

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY

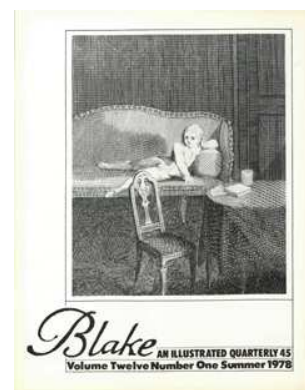
# BLAKE

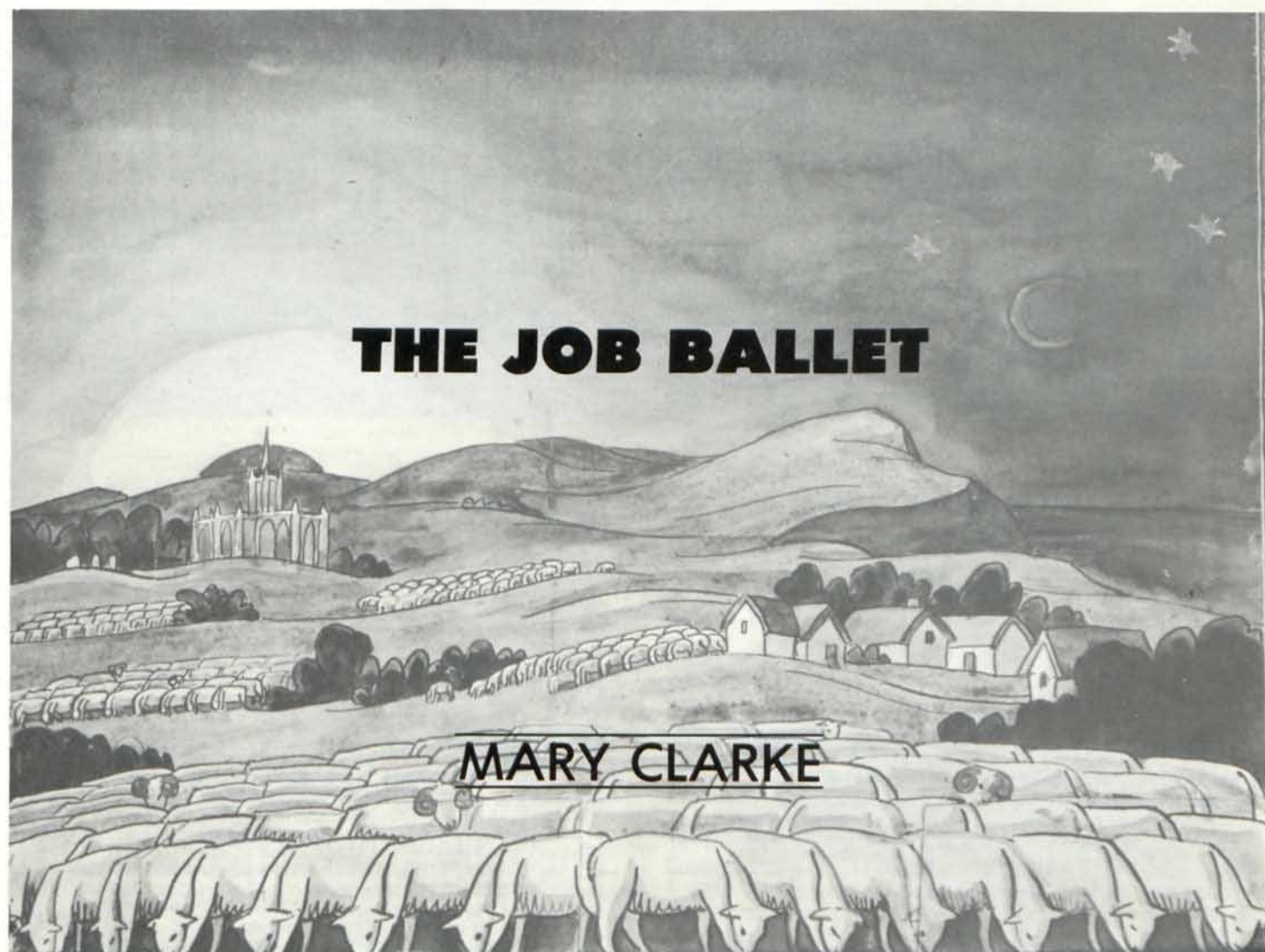
A R T I C L E

## The Job Ballet

Mary Clarke

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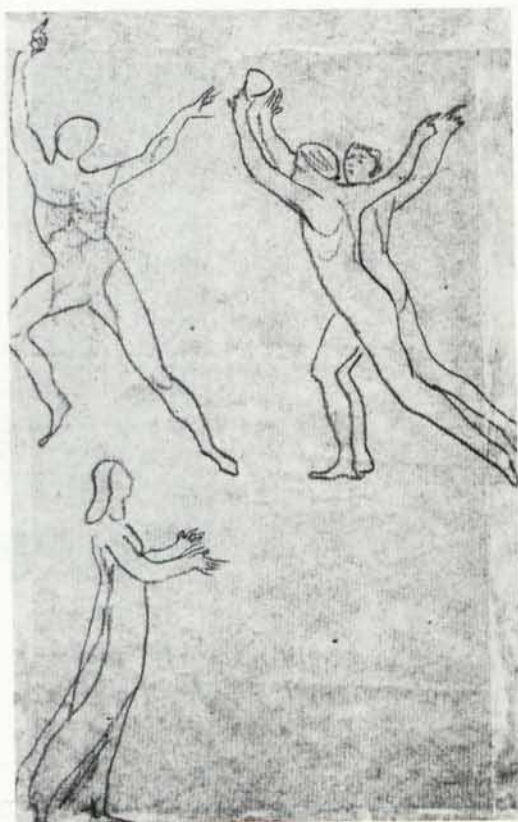
**T**he 1931-32 season opened at the Old Vic on 22nd September and this first full season was fittingly introduced by a performance of *Job*, which the Camargo Society lent to the company and for which Vaughan Williams asked only a nominal fee. Dolin repeated his magnificent performance as Satan and the impact of the ballet was instantaneous. The first slight programmes may not have seemed very important, but a work like *Job* at once revealed the power and the creative force of de Valois as a choreographer and the possibilities for serious English ballet.

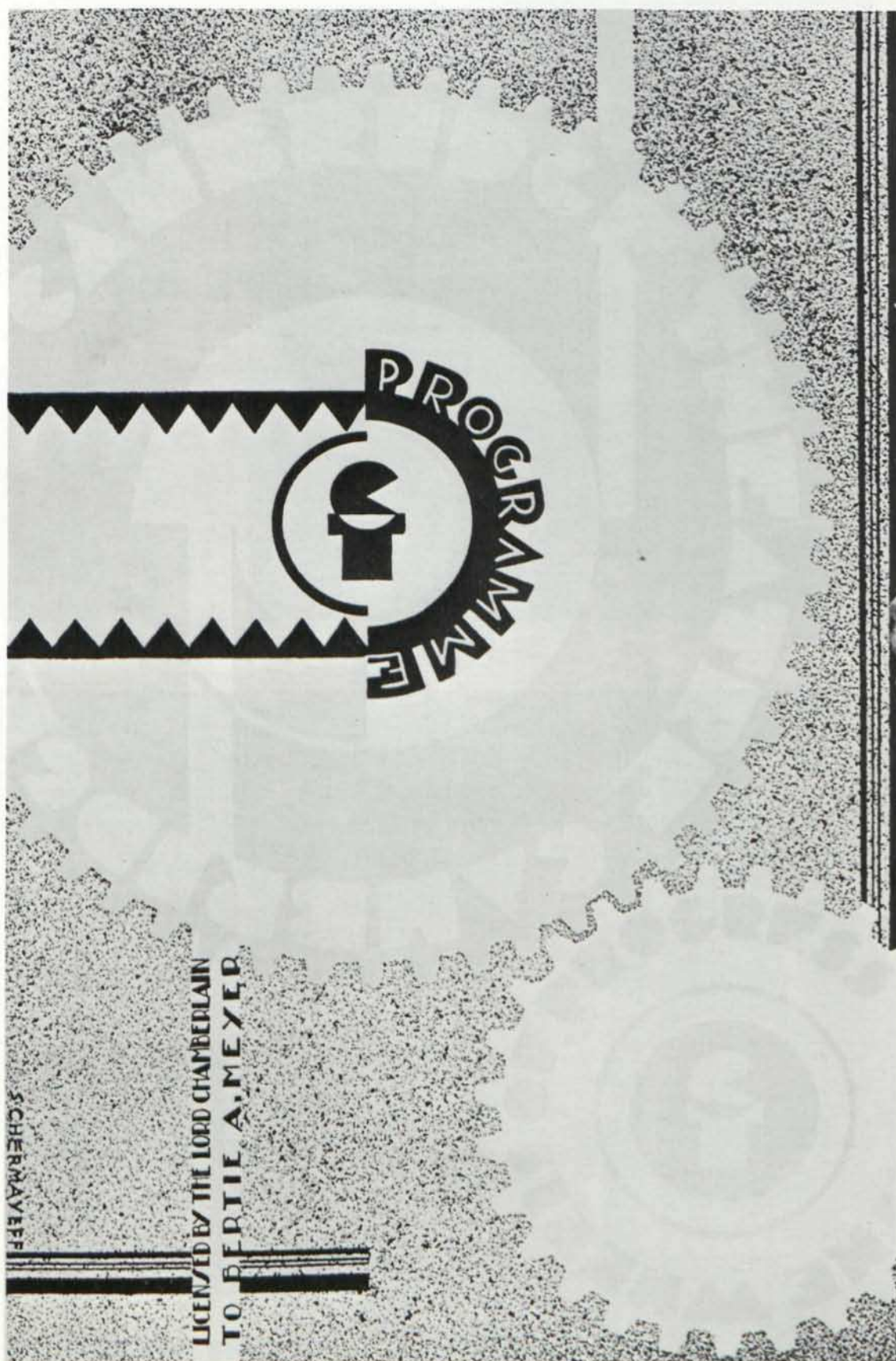
*Job* was not only a *succès d'estime* but a popular success as well, and the Vic and Wells were crowded whenever it was given. It has remained in the repertoire of the Sadler's Wells Ballet ever since and now occupies a very special place in the traditions of the company and in the affections of everyone who has been associated with Sadler's Wells.

Reprinted from Mary Clarke, *The Sadler's Wells Ballet/A History and an Appreciation* (Adam and Charles Black, London), 1955.

This "Masque for Dancing" had been invented by Dr. Geoffrey Keynes some years previously. An ardent balletomane and a great authority on the work of William Blake, he had felt that Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, first published as a series of twenty-one engravings in 1825, unconsciously provided settings which could easily be translated on the stage, while there were "innumerable suggestions in his figures for attitudes and groupings, which cried out for their conversion by a choreographer into actuality and movement." He prepared a detailed scenario for a stage production and persuaded his sister-in-law Gwendolen Raverat (née Darwin) to design backcloths based on Blake's drawings and to colour small cut-out figures to represent the leading characters in the main scenes and groupings. These designs were prepared for a toy theatre, and when the cardboard figures were assembled they illustrated very exactly the main climaxes of the action as they were eventually to appear in the ballet. Dr. Keynes had completed his scheme for the ballet by 1927 and had persuaded Ralph Vaughan Williams (a cousin of the Darwins) to compose the music. He sent a French translation of









## JOB

being **Blake's Vision of the Book of Job**

A MASQUE FOR DANCING invented by GEOFFREY KEYNES

Music by R. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Produced by NINETTE DE VALOIS

Scenery and Costumes designed (after Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job) by GWENDOLEN RAVERAT

Wigs and Masks by HEDLEY BRIGGS

*Scene 1.* Job is sitting in the sunrise of prosperity with his wife, surrounded by his seven sons and three daughters. They all join in a pastoral dance. When they have dispersed, leaving Job and his wife alone, Satan enters unperceived. He appeals to Heaven, which opens, revealing the Godhead (Job's Spiritual Self) enthroned within. On the steps are the Heavenly Hosts. Job's Spiritual Self consents that his moral nature be tested in the furnace of temptation.

Scene 2. Satan, after a triumphal dance, usurps the throne.

Scene 3. Job's sons and daughters are feasting and dancing when Satan appears and destroys them.

Scene 4. Job's peaceful sleep is disturbed by Satan with terrifying visions of War, Pestilence and Famine.

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Scene 5. Messengers come to Job with tidings of the destruction of all his possessions and the death of his sons and daughters. Satan introduces Job's Comforters, three wily hypocrites. Their dance at first simulates compassion, but this gradually changes to rebuke and anger. Job rebels: "Let the day perish wherein I was born." He invokes his vision of the Godhead, but the opening Heaven reveals Satan upon the throne. Job and his friends shrink in terror.

Scene 6. There enters Elihu who is young and beautiful. "Ye are old and I am very young." Job perceives his sin. The Heavens then open, revealing Job's Spiritual Self again enthroned.

*Scene 7.* Satan again appeals to Job's Godhead, claiming the victory, but is repelled and driven down by the Sons of the Morning. Job's household build an altar and worship with musical instruments, while the heavenly dance continues.

*Scene 8. Epilogue.* Job sits a humbled man in the sunset of restored prosperity, surrounded by his family, upon whom he bestows his blessing.

Job ... .. JOHN MACNAIR  
... .. ROBERT STEWART

Job ... .. MARGERY STEWART  
His Wife ... .. MARGERY STEWART

His three Daughters ... MARIE NEILSON, URSULA MORETON,  
DOREEN ADAMS

His seven Sons ... WILLIAM CHAPPELL, HEDLEY BRIGGS  
WALTER GORE, CLAUDE NEWMAN, ROBERT  
STUART, TRAVERS KEMP, STANLEY JUDSON

The three Messengers... ROBERT STUART, CLAUDE NEWMAN,  
TRAVERS KEMP

The three Comforters... WILLIAM CHAPPELL, WALTER GORE,  
HEDLEY BRIGGS

War, Pestilence and Famine WILLIAM CHAPPELL, WALTER  
CORE, HEDLEY BRIGGS

Elihu ... .. STANLEY JUDSON

Anton Dolin

(By kind permission of Messrs. JACK BUCHANAN and R. H. GILLESPIE)

The Children of God... BEATRICE APPELYARD, FRED  
BAMFORD, JOY NEWTON, NADINA NEWHOUSE,  
PHYLLIS WORTHINGTON, JOAN DAY, WENDY  
TOYE, MARLEY BELL

Sons of the Morning ... JOY ROBSON, MONICA RATCLIFFE,  
MOLLIE BROWN, ELIZABETH MILLER

Job's Spiritual Self ... .. JOHN LOFTUS

The music, originally written for full symphony orchestra, has, for the purposes of this and subsequent stage presentations, been re-scored for Theatre Orchestra by CONSTANT LAMBERT.

Scenery executed by ALICK JOHNSTONE      Costumes by EVE-MARIE

### INTERVAL

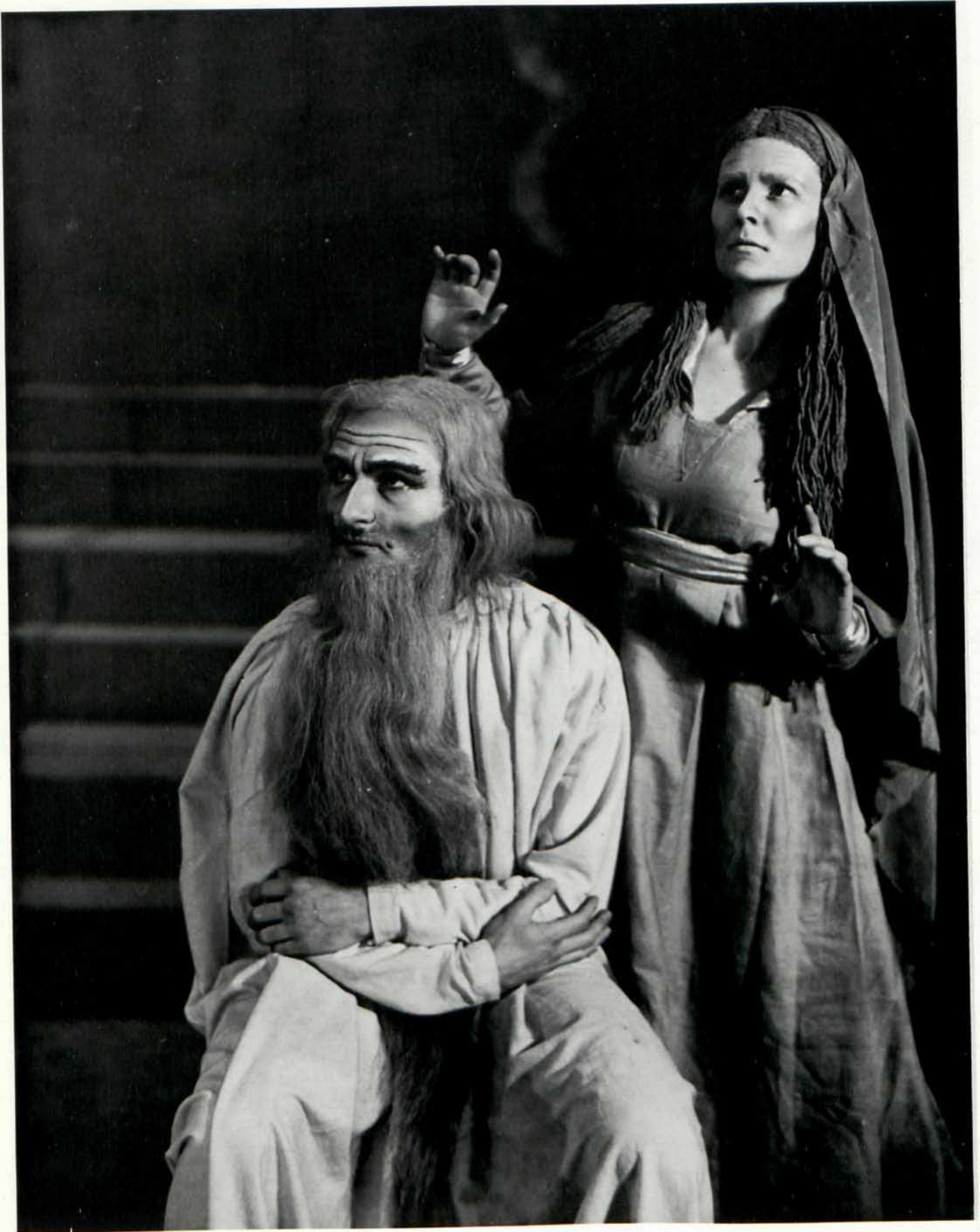




the scenario to Diaghileff, who was at that time the only person in a position to produce such a ballet, but the subject did not appeal to Diaghileff and he rejected it as too English and too old-fashioned. Dr. Keynes can probably take credit, however, for having sown a seed in the great man's mind which was later to bear fruit in the production of *Le Fils Prodigue*.

With the formation of the Camargo Society, Dr. Keynes saw another chance of having *Job* produced, and he invited Lilian Baylis and Ninette de Valois to come and see the models and the toy theatre. They were at once interested and it was agreed that de Valois should undertake the production, following the scenario of Dr. Keynes and using Mrs. Raverat's designs. Dr. Vaughan Williams had stipulated that there should be no *pointe* work (which he detested) and that *Job* should not be described as a ballet, so the description "a Masque for Dancing" was adopted. De Valois made a very careful study of the Blake engravings and began to plan her production, while Mrs. Raverat set to work painting scenery at the Old Vic. The production was to be presented by the Camargo Society at its fourth programme and Geoffrey Keynes undertook to finance it, being assisted by several friends, in particular by his brother Maynard and Sir Thomas Dunhill.<sup>1</sup> Constant Lambert rescored the music for a much smaller orchestra and *Job* was produced for the first time at the Cambridge Theatre on 5th and 6th July 1931.









*Job* won much esteem for both the Camargo Society and the Vic-Wells Ballet. With *Job*, Edwin Evans used to say, Camargo stepped on the map of Europe. Karsavina said, "The dignity of the greatest tragedy of all ages is nowhere impaired by a mere dance for the dance's sake, and yet this production fully answers the qualification of ballet. The quality of mime in *Job* is that of the flowing pattern of a well-conceived dance." Perhaps Lydia Lopokova, at first not very enthusiastic but greatly impressed after seeing it performed at Oxford during the Ninth Annual Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music, put her finger on the most important achievement when she wrote to Geoffrey Keynes: "My chief pleasure was that it differed from the Russian ballet tradition, the most important merit of *Job*." Ashley Dukes, writing in the *American Theatre Arts Monthly* about the English theatre in general, said *Job* was by far the most satisfying achievement of the English theatre that season, representing "the impressive silence in the midst of unimpressive talk."

*Job* owed no small part of its success to the performance of Anton Dolin as Satan, Blakish and

devilish, yet superbly arrogant and physically magnificent in a way that none of his successors have been able to equal, although all of them (and Robert Helpman in particular) have given striking and valid interpretations. At the time of the first Vic-Wells performances Dolin was still appearing in *Stand Up and Sing*, but Jack Buchanan (to whom all honour) gave him permission to dance at the Vic, and his performance was a major feature of the success of the ballet--although the timing was so close that he had to take his last curtain half-dressed in evening clothes, with a taxi waiting at the stage door to whisk him back to the Hippodrome. Lilian Baylis wrote him her thanks: "Ellen Terry was one of the first great players who gave such practical help to the Old Vic, and you are the first great dancer, and I shall pray and remember you always with very great affection."

<sup>1</sup> One benefactor was later taken to a performance by Geoffrey Keynes and his wife. The eminent man sat solemnly through the opening ballet, which happened to be *The Jackdaw and the Pigeons*, and at the end said politely to Keynes, "Yes, old boy, very interesting. But tell me, which one was *Job*?"



Photo behind title: backdrop design for *Job*, Gwendolen Raverat. On deposit at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; reproduced by permission of the owner.

1 Toy theater model for *Job*, Gwendolen Raverat design. Victoria and Albert Museum.

2 Notebook sketches, Ninette de Valois. Victoria and Albert Museum.

3 *Job* television production, Harold Turner as Satan. Victoria and Albert Museum.

4 & 5 Original production, 5 July 1931. Victoria and Albert Museum.

6 Michael Some as Job, later production. Victoria and Albert Museum.

7 Studio picture of Anton Dolin for a later Raverat production. Victoria and Albert Museum.

8 Joy Newton, original production. Victoria and Albert Museum.

9 Original production. Victoria and Albert Museum.

10 Robert Helpmann as Satan, later production. Victoria and Albert Museum.

