

BBC RADIO: SUMMARY OF HOLDINGS RELATING TO SIR FREDERICK ASHTON

Compiled by Jill McLoughlin

DATE	TITLE	DETAILS
9.12.58	Talking of Theatre 10'25"	Sir Frederick Ashton talks about having seen Pavlova as a small boy, and that he thought all dancers performed spontaneously. Essential to be a dancer before becoming a choreographer: details of early dance training with Mme Rambert and later Nijinska. Talks of his production 'Daphnis and Chloe' in modern dress which Karsavina supported. Definition of classical and romantic styles. Details of his first very modern essays as a choreographer, his first full length ballet was 'Cinderella', explains difficulties in composing a full-length ballet. Description of stages by which a ballet is built up from idea by the choreographer, commissioning and planning of music, meetings with the composer and decorator to working out the steps with aid of tape recording of music. Tribute to Margot Fonteyn with whom he has worked so much. Definition of the choreographer as 'playwright, producer and animator'.
1964	Talking About Music: Cats	Sir Frederick Ashton listed as speaker, no details or other details given (but not sure item still exists).
30.4.65	The Swan	Famous men and women of ballet recall Anna Pavlova. Sir Frederick Ashton talks about her infectiousness, limitations of her technique, her genius, influence on him as a choreographer. Their final meeting.
25.6.66	Constant Lambert 58'22"	A portrait of the composer, conductor and writer drawn from the recollections of those who knew him including Sir Frederick Ashton.
17.1.68	The Lively Arts 11' 42"	Interviewed on his new ballet 'Jazz Calendar' (first performance 9.1.68). He has always liked jazz, which is not a new field for him. No intention to parody anything in the ballet. Tribute to Derek Jarman, designer of settings and costumes. Goes through the work explaining his ideas and

		planning of each of its sections.
20.11.68	The Lively Arts 28'46"	Oleg Kerensky interviews choreographers Sir Frederick Ashton and Anthony Tudor about their latest works. Ashton speaking about his new ballet 'Enigma Variations'. Says he had idea for some time and finally, influenced by ideas of designer Julia Trevelyan Oman, put it into practice. Depiction of characters greatly helped by Elgar's music but some difficulties as work not so well known. Pleased with good reception of ballet, especially by Elgar's surviving daughter. Visualisation of various characters including idea of making Elgar and his wife part of the cast. Fortunate in his cast. Despite new approach ballet linked choreographically with rest of his work.
12.2.70	Sir Frederick Ashton 55'35"	Ian Horsbrugh interviews Sir Frederick Ashton with others who look back on his life and work, on his retirement from Royal Ballet. Seeing Pavlova; hardships at public school in England; working in the City. Dancing lessons from Massine, then Rambert. Had agility, but not temperament or physical strength to make a dancer. Always enjoyed performing, no indication in early years of choreographic ability until he worked on 'The Tragedy of Fashion'. Worked in Paris with Nijinsky for 1½ years, then returned to Rambert. Success with Walton's Façade. In 1935 accepted invitation to join Vic-Wells Company. Value of previous experience in revenues, musical comedies etc. His great facility for movement. Beginning of association with Margot Fonteyn. His influence on her dancing. Working with Constant Lambert. After the war the move to ROH. Importance of maintaining classical ballets in repertoire. His first full length ballet, Cinderella; difficulties presented by a 3 act ballet. Ideas behind 'Symphonic Variations'. Methods of working with designers, in particular, Sophie Federovitch. Triumph as creator of style in 'La Fille mal gardée'. Tamara Karsavina's assistance. John Lanchbery's re-orchestration of the score.

18.2.70	The Art This Week Dur: 4'26"	Oleg Kerensky interviews Sir Frederick Ashton, retiring Director of the Royal Ballet, about his work. Discusses new ballet 'Lament of the Waves', how he was attracted to the music; décor which is principally lighting effects centring on a ball of light. Assesses his achievements during years of office.
30.12.70	Markova 39'10"	Tribute to the ballerina to mark her 60 th birthday with contributions from friends and colleagues. Sir Frederick Ashton listed as a contributor.
Mar 72	Dateline London: Sir Frederick Ashton 2'17"	Sir Frederick Ashton interviewed by John Selwyn Gilbert about his methods as a choreographer, with actuality of rehearsal.
7.1.79	The Firebird 43'06"	Tribute to prima ballerina Tamara Karsavina, compiled and introduced by Derek Parker. References to Nijinsky and Diaghilev. Sir Frederick Ashton listed as a contributor.
13.9.79	Woman's Hour	Sir Frederick Ashton interviewed by Tony Barnfield on his career and life. Expresses great love of England – born in South America – Pavlova first inspiration for him to become a dancer. Describes his methods in creation of a new ballet, using dancers to create the choreography. Prefers pure dancing to "story" ballets, but recommends mix of both. Describes his post-retirement activities and position as "wise old owl" of ballet.
2.5.81	Desert Island Discs 40'30"	Interviewed by Roy Plomley, Sir Frederick Ashton discusses his life and career plus chooses 8 discs
12.10.81	Vivat Rambert 43'25"	Various members past and present create a portrait of Ballet Rambert (not sure if Ashton is included)
24.7.84	Come Back	A profile of the 1960's ballerina Antoinette Sibley who has made a triumphant return to the stage after health problems halted her career. Believe Sir Frederick Ashton is a speaker.
7.10.88	Kaleidoscope: Ashton's Legacy 29'13"	Assessing life & work of Sir Frederick Ashton including interviews with critics and dancers who worked with him & archive material of himself. Presented by Colin Nears:

	<p>Nears: Ashton's position in ballet world.</p> <p>De Valois: First impressions of Ashton, witty, intelligent, always listened.</p> <p>Rambert: Told him he was passionately lazy.</p> <p>Ashton (archive): Recalls dancing with Nijinska – his greatest influence.</p> <p>Chappell: Ashton's first ballets – already fully developed choreographer, excerpt from 'Façade' in which Ashton danced the Tango.</p> <p>De Valois: A great demi-character dancer. Immensely musical but could not read a score.</p> <p>Bintley: Is an Ashton Fan. His works are so strong, stand up to scrutiny when pulled apart.</p> <p>Fonteyn (archive): Initially thought Ashton was a madman, that his choreography was impossible.</p> <p>Chappell: Natural flow of his dances – always seemed effortless.</p> <p>Archive extract: Ashton rehearsing.</p> <p>Fonteyn: Always created works on specific dancers, generously listening to their suggestions.</p> <p>Sibley: Initially petrified of him. Was reprimanded for not knowing she was dancing on pointe – something he put in all ballets he subsequently created on her.</p> <p>Seymour: How Ashton taught her to use her hands and thus improve her line.</p> <p>Ashton: Will bully dancers to get their line exactly right.</p> <p>Extract: Franck's 'Symphonic Variations' – Ashton's first ballet after move to ROH.</p> <p>Ashton: On the ballet's creation – abstract antidote to too much drama.</p> <p>Somes: He translated sound into movement</p> <p>Alston: Amazed at what Ashton created with just six dancers. How he adapted the Company to the much larger space of Covent Garden.</p> <p>Robertson: Creation of full-length 'Cinderella' gave Company the start of a solid repertoire. The rich and enchanting diversity of the piece.</p>
--	--

		<p>Extract from Prokofiev's 'Cinderella'.</p> <p>Bintley: Playing the Ugly Sister that Ashton himself played. The pathos in the role and depth of all characters Ashton created.</p> <p>Alston: Creation of 'La Fille mal gardée'. Freshness of Ashton's creations.</p> <p>Extract: Mendelssohn's music used in 'The Dream'</p> <p>Sibley: Having 'The Dream' created on her – not always easy. Ashton went off in huff leaving her to sort difficult steps out with Dowell.</p> <p>Dowell: He was saturated by music that he worked on. Ensuring that stories came across clearly. Always worried his works would be too long.</p> <p>Nears: Ashton's understated style.</p> <p>Vaughan: He wanted neatness, but disliked primness and English reserve. He always wanted big extended gestures.</p> <p>Robertson: A peculiarly English genius. Great feelings in the choreography – nostalgia, regret and great job. An Edwardian by nature.</p> <p>Extract: Elgar's 'Enigma Variations'.</p> <p>Ashton: Enormous qualms. Did extensive research on the character represented in the variations. Alarmed at interpreting 'Nimrod' – but pared it down to essentials to create mood.</p> <p>Spink: Understated way Ashton builds emotive power in the Elgar.</p> <p>Dowell: Public like narrative style of his works. Hopes that will endure.</p> <p>Bintley: Support Ashton gave him although his own style is different. Has very similar intentions, but is not romantic.</p>
21.9.04	Sir Fred 27'39"	On the centenary of Sir Frederick Ashton's birth, Alastair Macaulay talks to those who knew and worked with him.

Jill McLoughlin
April 2015