

. . . impassioned Handel
 meant for a lawyer and a masculine German domestic career — clandestinely studied the harpsichord
 and never was known to have fallen in love,

is shown as Marianne Moore here portrays him, honest, extraordinarily industrious, all in all a simple and a very noble man. There has been some quib-

bling over the lack of congruity between the ancient instruments filmed and the London Philharmonic sound that comes out of them. Certainly the job of orchestration itself is more often up to the film standards than to Handelian correctness. This detracts very little however from the genuine sympathy and understanding shown a great composer and his life of work in this film.

DANCING on BROADWAY

By S. L. M. BARLOW

NOT very long ago I witnessed some excellent ballet in Buenos Aires. Our old friend Col. de Basil was presiding over the season, for which the regular corps de ballet of the Colón had been welded to a stratosphere of itinerant stars. I saw a superb performance of *Scheherazade*, with Shabolevsky and Grigorieva, a so-so *Carnaval*, and the lovely *Concerto of Mozart*, (fifth for violin), with choreography by Balanchine and sets by Tchelitchev. It is an enchanting work and should be given here.

The circumstances of dancing on Broadway are somewhat different, but there's a plenty of the finest to be seen here. We have what is irreverently called the Chase National, also Katherine Dunham, and various smaller exhibits. We are the dancingest people on earth from jitterbugs to Nora Kaye and our dance music has affected the world. It is only proper to begin with the most authentic exposition of Americana: Katherine Dunham's *Tropical Revue*.

Whether the troupe is interpreting a Melanesian ritual of jealous gods and

husbands turned into snakes, or the less scissile aspects of the Haitian rites of puberty, or plain Latin American rumbas, the amount of vitality and incandescence generated is extraordinary. Not a moment is flaccid, pompous, or common. If some of it is naïve, the next second there is something of that immemorial dignity peculiar to Negroes or of the luxuriant shamelessness of a Brazilian liana. Technically, there is sufficient skill, even to the Shan Kar neck-movements, and the acrobats are neat. Above all, there is grace — and heat.

The last third of the program is North American: Strutters' Ball, Memphis Blues, Boogie Woogie, and Barrel House. It's less exceptional, less primitive than the first parts, but equally well done. And even the exotic sections are properly New Yorkese, the melted and assimilated idioms, exposed by New York bodies familiar with jive and jazz, even though the names may be Gomez or Ohardieno. There's nothing like this at the Copacabana in Rio, unless we send it there.

A small orchestra, dominated by the battery, performs negligible music effectively. Harl MacDonald is credited with one rumba. But actually most of the dancing is done to percussion alone, which is as it should be. And Gaucho, Candido, and Julio exploit the varieties of timbre and rhythm, with everything from a Balinese gong to a bazooka, with real and exciting skill. When the orchestra or the two pianos join in, one is only conscious of an amplified rhythm or of an occasional hot trumpet cutting across the dry web of the drums.

Around the corner, Yolanda Mero-Irion is leaning heavily on the arm of Balanchine. She has, of course, excellent dance music to sustain her ballets. The music of the *Merry Widow* has lost little of its freshness, and the *Fledermaus*, now *Rosalinda*, has a score of perennial charm and delight. The librettos and actors are frequently in the way, but when the music is unobstructed and can be conveyed direct by a good set of vocal chords or a shapely and agile leg, then there is nothing outmoded or old-hat.

For many reasons I like Balanchine's work best when he is organizing *divertissements* or just such interspersed comic-opera ballets. No one else has the freshness of combination, the unexpected ending from a familiar, classic beginning, the deft weaving of new patterns for a small group of dancers, to compare with him. But just for the very reason of his felicity with hands and arms and with two or three dancers, to me he has rarely shown his happiest talents when producing an entire ballet. As one would expect, the several parts become more important than the whole. Again, he is a modernist and

a satirist, — and I doubt if he believes in a long romantic ballet any more. At all events, he and Agnes de Mille do superlative jobs on any comic-opera number. And Strauss and Lehar hold up their reorchestrated ends with good grace.

III

It is symptomatic of something vastly encouraging that the Ballet Theatre can pack the Metropolitan for more than thirty consecutive performances and that the subsequent tour carries the troupe all over the country for year-in, year-out work, lucratively. Ballet appears to be now a popular art, and much credit must go to Mr. Hurok for his persistence.

The season brought forth three novelities: *Mademoiselle Angot*, choreography by Massine, music by Lecocq; *Fair at Sorochinsk*, choreography by Lichine, music by Moussorgsky; and *Dim Lustre*, choreography by Tudor, music by Richard Strauss. The regrettable illness of Markova permitted Nora Kaye and Rosella Hightower to appear in unaccustomed roles, and to triumph. The repertory consisted of some twenty-five or more ballets, five Russian composers contributing nine scores, four Frenchmen five scores, three Germans three scores, two Italians two scores, and one score each from a Spanish, Czech, English, Polish, and American composer. In not more than seven cases, and probably less, did the composer have any thought of ballet when he wrote the music. (The American was one of the fortunate seven.) The choreography in ten cases was the work of Englishmen, Tudor or Dolin. The Russians next; and, in one and a half cases, the choreography was by an American. Four or

five Americans designed scenery or costumes, Lucinda Ballard coming out on top with three shows. This is a break-down done *grosso modo*, but not less significant for all that.

Of the new ballets, *Mademoiselle Angot* was the least interesting. Lecocq's *Fille de Mme. Angot* is full of lively and endearing tunes and stands up well among the classic nineteenth-century comic-operas. It has a more than average good libretto. Massine's misbegotten step-child has no discernible plot and only the feeblest choreographic excuse for scads of Directoire costumes and scenery. Noverre or Théophile Gautier would have set her out as a changeling at once. *La Vie Parisienne* was good enough, supplying a colorful if not particularly French vaudeville to the repertory; but *Mademoiselle Angot* offers no substitute, — where none was needed. Massine is a great figure in the history of ballet, and it is whispered that he is not at present allowed to put on his more imaginative and cogent brain-children. But even so, reviewing the works of his now in the repertory, I confess that *Aleko* seems to me overstuffed and turgid, and *Capriccio Espagnol* diffuse compared to the concentrated article given us by Argentinita. Where is the Massine of *Les Présages*, of *Symphonie Fantastique* or the earlier, exquisite *Femmes de Bonne Humeur*?

Lichine's erection of a bedevilled ker-messe over Moussorgsky's superb music for the *Fair at Sorochinsk* is good, macabre fun. Conductor Dorati is the fourth to adapt the sections which the composer left unfinished at his death, and he has done an excellent job of it. I am one among a minority who regard Moussorgsky's gay and tender opera as a

jewel, a not unworthy pendant to the more massive and certainly nobler *Boris* or *Khovanchina*. I like to hear the music under almost any circumstances. (And I thought the New Opera Company's version of two seasons ago the best operatic offering in a long time). And the disarray in which Moussorgsky left the score makes it fair game for adaptation. Dolin and Chase lend the new ballet a most pungent, sulphurous diabolism. Fortunately, the story calls with logic for much Russian folk-dancing (it is about the only ballet in the repertory, except *Petrouchka*, which does so), and the company tears its way into this with real gusto.

The one new ballet with tradition, novelty and style was Tudor's *Dim Lustre*. It is slighter in texture than *Pillar of Fire*, *Romeo and Juliet*, or *Lilac Garden*, but it supplies a link, the link of elegance and nostalgic satire, in that chain which Tudor wears as master-choreographer of our day. It is constantly expressive, wistful or humorous by turns, and, though episodic, has suspense and development. Nora Kaye and Laing are ideal as interpreters of Tudor's impassioned aloofness. They combine distinction, fire, and reticence. Miss Kaye has a brilliant and intense dancing personality, a fine technic, and looks. But she is somewhat bony, and her costumes should be carefully studied to enhance rather than expose. The costumes by Motley (a pair of English spinsters of quite average attainments) belong to the lambrequin school and cover Miss Kaye with frills in all the wrong places. The Motley set is good, but any one of a hundred Americans could have done better.

Tudor's excellencies and peculiarities

are nowhere more evident than in his odd but often felicitous choice of music. For *Dim Lustre* he has dug up an early Richard Strauss piano concerto called *Burleske*, a lively trifle, with Godowski to starboard and a strong Liszt to port. The mood and heft of the choreography are remarkably apt to those of the score, and the marriage is a happy one. Of course, in all ballet, music suffers from a levelling process, as well as from lack of rehearsal and reduced orchestras and altered tempi. The levelling process, which takes place in the listener's ear, is more obnoxious than the inadequate or altered rendering. It allows one's perception, divided between the eye and the ear, to accept tawdry music as good, and makes great music seem ordinary. Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht* has an acidulous bite (abetted by lapses due to performing a very difficult work in a hurry) which forces it on the attention, and duplicates the tortured and frustrate emotions of the heroine of *Pillar of Fire*. The choreography seems to dissect the music. For *Romeo and Juliet*, Tudor chose an opulent and Maeterlinckian score of Delius. There is a ton of plush in the music, but so is there in the tale of Capulets and Montagues. Anachronism is Shakespeare's own oyster; and a score of contemporary Veronese madrigals would not accord with this essentially Dumas story, which reached Shakespeare from Naples via the *Palace of Pleasure*. Even Chausson's *Poème*, which I'd thought of as a straight, solid work of the Fauré-Franck school, becomes a Freudian commentary to the equivocations of *Lilac Garden*. Yet, somehow, Tudor never does an injustice to a score, unless it be Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*, which for the purposes

of *Gala Performance*, is injudiciously mauled and diminished. By and large, the roster of Tudor's musical findings is impressive. It brings us music we would not otherwise hear or revivifies music that had become tarnished. Its one fault is remoteness – remoteness from contemporary life, from modern auditory demands, and above all, from the American scene, wherein the Ballet Theatre moves, has its being, and earns a substantial living.

The other ballets, chiefly those of Dolin and Massine, stick close to Tchaikowsky, who could apparently turn out waltzes and polkas, for *Blue Birds* and *Swans*, by the dozen with a nut-cracker. They are all surprisingly, mellifluously good – and second-rate. Yet there is genius in the pot: every now and then soar the perfect accents for accompanying the dance. The music remains accompaniment, and perhaps that is its chief virtue. The *entrechats* are in the pit as well as on the stage. Offenbach also is returning to popularity these days out of a neglect quite incommensurate with his enormous talent, his verve, nad his flawless craftsmanship. He comes in handy, with his irreverence and wit, now that ribaldry has gone Park Avenue; and the librettos he used (masterpieces by Meilhac and Halévy, mostly) are still a good steer for choreographers. And since he is untranslatable; since the Broadway versions of this eminent Parisian have of late years looked like the production of a well-to-do troupe in the Tyrol, it is good to have him in ballet-form. Personally, I do not care much for Massine's conception of the Gallic. Perhaps he doesn't like *Boris*, either, as we give it here.

As has been said, we are the dan-

cingest people on earth. We dance singly, by twos, and by groups. Ballet is a group performance. If ballet in the United States turns its back on Americans, then ballet is lost for us here. If our stories and our steps get into and remain in Court Ballet, as the mujik's did in Russia, then ballet will survive.

Ballet Theatre gave *Billy the Kid* as its only single American ballet. It is of vast importance that the great impetus to our native composers, choreographers, designers and dancers, given by the

American Ballet and Ballet Caravan, and a few other groups, has been submerged by a welter of neo-Viennese valentines or a rehash of Massinic escapism.

I like Russian Ballet. I like hybrid ballet. But I see no excuse for hybrid ballet in New York out of which everything American has been left except the American Ballet and Ballet Caravan and as in the case of Miss Kaye or Miss Hightower, their brilliance has saved Mr. Hurok's skin.

OVER THE AIR

— BY CHARLES MILLS —

RADIO, along with all the other propaganda media, definitely means us to know there's a war on. Every big network has a morale series and some of the shows have made progress in quality and technical finish, though no single one is consistently effective or distinguished.

N.B.C. has the largest number of these programs; among the best is *Wings To Victory* which presents action that is largely exciting, but seldom witty or clever. It is convincing enough however, in a realistic sort of way, to be entertaining. The background music is handled intelligently, and the sound engineers manage to avoid interference with other descriptive effects or the clear projection of dialogue pitched at a low, dynamic level. The orchestration of these more or less subdued scores is fairly good. *Cavalcade of America*, also N.B.C., not strictly limited to propaganda, has a higher level of excellence than any purely war program. Originating in Hollywood, it wins an obvious

edge in popularity by using screen actors. The scripts have dramatic timing, continuity, and intelligently developed excitement and I've not yet heard a bombastic or overwritten program on the series. One particularly fine job was *Continue Unloading* with John Garfield. Sound effects, musical score and script were compact and intense, the streamlined timing of the orchestral high-points hit the dramatic climaxes right on the nose. Precision like this makes for good propaganda and entertainment. Another N.B.C. presentation, *Meet Your Navy*, is a sort of variety show that hardly does justice to the service it is dedicated to. A big disappointment was a performance of Harold Rome's *Remember Thomas Jefferson* which was martial in rhythmic motion only, banal in melody and stale in harmony. *I Sustain The Wings*, also N.B.C., is unpretentious but much more attractive. Glen Miller's clever arrangements are more colorful than those of any similar ensemble, Morton Gould's for instance, or Kostelanetz'.