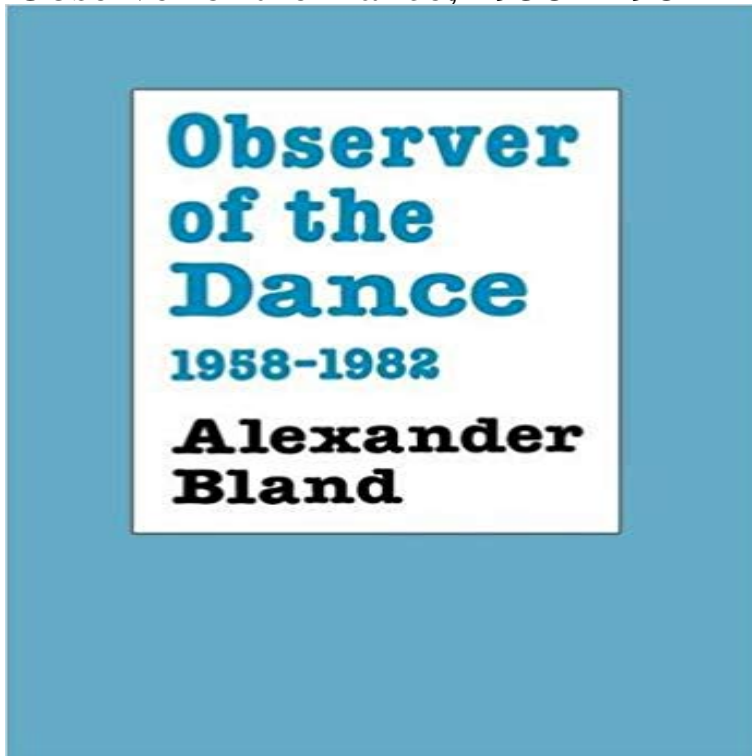


Observer of the Dance, 1958 - 1982



Alexander Bland (the pseudonym of the husband and wife Nigel Gosling and Maude Lloyd) was a master distiller - in a few perfectly chosen words he could scan the breadth or depth of a performance in such a way that the reader would feel yes, that's exactly what it was like. As Rudolf Nureyev says in his foreword to this book His ability to put the essential concept of a work into words was amazing. He made everything fall into place. To be brief and succinct was crucial, for The Observer, of which Bland was dance critic from 1955 to 1982, allowed only a short column for dance reviews, considering it a minority interest. But such was Alexander Bland's skill that, often by using a particularly telling metaphor, he could convey the image of a piece as well as give an enlightening account of its components in the small space allotted to him. Richard Buckle (from whom he took over as dance critic) recalls one description of the Royal Ballet: The company presents a seamless, closely-woven texture, reminiscent of fine linen, a unanimity of purpose, reminiscent of purpose like that which steers a flock of wheeling birds. It was this kind of elegant, yet totally accessible writing that became the hallmark of Alexander Bland's articles. One of the most assiduous of dance critics, he reported regularly on dance for nearly 30 years. In this way, although there are reports from all over Europe and America, this book is the story of British ballet over that momentous period. But it is, of course, far more than that. Over the years his readers came to expect neither obvious jokes nor provocative declarations, but a penetrating, often profound truth lightly disguised with a sparkling and delicate wit. Alexander Bland felt that his job was firstly to give an account of what he had seen, but secondly, and more importantly, to keep his readers paying attention to the works he was discussing, and he succeeded brilliantly on both counts. This book is an

engrossing and delightful read from start to finish.

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