

From NORD to the Met

By Val Flanagan



The ballet career of Carolyn Martin started early. She began dancing with NORD group at age of 7, later took private lessons from Miss Gayle Parmelee

Back in March of 1951 Carolyn Martin, then eight years old, appeared on stage at the Civic Theater with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in two performances of "The Nutcracker." She appeared through the courtesy of the New Orleans recreation department, which had selected her as the outstanding dancer of its ballet classes.

If you were in the audience at that time, you may perhaps recall the realistic performances young Carolyn gave as Clara, the dreaming little girl in the fairy-tale ballet. Well, Carolyn will tell you now that the dreaming wasn't an act. She actually was in a reverie, imagining the day when she would dance as a real member of Ballet Russe.

The dream came true little more than nine years later. In the early fall of 1960, after auditions in New York, Nina Novak, prima ballerina and ballet mistress of Ballet Russe, selected the New Orleans lass for the company.

Attractive, blonde Miss Martin toured with Ballet Russe for two seasons—1960-61 and 1961-62—and moved up in its ranks to become an understudy to one of the female leads. Today she is a soloist in the Metropolitan Opera ballet, an extraordinary achievement for a first-year "Met" dancer. Carolyn made her debut as a soloist last

December 3rd in "Die Fledermaus." She signed with the New York group last fall after Ballet Russe decided against going on the road for the 1962-63 season.

"I'm thrilled to be with the Met," she says. "Now I can stay in New York rather than go on another long tour. I'll be working with well known artists and choreographers, one of them being Madame Alexandra Danilova, be able to also keep up my classes here with my favorite ballet teachers, and continue with my studies at Columbia (history and art).

"I really feel quite fortunate. At the Metropolitan I'll also be learning styles of dancing other than purely classical ballet."

Carolyn's life has been pointed to a career in ballet ever since those appearances as Clara in 1951. Since then she has thought of little else.

"Carolyn has a special quality about her, an indefinable something that somehow causes her to be noticed, that attracts attention to her," says her New Orleans teacher, Miss Gayle Parmelee.

"I remember when little 7-year-old Carolyn tugged on the back of my leotard and said, 'My grandmother knows your grandmother.' I patted her on the head and placed her in line with the others. I was



In March of 1959, performing a pas de deux, Carolyn and Hiller Huhn won first place in the New Orleans Junior Philharmonic Society auditions