

Joffrey Ballet plays to a full house

By CORINNE ABATT

If there is any single bit of proof that the metropolitan Detroit area is fast becoming a major audience for the arts, it's dance.

The Detroit Symphony delightedly announced that all seven performances of the Joffrey Ballet were sell-outs. Music Hall Center, too, has had excellent response for its expanded dance programs this season.

The Joffrey pays its dues to achieve the sell-outs. Last year's "Romeo and Juliet" to the music of Prokofiev was absolutely incredible — the kind to remember for many years, the kind you could see for three nights' running and still not tire of.

The Joffrey has any number of good things going for it — a fine corps of super-energetic, skilled dancers, exciting choreographers and excellent program balance.

THE OPENING night program this year illustrates the kind of work that not only tests the dancers, but avoids killing monotony and keeps the audience interested at a peak.

The program opened with "Trinity," with music by Alan Rapp and Lee Holridge and choreography by Gerald Arpino. It is in three parts: Sunday, Summerland and Saturday. The predominant music is rock, late-1960s variety, intense, pulsating, done with amps by a large segment of the Detroit Symphony.

During the middle part of the ballet, the mood changed dramatically as the Boychoir of Christ Church of Bozette sang very early liturgical music and the pace of the dance went from high energy to sensitive, sensual ritual.

The third part of the ballet is a return to the powerful, energy of rock. It is expected that choreography will

showcase the women of a ballet company. But there was a time when the male dancers, leading dancers excepted, were largely intended to support the women. Not so with Joffrey. For one thing, this isn't a star oriented company. Each dancer is featured many times, a total group effort. And all male dancers are beautifully showcased, not as just male dancers, either, but as virile, powerful, exciting athletes. And, incidentally, few, if any athletic endeavors, are more demanding of physical excellence than this type of dance.

THIS, MOST CERTAINLY, is one of the reasons for Joffrey's wide appeal. Yet, all of this athletic prowess is kept within the framework of art rather than athletics. It is a balance that is always controlled, beautiful to watch without being pretty.

"Monotones II," music by Eric Satie,

choreography by Frederick Ashton, is a total study in control, both mental and physical. Three dancers, Darrell Barnett, Charlene Gehm and Dennis Poole, dressed in simple white jumpsuit type costumes with white head coverings, performed the demanding pure-of-form choreography with great delicacy. This piece seems to isolate dance from the world around it, taking each movement and showing it as in individual work of art. Because the music's tempo is leisurely it was orchestrated by Debussy, the demand for excellence is all the more apparent.

The effect was something like looking at an uncut, but faceted diamond on a plain background — you can see all of its beauty and all of its flaws. There were few, if any, flaws here.

"A Wedding Bouquet" was the production number of the opening performance. For those who expect at least one piece in a ballet program

with elaborate costumes, sets and story line, this was the answer.

The story, from a poem by Gertrude Stein, was narrated by Christian Holder as the debonair raconteur who is seated in evening dress at a small table in the corner of the stage leisurely drinking champagne. Holder reads as well as he dances and Stein's lines are not the easiest to handle.

THE STORY of a couple about to be married is set in a French village. Before the ballet concludes, one former mistress of the groom has been rather harshly cast aside and several others end up in the wedding party.

Music, narration, costumes, story and choreography all combine to make this a charming piece almost of the operetta ilk. However, it is something less than a showpiece for pure dance. In this one, the dancers are closer to actors.

The final program selection was "Suite Saint-Seans" and here the choreography was more in the classical mode. Arpino did the choreography for Saint-Seans' music. The lighting by Thomas Skilton, soft, gentle, at times almost apaisant, but with striking clarity.

In the "Minuet" Lisa Headley and Patricia Miller were both outstanding. Ms. Headley dances like a butterfly which has just emerged from a cocoon, delighted to be born able to fly, overjoyed at being alive. Ms. Headley takes some charming liberties with the classical style. Her hands and smile as well as her whole body convey her excitement with her art form. This is true of the whole company, not only do they communicate their pleasure in what they are doing to each other with smiles and eye contact, it comes right through to the audience.

Room for Design



by Gloria Cohen

Labels, cost won't insure good taste

Last week, I touched upon the subject of developing good taste. I promised to follow through more elaborately on the elements that comprise the art of acquiring good taste.

It's not a subject you can learn in school. Nor is it something you can buy. You can't borrow it from a neighbor or friend or inherit it.

You may find yourself in a store surrounded with tasteful items and still not know just how to coordinate and select the pieces that will complement each other.

Everyone has certain likes and dislikes — colors and styles they prefer to live with. Somewhat like picking your friends, you select those that complement your personality and make you feel comfortable. There may be certain people with whom you desire to spend as much time as possible, with others an hour is too long.

There are furnishings that you see in stores and showrooms or in other people's homes and though they may be attractive, you know you couldn't live with them. The way you choose to dress may be totally different from today's fashion or trends. But if it suits your personality regardless of current styles, you are expressing individuality.

However, there are some exceptions. For example, you may not want to wear a large hat if you are rather short. If you are a redhead, you might decide to stay away from bright orange.

There are elements and principles of design which play an important part in a room that is planned tastefully. Develop the habit of careful and constant observation. Wherever you go, notice light and shadow, shape and texture, pattern and color, and colors that complement each other.

LOOK FOR BALANCE, scale and proportion, rhythm and emphasis. Examine rooms that appeal to you and observe how certain principles of design have been applied. Ask questions. Study the home furnishings magazines and see how certain techniques have been applied.

Remember fashion isn't a good criterion of design. Fashion in home furnishings may soon become outdated. It's important, therefore, to learn to discriminate between fad and an enduring design.

Whether you are buying a dish, a chair, or a house, keep in mind that good taste isn't determined by cost. Ultimately, taste is a sense of what is appropriate to your way of life. By surrounding yourself with the things that are compatible to your particular way of living, you express taste.

The success of your decorating depends upon the way you blend the ingredients that have been chosen with your home and family in mind.

I recall a friend whom I met with frequently. I was always impressed with the way she was "put together" — impeccably dressed, well coordinated and always stylish.

I was certain that if she wore her clothes inside out, I would see nothing but the most exclusive designer's labels. She looked like a million dollars, yet I knew she was on a very moderate budget. One day I couldn't keep from asking her where she shopped and what her secret was.

WHAT SHE CONFIDED TO ME was a procedure I had long employed in the design business. I had simply not thought to apply the same camouflage to clothing. She would select a very well-made suit of exceptional quality and design. That was her basic ingredient. She would then take herself to the bargain basement and co-ordinate the blouse. The accessories — scarf, gloves, and belt — might have been found at a dime store. The handbag and hat may have come from a department store sale counter, yet she emanated style and good taste.

The same principle may be applied to home furnishings. Invest more in the furnishings you will "use up." The carpeting, floor covering and furniture are basics like my friend's suit. But who is to know the origin of your accessories? You can buy items from ads in the paper or spend a fortune on imports.

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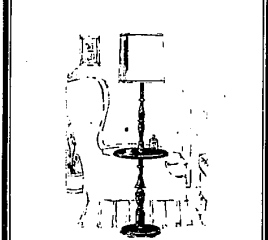
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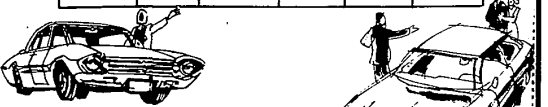
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