

# World of Dance

Walter Terry



—Photos by Ron Protas

"As the adored Diva, she is beautiful . . . radiant . . . desirable."

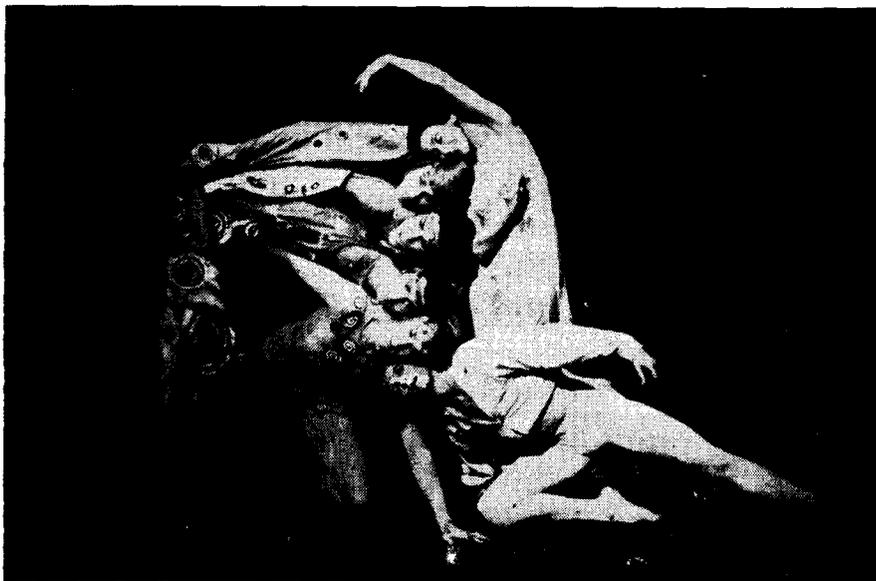
## Fonteyn: Ecstasy

FOR MANY, aging is not a very happy condition. Not everyone can accept it with the wry grace of Ninon de l'Enclos, who is imagined, by Dorothy Parker in a poem about the famous courtesan's last birthday, as having said to her mirror, "The dear young men, the sweet young men, they think I'm only seventy." The stage performer probably finds aging more irksome than the average person does, and of all stage artists, the dancer, depending en-

tirely upon his body, finds it the most frustrating of all experiences.

Martha Graham is on record as having said, "I hate age!" Ted Shawn, founder-director of the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, embraced an old friend he had not seen for a long time and said, "Albia, how the hell did I get to be eighty? Inside, I still feel like nineteen." Margot Fonteyn, for a quarter of a century, has been the most famous teen-ager in all ballet, Princess Aurora, the sixteen-year-old heroine of the Petipa-Tchaikovsky classic *The Sleep-*

Margot Fonteyn in the Stuttgart Ballet's "Poème de l'Extase" with "remembered" lovers—Jan Stripling, Richard Cragun, Bernd Berg, Heinz Clauss—and the final suitor, Egon Madsen.

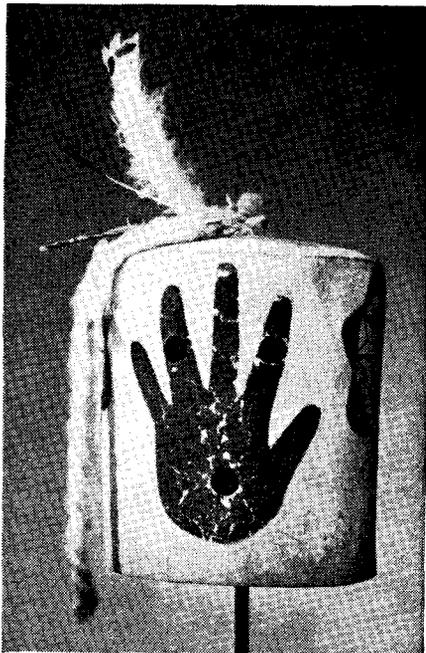


ing Beauty. But Dame Margot of Britain's Royal Ballet is now in her fifties, and she is not at all interested in being an aging Aurora but, rather, a maturing artist.

John Cranko, the brilliant director-choreographer of the Stuttgart Ballet, created *Poème de l'Extase* (to the music of the same name by Scriabin plus Sonata No. 9, orchestrated by Wolfgang Fortner) for Fonteyn in the spring of 1970 in Stuttgart. In this summer of 1971, Dame Margot, as guest, danced it here in New York with the Stuttgart during the German company's return to the Metropolitan Opera House (following an earlier Met season and tour). In it, she plays a Diva, of fifty or thereabouts, who is ardently wooed by a Young Man. She is amused, touched, interested, curious, and, finally, deeply concerned. To help her make a decision about the new and boyish contender for her affections, she summons up images of four major lovers in her life. She relives moments with each. At the end, she makes a decision. The boy-suitor is rejected, and she stands alone with her anguished memories.

*Poème de l'Extase* is not a great ballet. I'm not even certain that it is a good ballet. But it is a great vehicle for the maturing art of Fonteyn. As Alan Beale, ballet master of the Stuttgart Ballet, says succinctly, "It works." It does. And Dame Margot is divine. The ending itself, with Fonteyn alone on stage and touching her face with lonely hands, is a moment never to be forgotten. Is it dance? Is it acting? Whatever it is, it is consummate artistry in the revelation of the inner being.

Jürgen Rose's costumes and great billowing, multihued, stage-high scarves (inspired by Gustav Klimt) seem to combine fantasy with delicious decadence, and the Lovers—Egon Madsen as the final impetuous one and Jan Stripling, Bernd Berg, Heinz Clauss, and Richard Cragun as the remembered amours—are superb. But it is Dame Margot's ballet. As the adored Diva, she is beautiful, she is radiant, she is tormented, she is desirable. Fonteyn's body, with its faultless contours, is still Princess Aurora. In *Poème* Dame Margot does not appear as an aging ballerina but as a performer giving us one more example—Odette-Odile, Giselle, Ondine, Sylvia, Marguerite—that her art has come of age. What theater treasures lie ahead for her—and for us! I'd love to see her as Phaedra (a role that fascinates her), as Blanche in Valerie Bettis's ballet *A Streetcar Named Desire*, perhaps as Theodora of Byzantium (a circus performer who came to rule an empire), or as any of a number of women who have changed the course of history as Fonteyn herself has done with her glorious images in dance.



Zuñi mask, Brooklyn Museum, New York.

## The First Americans as Artists

Memories and questions about  
the priceless heritage of  
American Indian arts and crafts

by KATHARINE KUH

A FORTHCOMING book\* on a subject of inimitable vitality set up a chain reaction in me. First came weariness at the thought of another primer-like survey that adds little to a field not yet fully explored. But then, slowly, as I leafed through its copious illustrations of Indian arts and crafts, buried memories and old questions took over.

Vivid remembrances surfaced for me, fanned by an extraordinary shot of a Klukwan community-house interior decorated with magnificently carved wall screen and house posts. In the foreground, elaborately outfitted Chilkat Indians pose proudly with other ritual objects, notably bentwood boxes and a giant potlatch vessel large enough to double as a dugout canoe. Years ago—in 1940, to be exact—I traveled from Juneau to the tiny Alaskan village of Klukwan via mail boat and government truck. Once arrived, I found a settlement of no more than a hundred Indians living primitively on a river jumping with salmon and surrounded by mountain scenery of indescribable grandeur.

In retrospect, I am still awed by the quantity and quality of art in that remote Alaskan town. Precisely because it was remote, the Indians there retained animistic clan beliefs and periodically used the masks, rattles, bowls, blankets, and many-tiered hats that

had earlier been created for ritual ceremonies, some of which at that time were already banned by our government. I stayed in Klukwan five days, living with a native family and waiting to see a hoard of magnificent painted, carved, and woven objects that were stashed away in the home of an ancient chief, who was hesitant about receiving me. Though the accommodations were hardly first-class, life in Klukwan was endlessly interesting. One evening, I discovered a neglected cemetery where several stone carvings (a rare sight in Alaska) of bear and porcupine likenesses were almost obliterated by dense northern growth. Because that same day I had witnessed a porcupine hunt interrupted frequently by marauding bears, I found the totemic creatures in the graveyard peculiarly relevant. It was clear why animals had assumed transcendental meaning in Alaska, for, only a brief thirty years ago, they were still an integral part of Chilkat life and still provided daily challenges.

I was finally received by the chief, but only because I learned he was a member of the Wolf clan and immediately sent word to him that my maiden name was Woolf. "Welcome, daughter," was his greeting, and to this day I am not sure whether it was guileless or ironic. From trunks and bentwood boxes, from under beds and dark corners, this debilitated old man in the last stages of tuberculosis dragged out a fabulous assortment of ritual objects, all of them connected with a hierarchy of animistic beings who protected, di-

rected, menaced, and enriched the life of his people. As to craftsmanship, this small community was celebrated for a refinement rarely equaled in our country. Today, most of its splendid objects have been lost, chiefly to fire. Klukwan is now all but deserted, its younger people off in a more progressive world.

As I continued to thumb through the book's illustrations, I found myself wondering why American Indians were so preoccupied with the idea of the isolated human hand as a symbol and questioned whether this image meant more than meets the eye. The symbol appears repeatedly from Yucatan to Alaska. Feder's book, which, by the way, deals only with Indian art of the United States, includes a variety of detached painted and carved hands created by the Winnebagos of Nebraska, the Prairie Potawatomi of Kansas, the Zuñis, the Osages, and the Eskimos. These short-hand condensations no doubt symbolized man much as a procession of paws represented bear. Modern painters, especially Miró and Klee, exploited the same device and in addition borrowed widely from primitive art.

That Northwest Coast Indian art technically and conceptually outstripped that of all other tribes in the United States is undeniable. The Tlingit and Haida produced wood carvings that at times can hold their own with the sculpture of Pre-Columbian Latin America, which is, to be sure, considerably better preserved, if only because it was made of stone. Alaskan and Mayan images have unexpected affini-

\**American Indian Art* by Norman Feder (to be published in November by Harry N. Abrams, Inc.)