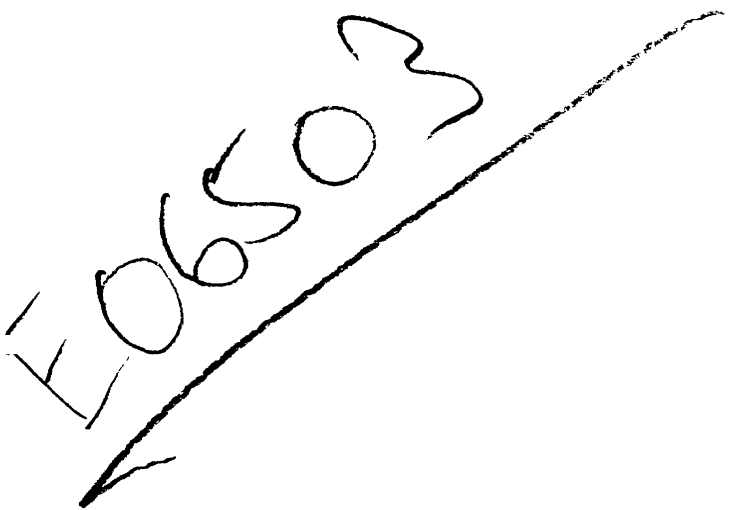
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The Marie Rambert Ballet

by

ARNOLD L. HASKELL

with a Foreword by Tamara Karsavina

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Dedicated to this fine group of young artists that has come just in time to revive the glories of the finest theatrical entertainment yet devised—ballet—and to give it a permanent home in England

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FOREWORD

THERE is an opinion prevalent in the Theatrical World that praise taking the form of a special publication is a tribute befitting only an established fame. It is in a spirit of concession to this opinion that Mr. Haskell says at the beginning of his essay, "It may be thought that the appearance of this study is somewhat premature, seeing that this group of dancers has only recently made its debut." . . . These introductory words show that the author realises that his attitude towards the policy generally accepted with regard to beginners is unconventional, but by no means does he feel the need of an apology. The intrinsic value of his subject is a sufficient "raison d'être" for the present study to a man of Mr. Haskell's sincerity, and I hasten to add, to all real lovers of Ballet.

To share in the world's admiration of its great artists is happiness to a sensitive mind; to add one's tribute to a loud chorus of praise is an honourable task, but to be first to praise the yet unpraised is a proof of courage and discernment. This courage few possess. Non-committal, benevolent approbation, tempered with reticence, usually greets talented beginners. Such reserve is excusable and is only the result of insufficient conviction, a safeguard against a possible blunder should the first favourable impression prove to have been wrong.

Mr. Haskell has no need of reserving his judgment of Marie Rambert's dancers on their debut. He has a spontaneous, because instinctive, perception of the art of which he declares himself to be a "fanatic."

To his "fanaticism," to his exceptional love of the Ballet, Mr. Haskell owes his clear insight into its nature, his fine capacity of discrimination between the genuine and the "clinquant," without which the greatest erudition is of no or little avail to the art critic. Coupled with a thorough knowledge of Ballet technique this natural capacity and discrimination make Mr. Haskell a critic competent to foretell the future achievements within the reach of Marie Rambert's dancers. And he has the courage of his convictions.

Perhaps in no other essay on Ballet as in the present has an author found such felicitous expression to formulate his credo. "We must realize that dancing is an art on its own —that dance movement can be beautiful apart from music and décor. The Dance, apart from Ballet, has an independent existence."

Yes, we must realize this, we must understand that an art can live and find its true accent only if it owes its creative powers to its own elements and as long as it uses means legitimate to its nature.

And yet one would not willingly renounce the magnificence of a Ballet "à grand spectacle," the beauty of décor, the orchestra, the enchantment of lights and costume; these are glories to which Ballet has a rightful claim.

Spite of "glamour" is by no means part of the author's feelings. He owns himself to have had an intense enjoyment at its display. He does not want to dress the Dance in sackcloth, he does not mean Ballet to be a poorly-clad Cinderella. But he says, with truth and deep conviction, that the acid test of Ballet is its choregraphy. If choregraphy cannot stand by itself, all the ingenuities and brilliances of staging are but trumpery, a patch covering a sore. Not only do not Mr. Haskell's opinions, professed in the present study, minimise the value of stage setting, but actually show us the way to finding a happy relation between the Dance on its own and the glamour of its presentation ; that is if we realize that the Dance is the chief pattern in the composite fabric of movement, sound and colour. We must take care to achieve the perfection of this pattern and use stage effects only to enhance its beauty, but never to cover its deficiencies.

The genuine and spontaneous success of Marie Rambert's season at the Lyric, Hammersmith, proved once more the prevalence of sound taste in the audience, for this "fine young group of Dancers" had nothing extraneous to recommend them but their art. It would be optimistic, however, to assert that the public as a whole never fails to discover the true merit of a performer. The ever-growing vulgarity of our leading "shows" and revues vitiates the public taste in the same way as highly seasoned viands make one's palate inappreciative of simple and wholesome food. And in view of the fact that not a few theatre-goers disqualify a truly beautiful production on account of its being "poor," such works as this one of Mr. Haskell's are of very great value to

the cause of art. The propagation of the ideal, of the intrinsic value of the dance, helps the general understanding of the art. Many sincere but somewhat timid lovers of Ballet who have deplored the passing away of the classical tradition, will rally themselves round Mr. Haskell and welcome the revival of "the finest theatrical entertainment yet devised—Ballet," and I doubt not that the present study will make many converts amongst those whose love of the dance is tainted by the tendencies of what the author calls emphatically "the absolute Dance," tendencies which are spreading fast, chiefly for the reason that they bring dancing within the reach of unskilled performers.

Mr. Haskell is not only an enthusiastic lover of the Ballet but a competent judge of its technique. According to his own words he is a "militant Balletomane." As such he vindicates the true return of the Ballet against prejudice and misapprehension.

This study is not only a tribute to young talent and to Marie Rambert who formed, taught, and inspired these Dancers, but it is also an expression of its author's dearest convictions, an exposition utterly sincere, comprehensive, and illuminating.

TAMARA KARSAVINA.

IN THE STUDIO.

Marie Rambert, Prudence Hyman, and the Author.

Robert Stuart, William Chappell, Pearl Argyle, Frederick Ashton, Andrée Howard, Diana Gould—(*from left to right*).

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

It may be thought that the appearance of this study is somewhat premature seeing that this group of dancers has only recently made its debut, but there are many reasons for writing this, apart from the very natural one of wishing to be the first to write about artists who should make a very considerable name.

Taken as individuals, apart from the group, the Marie Rambert dancers are fully qualified to be called artists of the dance, and when Serge Diaghileff visited the school shortly before his death, he expressed the intention of taking many of the pupils into his company. Moreover, apart from her actual achievements, I am convinced that Marie Rambert, almost alone in England, has found the one way in which to save ballet and make it indigenous. Without any ridiculous claims or exaggerated publicity she has actually succeeded in giving us the first really all-English Ballet, an astonishing fact, especially to anyone who has seen as many companies heralded as "The British Ballet at last" as the writer. These various companies may have been all British in a sense that would satisfy the passport

officer, but the less said about their performances the better.

My interest in this group began from a lecture on Petipa, delivered by Marie Rambert at the Faculty of Arts, and illustrated by her pupils. I had rarely heard so much sense on the subject of dancing as in that half hour, but what finally convinced me was the translation of her words into action, and I count that evening and my first visit to her studio as one of the most memorable of my dancing experiences. Here were the works of the master, Petipa, danced as I have rarely seen, something big and inspiring, in spite of the rickety platform and the crowded, draughty hall. I wrote at the time: "I have been recently to two immensely enjoyable performances.

"On the first occasion the stage was totally inadequate, an improvised affair that might well have given the dancers a nasty fall, while on the second occasion I saw the usual class, and a rehearsal, without costumes, scenery or orchestra, of the ballet, *Our Lady's Juggler*, and yet in spite of these drawbacks I have rarely enjoyed a performance more or understood half so well the real meaning of dancing. I will continue to speak in the first person, as I have no right to impute faults or opinions to others, but I think that what I have to say here applies to a large section of ballet lovers. Although I have always at all times put the dancer first and criticised every ballet from the point of view of the dancing, I have undoubtedly lost sight of the dancer on occasions, either through extreme pleasure or extreme indignation at the décor or the music. If we are ever to produce anything

new in dancing this is the wrong point of view. We must realise that dancing is an art on its own. That dance movements can be beautiful apart from music and décor. The dance, apart from ballet, has an independent existence. Never did I realise that so vividly than when seeing the creations of a genius, Petipa, *faultlessly* danced on a rickety stage to music that was by no means great, without any of the glamour of a stage performance. Many fervent and misguided ballet lovers—I am taking up a point made by Marie Rambert here—regarded the revivals of the Petipa ballets, 'The Sleeping Princess' and 'The Swan Lake,' as a lapse of taste on the part of Diaghileff, while actually considered from the dancing point of view alone they were probably the finest work he ever produced. The instinct of the gallery and pit, with whom these ballets were obvious favourites, was, as often is the case, entirely sound, and the bored public in the stalls, whose one word of praise in the later seasons, was, 'What fun, how amusing,' was entirely wrong. They had not come to see dancing at all. They were tickled by the spectacle they saw, at the best, for many came to be in the swim, but it is safe to say that the person who thought Petipa's immortal works were a lapse of taste never understood any of the Fokine ballets, and certainly not the later works. Their surprise would have been great if they realised what Diaghileff himself, and every choregrapher who has ever worked for him, really thought of Petipa.

"There is, of course, ample excuse for them. They were carrying to extremes the mistake for which I have

blamed myself, a mistake that can only be remedied by a study of such an excellent volume as the Beaumont and Idzikovski Manual of Operatic Dancing, or better still, a lecture and demonstration such as I heard the other night.

" There can be no bluff about pure dancing. Had Harold Turner, Pearl Argyle, or Diana Gould made one incorrect movement they would have been shown up, first of all without any mercy by their teacher, and anyone with the slightest sense of line in the audience would have felt the error like a false note. Here we could have absolute artistic integrity and all the pure enjoyment that that means. Bluff only begins when the dancer relies on the orchestra and the costumier to hide his errors, instead of to assist him to the greatest artistic heights as it should be. In the recent exhibition of ballet décor a large number of the costumes were sheer bluff. They were interesting historically, many of them artistically, as sketches. Temporarily they may have rendered the dancers a service, but in the long run they were harmful. During the final Diaghileff seasons, the very finest variations from ' Aurora's Wedding ' had to be cut ; not enough dancers could be found to perform a dance in which every error would be made immediately noticeable and even accentuated by the costumes and the music. Yet I could name at least five young dancers, unknown to the general public, who could have performed those variations well, for the very reason that they have been used to the practice dress and not to years of bluff. The shame of it all is that it matters so little if one thinks of it in terms of career. One in a thousand will notice the falling off in

Diana Gould in " The Pavane " from *Capriol Suite.*

Mlle. X. She was, perhaps, great in promise before she was known—I am thinking of an actual case in point—now she is incapable of the slightest thing without her specially created dance, her pet musician, her costumier, and worse to come, her press agent and her photographer. I can remember well only a few years ago when she promised to be remarkable, when she thrilled me at rehearsals or at class. To-day the press calls her 'the great ballerina,' forgetful of all standards, of the very dignity of the name 'ballerina,' a word that meant something : Trefilova in 'The Sleeping Princess,' or Karsavina in 'Gisèle.' ''

Marie Rambert then by substituting technique and real artistry for bluff has chosen the one way in which ballet can be saved.

All the dancers in this group are her pupils, taught by her, and influenced by her, and that point must be borne in mind, for I shall not insist upon it in my treatment of individuals. The Marie Rambert dancers are not to be treated as school performers. They are artists with exceedingly strong personalities. I shall have something to say on her actual methods in the following chapter, but this preservation of the individuality of the dancer is one of the most important features in their training. In her studio one thing alone comes out of a common mould, and that is efficiency.

This is, therefore, a study of individuals and of a group.

CHAPTER II.

MARIE RAMBERT AND HER METHODS.

Marie Rambert received her general education and her first dancing lessons in the Russian State School in Warsaw. From there she went to study eurythmics with Jaques Dalcroze. She says, "I find that training in eurythmics is extremely useful to every dancer and teacher of dancing, and indispensable to the choregraphist, as it teaches him the structure of music and how to build his choregraphic pattern with that in mind. It is, of course, not necessary that the choregraphic and musical design should coincide at every point, but the choregraphist must understand what is to be underlined and what is to be passed over in the musical design."

It was for this particular aspect in her training that Serge Diaghileff chose Marie Rambert straight from the Dalcroze School to help Nijinski with his production of *Le Sacre du Printemps.* This influence will be obvious to all those who remember Nijinski's version of this ballet and the manner in which it stressed Stravinsky's rich rhythmical design.

Her work with Nijinski consisted in preparing the rehearsals with him and studying the parts with the various members of the company. This naturally led to an intimate knowledge of his methods both as dancer and choregraphist.

Marie Rambert and Harold Turner in
" Our Lady's Juggler."

She says, "In addition to being an artist endowed with a powerful instinct of his art, he was also a supremely conscious artist, always able to master and guide his instinct. It was this combination of the two that made him the genius he was."

Marie Rambert left the company at the same time as Nijinski, and made her first appearance in London as the Florentine Virgin in the ballet "Pomme d'Or," originally produced for the Stage Society, and taken on by C. B. Cochran for the Ambassadors Theatre. In 1918 she married Mr. Ashley Dukes and did not appear again until 1926 in "A Tragedy of Fashion," by Frederick Ashton, to the music of Goossens. This was later incorporated into "Riverside Nights," at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. In the meantime she had started her school, although she continued her studies with Maestro Cecchetti, whose work for Diaghileff's company had filled her with enthusiasm.

She says of the "Maestro":—

"His method is the only *complete* method in dancing, that is, it has definite rules not only for the movements of legs, feet, and body, which all methods of classical ballet have, but also a complete theory of arm, hand, and head movements—a complete grammar of movement. It is for that reason I teach it."

However complete a system may be, however much an exact science, the personality and the methods of the individual teacher play as large a role.

The essence of good teaching is to preserve and to develop

the individuality of the pupil. In dancing there are too many girls to-day who have reached a very high degree of technical excellence, yet are quite out of the question as solo dancers. I know that there is a popular idea that the teaching of dance technique kills individuality. People who think that, however, are the people who will say of a pianist, "She has no technique, but she plays with such feeling." The whole thing is a fallacy. "Feeling" is no good without technique. It is not the teaching of technique that kills individuality but the fact that so many teachers suppress, either accidentally or on purpose, any signs of difference in their pupils. It is manifestly easier to take a whole class and to treat them as one individual. This may be thought necessary in bar work and centre work, but time must be devoted to rehearsal, to the arrangement of dances, and to the consequent stimulation of the imagination. This is the case with Marie Rambert. With her the classroom is in every way a full education for the stage. Even in the bar work she treats the members of her little group as individuals. The mistakes of each member are corrected in a different manner. She realises that the mistake is not in itself the most important thing, but is merely a symptom of something deeper. In one pupil it may be caused by pure carelessness, in another by inability to concentrate, by still another for some purely physical reason, and so on. Marie Rambert's actual methods, those of the great Maestro, are followed by many; she obtains her results by a real study of the character of her pupils. Every girl that comes to a dancing school comes possessing something positive. There is no such thing as an entirely clean slate. That something, whether it be a gift of brio,

dramatic sense, humour, or mischief, must be built up and disciplined, while excessive reserve, inability to concentrate, sulkiness and vanity, all of which are noticeable faults, must be broken down. Knowledge of this has produced Pearl Argyle, Diana Gould, Prudence Hyman, Andrée Howard, Harold Turner, Frederick Ashton.

Marie Rambert is a fanatic, with the result that she inspires all her pupils with her fanaticism. She will give no concessions to popular taste. The lighter forms of dancing do not exist for her. Whether she is commercially wise or not in that is another matter. Personally I am convinced that this is the only way in which to produce serious ballet artists, but then I, too, am a fanatic. I admire the music hall dancer if she is good, and especially a well-trained troupe of Tiller girls, but I like to see the future ballerina kept entirely free from such influences. It is impossible to excel in both branches, and dissipation of energy at a critical age, both physically and mentally, is fatal. Marie Rambert has a "one track" mind. Her intense energy is reserved for one purpose alone.

I have dealt with Marie Rambert as teacher and inspirer, the next point is as producer—impresario. It is only in providing a permanent company that Marie Rambert will take the place of Diaghileff; in other directions she will not follow in his footsteps. Anyone who attempts to do so is doomed to certain failure. In his later years Diaghileff's development had followed artistic and musical lines to the neglect of dancing. This was possible as long as there was an Imperial school to draw upon for talent. Diaghileff

himself would have come to an impasse through lack of inadequate dancing material. In the later seasons it was impossible to obtain a good rendering of "Aurora's Wedding," and a company that can no longer dance Petipa and has to rely on settings and music to pull it through is artistically sterile. Whatever may be said to the contrary, the quality of the dancing first made the Russians, and the original notices are full of La Karsavina, Nijinski, Pavlova, Fedorova, Bolm, and Fokine, and it is only later that they devote the majority of their space to Picasso, Braque, and Stravinsky. The star system, provided the stars are not artificially created, is an essential one, and its evils only imaginary. At a far later date, when it was abolished, Vera Nemtchinova made herself into a star through sheer hard work and ability, and, together with Anton Dolin, "put the Nijinska period across."

To-day it is the maître de ballet alone who can succeed in a revival, and Marie Rambert is essentially a maître de ballet and a maker of stars. Later in the course of evolution a new group of composers and painters will grow up and take charge of the company, and new works of art will be created. In the meantime Marie Rambert has realised, as her lecture on Petipa shows, that her company must be grounded in the great classic tradition, and she is wise in developing and using the resources in her own studio, such as the costumes of one of her own dancers, William Chappell.

It is only as long as she does not attempt to force matters that she will succeed. She has a new public to educate as well as a new company. The musicians are ready to use

her material. Constant Lambert, speaking at any rate from a dance point of view, the finest of our modern composers, and where ballet is concerned a conductor of genius, will now have an opportunity of many an English première instead of having to go to South America or Germany. Marie Rambert is fully in sympathy with our young composers. In that way she has the possibilities of doing more for English music than any far-fetched opera schemes.

That is in the future. In the meantime she has accomplished much in producing the group that is the subject of this work. I am treating of them as individuals, as she herself does, but they would already readily admit the great debt they owe to her. It is obvious. I shall not insist further.

CHAPTER III.

PAS DE QUATRE.

There is a superstition, which I myself have long believed, that English girls are exceedingly competent technically, but are lacking in personality or any particular distinguishing feature. It is but a year ago that I wrote: "We have admirable corps-de-ballet material. Our girls can, I think, be far better trained than even the Russians as an ensemble and a background, but I cannot see yet where the English ballerina is to come from. It is the personality of the dancer, the fierce partisanship that can cause hours of discussion as to the comparative merits of Karsavina and Pavlova in "Gisèle" that causes half the interest and joy of the real ballet public. Without outstanding personalities English ballet will never have *glamour*, and *glamour* does not mean a stageful of dancers, a huge orchestra, and a crowded auditorium, or the tiaras and trappings of a smart function; *glamour* is something that the dancer and the dancer alone can provide. I have been thrilled on many occasions by some great artist in class in her black practice dress."

These remarks, it must be understood, do not apply to the many English dancers of the Diaghileff Ballet. For all artistic purposes they may be considered as Russians.

Within a few weeks of writing the above I was proved wrong by four English girls, and my pessimistic query as to where the ballerinas of the future are to come from has been answered.

These girls are technically good enough to have appeared with the Russians at their best, and in later times I know of few who could have danced difficult Petipa variations with half their brilliance. In addition to their technical excellence they have that quality I have called "glamour," the quality that can transform a classroom into an opera house. A curious and vital quality this. Is it born with the dancer? Can it be learned?

The first difficulty is to define it. It means more than brio, temperament, or the American "sex appeal." It contains poise and serenity. All form a part of it. There is very definitely such a thing as "the dancer's face," though this sounds far-fetched. Personally, I believe that the majority of dancers are born with that quality to a greater or a lesser degree, but that it is very rapidly lost through uninspiring teaching. It should develop with the dancer at the time when she is beginning to master technique, and to feel that magnificent sense of power and freedom to express herself. The final touch, the poise and serenity, comes with the complete mastery of technique. The usual non-ballet dancer of the "scarf-wagging-Pipes-of-Pan school," for instance, is the very negation of that difficult thing I am trying to convey. The particular dancers I am about to discuss are among the first English girls to possess this, and while

they are by no means fully developed artistically, and are lacking in stage experience and self-confidence, each one is well on the way to becoming an exceedingly fine artist.

At the present time there is a wave of hysteria about women aeronauts, motorists, and golfers. They may be accomplishing something difficult, something requiring nerve, and in most cases an exaggerated publicity-seeking instinct, but I very much doubt the ultimate value of their services to national prestige. The doing of difficult things that men usually do better is totally uninteresting, the only remarkable thing is that women should want to do them at all. In the long run an actress, a singer, or a dancer is of far greater value to a nation, especially when she does consummately what a woman alone can do.

The actresses and the singers have their chance. Let us for a change celebrate our young ballerinas. A great ballerina provides inspiration for both musicians and painters. The Russian Ballet has shown us what a great inspiration the dancer can be to the whole of a country's art. It is safe to say that what we in Western Europe know of Russian painting and music was given us by the wonderful body of dancers, galvanised by the brain and energy of Diaghileff. These things will count when all the freak performances of individual women are long forgotten.

I speak, therefore, of these young dancers with all the respect and the admiration they deserve, for the little they have already accomplished, and for the many things they can and will do if given the opportunity.

Pearl Argyle in "Les Sylphides."

(i) PEARL ARGYLE.

Of this brilliant quartette Pearl Argyle, to my mind, stands out for the moment, as she is the most aware of her audience. She possesses the true dignity of the ballerina, and although there is no suspicion of musical comedy about her, she is able to get her personality across the footlights to an exceptional degree. At rehearsal or in the classroom she loses considerable effect. She is exceedingly beautiful in build and feature, but the most remarkable thing about her is her beauty of expression. She possesses poise, serenity, and quiet self-confidence in an unusual degree for so young a dancer. Her dancing is not of the kind that is commonly called "temperamental." There is a great deal of nonsense talked about temperament in dancing. Generally, as used by the uncritical, it means a noisy and rather vulgar display, and a *m'as-tu vu* attitude. Actually true temperament is hidden under a very considerable degree of reserve. Temperament, in its true sense, Pearl Argyle has in plenty, only it is the temperament of the pure classical dancer, and not the sham thing that so many Spanish dancers display. In spite of her poise she has not yet fully developed artistically. She has much to give yet, in spite of her "finished" appearance. Whether she will be able to develop further depends on her particular psychology. It is sometimes dangerous to possess such reserve at so early an age. She is naturally graceful, and her footwork is nearly perfect. Her arabesque and the movements of her body are not yet so good. There is a certain stiffness of the body that may be the result of her fear to let herself go.

I have seen no young dancer who could have performed the difficult prelude in *Les Sylphides* more brilliantly. She danced Tchernicheva's great rôle in a manner worthy of Tchernicheva at her best. She had caught the true spirit of Fokine's romanticism, and the company in which she was dancing—with Karsavina, a real sylph—made the test an acid one.

She is certainly the most inspiring English dancer of her age.

(ii) DIANA GOULD.

Diana Gould starts with all the advantages of striking beauty. She is a veritable Giogione Venus : I quote Alexandre Benois here. She is also naturally graceful. Her arabesque is one of the most beautiful I have seen in any dancer. She is exceedingly supple in spite of the statuesque quality of her beauty, and one of the few young dancers who can dance with barefoot and not look ridiculous and "arty-crafty." She is neither physically nor temperamentally the traditional classical dancer. In *Les Sylphides* she was not at her best. Diana is a Greek Goddess and not a sylph. It was in *Leda* that she gave a really memorable performance. Diana will need careful casting, but once a suitable rôle is found for her she will be without an equal. I can imagine her in *L'Après Midi d'un Faune* for instance. From mythology to a dressmaker's parlour is a long distance, but not for Diana Gould. Her "Mannequin" is a perfect little character study, and a very remarkable piece of acting in a quiet manner. I have seen her rehearse it in black practice dress,

Prudence Hyman in "Rugby.

and she was equally well able to suggest the whole atmosphere. This is a work that requires remarkable style and finish, and also a considerable sense of humour. Except in this number Diana has not yet the stage sense of Pearl Argyle. Well cast, she is perhaps more immediately striking, but when she develops more fully she will be able to give more to the audience than she does at present. Her possibilities are immense.

(iii) PRUDENCE HYMAN.

Prudence is, perhaps, the most unfinished yet the most brilliant and full of possibilities of all this little group. She is born with an intense love of the stage. Every appearance is a thrill for her, and she is able to communicate that thrill to the audience. She is elfin, mischievous, full of vitality. She possesses a true dramatic instinct and a real sense of style. A rôle will never become routine to her, and therefore she will vary from day to day from brilliant to bad, but the result can never be uninteresting. I am indebted to Philip Whitcomb for the following story of Prudence. It will indicate the amazing vitality that she possesses better than any other illustration. During her appearances in "Jew Süss" in the ballet Mars and Venus, she was bored at the little there was to do. "I must get film work in the mornings and cabaret work at night after the show." "What will you do between one o'clock and seven in the morning?" she was asked. "Sleep, of course." She had not seen the joke, for that is exactly the way in which she would like to live. Work is an exciting adventure to her, and because of that she would

stand out in any company. It is a thrill to watch her even at the bar in class doing those same exercises that she must have done half her life.

It is to me as certain as anything is certain in the dancing world that Prudence will make a big name. Work of all types is open to her, and whatever she does she will carry the audience with her.

(iv) ANDRÉE HOWARD.

The teaching of dancing, as I have shown, apart from its technical aspects, is a complicated problem in the study of psychology. With Frederick Ashton it was a question of converting a love of elegance into an understanding of strength and beauty, with Pearl Argyle of translating reserve into serenity. With Andrée Howard the problem was the difficult one of inculcating technique without losing a charming and natural spontaneity. Marie Rambert has again been entirely successful. Andrée is an exceedingly strong dancer who excels in rapid, bird-like movement, and who has an entirely unspoiled charm that is exceedingly rare in a dancer. Andrée does not present any difficulties in casting. Her personality is not of an aggressive type. She will lend distinction to all the classical repertoire. I can imagine her in the brilliant Petipa "Bluebird" or in the "Diamond" variation. She has none of that hardness so often found in the rapid dancer.

At present she has, perhaps, the least stage sense of this little group, and her appeal is essentially to the expert. Experience and years will soon remedy this.

Andrée Howard.

CHAPTER IV.

HAROLD TURNER.

The chief difficulty of a ballet company at the present day is the finding of male dancers. A company consisting of women is inevitably amateurish and will never obtain artistic results. The fault of much English dancing in the past has been the lack of interest the English boy has shown in dancing, in spite of the fact that it requires strength, technique, and endurance far surpassing the footballer or the tennis player. The male dancer is often effeminate, but by as much as he is effeminate he is a failure. It is his function to form a strong contrast to the woman on the stage, which the pale imitation of a woman cannot do. Romanticism and effeminacy should not be confused. There is nothing in the slightest degree effeminate about the male rôle in "Les Sylphides" or "Le Spectre de la Rose" for instance, and the modern ballet calls for a greater and more obvious appearance of virility. Dancing, therefore, is no more unsuited to the Englishman, if he can keep his head, than any other form of athleticism.

Harold Turner, a Manchester boy, was sent to Marie Rambert by Leonide Massine, who was impressed with his performance at a school display. Wisely she held him in check until he was fully trained, with the result that his first

serious debut with Karsavina in that most difficult rôle, "Le Spectre de la Rose," caused something of a sensation amongst dance lovers.

Turner has still much to learn, especially in stagecraft, and in some respects he is more immature than the girls in the company, but his promise is immense, and if he can keep his head (how is it that flattery is so much more dangerous to the male dancer?), he should very rapidly gain international fame.

He starts with that indispensable quality of feeling and enjoying movement with his body. He does not rationalise it, consider what arms, legs, and trunk are doing, but feels everything as a whole, with the result that his expression becomes transformed, and for the moment he finds perfect freedom.

Harold Turner has this particular quality of "forgetting himself" more than any other male dancer of to-day, and it is for that reason that his "Spectre de la Rose" seems to me the best and the most spirit-like since Nijinski's, and for that at anyrate it is not ridiculous to compare him to Nijinski.

Turner shines particularly in Fokine ballet, the atmosphere of which he seems to feel. It is difficult to say whether he is a good actor or not, and beside the point, as so far he has had no opportunities and they may never arise, but he is more sensitive than the average dancer, and for that reason a better mime. The old ballet called for a fixed repertoire of gesture that was a substitute for acting, while the Fokine ballet demanded either genuine acting (*Thamar*, the Girl in

Spectre de la Rose) or an expression that was as harmonious with every movement of the body as the fingertips had to be, and in fact as much a part of the body. The male dancer's expression in *Les Sylphides* or in *Le Spectre de la Rose* can hardly be called mime, yet unless it is exactly in keeping, it puts the rôle out of harmony. The whole essence of Fokine ballet is not the mere beauty of line and movement as with Petipa, but absolute harmony between movement, music, décor, and artist. Harold Turner has the gift of putting himself in tune with the choregraphist.

In *Our Lady's Juggler*, which I deal with more fully elsewhere, he is the perfect Juggler; it is not merely a question of acting, but of feeling. As a dancer Turner is the ideal interpretative artist. I do not mean to convey that he is lacking in personality, but unlike many brilliant dancers he does not alter the spirit of every rôle to suit himself. In *Capriol Suite*, for instance, he does not obtrude himself. He is not the brilliant soloist here, but one of a group. It is this rare quality that Turner possesses to a far higher degree than the average, and that would have made him of such great use in the Diaghileff ballet, where the whole trend of ballet was forced into an unnatural channel to suit the leading dancers.

Technical ability he possesses to the full, and he is beginning to understand the use of showmanship in moderation. I have noticed with care the extra applause he has been able to raise by perfectly legitimate means after a season of the same ballet. His whole future will be decided by his mental outlook. At present he is an extremely sensitive artist. If

he can maintain his sane outlook on dancing and be prepared when it is artistically necessary to remain in the background, he will continue to be so. His partnership of Karsavina should have taught him an invaluable lesson. I have continually written of the remarkable manner in which she maintains the artistic balance in *Le Spectre de la Rose*, where the obvious brilliance belongs entirely to the male dancer.*

In his work with her, both in the Mozart Klein Nachtmusik and in the famous Gallop, I admired his sense of proportion and balance, and the finish of his work even by comparison with hers.

As a partner he still has much to learn. But that is purely a question of time and experience. The correct attitude is there, and that is the foundation.

Given the opportunity of course, Harold Turner will be a very great dancer, and, what is so rare, an artist as well.

* See the author's *Tamara Karsavina*, page 18.

Dancing Times.)

Frederick Ashton in " Capriol Suite."

CHAPTER V.

FREDERICK ASHTON,

Dancer and Choregraphist.

(i) Dancer.

Frederick Ashton as a dancer shines by his intelligence and his sense of style. He is not a natural dancer, revelling in movement for the sheer intoxicating joy of it. He is supremely conscious of what he is doing, and only rarely does he "let himself go." One has the feeling that he is watching and criticising himself. His greatest faults as a dancer, just as his greatest merits, come from this attitude. For a time his greatest danger was of being weak and elegant, but elegance has given place to an unusual feeling for style. Ashton is in no sense a classical dancer. He will not fit into a ready-made rôle. He must study not only the rôle itself but all round it, the period, the costume, and the mind of the composer. The choregraphist dominates the dancer. That does not mean to say that Ashton is not an exceedingly interesting dancer. I would rather watch him than many more technical performers. He is certainly improving rapidly and he is still a comparative newcomer to dancing. He started as a pupil of Massine's, whose influence is noticeable, went on to dance with Ida Rubinstein, where he gained

much practical stage experience, and then joined Marie Rambert, who has been able to turn him from a gifted amateur into a gifted professional. His finest performances have been in rôles of his own composition. His "Swan" in *Leda* could have been bettered by no one, and his "Pavane" in *Capriol Suite* is perfectly in period. The *Sabaudo de Bresil* varies from performance to performance. It requires a mastery of breathing that Ashton does not always possess. I have seen him give one really inspiring performance of this dance to an audience of one person, besides the writer—Anna Pavlova. On that occasion Ashton forgot to look at himself or to be critical. He felt with his body instead of thinking with his brain, and the result was thrilling. It is only under the stress of some particular excitement that he can really do justice to this dance of his. Ashton would, I know, rather be praised for his dancing than his choregraphy, but he is essentially a choregraphist, even in his dancing.

(ii) The Choregraphist.

I can safely say that Ashton is the finest English choregraphist whose work I have seen, and one of the finest living to-day, in spite of his comparative inexperience and his limited output. The average English choregraphist has jumped at theatrical effect, and has presented a spectacle, a tableau vivant, but never a ballet. Ashton has a truly remarkable sense of style, genuine originality of outlook, and a real gift of composition and design. He is not a revolutionary, and he has discarded nothing worth while, but has made use of the dance of yesterday in his effort to create

the dance of to-day. He leaves much for the spectator to fill in. He does not drive home his points with monotonous insistence, so that a work of his can live and be enjoyed more after the fifth visit than the first. Also as a dancer himself he creates movement that the dancer can understand, and that shows him to the fullest advantage. He has avoided the cheap momentary effects of distortion. In *Leda* it was a bold thing to have a male dancer "Swan," with none of the customary feather trappings. It forced the choregraphist to give his "God-Animal" study by movement alone, and from his entrance to his exit the illusion remained. The Botticelli groupings, which might easily have become banal had he insisted, were mere fleeting suggestions, inspired by the painter, never at any times copies, and he led his company on and off the stage with truly beautiful patterns. A barefoot ballet without a suggestion of "Pipes of Pan" or handkerchief wagging. This early work contains more of Massine than the later ballets. Certain poses are reminiscent of *Zephir and Flora*, but it is a far superior work in spite of its immaturity. There is none of the restlessness of the later Massine ballets, the excess of movement that is so wearing both to the dancer and the spectator. There is much repose about Ashton's work, and a certain serenity is an essential in every work of art. His masterpiece is undoubtedly *The Capriol Suite*, a work that is entirely original and mature. It has an Elizabethan atmosphere without in any way being a pastiche. It is a ballet founded loosely on the author's idea of the French folk dance, in the way that so much of the finest music has come out of the folk song. Each small item is worked out to a delightful and original climax. Here is

something that is truly of the people in spirit, without any of the amateurishness that such things usually assume. *Mars and Venus*, which was not seen to full advantage in "Jew Süss," is a charming, elegant fragment, a pastiche made memorable by the beauty of its Venus, Pearl Argyle. "Mannequin," arranged for the *Tragedy of Fashion* and now danced by Diana Gould, is a satire that shows Ashton's versatility and his feeling for climax, and his very keen observation of movement. It is a translation of the mannequin walk into terms of ballet. I have seen a score of "dressmaking" ballets. This is the first to succeed. It is completely translated.

Ashton is now having plenty of opportunity to develop. At the time of writing he has been entrusted with the choreography of the Camargo Society's first production, *Pomona*. I feel certain that his work, which is now only known to a few, will cause a sensation. He is young, and his inspiration is still fresh. For very many years he will be able to create without any recourse to tricks.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHOREGRAPHY OF SUSAN SALAMAN.

Susan Salaman has the great advantage of understanding her dancers and her public. Her work as yet cannot be called original, and she is not trying to find a new idiom or experimenting in any way. She is content to use her material to the best possible theatrical advantage. If she is not a great artist, she is certainly an excellent craftsman. She understands her limitations, and succeeds to the full in what she sets out to do. One can, therefore, only criticise her bearing that fact in mind.

Her most ambitious work is *Our Lady's Juggler*, in which she takes the delightful story of the Madonna taking pity on the poor despised juggler, and appearing to him miraculously where she had been unmoved by the more conscious efforts of the artists and musicians. Her first act, the fair, is a complete success, and her handling of the small crowd of burghers, a chorus to the main action, comes off brilliantly. The solo dances are more conventional, but she succeeds in giving Harold Turner an admirable chance both as a dancer and as a mime. It is in the second act, the interior of the monastery, that she has been more ambitious and has failed. When I say that she has failed, I am speaking purely personally. From the point of view of the audience it was an immense success on every occasion. It is easy to gain effect with the dim religious atmosphere, the acolytes, and worshippers. She

has tried to translate that atmosphere, which is in itself the nearest approach to a ballet, too literally, with the result that it is far less effective than the actual thing, a pale echo, and not a genuine translation. She has set out to do one of the most difficult things conceivable, to balletise what is actually one of the most beautiful of all ballets, and with her method of attack, anyone would have failed. It is only by leaving the cathedral atmosphere entirely alone that the true religious effect could have been obtained. Although, therefore, this subject at first sight seems admirably suited to ballet, in reality it sets an impossible task to the choregraphist. In spite of the fact that as a whole it does not succeed, it gives Harold Turner another chance, and presents Marie Rambert herself in a pose of very great beauty. Her interpretation of the Madonna, an exceedingly difficult task, as any dancer will realise, could not be bettered.

In *Rugby*, a far more suitable subject, Susan Salaman is entirely successful. It is a sympathetic, though satirical study of the sports-worshipping girl, and the proud, flattered footballer. It has great distinction and none of the cheapness that the sports subject so often has. The cleverest and most original portion is when the whistle has blown and the three wholly adorable flappers view the game excitedly over the fence. Here the author handles the conventional ballet poses in a witty and really original manner. It promises a freshness of outlook that I have not noticed in the earlier work.

Although Susan Salaman may never create a choregraphic masterpiece, she will always succeed in delighting an audience with her clean and exceedingly able work.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTES ON OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY: WILLIAM CHAPPELL—ROBERT STUART—PHILIP WHITCOMB.

This does not pretend to be more than a series of Notes. Progress is rapid with young dancers, and it is not desirable, in fact it is not possible, to criticise them as one would dancers who had attempted more ambitious rôles. If the Marie Rambert Ballet is the growing force which I imagine it to be, it will be continually transforming pupils into artists, and the clumsy little girl of to-day with grim expression, tongue out as an extra aid to concentration, will be the smiling dancer of to-morrow.

William Chappell, who danced the rôle of "Mars" in *Mars and Venus* at the Lyric, Hammersmith, is a dancer of great promise, who is now improving rapidly. He possesses great natural abilities, easy breathing, a fine arabesque, and a sense of line and style. As a costume designer he has been entirely successful in his first important venture, the costumes for the delightful *Capriol Suite*, which are in absolute harmony with music and choregraphy. He has had, to my mind, the great advantage of having to work to a strictly limited budget. The young artist, with unlimited means at his disposal, is usually inclined to be finicky and over ambitious; simplicity only comes, if it ever does, with experience. No one could have improved upon the Capriol costumes.

Their simplicity is striking, the economy that prompted it is completely forgotten. The costume worn by Diana Gould in the Pavane, obviously built around her personality, with respect but no slavish imitation of the period, shows that this young artist has very great possibilities, and entirely justifies the policy of Marie Rambert of finding talent from within. The good English ballet designer is scarce, the great one does not exist. The late Lovat Fraser was the only stage designer of genius we have produced. It is to be hoped, therefore, that William Chappell will have every opportunity and encouragement.

Robert Stuart is a young dancer who promises well in the humorous side of dancing, and he gave excellent performances in *The Capriol Suite* and in *Our Lady's Juggler*. It was difficult to judge anything from the butcher boy solo, which was, I believe, an excerpt from a longer work, and which seemed to me the one flaw in the Lyric programme. Stuart has a good sense of the stage, and in suitable rôles should make his mark in the company. Technically he is improving with great rapidity. He dances with intelligence and understanding.

It is impossible in a note to do justice to Philip Whitcomb, it is equally impossible to leave him out. In strict fact, Whitcomb is not a ballet dancer at all. He is a student of all forms of dancing, and the sympathetic friend of dancers, whose influence with this particular group in those branches of learning outside pure dancing has been very great. His performance as the strong man in *Our Lady's Juggler* was a perfect little character study.

APPENDIX.

Repertoire of the Marie Rambert Ballet.

(A) Original Ballets.

LEDA AND THE SWAN.

Music by GLUCK. *Choregraphy by* FREDERICK ASHTON.

LEDA .. .. DIANA GOULD
THE SWAN .. .. FREDERICK ASHTON
NYMPHS .. PEARL ARGYLE, DOOLA BAKER, ANDRÉE HOWARD, PRUDENCE HYMAN, ELIZABETH MILLAR, BETTY SCHOOLING
FIRST ZEPHYR .. .. HAROLD TURNER
SECOND ZEPHYR .. .. WILLIAM CHAPPELL

(Frederick Ashton's Costume by Bruce Winston.)

OUR LADY'S JUGGLER.

Music by RESPIGHI. *Choregraphy by* SUSAN SALAMAN.

Characters in order of their appearance :

LITTLE CLOWNS B. SCHOOLING, B. CUFF, J. BENTHALL, V. FLECK
HOBBY HORSE .. .. ROBERT STUART
MINSTREL .. .. FREDERICK ASHTON
STRONG MAN .. .. JOHN McNAIR
HIS COMPANION .. .. WILLIAM CHAPPELL
CIRCUS CHILDREN SUSETTE MORFIELD, KITTY McDOWELL
THE JUGGLER .. .. HAROLD TURNER
THE VIRGIN .. .. MARIE RAMBERT

Holiday-Makers, Friars, Acolytes.

Scene I.—A FAIR.
Scene II.—IN A MONASTERY.

(Costumes by Susan Salaman.)

CAPRIOL SUITE.

Music by PETER WARLOCK. *Choregraphy by* FREDERICK ASHTON.

BASSE-DANSE .. PEARL ARGYLE, PRUDENCE HYMAN, WILLIAM CHAPPELL, ROBERT STUART

PAVANE .. .. .. DIANA GOULD, FREDERICK ASHTON, HAROLD TURNER

TORDION .. .. .. ANDRÉE HOWARD, HAROLD TURNER

MATTACHINS .. FREDERICK ASHTON, WILLIAM CHAPPELL, ROBERT STUART, HAROLD TURNER

PIEDS-EN-L'AIR .. .. PEARL ARGYLE, DIANA GOULD, FREDERICK ASHTON, WILLIAM CHAPPELL

BRANSLES .. .. ENSEMBLE

(Costumes by William Chappell.)

MARS AND VENUS.

Music by SCARLATTI, *arranged by* CONSTANT RAMBERT.

Choregraphy by FREDERICK ASHTON.

VENUS .. .. PEARL ARGYLE

MARS .. .. HAROLD TURNER

or

WILLIAM CHAPPELL

NYMPHS .. .. PRUDENCE HYMAN, ANDRÉE HOWARD

(The Ballet originally written for "Jew Süss.")

(B) Revivals with Tamara Karsavina.

LES SYLPHIDES.

A Romantic Ballet by MICHAEL FOKINE *to Music by* CHOPIN.

NOCTURNE THAMAR KARSAVINA, DIANA GOULD, HAROLD TURNER, and Misses ARGYLE, BAKER, CUFF, HOWARD, HYMAN, McDOWELL, MILLAR, and SCHOOLING

MAZURKA .. .. ANDRÉE HOWARD

VALSE .. .. THAMAR KARSAVINA

MAZURKA .. .. HAROLD TURNER

PRELUDE .. .. PEARL ARGYLE

VALSE .. THAMAR KARSAVINA and HAROLD TURNER

GRANDE VALSE .. .. ENSEMBLE

LE SPECTRE DE LA ROSE.

One Act Ballet by J. L. VAUDOYER *from the poem by Théophile Gautier.*

Choregraphy by MICHAEL FOKINE.

THE YOUNG GIRL .. .. .. TAMARA KARSAVINA

THE SPIRIT OF THE ROSE .. HAROLD TURNER

(Revived at Bath, The Arts Theatre Club, The Lyric, Hammersmith.)

(C) Divertissements.

LE RUGBY (choregraphy by Susan Salaman) .. .. *Poulenc*

THE RUGBY PLAYER HAROLD TURNER

HIS ADORERS .. PEARL ARGYLE (white)
ANDRÉE HOWARD (blue)
PRUDENCE HYMAN (black)

RUSSIAN DANCE (Massine) .. .. *Rimsky Korsakov*

MARIE RAMBERT.

MAZURKA DES HUSSARS (choregraphy by Frederick Ashton) *Borodine*

MARIE RAMBERT and FREDERICK ASHTON

MANNEQUIN (choregraphy by Frederick Ashton) .. .. *Goossens*

DIANA GOULD

SAUDADE DO BRÉSIL (choregraphy by Frederick Ashton) *Milhaud*

FREDERICK ASHTON

"I CAN'T ABEAR A BUTCHER" (choregraphy by Susan Salaman) *Grovlez*

ROBERT STUART

(D)

NOTE ON THE CECCHETTI SOCIETY.

The Cecchetti method was not invented by the "Maestro" but handed down to him by Giovanni Lepri straight from the great Carlo Blasis himself. It is a dangerous thing for the secret of the great classical dance tradition, the one really complete and scientific method, to be known by one teacher alone. Several pupils and friends of Enrico Cecchetti realised this, and the Cecchetti Society was formed in 1921, with Marie Rambert as one of its founding members. The importance of this cannot be exaggerated.

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