



## Brahms by Cliburn—Debuts of Nureyev, Chookasian

**V**AN CLIBURN entered what might be hopefully described as Phase 3 of his New York career with a recent series of performances of the Brahms B flat Concerto with the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Alfred Wallenstein. The first was the honorable if rather unrewarding time in the aftermath of his debut; the second the much more rewarding if sometimes less honorable aftermath of his celebrated foreign success. Now, it would seem, he has settled into a stride in which honors and rewards should be about equal, enabling him (to cite his own words) to be a success as well as a sensation.

To be sure, Cliburn could never, post-Moscow, have become "just another pianist," any more than Menuhin could become "just another violinist." Destiny has marked each for her own, in their different ways. But there were some suggestions in his Brahms that Cliburn is on the way to becoming another pianist than he was. There has been a settling in, a squaring away, that have, as well as reducing tension, promoted greater freedom and more relaxation.

The particular work had a part in this result, for what are normally considered its difficulties are in accord with his strengths, and its voice speaks with a diction to which he responds naturally and without strain. He commands without stress the big sound it demands, his hands encompass its clusters of chords as easily as they might a basketball, and his feeling for melody responds to its long rising and falling curves like a bird dog on a scent. Now and then, to extend the analogy, the quarry takes wing through some thickets with which he is not yet quite familiar, but he always brings it into view (or hearing) again. Such beauty of sound as he commanded in the slow movement, and his inclination to "play along" rather than always dominating the orchestra, are among the unteachables which come naturally only to the elect.

As conductor, Wallenstein had not only a consistent but also a considerable part in this result. He wasn't aided by the kind of free-flowing, articulate horn sound that some players provide for the important solos of the first movement, but there were compensating values of other sorts. The all-Brahms program included a rousing

performance of the "Academic Festival" overture and a soundly traditional playing of the Third Symphony.

Rudolf Nureyev, the young Soviet ballet dancer who was on his way to this country (via Paris and London) with the Leningrad Kirov troupe last summer when he chose political asylum in France, finally reached a New York stage in mid-March. This was not one of the major halls in the Times Square district, but across the river in Brooklyn, where he was an added inducement to ballet fans who might not have otherwise ventured a trip to the Academy of Music to see Ruth Page's Chicago Opera Ballet perform danced versions of "Camille" (to Verdi's "Traviata" music) and "Fledermaus." If he doubled the attendance, he certainly quadrupled the interest of the evening, though he was in action barely twelve minutes in the showy pas de deux from "Don Quixote" (with the Minkus music).

It would have been worth the visit merely to observe Nureyev walk around the stage, for he presents an idyllic combination of beguiling youth and perfectly proportioned physique. Rather slight and with a disorderly mop of chestnut hair which crowns a distinctly Slavic face, Nureyev has immense elasticity in his muscular but perfectly proportioned thighs and legs. Also, for purposes of partnering, he has deceptive strength in his slender arms and torso, enabling him to lift and carry with ease his partner, Sonia Arova—and she is of the substantial ballerina breed.

His part of the variations—which was related to the Spanish subject only through the bolero jacket he wore—provided a swift survey of agile floor work and floating air turns, leaps, pirouettes, and entrechats, as index to a virtuosity as effortless as it was eye-filling. Since the choreography was attributed to "Nureyev, after Marius Petipa," he doubtless did most of what he does best. But his brio, elegance, and discipline haven't been matched since the early days of Igor Youskevitch—who, good as he then was, couldn't match the youthful air of detachment, almost disdain, with which Nureyev surmounted difficulties. He should be seen soon again, in a role where characterization would be an added challenge for discipline.

To the credit of Arova (a Bulgarian-born dancer new here), interest was not absent when Nureyev was. Her first solo followed a boisterous demonstration for his initial exhibition, but she won honors on her own for the strength of her technique, the brilliantly executed steps on point diagonally across the stage. She also was Camille in the preceding "Traviata" in mime, with Kenneth Johnson as Armand-Alfredo.

**G**IVEN a broad enough experience of opera-going, there should be, someplace or other, a touchstone of comparison for almost any standard, or semi-standard, work of the repertory. But, for me, "almost any" is the covering clause for Ponchielli's "La Gioconda," of which the latest offering in the Metropolitan did not come any closer to a paragon than its predecessors in three decades.

For a while, in Act I, there was a prospect of something more than ordinary (though even the most optimistic would hardly hope for the extraordinary). The venerable scenery (new in  
(Continued on page 55))

## Lines Inscribed in a Volume of Henry James

Found in Coolville, Ohio

By Ernest Kroll

**J**AMES lacked the stinger of Bierce,  
Who instinctively knew where to pierce.  
Bierce, with his talent for names,  
Would have been useful to James,  
Would have riposted the quote  
Of the local critic who wrote  
On a leaf of *The Wings of the Dove*  
"This wouldn't interest a goat"  
With a quote of his own: "I concede it,  
If a goat attempted to read it."

# ATLASES REVISITED

By RICHARD EDES HARRISON, author of "Look at the World," and cartographer who specializes in topographic relief and the reviewing of atlases.

THE THREE years since we last looked at atlases (SR, March 21, 1959) have seen greater changes than in the previous decade. There are the normal revisions after a census but more significant is that the disintegration of colonialism has accelerated into its final stages. A map of Africa, showing the old line-up of colonies, is a dead giveaway unless it is in a historical atlas. Of the thirty-three atlases reviewed here in 1959 most have been revised pretty satisfactorily, and it is significant that all ten of the unrevised ones are of foreign origin. Our big domestic companies, Rand McNally and Hammond, have shown commendable zeal in completely revamping their lines so that all of their numerous hard-cover atlases are dated 1961 and include the major international changes. In Europe they are slower but we have learned that several of their atlases are now being revised, including the "Atlas Mira."

There is considerable evidence that the atlas field will continue to change actively in the next few years. At least three companies in Europe are planning to issue brand new atlases of the largest size. American publishers are angling for the U.S. rights to various European works, which, in some cases, will be re-tailored to fit our geographical and language requirements, fancied or real.

The present situation is embodied in the chart on the next two pages. As before, the listing is by no means complete but it contains most of the domestic atlases as well as a representative selection of European works. Note that there are two additional columns in the present chart: "Weight," which requires no explanation, and ★"Balance," which is, of necessity, an abbreviation for "balance of coverage," i.e., the fair allocation of space to maps on a world-wide basis. Since we are considering world atlases only, this is a most important criterion. Nations understandably allot more coverage to their own country. In Europe, where most nations are of medium or small size, this offers no great disadvantage but in the United States we tend to cover our own land at such favorable scales that the rest of the world is seriously underemphasized. This can only lead to grave misconceptions of geography. How many of our readers are aware for example that that "skinny little country," Chile, is substantially larger than Texas? Many of our atlases give a full page to Rhode Island, which is tantamount to a page for the tiny country of Luxembourg. One of our top-price atlases devotes 74 per cent of its space to the U.S. and the rest of the world is squeezed into the remaining 26 per cent.

Only one American-designed entry rates "A" on balance—the ★"Goode's World Atlas," published by Rand McNally. It is interesting that this volume, created forty years ago by a sapient old professor, follows almost exactly the same internal arrangement in its eleventh edition. I believe it is no accident that this work has shown far more durability than any of Rand McNally's other atlases with the single and rather special exception of the huge "Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide" (of which more later).

Another change occurs in the column ★"Total Pages."

Here we have subtracted the pages in the index from the cover-to-cover totals to give a more direct indication of the number of pages devoted to non-map material. The variety and extent of this is astonishing—an American phenomenon which, alas, is catching on in Europe. It seems to me that a proper—and the only desirable—atlas is one that contains an integrated collection of maps and no other material unless it contributes directly to the use and understanding of the maps. Thus, in addition to the regular front matter (title page, table of contents, foreword, etc.) and the index, one might admit a table of geographical equivalents, a two-page round-up of major world comparisons, and little else. Too many atlases today contain gazetteers, pseudo-gazetteers, photo sections, globe photos, encyclopedic sections on the nations, diagrams explaining all sorts of things from drumlins to interplanetary vehicles, and statistics unlimited.

It is well-nigh a physical impossibility to incorporate an adequate gazetteer in a household atlas. Even a smallish one like the "Macmillan World Gazetteer" has only 16,500 entries yet runs to 793 pages! Obviously, any gazetteer included in an atlas is going to be pretty skimpy. Photographs are likewise out of place in an atlas; one cannot afford the space to give a country more than a superficial sampling of views. A major feature of the "Life Pictorial Atlas" is its photographs, and yet they only average about one per country. It might be possible to do justice to San Marino or Liechtenstein with a single picture but when one tries to represent China or India with one view, the effort cannot be taken seriously. More particularly when the editor thinks the way to represent modern China is with that ineffable piece of geographical corn—the Great Chinese Wall! Statistics are also out of place in an atlas unless they consist only of simple and comparatively immutable comparisons like the lengths of rivers, or you are prepared to buy a new atlas every two or three years. There is nothing useful or attractive about out-of-date statistics, and it is much better to get them fresh from the "World Almanac." How nice it would be to have the stores carry atlases that are really atlases, gazetteers that are true gazetteers, and picture books that are really picture books, uncluttered by map sections.

