



Patterns in Pastel

LOS ANGELES.

THE ODORI Festival of Japan, on its first American tour, did not get to Broadway, but it enchanted audiences in a three-week engagement, just ended, at the Ahmanson Theater, one of three magnificent theaters in Los Angeles's breathtaking showplace, the Music Center.

With the opening *Flower-Hat Dance and Dance of the Staffs*, it was abundantly clear that the viewer was in for an evening of rich colors, in movement as well as in gorgeous costumes and fanciful props. The hats were not the floppy lawn-party variety; indeed, they were more like canopies of streamered flowers which spiraled out into space as the dancers turned, filling the stage with patterns in pastel. The staffs were used for something rather like baton-twirling and also for those delightful mock duels one finds in almost every dance folklore.

For the Odori Festival is a folk affair. There is nothing of the solemnity of the Noh, nothing of the formality of Gukaku, little of the deliberateness of the Kabuki about it. Rather, it is folk dance and folk music expertly edited and shrewdly theatricalized for the stage. There was variety, of course, for even in the first section of the program (composed of short folk songs and dances), the range of material included not only the flowered hats a-whirl but also *Devil's Sword Dance*; a spellbinding solo on the shamisen (a musical instrument unique to Japan); and one of the loveliest dances I have ever seen, the 300-year-old *Ayako-mai*, danced by three girls who moved with slow and delicate tread as they traced designs in air with the daintiest of gestures, and turned impassive faces to the audience. The accompaniment for this gentle reverie was sweetly vocal rather than instrumental.

The second part of the program was a dance-drama, *The Great Snake of Yamata*, but here again the presentation suggested a street festival with folk players. There were two snakes involved in this version, and they were both fearsome and funny as they tossed their heads and lashed their tails, coiled and uncoiled, and even got tipsy on wine. The costumes and masks for these dragon-like creatures were a show in themselves.

Part Three, *Prayer of Farmers*, was a folk festival of a different sort as the dancers and musicians indicated planting, harvesting, and celebration of yet another cycle in the yield of rice. A decorative bit in this charming suite of

dances by the fields and paddies was a dance of two white herons, long of neck, swift and graceful.

The Odori Festival of Japan is another first-rate importation by that indefatigable impresario, S. Hurok, and it is certain that these fine folk artists will return for a more extensive American tour and for a New York season.

NEARBY, in the splendid Dorothy Chandler Pavilion of the Music Center, the Los Angeles Civic Light Opera Association is presenting a new musical (really, an operetta), *Dumas and Son*, a story about Dumas père and Dumas fils, along with the tale of Camille (Saint-Saëns) as adapted by Robert Wright and George Forrest.

The lavishly produced piece, which is slated for Broadway, has choreography by Tony Charmoli. It is, frankly, incidental dancing, but it is of good quality. One of the short dances, a breezy can-can with just two girls, gets *Dumas and Son* off to a show-stopping start. It isn't merely a sassy choreographic diversion; rather does it define through dance the giddy characteristics of a pair of tarts who play important roles in the narrative itself.

The show as a whole? Well, I think I shall just hold it to what I have said about the agreeable dancing.

SANTA FE.

TWO DAYS before I arrived here, the handsome home of the Santa Fe Opera, set against mountainside and vaulting skies, burned to the ground, leaving nothing but twisted bits of steel. John Crosby, the indomitable and tremendously gifted director of the company, immediately took over the Sweeney gymnasium in a Santa Fe public school and transformed it, almost overnight, into a theater, which the proud folk of Santa Fe renamed "The Sweeney Opera House."

It was here, therefore, that Mr. Crosby presented the American premiere of Hans Werner Henze's *Boulevard Solitude*. (Balletomanes know Henze best for his rather soggy score for Sir Frederick Ashton's three-act *Ondine*, created for Dame Margot Fonteyn.) Just as *Dumas and Son* is a modern (fairly) musical comedy version of *Camille*, *Boulevard Solitude* is an updated version of the opera *Manon* (or, if you prefer, *Manon Lescaut*). There is always something of the tramp about Manon, but



The Odori Festival—
"first-rate importation."

in full, elegant skirts it did not show. In post-World War II dress, it does.

The dance public has every reason to be fascinated by this brand-new analysis of Manon, for *Boulevard Solitude* is a choreographed opera. It has no formal dancing in it as such, but Bliss Hebert, the director, has conceived it in choreographic terms and he has had Thatcher Clarke to carry out his ideas in sensual, macabre, decadent movements and rhythms and striking tableaux.

The opening scene is done in slow motion, in changes of position of the characters (we are in a French railroad station), and in those "freezes" which we associate with old, silent movies. Using the slice-of-life technique, one of the scenes shows a man reading a paper, a girl sobbing, and, as a sort of lewd façade, a trio of duos: a sailor embracing a girl, with his hand placed on her buttocks; another sailor being embraced by a girl who caresses him in the same spot; and a third sailor in an identical pose with a boy. Later in the opera, the locale shifts to a library, and here, raffish researchers turn away from their books and, again in slow motion, sink to the floor for an orgy.

This recurring chorus of salacious beings is not real—only Manon, des Grieux, Lescaut, and the chief characters are real—but it mirrors the thoughts, the temptations, the disgusts of the key figures and, in movement, comments upon them. Messrs. Hebert and Clarke have done a stunning job of staging a new and challenging theater work. It will remind you strongly of the Broadway musical *Cabaret*, and of George Balanchine's ballet version of Kurt Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins*, and very possibly of the Jooss Ballet's old-time favorite, *The Big*

City; but it will remind you only of the genre, for the choreographic treatment of *Boulevard Solitude* is wholly fresh.

VICENTE ROMERO is to Santa Fe what José Greco is to Brooklyn—that is, a native son who made good as a Spanish dancer. Romero, who is such a favorite with New Mexico audiences that he can play three of four months annually in his home state alone, was performing at one of Santa Fe's most popular night-clubs, El Nido. He is tall and lanky, rather like a Latin Buddy Ebsen, and highly personable. His supporting ensemble includes not only a Santa Fe girl but also a brilliant guitarist, René Heredia, who played for the late and fabulous Carmen Amaya, and a volcanic Spanish lass (a blonde) named Isabel, who is both a flamenco singer and a gypsy dancer and excels in both areas of endeavor. She is also a winning comedienne—a cutup, a card, a camp.

Romero, who has had Spanish dance training in Santa Fe and ballet studies and intensive coaching in Spain from Pilar Lopez (sister of Argentinita), is not an unforgettable virtuoso (neither is Greco), but he is a good performer. New York has yet to see him, but he is so respected at home that the New Mexico Arts Commission has given him grants which have made possible a tour of twelve universities and theaters in that state. This is logical, for New Mexico has three cultural heritages, that of the American Indian, that of the "Anglo," and that of the Spaniard.

EARLIER this month, the New York City Ballet's Edward Villella, together with his favorite ballerina, Patricia McBride, returned to the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival to perform an ebullient *pas de deux* from Balanchine's delicious evocation of the Commedia dell'Arte, *Harlequinade*, and to dance a new piece, *Pas de Deux*, which he had choreographed himself to music of Louis Gottschalk. The elegant costumes borrowed from Balanchine's *Jewels*, were inappropriate, but the dance itself was totally appropriate to the virtuosic powers of both Villella and Miss McBride. A frothy bit? Yes indeed, but one which showed off the young star's applause-getting skills as a leaper, a turner, and an all-round dancing athlete.

This seventh program in the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival series was not an all-Villella affair. The ravishingly beautiful Carmen de Lavallade was present to dance in John Butler's bitter and beautiful *Portrait of Billie* (Billie Holiday) and in Geoffrey Holder's radiant set of Negro spirituals, *Come Sunday*. To see Miss de Lavallade dance "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" is to catch a glimpse of heaven itself.

—WALTER TERRY.

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Fresco at Catalan Museum of Fine Arts—"regal images of the Pantocrator, great staring eyes, oracular hands. . . ."

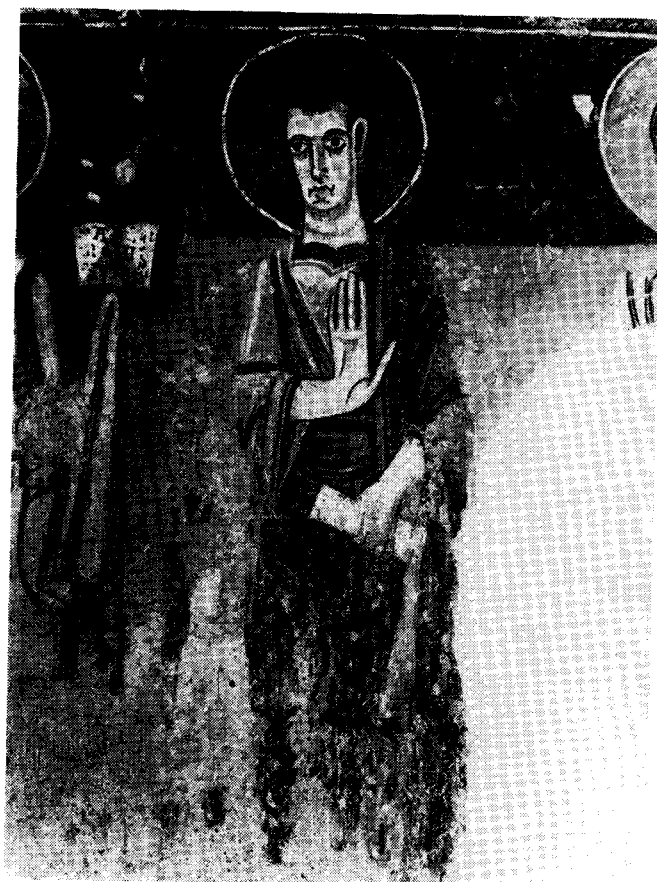


Figure of apostle—"a gutty iconography illuminated by foreboding. . . ."

THE FINE ARTS

Barcelona's Catalan Treasure House

IN BARCELONA, one rare art experience compensates for several disappointments. I refer to the city's priceless collection of medieval frescoes in the too-little-known Catalan Museum of Fine Arts.

You can skip the misnamed Modern Art Museum with its motley mess of tedious nineteenth and twentieth-century works, many of them ironically recalling Fascist Spain's archenemy, the Soviet Union. Similar restrictive attitudes toward painting and sculpture characterize both governments. At Barcelona's Modern Museum there are, it is true, several rooms devoted to a kind of stylish international abstraction that, despite bland conformity, would scarcely be acceptable in the U.S.S.R. Yet, in Spain, as in Russia, it is the unpardonable lacunae we most remember. Take Miró, who is present in Barcelona with a print, a beat-up small collage, and an unimportant watercolor sketch; or Dali, with an uninspired trio, the least dull

a portrait done when he was sixteen; or Tapies, with a single premature canvas of 1949. One can only ask, where are examples of these artists at their best and where, indeed, are Picasso, Gargallo, Juan Gris, González, and a host of other outstanding Spaniards?

As for the Picasso Museum, this is a snare and delusion. Only recently opened and handsomely housed in a fine, modernized old palace, the much advertised collection includes a few good early works, several desultory later ones, and a plethora of prints familiar to many art-conscious Americans. When the history of Franco is written, his most invidious failure may well be his rejection of Spain's foremost creative minds, notably García Lorca and Picasso. Unless a miracle transpires, the country's greatest twentieth-century artist—perhaps the world's greatest—will be represented in his native land by little more than leftovers.

Even Gaudí, that fascinating darling

of the cognoscenti, occasionally disappointed me. Like Barcelona's cavernous but oddly insensitive Gothic cathedral, this architect's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings are apt to overpower one, not so much by sheer size as by their uncontrolled exuberance. Inventive, if occasionally slightly deranged, these super-Art Nouveau constructions are sometimes successful evocations of nature's abundance, sometimes only fey suggestions of Hänsel and Gretel quaintness. Though Gaudí is a recognized pioneer in the exploration of fluid form and space, the structural clarity of his buildings is too often obscured by idiosyncratic fantasy. His own unbridled imagination seemed to taint the validity of his architectural discoveries. Not so, however, with his masterpiece, the towering, unfinished *Sacra Família*, which physically and figuratively soars above Barcelona.

All of which finally brings me to the city's unique art experience, its unexcelled