

properly locates the action in the 1890's – if you are looking for that kind of thing – but otherwise it is a stultified replica of what theatre organists considered adequate in the days of silent pictures. It is functional only in the most

superficial way, and so reminiscent of Viennese popular music that one expects to meet a countess, a baron or old Franz Josef himself every time the camera turns a corner.

WITH THE DANCERS

—By S. L. M. BARLOW—

I think that it is axiomatic that great art tends to the symbolic rather than the illustrative; this is certainly true of Greek art, the Gothic, and the early and best Renaissance. As corollaries to this, I would put first a religious motive (that motive which sends people to the tomb of Lenin or the Bo-tree at Buddh-Gaya), and second the formal necessity of a science under which technics can be developed. The B-minor Mass, the ceiling of the Sistene Chapel, the Sainte Chapelle, and the chryselephantine Minerva of Phidias are apt examples.

Dancing – and to a certain extent every art – in America lacks some one of these major elements. We must usually rely upon personality, upon the unique nimbleness and grace of Pavlova or Pearl Primus or Paul Draper. And they in turn have little to rely upon but their inventive instincts and their muscular control. As such, they are bound to remain sports and, to some extent, the art itself an aberration. In music, we are peculiarly inclined to consider that the art progressed, like the Great Roc, from pinnacle to pinnacle – from Bach to Beethoven to Debussy –, but nothing could be further from the truth. The fertile valleys

before and between are there, flowering and bridging in unwarranted neglect. The programs of Yves Tinayre alone would serve to knock the pinnacle theory overboard.

It is because symbolism, tradition and reverence, and technic so strongly mark the work of La Meri that her "School of Natya" is of primary importance. As far as I know, there are only two great schools of cooking: the French and the Chinese. Other countries have regional dishes. In the dance, there are perhaps three schools: the Indian, the Russian (which for the moment commands ideas essentially Italian or French), and the "Modern," which includes Graham, Wigman, Weidman, and several junior groups, here and in Europe. The only one of the three which has a book of revelations of its own and a steady and provable tradition for at least two thousand years is the Indian. The joy of the Hindus in a dance-theatre is immemorial. And there was divine precedent, for there was a claque in Heaven.

Just as Carlo Blasis codified the Classic Ballet, and Gautier and No-verre advanced its theories, Bharata set forth his conception of the dance-theatre many centuries before: "I made

this dance, following the movement of the world, whether in work or play, profit, peace, laughter, battle, lust or slaughter; yielding the fruit of righteousness to those who follow the moral law, a restraint to the unruly; a discipline; affording sport to kings and endurance to the sorrow-smitten; informed with varying passions of the soul. It shall be the source of counsel in matters of flavor, mood, and rite. "

And he continued in this noble and broad tone to lay the technical foundations, creating a deliberate art and not an amateur's pastime, since, said he, "all the activities of men result from the conscious working of the will; wherefore actions and acting must be carefully prescribed." The technic he proceeded to establish is precise yet elaborate, and centers in the real heart of ballet, perhaps of all art: symbolism.

Symbolism expresses itself in a convention. Most of the Greek sculptors, notably Polycleitos, worked to exact Pythagorean rules. Fra Angelico could not conceive of painting that did not crystallize in well-recognized symbols the heavenly origins of his discipline. Raphael, from the apparently simple Spozalizio to the impressive complexities of the "School of Athens," charged every canvas with an intricate exemplification of the neo-Platonic theories of his friend Pico della Mirandola, using symbols now unfamiliar to us, but salon gossip then.

Costume and scenery can convey a certain measure of symbolism, but the emotions and their causes must be depicted as well. Without any scenery, and with only the *Mudras* of gesture — of hand and foot and eye — to help, the Hindu dancer can tell a whole

story. Does Shakuntala desire to show that she is watering a tree? First, she shows *nalina-padmakosha* hands, palms downwards, raises them to the shoulder, inclining the head and somewhat bending the body. *Nalina-padmakosha* hands are made thus: *Shukatunda* hands (the hand flat, the thumb against it underneath, the first and third fingers bent in) are crossed, palms down but not touching, turned a little backward, and then made *padmakosha* (like a lotus-bud). Moving the *nalina-padmakosha* hands downward indicates "pouring out." At Ajanta there is a fresco of a lady who seems to be moving her head to and fro, her lips quivering, while she holds *pataka* hands unsteadily against her face, palms inward. Any Hindu knows that she is being pursued by a bee. Time has destroyed the painting of the bee. But we know he was there. Just as, when you find a fragment near Rome of a marble hand holding a key, you may know that the statue was one of St. Peter.

To express the ideas which, we hope, lurk behind the scenario of a ballet, the Hindu begins with the head and ends with the feet — as reasonable creatures would expect. First there is facial expression, then the hands, then the torso, and lastly the feet. Movement for movement's sake is as out of place as noise for noise's sake in pure music. European ballet technic begins with the feet, and, barring a few seal-like flaps or some thumping of the breast, or the inward cult (modern) or the outward cult (classical), leaves the hands and face to individual aptitude. Pavlova did, exquisitely, dance a dying swan. But the Indian ballet-

omane would not tolerate something which, however lovely, is but an animated picture, an imitation, unless the swan symbolized some deep spiritual reality or some anthropomorphic lesson.

For this reason, La Meri's handling of what I suppose is an essentially Oriental legend, "Swan Lake," is entirely legitimate, for, far from shearing it of meaning — as too often we have done to foreign importations: *Kitezh*, for example — she has illustrated and even invented meaning where there was but movement before. And surely, if we can indulge in occidental versions of *Scheherazade* or *Kismet* or *Lady Precious Stream* or *Mother Goddam*, we cannot quarrel with a nearer neighbor offering us *Swan Lake* accord-

ing to the scriptures of Bharata.

La Meri is amazingly qualified to present just such an ice-breaker. She has humor, intelligence, and skill. Her company includes dancers of the real brilliance of Carolyn Hector; her costumes are the best I have seen. Her taste and talents are catholic. La Meri's Argentine Gaucho dance is as expert as (and far wittier than) Argentinita's *Huayno* dance. With her school, she brings to our ballet world a tradition and discipline that should enrich not only its immediate devotees and students, but also the inmost consciousness of every creator who is willing to consider that long Indian civilization wherein art is a form of worship.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

ONE of the really important musical events of the season — the performance of Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with the composer conducting, was given to the radio audience by the Blue Network. This work ranks with the *Symphony of Psalms* among the great monuments to neo-classicism. Its effect over the air is one of streamlined clarity and brilliance. It is fantastically well orchestrated, every detail of weight, balance and texture scored and delivered with a positive, serious objectivity. This Apollonian control, severely conscious and disciplined, by no means inhibits the communication of a profound interior experience which is exposed to us in unmistakable and purely musical terms.

The least impressive aspects of the score are the excessively concentrated development sections, harmonious to the general plan and purpose of the work, no doubt, but shortwinded in effect and psychologically disappointing. Deliberate thematic starvation by a master is of course a most legitimate plan of exposition. But our natural expectation, aroused by so great a demand upon patience and attention, lets us down in the end with a sense of viewing many more blossoms than buds.

Stravinsky also conducted on this program his *Four Norwegian Moods* and *Circus Polka*. The former is a set of dances scored with expert skill. Their musical material is disarmingly simple and fresh, though scarcely representative of the composer's best wit. But they