

wood; throughout the entire book there are just exactly three of these. He feels it necessary in his final reference to point out that "Hollywood is the center of American film production." One gathers, however, that he would prefer not to talk about America at all. This book, with its enormous compendium of snobbish and antiquated misinformation delivered with steam-roller authority is a monument to that familiar gracelessness which Europe so often showers on America and its products.

Elizabeth Bergner's *As You Like It* (Escape Me Never in the Forest of Arden) is very bad indeed, but William Walton has written a really splendid score for the picture. It is too bad that Walton should go through such an experience for it is evident that he has a tremendous talent for picture composing and that this special medium suits him very well. I hope that he will continue to make music for the pictures nevertheless; it is indeed very discouraging to write an enormous score and have it fail through no fault of one's own. But movie producers in London and Hollywood will probably consider that a composer connected with an unsuccessful picture is a good composer to steer away from. In this business the saying goes "one is only as good as one's last picture." Walton should continue, nevertheless. He has a special feeling for atmosphere although he is not always deft with his dialog. I liked especially his microphone orchestration, and the development of the score as an organic and picture whole; it was smooth, and did not "chop" or startle when to be startling was not the order of the day. As for Bergner with her writhings and her coyness and her constant chasing and being chased around trees—if you can stand that you should go to *hear* it.

## WITH THE DANCERS

—By EDWIN DENBY—

GRAHAM—SHAN-KAR—ENTERS

**I**N December Miss Graham presented a new heroic dance suite for herself and group called *Chronicle*. It deals with divi-

sion, grief, and final adjustment. I wish I had seen it again to clarify my own impression and to be able to point specifically to its more or less successful elements. As it is I can only speak of it in general terms, and confusedly.

Seeing Miss Graham with her group and in solo recital, I was impressed by her courage and integrity. She believes in the biggest possible gesture; so she has trained herself to execute these extraordinary movements as accurately as a ballerina would her own most difficult feats. She believes in unexpectedness of composition, and she succeeds in keeping up an unremitting intellectual tension. There is no slack anywhere, physically or intellectually. She has, besides, an emotional steadiness in projection that binds together her constantly explosive detail, a determination which controls what might otherwise seem unrelated and fragmentary.

These are certainly rare qualities. I think anyone who likes dancing will admire her. But it seems to me her courage could go even further. She seems to watch over her integrity with too jealous an eye. She allows her dance to unfold only on a dictatorially determined level. But a dance unfolds of its own accord on a great many contradictory levels. And I miss the humanity of these contradictions.

To speak more in terms of dance, it seems as though Miss Graham were too neat. Her group is excellently trained. They do each motive given them with accuracy and decision. But from time to time, accidentally it seems, Miss Graham herself has a softening of contour between moments of emphasis where her natural subtlety of body substitutes shading, continuity, and breath for the geometry of constant tension; and it is at these very moments, which seem unintentional, that Miss Graham gets her audience most, gets them to feel something of the drama she is trying to tell about. I have the impression that Miss Graham would like to keep a dance constantly at the tension of a picture. She seems to be, especially in her solo dances, clinging to visual definition. Even her so-called angularity springs partly from a fear that the eye will be confused unless every muscle is given a definite job. The eye would be confused. But our bodily sense would not. Our bodily sense needs the rebound from a gesture,

the variation of hard and soft muscle, of exact and general. As I said, Miss Graham herself has an instinct in this direction; but she seems to hesitate to rely on it in composition. I think it is this lack of confidence that she can communicate her tension directly to the body of anyone in the audience that makes her dances so "difficult." Isadora did not have this lack of confidence, and so her dances—though perhaps pictorially undistinguished—were always compelling, and gave the effect of beauty. But I don't want to go off on too theoretical a discussion, though Miss Graham is a controversial figure and important to us.

For musicians Miss Graham's programs are especially interesting because a number of modern American composers write for her, setting her dances to music after the dance has been composed. In general they seem anxious to stick literally to the rhythmic detail of her dance, the way many dancers—inversely—might try to stick to the rhythmic detail of music. It isn't a good method. Especially because Miss Graham's motives are so obvious they need no reiteration in music and they are structural body rhythms rather than ornamental gestures. For the musicians the result of following her is that, instead of making their piece a whole, they divide it up into a series of brief phrases, each stopping on an accent. It seems to me that the rhythmic structure of dance and that of music are parallel but not interchangeable. Time in music is much more nearly a mathematical unit than in dance, and stress more regularly recurrent. A good dance goes along with a piece of music with plenty of points of contact but many of duality. A dance needs a certain rhythmic independence—similar in a sense to the rhythmic elasticity the voice is given in our popular songs. But to give this freedom to the dance the music must have a life of its own; and the more modest this life is, the more definite it should be. Because it is no fun seeing a dancer dance smack on his Gebrauchsmusik, and he looks as dramatic doing it as a man riding an electric camel.

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One very good kind of dance music is that of Uday Shan-Kar. I do not mean to criticize it as music, much less as Hindu music. But to a lay ear it sounds pleasant, it sounds as though it made sense without being emphatic, it repeats itself without insistence. The

Oriental music I have heard always has this independent friendliness toward the dancers. It may have something to do with the fact that the music is made in sight of the audience, and that the musician exists not only as an instrument but also as a person. To me it is theatrically much pleasanter to see the people who make the music for dancing. It puts the dancer into a human perspective, it takes the bombast out of his stylization, and instead shows its real reference to the more usual look of a body. Human beings don't look any better for being alone, on the contrary their beauty is a relative thing; and even their solitude is more lonely when it is imaginary.

Uday Shan-Kar is a fine dancer. What struck me most about him was that though he is a star, though he projects as vigorously as any Broadwayite, he still gives a sense of personal modesty. Many gifted dancers seem to say on the stage, "I am the dance." He says, "Hindu dancing is a beautiful thing and I like to do it as well as I can." We see him and admire him. His exact control of every gradation of dancing—fluidity or accent, lyricism or characterization, space movement or stationary gesture, virtuoso precision or vigorous generality, is marvelous. His intention is always clear and his surprises never offend. Within the limits of what may seem to us supercivilized and adolescent suavity, without either our classic foot work or our modern back work, he finds it easy to run the whole gamut of dancing. Another style of dancing might have a different range, so to speak, but none can have a more complete expressiveness. Although he shows us all this in his own person as a dancer, we do not feel that he is showing us himself, he is showing us something that is beautiful quite apart from his own connection with it. He is a friend of ours who thinks we will enjoy too what he would enjoy so much if he were a spectator. As a result he is glad to show us his company—the coquetry and wit of Simkie, the juvenile eagerness and delight in his own gifts of Madhavan, he shows us even the least expert of his dancers as they are—not subtle of course but agreeable. All these shades of dance personality are allowed to flower according to their nature, and add up to the sense of harmonious and natural completeness. I believe that this use in a troupe of whatever gifts are present, like the sense in a star that he is not

the only person, in fact only a detail in the whole of dancing—is the only thing that makes the theatre real. Considerations of accuracy, form for the group, of personal projection or style for the star are not secondary, they are an integral part of the artist's life. But they belong at home in the routine of preparation, they are his private life. In the studio the artist is more important than the whole world put together. On the stage he is one human being no bigger than any other single human being, even one in the audience. The big thing, the effect is then at an equal distance from them both.

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I have not yet spoken here of Miss Enters who is a very remarkable artist, and amazingly in the American tradition of art—that exquisite speciality of Hawthorne, Dickinson, and even Henry James. She is a dancer in the shy lightness with which her body floats through her pieces, with a secret rhythm that carries through, barely underlining each point in her story. It is a joy to see an artist on our stage who does not ram his point and his personality down the audience's throat. Her new *Time on my Hands* and *Mme. Pompadour* are like the old pieces, brilliant in timing, in sly detail, in psychological form. The new Spanish numbers are good propaganda. I regret she is always alone, but she never oversteps the bounds of this refinement.

Two German dancer-mimes this month have been interesting too: Miss Goslar, of *The Peppermill*, who is one of the best German comics, perhaps a little inclined to be sorry for her characters instead of letting them be happy in their own way and too correct perhaps in her composition, but a dancer of quality. The second was Valeska Gert who embodied the hectic Germany of the inflation, who here in New York in the midst of our pre-war optimism seemed to be unintelligibly howling in a wilderness. Our intellectuals found her horrid violence old-fashioned. They did not notice that Gert's numbers often have a grand acknowledgement of lust, which may be foreign to our tradition that desire need not affect the mind, but which is none the less a possibility.

*Edwin Denby*