

during the credits, and harmonium) tell their tale perfectly. The crickets, birds, frogs, dogs, roosters and distant train-whistles do the rest. However, since there is so little music, anyway, I think Zanuck might have gone the whole hog, and tried none at all. Then in place of the sad harmonium tune in *Ma Joad's* head at these various points we could have heard, for instance, the wind rattling the panes or a shutter creaking when she burns her keepsakes; a far-off train whistle or the equally poignant sound of an automobile horn on the highway at the burial scene; an owl or a baying dog when Tom leaves his mother and goes off into the dark. Care would have had to be taken to make these effects credible, to keep them from seeming forced or arbitrary; nevertheless, it could have been done.

In reviewing *Of Mice and Men* the *Times* movie critic found fault with the music played during the dog-shooting scene. His contention was that what he called the variation on *Hearts and Flowers* was not in keeping with the film. It is quite obvious, even to the layman, if he listens to Copland's score, that there is not the slightest musical connection between the blatancy of that old tune and the sensitive music for this scene. What the critic really meant was something else. He objected to the idea of using music at all to foster emotion for such a patently

sentimental episode. Such an objection is justifiable only if it is carried to its logical conclusion. In that case the music would be suppressed throughout the film, which would be a perfectly valid thing to do esthetically. But if one is going to admit the hypothesis that music heightens dramatic effect, he has to accept the idea that pathos as well as suspense, humor and atmosphere, has the right to its musical crutch. The difficulty is that pathos music, of all accompanimental music, is the most accessible to ridicule. Hardboiled resistance to it is a part of every audience's receptive equipment.

I should say, after one hearing, that Copland has done an admirable dramatic score. The music always seems to be going somewhere. Even where it is just a filler-in, it doesn't sound like it. The dog-shooting scene, with its touching cadences ending in a single flute tone; the nervous tension of the fight, when the staccato chords flying about in space suddenly crystallize into one painful, endlessly spreading dissonance as Lennie catches his assailant's hand and starts to crush it; the amusing eating-music with its porcine contrabassoon noises, the tragic texture of the final sequence—these places among a great many others in the score should be ample proof to producers that a good composer can write better music (yes, even movie-music), than their Hollywood music-men.

WITH THE DANCERS

—By PETER LINDAMOOD—

THE Ballet Theatre surprised everybody. This top-heavy art trust, three-sheeted as "the greatest collabora-

tion in ballet history," functioned prodigiously through a long three weeks' sprint. At no time did it suggest the

welding together of artistic integrities by central, personal genius. But playing night after night to rows of S.R.O. contented faces, it revived all the many flagging, embittered hopes for American ballet.

In some measure the amazing rapport established by the artists with the public was due to a special simplicity about entertainment value. Financially and strategically, this combine was better equipped to stake its success on a streamlined attack than, say, the Caravan Ballet. Nevertheless the Ballet Theatre, now deliberating its next move, should immediately court the brilliant artistic integer of the Caravan. These two companies are actually much closer than either would perhaps admit. To the obvious profit of the Caravan would be the big-time working conditions at the Center Theatre, where the scores of Thompson, Bowles, and Copland could be orchestrally rescued from their present two-piano meagreness, and the imaginative décors of Cadmus, et al be extended into the super-natural theatre of Feder's lighting. In this hypothetical union, too, the young Caravan dancers would absorb some of that indefinable adult quality so notably demonstrated by the soloists and corps de ballet of the new company.

And the Ballet Theatre, having gained new strength, should at the same time vigorously thrust from its midst two very corny nuclei. The first is that unregenerate early-century Muscovite stuffiness which popped up again and again via école Mordkin in nearly all the established repertory mise-en-scènes and in several choreographic demonstrations. The other sour note ought to be easier to drown out for it is so obviously just

a last minute saccharine sop to the audience's spine. I mean that presentation-number ghost which has a way of kicking around like a box of tinsel long after Christmas, indeed long after Roxy, and which was here compounded first of Patricia Bowman, bringing her grisly "twinkle-toes" tradition to serious roles; an aura of Hollywood Bowl and all its lurid oeuvres (item, *Mechanical Ballet*); and, finally, Radio City Music Hall itself which roared over to the Center for a sleazy visit, (item—the horrendous *Raymond Scott Quintette*). Of course America is vast and its genre is assorted and frenetic. The racy juxtaposition of "literally all kinds of dancing" was apparently irresistible to Anton Dolin, who here showed himself an impressionable Englishman aglow with the old melting-pot wheeze. What we got was a simple jam session between Miss Bowman, the Scott ensemble, Mr. Dolin and some window decorators. The audience loved it because it was in a kind of trance anyway.

Easily the most significant productions of the Ballet Theatre were contributed by the diverse genius of Anthony Tudor, late of London's Rambert Ballet. Tudor works primarily as a man of the theatre, intent on projecting the rich texture of the human record. The human is the hardest to maintain, but Tudor's will to do so has given him limitless powers for logical movement. In the modification of classic ballet vocabulary (through Dalcroze and Von Laban) he parallels Joos. But not having been exposed to the special horror of post-war Germany, his canvas is free of Teutonic frustration. Unhampered he gives us a feeling of temporal logic rather than of catastrophe without perspective; every revolution in

movement seems personal to his vision.

Jardin aux Lilas (to Chausson's *Poème*) was a marvellous and succinct conversation piece, its theme the precious elegance of love and frustration set in a counterpoint of moonlit intrusions. It was also a very special essay on the human torso, with its indescribable effect of inert shoulders and drooping heads, its unique combination of the fluid and automatic. The monotonous narrative line appeared to slide off the very profiles of the dancers. To the shrill, and exhaustingly continuous music a disturbing climactic effect was imparted by Tudor's use of abrupt, vindictive entrances and exits and the spotted immobility of his dancers. He has so cleansed the Mittel-Europa eurythmic pamphlet of the arbitrary and the momentarily inventive, that the insertions of ballet technic (for once) served as a legitimate accent.

Tudor must first have heard the Kurt Weill music he extracted from the *Beggar's Opera*, while sitting over an hallucinatory Pernod at Chez Maxim's with a carbohic view of the bordel across the courtyard, and a crumpled page from Bullfinch's *Mythology* in his hand. The result in *Judgment of Paris* is a vignette of the outrageous, an attack on reason. How to explain the immediacy and crackle of this brief aromatic theatre piece, gawkish and sinister, a hedonist's unedited report! There was a sense, too, of open participation, by the blushing audience, in the three soli (to percussion and wirish melody) of the transmigrated goddesses, Agnes de Mille as Venus of the Hoops, Lucia Chase as Minerva, and the youthful Viola Essen successful as a sordid, adult Juno. De Mille's jazz-hot dry point of trun-

cated venality can only be reported as wildly gynecological. Alone, with Toulouse Lautrec, De Mille can elevate the can-can and the burlesque. The dénouement was a shade too perfunctory—the whole onslaught could for my taste have been longer. But in this fragment we see Tudor as a facile, acrimonious satirist.

Dark Elegies, perhaps too tame for impatient moderns, was a series of limpid, quiet designs, strung along the sombre invocation of Mahler's *Kindertonlieder*. I remember it as a striking study in the varied geometry of relaxation and tension, with the dancers creating aspects of adolescence in harmonies of tenderness, heroic hope, despair. Against their nostalgia, Tudor set his own plastic in a somnambulistic counterpoint. The experimental floor-work adagio was fluid rather than percussive; while for the dancer, Hugh Laing, he created a solo passage that amazingly extended visual dynamics far up into the air. It was a memorable illusion of elastic contrast to the horizontal stillness.

Let Mr. Tudor remain in this country. Here is the one man who can teach our young American choreographers the importance of content and complete clarity when staging a regional document. Right away he should attack the "golden period" of New England in the 1840's and shortly before. American primitives are jabbering stiffly on many walls, pleading for animation.

III

From London also came the talents and person of Miss Andree Howard. Her *Death and the Maiden* was tediously slight, while *Lady into Fox*, the extraordinary short novel of David Garnett

which she set to a potpourri of Honegger piano pieces, quite definitely failed to come off. Miss Howard, a decided amateur, herself danced the title role and obscured its meaning beyond possible rescue by the other characters. This attempt to work with bizarre cerebral material was, however, one of the organization's most curious experiments, giving the subtle its first big chance.

In Dolin, the third British import, the Ballet Theatre has a dancer who, in classic roles, makes ineffable glamor seem a male prerogative. His style is noble, romantic, mimetically sound, and his tremendous personal accent carries conviction even in minute violations of convention. In *Giselle*, despite the appealing tiny-craft classicism of Annabel Lyon in the title role, Dolin uniquely dominated the whole complex romantic structure, with pirouettes slow, fluid and vertical, and an elevation unfamiliar in its rigidity, especially with the arms. Respecting the tradition of this work in which dance pattern, divertissements and baroque narrative are so prodigally interwoven, he brought it back again as an unsullied box office favorite. Lucinda Ballard, responsible for half the scenery and costumes of the entire repertory, here had a special triumph of period taste with her bright al fresco chromatics for the first act, and sinister portiere-like tree treatment in the second.

For *Swan Lake*, Dolin, again noteworthy, had the perfect complement of another *danseur noble* in Laing whose line is equally splendid. The rapturous music of Tchaikovsky has never seemed to me in perfect union with Petitpas' virtuoso structure; unless the *Swan Queen* is danced by a convincing stylist, this ballet has a habit of becoming the

property of the corps de ballet, especially of those jaunty maids of the celebrated pas de quatre. That is exactly what happened.

III

It is not necessary here to give a complete documentary inventory of the Ballet Theatre's staggering output. A few further impressions, however, must be recorded. For another illustration of music at variance with choreography see Shabelevsky's *Ode to Glory* (Chopin's *Polonaise Number 3*). Here was an uninspired pas de deux, which neither throbbing orchestration nor Feder's powerful lighting expanded to effective proportion. The gymnastics however were wonderful. Perhaps no one could support alone the terrific force and attack of young Sonia Woidzikovska's technic. Not since Toumanova days have we had such formal acrobacy . . . A noble experiment in condensation and re-staging was Madame Nijinska's revival of the venerable *Fille Mal Gardée*. It would have been more right if her profound grasp of the archaic pastoral had been successfully projected by the performer in the title role. Shabelevsky, however, gave us a trenchant portrait of peasant gaucherie . . . *Peter and the Wolf*, by way of Prokofieff and Adolph Bolm, was something of a snap and quite perfect in its forthright intent. The children loved it all. Of course the music was a programmatic natural. Perhaps the choreography was a shade too straight but it was finely sculpted. The Ballard set, not at all imaginative, was however bright and functional; the tree framed the bird (briskly created by Viola Essen) and focussed Peter (Eugene Loring) in his rhythmic meadow. A special word for Karen Conrad who did

something rare and wicked as the Duck.

On the distinctly less successful side chalk up *Dark Elegies*, Agnes De Mille's refurbishing, with her Negro group, of Milhaud's historic *Création du Monde*. This at best was a commendable effort, not a distinct achievement. She has however communicated to her dancers a remarkable unity of movement. Other works, less intellectualized in their conception of racial erotic heritage, may fulfill De Mille's vision . . . *Goyescas* was too genteel a portrait to leave us with much more than a memory of pastel pleasure in sound chirped out by multitudinous castanets heard above the Granados melodies. . . The absolutely unpardonable was finally achieved in *Voices of Spring*. Strauss in duration requires delicate treatment from the dancer-mime; Conrad and Leo Danielan in unduly minor roles, alone captured the elusive essence. The whole thing was a prolix essay on men, maids and mincing; a Mordkin libel on coquetry set on a Simonsonized canvas of the Jardin Public.

There remains the triumph of Fokine's *Les Sylphides*, restored to forgotten significance by the creator himself. After three decades of popular debauch this work again revealed the momentous significance of the romantic revolution in choreography. A regasp in treatment gave us, in a fresh way, Fokine's

majestic pattern of wistfulness. Tribute should not be grudged to Karen Conrad's sensational galvanizing elevation. Her phenomenal technic is sheathed in a personality full of typical American Girl health and sex appeal; her fierce batterie and leaps are well under control of an excellent if not immaculate line. Superb dancing also was here offered by Nina Stroganova and in other roles demanding her special quality of the lyric and the poignant.

Happily the thoroughness of newspaper controversy has relieved us of further critical duties toward *The Great American Goof*. Between so much outrage and so much enthusiasm, I find myself unimpressed. Loring had the unbelievable task, as choreographer and principal dancer, of creating positive appeal out of an irresponsibly Nihilist exegesis. Result—an enormous plaintive platitude. The sets were dated constructivism with little spatial gain (why not flash Walker Evans photographs on the screens); the costumes effective black and white bargain-counter for the chorus but little imagination for the human types. In spots the dancing had excellent stylized conception, most notably that of the Dummy postured and spoken by Tudor. And no amount of whacky program-noting will ever justify the inconclusiveness or cover up the nakedness of Saroyan's libretto.

OVER THE AIR

By CONLON NANCARROW

AFTER having been politely brow-beaten on my radio about acid stomach and nervous B. O. — to the tune of

Hearts and Flowers — I was definitely revived by WNYC's ten-day "American Music Festival." This, according to Di-