

tions in three very pleasant excerpts for piano (Boosey and Hawkes). In transcribing the music from his film, the composer inevitably sacrificed some of the lovely flowing quality of the strings in the second piece, but the last has unexpected eloquence.

Songs by William T. Ames, David Diamond, Otto Luening, and Paul Nordoff have been sent by Associated. Of these the Diamond settings of Shelley's *Music, When Soft Voices Die* and Clair's *On Death* seem the most sensitive and

interesting. Along with their vague, lax, archaic quality, they have a fairly personal style which Diamond has prolifically applied to dozens of songs recently. Thus, when we come to the five from *The Tempest* (Chappell), the authorship is easily recognizable. The Shakespere settings are simpler, doubtless because of the limitations of available performers in Margaret Webster's production. But with this simplicity comes a much-needed clarification of form and direction.

WITH THE DANCERS

By MINNA LEDERMAN

THE beautiful and subtle works of the Balanchine Festival made history for the Monte Carlo, indeed for all of us. It was wonderful to see the company rise to its fine moment. Night after night the young dancers bloomed in New York's City Center where the audience, which only yesterday seemed so callow, grew visibly more rapt and more knowing with each performance.

Ballet Imperial, 1941 (to Tchaikovsky's *Second Piano Concerto*) and *Mozartiana*, Paris, 1933 (the Tchaikovsky suite) are revivals. *Dances Concertantes* (Stravinsky), and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (Strauss) were introduced last fall. The brand-new *Pas de deux* (to an entr'acte from *The Sleeping Beauty*) is at this writing still to be presented. But *Sérénade*, 1935 (again Tchaikovsky), though not officially included was performed and certainly belongs with the rest in any Balanchine season.

Except for *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*,

a *ballet d'époque* with characters and comic episodes, these works are, by program terminology, abstract, which seems to mean without plot. They give us however fugitive suggestions of games, processions and encounters of love. *Imperial* is announced as an Homage to Petersburg, but in a way that is what they all are, evocations without nostalgia of the atmosphere of Balanchine's youth. Their idiom is classic in its "purest" form, a statement that also inadequately prepares one for an evening with Balanchine, since he has so enriched the language of the ballet, that when used by him, it seems the most communicative dance medium of the Western world.

Dances Concertantes still carries a high electric voltage, it is the company's most brilliant ornament. The Stravinsky score is of course no casual incident in this celebration. Balanchine has been under the composer's sign for over

twenty years. He has the same preference for the lean line, for bold asperities, and there is also in his ballets a characteristic transparency, as of chamber music, which lifts and breaks up the densest mass. But not even *Apollon* pays such devoted tribute to the master. The quivering, twittering groups of dancers give continuity to the jagged phrases of *Concertantes*, they weld the fragments firmly to the large design keeping that always lucid in our mind. A musician may accept, even welcome less, surely he could never ask more.

Balanchine's supreme gift, however, is not his musical sensibility but the abundance of his dance invention. His devices, in all their variety and unforced quality, are no product of the busy intelligence. They pour out of overflowing fancy and unfold in a constant play of feeling that seems the expression of nature itself.

This felicity gives *Mozartiana* its inspired air. The tight little gigue of the solitary male, the clear and delicate friezes woven by the girls, their provocative games (a signature personal to Balanchine's style), the seraph's floating dance of grief are as fresh as the changing moods of a summer day. They lead us gently to the most extraordinary flight of choreographic imagination, Balanchine's setting of the theme and variations, the last number of this suite. A classic pair, the man in tights, the ballerina in plumes and all in white, whirl around each other in a bounding rise and fall from toe spins to the sole of the foot, in forward lunges, in pushing arm thrusts, reiterating in a broad way the rapid opening mood of country gaiety. Soloists and groups expand the theme in wide circular designs, each

variation more lyrical than the one before. The pair re-appear, the ballerina in a sharp black tutu as if to announce the importance of the closing adagio. She begins a series of great majestic leaps which return her always upon herself, she stalks her partner in a constricting spidery embrace, they come together and, in unison, shift their weight from left to right with a magnificent upward stretch of thigh. They then resolve this tension in a deep bow, move forward side by side and with hands joined, turn in a noble sweeping arc to walk up stage.

What we see is simply two dancers, Franklin and Danilova, elegantly dressed, moving away from us to the undisturbed quiet of Bérard's back drop. But the experience of vast release after hair-raising constriction assures us we have been visited by divinities. There is one more embrace, the company returns for a last moment of joy. Nothing happens, as you can see, but on the other hand everything. The brilliant day has been completely lived, it is over.

Mozartiana is all airy grace, yet no other ballet touches off so lightly a broader range of feeling. The charm and surprise of Bérard's costumes are exactly right. For me this was the festival's high point.

III

In *Ballet Imperial*, the torrent of invention would be overwhelming, except for what I am tempted to call Balanchine's sense of just momentum. With him the impetus of any motion, once set off, always expends itself completely, whether in the evolutions of a single figure, or from figure to group, or through the ensemble. There is no ar-

bitrary stop, never any "still," only a rest. Each impulse is followed-through, and all movements are meshed in a fluid whole.

The pulse that regulates its flow keeps *Imperial* from fatiguing us. The theme of this ballet is grandeur and it is projected for thirty-five minutes in a power drive of unflagging intensity. We see how arms and legs at their greatest extension can flail the air and divide up space. The ballerina, her partner, the soloist, the entire corps are most of the time spread-eagled at a great elevation. For all their arrogant carriage, their deep reverences, their classical formations, the ballet moves upon us with the direct frontal assault of mass folk dancing. The ballerina (and how American Mary Ellen Moylan is in her legginess, her dashing confidence) swoops into fantastic leaps and air turns, her arms drive in great parallel circles. Absolutely dazzling is her supported, stuttering retreat on toe from which the arms and legs open out to the widest horizontal as she is dragged with only one foot touching, around the stage. Or the circle of limping steps from which her partner appears to take flight in a series of *brisés* with its climax of *entrechats*. The ballet ebbs and flows in large waves. Twice the rhythm is clearly established for us — when Magellanos acts as a fulcrum for two long swinging lines of girls, and later, when the whole company moves turbulently back and forth across the stage while the ballerina remains immobile in the center, a point of gravity against the tide.

When this almost ceaseless flow of movement is over, we are, astonishingly enough, not worn but happy and elated. Balanchine is always urging people to

look at dancing. This is an invitation few choreographers can really afford to give. His own designs are indeed grateful to the eye. There is no decoration, never a figure beyond the normal unit range of vision. If we see one dancer and then two, or three and three, we see them in their mutual relation and we don't have to add or subtract. In *Imperial*, where the stage is always so full of people, no one ever gets lost, everyone, everything is perfectly spaced.

After all the excitement this work has given me, I am not going to register more than a mild objection to the literal Marinsky Theatre set, the stiff, lifeless costumes, nor even to the Tchaikovsky *Concerto*.

III

Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme is much easier to follow this season but still disappointingly tends to fall apart. The Strauss suite is an inadequate support. Sometimes it doesn't sound at all, sometimes it is grey. Balanchine seems to take his cue instead from Berman's sumptuous and witty costumes. But the dancers are not quite robust nor sly enough to carry off the elegant horseplay of pinching and slapping and tumbling and kicking. For period effect I like best the moment, just before the end, when the blackamoors bound on stage, quickly embrace the ladies of the court, squat and leer up at their demure blond faces.

The *pas d'amour* however is an enchanting pastoral lyric. Krassovska's flutterings, the dovelike tenderness of her extended yielding movement, and the circling arms of Magellanos, now shy, now bold, are the essence of poetry in dancing. Balanchine seems always to be exploring and re-creating the lan-

guage of love. This season we could see his mysterious and tragic *pas de trois* in *Sérénade*, the breath-taking adagio of *Mozartiana* and, for a moment, the curious leg-winding embrace of the Ballerina as she is held aloft in *Imperial*.

III

All the Monte Carlo dancers begin to show the effect of Balanchine's direction, his wise, never taut guidance. Moylan and the little Ethridge have at this moment a lovely openness, a freedom in the shoulders and arms which is touching and young. And though the temperament of Boris may yet run away with her, she gave us a restrained and moving *Sérénade*. Krassovska, always feminine and at her best when unforced, was relaxed in a brilliant *Bluebird*. Of the men Lazowsky appears to have the finest musical sense, his *Mozartiana* was sensitive and winning. I should like Magellanos much better if the pleasure of dancing would shine through him. Certainly the smooth, breezy style of Franklin, his friendliness, the amiability he conveys so much better than any other partner is one of the company's greatest assets.

And then there is always the radiance of Danilova. Her little Ballade of the Wheat in *Coppélia* is as poignant as if a great lieder singer had rounded off every phrase. The music seems to flow from her head and shoulders and die out along her arms. In *Nutcracker*, the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy has the same perfection, only here the sensation is all one of childlike, delicious pleasure. And of course there is nothing more beautiful than the long sorrowful line of her Swan Queen, no moment more touching than when, embraced by her

lover, she sways gently, in a quarter circle, on the point, giving in this repeated movement all the desolate feeling of parting.

III

The least disingenuous element of *Frankie and Johnny*, the company's Americana number, was Jerome Moross' score. It has block-like sections of monotony but the orchestra sounds out in a simple, forthright way which is refreshing in contrast to the nervous stage business Ruth Page and Bentley Stone have arranged. I should like to hear Moross try again with better material. At the opening, I thought the ballet needed to be cleaned up, but not quite in the way worked out later to please the License Commissioner. The hoppity Mittel-Europa miming and the Gay Nineties fol-de-rol are a deliberate cheat. They are meant to obscure the ballet's intention, or rather lack of it. But later when Franklin and Boris, dancers of real style and line, replaced Page and Stone, the jig was up. Boris especially gave her role the works with her floor writhings and breast beatings. And then what we saw was no Weill-Brecht golden-hearted whore, to borrow a phrase from Blitzstein, only a rather empty, raw spot, set nowhere, or perhaps a little bit in Chicago, I wouldn't know.

III

But after a season of so much pleasure, I can hardly close on this unhappy note. I want the Monte Carlo to return soon, with a revival of *Apollon*, or of *Cotillon* which I never saw, or *Barocco* which in 1941 seemed the most beautiful of all Balanchine works. And I want again to see the ballets of this Festival, while they are still fresh and clear and strong, as they are today.