

# DANCE

Erik Bruhn as the Undisputed Rasputin

by Walter Terry

Fort Worth, Texas

**H**ER IMPERIAL HIGHNESS the Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolayevna Romanova was present in imperious person—or was it Mrs. John Manahan of Charlottesville, Virginia? On hand also were people dressed as Czar Nicholas II, Czarina Alexandra, Prince Yussupov, Lenin, and Rasputin. The occasion for the gathering was the world premiere (following workshop presentations) of James Clouser's *Rasputin—The Holy Devil*, a three-act rock ballet starring Erik Bruhn, one of the great classical dancers of our age, and featuring the Fort Worth Ballet and Space/Dance/Theatre accompanied by St. Elmo's Fire Band. The ballet, produced in cooperation with Texas Christian University, was given in the vast Tarrant County Convention Center Theatre.

Mrs. Manahan, once known as Anna Anderson, is the author of *I Am Anastasia* and the subject of a play, a movie, a television drama, and a full-length ballet (Kenneth MacMillan's *Anastasia*, for Britain's Royal Ballet). She and her husband were flown to Fort Worth by private plane and booked into the presidential suite of the Hilton Hotel as guests of Charles Tandy, chairman of the board of Tandy Corporation, and Lewis F. Kornfeld, president of Radio Shack. Following the ballet premiere, the grand duchess was a special guest at "A Mad Russian Night," at Tandy Center.

Although the diminutive grand duchess—with carrot-red hair, regal manner, and an uncanny resemblance to photographs of the young Anastasia—was very much the center of attraction at the reception, the undisputed star of the evening, as he has been for three decades, was Bruhn.

*Rasputin* represented a major departure in technique and style for Bruhn, who earned international fame as the finest premier danseur noble of our era during his long years of association with the Royal Danish Ballet, the American Ballet Theatre, and other major ballet troupes. At fifty, and following a three-year period of near incapacitation because of back problems, Bruhn's virtuoso days are behind him. In recent seasons therefore, he has brought his unique skills to such mime roles as old Dr. Coppélius in *Coppélia*, Madge the witch in the Danish *La Sylphide*, and the title part in Fokine's *Pe-*



Buddy Myers

*trouchka*. He has also begun to explore the modern dance field in works by the late José Limón (*The Moor's Pavane*, with the American Ballet Theatre, and *Missa Brevis*, with the José Limón Dance Company)—much as his celebrated junior colleague and good friend Rudolf Nureyev has done in works by Martha Graham and Murray Louis.

As far as the rock *Rasputin* is concerned, Bruhn says, "I feel perfectly natural in the movements Jim Clouser gave me. I don't feel out of place nor does the style seem like alien territory. I found that I could do all the movements—and they were difficult and exhausting!—except for lifts, and that was because of my bad back. But we didn't need to do lifts anyway. Rasputin wasn't the lifting sort. He embraced everyone just as he embraced life itself.

"I wouldn't have been interested in the role if it had been an updating of old-style ballets, with dance-step, act, act, act, dance-step, act some more, and so on. But Jim conceived the acting and the action in terms of dance movement:

seamless. Also, I was fascinated with his concept of Rasputin. I believe as Jim does that Rasputin wasn't all evil, that his carnal side was not a sin but a manifestation of life. After all, the lust for life is carnal as well as physical."

In *Rasputin—The Holy Devil*, Bruhn is required to make full use of his still remarkable physical skills—in multiple pirouettes; leaps; leg extensions; falls; and monumental, majestic gestures—and to expend almost shocking explosions of energy in the dramatization of an incredible lust for life that defied bullets, beatings, poisoning, drowning.

At the opening performance, the Grand Duchess Anastasia-Mrs. Manahan saw an interpretation of the events leading to the Russian Revolution that depicted her father, Czar Nicholas II, as a benevolent monarch who was close to his people; her mother, the Czarina Alexandra, as a mother not only to an ailing son but to the Russian peasants; Prince Yussupov as the symbol of a decadent aristocracy that separated the imperial family from

the people; Lenin as the Marxist who changed peasants into revolutionaries in order to destroy the aristocracy; and Rasputin as the mystic who united body and soul, the spiritual and the carnal, heaven and earth, royalty and proletariat in a massive life communion that was celebrated in a vast religio-sexual experience.

The ballet incorporates and even melds a wide variety of dance techniques. In the Yussupov Charade, the Imperial Ballet appears in the most elegant and classical steps that juxtapose the ballet pointe with the flexed foot of the peasant folk dancer. In Rasputin's Charade, the monk is assisted by a corps of carnal angels who shed their diaphanous robes deliberately or tear them off in ecstasy. Here Bruhn achieves a remarkable dual image as a genuflection becomes an amorous bending over a "fallen angel," a benediction turns into an embrace, and a victim is somehow transformed into a willing celebrant.

*Rasputin* has its flaws, chiefly those of obscure meanings, but there is immense power in its very roughness and a curiously cathartic passion in its crudities. There are delicious bits of ironic humor—such as the set of rock lyrics accompanying the final assassination attempts on the monk, when a singularly pure voice sings, "Don't take this personally."

Whether or not *Rasputin*—*The Holy Devil* remains in Bruhn's repertory, it has represented a milestone in his career. He says that the only mime roles he will continue to do in traditional ballets are Coppelius and Madge. "I feel I can continue to grow in these parts, but I'm not interested in any of the other old ballets. I love dancing, and I want to go on dancing for the rest of my life if I can find the roles. Jim gave me the kind I want in *Rasputin*, and he has another ballet in mind for me. I also feel that the Limón repertory is very suitable for me right now."

At the post-premiere party, all eyes were focused on Anastasia. The curious drew as close to her (as she sat in a throne-like chair) as they dared. Was she or wasn't she? The whisper went softly around the lavish reception room. Then the guest of honor entered. He remained standing of course. There were no whispers. The greeting of the select guests, as had the standing ovation of an entire audience earlier in the evening, made it quite clear that all knew they were in the presence of a genuine Prince of Ballet, Erik Bruhn, who is one of the great dancers of our age, standing on the threshold of a new career. ●

## Bohemia The protoculture then and now

by Richard Miller

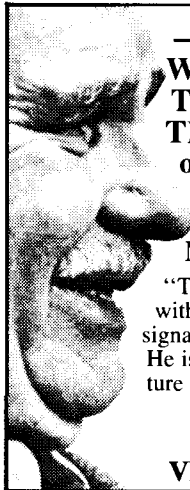
*Bohemia* is the first and only book to record and interpret the philosophical, moral, and social foundations that underlie and dictate the goals of the youth movement worldwide.

AT YOUR BOOKSELLER \$14.95 hardcover  
\$ 7.95 paperback



Nelson Hall

325 W. Jackson, Chicago 60606



## —AND I WORKED AT THE WRITER'S TRADE Chapters of Literary History, 1918–1978

by  
Malcolm Cowley

"There is not a page here without the watermark and signature of intelligence . . . He is still a hero of the culture we breathe."

—JOHN LEONARD,  
*The New York Times*

VIKING

\$12.50



GARRY  
WILLS

## examines Jefferson's Declaration of Independence— and ours.

The author of *Nixon Agonistes* and *Bare Ruined Choirs* cuts through the past century's pious regard for the Declaration as a "symbolic" document to show what was new and important in Jefferson's original draft. "It all adds up to a uniquely fresh and readable interpretation of America's basic manifesto?"

—*Publishers Weekly*. \$10.00

## INVENTING AMERICA

DOUBLEDAY



## We'll take frightfully good care of you in Africa.

Whether you prefer tracking gorillas, basking on the golden beaches of the Seychelles, photographing the locals of the Masai-Mara (lions, rhinos, gazelle and wildebeest) or taking the Hemingwayesque route in your own private plane—British Airways can show you quite a wild time.

Take our Explorer safari, for instance. For a most appealing land price of \$695 per person,\* you can experience Africa—bush to beach—for 16 days.

Or our Wings Over Africa for a 16-day land price of \$2,250 per person.\* With your own professional guide, private twin-engine plane and pilot, you can make your own laws of the jungle.

But you must call your Travel Agent to find out about all of our British Airways safaris. Whether you're the adventurous, the romantic, the environmentalist—or simply curious—we've a safari to suit you.

\*Price includes meals, accommodations, all transfers and fees. Air fare is additional. Safaris available from New York, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

British Airways, Box 457, Dept. 168-230

Fresh Meadows, New York 11365

Telephone: (212) 687-1600

Dear Mr. Morley: Please send me the "Holidays in Africa" brochure.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

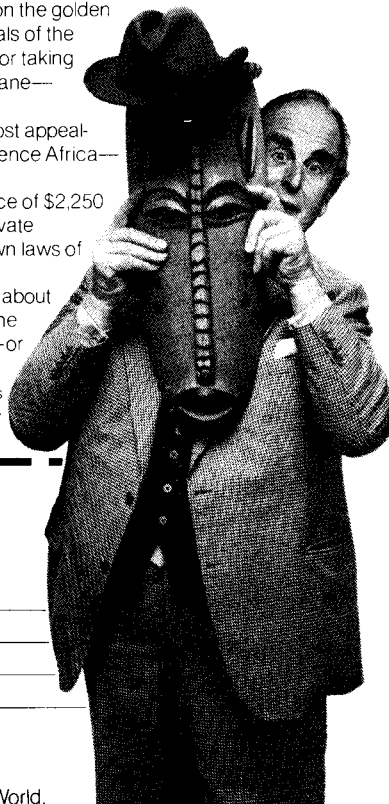
Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

My Travel Agent is \_\_\_\_\_

## British airways

We'll take good care of you to Britain, Africa, The World.



## SATURDAY REVIEW: BOOKS

# Madness in the Deep

### **Altered States**

by Paddy Chayefsky

Harper & Row, 192 pp., \$8.95

### **The Scientist:**

#### **A Novel Autobiography**

by John C. Lilly, M.D.

Lippincott, 256 pp., \$10

Reviewed by Alan Harrington

**ecstasy.** *n* ... 1. State of being beside oneself ... beyond all reason and self-control. ... 2. Hence: *a Obs.* A swoon or trance. *b* A state of overmastering feeling, esp. joy; rapture of delight. *c* Violent distraction; madness.... 3. In mystical language, a psychological state in which intense mental absorption in divine things is accompanied by loss [sic!] of sense perception and voluntary control. ... 4. *Med.* A morbid [!] condition of the nervous system marked by mental exaltation, suspension of voluntary motion, and depression of the vital actions....

—*Webster's New International Dictionary*, Unabridged, Second Edition, 1953

**T**HE WEBSTER people couldn't have imagined 25 years ago that mystical experience—once the business of holy men and women; religious hysterics; Hindus meditating in remote caves; witch doctors; artists crazed by neglect, grief, loneliness, starvation, or sleepless nights; and legions of certified lunatics—would shortly become commonplace. But that's exactly what happened in the late 1950s, when such mind-altering compounds as LSD-25, mescaline, and psilocybin made ecstatic voyages available to millions.

Now we have an astonishing development—a combining of drug-induced ecstasy with the scientific method. That is, ecstasy employed as a research tool—reputable scientists making use

of carefully programmed visionary trips inside their own head; if you will, self-induced, voluntary madness as a means to discovery; ecstasy as a new discipline. Various drugs serve here as essential additives. The medium that leads the scientists to their desired visions or hallucinations—take your pick—is a “natural” one: sensory deprivation. The experimenter is immersed—initially without drugs, then perhaps tripping out on 300 micrograms of LSD—for hours on end in the black, tepid (93° F) water of an isolation tank.

The stunning discoveries that emerge from this deliberately induced derangement of consciousness are the subject of two remarkable books: *Altered States*, Paddy Chayefsky's first novel, and *The Scientist*, Dr. John Lilly's “novel autobiography.” They might well be read one after the other, beginning with Chayefsky's fiction in order to prepare the way for Lilly's revelations, which many readers, despite the high order of his credentials, are going to find beyond belief.

Floating in blackness and drugged as well, Chayefsky's obsessed, visionary researcher, Dr. Eddie Jessup, and John Lilly, his own protagonist, report on their travels backward and forward in time. Selected herbs of madness help Jessup return to primeval, Jungian depths. He reexperiences—or, say, regresses in hallucination to—not only his own birth and coming to consciousness but also his prehistoric identity, the ape state, a scene of primeval earthquakes and the doomlike crack of dawning time. Lilly travels forward to A.D. 3001 and, it appears, sideways too in space-time to converse with a trio of remote “Beings” who see him as their agent on earth and who guide his destiny.

Now recall Lilly's pioneering work in communicating with dolphins and his eminence as a neurophysiologist, biophysicist, and psychoanalyst when you hear his psychiatrist, Robert, ask:

“So you are becoming aware that you tend to split into human being and extraterrestrial Being?”

Lilly: “Yes, I now immediately think of all sorts of psychiatric diagnoses of such states ... hypnotic regression and splitting ... psychotic episodes....”

Robert: “[But] your internal reality rejects psychiatric and psychoanalytic explanations for what has been happening to you....”

Lilly: “Yes. There seems to be something inadequate in these ready clinical explanations... this seems beyond anything that is explainable by my present knowledge of science, psychoanalysis, and psychiatry. Somehow, something is going on that surpasses our present framework of thinking and explaining.”

In their rigorously managed travels into our race's Collective Unconscious (Jung's concept, long since accepted by both writers), Chayefsky's psychophysicist, Eddie Jessup, and Lilly have to be viewed, and reviewed, as pilgrims of a new kind. They are wired to elaborate EEG and EKG equipment. Their progress is monitored by colleagues every moment of the way. They shout, moan, laugh, and cry out in wonder. Their tape-recorded voices from the isolation tank tell of blissful, monstrous, and horrifying encounters.

Our questions must be, How is one to judge the validity of such voyages? Are they merely hallucinations? If we believe they are, how can we account for their sources? Where in the world can these shockingly clear evolutionary reenactments be coming from? As Lilly puts it, does the brain contain the mind,