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While thousands watch ballet come to life in theater, backstage a ballerina nonchalantly pauses to telephone friend.



Another, still in practice clothes, stands on tiptoes to read notices of next day's cast, costume, and schedule.



Unperturbed by pending appearance onstage, prettily costumed ballerina reads a letter from home.

BACKSTAGE



Star of stars, Margot Fonteyn, dressed for title role in "The Firebird," strikes graceful pose she must do to perfection when curtain rises and music begins.

Photos by Mickey Pallas

IN THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF BALLET, wicked magicians turn fair maidens into swans, a sleeping beauty is awakened from a hundred years' sleep with a kiss, and young girls who die before marrying go to a strange limbo where they must dance nightly on their own graves.

Magic like this has been enchanting balletomanes for three centuries, but somewhere between the stage and the wings the magic is lost. Backstage, the artists who create this make-believe—men and women of intense dedication and infinite grace—are, unbelievably, just men and women.

When not on cue, a fairy princess pauses to telephone friends, a tiny member of the corps de ballet stands on tiptoe to see the bulletin board, a pretty ballerina reads a letter, and other assorted dancers busy themselves with such mundane chores as limbering up their muscles—just like football players before a game.

But onstage the magic remains! England's Royal Ballet, for instance, which recently toured America with its internationally renowned ballerina assoluta, Margot Fonteyn, can still—between telephone calls and letters—bewitch an audience with enchanting tales of "Giselle" and "Swan Lake."

And the most enchanted audience of all is the cast itself. No matter how often they've seen it—or danced it—members can still stand open-mouthed in the wings, marveling as the never-never world of once-upon-a-time comes to life once more.



Backstage ballet, however, includes some necessary labor. Two hours before performance, star Nadia Nerina (left) limbers up on deserted stage, and (at right) Franklin White completes arduous make-up for role as wicked magician.



BALLET



Between acts, male star Michael Somes (hands on hips) listens to director.

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