

CRITIC-AT-LARGE (Continued from p. 80)

Phoebe Frank and Beverly Brown in upstage pools of light imitating Guzman in a downstage area. The emulative form was, however, balanced by a winning simplicity of performance.

Guzman's most ambitious world premiere concluded the evening. The eight dancers were put through the faces of the Vaughan Williams "Symphony No. 8." It was big music for such a small ensemble, and while Guzman did keep the patterns clear, the relationship to the music was respectful, rather than organic.

Another long Latin suite, "Bailes de la Plaza," had little to do with the ethnic mores suggested by the Juan Lorel Campo songs. The movement style was straight ballet school.

While talking to young dancers last summer at a A.R.B. Craft of Choreography Conference, the Stuttgart Ballet's director Glen Tetley said that, if they were familiar with the past in their art, they ran the risk of repeating what had already been done. Perhaps this was the deterrent in "a deux," danced June 24-25 at New York's Cubiculo by Timothy Haynes and Satoru Mizazaki of the Laura Foreman Company. It was inscribed in the program as "collaborative choreography: concept, structure and direction, Laura Foreman/movement materials developed by the performers."

In reality it was a free-associative improvisation in which each dancer took off from the previous pose of his partner. There were occasional moments of interest, as when one walked on the floor while the other, at a right angle, walked on the wall. Here was an artistic problem solving at its most primitive. (Remember Patrice Seckler's tango up the side of the proscenium Charles Weidman's "Flickers" or those dancing-on-the-ceiling bits in the old movie musicals?)

Betsy Wetzig's choreography for her little group of women also smacked of déjà-vu. Miss Wetzig's in solos, "Inbetween (a dream, of me)" and "Beginning (growth is life)" did a lot of suffering on the floor in the style of Bennington 1950. The two group pieces, "Bring Your Child" and "Space Cycle" were the kind of und-and-movement studies they used to do in the 60s at Connecticut College ca. 1960.

Please don't get me wrong. I don't mean that one could not use materials that have turned up before. A fresh point of view is needed. Otherwise one ends up re-solving the same old problems.

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ing fixed points within which players and dancers find some freedom of choice. It begins with an aubade (solist and percussionist) are controlled by a supplementary pre-recorded tape. The central section allows for interludes in which the leading dancer develops her own rhythms, interrupted by the others with a strongly patterned and insistently repeated phrase. The choreography is credited to Peter Kyle (who dances the solo part), Laverne Meyer (the company's director) and the dancers. Kyle explained to me that they developed and prepared certain movement themes during the rehearsal period on which the cast improvises in performance. It is possible to see momentary allusions to the explorer's life in, for instance, images of separation and reunion, in the alternation of becalmed and stormy moods and in the movement of the soloist carefully and cautiously among the others. But the theme is developed in an essentially abstract form: as the composer comments, the work, by requiring its performers find, within fixed limits, the details of music and dance for themselves, is like a real expedition, "an expedition of the performers themselves, individually as a group."

By this criterion, "Meridian" is an impressive achievement. It lasts more than 50 minutes, has no weak effects at all, holds the attention throughout and takes a shape of its own. John Percival

NEW DANCE

performing at the bykert downtown gallery at the end of april, julie finch wore (i think) the same pink pants and black leotard, the same earrings, the same ponytail that she'd worn at lo giudice gallery when i first saw her there a year-and-a-half earlier. danced to most of the same soulful R&B songs, too (redding, sam cooke, bobby womack and others), this time she had a real live band instead of records. julie did the arrangements herself, and she had them the same casual, effortless calm which she

films: the ephemeral giselle by john mueller



Eric Bruhn and Carla Fracci in the American Ballet Theatre film, "Giselle."

Most designers of dance film series and courses have eventually discovered with some amazement and frustration that no adequately filmed complete "Giselle" is currently available for rental.

Fortunately it is the case that the performances of some of the great Giselles of our century have been captured on film. The major problem is that these films have continued to rest in vaults after their initial showings often because the owners are not aware that there is a significant market for dance films.

Let me elaborate, outlining the "Giselle" material presently available on film and suggesting ways in which at least some of the anchored Giselles may be loosened from their moorings.

Ulanova-Fadayechev. In 1956 a feature-length, color film called "The Bolshoi Ballet" was created in Britain by Paul Czinner using his highly effective—and expensive—multiple camera technique. The film includes a complete "Giselle" with Galina Ulanova in perhaps her most famous role together with a collection of short numbers including the "Spring Waters" duet and Ulanova's "Dying Swan." She is supported by Nikolai Fadayechev as Albrecht and Rimma Karelskaya as Myrtha.

The film is regularly shown in Britain and is available for rental there from Connoisseur Films Ltd., 167 Oxford St., London W1R 2DX. The company is willing to consider North American rentals, but this is obviously a clumsy and expensive procedure.

There are copies of the film in the United States, but they are on 35mm and for years have resided, for lack of apparent interest, in a warehouse. The owner says he will make 16mm prints and put them into circulation if enough serious inquiries are received. If you are

gives her choreography, it reminded me of the story Jerry Wexler of Atlantic records once told to illustrate which Aretha Franklin songs have the most soul—not the driving, upbeat screaming kick-out-the-jams numbers, but the slow, down-tempo stylings. "Have you ever been on a subway at rush hour?" asked Wexler. "Well, next time notice who it is that's pushing and shoving and arguing to get off first. Then when they've all knocked each other out of the way, along comes your soul brother, very cool and collected. He knows where he's going."

So does Julie Finch. She lets the energy and weight of the music itself take her where it will, within the set pattern that she has established for each song. Inside that pattern, she lets the nuances flow. But there's no jabbing, slashing, jutting out into space. And when it's over, it just ends. No climaxes or flashy grand finales. Just real soul. . . .

Charles Stanley's "twentieth century limited" (at la manna in early June) is a chilling collage of fragments

interested, write Mr. Alexander Majthenyi, Pergamon Press, 395 Sawmill River Road, Elmsford, New York 10523. His phone is (914) 592-7700.

Fracci-Bruhn. A letter-writing campaign also might be effective with another "Giselle": a 95-minute color film of an American Ballet Theatre version, filmed around 1969 featuring an extraordinary cast led by Carla Fracci and Erik Bruhn with Toni Lander as Myrtha. The film is, I think, theatrically effective although there is some pointless re-choreographing and some painful moments as the editor chooses to cut to reaction shots when people like Ted Kivitt are in there dancing their hearts out.

The film is available in 35mm in the United States and decisions are being made now about renting and selling it here in 16mm. If they think interest is sufficient, it will be made available. Letters should be sent to Dr. Klaus Hallig, International Television Trading Corp., 866 Second Ave., 2 Hammarskjöld Plaza, New York, New York 10017. The phone is (212) 838-2477.

Alonso-Plisetsky. In 1964 a complete "Giselle" was filmed in Cuba, in color, with Alicia Alonso and Azari Plisetsky. Cuban films, like Cuban cigars, have been officially deemed corrupting in this country but a copy of the film has nonetheless found its way into the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library where its frequent screenings mostly produce raves, particularly for the second act.

Until Henry Kissinger clears things up, inquiries might be sent to Distribuidora Internacional de Peliculas ICAIC, Edif. ICAIC, 12 Y 23 Vedado, Havana, which is the agency that sells the film.

Markova-Dolin. Perhaps the most mysterious "Giselle" film is one made for theatrical presentation in the early 1950s featuring Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin. The film is not entirely complete—it runs something over 30 minutes—but the solos and duets of the two famous principals are all preserved. According to Arthur Knight's ecstatic review in the Saturday Review (April 18, 1953), Markova "has never danced (the role) better than this; nor has any dancer ever left a better film record of her work."

The film was produced and directed by Henry Caldwell who may possibly be roused at Executive Films Limited, 133-117 Wardour, London W1.

Kaye-Youskevitch. The only reasonably complete "Giselle" currently available is an NBC television kinescope from 1950 of a live, specially-staged American Ballet Theatre production. It rents for \$25 from Em Gee Films, 4931 Gloria Ave., Encino, Calif. 91316 and runs 56 minutes.

The dancers are clearly cramped for space and the quality of the film is murky in spots. For all that, however, the film does preserve the performances of Nora Kaye and Igor Youskevitch with Diana Adams as Myrtha (not to mention Ben Grauer as The Narrator). And, given the obstacles, they do well indeed.

Because of its technical limitations, this is probably not the best film to use to introduce an audience to "Giselle" but, in a series with one or more of the other films, it would add a valuable dimension.

There are of course other "Giselle" films in existence. For example, I understand a version with Viollette Verdy and Edward Villella is buried in Boston somewhere and the BBC filmed a Royal Ballet performance in 1958 featuring Nadia Nerina and Fadayechev. But if they were all available, the films described would be a more than adequate start for the most avid Giselle freak. Enough letters (they need not be long) may help to improve the situation.

from his recent dance-past (specifically from three solos entitled "le roi soleil," "caligula" and "highways and byways"), material takes on wholly new connotations when restructured in such a way, of course, and, for the viewer, there's a kind of uncanny fascination in spotting seemingly jumbled memory-references. And since Stanley uses fragmentation and time-convolutions as structural devices in all his dance-theater pieces (including the three excerpted here), the new-work-out-of-old layers this texture even further.

anyway, role-playing, desperation, childhood memories (including masturbation), aesthetics, hunger and rage are all part of the mix this time around. Stanley is a compelling presence onstage, and, as usual, his collaboration with composer John Smead leads to extraordinary results. The piece ends on a note of shrill hideousness, and it takes you a long time to shake that climax, built up as it is out of all those disorienting little shocks along the way.

robb baker
(over)