

INNOVATION AT THE GREEK

L.A. Dancers Share Opening Bill of N.Y. City Ballet

By CHARLES FABER

Thanks to James A. Doolittle, Los Angeles reached a new plateau of artistic awareness and cultural achievement last night with the presentation of "Serenade," performed by local dancers only, as an integral part of the New York City Ballet's opening program at the Greek Theater.

It would seem that the Greek Theater Association had, during its rise to international renown in the remarkably short span of twelve years, achieved the ultimate in the field of ballet by presenting European as well as all the major American companies, and becoming the Los Angeles home of the New York City Ballet.

But, like all men of vision, the Association's General Director Doolittle could see beyond present success toward implementing means of growth and helping to insure the future of what has become a major popular art in America, with one of its largest audiences in the Southland.

Local artists have appeared in the full-length "Nutcracker," and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (to be staged again for the week beginning Aug. 18), but it remained for Mr. Doolittle to go the whole wonderful way, and present a complete ballet from the New York City repertoire cast here in Los Angeles.

One would have to be a dedicated young dancer to realize fully the inspiration, joy and lasting artistic benefits to be derived from training under the revered George Balanchine, who chose 26 dancers for performance from the more than 100 personally auditioned.

The handsome young men and women danced Mr. Balanchine's own "Serenade," the first ballet created by the master in America, with such precision and verve as to make it nearly indistinguishable in quality from the other Balanchine works on the program danced by his regular company.

able achievement. The eyes shown with the promise of widening horizons, and their disciplined bodies followed in the direction of the promise.

They moved in the intertwining patterns and the strict idiom of the classic tradition with a fluidity that brought delight to the audience, and, it may be assumed, deep satisfaction to Mr. Balanchine.

Mr. Doolittle's satisfaction must certainly be the rare one that comes only to an altruist. His latest creative contribution to civic grandeur proves conclusively that he is on the side of the City of Angeles. Let it be recognized once and for all that his preeminence as producer and custodian of a cultural landmark is unassailable.

The regular dance company shone with the brilliance that is the product of Mr. Balanchine's many years as choreographer and ballet master, and the inspiration of the local dancers privileged to appear on the same program with them.

The gala evening began auspiciously with what is undoubtedly the epitome of ballet, "Swan Lake." All the mystery, fantasy, elegance and technical complexities of which the art, and this example especially, are compact, were projected last night.

Melissa Hayden, as Odette,

was instinct with the shuddering, pathetic fear of the Queen of the Swans, living under an evil spell. How it is overcome through her love for a mortal was exquisitely portrayed, especially in the impeccably executed adagio with Prince Siegfried. Jacques d'Amboise imbued the role with masculinity and a truly noble style.

The popular dance of the cygnets, led by Jillana, was clean, crisp, and set the standard for the excellent ensemble.

The classic mood changed to a rip-roaring, rousing salute to John Philip Sousa, "Stars and Stripes," the bandmaster's music adapted and orchestrated by Hershy Kay. Suki Schorer, Gloria Govrin and Kent Stowell were exciting, high stepping soloists. Patricia McBride and Edward Villella capped the red, white and blue climax with a pas de deux that went off like fireworks.