

PM

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Like It or Not, It's a Hit

By HENRY SIMON

Twenty-five curtain calls means a hit on any stage. That is what Antony Tudor's ballet *Pillar of Fire* got last night when the Ballet Theater gave it its world premiere at the Metropolitan. The heat of enthusiasm, which was unmistakably genuine, is particularly noteworthy as the piece is pitched in a modest key—few pyrotechnics, subdued color and tender feeling.

The story deals with a girl who fears she may remain a spinster, like her older sister, and who suspects that the man she loves prefers a younger sister. In desperation she throws herself at a young roue who emerges from a house of ill repute conveniently located across the street. Finally, spurned by her light of love, she gets the man she wanted all along. The tale is well set to the neo-Wagnerism of Schoenberg's *Verklaerte Nacht*.

But it is the sustained mood of the piece rather than the drama, the probing into the dreams and desires of an adolescent, that makes the appeal of the piece. That and the exquisite dance-miming of Nora Kaye with first-rate support from Annabelle Lyon, Lucia Chase, Mr. Tudor and Hugh Laing.

So there is no doubt that we witnessed a triumph, and the fact that I found the whole business rather distasteful may be irrelevant. A young girl peeping in at the half-obscured goings-on in a bawdy house and the scene of violent rejection and reconciliation before a dim aquarium-green background left an unpleasant taste.

It was most pleasantly removed, however, by the brilliant performances of *Pas de Quatre* with Alicia Markova as the deliberately starred dancer and *Princess Aurora*, in which Irina Baronova, George Skibine, Karen Conrad and Ian Gibson all managed literally to stop the show at various times.