



SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

AN EVENING WITH THE ROYAL BALLET

THE ROYAL BALLET

Big things have small beginnings. The world-famous Royal Ballet Company, whose President is Her Royal Highness, Princess Margaret, is now a box-office attraction over the whole world. It actually started out some thirty odd years ago as a small group of dancers—(six girls and their teacher)—who put on occasional ballets to vary and supplement the diet of Shakespeare offered by the Sadler's Wells Theatre in Islington, London.

The teacher of these girls was an extraordinarily indomitable young Irishwoman called Ninette de Valois.

From these humble beginnings British ballet, helped along by hard work and devoted talents such as those of Sir Frederick Ashton, their present Director (and former Principal Choreographer), and Constant Lambert, their first musical director, grew and flourished. By the beginning of World War II the Sadler's Wells Ballet, as it was now called, was a firmly established attraction with its own theatre, ballet school and a galaxy of star names, among them Fonteyn and Helpmann. But it was the war-time ballet boom rising to an almost hysterical climax in the immediate post-war years which made the public as a whole—generally rather philistine in these matters—ballet conscious, and gave dancers like Margot Fonteyn, Beryl Grey and Moira Shearer the status of national heroines.

The hysteria has gone, leaving the Ballet—dignified in 1956 by the appellation Royal into the status of a national institution—firmly anchored in the cultural stream not only of its native Britain but of the world.

Front Cover Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev in "Le Corsaire"

British Home Entertainment

in association with

the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden Limited

present

“AN EVENING WITH THE ROYAL BALLET”

“LA VALSE”

with

ARTISTS OF THE BALLET

“LE CORSAIRE”

with

MARGOT FONTEYN and RUDOLF NUREYEV

“LES SYLPHIDES”

with

MARGOT FONTEYN and RUDOLF NUREYEV

“AURORA’S WEDDING”

with

MARGOT FONTEYN and DAVID BLAIR

Filmed at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London

Produced by Anthony Havelock-Allan

Directed by Anthony Asquith and Anthony Havelock-Allan



Margot Fonteyn and David Blair in *Aurora's Wedding*

AURORA'S WEDDING (ACT III of THE SLEEPING BEAUTY)

The Sleeping Beauty, of which Aurora's Wedding forms the last Act—one frequently performed on its own—evokes the Imperial Russian Ballet at its most magnificent. Thanks largely to the blazing beauty and inexhaustible richness of the Tchaikovsky score, the rather formal spectacle envisaged by the choreographer Marius Petipa is transformed into a work of transcending lyrical beauty.

The Ballet had its premiere at the Maryinsky Theatre in 1890 and has remained in the repertory there to this day.

More than thirty years elapsed before it reached Western Europe, revived as were so many of the great classical Russian ballets, by Serge Diaghilev. It was presented with lavish sets and costumes by Leon Bakst, at London's Alhambra theatre in 1921. The ballet's original Aurora, Carlotta Brianza, was inveigled out of retirement by Diaghilev to play Carabosse, the Wicked Fairy.

For the next twenty-odd years a selection of dances from the ballet were frequently performed under the title "Aurora's Wedding." But the full-length work was not revived until 1939, with leading roles danced by Margot Fonteyn and Robert Helpmann. Exactly ten years later the Royal Ballet took New York by storm with their performance of this work on their first American tour.

The Ballet remains a great popular favourite, partly due to the glitter and gaiety of its overall effect, partly to the magnificent music and partly too to the display it makes of pure dancing in the two principal roles and in the explosive Blue Bird pas de deux.

For bravura, brilliance and plain excitement it is hard to beat.



“ LA VALSE ”

“La Valse”, with music written in 1920 by Ravel, is a fine exercise in academic dancing by artists of the Royal Ballet.

Ravel, seeing the music as “the apotheosis of the Viennese Waltz” has written swirling, exciting music and the background for the Ballet is the Imperial Court of 1855. It was first presented

at the Paris Opera in January 1929 by the Ida Rubinstein Company, with choreography by Nijinska and conducted by the composer.

The present production for the Royal Ballet is choreographed by Sir Frederick Ashton and has also been performed at La Scala, Milan.

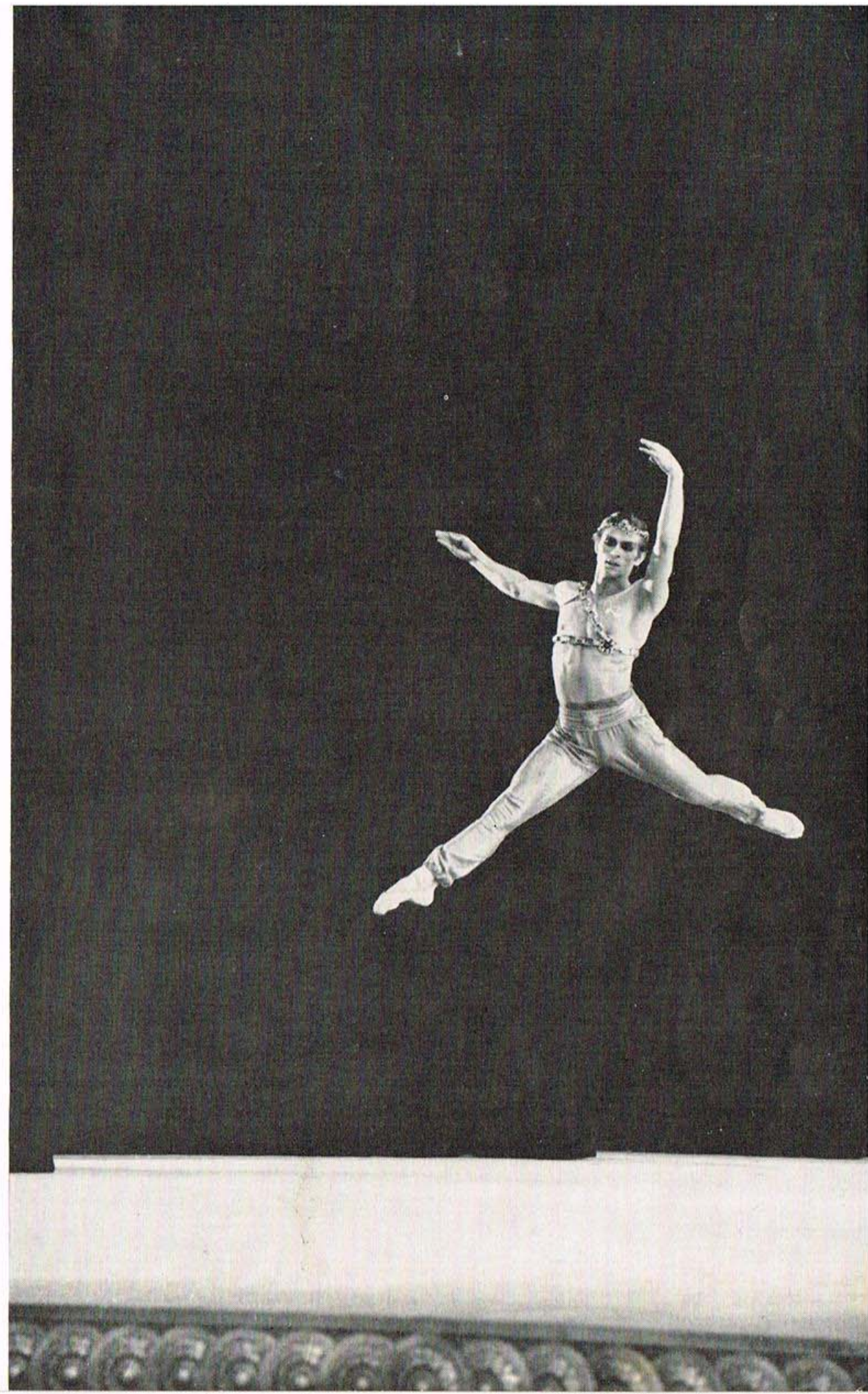
“ LE CORSAIRE ”

Danced for the first time in England by Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev in November, 1962, “Le Corsaire” was a sensation. The Ballet presented by Fonteyn and Nureyev has music by Drigo and owes little to the original Mazilier-Adam work originating in Russia where the ballet is still regarded as a classic and regularly performed.

Based on Petipa’s choreography “Le Corsaire” danced at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden owes much to Nureyev’s own interpretation of the famous Pas de Deux.

The version filmed in colour by British Home Entertainment includes this pas de deux, the two solos and the coda.

The critics raved over this fragmentary tale of a Corsaire Princess who falls in love with a slave and wrote describing the dancing of the two stars “the sheer percussive impact of a bravura style which makes the heart alternately freeze with awe and race with exhilaration.”



“ LES SYLPHIDES ”

To the average person “Les Sylphides” with its superbly romantic and tuneful Chopin score, dreamily unfolding patterns of gauzy tutus, fragile white arms and flower-wreathed heads, is the quintessence of ballet.

The work of Fokine, the greatest of classical choreographers, it represents possibly the highest achievement of his career and is generally thought of nowadays as a masterpiece of choreographic design, ‘a miracle’ as one ballet writer puts it ‘of movement and design.’

It was first presented under the title “Chopiniana” in 1908 for an examination performance in St. Petersburg. The fact that as teacher of the graduating class he was the only male dancer available explains the single masculine role in the whole lengthy ballet.

The ballet was staged at the Maryinsky—now the Kirov—theatre in the following year, with Pavlova dancing the lead. Diaghilev rechristened the ballet “Les Sylphides” when he included it in his first season, in 1909, with the leading roles danced by a glittering group including Nijinsky, Pavlova and Karsavina.

The ballet was first performed by this company in 1932 with Markova in the leading role. The sets used by the Royal Ballet are the original unabashedly romantic settings designed by Benois for Diaghilev. The production was revived in 1956 by Serge Grigoriev, Diaghilev’s ballet master. The Royal Ballet’s performance of this famous and popular work—by far the most widely performed ballet today—is generally held to be as near as is possible to Fokine’s original conception, as interpreted by Diaghilev’s company in St. Petersburg over fifty years ago.



Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev with the Royal Ballet in *Les Sylphides*

MARGOT FONTEYN

Dame Margot Fonteyn is acknowledged throughout the world as the greatest ballerina dancing to-day, in direct line of succession from balletic immortals like Pavlova and Ulanova.

Dame Margot is the first great ballerina to be produced by the English School and it was her early partnership with Robert Helpmann that gave this school its international reputation. Her most successful and popular roles include Princess Aurora, Giselle, Chloe in "Daphnis and Chloe", and, most recently, Marguerite in Sir Frederick Ashton's "Marguerite and Armand" created specially for Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev.

In private life Dame Margot is Mme. Roberto Arias, wife of an international lawyer and formerly Panamanian Ambassador to London. As well as the title Dame of the British Empire, she holds several honorary degrees and is President of the Royal Academy of Dancing. She has simple tastes: drives about in a small car, likes going to the movies, swimming, sunbathing and dancing the Bossa Nova.

RUDOLF NUREYEV

Born on March 17, 1938, in Eastern Siberia, Nureyev joined the Kirov Ballet Company in Leningrad when he was 17. He visited Paris with the company in June 1961 and sought asylum in the West. He has since conquered world audiences with the technical excellence and spirited fire of his performances in Paris, Rome, New York and London. He made his debut at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, with Dame Margot Fonteyn in "Giselle" and has since danced with her in "Les Sylphides", "Le Corsaire", "Marguerite and Armand" and many other ballets. Rudolf Nureyev is not only hailed to-day as Nijinsky reborn, he is also a popular idol, drawing ballet fans and public with his spectacular dancing.

DAVID BLAIR

Joined the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet in 1948 after four years in the Royal Ballet School. He was born in Yorkshire in 1932. One of the Royal Ballet's principal dancers, Blair has played a number of brilliant roles from Captain Belaye in "Pineapple Poll" to Colas in "La Fille mal Gardée". He has danced all the principal male classical roles. He was awarded the C.B.E. in 1964.

ANNETTE PAGE

Born in Manchester in 1932. Joined Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet in 1950 becoming a soloist of that Company in 1954. The following year she transferred to Covent Garden and became a ballerina in 1959. She has danced the leads in all the major classics: Aurora in "The Sleeping Beauty", Odette/Odile in "Swan Lake" and "Giselle", Lise in "La Fille mal Gardée", as well as many other principal roles.

BRIAN SHAW

Born in Yorkshire in 1928. Joined the Royal Ballet in 1944. One of the Royal Ballet's principal male dancers who has danced many leading roles including the Blue Boy in "Les Patineurs", Franz in "Coppelia", the Barber in "Mam'zelle Angot" and Petrushka. He created a role in "Symphonic Variations".



LE CORSAIRE

ANTOINETTE SIBLEY

Born in Kent in 1939 Antoinette Sibley joined the Royal Ballet in 1956 where her cleanness of line and attack and her rapturous approach to ballet made her popular in such ballets as "The Sleeping Beauty" (both as Princess Aurora and as Blue Bird) "Swan Lake", "The Two Pigeons" and "The Good-Humoured Ladies." She created the role of 'the wife' in "Jabez and the Devil."

MERLE PARK

Merle Park has a gay and effervescent personality which she has shown to advantage as one of the Royal Ballet Company's strongest and most versatile soloists. Among her many successes are included "Napoli", "La Fille mal Gardée", "The Two Pigeons", Aurora in "The Sleeping Beauty" and "Birthday Offering" in which she danced the role created for Margot Fonteyn.

GEORGINA PARKINSON

Joined the Royal Ballet Company in 1955. She created one of the leading roles in Kenneth Macmillan's "Symphony" and, more recently, in Nijinska's "Les Biches"; other roles include the Lilac Fairy and the famous Blue Bird pas de deux in "The Sleeping Beauty", the Queen of the Wilis in "Giselle", and the Gypsy Girl in "The Two Pigeons".

GRAHAM USHER

Trained at the Royal Ballet School from 1945 to 1955, Graham Usher was born in Yorkshire in 1938 and joined the Royal Ballet Company in 1955. He quickly established himself as a dancer of exceptional technical brilliance in such roles as the Devil in "Petrushka", the Blue Bird in "Sleeping Beauty." He danced the second principal male role in Kenneth MacMillan's "Diversions."

WORLD PRESS OPINIONS

New Zealand

"A chance to view the pinnacle of ballet achievement" *Truth*

"A triumph for the designer and the corps de ballet, as much as for the stars" *New Zealand Listener*

Australia

"Fonteyn and Nureyev delight the audience" *Brisbane Sun. Truth*

"She's beautiful, superb, indescribable, this legend Fonteyn. At times she seemed to be standing on air"

Sydney Daily Telegraph

"Cheering and stamping . . . for Fonteyn and Nureyev"

Sydney Sunday Mirror

"Electrifying performances"

Sydney Daily Telegraph

"Nureyev's Nijinsky-style leaps and Fonteyn's technical perfection, brought a spontaneous and thunderous audience reaction"

The News, Adelaide

"Undoubtedly the best ballet film we have seen"

Sunday Telegraph, Sydney

South Africa

"What a superb evening" *Sunday Times, Johannesburg*

"Royal Ballet film brilliant and opulent" *Rand Daily Mail*

"Nureyev a genius" *Oliver Walker*

"The world's most spectacular dance partnership of the post-war years" *Sunday Express*

"Magnificently photographed" *Sunday Times, Johannesburg*

"Nijinsky reborn" *Pretoria News*

Canada

"Dame Margot . . . is matchless The colour is magnificent, the sound excellent" *Globe and Mail, Toronto*

Denmark

"The whole performance was of a rarely seen quality: exciting, intoxicating, alive" *Aktuelt*

"Everything looked magnificent in Oliver Messel's gala decor" *Berlingske Tidende*



AURORA'S WEDDING

LES SYLPHIDES





Also **THE SOLDIER'S TALE**

by IGOR STRAVINSKY

libretto by C. F. Ramuz

The Devil	...	...	...	...	ROBERT HELPMANN
The Soldier	...	...	...	...	BRIAN PHELAN
The Princess	...	...	...	...	SVETLANA BERIOSOVA
Produced by	...	...	...	...	LEONARD CASSINI and DENNIS MILLER
Directed by	...	...	...	...	MICHAEL BIRKETT

Score played by the MELOS ENSEMBLE
conducted by DEREK HUDSON

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

A soldier, returning from the wars, sits beside a sunlit pool and plays his violin. The music attracts the attention of the Devil, in the guise of an elderly lepidopterist, who asks for the violin. The soldier refuses and the Devil offers in exchange a book of riches. The soldier accepts, but the Devil finds he cannot play the violin and persuades the soldier to give him lessons in his splendid mansion.

On returning to his native village, the soldier is treated like a forbidding stranger. Friends disappear behind shuttered windows: his mother screams at the sight of him; his fiancée, married to another, hugs her children close to her as if to protect them from an unknown evil.

The soldier has only his book of riches and in time grows 'rich as rich can be.' Wealth brings him no joy, however, and he longs to lose what he has gained so that he can re-gain what he has lost. Only when he has tricked the Devil into taking his last money away does he win himself a wife, a princess into the bargain, and find happiness again.

But the Devil, who has deceived him time after time, appearing as a gypsy woman, a former fellow soldier, a country gentleman, has sown seeds of discontent which, in the end, lead the soldier irrevocably to Hell.