

it sounds less colorful than it did in black and white. The greater wealth of means is, however, a gain for the ensemble scenes. But in any case Mr. Rome seems destined to go on providing us with entertaining shows.

WITH THE DANCERS

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THE oddly written publicity for the new Monte Carlo states: "The arrival each year of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo automatically mobilizes the ballet-fans of the nation, and the resulting enjoyment is prodigious." This sounds as though we were to derive prodigious enjoyment from being automatically mobilized; almost as though we were to plunk down our shekels, raise our right arms, and shout, Heil Hurok. Of course the sentence quoted and others like it are ridiculous. It was a great pleasure to see the new Monte Carlo, it was a pleasure too that it was such a success. But it isn't yet all it set out to be; it hasn't kept as many of its campaign promises as it could have.

This new Monte Carlo is subsidized by our own money, so it isn't a gift horse; we have a right to look it over, and there are several front teeth missing. One of them is music by our own composers, whom we have a hard enough time hearing anyway. Thanks to the WPA and more to the Ballet Caravan, anyone interested in ballet music already knows that you can get it as satisfactorily here as abroad. We want it not for the pleasure of saying it's ours, but because we are curious to hear it, and an American enterprise seems a natural place; especially an enterprise which promisingly entitles itself "Universal Art, Inc."

So much for propaganda; now to the pleasure of praising. Massine deserves the greatest praise for the company he has chosen. The freshness of the corps de ballet is wonderful. Especially the girls, as Willis, as Swans, as Sylphides, as Parisiennes, as Transylvanians are a constant pleasure. The soloists are excellent, with a clarity of profile and a physical zest that are first rate; and the boys even outdo the girls. I particularly enjoyed

the intelligence of Platoff and the limpidity of Guerard; and I remember half a dozen others in great moments. These soloists have not reached the completeness of personal projection that would transform them into stars, but they are all wonderfully free from faking either technic or personality; and with what wholeheartedness they all dance. In fact I think the very best thing about the new Monte Carlo is this real sense of dancing it gives you all the time.

I saw two stars in the New York season—Danilova and Lifar—and for complete satisfaction two stars are not enough, especially as before the season was half over Lifar had left. (I missed Markova.) Danilova is not only a prodigious technician, but the way she points up a technical feat with a personal wit and distinction makes her the equal of any great actress. Her “pointes,” her “ballonnés,” and above all the poses in which she rests on her partner’s shoulders are among the joys that genius gives us. Lifar is neither such an impeccable technician, nor such a wit. He is frequently brilliant, but he can sometimes be awkward, and even dull. I seem to forget these lapses and only remember that more than any other dancer he touches me. Look at his Faun standing next to the Nymph, look at his attempted flight in *Icare*. It is dancing, but something else is there, too, a kind of naturalness in the part that goes beyond the gestures required, as though the character were as much alive as anybody living. Though on the stage, he seems to believe in the life that is going on outside of the theatre in the present. He seems to believe that his part makes sense anywhere, that his part (in the words of Cummings) is competing with elephants and skyscrapers and the individuals watching him. They all seem real at the same time, parts of the same imagination, as they are really. There is something unprofessional about carrying reality around with you in public that goes straight to my heart. This is the kind of criticism it is hard to prove the justice of; I wish we could see Lifar more often so I could try. To me his ballet *Icare* seemed a strange real story sincerely told. It wasn’t always successful (the percussion is quite bad) but it was far more warm and human than the agreeable cuteness of Fokine’s new pieces, or the brilliantly calculated blatancy of Massine’s.

Massine is certainly brilliant whether he appears as a performer or a director. He knows how to keep things going, how to make them look like a lot, how to get a big hand. He can get away with murder. If one took him seriously, he would be guilty of murdering the Beethoven *Seventh*, the Fioretti, and even tender little Offenbach (though there wasn't much of Offenbach left in that new orchestration). There is of course no reason for taking Massine seriously, he doesn't mean to be, he doesn't mean to murder. Like a cigarette company, he is using famous names to advertise his wares. But I cannot help resenting it, because they are names of living things I have loved. It is hardest to bear in the case of the *Seventh*, where the orchestra is constantly reminding me of the Beethoven original.

Trying however to put aside this private resentment, I still am disappointed. Well, I'll exaggerate, and be clearer. I could see a kaleidoscopic succession of clever arrangements, but there was no thrill in the order in which they came. There was no sequence in the movement that awakened some kind of special feeling, some kind of urgency. It all occupied the eye as long as it lasted, and left no reality, no secret emotion behind. I missed the sense of growth and interplay, of shifting kinds of tensions, the feeling of drama almost, that makes the best choreography mean much more than a string of effects. As a pictorial arranger Massine is inexhaustible. But dancing is less pictorial than plastic, and pictures in dancing leave a void in the imagination. They arrest the drama of dancing which the imagination craves to continue, stimulated by all the kinetic senses of the body that demand a new movement to answer the one just past. Until a kind of secret satisfaction and a kind of secret weariness coincide.

This dramatic progression of different qualities of movement is what means so little in these ballets. Take the *Seventh*. Every gesture is visually clear, but every gesture is at the same pitch, hit equally hard. The picture changes, but the tension remains the same. It's all very agitated. There are sometimes more, sometimes fewer people on the stage; they get on top of each other, lie down, run around, jump, crouch, whirl, pose, wave, or huddle, and they never give any sense of getting closer together or further apart, of getting lighter or heavier, more open or more shut in,

more soft or more hard. It is showmanship with a vengeance, it is a drill of automatons. Notice Massine's use of ballet technic. The extended silhouette is used as though it were a constant, like a military position; with none of the thousand subtleties of direction and intensity with which Balanchine gives it so much variety and purpose. And consequently with Massine it breaks in the middle, in the small of the back, instead of growing out from there by reaching up and down in a thousand human ways.

Because Massine's tension is static he can never make us feel the curious unfolding that is like tenderness. Like a Hollywood director he gives us no sense of human growth (there isn't time), he keeps everything at a constant level of finish, everything is over as soon as it starts. He has no equivalent for mystery except to bring down the lights. So the *Seventh*, though danced with fervor and transfigured by the most wonderful sets and costumes in the world, leaves a sense of cheapness; and if you remember the mystery of Beethoven dynamics, it is unpleasant. *Gaité Parisienne* seems just another empty Review number. Where sex is a convention and not an emotion. Smarter of course than Broadway, and marvelously danced. And *St. Francis* seems a slinky posturing, a Sacharoff-Kreuzberg parody of illuminated Books of Hours and Minnelieder, with a finale of anthroposophic chorus girls.

No one but Massine could have got any theatrical effect out of this hodgepodge of minor pictorial devices, no one but he could have held the stage with a solo only half executed—but everyone acknowledges his stupendous gifts of showmanship; and eminence for that matter. We should miss a great deal if we were not to have a new Massine ballet; but we miss more by not having a new Balanchine ballet, or at least an old one like *Apollon*, a work of genius that reminds us of the sort of thing the greatest choreography is. The Monte Carlo has plenty of effective pieces; it should also have a great one.

All this schoolmastering leaves me only room enough to say that the purest pleasure I had was from the old *Coppelia*, which spread a kind of gentle radiance.