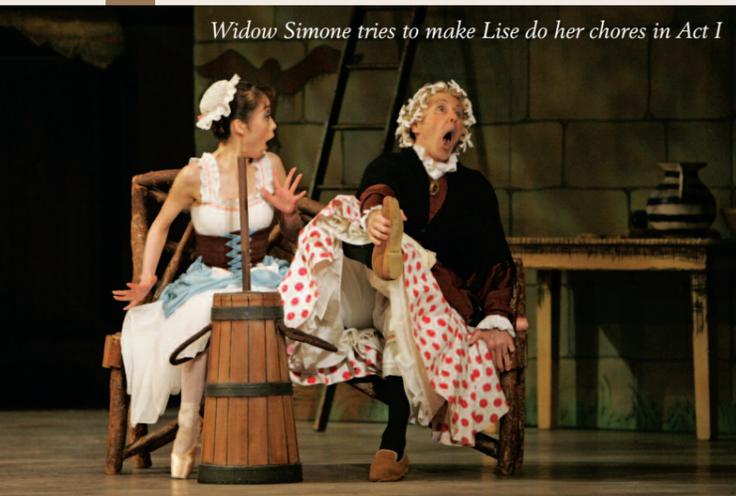


so long hoped and worked for. The familiar roles became even more exciting and wonderful artistic experiences; in *The Sleeping Beauty*, for instance, I felt I was meeting my suitors for the first time; and that everything indeed was happening for the first time – as in life. I now had time to feel, to think and to move, I was no longer merely listening to the music but was enveloped in it. I was the music. And at the end of the performances I was relaxed and happy.

I did not read the synopsis of *La Fille mal gardée*. Ashton told me the story, simply and vividly. Essentially Lise is a peasant girl set in a certain well-defined period and from the



Widow Simone tries to make Lise do her chores in Act I



Lise and Colas play with the ribbon in Act I

moment I first heard the music Lise came alive for me. Swanilda, another peasant girl, is pert, sophisticated, extrovert, vivacious; Giselle is a peasant girl who has a beautiful soul; she is unsure of herself, tentative and superstitious. But Lise is entirely different. Although young and tender she is already fully aware of her destiny as a wife and mother. She is warm, vital, generous and very human, and above all she is a young girl in love for the first time. Nothing matters for her except Colas. She expresses young romantic love blossoming with all the freshness of spring.

Working with Frederick Ashton is a great experience. Part of his genius is to allow his artists to express their own personalities. He never tries to impose his will against their artistic temperaments; on the contrary, because of the marvellous alchemy of his talents, the artists flower and create in their own way what he had in mind.

David Blair and I have worked together for four years. Our partnership has reached a stage where I have complete confidence in him so that when we dance together, whatever roles, we are always in complete harmony with each other.

Every character in the ballet has a right to exist and the character exists through the mind and emotions of the dancer. I love all the characters I portray, Lise no more than the others. These characters are living people to me and it is a great joy and privilege to portray them.

NADIA NERINA in conversation with Arnold Haskell. From a collection of articles edited by Ivor Guest, originally published by *The Dancing Times* in 1960.

The original *La Fille mal gardée* was produced in Bordeaux in 1789, probably with music composed, as was then the custom, by the leading violinist, whose name is not now known. A study of the orchestral parts of this first version shows a tuneful but unoriginal score. It also shows how little orchestral musicians have changed, for the parts are decorated with drawings which range from the witty to the crude. This first version was played with great success in the 1790s in London, where it was affectionately known as 'Filly-me-gardy'.

When the Paris Opéra put on their own version of the ballet in 1828, their young chorus master Hérold (who subsequently wrote many operas, including *Zampa*, of which the overture is still played) was asked to put together a new score. This he did by using scraps of the Bordeaux version, borrowing from other composers (Rossini and Monsigny, for example) and composing attractive melodic numbers of a charming simplicity.

Some 30 years later *Fille* was put on in Germany, and for this production the composer Hertel wrote a new score. This, never better than ordinary and often banal, is unfortunately the one which has survived in productions of the ballet in Russia and the USA. When Frederick Ashton asked me in 1959 to put together a score for his new version of the ballet, we rejected the Hertel and the Bordeaux and I set about adapting the Hérold score for Ashton's special and particular needs. At first it seemed an impossible task: in the whole score (photocopied from the Paris Opéra library) only two of the 50 numbers bore any title, one 'Harvesters' Dance' and the other 'Storm' (which anyone could have guessed because it was the storm music from Rossini's *La Cenerentola*). There seemed to be no mime-scene music and – very serious for an Ashton

project – nothing suitable for *pas de deux*.

So I set about doing in 1959 what Hérold had done in 1828, writing whole numbers here and parts of numbers there and using Hérold's score wherever it could be made to fit our scenario. Thus, most of the mime scenes are mine, as also are the first-act *pas de deux*, Alain's comic solo and, of course, the Clog Dance, for which Ashton took me to an English folkdance display at the Albert Hall and after the Lancashire Clog Dance said, 'write something funny to fit that'.



The clog dance in Act II

I composed the finale in the rondo style Ashton likes so much for his finales – a 'dancy' tune which keeps recurring interspersed with thematic episodes linked with the main characters to give them each a chance to show their paces.

It was, all in all, a very happy collaboration, with each helping the other. Thus I suggested the episode of the quarrel where Alain tries to play the flute with disastrous results, and Ashton suggested the subtle pauses in Lise's solo in Act I scene 2.

The whole *Fanny Elssler pas de deux*, which she had had put together from Donizetti operatic arias and inserted into her performances of *Fille* in the 1830s, was found by Ivor Guest (in violin-duet rehearsal form, as all ballets were rehearsed until the 1880s) tucked away in a box of music at the Paris Opéra.

JOHN LANCHBERY