

14 July 1970

The Manager
New York State Theater
Lincoln Center
New York, N.Y.

Dear Sir,

For many years I have been attending performances of the New York City Ballet, and recently I have also viewed the American Ballet Theater's performances on about six evenings, usually from a single seat near the stage in the First Ring.

In most respects, the New York State Theater is thoughtfully and pleasantly operated and the staff of the Theater deserves to be complimented for its courtesy to patrons.


Nevertheless, several performances were completely spoiled for me by the conditions prevailing in the partial-view section of the First Ring in which I habitually sit, by choice, in order to avoid the conversation and other noise which one is likely to encounter in other locations. On a number of evenings, when the other single seats apparently were unsold, persons without tickets were seemingly allowed by the management to occupy the vacant places. One group of four young women who were hysterically admiring of the ABT company, took turns in occupying three seats in front of me. I can only describe them as not house-broken: they conversed stridently, banged on the railing, leaned outward all the way so as to obscure the view of the person or persons behind them, and were obnoxious. Also in the same section, behind me, was an unauthorized photographer whose loudly clicking camera was an extra distraction. This has happened often--and upon questioning, the photographers have acknowledged that they were not "staff" but free-lance. And, on top of these disagreeable factors, one elderly gentleman often comes to occupy a top-price seat in the First Ring front who seems to have entered the theater with a gallery ticket. On my visit last week, he sat behind me and literally poked me in the back to indicate that I was interfering with his view--thanks to the fact that the hysterics in front of me were blocking my view, I was indeed in his way.

In short, as the only paying patron in the section I was sandwiched between freeloaders whose manners were execrable and who ruined what otherwise would have been a memorable evening of ballet. May I suggest that the ushers--who customarily do not keep an eye on this part of the First Ring--might in future check to see that the occupants are in fact entitled to their seats, and that they observe a reasonable decorum--as a measure of respect for the artists on stage, if not to other members of the audience.

I do not begrudge anyone a "free" evening at the ballet. On the contrary, I feel warmly towards those who share my own admiration and pleasure at viewing the magnificent companies which perform on your stage. But a patron who pays his way should not be made to feel an interloper by those present by courtesy of the house or by seat-switching unobserved by or condoned by the ushers.

If this letter seems cranky or petty, I should greatly regret it. I do hope that you share my belief that patrons are entitled to reasonable quiet and tranquillity during a performance and that their comfort should not be subordinated to individuals who are allowed without purchased tickets to "take over" vacant seats or sections and to disport themselves in a highly infantile and noisy fashion.

Yours sincerely,



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