

Autolycus

Shopping at Sainsbury's

With the chilling prospect of next year's Arts Council grant falling drastically in real terms (according to leaks on Fleet Street), and with contingency plans accordingly being drawn up by grant-aided companies all over the country, it is inspired timing to announce a mammoth £500,000 injection of cash into arts sponsorship by a newcomer to the field, Sainsbury's. (An estimated £5 million is contributed annually to the arts by commercial sponsors).

Is this the biggest single sponsor to date? Such statistics are difficult to compute in precise terms. But here's a quick comparison. Du Maurier's wholesale sponsorship of the Philharmonic Orchestra, whose impact has been enormous and whose benefits are measurable, is probably the most impressive other single sponsor recently. A few prominent examples would be, Gulf Oil's £250,000 to Scottish National Orchestra (over seven years) for recordings and the current series of concerts; General Accident's estimated £250,000, also to the SNO, for a year's educational touring to 21 towns, plus recordings and educational materials and competition prizes; Harvey's £120,000 towards music and fine arts, not forgetting their Leeds Piano Competition sponsorship; and newcomers, Clark's shoes, whose £150,000 (over three years) has transformed the fortunes of playwright David Wood's new company, Whirligig, for children.

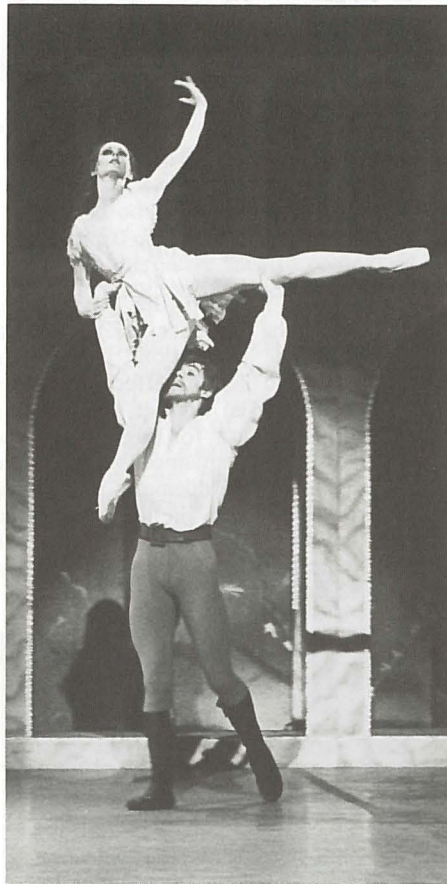
In Sainsbury's case, the money will support Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet (pictured), whom they have supported ad hoc in the past, and also Kent Opera and Polka Children's Theatre.

The Sainsbury supermarket chain, which is now pushing for the number one position as Britain's largest food store (Tesco has headed the league for years), has long been a patron of the arts, at least through the Sainsbury family's private wealth. But for them, this marks a new departure: a serious commitment to support the entire spectrum of artistic endeavour, with discussions now underway about support for classical music and the visual arts. The emphasis is not on upmarket activities, but rather a family image.

Chairman, Sir John Sainsbury said: 'We believe we should develop a planned programme of sponsorship distinct from our charitable donations - for two reasons.

'Firstly, because it is clear that well-directed and imaginative sponsorship can bring prestige and credit to the company, and in purely material terms can be fully justified as 'good business'. Secondly, by so doing we are making a contribution, however modest, to the quality of life of those around us. We feel that sponsorship from successful businesses can be a valuable additional source of funds for the arts'.

Noble sentiments. But it is the size of their undertaking which will echo round the



Sadlers Wells Royal Ballet
The Taming of the Shrew
Katharina (Siobham Stanley)
Petruchio (David Ashmole)
(photo Leslie E. Spatt)

business community, we hope, and do more than speeches, theories, or articles ever achieve, to accelerate the growth of arts sponsorship. Sainsbury's seem to be as good as their word. Former deputy chairman and brother to Sir John, Simon Sainsbury, is chairing a special Sainsbury's

Arts Sponsorship Committee, to address himself to the problem of how to achieve maximum benefit and coverage from every pound spent, from the company's point of view - and, indirectly, the public. His concern, of course, will focus on attracting large numbers of people, not funding the *avant garde*, but no matter. It releases another £500,000 of Arts Council cash for supporting innovative work. Let us hope this pattern develops, as the word gets round. Nor should we forget the part played by Bill Kallaway's team, as the major arts sponsorship consultancy on the scene, in selling their services daily to industry. (Kallaway Ltd, 2 Portland Road, Holland Park, London W11 4LA. Tel: 01-221 7883).

Lady into Fox

Maria Björnson is rapidly becoming the designer whose name one looks for as a sort of guarantee of visual pleasure in a production. But there is, of course, much more to her sets and costumes than their pretty faces. She seems to have that happy knack of imposing a consistent *style* on a whole production that bridges the gap - it is sometimes a chasm - between the realities and the fantasies that every audience has to be made to cross, if it is not to fidget and find itself more knowing than the authors and the actors. We noticed this first in her work on the cycle of Janacek operas which the Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera have been lovingly co-producing and touring with. She did the designing for 'Jenufa', 'The Makropoulos Case', and, most intelligently and imaginatively of all we think, for 'The Cunning Little Vixen', which requires the sort of interaction of human beings and animals on stage at the same time that has defeated designers as ingenious as Walt Disney. For 'Vixen', which is produced by David Pountney, and

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