

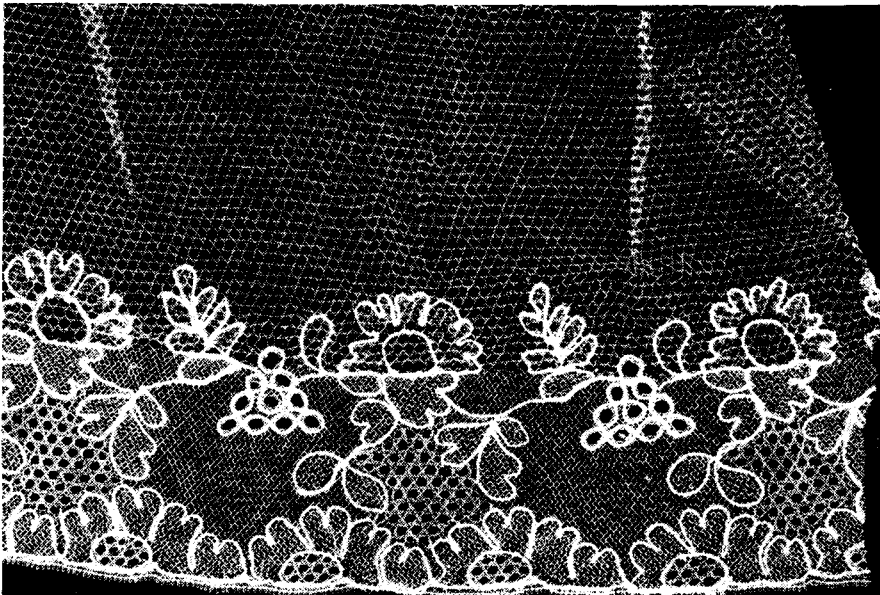
—Photographs courtesy of Da Capo Press and the George Eastman House.

The Tower of Lacock Abbey, Talbot's ancestral home in Wiltshire.



The Open Door—"a daily scene in the Dutch genre."

Lace—a negative image.



FOX TALBOT IN FACSIMILE

By MARGARET R. WEISS

Easily qualifying as a Renaissance man—with pursuits ranging from mathematics and chemistry to classical mythology, Egyptology, British folklore, and politics—William Henry Fox Talbot deplored the fact that he could not draw. Yet, it is to this missing talent that the world owes his invention of the negative-positive photographic process as we know it today.

When Talbot set out to visit Lake Como in 1833, he left London equipped with a small camera obscura to aid him in sketching the beauty of the Italian landscape. Admittedly, "the faithless pencil only left traces on the paper melancholy to behold," but the eye-appealing images the lens projected upon the paper inspired him to begin the photochemical experiments that would "cause these images to imprint themselves directly and remain fixed upon the paper." Unaware of his countryman Thomas Wedgwood's earlier unsuccessful attempts, or of Niépce's and Daguerre's accomplishments across the Channel, Talbot was able by 1839 to establish the priority of his "photogenic drawing" process, a viable system for mass printing photographs.

Talbot's technique involved making paper light-sensitive by baths of salt and silver nitrate. The sodium chloride crystals were reduced to silver on exposure to light and turned dark in color; a strong saline solution "fixed" the image. This produced a negative from which positive prints could be made on sensitized paper exposed to sunlight.

Despite a familiar complaint about "the paucity of skilled manual assistance," he set up his Talbotype Establishment. A team of three men, supervised by a member of his own Lacock Abbey household staff, printed negatives one by one, "mass-producing" about 350 prints each month. Between June 1844 and April 1846, some 8,500 of these prints were tipped into copies of *The Pencil of Nature*. For Talbot, this volume was the published record of twenty-four of his photogenic drawings—tangible evidence that the latent images made by lens and light could be transmuted into lasting impressions by photochemical methods alone. For the

world, these fragmentary but faithful-witness documents of the Lacock scene—the latticed window, a leaf, a bit of lace, a bowl of fruit, the broom idling at the door, the hayloft ladder, pieces of sculpture, a page of manuscript, a shelf of books, the Abbey tower—represented a milestone in publishing. *The Pencil of Nature* was the first book illustrated with photographs, progenitor of all future pictorial histories, art and science reference works, museum catalogues, travel and adventure photo-documentaries, archaeological research studies, and those dazzling tabletoppers that annually challenge budget and muscle during the holiday gift season.

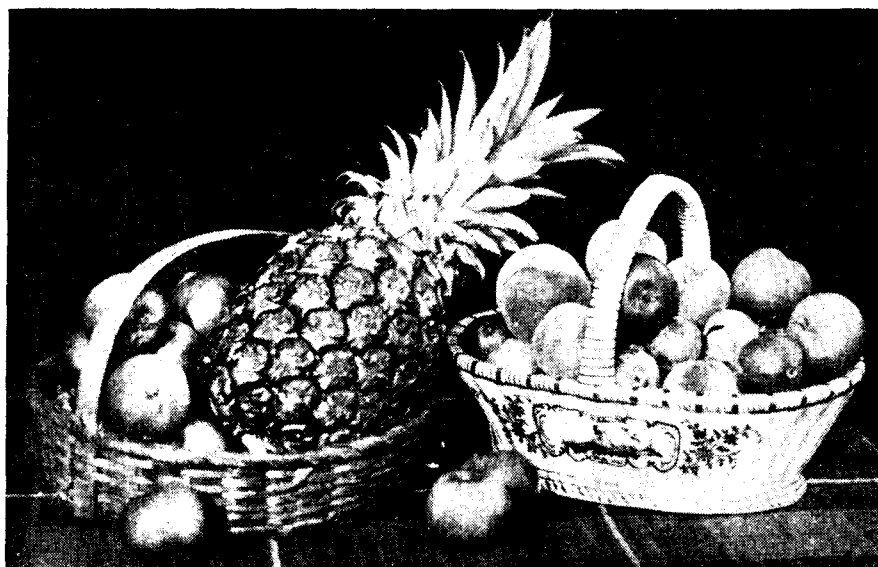
Though Talbot was visionary enough to foresee the possibility of photography by “invisible rays that lie beyond the limits of the spectrum,” he was less interested in such predictions than in detailing his day-to-day experiments and stressing the completely photographic nature of the new negative-positive process. In his “Notice to the Reader,” Talbot emphasized that “the plates of the present work are impressed by the agency of light alone, without any aid whatever from the artist’s pencil. They are the sun-pictures themselves, and not, as some persons have imagined, engravings in imitation.” And later in the text he added, “they [the plates] are impressed by Nature’s hand; and what they want as yet of delicacy and finish of execution arises chiefly from our want of sufficient knowledge of her laws. When we have learned more, by experience, respecting the formation of such pictures, they will doubtless be brought much nearer perfection; and though we may not be able to conjecture with any certainty what rank they may hereafter attain to as pictorial productions, they will surely find their own sphere of utility, both for completeness of detail and correctness of perspective.”

This was a most modest estimate of his accomplishment. Today the paper photograph’s “sphere of utility” extends to practically every facet of printed communication—from technical manual and art text to playbill and picture weekly.

Thirty-five years ago at the centenary celebration of Talbot’s first experiments, his granddaughter Matilda observed, “There is room for a good deal more to be done in getting his work better known. People do not realize how much they owe to our grandfather.” With only two dozen collector’s-item originals extant, the facsimile reissue of *The Pencil of Nature* (Da Capo Press in cooperation with Beaumont Newhall and the George Eastman House, \$35.) should help make a wider public aware of that indebtedness.



The Ladder—“absolute immobility for a few seconds.”



A Fruit Piece—“almost limitless copies possible.”

A Scene in a Library—Talbot noted effect of “invisible rays.”



World of Dance

Walter Terry

"Variations" and Variations

THE ROYAL BALLET'S gala 20th anniversary season in America has brought to the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House not only those great full-length classics (one in a new production) for which it is justly famous, but also shorter works, some of them new to us. The one which has attracted the most discussion is *Enigma Variations*, choreographed to the Elgar music by the company's director and chief choreographer, Sir Frederick Ashton.

It is without question a visually beautiful creation—Julia Trevelyan Oman's setting and costumes are incredibly lovely—and its formal relationship to the music, and to the many characters represented in the variations, is at all times pertinent, tasteful, and attractive. Where I question its theatricality is in this very *formal* use of choreography to define and really get into these "friends pictured within," as the composer describes them. Indeed, they were more like pictures than like beings. True, there were some poignant touches for Elgar's wife, bits of humor here and there, and many delightful pictorial images. In the main, however, these pictures from within were not provided, choreographically, with what Martha Graham has called "the inner landscape," where emotional ventures and adventures occur.

Miss Graham, for example, when she created her biography-in-episodes of the enigmatic poetess, Emily Dickinson, let us see two Emilys: the lady as

her New England neighbors pictured her, and the wild or foolish or funny creature who, within her own inner landscape, wrote the poems the world applauded.

Some of us found certain aspects of Antony Tudor's approach to characterization through choreography in *Enigma Variations*, but it was Tudoresque without the Tudor bite. Englishmen are not given to emotional displays, but within themselves they experience secret pulses, impulses, and compulsions, and these are what I wish Sir Frederick had probed for.

Sir Frederick himself said that he wondered whether the American public would respond to a ballet so Edwardian in concept. Audiences have responded to it warmly, but whether they have been stirred by it, I am not certain. I do know that musicians and music-lovers are profoundly impressed with it, and that the dancer and the dance-follower appreciate it, but, in many instances, are unmoved by it.

The performances of the artists in *Enigma Variations* are outstanding. Derek Rencher is perfect as the figure of Elgar, and Svetlana Beriosova as the composer's wife gives the ballet its fleeting moments of inner radiance. And the others in the big cast of principals contribute to the pictures the choreographer has outlined.

For his second new work, *Jazz Candelar*, Sir Frederick was in a jaunty as well as a jazzy mood, and the result is a theater piece which is refreshing, marvelously inventive, and loads of fun. It takes its theme from the old poem, "Monday's child is fair of face/Tuesday's child is full of grace. . . ." Its original jazz score by Richard Rodney Bennett gives Sir Frederick an enormously helpful series of musical springboards for his seven days of vaulting adventures. There are truly glorious patterns of movement for the second day—conceived as a *pas de trois*—and the "Saturday's child works hard for a living" episode is an uproarious view of the ballet studio in which six young men, under the baleful eye of the ballet master, are working hard to learn how to make a living at the hardest (physically) profession you are likely to find. This is Sir Frederick in his heartiest and most irreverent comic vein.

"Friday's child is loving and giving" is also deliciously irreverent, for the choreographer gaily twists the intent of the line into a big sex frolic of loving

and giving. And to love each other and give with style, as well as with animal energy, in positions vertical, prone, and sometimes on a racy slant, are Antoinette Sibley and, guess who, Rudolf Nureyev. And, well . . . it's a merry ballet, and sometimes very sweet, in all of its scenes, and you'll smile, laugh, and guffaw happily throughout.

The scenery, which is varied from scene to scene but yet constitutes an homogeneous setting, and the costumes by Derek Jarman are delightful.

It was the Petipa-Tchaikovsky *The Sleeping Beauty* which introduced Britain's Royal Ballet to America twenty years ago. It started a love affair between the Royal dancers and the American public which has been faithfully pursued ever since. By way of celebration, an entirely new production of the beloved old classic has been mounted with great magnificence, perhaps not entirely for us but maybe partly because of us. The settings are operatic in their richnesses and immensities, perhaps even outdoing grand opera itself at its most lavish. The transformation effects and vision scenes are skillfully wrought, and the whole is sumptuous indeed. But what would all this mean without dancing?

There is, naturally, the basic choreography of the master himself, Petipa, and this is what made *The Sleeping Beauty* an enduring dance masterpiece. Without tampering but, rather, enhancing it, a contemporary master choreographer, Ashton, has provided additional choreography which gives added zest and better pacing by replacing much of the extended mime sequences with dancing which serves plot and character even better than the quaint old gestures. There is, for example, a new and hauntingly beautiful solo for the Prince in the "Vision Scene" in Act II. But don't worry! The great "Rose Adagio" is intact, and so too are the "Blue Bird Pas de Deux," the "Grand Pas de Deux," the fairies' variations (including another one), the ensemble dances, and everything every balletomane has long loved.

Perhaps, as I did, you will find that the colors used in the costumes designed by Lila de Nobili and Rostoslav Doboujinsky blend in too blandly with the colors of Henry Bardon's scenery. (The hues seem muted and don't allow for contrast between the dancer and his background.) And perhaps you will prefer the old Carabosse in her rat-drawn carriage to the newly grounded one. But see for yourself this lavish anniversary gift from one of the world's great dance companies, composed of great dancers—the Royal Ballet has never performed better in its illustrious career—and of great, good friends.



—Mira.

Derek Rencher and Svetlana Beriosova in Ashton's "Enigma Variations"—"many delightful pictorial images."