *Carmen*, *The House of Ice*, and *Boris Godounov*, so did they let us down when they tried their hand on *The Enchanted Mirror* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. I would even go as far as to say that it was from the moment

[1] After the retirement of the famous theatrical designer, André Roller (1805–88), a host of skilful masters joined the Imperial theatres: M. A. Shishkov, M. I. Bocharov, Ivanov, and later, C. K. Allegri and P. I. Lambin. All these were first-rate practitioners and connoisseurs of perspective. They succeeded in creating canvases in which the traditional craftsmanship blended admirably with the poetical. Intermixed with their work, there was also the work of foreigners—the Frenchman Levot and the Italian Tzykarelli. The décors of the latter proved that the art, once represented by Bibbieni and Gonzaro, was still alive in Italy. Some of the work created by the above artists for ballet approached to some extent the balletic ideal and contributed largely to the success of some of the productions, notably *The Sleeping Beauty*. But in general, décor after the Roller and before the Tsarist period, suffered from slackness and lack of style.

that their conception of ballet décor appeared on the stage that our conception of the balletic ideal crystallised into sharper outline. It was here that the differences of our aesthetic training became emphasised. Both artists possessed flourish and vigour, but at the same time they disappointed us with their lack of finer taste and understanding. The Moscow school of ballet differed sharply from the St. Petersburg school in that particular, which its followers described as "the despotism of temperament" and which, to us, appeared as akin to ignoring the very essence of ballet. The Moscowism of Golovin and Korovin shocked and offended us in ballet, which is why we used the work of these artists only in *Boris Godounov* (by Golovin) in 1908 and *Ivan the Terrible* (by Korovin) in 1909, and did not commission their work when it came to ballet, the task nearest to our hearts, the task that we felt that we knew and understood so much better than they.

Here it is appropriate to mention the one feature —and quite a substantial feature at that—that was entirely absent from our project of exporting Russian ballet, and that is "snobbism," in the "Continental" meaning of this English word. We produced Russian ballet with the idea of sharing our rapture with the audiences of the world—and we had attained this rapture from that which was already in existence and evinced only a few

symptoms of an approaching decline. It was never in our minds to create new Russian ballet music; our most gifted composers had presented ballet with several *chefs-d'œuvres*, and our selected balletmaster, Fokine, was merely a "renovator," not by any means a fanatical innovator. Fokine himself was far too deeply in love with what had helped to formulate his aesthetic consciousness to wish to destroy it and create instead something essentially his own and entirely original.

And we, even less, desired to destroy and create something "never yet seen on any stage"—we, the painters Bakst, Roerich, Anisfeld. It is understood, of course, that we were far from desiring merely to copy the old, even though we loved it. Naturally, all that we produced was new, but it was not actuated by the desire to startle—*coûte que coûte*—by its modernity. It emerged in all sincerity, even as the new must inevitably emerge in all those cases when it is born in the soil of enthusiasm, and that enthusiasm we had in abundance.

In general we had no intention of separating décor from one of its potent means of scenic seduction—from illusion—and from one of the tried methods of creating illusion—from perspective. But I personally refrained from reproduction, and perspective and its consequences. It has so happened that this problem during the past few years has become very complex and obscure. Modernism (the strange blend of absolute, rigid, immutable

laws that are allied under that term) has ordered the theatre to turn its back on illusion, under the plea that all this is somehow "puerile," and gradually this abstention from illusion has become a principle, almost a fashion.

However, everything else in the theatre has remained obedient to illusion, and one cannot take a step without recognising this fact. Why, even such an incorrigible experimenter as Maierhold (who clutters up the stage with trestles, props and ladders, and uses a bare wall as a background) still demands that his actors should represent real figures and that their acting should convey the impression of something living—that is, that it should give the illusion of life! And are not the conquests achieved by the cinematograph as much conditional on the photographic reproduction of the surrounding settings as on the drama depicted? The art of the cinema attains a height of illusion undreamt of by the theatre, even in the days of its greatest craftsmanship in illusionist painting. On the other hand, precisely that which does not permit the theatre to attain the absolute illusion of the cinema imposes special boundaries and special demands on illusion in the theatre. But this does not affect the principle of illusion; it merely confirms it.

Photographic illusion would be particularly undesirable in the more established branches of theatrical art—in ballet—but it does not follow from this that ballet must be barred from all means

of theatrical "conviction" and among them the verisimilitude of illusion in its setting. It is only with the "persuasiveness" of the theatrical setting that there is born the mood of the ballet, and this persuasion, this sense of rightness, can be attained even in those instances when it seems as if everything that is happening on the stage is contrary to sober reason. Music takes the predominant rôle in ballet, but this music only fulfils its basic function when it contains the power of persuasion, something spell-binding that compels us to believe in her most improbable occurrences. For this reason Delibes, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky must all be ranked as first-rate composers of ballet music, inasmuch as their work, quite apart from any musical merits, possesses that wonderful power of "persuasion," inducing us to accept unquestionably all that we are seeing and hearing.

The magic side of this reaction to ballet is particularly surprising, as it would seem at first glance that ballet, by its very muteness, must spoil illusion. But in practice, this muteness aids illusion, while in opera the effect of the characters singing their words nearly always spoils it. The dancing on the stage only underlines the music, its rhythm ranks somehow as a "second" music. Of course, in those cases where the dances are merely numbers to display the virtuosity of the artists, there is no illusion; but then, though the spectacle may be agreeable, there is also no ballet. A dance in

itself does not pretend to illusion. But dancing, when it takes part in the action and does not contradict the illusion, is the most indispensable part of ballet. And this applies not only to the *pas d'action*, a word that can cover a whole programme of ballet, but to other dances when they emerge naturally from the context, when they do not acquire an independence of their own apart from the unity of the action. The main reason for the decline of ballet in Europe was the neglect of this Principle of Persuasiveness. Everything was focused upon the dancing, with a resultant confusion of ballet with its genre; and ballet, having lost all power to persuade, began to resemble nothing but a senseless jumble or revue.

It is to this same contempt for "persuasion," for illusion, that may be attributed the gradual disappearance of the male element from the European stage. With the disappearance of the belief in ballet as a dramatic representation, the whole outlook on ballet became light-hearted—it became looked upon as almost nothing more than the evolutions of pretty and reasonably accessible "*petites femmes.*" When we Russians brought with us in 1909 not only first-rate *ballerine* but first-rate male dancers—among them one genius—Paris looked upon it as something quite out of the ordinary. And even though this same Paris had in its time applauded the Vestris and more recently the members of Petipa's dynasty. And it had so

happened that it was one of the Petipas, Marius, whose long and unremitting service had succeeded in preserving on the Russian stage the real basis of ballet—those strict relations that called for, among other things, the inclusion of the male element, on a par with the female. This demand is based on the fact that it is only with the presence of both sexes that ballet develops real dramatic effect, becomes theatrical art in the full sense of the word, and acquires "persuasiveness."

Thus both in music and dancing, ballet must be convincing, must persuade, must create illusion. Why then expel illusion from the third of the arts that make up the ballet spectacle, from that very art that up to now had contributed most of all to illusion—from painting? No scenic illusion is required for those theatrical compositions of a dancing character, in which everything is co-ordinated into a sort of abstract pattern. But such compositions are not ballet in the strictest sense of the word. On the other hand, the actual forms of illusion are of a varied character. It is not always necessary for full-size palaces, halls, city streets, mountains, to appear on the stage, neither is it imperative for any of of these to appear in realist guise—to resemble the real thing. Illusion does not demand a complete *trompe-l'œil*, i.e. that the separate parts that compose the scene should each produce an absolute effect of reality. In many cases one can manage without that, and sometimes it is even useful to

refrain from it. For *Pulcinella*, Picasso composed a décor that creates a complete illusion of a night in Naples. We believed both in that toy house, in that childishly painted moon, and in that barque. And all of it, according to scheme, blended miraculously with the paradoxical nature of the music. Another example: In his first version of *Carnaval*, Bakst hung his scene with deep blue curtains with a narrow ornamental frieze at the top. The players entered the stage through these curtains and vanished into their folds. The illusion was created that a *bal masqué* was taking place somewhere behind these curtains and that here on the stage was a sort of hastily erected tent *promenoir* in which the various amorous couples took convenient refuge. But when later Bakst produced the same ballet on the stage of the Maryinsky Theatre, replacing the draperies by an entire garden plus some sort of bridge, the effect was not nearly so strong, and the illusion lessened even though the décor, as a whole, was much more probable.

The problem of creating illusion and the methods by which it can be solved is a question belonging to a different category. But the décor of *Pulcinella*, with its synchronisation of costume, reached an enchanting perfection in this sphere, so that everything emphasised the shades of parody in the music with which Stravinsky expressed his admiration of the fantasticism of Pergolesi. But one cannot

visualise *Le Pavillon* or *The Sleeping Beauty* in décor of this genre—neither was such décor ever contemplated in their production. Bakst's version of *Carnaval* was delicious, but were one to attempt to perform *Swan Lake* or *Scheherazade* in such a setting the result would be an absurdity or, worse still, tasteless. *L'imagerie populaire* of Derain in *Concurrence* was sheer delight and quite in keeping with this admirable ballet-bouffe—but should one attempt that kind of décor for *Giselle* . . . !

A certain genre of ballet calls for a wealth of décor, demands all that is intricate and expert in painted illusion, i.e. the depicting of given situations by means of painting. One must almost smell the spice-laden atmosphere of the Eastern harem in the décor of *Scheherazade*. One must feel oneself in the charming interiors of our grandfathers' days when the curtain rises on the first scenes of *Tchelkynchika*. Again, it is essential that the first and fourth scene of *Petrouchka* should admit the spectator to the Admiralsky square in St. Petersburg in 1830, should create the impression of the holiday fever abroad on a mild frosty day.

And what unlimited scope the existing ballet literature offers to the creative powers of painters! What wealth is here as yet unsaid, how much more to say, and how much more to learn in accurate and persuasive portrayal of ideas! But it must always be understood that Terpsichore must remain the Muse of Inspiration—it is quite out of order to use

the scenery of a ballet as an excuse for all sorts of pointless ingenuity. Incidentally, I have noticed that it is only the people casually attracted to ballet who permit themselves this licence. Artists who understand ballet and love its specific form are quite incapable of such tactlessness. Those who have had the good fortune to feel in ballet something unique and deeply poetical simply lack the heart to lift a hand towards such distortion. To such artists each problem set by ballet will whisper its solution, tell them how best to employ their craftsmanship to honour the spectacle of ballet in its entirety—the ballet that is "Gesamtkunstwerk."

And now just two words about costume in ballet. Everyone knows of the enormous influence exerted on the development of costume by the teachings of Noverre in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Even before his day, voices (among them the voice of Glück) had been raised in protest against the standardised traditional fineries that the unfortunate artists were forced to flaunt, the over-elaboration of which was fast approaching the level of caricature. At that time it was quite out of the question to perform a ballet (or opera) in rational costume. There was in existence a special ballet-operatic formula demanding that the Gods and Heroes of ancient days should strut about the stage in long curly wigs, draped in pompous gold-and-lace-embroidered cloaks, with helmets surmounted

by mountains of plumage. Another formula was in vogue for comic costumes, in which the masks of Italian comedy predominated. And there was yet a third no less rigid formula for depicting costumes of different nationalities and the amorous couples of the Pastoral. Jean Berain, a veritable dictator of settings for ballet and opera towards the close of the seventeenth century, managed to infuse endless variety into these specifically theatrical costumes, but towards the middle of the eighteenth century the system founded by Berain had become quite impossible. It was then the protests in the name of respect for the old, or simply in the name of healthy common sense, began. Noverre expressed these protests in a more practical form, from which sprang the reform of costume and décor for those ballets that he produced; and shortly afterwards, in the epoch of the triumph of the classic (which coincided with the triumphs of Napoleon) the reform had become universal. The ballets of mythology were danced in Grecian tunics, and other ballets in such clothes in which the theatrical costumiers of the day endeavoured to manifest their knowledge of ethnology and history.

It seemed as though *le bons sens* established on the ballet stage must now remain the permanent ruler over the setting. But here a tiny detail, playing, one would imagine, a microscopic part in the general aspect of ballet, crept in to spoil the theme. This detail was the ballet shoe, essential for the

execution of those dances called "classical," which had attained full development in the first third of the nineteenth century and had achieved the significance of an implacable dogma.

The Classical, in the form in which it emerged in 1830, with the appearance of the blocked shoe, not only influenced the manner of presentation of the dance, but the whole style of ballet setting. And such a result must not be considered surprising as, whatever our reactions to the blocked shoe, it is the ballets composed during the reign of this system that possess to such an extent the quality of mood that is so dear to us. The clamour to get rid of convention and inaugurate a more rational system in contemporary ballet arose more than once, but all these outcries terminated in defeat. To be quite fair, the "classical ballet" in the steel support does endow point-work with a special brilliance and lends vividness to the whole effect. The classic system also promoted the uniformity and discipline so vitally necessary for the management of masses. There was a time when the laws of Noverre, and other ballet masters—"to seek in ballet the natural, the immediate and the simple"—were held in respect. These laws indirectly influenced dancing, and though they preserved all the conventions nevertheless imbued them with a tinge of freedom. But in those places where the cult of the natural entirely elbowed out the classic discipline there resulted dilettantism and, what was even more

intolerable, disorder. For ballet, together with music, is specifically that art which, owing to its discipline and scholasticism, can repel the attacks of anarchy—and that is precisely one of its most vital qualities.

Why then, you will ask, did the blocked shoe and unavoidable use of a sort of *chausson de danse* that it involved, influence so strongly the whole ensemble of ballet? After all, in the real strict traditional ballet there are male dancers whose need for a special shoe is not so great, who are permitted every conceivable kind of footwear. There is a mass of character dances, occurring even in the most classical of ballets, that can be danced without special footwear either for men or women. However, it is essential to possess a slight acquaintance with the process of designing theatre and ballet costume to understand the whole business.

We will begin with the obvious fact that the concession of a particular form of shoe to the ballerina, enabling her to perform the classic point-work, immediately influences the entire costume. You cannot dress up a ballerina as a historically accurate Greek or Egyptian maiden, a lady of the seventeenth century, a marquise of the eighteenth, and then add to the whole the ballet shoe. The result would be ugly and absurd. To soften this absurdity, to transform the ugly into the elegant, one must resort to further concession, to compromise, and as a result of these concessions, there arises a

whole series of standards. It was out of these standards that there grew up the canons of the ballerina's costume. The frock must be lifted high enough from the ground to permit the movement of the legs to be seen; this frock must be made of very light material so that it does not impede action, or weigh down. These standards led to the creation of the special ballet frock, called a *tu-tu*, made of tarlatan and gauze. This frock grew longer or shorter, but throughout all its changes it continued to resemble the calyx of a flower and lent the ballerina her specific form. A ballerina is a girl whose feet are clad in heelless shoes, around whose legs are flesh-coloured tights, extending to the waist, around which is placed something akin to a fleecy cloud. Her hands must be bare, her neck free, her coiffure not over-sumptuous. This must be the appearance of all those in the cast of the ballet entrusted with parts of importance, and this must be the appearance of the *prima ballerina* herself—the queen of the ballet spectacle. But if this is so, if to achieve it one has to abandon any pretence at probability, history, common sense, etc., then how, without ruining the entire harmony, can one neglect the rest of the cast? A few exceptions may be made in respect of performers farthest removed from the *prima* and her suite, and such exceptions are invariably made. They are made in all cases of episodic dancing interpolations and it is these interpolations that infuse life and variety into

L'Oiseau de Feu. Décor by Gontcharova

A scene from *Concurrence*. Décor by Derain

ballet (whether the dances are national, comic or acrobatic). But even when designing the costumes for such interpolations, the designer cannot but concern himself with their blend with the principal costumes, which obey the demands of the classic standards. When this is not carefully supervised the result is apt to be wild, ugly, or even stupid.[1]

May I be permitted to conclude these remarks upon ballet décor with a eulogy upon those conventions without which ballet, our beloved ballet, cannot exist. If anything must be considered surprising and marvellous it is that these inexorable conventions not only do not hamper the action, but on the contrary, being based on its nature, appear as its chief delight. It really is remarkable that we should go into raptures over a spectacle in which human speech is replaced by gestures, in which everything is mute, in which for the slightest reason, or for no reason at all, the characters start leaping, in which occasionally the weirdest events take place against a fantastic background, in which nothing is rational and in which—*enfin*—there is no room for any relation to everyday life. And yet, with all

[1] Sometimes such wildness enters into the programme, not as a result of carelessness, but in answer to a definite purpose. Thus, in *Petrouchka*, only the ballerina and the two organ-grinders were allowed ballet shoes, the rest of the dancing masses and the cast wore normal footgear. Thus Derain in *Concurrence* deliberately superimposed the comic costumes of 1890 on the grotesque figures, with the purely balletic costume on the figures representing something of the ideal. However, these are only the exceptions that prove the rule.

this, there is no other spectacle that can create such an atmosphere of poetry, that can persuade as strongly as ballet. Actually a sort of enchantment is at work here. But this enchantment is undeniably caused by the whole ensemble, and not by a particular branch of ballet. Take away from ballet its music and it will become immediately quite mute—that is, something agonisingly ill, something crippled. Take away its painting and it loses a major part of the persuasiveness of its mood, its poetry. Attempt to destroy any of its conventions and this will not only fail to lead to any improvement in ballet, but will appear as a crude invasion of reason, an attack against its very nature.

Ballet and everything concerning ballet must be artifically conditioned, must be a beautiful lie, and only under these conditions is ballet "good." Only in such cases does it speak the truth that answers to the fundamental demands of human nature, which understands truth far more easily when it is presented in the guise of fiction—that is, poetry. The late A. I. Levinson, in one of his delicately thought-out *études* on ballet, quotes the words of Gautier on this spectacle, which he defines as "the realisation of the imagined" and, speaking of romantic ballet, Levinson adds for himself that this ballet was in reality an immediate and unconscious expression of "spiritual metaphysics"—in other words its own kind of "mystery." But that with which Levinson is trying to characterise the romantic ballet alone

can to my mind be applied to the whole of ballet in general, and from that there arises the question: Can ballet exist without romanticism? Can this form of spectacle, in which all that is romantic has acquired such convincing expression, exist outside these influences? On the other hand, that which we call romanticism is not merely a "fashion" inherent only to one particular moment in the history of human culture. Romance existed before romanticism; it found expression both in architecture and music and in plastic art. And ballet, from the earliest days of its infancy, satisfied almost entirely this ideal of romanticism.

Romance, outside romanticism, continues to exist in our time, for is not the present vogue for ballet caused by the fact that we find it a miraculous compensation for all the over-prosaic that we have to endure in everyday life? We, the followers of ballet, know how it satisfies us more than any other spectacle, how it heals and consoles us. But ballet only retains this "magic" while it enshrines our ideals, the wonderful illusions, the dreams of the poet, dreams that turn their backs on sordid reality. And is not this romanticism?

V

THE RÔLE

By Lydia Sokolova

TO

LADY ST. JUST

V

THE RÔLE

By Lydia Sokolova

THE most dynamic personality I have ever known was Serge Diaghileff, and it is fitting that he should have laid the foundation-stone of ballet as we know it to-day. For it is by personality, combined with technical ability, that a dancer can rise to the greatest heights; and without this quality, a dancing career will be a long struggle against odds which will never be overcome.

As an English dancer, and one who has spent some years in the training of ballet dancers, I know only too well the handicap that our dancers have to deal with in this respect. From the time an English child is born, every move that is possible towards making it suppress its natural emotions takes place. We are told not to cry when we are hurt, and not to laugh loudly because it annoys other people. We are encouraged to be nice well-behaved children on every possible occasion. This upbringing is in direct contrast to that of the Russian child, which is allowed to indulge its every mood, grave or gay. When the English boy or girl goes to school, the finishing touches are put to this orgy of repression. Yet people are still frequently asking me why English dancers as a general rule seem

unable to express themselves on the stage. The fault is not their own; it is simply a case of the English outlook on life.

The reason for this difference in upbringing is largely an economic one. The majority of the young English dancers to-day are the sons and daughters of professional people—doctors, lawyers and business men, whose homes are always run to conform with social conventions. They are often prepared to let their children take up dancing merely as a hobby, or because they want to be in the atmosphere of a theatre, in however humble a capacity it may be. The question of earning a large salary to support their parents is seldom taken into consideration. The parents of the young Russian dancer, however, have not the means to let their children take up dancing with any object other than making it a career, and they realise therefore that the child's personality must be allowed to develop along its own lines. The child is given to understand from an early age that no sacrifices are too great and no work too arduous to reach the top of the tree in the shortest possible time.

In the building-up of personality one cannot begin too early. The present system of education in this country, as I have said, is a major difficulty. The solution of the problem is to be found in the formation of a national-school, as it exists in Russia. Here the would-be dancer could receive a complete

Lydia Sokolova as the Doll in *Petrouchka*

Lydia Sokolova and Leon Woizikovski in *Barabau*

education, not only in dancing, but in languages, music and miming. Rhythmic tuition would also be included, as English dancers, though often very musical, are notoriously non-rhythmical. Make-up classes would be compulsory for all, since make-up is one of the most important—and neglected—factors in stage training.

Above all no mother would be allowed to be present at any classes. The child would have to learn to use its own brains and not rely on its mother to help it out. A child that is blessed with an interfering mother will take twice as long to become a dancer and will cost the fond parent twice as much money as a result. And as for the trouble caused by mothers in Russian ballet—but that is another story.

Every teacher of dancing knows of this handicap of personality with which English dancers have to contend, but even so, all too few of them attempt to concentrate on making the embryo dancer *feel* her emotions. Exercises are admittedly an essential, but just as essential in the training of a child is the art of how to dance; not just a series of steps, but to add to it that extra something which we call personality. And this to my mind is the most important factor in dance training. Why is it that *Spectre de la Rose* is nowadays a lifeless ballet? It is not that the technique of the male dancer is always at fault. I have danced *Spectre* with Nijinsky and I know that there have been dancers since him whose

technique has been equal to his; but it is by the personality of the dancer that this ballet stands or falls, and it was in personality that Nijinsky was so completely outstanding, and for which he will be remembered long after other dancers have been forgotten.

In the creation of a rôle the artist has got to make the character she is portraying become a living being, not merely a dancer executing a series of movements. This applies to all types of ballet, though naturally in an abstract ballet such as *Les Sylphides*, the effect will be less marked than in a character ballet. To make an audience believe in the reality of a rôle, the dancer must first believe in it herself absolutely. Every move that goes towards the building-up of a part must be brought into play.

Make-up will be the first item. The importance of a correct and carefully thought-out make-up is very great. A bad make-up will ruin a performance which may have been good in every other respect. I have actually seen on the Covent Garden stage, on more than one occasion, a dancer in the *corps de ballet* of *Sylphides* using the vivid sunburn make-up of *Les Présages* which came next on the programme. Her flaming face stood out from the rest of the *corps de ballet* like a beacon in the night; and for me, and I am sure for many others, this struck such a jarring note that there was little enjoyment to be derived from watching the ballet.

We who worked under Diaghileff could count

ourselves fortunate. If there was anything wrong with our make-up we were told so, usually before we reached the stage. Although *entr'actes* may have seemed long to an audience, they probably had no idea of the changes of make-up that were required. We used to carry portable zinc baths with us all over Europe and America, which were used after such ballets as *Cléopâtre* and *Scheherazade*. In *Cléopâtre* eight girls used to make up completely brown, faces and bodies; six were green, six men were red, and Massine and I were very dark brown. Probably the next ballet would be *Lac des Cygnes*, which necessitated a complete change of make-up from head to foot. In *Salomé* Bakst used actually to paint designs on Karsavina's legs before each performance so that the finished effect of costume and make-up looked, and in fact was, a Bakst design. In the original *Good-humoured Ladies* each one of us had a special make-up designed by Bakst himself. These have ceased to exist, as have also the delightful scarlet cheeks of the nurses in *Petrouchka*.

There is also a great art in wearing wigs, particularly white ones. With white wigs, eyebrows should be much higher than the natural line, very finely pencilled and not elongated; a very pale make-up is required. It seems simple enough, but I wish more dancers remembered it.

A *première danseuse* may have five or six completely different rôles in a day, but unless she can fall absolutely into the mental state that each one

demands, her performance will be lacking in finish. She must get right outside her own individual self. Everyday thoughts and worries have no place in the theatre; to become and to remain a great artist your art has to come first all the time. If you possess any outstanding mannerisms on the stage, they must be got rid of at all costs; they always seem to show themselves at the most inopportune moments and bring an audience back to earth at once. The creation of a rôle must be worked upon down to the smallest detail. The purist is opposed to conversation on the stage during a ballet performance. In practice, conversation—crowd-scene conversation—does take place. Therefore if it is necessary to talk to any other dancer, one must make the sort of remark that the character one is representing would make at that moment. In *Scheherazade*, when the niggers came up to the girls they would always say "*krasavitsa*"—"beautiful"; it was not necessary, but it helped to build up the atmosphere. Above all, you must forget about the audiences. "Playing to the gallery" is despicable, and the gallery will be the first to condemn it. If you can really get under the skin of the character you are depicting, you will soon forget that such a thing as an audience exists: the only clue to its existence will be that feeling of contact with something alive; you are not dancing to bare walls, but to something that either responds to you or does not. If the response is there, and an experienced

dancer can feel it at once, forget about the other side of the footlights, the people in the wings, and those on the stage with you, except in so far as they come into the rôle you are creating. If you feel a deadness all around you, you may be sure your performance is lacking in reality.

Let me take as an example of "contacting an audience" the famous Prelude in *Les Sylphides.* This dance is the supreme test of whether a dancer possesses artistry as well as technique. The actual dancing movements are not difficult, but to make an audience respond fully to the ethereal nature of the dance is far from easy. In the Prelude, more than in any other dance, the dancer must, metaphorically speaking, "get outside her own body." It is actually a spiritual state, and has a corresponding effect upon an audience. There is always a marked pause after a really good Prelude—the audience is "coming back to earth." Of all the great dancers whom I have seen in this dance (and I have seen them all), not one in my opinion can approach Tatiana Riabouchinska for sheer poetry of movement and feeling; her performance is as near perfect as I can believe possible.

Massine and Woizikovski are two of the greatest dancers of to-day. Their methods, however, are completely different. Massine is the epitome of personality; he electrifies an audience directly he walks on to the stage, and will hold their attention whether he is dancing or not; he has every trick of

stage-craft at his finger-tips, whether as a dancer or as a choreographer. Incidentally, Massine is one of the very few choreographers who can create a rôle for himself. His ballet *Choreartium* is an absolute masterpiece of abstract ballet. This work is so profound that one may see it over and over again, and yet discover some completely new facet to its beauty every time. Most of the diehards of the musical world object to the use of Brahms's Fourth Symphony as a medium for ballet; but when anything so great as *Choreartium* is the result, I fail to see any weight in their arguments. In these days when the second-rate in ballet is apt to be accepted by a large section of the public, the genius of Massine is more than ever apparent.

Woizikovski succeeds as a dancer by sheer vitality and force of rhythm. Who can forget him in *Concurrence* and *Présages*, to name only recent ballets? He is more effective than Massine in *Pulcinella*, because he seems more able to overcome the handicap of wearing a mask and at the same time of making a witty character-study. His *Petrouchka* has no equal. Woizikovski is at his very best in strong rhythmic dancing; in more classical rôles he seems uncomfortable. His Eusebius in *Carnaval* is not outstandingly good, a rôle which Massine dances and mimes perfectly. Woizikovski has a magnificent memory for ballets. At one time in the Diaghileff ballet, he knew every part in every ballet.

The subject of memory in dancing is an interesting one. A choreographer, such as Massine, can seldom remember his own ballets when he tries to revive them. On the other hand, those artists on whom they have been arranged, can remember their own rôles perfectly, and often other dancers' rôles as well. It all seems rather like wireless; the transmitting station which gives off the ideas and then passes on to new ones, and the receiving sets which absorb the ideas and at the same time store them away in the subconscious.

Nowadays, there is a tendency for choreographers to invent ballets on a strongly personal note. Instead of creating a character as a picture that can be equally well interpreted by more than one artist, the choreographer tends to build a rôle around the capabilities and limitations of a particular dancer. The result is that when any other dancer has to be substituted, the comparison is nearly always very marked. *Les Présages* without Woizikovski is an example of this; much of the backbone now seems to have gone from that ballet. For this reason the older ballets, such as *Carnaval*, *Petrouchka*, *Boutique Fantasque*, and *Tricorne*, will live longer than those that depend on individual dancers for their effectiveness.

A famous actress wrote a letter to the papers recently in which she deplored the habit in actors and actresses of to-day, of mixing too freely with their public. Diaghileff was a shining example of

showmanship in that he always kept his ballet something of a mystery. We were never allowed to see our public; I had been in the ballet for seven years before I saw a single performance from the front of the house. We went to hardly any parties, and for any enthusiast to get past the stage door was no mean feat. This had the effect of making us more or less unknown except in our capacity as dancers, which was all to the good. I was many years in the ballet before people knew I was English; such a state of affairs would be impossible nowadays, when there is a steady flow of people from one dressing-room to another.

It is generally agreed that the *Sacre du Printemps* contains the longest, the most exhausting and the most difficult solo dance of all ballets—that of the Chosen Virgin, which I created in Massine's ballet. This amazing choreographic work was started in the unromantic surroundings of Liverpool. I can truthfully say that I am the only living person who knows, and remembers, the original version of the *Danse Sacre* in its entirety. I little thought when I was appearing in Nijinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* in Paris, when it was howled down, that seven years later I should be creating the rôle of the Chosen Virgin in the same ballet with Massine's choreography, and that it would be my biggest achievement.

The very first step arranged by Massine was possibly the most famous in the whole dance. This,

Le Sacre du Printemps
Lydia Sokolova as the Chosen Virgin

Lydia Sokolova in *Le Sacre du Printemps*

like all of them, had a very complicated rhythm. The step was repeated thirteen times, but it came so near the end of the dance, and after a series of enormous jumps, that by the time I had to execute it I was almost in a state of exhaustion and was long past counting the number of times I had to do it; consequently I was assisted by Woizikovski, who prompted me by counting aloud up to thirteen.

As Massine and I seemed to work together so harmoniously, the actual creating of the steps came very easily to him. After two or three rehearsals, Diaghileff and he decided that it would be wiser if we were separated completely from the usual routine of everyday work, and so the two of us returned alone to London. Massine decided he would have to divide the dance into phrases, some long and some short. This was because this particular work of Stravinsky has no set dance formula: for instance the first step repeats itself seven times, the second five times; then comes a small echo of five, executed by the *corps de ballet*; the next step repeats itself seven times, the next five, the next sixteen, and so on. The dance is danced completely separate from the orchestra in rhythm and phrasing; but it had to be danced so perfectly in rhythm and detail that on three occasions I had to meet the orchestra on two beats, where there was a definite pause in the music. If either the orchestra or I were early or late, it had to be faked by my missing or adding one movement. During the whole time I danced the *Sacre*, the

orchestra and I met on these three occasions perfectly only at two performances, both of which Eugene Goossens was conducting. The whole dance was so intricate that the only people who could possibly have known were Massine and myself.

To arrive at such absolute rhythm it was necessary to spend hours practising the dance with a metronome. As I have said, my rhythm was completely different from that of the orchestra; I could only take my cue from the first beat of the conductor at the beginning; and after the three pauses when I met the orchestra, I used to remember how many times I had repeated each step by pressing a finger down into the palm of my hand each time I did it.

I used to find it a terrible nervous strain, during the first act while I was preparing in the wings, and during the first part of the second act where I had to dance with the *corps de ballet,* hearing the powerful Stravinsky music which was so completely different in interpretation from the dance which I knew I had to perform a little later. All the time I was concentrating so profoundly on what was to come, that it was a great mental effort to force myself to listen to and count what I had to dance with the *corps de ballet.*

As the moment drew near for the enormous group of about sixty people formed by the ballet to move back, leaving me alone in the centre of the stage, I could feel the cold perspiration gathering on my hands as I stood with fists clenched. The tensity of that moment was overpowering. At such

a time it is impossible not to feel the absolute contact with a huge audience, as there always was for the *Sacre*.

With my eyes fixed on a red "Exit" light at the back of the theatre, without allowing them to blink, I lived the rôle of the Chosen Virgin of the Sun, completely spellbound in the part I was playing. As the huge group moved back to the count of twenty, I knew the moment had arrived, when with one upward beat of the conductor my ordeal was to begin.

Those who know the music of this famous dance will remember how it works up to an absolute frenzy. This was interpreted by Massine by huge jumps round and round the stage, until at the last moment, like a deeply inhaled breath, I held myself poised on my points, before literally collapsing exhausted in the middle of the stage. The sensation following the dance was indescribable. The nearest description I can give is that my heart was bursting and that I felt I could never recover my breath again.

Always Woizikovski and Hoyer were the ones who pulled me up and stood me on my feet, and I can honestly say I was all but unconscious until the curtain had fallen and risen three times.

In conclusion, these are the qualities that go towards the creating of a rôle: Temperament, artistry, stage sense, poetry, and lastly "the infinite capacity for taking pains."

VI

BALLET AND THE FILM

By Anthony Asquith

TO

MY MOTHER

VI

BALLET AND THE FILM

By Anthony Asquith

We all remember those two-pronged questions in examination papers, such as, "Compare and contrast the ecclesiastical policies of Elizabeth and Ivan the Terrible." If our ignorance was fortunate enough to evade one prong, it was certain to be impaled on the other. These questions we used to leave to the end, and, after dealing at length with Elizabeth, about whom we knew a little, we always came to the following sentence: "Let us now turn to Ivan the Terrible. What a contrast is here! In the very first months of his reign he——" and, breaking off artistically in the middle of a sentence we would show our papers up, hoping that the examiner would read into that dash a profound and brilliant disquisition which only lack of time had robbed of the ideal prose incarnation.

And now I find myself once more in the old school dilemma, for, though I have some knowledge of films, my technical ignorance of ballet is only tempered by long-standing enthusiasm. It would be possible for me to treat ballet merely as a subject for film, and that I will touch on later, but I feel there is a real and deeper connection between the two arts in spite of many obvious differences.

The first stage ballets of Noverre and the first silent films had this in common: both set out to tell a story by means of dumb show or mime. It is true that in the earliest films of all the mere fact that the pictures moved was enough to fascinate us. The mechanical miracle satisfied our naïve wonder, but not for long. Soon we wanted the action to be about something, to have a story; so the next films, while reserving violent physical movement for their climax, started with scenes in which a few simple characters conveyed their relationships and emotions to the audience in a style of dumb show which, while perhaps not strictly natural or of great formal beauty, had the advantage of complete clarity. No one could doubt for an instant who was the hero, who the heroine, or the exact nature of the villain's intentions. Wagner's musical labels were mere blurs compared with the physical tags which always accompanied the appearance of certain characters. Had the early films been a subject for serious study I can well imagine German textbooks of "visual motifs" such as "Mistaken - disdain - for - love - of - honest-fellow" motif (a haughty toss of the averted head), or "Fate worse-than-death-intention" motif (a simple twisting of the black moustache). But these scenes were disposed of as quickly as possible, because they were mere pegs for the main action—the thundering of horsemen over the prairie, the running fight of the hero and the villain on the roof-tops, or the pursuit of the comedian by three hundred policemen.

In fact, the *mime* in the earliest films corresponded in function if not in style to that of the more decadent classical ballets. Noverre insisted that dance should never be mere display, but should always be the illustration or summing up of the state of mind or mood of the characters concerned. The mime and the dancing *variations* were intimately related, much as the action and the chorus are related in a Greek play. The mime told us the story and sketched the characters for us, the *pas seuls*, ensembles, etc., gave us the emotional implications in generalised lyrical terms. For example, the first act of *Giselle*, in spite of one or two decorative irrelevancies, is a coherent dramatic story ending in a tragic climax of action. The second act is almost wholly lyrical, but the quality of its emotion depends on what has gone before. It is a summing up of the tragedy in terms of pure poetry and entirely different from *Sylphides* on the one hand, or the last act of *Casse Noisette* on the other. The first is a self-sufficient lyric not deriving its emotional quality from any surrounding or preceding drama, the second is a *divertissement* which is excused but not qualified by the plot. Similarly in the earliest films the preliminary posturing and grimacing of the characters explained the subsequent physical action, but the characters themselves were so simplified as almost to be abstractions, symbolic husks, emptied of all individuality, and it is difficult to mind whether one abstraction consigns another to a fate worse than

death or is bumped off in the nick of time by a third.

The need to remedy this drawback brought about the first advance in imaginative film technique. No one believed more strongly in the paramount importance of the climax of physical action than D. W. Griffith, and, indeed, I am told that the first thing he looked for in a scenario was the "Ride to the rescue," but he also realised how necessary it was that the audience should care about the character to be rescued. Obviously the audience must be given a more intimate knowledge of the people, must somehow be made to know them and care for them in a way which was outside the scope of conventional barn-storming mime. In the theatre the actors could convey so much by their dialogue and the way they spoke it. What compensation could the cinema give its public for the silence of the actors? The answer was: "It could bring them face to face." The invention of the close-up was the most important single advance in film technique. It immediately endowed film mime with an enormous new vocabulary. Up till then the audience had been related to the actors on the screen exactly as they would have been to actors on the stage. Every scene was played through in one continuous long-shot, and it was not unnatural that the actors, in their efforts to get across to the back of the gallery without the help of their voices, should have fallen back on the crudest operatic dumb-show. But now

in a twinkling the gallery could be whisked down on to the stage, could look into the actors' faces, could mark the faintest twitching of a lip, the least flicker of an eyelash.

Film acting immediately acquired powers of expressing emotion, and to a lesser extent, character, which were far beyond the reach of stage mime. But for all that it remained mime. The actors were voiceless. Only by the expression of their faces or their gestures could they communicate anything to the audience, and though acting became infinitely more realistic it could not for that very reason be completely natural. Griffith realised this and invented for his actors a style of mime that bore to life something of the relation that verse or poetical prose bears to ordinary speech. When Romeo says "Then I defy you stars," he is crystallising into words what in life and in a modern play would at most be an inarticulate cry of despair. Or again—and perhaps this in the better parallel—when Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi* looks at the sister whose death he has caused, he says: "Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young." These words are not far removed from ordinary speech. Embedded in them lies the kind of thing a man might say, but the emotional overtones, the sudden blinding horror of remorse and self-revelation—things which we might perhaps read in the actor's face could we see him close to—these, from the nature of the theatrical medium, Webster has translated into terms of speech.

So to compare the sublime to the rather less sublime—when Miss Lilian Gish denounced her betrayer in *Way Down East* she used as a basis for her acting the kind of gestures and facial expressions which a girl in those circumstances might be expected to use, but, as she had no voice, these mimic elements were isolated; the whole attention of the audience was focused on them. Griffith realised that absolutely natural mime in the circumstances would be inadequate, so he heightened and intensified it to a pitch where, while remaining within reasonable distance of nature and using natural elements, it became sufficiently expressive to compensate the audience for the lack of words. The opposite limitations of the two mediums of film and theatre in fact compelled opposite solutions to the same problem. In one case what the audience could not see was made audible; in the other what it could not hear was made visible.

The immediate result was an immense enriching of the film. From the first, films had been able to show, as no other medium could, swift and vivid physical action. But this action hitherto had borne so tenuous a relation to the characters, who were themselves scarcely more than ciphers, as hardly to be dramatic.

But now for the first time the characters and their emotions had a real bearing on the action. Up to this time when a motor raced a train to bring a reprieve to the falsely condemned hero it had

merely been a motor racing a train—visually exhilarating perhaps, but not moving, because the hero in question was unfortunately less alive than the motor-car; but the same scene at the climax of *Intolerance* was really exciting because we knew and liked the characters concerned. The physical thrill of the racing machines was subordinate and contributory to the dramatic suspense. For the first time the film had become a genuine medium on its own, using its unique powers to show physical action in a truly dramatic way.

But the invention of the close-up had other and less happy results. Directors, dazzled by the new possibilities, began to despise films of action and to concentrate on stories where the emotion and psychology of the characters were the whole interest. This in itself, although it resulted in the neglect of material which was pre-eminently suited to films, would not have been fatal had the directors not misunderstood the nature of silent film acting. They tried to make it completely natural. Now any situation which involves speech cannot be acted naturally in mime. Griffith for his big scenes either chose situations where the characters had not to speak, or, if they had to speak, he devised actions for them which conveyed in visual terms the emotional quality of the unheard words. This required real imagination, but there was a simpler way for the less talented. You took any play, photographed the actors in close-up, registering

emotions and mouthing speeches, and you interspersed these close-ups with sub-titles telling the audience what emotions they were registering and what they were saying. Film mime, in fact, not only ceased to leaven with emotion the physical action—there was no physical action in these films—but it ceased to be true film mime.

Now the best classical ballets were parallel to the best Griffith films, in that the mime and the set pieces had a real emotional and dramatic relation. But because there was no invention corresponding to the close-up to tempt producers to concentrate on the psychological and emotional expansion of mime, the decadence took an opposite direction. Mime became more and more a dead stereotyped series of movements, the sole function of which was to provide a framework for equally dead displays of technical virtuosity, for it was physical agility and not, as in films, mime that was developed at the expense of the ballet as a whole, just as in opera *coloratura* ceased to be the expensive flowering of the melody and became the empty vehicle for a *prima donna's* vocal acrobatics.

Such ballets as *Thamar* and *Scheherazade* were violent re-assertions of the unity of drama and the dance. In both the problem was simplified by making dancing a natural part of the story. In *Scheherazade*, in particular, there were scarcely any set pieces, and the border-line between the mime and the dance disappeared because the dance

contributed directly to the drama and was not, as in *Giselle*, for example, merely a comment on or a lyrical summary of it. And not only was there practically no distinction between dancing and mime in these ballets, but the décor and music were directly dramatic in a way which they had never been before. All the elements in the ballet were in fact concentrated on reproducing the mood of the story. Now in films there was a parallel development.

The invention of the close-up came from the necessity of increasing the powers of mime so that the action might become dramatic. The production of ballets such as *Scheherazade* and *Thamar* came from the parallel necessity of creating a new fusion between the dramatic and purely choreographic elements. But the film had now reached a stage where some further advance had to be made. Divorced from the scenes of action which were the essence of the earlier films, the registering of emotions by actors proved not to be self-sufficient, just as in classical ballet the dancing *variations*, when they no longer arose from and illustrated the emotions of the story in which they were set, degenerated into meaningless display and ceased to have any but a technical interest. Indeed, not only were films dependent entirely on mime insufficient to interest the audiences, but the mime itself often proved inadequate for its own purpose and the directors had to resort to explanatory sub-titles.

The second advance in film technique came from the realisation that there was in films an element other than physical action from which mime could draw life—the element of pictorial expressiveness. Hitherto the only means the director had used of conveying the emotions of his characters to the audience had been the facial expressions of his actors. If he wanted to show that someone was frightened he made him look frightened, and if the leading lady was not very good at registering terror, he put in a sub-title to the effect that fear was clutching at her heart-strings with an icy claw.

The Germans were the first to realise that the mood or emotion could be translated into pictorial terms. They saw that the mere making of a face is often not enough to give the audience a sense of, say, a man's terror, so they took his terror and made it an element in the actual picture. If the character was frightened they not only made him look frightened, they made what he saw look frightening by the way the scene was lit, by the design of the set or by the angle of the camera in relation to the scene. They used the personal emotion as a kind of dye in which they steeped the whole film. The most complete example of this method is *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.* The whole action of this film took place inside the head of a madman and we were shown the world through his eyes, coloured and distorted by his illusions. The houses leaned over at impossible angles, the streets zigzagged like

Scheherazade. Décor by Bakst

Les Sylphides taken during performance at Sadler's Wells

flashes of lightning, and the characters themselves moved like puppets in a nightmare. The expression of mood and emotion was no longer the sole prerogative of the actor but was taken over by the picture as a whole. Where the form, lighting, and composition of every scene is determined by some prevailing mood, the acting too must conform. It must work in pictorial rather than naturalistic terms. The emotion must be concentrated into some expression or gesture which will form part of the visual scheme. The characters, therefore, tended once more to put off their individuality and to become types whose actions were symbolic rather than directly expressive, and were related to life almost as remotely as those of a dancer in such a ballet as *Scheherazade*. For the kind of gesture or expression which symbolises an emotion is seldom that which a man in the throes of that emotion in fact uses. *Dr. Caligari*, the most stylised of films, and *Scheherazade*, the most naturalistic of ballets, from opposite directions reached approximately the same position. The ballet sacrificed its power of lyrical generalisation to direct narrative drama; the film sacrificed its humanity and its realism to the expression of the drama in pictorial terms.

To many ballet lovers *Scheherazade*, though at first a tremendously exciting experience, is too particularly dramatic to be permanently satisfying. Equally, *Dr. Caligari*, though it is a brilliant success,

is produced in a style which has severe limitations. Comparatively few emotions can be expressed by this pictorial method, and even these are generalised in the process because the characters as such exist more as colours and patterns in a picture than as living men and women.

Neither ballet nor film remained long at this stage of development, but from the point of view of mime this was the nearest to which they approached each other in style. Ballet tended back towards the classical balance between mime and dance, and film mime found a new solution in Charlie Chaplin's *Woman of Paris*; but this does not concern us here.

Then came the invention of the talking film. In a moment all superficial resemblance between film and ballet vanished. The actors were endowed with voices and the days of mime were over.

But film and ballet have another common element—rhythm. And from the rhythmic point of view the ballet is far more like the sound film than the silent. In a silent film there are two kinds of movement: the movement of people or objects within the limits of a shot, i.e. in a given strip of film photographed without a break, and the movement expressed by the relation of one shot to another, just as in music there is the rhythmical relation of notes to each other within the limits of a phrase and there is the rhythmical relation of phrase to phrase. A simple example will make my meaning clear. We wish to show a man running

with ever-increasing speed. It is obviously not enough merely to photograph him running faster and faster. If we speed up his motions mechanically the result is merely comic. But suppose we break up the scene into more than one shot, e.g. a long shot of him running towards the camera, a closer full-length shot of him running with the camera accompanying him, and two close-ups—one of his head and shoulders, and the other of his feet. Up to a point we can increase the speed of his movements within the limits of these shots, but quite soon we shall verge on the ridiculous. Suppose then we gradually increase the speed with which these shots alternate on the screen, suppose we show an ever-diminishing length of each; then we shall get a double sense of speed, not only from the man's movement, but from the quickening rhythm of the relation of the shots to each other.

I have compared the rhythm of silent films to music, and in one sense the comparison is exact. In each case only one sense is affected—in the silent film only our eyes and in music only our ears. But the rhythm of ballet is not either the rhythm of the music or the rhythm of the movements of the dancers, but the relation of each to each.

Equally in the sound film there are two streams—the visual and the oral—and it is in the relation of the two that the rhythm lies, but it is not a simple relation as in ballet. There is not only the relation

of the flow of images within each shot to the sound which accompanies it, but the relation of what I call the cut—the visual "kick" resulting from the change from one shot to another—to the sound stream. It would not be enough, for instance, if we were putting a ballet scene on the screen, to photograph the ballet through from any given position and at the same time to record the music. It is true that the movements of the dancers would synchronise with the music, but the special rhythmic element which is peculiar to sound film would not be there. All that would result would be the record of a stage ballet. We have seen that the ability to alter the point of view of the spectator to the scene is what chiefly differentiates film from the theatre. We enable ourselves to do this by photographing the same scene from different positions and changing them in the cutting according to whether we want the audience to see the scene at any moment from far or close to, from above or below. This, naturally, is determined by the nature of the scene. If then we photograph our ballet scene from more than one angle, we are already getting away from stage technique; but only if we relate the change from one angle to another of what I will call the visual beat to the accompanying music, will we be using true sound-film rhythm. Then not only will the movements of the dancer synchronise with the music, but the shots themselves will be moving in time with it; the whole film will dance.

Perhaps I may be forgiven if I illustrate this point with a sequence from one of my own films. The scene was the performance of a classical ballet; the music used was the beginning of the second act of *Lac des Cygnes*, and Mr. Frederick Ashton designed for it an exquisite fragment of ensemble in the classical manner. The dramatic point of the scene was that, at the end of the number, the heroine, who is a member of the *corps de ballet*, and the hero, who is sitting in the stage box, see each other for the first time and fall in love. For this reason I did not use any close-ups until that moment, for a close-up is the most emphatic kind of shot there is. The ballet scene itself was purely lyrical, and my object was to translate it into film terms. One way in which the film can express the emotional over-tones of a scene is by the use of what I will call visual metaphor. For example, in the scene of the man running, to which I have referred, suppose we not only wished to give a sense of increasing speed, but also of the man's emotional tension. That is to say, we wanted the whole scene to give, in visual terms, a sense of ecstatic forward movement. It would be possible to cut in with the shots of him running, other shots which suggested this in visual terms—shots, say, of a thin shining wave rushing up over the sand or a gust of wind sweeping over a cornfield, or the shadows of clouds passing over a hill-side. These would be visual metaphors of forward movement and they would harmonise with

the shots of the man running because of the common element of motion.

But the ballet scene in question was in itself sufficiently lyrical not to need this kind of heightening, and indeed it was a kind of metaphor preparing us by anticipation for the love of the two main characters. I therefore treated it quite straightforwardly as a ballet scene, but in a way only possible in sound film.

The music is only twenty-four bars in length and begins with a preliminary bar of drum roll. As soon as this started I had a shot of the curtain beginning to rise, taken low from a corner of the orchestra. Half-way through this bar I established the beat by cutting to another angle of the same thing taken from farther off and higher up. There was as yet no beat in the music, but the "kick" of the change of angle prepared the ear for it. On the first beat of the first bar I cut again to an extreme long shot taken from the back of the gallery. The point of view of the spectator had been receding and ascending as the curtain went up, and the rhythm of the music had already been established in visual terms. The beat of the music is fairly slow and the phrase rhythm a regular four bars, and there was no object in contradicting this in the pictures, so I changed the angle of the dance's rhythm only on the first beat of each phrase. The shots themselves then moved in the same slow regular rhythm as the music. Their pattern was a gradual regular

descent and approach to the stage. Only on the last bar, as the music came to a close, did I cut to a close shot of the girl as she was sinking to the ground at the side of the stage near the box. The music ceased for a moment, then there was a sudden upward *glissando* on the harp, ending in three loud chords for the full orchestra. The first two occupied a bar, and the third, which was a semi-tone higher, another bar. During the *glissando* the girl rises, lifting her head towards the stage box. As her eyes meet the man's, and simultaneously with the first chord, I cut to a close-up of the man looking at her. On the third and highest chord I cut back to the close-up of the girl motionless, looking at him, and immediately the picture faded.

In the next scene they meet outside the stage door and he takes her home. In the book from which the film was taken there then followed a series of love scenes. Now although in the silent days audiences would gloat rapturously over close-ups of marathon kisses, since the introduction of sound they have suddenly become self-conscious and will giggle and titter on the least provocation. I decided, therefore, to attempt to give a lyrical summary of all these scenes in a way parallel to the methods of classical ballet. When, therefore, the girl comes into her room after leaving the man, she runs over to the window and throws it up with an ecstatic gesture. As she does so, we hear again the *glissando* on the harp, which again ends in a

loud chord, but this time the chord is the beginning of the *Lac des Cygnes* music to which the ballet was danced. On this chord I cut to a long shot of Hampstead Heath. The picture is almost all sky; at the bottom of it there is a thin strip of curving ground and towards the middle a small feathery clump of trees blowing in the wind. Across the sky a kite is flying, and the two small figures of the man and the girl walk across the picture and pause in front of the trees. This shot occupies the first two bars of the first phrase. On the first beat of the second two bars I cut to a shot of what they saw—a long shot down on to London, smoke dappled with occasional patches of light and flashes where the sun was reflected by a window. This occupied the second two bars. At the beginning of the second phrase I cut to a shot taken looking down over the stern of a river steamer. The shining wake of the ship is rushing away from the camera, which, following the shape of the music, tilts up showing a stretch of the river. The ship is just passing under Battersea Bridge. It is late evening; Lots Road Power Station is silhouetted against a bright band of clear sky. The chimneys cut across this and plunge into the heavy black cloud which covers the rest of the sky. This shot occupies two bars. The last two bars show for the first time the man and the girl close to. They are sitting in the stern of the steamer. His arm is round her. Their eyes meet and, as the music finishes and the picture fades, they kiss.

I tried in this brief sequence to sum up a whole series of London love scenes in four shots. These are given unity and significance by the accompanying music—the music of the ballet in which she danced when he first saw her; but now, instead of the dancers, the scenes themselves move in time to the music, making as it were a little ballet of the visual elements typical of their love scenes. Just as in classical ballet the formal numbers reflect in lyrical terms the emotions and states of mind of the characters, so I tried in this sequence to translate as it might be a *pas de deux* into terms of film; and the point I want to make is that the underlying principle is exactly the same in sound film and ballet. In both we have a visual stream the movement of which corresponds to and is determined by the rhythm of the accompanying music.

I have tried to show what I believe to be the basic elements common to film and ballet. Is there any scope for a film ballet—a ballet constructed in film terms and not merely a film treatment of a theatrical ballet? Mr. Walt Disney's *Silly Symphonies* prove that there is. But there is no reason why the film ballet should be confined to cartoons, though the purely cinematic movement which Mr. Disney understands so well would, I am sure, be an important element in it. For the film has at its disposal an infinitely greater variety of movement than the theatre—slow motion for example, which gives to the movements of the human body something of

the majestic grace of a natural process or the disembodied quality of a dream. Indeed, I believe that dreams would provide admirable material for a film ballet. Only the cinema can fully realise all the *Alice in Wonderland* incongruities of space and time which some *surréalistes* painters have tried to capture. Mr. Frederick Ashton in *Apparitions* has beautifully expressed in terms of stage ballet the frustration of pursuit and the horror of being pursued, which we so often experience in dreams. I believe the same kind of subject would lend itself admirably to film treatment. For example, the *premier danseur* pursues the *prima ballerina*. We wish to give his feeling of thwarted hopelessness. Suppose then we show her moving away from him in a series of *grandes jetées* in slow motion, floating through the air like some one on the moon, while he is photographed running at normal speed. Suppose further that the background to her leaps is rapidly moving scenery—a shot say taken from the window of a railway carriage and projected on to a ground glass screen behind her—whereas the scenery behind him is stationary or even moving in a contrary direction despite the speed of his movement—("A slow sort of country!" said the Red Queen. "Now *here* you see it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place")—then the relation of the movements not only of the dancers to each other but of each dancer to his background might convey the nightmare feeling of impotence.

In *Apparitions* there is a scene where the hero's ideal woman is suddenly transformed into the embodiment of evil and from being pursued becomes the pursuer. The ability of the camera to materialise someone out of nothing might be used here. Wherever the hero turns, there she stands in front of him. And suddenly she is multiplied. From being a single dancer she becomes a *corps de ballet*. This of course might be merely comic, but I can imagine the effect of absolutely identical appearance and movement of a number of figures might be frightening and might also give the choreographer interesting possibilities. Further, not only can the background move, it can move rhythmically in relation to the music and form a visual counterpoint to the movements of the dancers; and it can change in the twinkling of an eye from being natural scenery—a street, a field or a stretch of sea—and become stylised décor or even an abstract moving pattern. And the scenery need not be merely a background for the dancers. It too can take a principal rôle in the ballet. For example, alternating with shots of the swirling of tarlatan ballet skirts, we could show parallel shots of foam and spray surging round rocks; or we could have whole sequences without human beings at all, where the movement is only of natural objects or machines, but so cut together as to form a rhythmical unity with the accompanying music.

These are only some of the possibilities of the film

ballet, and are to be thought of merely as indications of the kind of way in which the ballet can make use of the cinema as a medium. If ballet can express mood and emotion by the relation of visual movement to music, then the cinema can provide it with a whole new territory to exploit—a territory into which the theatre can never enter.

APPENDIX

THE BALLET FROM THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE

By R. C. JENKINSON

APPENDIX

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By R. C. Jenkinson

About fifteen years ago I saw my first ballet: it was *La Boutique Fantasque*, the best possible initiation, as I now realise, for the would-be enthusiast. It is interesting for me to compare those first impressions with my reactions to-day. The excitement and sense of expectancy, as I await the rise of the curtain, remain and are even increased by experience, but my focal point has changed.

At that first performance of *Boutique* I was thrilled, but I had no clear idea why: the music was lovely as music, the setting and costumes attracted me as a piece of constantly varying decorations, but their relation to the dancing meant nothing. The dancing appealed to me by itself because of its rhythm and the graceful lines formed by the individual dancers or groups. The only dancing that I had seen previously had been Adeline Genée's in some exquisite *divertissements*. I adored them; but any idea of the co-operation of the three arts—music, décor and dancing, intimately interwoven to produce this comedy of the Toy-Shop—was new to me, and of Diaghileff's conception and work during the previous twenty years I knew nothing. I should then have enjoyed the same dancing set to different music or décor: while to-day I would find it intolerable, not because I feel the intimacy of thought of the three composers, Respighi, Derain, and Massine, and realise that each piece of dancing,

the individual steps themselves, would be differently conceived and worked out were either music or décor changed.

The second ballet that I fell in love with was *Les Sylphides*; why, I know not. It is the purest and for that reason the most difficult of all ballets. I knew the music and loved the dancing, and I suppose that instinctively I sensed the romantic beauty of the thing, though here again I appreciated nothing of Fokine's and Benois' close co-operation and their mutual understanding of the music of Chopin.

The third ballet to enchant me was *Prince Igor*. The barbaric splendour of the scenery, the wild beauty of the music and the excitement of those glorious, half-animal Polovtsian dances, thrilled me then as they do to-day.

In those early days it mattered little where I sat; but now I feel strongly that one should watch from different angles and distances. Personally, I like to sit close enough to see the mime clearly, to watch the differing expression of the dancer throughout a rôle, and to compare the difference in the mime of various artists. Comparison plays a great rôle in the making of a *balletomane*. The subtle changes of Baronova in *Choreartium*, of Toumanova in *Jardin Public* and Massine in *Beau Danube*, are wonderful. I think the ensembles of *Sylphides* and *Aurora's Wedding* are best seen from mid-theatre; but there is so much to look at and grasp in all ballets that different angles of view are essential before I can begin to appreciate fully their various facets.

No two consecutive performances of any one ballet will be the same, and that is one of its greatest charms. My interest in a ballet that I know well, far from flagging, increases when seen a score of times, and the better am I able to appreciate various individual performances.

A point of great importance and interest is the contact

between audience and dancers. I have seen *Choreartium* frequently, from its last rehearsal onwards, and from the first fell madly in love with it; but I do not think that it "went over" until its first performance last summer (1935) when the house roared approval. This was not solely due to an exceptionally fine performance, but partly to a sort of magnetic ray which radiated from the audience to the dancers and back again. For after three years that audience had gained a clearer perception of its significance, of the feeling behind Massine's choreography, of its close relation to the music.

But I anticipate. Soon after my interest in ballet had been aroused, it spread from the ensemble to the dancers themselves, and I began to look forward to seeing certain parts taken by the same dancers: Woizikovski in *Igor*, Sokolova—greatest of English dancers—in *Boutique* and *Les Biches*, Lopokova in *Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur*, Karsavina and Tchernicheva in their several parts, became essential to my evening's enjoyment. This appeal was very personal, at first a blind devotion. Karsavina will always remain as the first great dancer to impress my memory—*Tricorne*, *Scheherazade* and *Cléopâtre*. Massine, with Lopokova, in *Boutique* I shall never forget; their *can-can* made me more than anything else into a complete fanatic.

It was not until, after a lapse of five or six years, I went to see the de Basil company, at the Alhambra in 1933, that I realised how much I enjoyed ballet, and how much I had missed it; and for bringing ballet back into my life I owe to Colonel de Basil a debt of deep gratitude.

This newly formed company from Monte Carlo revived for me all the flavour of Diaghileff's ballet, through the presentation of some of my old favourites, and the re-appearance of Danilova, Massine and Woizikovski. I had just been to see ballet travestied at the Savoy Theatre,

and the following evening went for the first time to the Alhambra: the shock of joy was galvanising.

That summer must have made many an enthusiast, with its four young dancers of the first importance, and those two master creations by Massine, *Les Présages* and *Choreartium*. They were new departures in ballet production—a storyless translation of music into terms of rhythm and mime—and I had to approach them from a different standpoint. That is why *Choreartium*, which I love the better but which is the less obvious of the two, took so long to become popular. In these I saw Baronova, Toumanova and Verchinina at their best—and what a wonderful best! Verchinina appeared in all her beauty, full of grace, power and character. In the first act of *Présages*, and the lovely slow movement of *Choreartium*, her force was irresistible. What impressed me most was the inevitability and certainty of all her movements. The greatest moment for me is her entry, in scarlet dress, in the latter ballet, just as the music changes to the second theme: music and action on the stage at the same time become triumphant and full of hope. I have seen no one else dance either of these parts; I would dearly love to see Baronova take both. With her character, as it has now developed, her firmness and sense of the dramatic, she would surely be outstanding.

Baronova and Toumanova, fourteen years old, were the wonders of that 1933 season, and to me their interpretations are still the feature of every season. The quality of their dancing and their understanding of their parts is amazing. I have always thought Baronova at her greatest in the slow movement of *Présages*: there is more sympathy and depth in her performance; her dancing of the difficult part where Fate draws the life out of her, and leaves her limp and broken, is almost unbearable. No piece of acting has ever affected me more.

Her dancing too in *Choreartium* one night in August 1935 was memorable. She took the part differently, or so it seemed to me, and became the human embodiment, both in expression and movement, of all that Brahms's lovely music meant to me. Apart from that performance I have liked Toumanova the better in this rôle. Her vitality and delicacy are glorious. I think now, however, that her greatest performance is in *Tricorne*—gayest of ballets. Her dark, clean-cut beauty and vivacity are admirably suited to the part of the Miller's Wife; her change from gaiety to revengeful temper when the Miller is carried off to prison delights me; and her love duet with Massine against Picasso's delicate setting is the essence of light and happiness.

Riabouchinska is the fourth of the new dancers who have played so great a rôle in my balletic education: her lightness and suppleness are superb. To see her as Papillon in *Carnaval*, especially now that Nijinska has indicated to her the original choreography, makes me feel that the floor is not there, and how I love her Mazurka with Massine in *Beau Danube*. *Sylphides* with her, Toumanova and Baronova, is the most flawless, the loveliest presentation of a ballet that I know.

Spectacular ballets can be equally moving: *Scheherazade* is devilish but tragic. I love to watch Tchernicheva as Zobeide when she sulks on the divan while the King prepares for war; and at the end when she all but persuades him to spare her. In *Thamar*, too, as the jaded Queen of Georgia luring with her rose scarf any traveller passing in sight of her castle, she is superb. As the curtain rises on *L'Oiseau de Feu* I feel Romance is abroad: Massine softly wandering through a dimly lighted forest, and then the glittering entry of Danilova as the Fire-Bird. Their dance is so lovely; Massine's excitement and comprehension gradually rising, while she who knows everything

is a fluttering bird of paradise. Last the comi-tragedy of *Petrouchka*. The curtain rises on Benois' lovely décor, and as I watch the gaiety of the Fair I wait always with the same expectancy for one thing, the eerie grey beard of the Magician, the showman of the tragedy that is the centre of the fair. As the Doll I love Toumanova best of those I have seen in the part. She is more of a puppet, more childlike (especially now that some kind friend has asked her to be more sparing with her radiant smile). Then comes the dance of the Nursemaids and Grooms, which always enchants me. Verchinina and Shabelevsky were unforgettable one evening last summer. All these individual performances have taught me and confirmed me in my love for ballet, and new companies have each added some fresh aspect.

Woizikovski gave us his season of ballet in November 1935, and amidst much that I disliked one or two things pleased me very much. *L'Amour Sorcier*, if it had been given a climax, would have been delightful: a lot of it was, especially Tarakanova's dance as the Widow. *Prince Igor* with Woizikovski proved as exciting as ever, but to me the outstanding event was the dancing of a new-comer, Ruth Chanova. She has much to learn, particularly in the full use of dramatic expression, but I think her delicate perception of music and her sense of rhythm are perfect. At present "classical-romantic" ballet suits her best, and although I did not like the settings that were used, both in *Sylphides* and *Le Spectre de la Rose* she was exceptionally good, and very personal in her interpretations.

During the same season Kurt Jooss gave his ballets. His school of dancing differs in many ways from ballet; he does not employ the points, which gives me a feeling of clumsiness and angularity in the turns, and much as I enjoyed his ballets, I longed for the classical style after

an hour of his production. Often I took a taxi from Gaiety to Coliseum and gave myself a well-balanced programme. Several ballets were good, and two dancers from the well-trained ensemble were notable. Elsa Kahl may be compared in many ways to Verchinina; she is a dancer of much grace and power, and a fine actress. Hans Zulig, a young unfinished dancer, showed great promise. If he develops character, and is given the chance to study classical ballet, he may go far. I feel that Jooss' present medium is on the whole tedious and heavy, suitable only to such ballets as *La Table Verte* and *The Big City*.

Finally I must write of the part played by our own English Ballet at Sadler's Wells in forming the *balletomane*. No praise can be too high for the enterprise and energy which makes it possible. Here I feel that the members of one large family are contributing to the evening's entertainment. Of their repertoire the latest shall come first. I saw *Apparitions* only three nights before the moment of writing: it is very good, highly imaginative and has many lovely scenes. *The Gods Go a-Begging* I enjoyed in every respect more than I can say. The music was lovely, the scenery lovely, and the dancing very good. Indeed I like most of the Sadler's Wells ballets. *Lac des Cygnes* given in its entirety, is excellent. Margot Fonteyn as the Swan Princess gives a wonderful performance. Here is a young dancer of the highest merit: her interpretation and the quality of her dancing are superb. In this as in every other ballet in which I have seen her, I find myself wondering how she would dance the slow movement of *Présages*, and I would love to see her in *Tricorne*. She has still much to learn, but if praise does not spoil her—and I don't think that it will—Fonteyn has a great future.

Robert Helpmann seems to me the finest male character dancer, with the exception of Massine, that I have seen.

Whatever he dances he is outstanding, and in *The Rake's Progress* and *Apparitions* he is truly great. Elizabeth Miller is charming: she is, of course, still unfinished, but is a really good dancer in the making, and an actress with a presence on the stage.

The watching of young dancers and their future development gives me the greatest possible pleasure and interest—yet another phase in the composition of a *balletomane*. Few realise the hard work in the life of a dancer: exercises, lessons, rehearsals, and performances. Only those who have a real love of ballet, character and determination, can carry it through.

In my opinion Sadler's Wells should become the home of ballet—national and international. There, almost alone, it seems to me, could the dancer be given time to develop her character, to study and read; for to give a great interpretation it is necessary not only to dance, but to appreciate music, painting, and architecture, to have read much, and to have digested the result of these studies. To-day the young dancers, especially such as Baronova and Toumanova, perform too much, and therefore have too little time to take lessons and cultivate the arts.

Let me close with a recollection of the greatest of dancers—Pavlova. Last week I saw the film of her dancing and I was carried back ten years, to the last time I saw her dance—I saw her only three times. I cannot begin to explain, where others more competent have failed, why, with no *corps de ballet* or décor to help, it affects me as it does: there has been, and will be, only one Pavlova. Those who have never seen her can never understand the translation, through her indescribable genius, of the beauty of the flight of a bird or the closing of a flower into human emotion.

She was the Goddess of Nature personified.

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