

DANCE AT THE COMMON- WEALTH ARTS FESTIVAL

Fernau Hall

Drawings by Eilean Pearcey



The Commonwealth Arts Festival, held in London and a number of other big cities in Britain in September-October 1965, was an enormous success—so much so that in retrospect it seems very odd that it had never happened before. Since the Commonwealth depends for its effectiveness on the mutual understanding and respect of its members, one would have expected events like this to have become regular institutions long ago and to have been organised by some Commonwealth body. In fact, however, the Festival owed its inception to the imagination of one man—Ian Hunter—and it was he who organized it, though of course he had a good deal of financial and other assistance from Commonwealth governments. His years of experience in running the Edinburgh Festival were of great importance : he realized, for example, the necessity of visiting each country and finding out for himself the best artists and companies to bring to Britain (if the choice is left to government committees, the result can be depressingly tame). In this way he was able to maintain a remarkably high standard, apart from a few unfortunate lapses ; in fact the Festival was a thundering success, and it now looks as if it will be repeated at three-year intervals, each time in a different part of the Commonwealth—a splendid idea.

To avoid language problems, Ian Hunter very properly concentrated on arts in which language was not all-important : the visual arts, film, music and the dance ; and, as it turned out, dance was the art which dominated the festival, bringing in the widest variety of countries, showing them at their most creative, and incorporating their oldest and richest traditions.

In the programme of the “Great Dance Gala” which began the Festival, Ian Hunter explained his ideas :

“Arts Festivals without a strong artistic purpose are of little point, and I was determined that full advantage should be taken of the unique opportunity offered by the Commonwealth Festival to present for the first time to the world, arts of so many of its great and ancient cultures. I decided, therefore, that the theme of the Festival should centre on contrast : contrast of artistic expression of the various cultures contained in the Commonwealth, stressing the different ways in which different people express, through the arts, the same basic emotions or ideas—for instance—ceremony, love, death, the seasons.”

These contrasts were very evident in the Great Dance Gala, which brought together dances and music from Ceylon, many countries of



Africa, the West Indies and the United Kingdom. The idea of the gala proved to have a very wide appeal : though it was given at the enormous Royal Albert Hall, all seats were sold out, and hundreds were turned away from almost all performances.

Classical dancing was represented by a number of Ceylon's finest Kandyan dancers and drummers. In harmony with the aims of the Festival, the producer of the Sinhalese section (S. Pani Bharatha) selected for his main dance item a Vannama which began with the imitation of animal movement : *Gajaga Vannama*, showing the walk of an elephant. Here the links between Kandyan and the Kathakali of Kerala, only a few hundred miles away, were very obvious : the slow stately steps had a similar rhythm to Kathakali's elephant gait, and the arms indicated the trunk of the elephant in a similar way. Soon, however, the long line of dancers changed to pure-dance patterns, with outflung angular arm movements something like those of Kathakali, but with their own special type of nobility, and tossing movements of the head which made the great silver head-dresses, shimmer. One serious mistake of the producer was to make the dancers perform in a line spread across the

centre of the arena, facing North : this meant that less than one-third of the spectators could see the steps from the front, whereas he could easily have used several different "fronts". Fortunately the other main Kandyan item—an item involving ten drum-dancers and five different types of drum—was spread out in a semi-circle, and looked magnificent as well as sounding magnificent, with the loud powerful rhythmic patterns being taken up by each pair of drummers in turn.

The most varied and effective of the many African contributions came from the West African state of Sierra Leone. Though this country has a relatively small population (2½ million) the producer, John Akar, assembled dancers from fifteen different tribes, and presented an amazing variety of dances ; many were originally performed by secret societies, and were based on rituals of fertility, birth, marriage and death. The very first entrance established an atmosphere of mystery and propitiation, with four dancers in great masks moving round the stage—"spirit devils" of the Mende tribe. One wore a grass costume that was like a tent, with a small highly stylized mask at an odd angle near the top, and moved with much the same stately and strangely frightening undulation as the Padstow Hobby Horse of Cornwall (whose ritual function must originally have been much the same). Very different in style and atmosphere were the dances of the slender and elegant maidens, with their rapid oscillations of the shoulders and their relaxed spontaneous gestures of the arms. These dances had the gay innocent eroticism typical of much of the best African dancing, and showed just how idiotic was the decision of the London authorities, to force these bare-breasted maidens to wear brassieres when they danced in Trafalgar Square. (The Sierra Leoneans insisted that this was the traditional costume of their country, and though prudery triumphed in Trafalgar Square it was not allowed to spoil the dancing at the Albert Hall or on television). Still another type of Sierra Leonean dance was *Bundu Kali*, in which the men imitated baboons, though transposing the baboon movements into choreographic terms, as happens in all good folk-dances of animal inspiration ; their leaps were particularly effective, the men soaring into the air with acrobatic ease and perfect rhythm.

It is possible to recognize some common characteristics in almost all African dances : everywhere there is the same stress on powerful and complex drum rhythms, and everywhere one finds dancing at the very centre of culture : as in ancient India, it is the mother of the arts. But in East Africa, thousands of miles from the West coast, one finds dances very different in style and technique from those of the West—and this was certainly true of the dances of Uganda, performed by the "Heart

Beat of Africa" troupe produced by Miles Lee. The men concentrated on pounding out rhythms with their feet, emphasising the beats with rattling seeds bound around their legs; the women moved their hips with a very quick up-and-down oscillation that linked them with the Arab belly-dances of North Africa—in some mysterious way they were able to combine this fast oscillation with a quite independent slow rhythm of stepping.

This woman's dance, *Endongo*, originally danced at the Kabaka's palace, and now danced by professionals at weddings and other festivities, was selected by the BBC for recording and transmission as part of a programme in which many aspects of African, Latin American, North American and English dancing were discussed by a sociologist, Frances Rust, and myself. Mrs. Rust showed how differences in the institution of slavery in Latin America and in North America brought about great differences in the development of African dances in those two cultural areas: in Latin America the slaves were allowed to retain some of their culture, and there was continuity in dancing and music, while in North America there was almost a complete break leading to the creation of jazz. My theme was an explanation of the links between African dances, the professional style known as jazz dancing which has grown up in the United States in the last two decades (and is now the standard form in a good deal of theatrical and television dancing in the United States and in Britain), and the "beat" dancing which is now common among young people all over the Western world. In fact jazz dancing was given its present shape mainly by one American teacher and choreographer, Jack Cole, who had been trained in Bharata Natyam and had been much influenced by it; other influences were American modern dance, and movements from a variety of African dances. As for the "beat" dancing of the teenagers of today this has links with jazz dancing (for some of the new "beat" dances are created by professionals) and resemblances to West African dancing are astonishingly close: some of the movements performed by the men and women from Sierra Leone at the Albert Hall would have looked perfectly in place at one of London's teen-age discotheque clubs.

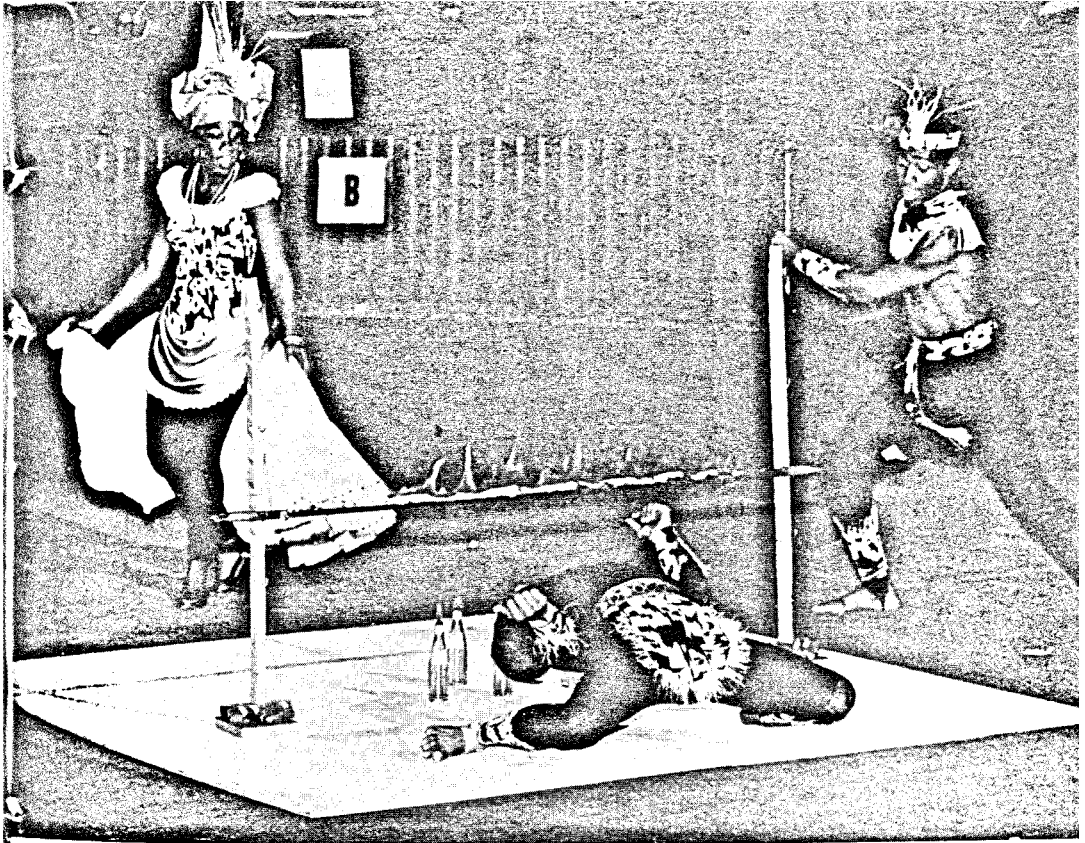
Possibly the oldest of the dances performed at the Albert Hall was a mysterious ritual dance, the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance, which has many equivalents among the dances of primitive people—including the tribal peoples of India—and may go back to the Old Stone Age. This was a simple processional dance of men carrying deer-horns in front of their faces; but it had an archaic magical quality which emerged even in the sophisticated surroundings of the Albert Hall.

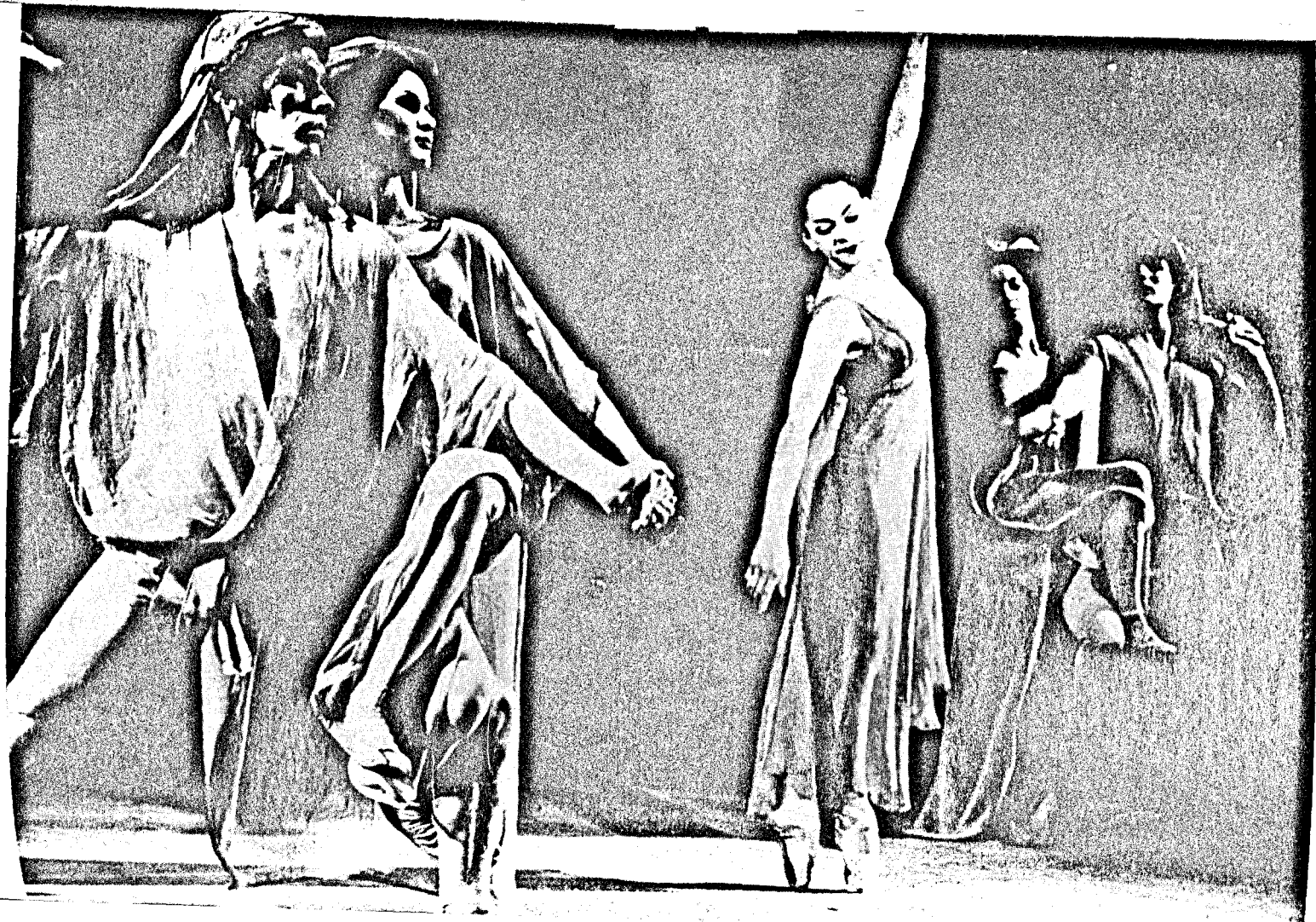


Photographs : P 49 1 Ballerina, Australian Ballet Company. 2 Yamini Krishnamurti. P 50 Sierra Leone Dancers P 51 Limbo Dancers, Trinidad 2. Kandyan Drum Dancers. P 52 "Yugen", Australian Ballet Company.











By far the most exciting of the solos was a Trinidadian Limbo dance performed by Winston Beharry, who leaned his body further and further back until he was able to pass it under a very low bar without letting his head or arms touch the floor. This could easily have been just a display of virtuosity and suppleness, but Winston Beharry showed such grace and rhythmic vitality that it became something very much more. In Trinidad there is a fascinating fusion of cultures—African, Indian, Spanish, Latin-American and English—and elements of all of them could be seen in Limbo and heard in its steel-drum music.

Unfortunately Trinidad also sent the one item which spoiled the atmosphere of the gala and made nonsense of its artistic ideals: an “Indian Temple Dance”, by two young Trinidadian men of Indian parentage, which was to the last degree phoney, having nothing to do with Indian temple dancing—apart from a few clumsy attempts at fragments of Bharata Natyam *adavus*—and was clearly inspired by the worst type of Indian film dancing and music. It was sad that, since the gala contained no authentic item from India, this item must have given tens of thousands of people a completely false notion of Indian classical dancing.

In fact Ian Hunter had planned, in collaboration with Indian experts, to bring to the West, for the first time ever, a Kathakali troupe; and its performances should have been the centre-piece of the Festival. Other great Eastern styles of dance-drama are known in the West—in particular Kabuki and Noh from Japan, Pekin “opera” from China, and Thai dance-drama from Thailand; and glimpses of Kathakali have been given in London by great exponents of both the Cochin and Travancore schools; but nothing like a complete Kathakali dance-drama, performed with a full complement of traditional Kathakali dancers, drummers and singers, has been seen in the West, and the news of the coming visit of the Kathakali troupe aroused great interest in Britain. In India, every care was taken to make sure that the performances would be of the highest standard, worthy of the ancient traditions of Indian *natya*: the selected artists rehearsed together for months, and Rukmini Devi was given the task (for which, with her wide experience of the Western theatre, she was well suited) of ensuring that the programmes would be suited to British theatres and British audiences.

Unfortunately the outbreak of hostilities on the borders caused someone in India to cancel, at the very last minute, the journey to London of the Kathakali artists. This impulsive decision had regrettable consequences: it meant that India, whose traditions of dance and dance-drama are older and richer than those of any other country,

had nothing to represent these traditions at the Festival—and those who had bought tickets for the Kathakali troupe seemed due for a bitter disappointment. In this emergency Ram Gopal improvised a programme consisting of some of his own items, Bhangra dances by a group of Punjabi folk-dancers, and a variety of dances by Yamini Krishnamurti, who had just finished giving some recitals at the Commonwealth Institute Theatre.

This programme faced Yamini Krishnamurti with one of the greatest challenges of her career. The Scala Theatre—a great barn of an opera-house made sense as the venue of Kathakali dance-drama, but it was the very last place one would choose for a solo dancer; and whereas her audiences at the Commonwealth Institute included quite a number who were familiar with Indian classical dancing (as a result of visits by Shanta, Sitara, Damyanti Joshi, Kumudini, Indrani, Ritha, Kamala, Balasaraswati and others) most of those who came to the Scala were part of the mass audience attracted by the Festival—people who would never in ordinary circumstances have gone to see anything exotic.

Fortunately Yamini Krishnamurti was well equipped to face this challenge. Unlike a number of dancers who have come to the fore in India in the last two decades, she had mastered the art of projection, something which is very familiar to India's great traditional dancers (who inherit it as a birthright from generations of performers) but something from which most Indian middle-class dancers are debarred by a modern prudery which runs counter to all the great Indian classical traditions. (This problem is by no means unique to India: English Ballet is plagued by exactly the same conflict between the rather cold correctness which is inculcated in schools and the requirements of the stage, where breadth of movement, warmth of feeling and powerful dramatic expression are needed.)

Another aspect of her dancing which helped her to hold the audience was the remarkable (and very unusual) balance she maintained between the different aspects of her dancing—a balance which clearly owed a good deal to the fact that she had had extensive training in both the main styles of Bharata Natyam. (In fact she united the strong, clean-cut line of the Pandanallur school and the powerful rhythms and strong *abhinaya* of the Conjeevaram school—and added to these further aspects of expressive spontaneity learned from one of the last of the devadasis, Gauri Amma.) Bharata Natyam is a very complex and sophisticated style, one which unites a masculine *tandava* aspect and a feminine *lasya* aspect in much the same way as the classical Ballet technique of the

West ; both may be thought of as masculine styles (demanding great strength and stamina) taken over and further developed by women, who have learned to interpret the movements in a graceful, feminine way without watering down the technique. This particular harmony opposites, characteristic of both Ballet and Bharata Natyam, seemed to appeal very strongly to Yamini Krishnamurti : in fact the more exacting the technical feats demanded of her, the more easy, graceful, spontaneous and feminine she became. In *abhinaya* she seemed to be slightly put off by the fact that this type of dramatic expression, though making great demands on the artist in some ways, is technically relatively easy; indeed, her *mudras* and facial expressions were a fraction too meticulous, too clean-cut, almost as if she were giving a child's guide to *abhinaya*. But when, in a Varnam, she moved on to *nritya*, combining dramatic expression with complex foot-rhythms, she seemed completely happy and relaxed, achieving this very difficult combination with a marvellous ease and assurance. It was the same in her Natanam Adinar, which was very largely *nritya* : here she revelled in the *tandava* aspect of Siva ; and she was no less impressive in *nritya* in *Usani Swarajati*, launching herself on a long chain of *thirumanams* in various rhythms against a song in *tisram jathi*. As she went on, she projected more and more joie de vivre, becoming fresher and making her movements sparkle even more ravishingly as the demands on her stamina mounted up. Unfortunately she had been given the very mistaken advice to keep each item short, and so she stopped half-way through this sequence, when she was clearly just getting into her stride. The fact is that when a dancer lacks personality and fails to project, 10 minutes is too long for a dance in Britain; but a number of great Indian artists (including Balasarawati) have shown that, in Britain as in India, a fine artist in good form can make an item last as long as she wants to, sweeping the audience along with her.

Yamini Krishnamurti was also very effective in a Thillana, which she made admirably flirtatious, while giving full value to a wide variety of arm and foot patterns. In *navarasa* she showed herself outstanding in certain of the *rasas*—above all moods of mockery (in which she was devastating) and of heroism ; but this extremely dynamic artist clearly found it hard to subdue herself to the devotional simplicity of *santi*.

Since Yamini Krishnamurti is a pioneer in the revival of the solo aspect of Kuchipudi, one waited with keen expectation to see what she would make of this style ; and she more than lived up to expectations. In *Krisana Shabda* she revealed a new world of dance, giving perfect

expression to the fascinating Kuchipudi idea of the *sringara rasa*. This Gopi, calling to Krishna's grandson to come to her, was impudent, brash, and coquettish, trying every trick in the book—including an outrageously provocative pretence at maidenly modesty. For this combination of moods the semi-classical Kuchipudi style, with its quick lilting steps and relatively naturalistic facial expressions, is perfectly suited; and Yamini Krishnamurti made so much of each step, gesture, twist of the mouth and flash of the eyes that it was hard, to imagine any one else tackling the dance. Such an item, showing an outstanding artist at her most individual and creative, gains in impact each time one sees it—and this artist showed her complete command of the choreography by changing it slightly at each performance. The Scala audiences were overwhelmed by it, and rewarded its interpreter with ovations.

The first of the ballet companies to appear was the Royal Winnipeg Ballet; founded 26 years ago, it is one of the oldest and best of the professional ballet companies in North America, and is accustomed to tour very widely in Canada and the United States. Under the leadership of Arnold Spohr, it has a very distinct style of its own, and shines best in strong dramatic works. Its artists were seen at good advantage in *The Bitter Weird*, by one of the finest American choreographers, Agnes de Mille. Like all de Mille ballets, this one was unequal, and showed certain faults of construction; in fact she made things difficult for herself by taking the music from *Brigadoon* (her musical in Scottish style) and setting to it a new story of a girl courted by two men. As in the musical, she used Highland Scottish steps with great sympathy and understanding, adding to them appropriate ballet steps, and adapting them very ingeniously to the demands of her dramatic story. Canada is a country with very strong Scottish traditions, and the Canadian dancers of the company did splendid justice to the Scottish dance-movements as well as to the dramatic action; but outstanding performances were also given by the soloists—Beatrice Cordua from Germany and James Clouser and Richard Rutherford from the United States. These same dancers, together with the very promising young Winnipeg dancer, Bill Martin-Viscount, did all that was possible with a rather tame little comedy ballet *The Comedians*, filling out their roles inventively. Unfortunately the repertoire was weighed down with some banal and clumsy ballets by the Canadian choreographer Brian Macdonald; his best work came, very unexpectedly, at the end of *Aimes-Vous Bach*, when he had the dancers perform in jazz-dance style to the music of Bach; here they were splendidly alive, and the combination worked oddly well.

The other Canadian dance company was less impressive : Les Feux Follets, a French-Canadian folk-dance group. This company performed items which varied in quality in the most astonishing and infuriating way. On the one hand, they performed Yugoslav, Scottish and Irish items quite well, with due attention to authenticity of steps, style of movement, music, costumes and so on ; the Scottish item was particularly well done, with choreography by two experts and even a bag-piper to play the music ; the Yugoslav kolos were not quite so authentic (the women danced on their toes instead of on the foot in the proper way) but they were reasonably good. On the other hand, the director of the company (Michel Cartier) staged three items purporting to represent dances of the ancient peoples of Canada—Plains Indians, Pacific Coast Indians and Eskimos—which were quite as phoney as the “Indian Temple Dance” from Trinidad, including hardly a single authentic step or melody. It was intolerable that a company calling itself “Canada’s National Folk-Dance Ensemble” should show no respect for the remarkably artistic achievements of these peoples : the Kwakiutl, in particular, are such great artists that one of their painted wooden Thunderbird figures was included in the central section of the “Treasures of the Commonwealth” exhibition at the Royal Academy alongside a great 7th century Buddha from India and a reclining figure by a man generally regarded as the greatest living sculptor—Henry Moore. The dance masks of the Kwakiutl are on a par with the rest of their sculpture, and it was very depressing to see them adorning some dancing that might have belonged in a night-club.

Some years ago the Indians of the Pacific Cost showed what could be achieved in reviving ancient traditions by staging a dance-drama *Tzimquaw* ; and much the same thing was done by the Yorubans of Western Nigeria in their “folk-opera” *Oba-Kosi*, one of the most interesting of the works shown at the Commonwealth Festival. In fact this work was astonishingly close to the Japanese Kabuki drama in its synthesis of dancing, singing, stylized speech and mime, as well as in its sophisticated ceremonial and its gorgeous costumes. In its use of drumming *Oba-Kosi* was very close to Kathakali : four wonderful drummers, standing on the stage, accompanied the whole action, and when it became very tense they moved close to it, so that their powerful rhythms could project it to the audience even more powerfully. The Yorubans had a rich culture before this was destroyed by the slave trade, and much of this was evident in *Oba-Kosi*, written and produced by Dura Ladipo : the formality of the ceremonies at the king’s court was impressive, so was the wit with which these ceremonies were mocked

by the magnificently robed townspeople, and so were the semi-abstract backcloths based on old Yoruban traditions. The story, concerning a great king, rival generals and witch-craft, would have done equally well for a Kabuki play, a Pekin "opera", a Shakespeare play or a Verdi opera; Dura Ladjo was a tremendously impressive figure as the King, seeming to stand about ten feet tall, and Tijani Lawal danced with characteristically Yoruban fire and exuberance as one of the generals.

It was very interesting to see certain West African traditions of dancing and drumming made use of in the items presented by the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica, directed by two Jamaicans with African forbears—Rex Nettlefold and Eddy Thomas. These tackled with great energy the task of making a synthesis of the widely different cultural strands which have gone into the making of modern Jamaica—and in their choreography one could see a mixture of movements from Jamaican folk-dances, Latin-American dances, ballet and American modern dance. Both directors are highly intelligent and complement each other admirably—Rex Nettlefold was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, while Eddy Thomas trained with Martha Graham in New York—and the most striking thing about the programmes of their company was the high quality and wide variety of the stories of their ballets: legends of Africa, life in slavery times in Jamaica, comedies of modern life in Jamaica, the Ras Tafari cult (a search for the Promised Land), French West Indian dances, a modern triangular love-theme that might have been used by Martha Graham, and so on. The actual choreography was not equal to the expression of the more ambitious themes, and the technique of most of the dancers fell far below that of the best of them; but the spirit of the company was very attractive and its future is bright.

The Australian Ballet's performances at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden showed it to be in some ways very like the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and in some ways quite unlike. In contrast to the Canadian company, the Australian company was less than three years old; but it was able to draw on the services of a number of fine dancers who had been with a previous Australian company or with European companies; and if at times it seemed like a daughter company of the Royal Ballet, this was not surprising, for its two artistic directors (Peggy van Praugh and Robert Helpmann) had both worked for many years as leading members of the Royal Ballet. Like the Canadian company, the Australian Ballet had dancers who were better than the ballets in which they appeared, and one longed to see the Australians showing their

mettle in at least one ballet by a great choreographer ; for the Commonwealth Festival, however the director naturally concentrated on home-grown works. The most interesting of the Australian ballets was *Yugen*, which showed a praiseworthy attempt to draw strength from Japanese traditions : as Robert Helpmann (himself of Australian origin) stated in the programme, "I have choreographed this work in the belief that this young company should draw on the legends, music and cultures that are their neighbours, just as the English Ballet has drawn on the countries of Europe".

The designer, Desmond Heeley, showed the great possibilities of such a cultural cross-breeding. He had clearly studied Japanese art, architecture and stage design with real understanding, and created a stage world of translucent grey rectangles which was full of the spirit of Zen ; his costumes, too, were subtle variations on Japanese themes. The ballet had the same story as a Noh play, but this story was used by Helpmann in a way totally foreign to Noh traditions—in fact as the basis for a series of divertissements. His choreography was at its best in Scene 1, when he adapted Japanese folk-dance patterns with some skill, and at its worst in Scene 2, when he arranged a long and boring series of fan dances (which demand specialized skills one cannot expect from ballet dancers).

The most disappointing of the Australian ballets was *The Display*, in which Helpmann tried to make the courting display of the lyre-bird into a symbol which would add an extra layer of significance to a very melodramatic ballet about young Australians on a picnic. The ballet began with a long naturalists imitation of the display of a lyre-bird by a man with an enormous feathered tail strapped to his back ; this picked up a rather regrettable tradition established by the Kathakali dancer Gopinath for use with Kathakali's peacock dance ; in contrast to Gopinath and his imitators, however, Helpmann did not translate the bird's movements into dancing, and the result was totally lacking in poetry, being in fact rather embarrassing to watch.

One very important achievement of the Festival was the interchange of ideas which it fostered. Directors and choreographers of one company could see how problems similar to their own were being tackled in other countries ; and in London they were able to make contact with the very important work being done at the Institute of Choreology with the help of Benesh Dance Notation—the first really precise and economic movement notation, whose use has transformed the methods of work of companies like the Royal Ballet and the Australian Ballet, and now seems

likely to be equally valuable to companies like the National Dance Theatre of Jamaica in collecting and preserving traditional material. The significance for India is equally clear, in folk dance and in classical dance : here choreology can make a great contribution to the scientific study and preservation of India's great heritage ; in fact Rudolf Benesh (director of the Institute) is so well aware of the international significance of this heritage that he has included Indian classical dance styles among the main subjects taught to student-choreologists, alongside ballet, modern dance, mime, folk-dances, historical dances, composition, art and music.

A short while after the Festival ended an Indian company there arrived in London—a company which might well have been one of the dance-sensations of the Festival. This was the Rajasthani puppet troupe of the Bharatiya Lok Kalamandal, presented by its founder-director, Devi Lal Samar. Invited to London by three of Britain's leading puppeteers, this troupe gave two performances en route from the Third International Puppet Festival in Bucharest to a tour on the Continent.

Samar presented a programme admirably suited to an audience which could not understand Hindi : an entertainment given at the court of Shah Jehan. The fascinating thing about this scene was that *all* the puppets danced, including the snake-charmer's cobra and the two acrobatic camels of the Jaisalmer cavalry, each ridden (with delightful incongruity) by a woman and child. No less fascinating was the special quality of ease and spontaneity given to the dancing by the ancient and highly virtuosic Rajasthani technique of manipulation with a maximum of five strings, and often less : the control exercised by the operators was almost incredible exceeding anything I have ever seen before with marionettes (string-puppets.) The fact is that the absence of legs and feet from puppets representing humans was a great advantage : not needing to worry about the great complexities of foot-movements, the puppeteers were able to concentrate on subtlety and vitality of the movements of the head, trunk and arms—and foot movements were suggested in the most extraordinarily convincing way by the movements of the hips, the swish of the skirts and the sound of the ankle-bells.

It was a joy to see the playfully satirical way in which the characteristic movements of Nautch singer-dancers, Marwari folk-dancers and gypsy dancers were translated into puppet-movements : with their shoulder-shaking, pirouetting, hip-swinging, backward-bending, skirt-waving voluptuousness and exuberance, these puppet dancers were very like the real thing, and yet true to their own puppet natures—unlike Petrushka (a puppet who wanted to be a man), they were clearly very

happy as they were, and acknowledged the enthusiastic applause of the audience with a proper combination of humility and self-respect. Another delightful dance, based on the entertainments given by Bahurupias (who change roles with lightning speed), showed a man dancing a duet with a female partner who kept disconcerting him by doing a somersault and changing into a bearded man. In this gay, witty and fantastic world it seemed perfectly right for camels to dance, with appropriate splay-footed awkwardness, and for the horses of battling Rajput swordsmen to join in the fight. In fact the whole show had the variety, humour, charm and spontaneity which are characteristic of the ancient traditions of Rajasthani puppetry—traditions which Samar has preserved and revived with outstanding tact and understanding.

The audience included many British puppeteers—including some who had come from long distances—and it was well able to appreciate the unique and marvellous quality of this performance. The item which perhaps aroused the greatest enthusiasm was a dance by two stilt-dancers: one of them was much more skilled than the other, moving his stilts in double-time and even doing acrobatics on them—much to the discomfiture of his less expert rival.

Two days later Samar presented at International Student Home an even more astonishing show, in which after the interval two of the artists (Dayaram and Tularam) showed how Rajasthani puppeteers are in fact versatile entertainers, with several strings to their bows. Together the two performed a cymbal dance in which they swung small cymbals on the end of lengths of string, so that these clashed in perfect rhythm on cymbals attached to their bodies; and one of them, balancing no less than six glasses and six saucers on his head, performed Kathak foot-beats—showing a virtuosity equivalent to that of his puppet-handling, though of course rather more obvious. This dance made a bridge between folk-art and classical art, as did the Nautch dancing of one of the puppets, and showed how the professional skill demanded by the two kinds of art can be of the same order.

Fernau Hall is a leading authority on ballet and his essays and critiques have appeared in several outstanding English papers and journals. He is also the author of an important work on ballet, "Anatomy of Ballet". He is one of the few scholars in the West who have made an intimate study of the Indian Dance. He tele-broadcasts on the dance.