jolly notes of his tibia.

The singers were excellent. The production was poor. Some kind of Eurasian scenery replaced what a real artist, Behrman, had so exquisitely planned. The three coaches who coach singers at the Metropolitan all speak broken English. The echo of their inadequacy (and some of the fault lies on the singers, too, though a competent coach would have corrected them) appeared in such lines as, "Ilona, leesten; I weel combe bok tonight." And the R's were generally trilled, like the noises of the tree-toad. I thought that often the translator had let well enough too much alone; you cannot use so few syllables as in Italian and hang on to them for bars. English prosody is a snare, to be matched only by a careful study of the *Venite* on a Sunday morning, or better still of *Four Saints*.

It is hard to say what I felt both *The Island God* and *Porgy and Bess* lacked, without seeming sententious. But one of them deals very definitely with God and the other with Man, collective Man, the folk. In other words, the subjects connote the larger reaches of the spirit and imagination – pity, magnanimity, reverence. One of them requires grandeur of style, the other simplicity. And I wondered if these qualities could be achieved without much preoccupation with them. I thought, by contrast, of St. Augustine who "had grown deaf with the clanking of the chain of his mortality." And of Wagner, who could assume a virtue which he was far from possessing. And I am at a loss for the answers.

WITH THE DANCERS

By EDWIN DENBY

ON the Carmen Amaya question, it was her *Ay que tu* number at Carnegie Hall that convinced me she is an extraordinary dancer. It is a kind of comic number. A gypsy girl sings to her lover, "You can't make me jealous; you go pretending to make love to others, but you always come back to me and say, There's only you, beautiful, there's only you." Amaya was wearing the typical flamenco dress, with its many flounces and a long train, but she looked like a girl of thirteen, angular as a boy, in her first evening gown. She fought her train into place, like a wild-animal trainer. Her voice was hoarse and small, her gesture abrupt and awkward. All this with the defiance of the song made the dance comic. But the figure of the tough slum child Amaya suggested was as real to you as the person sitting next you in the audience. You felt its private individual life, before and after this moment you were watching. And there was nothing pathetic, no appeal for help in it. And so you grinned and laughed, as much at home as with Villon "en ce bourdeau, où tenons nostre estat;" and the fierce adolescence on the stage looked as wonderful as tragedy does.

Realness in comedy is very very rare among dancers; and the cruelly comic is of course one of the special gifts of Spain. Now that I've seen Amaya do it, I have the greatest admiration for her. Before, at the Beachcomber, at Loew's State, and in some Argentinita-style numbers at Carnegie, I had been rather disappointed.

Compared to the other flamenco stars in town, I had not found in her dancing the limpidity, the exquisite flow and nuance of Argentinita; nor the diamond glitter, the superb force of Martinez. Fernandez, the Mexican, seemed more plastic. And Rosario and Antonio – somewhat like Amaya in fiery temperament, in exuberant blurring of detail, in speed and theatricality – have the advantage of being a couple perfectly matched, equal as dancers, which makes a dance look open and natural.

True, even in disappointing numbers Amaya has first-rate personal qualities. She has for instance a wonderful kind of rippling of her body in movement, more like a young cat's than a girl's; she has an extraordinary cutting quality of gesture, too, as if she meant, Here only and never elsewhere; she has of course a thrilling speed and attack. But these impressions of real moments were confused by others when she seemed to be faking: forcing her "temperament," or driving her dance right into the floor, like a pianist who pounds too hard. Or she would lose control of the dynamics of her dance, put all her fire into a half a minute of it, and not know what more to do with the remaining two minutes; so they went flat. Sometimes she seemed determined to cow her audience, and I had the feeling I was watching not a dancer, but an ambitious person. On the other hand, that, in the course of her recital, she could adjust herself to the glum expanse of Carnegie Hall and finally take charge is proof of extraordinary stage power. But Amaya's unevenness does not bother me any more. Instead, I now understand why all the other flamenco stars respect and admire her. And the other evening at Broadway and 46th, when I looked up, as I always do, at those Wilson's Whiskey shadow movies, and recognized Amaya doing a turn up there, I was as pleased as if I'd unexpectedly caught sight of a friend.

III

The recital of Maria Theresa (one of the original Duncan dancers), who danced several of Isadora's Chopin pieces, was interesting because it brought up again some of the technical procedures of Isadora: the large plain phrases in which a gesture is carried about the stage; the large clear contrast between up and down, forward and back; and the way the body seems to yield to the music and still is not passively "carried" by it, but carries itself even while it yields. It seems to me the effect of these dances, technically speaking, comes from the kind of support the gesture has, rather than from the interest or attack of each new gesture. The support never looks rigid or habitual, as in military position. It seems continuously improvised, and always active, always, if one may say so, a little stronger than the gesture in energy and just ahead of it in time. And it holds the eye. Such an accurate proportioning of the energy as it decreases from a central impulse in the torso through the joints to the extremities gives the limbs an especial lightness, the hands, head and feet an attractive, as if careless bearing. It also gives the observer's eye a definite center from which to appreciate the body movement as a whole; and a feeling of following the dance continuously. It is no easy technic for the dancer. Just remember how even good dancers confuse your attention by jerking your eye from this detail to that; how often even good dancers give you the sense that their impulse to move

operates by fits and starts; how often they seem to be dancing now and then during their number and the rest of the time, merely executing a dance. It struck me that in the Duncan method the dynamics of movement (the impulsive current) becomes the most carefully controlled and the most expressive part of dancing.

Of course we all know that the method did not turn out to be fool-proof. But I think that Isadora's technical approach to dancing (I mean, distinct from her unique greatness as a dancer) is an interesting subject to clarify. It is not sufficiently described by its Hellenistic poses, body bends, and barefootedness; or by its moral intentions toward naturalness. I was delighted that the new serious dance magazine called *Dance Index* devoted its entire first number to the subject of the Duncan technic in an extensive article by John Martin.

Incidentally I have always thought Fokine's *Sylphides* (also to Chopin) hardly at all reminiscent of the dance of Taglioni and Grisi, as often supposed; but instead, full of Duncanisms. I mean, in the "sensitiveness" of its extended phrases, in the clarity of its spatial contrasts in the solos, in the yielding quality of many arm gestures and bends. These last look correct as *ports de bras* and *renversés* but the timing is "unclassical." And maybe, too, the rose-petal hands, the loosely drooping fingers that Fokine or Nijinski invented for the *Spectre* were suggested by a gesture of Isadora's. It is of course equally true that the relaxedness of her manner superimposed on the solid leg and hip rigor of the ballet created a very different effect from hers; an effect of inherent contradiction, a poignant sense of perversity that has gone to the heart of most civilized people during the last thirty years.

At the Modern Museum there was a show of dance photographs by Gjon Mili, many taken by his new stroboscopic multiflash process which records successive phases of a movement at intervals of fractions of a second on a single plate. They are intelligent documentation, and phototechnically very handsome indeed; and they have a kind of friendly drollery in stopping the dancer so dead just when he was taking himself a shade too seriously. Well, as I was looking at them and thinking of the many dance photographs I have seen, I wondered why most of them depress me so. Of course I like to look at my own pictures as much as any ex-dancer does his. But – documentation aside – other people's generally look pretty foolish. The dancers on them look so busy getting nowhere. To be sure, a shot can show you only one gesture, which is like hearing only one note of a piece of music, or one word of a poem. The more painstaking the photograph, the more pointless the effect. Another trouble is that the dancer seems to be hanging in an airless void, in a nowhere; it's a place I wouldn't put a dog in, how should he breathe? Dance pictures get livelier the more sure you are of just where it happened, the more air there is all around. In fact my favorite photographs of violent movement are the strange series Rudolph Burckhardt took of Orson Welles rehearsing *Horse Eats Hat* among half-built scenery on the stage of the Maxine Elliot. In these pictures the place and purpose of the movement are clear. And the monstrousness of arrested motion seems, in them, the same thing as the poetic brutality that illuminates a farce; and so it can make sense within the picture. Of course the

movement in this case isn't the special kind that is made by dancers.

I have however seen dance photographs which give me an extraordinary sense of movement that is specifically dance movement. Curiously enough, they weren't even taken in action; nor all by the same photographer. They are the photographs of Nijinski. In the many that the Modern Museum owns (and no doubt in those of the even larger collection carefully secreted in the New York Public Library) one has, besides the documentary interest, an immediate sense of dancing, of the impulse to dance. Is it because these pictures so clearly give the sense of expressive energy radiating from the pit of the stomach up out at the top of the chest and the base of the neck, and radiating down through the small of the back and out along the legs? This would be the Duncan explanation. I myself would say he looks to me as if the body remembered the whole dance, all the phases of it, as he holds the one pose; he seems to be thinking, I've just done that, and then after this I do that, and then that, and then comes that; so his body looks like a face lighting up at a single name that evokes a whole crowd of remembered friends. As you look at him you see the pose breathe and move and start to glow. Quite apart from the style of movement they represent, some of his pictures should be in the furnished room of every dancer, to remind him of the real radiance of movement, to cheer him up when he wonders what it's all about, anyway. And dance lovers need such reminders and such cheering up from time to time, too.

III

Martha Graham's comedy *Punch and the Judy* has been the one American choreography of first class quality that I have seen this season. At the first view, however, I was puzzled by the emotional effect of it – what the piece really means. So I am coming back to it again, now I have seen it a second time; I leave you to judge, by comparing your own impressions with mine, whether I got it this time, either.

The program says it is a domestic comedy. The dance opens with some silly words and foolish ornamental overlarge gestures by three unsympathetic ladies, billed as the Three Fates. Then you see a young wife waking up with a headache. Her husband on the other hand wakes up at the top of his form. You get the situation, the joke of the ensuing friendly rough-house. You think it's a comedy. You see too that the characters move in marionette style: they are Punch and The Judy. But you notice that their movement has not merely a puppet style (familiar in dancing, and rather a bore) but it also seems real human movement, with a motor force not outside but within the torso. You admire the subtle adjustment of the two opposite styles. You admire how clearly you can follow the "meaning" of the separate gestures, as in a pantomime; and how at the same time these gestures in cut, contrast, and rhythm form a dance sequence. Nor do the gestures repeat themselves, or mark time, or utilize clichés; they are packed with inventive detail. And a kind of brutal plainness in the stage spacing is very deftly suggested. All this amuses you and the characters get interesting.

As the story continues, you notice that the other characters are less real than the protagonists, they are straight puppets. Their dances amuse you as gags, but

they don't have any inner drive of their own. The Fates too dance witty parodies of decorative movement, they don't become a dynamic factor. The power of dreams, which appears as "Pegasus," has a mysterious airiness in dancing, but the influence remains remote and brief and plays an ornamental and not a dramatic part. The two central characters are left with only unreal puppet foils. They themselves, part puppet, part human, never can act toward the others humanly. I had hoped till the end that at least in conflict with each other they would break through their own stylization, become completely human, and that then the emotion would open up, become a real conflict with a real resolution. It did not happen. Their relation to one another is unchanged after they have gone through all their puppet antics. And the futility of the action is expressed in the last spoken words: "Shall we begin again?"

It is then that you realize the action you watched was not as above-board as you at first imagined. Was there a kind of slyness, the way you were lured on to a pointless result? No, you were warned by the unpleasant opening. But now the jokes have a bitter taste, when you find they were not real people who made them. It has been a puppet story, not a drama but a monologue. The gags were the author's wise cracks at life and she didn't give life a chance to answer back. You expected to see the humor of living together, but what you have seen is the folly of it, the pointless folly. The folly might have found a point if it had had the contrast of sentiment; or if it had had the added force of fury to drive it into the vastness of the unconscious where folly is at home. But the point this work gives folly is a different one: it is the very care of its workmanship and execution. It is a high-class folly.

And so I found the piece easy to watch and hard to take. I found it not pleasant or open; but in its peculiar prejudice serious and interesting.

I was glad to be at a recital of Marie Marchowsky and her small group, both because she had seemed to me last year one of the good moderns and because she was presenting Virgil Thomson's *Synthetic Waltzes*. The choreography of this piece indicated, I thought, a more relaxed, a more intimate, a more lyric poetry than most modern dancers seriously attempt. The dance both in the figures and in the counter-rhythms was continuously interesting without being far-fetched, and graceful without being ironic. A grown-up and a friendly piece. Of the music, it is the best new dance music I have heard recently. It is as open and touching and as well made as Chabrier, which means that there can't be any better music for dancing. It is music with the charm of family life. It takes place among people at home, who live in a house with plants about it and they like it.

OVER THE AIR

By CHARLES MILLS

WILLIAM SCHUMAN's *Fourth Symphony*, presented by C.B.S. and beautifully performed by Dr. Artur Rodzinski and the Cleveland Orchestra,