

A DAVID BALLET IN LONDON

Successful Premiere at Duke of York's Theatre



WORLD FAMOUS CONDUCTOR TO VISIT PALESTINE

Arturo Toscanini to Open First Season of New Symphony Orchestra

New York, February 26th.

ARTURO TOSCANINI, the world-famous orchestral conductor, has accepted an invitation to conduct the opening concert of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra on October 24, it was announced to-day by Bronislaw Hubermann, the famous violinist who organised the orchestra.

Mr. Toscanini has cancelled all American engagements except three and will not return to New York next season, in order to be able to fulfil this engagement in Palestine. In addition to the opening concert he will conduct several others.

In announcing the maestro's acceptance of the invitation to conduct in Palestine, Mr. Hubermann declared that his acceptance "constituted a historical mark both in the struggle against Nazism and the up-building of Palestine."

Mr. Toscanini has on several occasions manifested his deep sympathy for the Jews in connection with their persecution by Germany and has expressed his sense of outrage at discriminations against musicians in Germany for political and racial reasons.

In April, 1933, he attracted international attention by his telegram of protest addressed directly to Hitler, and he rejected an invitation to conduct at the Bayreuth Wagner Festival in protest against Nazi discriminations.

ONE of the most dramatic sections of the Bible has provided the idea for the ballet which, under the title "David," recently saw its first performance at the Duke of York's Theatre, London. Six episodes from David's life are used for the attempt to reproduce choreographically striking scenes from Jewish history. David as a shepherd, as a warrior, as a poet, as a lover and finally as a king and priest, these are the stages through which the entire action and, in a deeper sense, the development of David as a spiritual personality, are running along their course. In the entire scheme of the ballet, David is not treated merely as a Biblical figure, but as a brilliant example for the entire people of Israel.

The happenings, which abound in dramatic force, are dissolved into dance and pantomime and only at one point the lyrical factor is emphasized by singing behind the scenes. The choreographic style alternates between classical ballet, individual dancing, remindful of certain positions in old Egyptian reliefs, and moving chorusses which especially in the crowded scene of the last picture (dance of David and of the whole people in front of the Ark of the Covenant) rise to an apotheosis of overwhelming effectiveness. The stage decorations by Meninsky support the entire dramatic happenings with such force of expression, such plastic manner of representation and such brilliancy in the colours of the costumes as are frequently almost blinding the eye. The symbolism of the action could not have been better illustrated than by the colossal columns and walls and the phantastically shaped hills and mountains of an imaginary Bible landscape. The stage curtain specially painted for this ballet by Jacob Epstein, the famous Jewish sculptor, and his first attempt in the field of scenography, is a conception congenial to the ethos of the David legend and introduced the action just like a painted overture.

MAURICE JACOBSON'S music does not aspire to be anything else than a supporting illustration and at most points it satisfied these pretences. Only in scenes of the forcefulness of the dance in front of the Ark of the Covenant it is lacking in the grandiosity such picture may demand from the music. Melodies of sacred character flavouring of Roman Catholic masses are out of place for such scenes where the Jewish element ought to have formed an integral part of the music. That element, however, appears only sporadically in an orchestration mainly inspired by Strauss' "Salome" and Bizet's "Carmen" and finds expression in certain melismatic movements, and most distinctly in the Hebrew song which seems to be based on the so-called "tonus Peregrinus" from Gregorian incantation. Otherwise the usual orientalisms in rhythm and instrumentation have been cleverly woven into the eclectic character of the music.

The performance was eclipsed by the wonderful art of Anton Dolin, the actor and dancer of the title-part. Even externally a more ideal interpreter could not have been found. His choreographic achievement, quite apart from the purely physical strain of a performance lasting more than an hour—can hardly be surpassed. Next to him Keith Lester who took the part of Saul and who was responsible for the choreography, attracted particular attention. The spontaneous applause after every scene which at the end of the performance rose to storms of enthusiasm, is a very good omen for the future.

The English Press as a whole gave the "David" ballet a very favourable reception, and it may be mentioned in conclusion that, with very few exceptions, all performers were Jews.

—Dr. M. Carner in "Juedische Rundschau."

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