

trapeze-net stretched at an angle) toward a species of Lady-of-the-Lake-femme-fatale-mermaid half way up to the flies in back. It was all very beautiful and the costumes were very becoming to everybody. Madame Halicka has a surer taste and a more courageous hand than any of the local chums. Their work on this occasion was, however, distinctly nice and far more striking than what one currently sees.

So much for the success-story. It would probably include Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* (scheduled for June 1st at the Maxine Elliott by WPA Project 891) if this particular number of MODERN MUSIC did not go to press before then. Rather than postpone the record till fall, I take the liberty of speaking briefly anyway. My acquaintance with the score is pretty complete, I must add, and I have been to rehearsals.

The libretto (Blitzstein's own) is dramatically effective and verbally bright, the musical declamation is the season's best by far, and the orchestral accompaniment is of a rare finesse. The work is proletarian in subject-matter and popular U.S.A. in musical material. Blitzstein has profited by a sincere admiration for Weill's *Mahagonny*. His *sens du théâtre* is of the best, easily the equal of Menotti's, who wrote his own libretto too. Welles and Feder have thought up their usual novelties of lighting and of *mise-en-scène*. I predict a genuine success. The opera has passion and elegance.

## WITH THE DANCERS

ELLIOTT CARTER

### MORE ABOUT BALANCHINE

**I**N these last months we have had the good fortune to see three excellent examples of George Balanchine's choreography well rehearsed and well presented by the American Ballet troupe.

Most modern American and German dancers return directly to the gestures of primitive ritual or the miming of basic physio-

logical activities. Balanchine treats these matters within the Petipa ballet tradition, a frame that theatricalizes by making everything more objective, and which he revitalizes by bringing it close to our present feelings. This tradition gives coherence and intelligibility to raw material that in itself has little more than ethnological interest. With these elements he has developed a type of choreography singularly poignant and poetic as well as new and original. Though at times resembling it in outward method, it is in direct contrast to modern dance technic.

A great difference between these two types of dancing is in the inter-relations of the people on the stage. The modern dance generally shows us individuals in the throes of self-induced emotions, who by their apparent disregard of the looker-on, seem to move within a ritual like that of the church. Groups of individuals also take part in these ritual dances without contact, apparently swayed by a simultaneously experienced emotion. The relationships are not human and emotional; they might exist between schools of small fish. Sometimes we see satirical situations such as the genius-hero being tortured at the hands of a fantastic society conjured up for the occasion without any social validity.

In Balanchine's world relationships are expressed in lyrical terms. Being of our times they often have some trouble, but this makes them the more appealing and immediate.

For Stravinsky's *Baiser de la Fée*, which pays homage to Petipa in its choreography as the music does to Tchaikowsky, Balanchine invented some of the finest *solis* and *pas de deux* since the days of the Imperial Ballet. In the third scene the formal numbers between Gisella Caccialanza and William Dollar, remarkable for their tenderness, brilliance, compactness and variety, are strictly within the classic tradition. This type of invention is as rare as it is important. For instance in the Paris performance done by Bronislava Nijinska the solo variations were boring, dull, and badly planned, so that the whole work was spoiled. Balanchine's worked-out steps were frequently more interesting than the music though he always followed it closely and sensitively.

The *Card Party* (in which William Dollar as the joker danced with brilliance and imagination) has a rather untheatrical lib-

retto, for a pack of cards is a pack of cards and gives little chance for contrast. Balanchine invented a choreography that had to be followed carefully to be appreciated, as all its effects were microscopic. He interpreted the cards as a comic perverse society and avoided any of the serious implications of the gaming house with its atmosphere of tension and of suicidal anxiety, a suggestion of which might have added body to the work. In the dancing itself there was many a reference to jazz which is certainly a good way of revivifying ballet technic and skillfully added to the general grotesquerie and cuteness of the ballet.

*Apollon Musagète*, seen by a few early comers, was Balanchine's masterpiece. Though in part a reprise of his former choreography for Diaghileff, it was less static and had greatly gained in feeling since its Parisian performance. The jerks from one statuesque pose to another were no longer in evidence and in their place was a very beautiful plasticity having both nobility and repose.

No one has ever worked out flow in dancing as well as Balanchine. In *Apollon*, as in his *Serenade*, there was a constant line of movement which bound all the steps together and never ceased until the curtain fell. There was something magical and stirring about this drawing of the invisible lines in the air. The solo variations were very fine creations especially those of the three muses, showing a highly creative imagination at work in every small detail. Balanchine's greatest successes have been in this lyric and poetic vein, as in *Errante* and *Orpheus*.

## FILMS SEEN IN NEW YORK

VIRGIL THOMSON

### A COUPLE OF NICE MOVIES

**F**OR *The Wave*, Mexican proletarian picture by Paul Strand (with screen treatment, whatever that may be, by Henwar Rodakiewicz and music by Silvestre Revueltas) fancy is the