

misconceptions about musical theatre current chez Juilliard. If I am wrong in my definition of them, let someone please correct me by defining them differently. That some such basic misconceptions exist, and gravely, must be evident to everyone. Otherwise it is not comprehensible that an organization disposing of their financial, artistic and intellectual resources should lay three such eggs in a row.

## WITH THE DANCERS

### DOLLAR AND BALANCHINE

“**C**CLASSIC BALLET,” the new work at the Metropolitan by Dollar and Balanchine (to the *Piano Concerto in F-Minor* of Chopin) is excellent. It is swift, pleasant, interesting, and very well danced. And its moving quality (which a first night is bound to flatten out) will increase the more often it is repeated.

Beyond this, it shows that the American Ballet has grown up to be the first class institution it was meant to be. George Balanchine has done more than anyone could have expected in so short a time. The company is at home on the huge stage. They are becoming brilliant in virtuoso passages. Without losing their freshness, they emerge as individually interesting; by which I mean that last most exciting and most dangerous phase in a dancer's development when he not only can do brilliantly what he is supposed to, but adds to that an illumination from individual feeling.

I admire Balanchine extremely for the way he fosters this personal quality in his dancers. It is real theatre personality, in distinction to the fictitious kind common on Broadway which consists of projecting yourself with a fanatic intensity regardless of anything else on the stage. There are moments when this is fine, and occasions besides when a performer has to do it to save a show, the way the boy stuck his arm in the dyke. But too many soloists appear only in this catastrophic role. And they never get

or give the variations of intensity that make a whole piece, and the soloist, too, theatrically satisfying. It is worth pointing out that the projection Balanchine encourages is the satisfactory kind, and that he is beginning to get it.

Dollar's choreography shows an honest and well grounded talent. In style it reminds me of Balanchine's *Nocturne*, but Dollar's application is so intelligent, it speaks well for his integrity. Balanchine seems to have two styles. One, like his *Mozartiana*, is brilliantly complex, full of surprising realizations, and poignant interchanges, and a subtle, very personal fragrance. The other, (to which belonged *Nocturne*, *The Bat*, and the *Abstract Ballet* in *On Your Toes*) looks like the opposite of the first. It minimizes detail for the soloist or the ensemble, and avoids technical feats. Instead it builds on unmistakable clarity of groupings and of directions; on rapid oppositions of mass, between single figures and a group; and above all on an amazing swiftness of locomotion. (The entrees are brief and, by simplifying the leaps, cover an astonishing amount of space.)

This style may have been due originally to the lack of training with which the American Ballet started. At any rate, Dollar now uses it very well. He has been able to add to it interesting feats, where they were worth doing. But he has not forgotten its essentials: mass, direction, clarity; and above all swiftness, a fine swiftness even in more complex passages that gives physical exhilaration to the whole. In addition Balanchine has contributed a middle section which is more elaborate both in detail and in feeling, and which fits in astonishingly with the more abstract speed of the rest, heightening it with its greater warmth.

I think there is another reason besides Dollar's integrity as a dancer that makes this collaboration between teacher and pupil come off so agreeably. It is that Balanchine, no matter how odd some of his choreography may appear, has always composed in a way that is natural for a dancer to dance. He has no interest in effects which are not danced, which are merely seen. His poses are not arbitrary, they are the point at which a certain kind of gesture in a definite direction is arrested by a complementary tension. The method of movement may be classic ballet, and the source of material, intellectually speaking, the practice room but

the practice room is as much a part of life as the factory or the jungle, intellectually speaking. It is because all his movement has this living quality that it can have a continuation in someone else's, or combine with any other kind of living movement, I imagine, without anything being lost. It is also for this reason (that Balanchine's movement is natural to the body) that the technical training of the American Ballet has been so happy. Its members are now both exceptionally well grounded in the essentials of dancing, proficient in the technic of the ballet. Personally I am not a "balletomane." But dancing that makes sense is so rare it is worth being serious about.

Theatrically at the opposite pole from the Metropolitan is the Experimental Dance Group which I saw recently in the Bronx Y.M.H.A. It is a new organization headed by Bill Matons, a company of young people not professional dancers, with a sociological viewpoint, and without time and money for enough rehearsals. There are a number of groups like that, but I enjoyed the Experimental Group. The program consisted of topical pantomimes, some with music, some to poems or with a few spoken words. What I liked was the clarity of story, the humor, the exactness of gesture, and the good taste of the choreography. Mr. Matons is a comic of exceptional talent. I hope he gets a chance at a longer form before getting on Broadway.

*Edwin Denby*

#### THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

**L**AST month Catherine Littlefield produced all of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* with orchestra and for the first time in America. Up to now we have only known the *Mariage d'Aurore*, its last act, which is given repeatedly by the de Basil Russian Ballet.

This work with Petipa's choreography is the great classic of ballet, summing up the tendencies in previous dancing and putting them to a fine score written especially for it. It contains all the ballroom dances and idealized etiquette of the court of Nicholas the First, theatricalized and made brilliant by the traditional ballet technic and enhanced by Tchaikovsky's music. Well done, this ballet should show us the ideal human world of