

first time in this country. Though scored with all Prokofiev's old skill, the sense of direction is lacking. The first and third movements kept going continuously but never seemed to get anywhere. More attractive were the quicker second and fourth movements, which hark back to Prokofiev's witty style, but its fine edge seems to have become blunted in recent years. Interesting works still to come include John Ireland's *Overture, "Satyricon"* and the *Oboe Concerto* by Richard Strauss, whose *Metamorphoses* for string orchestra was recently performed, without arousing any great enthusiasm.

Humphrey Searle

BALLET OLYMPIC IN LONDON

WITH four British and five foreign companies dancing here this year, London is surely the world's most ballet-minded capital. Of the organizations on view its own Sadler's Wells offers the best all around standards. No company that I have seen in Europe or America attains so high a level in purely classical dancing and production. Revivals of its first post-war Covent Garden season were the full length *Sleeping Beauty*, with spectacular new sets by Oliver Messel, and *Giselle* with a new and perfect period setting by the nineteen-year old prodigy James Bailey. Frederick Ashton's new *Symphonic Variations* (to César Franck) was a fine work, but it will perhaps seem less breathtaking to the British when they have seen some of Balanchine's American ballets of the past five years. Helpmann in his new *Adam Zero* did not repeat the deserved success of *Miracle in the Gorbals* (both with music by Arthur Bliss) or *Hamlet*. It was good theatre, slightly above average ballet and commonplace philosophy, an honorable failure worth seeing and doing . . . As to the company's personnel, in Margot Fonteyn it has one great ballerina. There are four exceptional female soloists – May, Shearer, Grey and Lynne, and a dozen more who are never less than competent. The corps de ballet is remarkable as an ensemble. Of the classical males, none is first rank, some are good, others promising. Harold Turner is now past his prime, though he, Helpmann and Paltenghi are brilliant in character.

The new French Ballets des Champs Elysées showed us thirty dancers, all fresh and talented. The men were noteworthy. If Roland Petit (*maître de ballet*, chief dancer and choreographer), Paul Gnatt and Jean Babilé do not kill themselves by overwork they could develop to the stature of a Massine, Youskevitch or Franklin. The most charming of their ballets is Petit's *Les Forains* to captivating music by Henri Sauguet and gay décor by Christian Bérard; the most original is *Les Amours de Jupiter* (Petit, Ibert, Hugo) which found five different, acceptable and poetical ways to

portray Jupiter's consummations of his loves. The classical dancing in *Swan Lake* provided demonstrations of virtuosity of the French school which is now an interesting historical survival; there was, however, not enough of this to deter London from securing a return booking of this live little company for a month in the fall.

Serge Lifar's new Monte Carlo Ballet contains a galaxy of soloists. Yvette Chauviré is superb; Janine Charrat charming; Olga Adabache strong; Kalioujny lifted us out of our seats as the chief Polovstian warrior; Skouratoff is a fine male classic. Several others were excellent. The poverty, ugliness, eclecticism and emptiness of Lifar's choreography beggar description and as only seven of the twenty-two ballets offered were not by him, London refused to embarrass his fine artists by watching them suffer and the season ended prematurely.

The Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet, a newly formed group in which the average age must be below twenty, promises well; its existence should strengthen British ballet by providing a second permanent home in which dancers, choreographers, scenic artists and composers may gain experience. In Celia Franca, a talented young dancer, the company has discovered a new choreographer who, if she maintains the exceptional promise of her first work, *Khadra*, will be a great addition. She has evidently studied Mogul Persian painting, and *Khadra* (to Sibelius's *Belshazzar's Feast*) brings a series of figures from Persian miniatures to life with poetry and imagination in classical steps with some stylized Indian movements.

The Ballet Rambert has, Sally Gilmour excepted, struck a hollow patch in dancers but, while the execution is not up to the standards sought by Madame Rambert, the ensemble shows a sincerity of artistic purpose, untrammelled by commercialism, which suggests passing weakness rather than permanent demise.

III

America's Ballet Theatre scored triumphs at Covent Garden with *Fancy Free*, *Pillar of Fire*, *Interplay*, *Apollo*, *Romeo and Juliet* and its pas de deux. Regarded as good fun was *On Stage* and as topic for heated debate – *Undertow* (net balance favorable). London delighted in the works of Robbins and Tudor but was as unimpressed by Agnes de Mille's *Three Virgins* and *Tally Ho* (both European in subject, music and costume) as America would be if visited with ballets on Texan rodeos by a British choreographer; you would at once notice a score of details which showed his lack of understanding and feeling for the American scene.

Ballet Theatre's *Giselle* failed in its challenge to London's memories of the great *Giselles* of the past and to comparison with the beautiful current production of Sadler's Wells. Classical ballets like *Swan Lake* (done full length here) or *Giselle* lose their dramatic significance without

classical mime which is not taught in American ballet schools. Alonso and Eglevsky danced Act II cleanly but showed no signs of having been asked to study the psychological problems of their roles; consequently the ballet became a series of unconnected concert solos and adagios which pleased the eye without touching the heart. Such mime as there was, particularly that of Hilarion, was ham melodrama. A further point for which I would like to have had space is a comparison of Tudor's original versions of *Lilac Garden* and *Gala Performance* as done by the Ballet Rambert and Ballet Theatre. They are better danced by the Americans but they have lost greatly in human interest. But London loved Ballet Theatre's Americana and Tudoriana and acclaimed its soloists.

Pasuka's African Negro Ballet tried to use African dancing as a medium for a story in the European ballet convention; the attempt failed but the African dances were strange, grim, exciting and well done – unfortunately they were too few and far between.

The International Ballet's dancing of classical work defies criticism this side the laws of libel. Personally I rather enjoyed a gloomy gymnastic display which they call *Sylphides* and attribute to a Mr. Fokine; their ideas of elevation in this made me wonder how far below ground their *terre à terre* goes. It is also now clear to me that Tudor's *Gala Performance* is sheer plagiarism of this company's version of the *Sleeping Beauty*, Act II. But their leading dancer, Mona Ingoldsby, is an interesting choreographer whose *Everyman* and *Comus* (Milton's masque) show imagination and fine grouping; if she gave up dancing and concentrated on choreography, both arts would gain.

And now to round out our season we will soon have four weeks of the Anglo-Russian Company – the ninth ballet group to appear in London this year.

Josselyn Hennessy

BELGIAN RADIO, A FORCE FOR NEW MUSIC

DESPITE great musical activity in Brussels during the occupation, modern music was rarely heard. The Germans prohibited Russian, English and American music; moreover Schönberg, Hindemith, Milhaud and Stravinsky could not be played. A Bartok quartet was barely tolerated and only on occasions. For five years the public heard nothing essential in contemporary music.

The liberated residents of Brussels are therefore more than ever avid for novelties. But the modern concerts they follow so closely have not been organized by the concert-giving societies. These, as elsewhere, are quite commercial, and fail in their duty, for the resumption of intellectual life