

DIAGHILEFF PROPHECIES "BALLET AMERICAINE"



Flore Ravelles in the Rôle of "Cléopâtre"



Scene from "La Spectre de la Rose," in Which Adolph Bolm and Xenia Maklezova Appear



Lubov Tchernichova, One of the Principals in the Russian Ballet, Who, in Spite of a Long and Stormy Voyage, Was Fresh and Smiling and Ready for Rehearsals When She Reached New York. She Spent the Early Winter in Lausanne, Rehearsing for the American Tour



Photo by White Studios, N. Y. Leonide Massine, Premier Danseur in "L'Oiseau de Feu"

Serge de Diaghileff, Director of the Ballet Russe, from a Snapshot Taken in the Grounds of His Lausanne Residence

EVEN a *grand seigneur* may issue mandates that can not be obeyed. Serge de Diaghileff, director of the famous Ballet Russe that opened its first American season at the Century Opera House on Jan. 17, has discovered this truth—met it last week when he delivered a ukase—that's Russian, I believe, for a "hurry up" order—to have eighty additional dancing girls recruited for "supers."

"Eighty girls, young, beautiful and intelligent, are needed, you may pay them fifty cents a night," announced the famous director. Advisers more familiar with the price that "youth, beauty and intelligence" command in New York, gathered around M. Diaghileff, assuring him that they couldn't be had at the money, so the offer was advanced to a rate more commensurate with the requirements.

Efficiency from Russia

Apparently, M. Diaghileff was satisfied with New York offerings of y, b, and i, for there was a very contented look on his face as he watched the rehearsals when the supplementary chorus went on for the first time. The great director made a striking picture as he leaned forward, scanning eagerly every detail of the work; conferring one minute with Ernest Ansermet, conductor of the ballet, humming over the music softly to the conductor's nodded leadership, or

stopping stage "business" to make a suggestion—and it was noticeable that the suggestion was always followed by improvement. He's one of the kind that America likes—a man who knows his business.

"There has been too much following of tradition in all the countries; dancing, music, art followed stereotyped lines for years, then the revolutionary movement came—and with it the Ballet Russe," said he, when questioned regarding the movement of which the Ballet Russe is the visible result.

"Why did it develop in Russia? Merely the psychological moment. Russia had evolved a wonderful school of artists, of dancers, of music; these we combined in a great ensemble. We gathered the talent of every school and created for it a new field of expression. Formerly you have seen the Russian stars, with the

entire ballet built about a central figure. The Ballet Russe breaks away from the old ideal—just as the drama has broken away from the 'central star' idea; just as music is freeing itself from hampering tradition and getting away from stilted forms into expression that better interprets the new age."

Ballet to Embody Our Life

Asked about the possibilities of an American ballet, M. Diaghileff replied: "When you have developed an art school that is distinctly American, when you have a well-defined school of American music, and a ballet school, democratic instead of Imperial, you will do wonderful things here. How long will it take? Who knows? It has taken Russia a hundred years to develop the Ballet Russe, but, then, you do things quicker. Your New World scenery and coloring, your busy, rushing life, your spontaneity and enthusiasm—these your artists will gather together—are gathering now—and you will, some time, have a ballet that will embody them all."

Endorses American Hotels

M. Diaghileff likes American hotels, "they are so typical of your people," he says. "The obvious mistake America makes, and that seems to be only by a very small number," declares the Ballet

Russe director, "is patterning after Continental ideas and modes of life."

That's why the eminent Russian takes such frank delight in Broadway, and spends practically all the time that he allows himself away from the theater, in seeing the sights on that famous thoroughfare.

Incidentally, he thinks American women are the cleanest-looking in the world.

"They give one the impression that they have just been tubbed," he said, "perhaps it's because of the amazing number of bathrooms you install everywhere."

And he turned back to the stage, and began to hum softly, a few bars of "The Specter of the Rose" as the ballet began its opening scene. M. S.

SUGGESTS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS TO ERADICATE "THE SHAME OF NEW YORK"

By ARTHUR BERGH

NEW YORKERS may well be startled by the facts and figures presented in MUSICAL AMERICA under the caption "The Shame of New York," for it is indeed humiliating to realize that the great metropolis which spends its money so lavishly upon all things has grown so niggardly in its appropriation for municipal music that it now ranks lower than twenty-fifth among American cities in this respect.

It is rather astounding that such a condition should exist when only two and three years ago New York ranked first

in the number of concerts, the standard of the programs and in the attendance at the summer concerts. Nothing could prove more conclusively the absolute necessity of placing municipal music outside the province of politics. Even under the supervision of such an ardent music lover as the present Park Commissioner, the Hon. Cabot Ward, we face a shameful situation. For a commissioner is powerless without the active and intelligent co-operation of a Board of Estimate thoroughly in sympathy with such a plan as may be evolved and presented before that body by the commissioner.

Masses Deserve the Best

If the Board of Estimate fails to ap-

preciate the vital necessity of bringing recreation to the masses, and music has ever been the ideal recreation, and if it fails further to realize that the masses desire the very best in music and that there is no more discriminating audience in the world than the cosmopolitan throng that gathers nightly to hear the concerts in Central Park, then we shall be asked to listen to a band of eighteen men in Central Park, and bands of fourteen men in the various smaller parks conducted by "leaders" chosen for their peculiar fitness in furthering the interests of their respective district leaders during the weeks preceding election day.

No commissioner has been sufficiently powerful to ride rough shod over the

demands of certain aldermen. The Hon. Calvin Tomkins during the term that he presided over the dock department attempted to carry out his plan without consulting the powers, with the result that the music appropriation for his department was cut exactly in half. This, of course, is the most effectual method of disciplining an official who has the courage of his convictions.

New Yorkers have been exceptionally fortunate in having such men as the former Commissioners Stover and Tomkins and the present Commissioner Ward to plead their case, but these men must have the united support of the musicians and the general public to achieve a lasting result.

I am not convinced that opera houses, orchestras and theaters should be subsidized by the nation, the State or the municipality, but at least the government should aid in developing the taste (or call it culture) of its citizens.