"ETONNE-MOI"

said Diaghilev

Leotards are properly functional, no doubt, and T-shirts and tights are all very well in their own sweaty way, but, despite the extra purities of bodily movement they may help to convey, and with due allowances for the stringent economy ballet has to practise in, it seems unlikely that they will be treasured in tissue and affectionately inscribed to whomsoever is the Cyril Beaumont of our times. After all, Diaghilev was usually in far worse a mess financially than any of our modern choreographers and impressarios, but just look at the costumes *he* commissioned and the people he commissioned them from. . . .

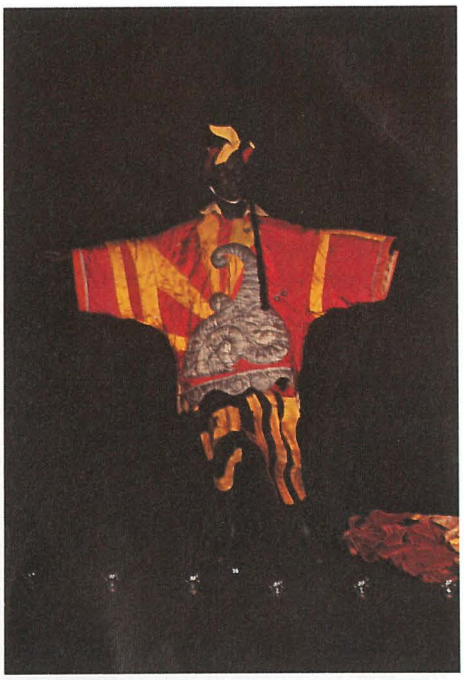
The exhibition of Dance costumes of three centuries (called 'Parade'), put on as part of the Edinburgh Festival by the Theatre Museum of the V & A reminds us poignantly of just how glamorous ballets used to look. Curiously the effects of sheer visual delight might not have been recaptured half as well had not Alexander Schouvaloff, who planned the exhibition, John Paterson, who designed its staging, and Philip Dyer, who displayed the costumes themselves, taken the very fullest advantage of that very modern box of tricks, the microprocessor.

'It's all very well to peer at collections of ordinary day-clothes in a dimly lit museum,' Alexander Schouvaloff says 'but our costumes – by Bakst or Picasso or whoever – were meant to be seen under bright stage lighting, and that's how we wanted them to look. The trouble was that, from a conservation point of view – one doesn't take liberties with Pavlova's tutu – bright light is lethal to fabrics.'

John Paterson's solution to this double problem was to hide his 62 costumes in virtually blackout conditions, using very bright light very suddenly for very short periods to bring them vividly back to life.

'The exhibition had to be open 7 days a week for a month,' he says. 'To satisfy the conservationists, this might have meant I was restricted to a steady 10 to 25 Lux – pretty gloomy for all. By using figure-framing spots in very short bursts – stereo-sound music operated them in tandem – I was able to go up to 85 to 100 Lux. The good thing was that, as a by-product, the general effect was kinetic rather than static.'

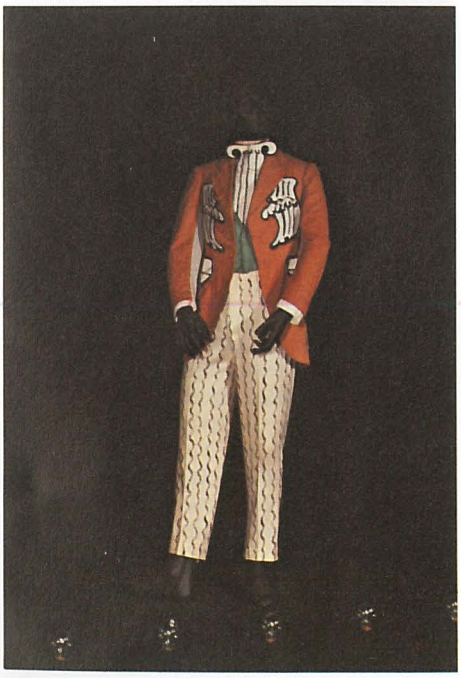
In a later issue of CUE, John Paterson will be describing in detail how he achieved the many surprising 'dramatisations by light' an exhibition of this kind so often calls for (and so seldom gets). The annoying thing is that the loving collection of lovely things in 'Parade' has not yet been seen in London. Alexander Schouvaloff is hopeful. But he also hopes it won't take as long to come through as the go-ahead on his Theatre Museum's move to Covent Garden. The plans are all approved. The contractor is ready. If only Mr. St John Stevas, when he hears the word culture, wasn't so ready to reach for his Treasury big gun.



Pablo Picasso's costume for the Chinese Conjuror, worn by Leonide Massine in the Diaghilev ballet Parade *(1917).*

A general view of how the costumes were presented 'out of the darkness came light'. In the left foreground, a group of costumes for The Sleeping Princess *(1921) by Leon Bakst.*

Scenery and costumes for Chout, *a Diaghilev ballet of 1921, were designed by Michel Larionov. Lydia Sokolova danced the part of 'the Buffoon's wife' (left).*



Giorgio di Chirico designed this 'costume for male guest' in the ballet Le Bal *(1929), choreographed by George Balanchine.*