

absorbed the shock of the previous one. And he can be most outrageously entertaining when, after accepting a gift of a jar of pickled onions, he proceeds to dip into the bottle and eat one with the pretended pleasure of a gourmet savoring an eight-course dinner.

But there is also a more serious revelation promised, and if McCowen achieves this aspect of the role less powerfully than an Olivier, Gielgud, or Scofield might, his expressions of inner torment may more exactly suit the dimensions of the character. Most pitiable is his breakdown into stuttering and paroxysmic speech as he undergoes the indignity of justifying his failure-ridden past life. And although his rising anger at both the church and business establishment may not move us to tears, he does bark out a clear indictment that none of us will forget. Similarly, in the scene in which Rolfe-Hadrian visits the ecclesiastical college that twenty years earlier had expelled him, and there talks to an unhappy facsimile of his younger self, McCowen is quietly touched rather than overwhelmingly exalted by experiencing for the first time in his life a feeling of love for another human being.

The total performance may be slightly smaller than what the funeral oration delivered near the end of the play would seem to warrant, but it is nonetheless a fantastic display of acting skill. Whereas most actors would judiciously repeat a few effective gestures and grimaces, McCowen creates an infinite variety of responses. His mouth is never still as he literally tastes his way through each new situation. He avoids the mistake of pretending grandeur and keeps us continually conscious of the bitter little man underneath. Indeed, he succeeds in this so well that we come to feel that the more benignly he behaves, the more perverse he is being.

The play itself is a theatrical composite most skillfully created by Peter Luke from Rolfe's 1903 novel, *Hadrian the Seventh*, and a few details of Rolfe's biography, so thoroughly examined in A. J. A. Symons's *The Quest for Corvo*. It is interesting to note that, coincidentally, one sentence in Symons's book describing Rolfe's brief career as a schoolteacher ("He had a way of giving boys a very good opinion of themselves which made them unable to measure accurately their strength and value afterwards when they came face to face with disagreeable events in life.") could also be applied to last season's best portrayal, Zoe Caldwell as Miss Jean Brodie.

Robert Fletcher's costumes make the most of the play's opportunities to contrast Rolfe's gray, impoverished life with the bright-colored doings in and about the Holy See. And director Peter Dews and his well selected cast exploit the popular potential of a play that is catholic with a small c.

Music to My Ears

Irving Kolodin

A Fine Quartet from the U.S.S.R.

THE SOVIET UNION has sent us no organization more creditable to its musical establishment than the Borodin Quartet, now in its third tour of North America. Whoever booked them for their recent New York appearances acted with admirable impartiality. On one evening they performed in the elegant Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (on the upper East Side); on the next, in the much more plebeian assembly hall of Washington Irving High School (on the much lower East Side). Both audiences heard the same program.

What is more, both audiences discovered that the Borodin ensemble is not one which pays only nominal tribute to its namesake. It offered a very considerable novelty in choosing not the Second, celebrated Quartet in D of Borodin with which to start the evening (it is known to some as the source of "This Is My Beloved" from *Kismet*), but the preceding A-major, whose appearances on programs hereabouts are almost as rare as moon flights. It is cut from the same cloth as its successor, if not tailored quite so fine or embroidered with equal lavishness. There is a similar flow of limpid melody, adapted to the instrumental purposes with a suavity, interrelationship of parts, and layout of registers which gave Borodin pre-eminence among his Russian contemporaries in this kind of writing. Just where he might have acquired such address and proficiency is suggested by the syncopated figure murmuring behind a mellifluous lyric subject in the first movement. Schumann would have loved it; after all, he invented it.

What the able ensemble gave back in sonority, a fine blend of parts (it was difficult, without looking, to tell where the first violin left off and the second took over in one of Borodin's numerous dialogues), and a high standard of musical accuracy were self-evident reasons for the Government-bestowed designation to honor what had begun as a Conservatory ensemble. The players also showed the resourcefulness and command of means to sustain interest in the Seventh Quartet of Shostakovich and the Ninth (Op. 59, No. 3) of Beethoven.

The quartets of Russia's most distinguished living composer have no more authoritative interpreters than this ensemble, whose pioneering recordings of all eleven—the up-to-date total—have just been issued on the Melodiya/Seraphim label. The Seventh, dating from 1960, is the shortest of all, totaling a mere eleven minutes for its three uninterrupted movements. But it is a weighty trifle, inscribed to the memory of the composer's first wife, Nina, who died in 1955.

Like certain others of the eleven, the Seventh embodies a good deal more of the subsurface Shostakovich of his greatest works, and a good deal less of the superficial propagandist he has permitted himself to be in others. It is as though he utilized the private, non-"proletariat" world of four strings to convey his innermost thoughts across internal as well as external barriers to all who chose to listen. Those who listened to No. 7 as played by the Borodin Quartet heard a masterful dissertation on the art of instrumental utilization, ranging freely across contrapuntal involvements (including a fugal section, with augmentation, whose subject turned into a retrospective conclusion, a nocturnal elegy for the departed, and other allu-



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sions perhaps too personal to probe).

Its concision and lack of extraneous notes had a strong suggestion not merely of Beethoven's general practice, but specifically of the C-major Quartet that followed the intermission. For, as its devotees know, the C-major of the *Rasumovsky* set also has a fugal section, a nocturnal kind of pseudo-slow movement, a considerable concision and absence of extraneous notes.

Given the larger requirements of Beethoven, the group led by Rostislav Dubinsky showed itself capable of applying more pressure to the excellent instruments at their disposal without sacrificing either vibrance or sonority. It was not the brusque kind of hard-hitting C-major to which such an ensemble as the Germanic Busch Quartet was partial, or the throbbing, warm-blooded kind heard from the Budapest ensemble. If this suggests a less characteristic Beethoven, it did not sound so in the actuality.

Performers of *Madama Butterfly*, it is well known, come in all sizes and sounds: small and soft, large and loud, medium and mellow. Pilar Lorengar, who sang the part for the first time here at the work's only Metropolitan performance of the season, is hardly small and soft, nor is she exactly large and loud. That would suggest the medium and mellow, but typing this Spanish soprano in an Italian opera concerned with a Japanese is not easy. As an individual, rather than a type, Miss Lorengar as *Butterfly* is a performer whose lack of true physical suitability, for the eye, or aural identity, for the ear, is redressed by a great conviction about her conception and a consistent involvement, as a woman, with the emotional fervor Puccini poured into his music.

As those who have been exposed to the wide range of roles Miss Lorengar sings might agree, she is consistently the artist, much less consistently the vocalist. Taking all things together—including the somewhat worn middle-register sound she now offers—*Butterfly* lies well for her. She gets around the midrange cleverly, reserving her peak effort for the top register, which she delivers piercingly, but on pitch. Thus, for those who rate a singer's success by the flourish with which high notes are delivered, Miss Lorengar's *Butterfly* is "in" from the end of the entrance on. She met all the dramatic challenges frontally, in a practiced, professional way. Such was also the sum, as well as the substance, of Sándor Kónya's Pinkerton, the Sharpless of Mario Sereni, and Nedda Casei's Suzuki under George Schick's resourceful direction.

Carlo Maria Giulini's final program of his four-week engagement with the
(Continued on page 55)

World of Dance

Walter Terry

A Dance Adventure With Mozart

"IT BEGGED to be danced," said Michael Smuin. "I had always wanted to do a ballet to music of Mozart. So I listened to hundreds of pieces, and I was about to give up until I found this one—all youth, all innocence, begging to be danced." The music was Mozart's *Cassation No. 1 in G*, created when the composer was only thirteen, and with this "festive music which was played outside—usually in a courtyard or a garden" Smuin found his inspiration for *Gartenfest*, an instant hit when it was performed by the American Ballet Theatre during its December-into-January engagement of Festival of Dance 68-69 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

This was the second choreographic success for Smuin within less than a year. His first for the American Ballet Theatre was the rollicking *Pulcinella Variations* (Stravinsky); his second is youthful and lively, rather than antic, and it contains some of the most imaginative choreography in classical style, laced with tasteful inventions, that you are likely to find anywhere.

Each of its six movements—"Minuetto," "Allegro," "Andante," "Minuetto," "Adagio," "Finale: Allegro assai"—is enchanting. Sallie Wilson, who leads both the opening and closing sections, makes the ballet take flight with her effortless leaps, and Cynthia Gregory turns this *Fest* into a *Traum* with the loveliness of her dancing in the "Andante." But I think the new ballet reaches its combined choreographic and performing peaks in the "Allegro," a highly virtuosic, intensely virile yet elegant *pas de deux* for Ted Kivitt and Ivan Nagy, and in the "Adagio," a softly radiant *pas de trois* for Miss Gregory, Kivitt, and Nagy.

Smuin, by making use of the technical skills and highly individual characteristics of the two men, has made the "Allegro" into a contest—not just an athletic bout, but an aristocratic display of male prowess. Nagy turns to the left; Kivitt, like most American dancers, is a right turner (although he is such a virtuoso, he can turn to the left and, probably, upside down); Nagy, in his leaps, rises into the air; Kivitt thrusts his way through space. These and other individual qualities make for an unforgettable match in balletic terms.

Bringing the two back to dance with America's newest major ballerina, Miss Gregory, Smuin introduces not only changes in speed and in dynamic color-



—Photos by Martha Swope.

Michael Smuin, choreographer of the new *Gartenfest*, is also an accomplished dancer. He is shown here with his wife, Paula Tracy, in one of his earlier ballets, *The Catherine Wheel*.

ings but also the air of lyrical romance. Perhaps a hint of contest is here also, but it is one of sheer poetry.

Gartenfest is graced by superlative dancing, but it is also blessed with Jean Rosenthal's mood-sensitive lighting, delightful scenery by Jack Brown, and absolutely irresistible costumes by a newcomer to design, Marcos Paredes, who also happens to be a valuable dancer in the company. So here we are with Smuin smash No. 2. But this is not the finale



Gartenfest—Ted Kivitt, Cynthia Gregory, and Ivan Nagy (reading heads from top to bottom) in the "Adagio," "a softly radiant *pas de trois*."