

# NEW BALLET BY CLIFFORD

The biggest new concerning the New York City Ballet's season is that there is a season. By the time John Clifford's new ballet made its first appearance on Dec. 4, the company looked as though it had recovered from its loss of rehearsal time. If you will recall the dark days of November, management decided to discontinue rehearsals because of an impending strike. Through good will and probably in reaction to the example of a neighbor, the Metropolitan Opera, the orchestra agreed to play without a contract, while the ballet scurried into rehearsal and performance simultaneously. A little crazy and hectic, but what good fortune.

Clifford's new ballet is called *Reveries*, to four movements of Tchaikovsky's *Suite No. 1*. I think of it as two ballets of two movements each, distinct from each other not only in tempo and mood but in choreographic worth. It is only when allegro of the last two sections begin that the ballet becomes successful.

The first section, for the large part is the most daringly conceived in its evocation of nocturnal melancholy. I admire Clifford's decision to use only bourees and ports de bras and then switch suddenly to spinning turns and diagonal runs. But the movements do not filter into the atmosphere, filling the stage with mystery or poetry. It remains a shell of an environment, and with such suggestive designs, one becomes painfully aware of intent unfulfilled.

## MUSIC PLAYING IN MY HEAD

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Sail on silver girl,  
Sail on by.  
Your time has come to shine.  
All your dreams are on their way.  
See how they shine.

If you need a friend  
I'm sailing right behind.  
Like a bridge over troubled water,  
I will ease your mind.  
Like a bridge over troubled water,  
I will ease your mind. \*

I suppose I could tell you how I argue with myself that the lyrics really aren't that good, but it's a losing battle. I can't even convince myself. This is a holy song, one that is meant to be heard with someone who means something to you. Play it and just look around. I really wish we could all hear this together sometime; it is one of rock's most supremely magical moments.

Come together, right now, over me.

\*1969 - Paul Simon

The same is true, though less so, of the romantic second movement, essentially a pas de deux for Johanna Kirkland and Conrad Ludlow. Those high, soaring lifts, which are so lovely at first, need juxtaposed movements to make them special, romantic. The pas de deux suffers from a self-complacency with its prettiness and, although it contains appealing movements, it does not build to a climax.

The last two movements, which introduce a delightful Gelsey Kirkland, are compact, clean, and crisp. I especially admire the way Clifford built his finale so quickly and unassumingly, but with impact. The entire cast was on the stage doing "finale" movements before you knew it, with the preparation unfolding before your eyes but somehow before you fully realized what was happening. Clifford surprised us without pulling the wool over our eyes.

In terms of Clifford's choreographic career to date, the allegro sections showed a new control. There were plenty of steps to the beat, originality, and variation without that frantic thrust so evident in *Stravinsky Symphony* and *Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs*. Clifford finds allegro most congenial. I now should begin to invest the adagio character.

While Clifford's choreography was most assured in the Marche Militaire of *Reveries*, Gelsey Kirkland's piquancy in turn helped Clifford to shine. The interesting point about this dancer is that her

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## ECLIPSE CAUSES BLINDNESS

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welders' glasses are no guarantee.  
Five seconds is all it takes.  
The process is painless.  
The retina isn't sensitive to pain, so this form of sunburn doesn't hurt.

The victim will notice a blank spot in his field of vision. That's where the sun used to be. The victim isn't worried. He thinks it will go away.

Most of the time, it doesn't.

The blank is in the area that we use for reading.

All right, so the smoked glass you used as a child isn't safe...so you were just lucky...so you don't want your children taking a chance.

So how do they look at this eclipse that everybody's so excited about?

The only one safe way...is by using the pinhole in a cardboard method, the Society for Prevention of Blindness warns.

Start looking for cardboard boxes now. The demand is going to be fierce.

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## FIGARO PLOT

In "Figaro" the scene is from Act. I. Susanna and Figaro, who are soon to be married, are trying to outwit his employer, Count Almaviva, and the designs that he has on Susanna. Almaviva recently married Marcellina, Susanna's mistress; but that does not bother him, though it does Marcellina.

In the scene she and Susanna have an amusing, typically feminine exchange. Other players in the scene are the mischievous, amorous young Cherubino and Don Basilio, a music teacher.

The singers in this engaging, light-hearted work were Ellen McLain, Susanna; Elizabeth Herrick, Marcellina; Lynda Smith, Cherubino; John Cheek, Figaro; Neal Schwantes, Count Almaviva; and David Perry, Don Basilio.

Figaro again is a central character in the Act Two and Three sequences from the "Barber."

Here he is acting as intermediary between Rosina and his friend Count Almaviva.

The singers were Lunda Austin as Rosina in the Act II duet and Aria, Marise Ettesen as Rosina in the Act III quintette, Johnny Williams as Figaro in the duet and aria, Neal Schwantes as Figaro in the quintette, Donald Cranfill as Bartolo, John Cheek as Don Basilio and Virgil Lonergan as Count Almaviva.

The Chabrier work recounts the story of a count who has been tutored in everything except how to conduct his wedding night.

Don Litaker was the count, Kay Lowe, the bride, and Johnny Williams the tutor.

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bubbly qualities and youthful spring have a mature cast. She is not a soubrette; indeed, she brought a new dignity, and fatalism to "Dances At A Gathering." So, I thought, did Karin von Aroldinzen in the first part of "Liebeslieder Walzer", though she has still to find the combination of simplicity and largesse needed for the final movement of Episodes. Other moments of new beauty, promised or full-blown, this season: Kay Mazzo's Adagio in "Symphony in C," Susan Hendl in the corps of "Episodes", Verdy's and Villedella's solos in "Dances at a Gathering", and McBrides softer lines in everything.