

# A LOYAL FAN'S LETTER TO AGNES DE MILLE

DEAR Miss De Mille — No, that's altogether wrong for the occasion — Dearest Agnes: Once in a while the theater does something right. It did something right for you last night.

I don't have to tell you, because you were there — last night at the Schubert Theater there was a homage, tribute, celebration — what you wish — of you, and significantly, American dance.

I happen to be writing this way because I want to make it very personal to you. This is hardly the occasion for a critical review — although if it were, it would be tremendous.

All I can say is that I trust you had a good time at the theater as I had. It was your night.

They called it, you will recall, "A Memorable Evening of Dance Honoring Agnes De Mille."

Your natural cynicism — no, not cynicism, exactly, wariness — must have wondered about anything being called "memorable," before it had had a chance to be remembered. But it was memorable, Agnes.

It was the theater and dance world trying to express its love for you, and the debt that we owe you. It was not just beautiful, it was fun.

Speaking for myself, it was one of the best evenings of dance I have ever had in life. I left the theater in a state of oblivious *entrechat*, it was a wonderful awareness of what you have achieved for us over — say — the past half-century.

All your friends turned up. It was produced by Jean Dailymple and



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staged by Donald Sadler — who, by the way, have never danced anything better. It moved like silk on satin — even though your special cloth has always been calico.

The dancers were based on Lee Theodore's *The American Dance Machine* — which has a special relationship with you — as, of course, you know.

One of the sadnesses, possibly one of the tragedies, of our emergent dance culture, is that we could never get the right funding for your American Heritage Dance Theater.

With just a little more foresight in Washington and Albany — both places sent you congratulatory telegrams, which was cute — this could have been a company that represented the American spirit to the world. Now, they find out and send words and formal messages.

I cannot be so dishonest to tell you that you don't need a company — although on this one night your friends did their best for you, this best will never forgive



**AGNES DE MILLE: Ageless & graceful.**

the lack of governmental funding. Kisses are great — money lasts longer.

But Agnes, it was a great night. We had so many hosts and hostesses. We had Natalia Makarova — breaking English as if she thought it was Russian. We had Jerome Robbins, so decently humble and understanding.

We had Misha Baryshnikov, saying nothing but holding your arm for the last call. And we had Isaac Stern, obviously, saying everything, and

ing a ravishing duet by John Taras, which, incidentally, must be restored to the repertory.

And we had James Mitchell talking with a hungry eloquence, and Bill Carter, with his still gawky charm, and Gemze de Lappe and Jamie Jamison still, happily doing your things.

I know I have missed out names — I should have mentioned Mollie Smith who led that *Funeral Dance from Brigadoon* — was that ever actually in the musical or was it dropped in Boston or somewhere worse?

It was a marvelous evening, Agnes. Artists, critics — you don't get along together all the time all that well.

And when you talked on stage — with such radiance — I suddenly remembered how much I envied you as a writer.

In my own small field, you happen to be better than I am. Which, naturally, is unforgivable.

It is not easy to accept that you could write this very piece so much more gracefully than I could. Agnes, you are giving a hidden smirk, which I do understand.

You have contributed. Marvelously. And last night in the Schubert Theater we were all so proud. Which is why I am writing you a letter rather than just printing a notice.

playing a few Bartok pieces that were almost outrageously appropriate.

And we had Tommy Tune — who in a very special way, Agnes, represented what we feel about you — and we had Mel Tomlinson and Lourdes Lopez from City Ballet.

Mel is very much one of yours, and was danc-