



Ballet is not for weaklings

by PEER J. OPPENHEIMER

When Cyd Charisse whirls gracefully on her first television show, it will be the culmination of three months' training that would exhaust a Rose-Bowl football star

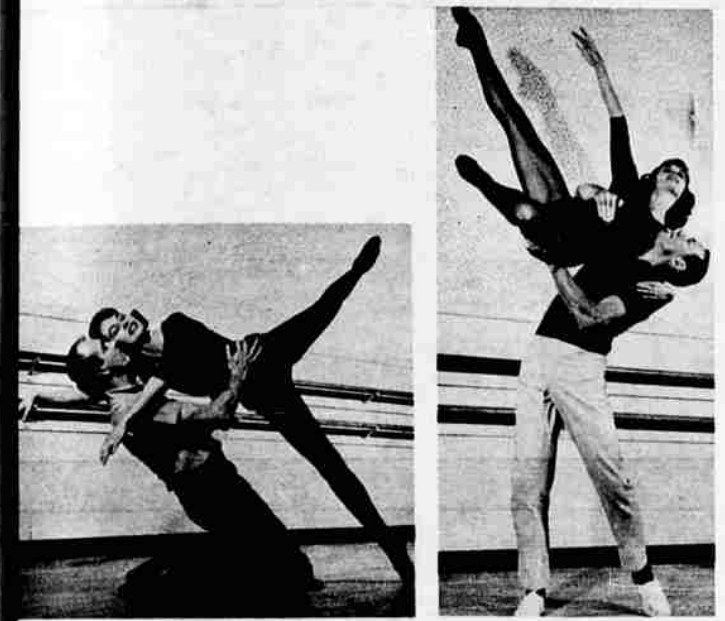


TO MANY AMERICANS, ballet is "toe-dancing"—a pretty but prissy pastime for the delicate set. They might get a different idea if they tried to follow in the intricate footsteps of Cyd Charisse as she prepares for her first television show, "Meet Cyd Charisse." Her grueling rehearsal regimen would have left some football-bowl athletes limp for the approaching New Year's Day classics. Not that Cyd, a former member of the Ballet Russe and star of half-a-dozen MGM musicals, will display anything but the smooth-limbed elegance and mellifluous grace that is the stage-side appearance of fine ballet. But to attain that perfection and beauty, there were three arduous months of backstage gymnastics. Cyd's workday at the NBC studio

in Burbank, Calif., started at 9 a.m. and continued until 4:30 p.m. in seemingly endless repetition of the complex dance steps that will highlight her show. Every motion and gesture with her partner, James Mitchell, had to be perfect. After dinner, there were dialogue and recording sessions with guest stars Tony Martin and Eve Arden. This had a bright side, of course—Eve is sparkling company, and Tony is Cyd's husband. Until 2 a.m. and over week ends, Cyd practiced her dancing at home and kept limber at an exercise bar. That rigorous schedule pared six pounds off Cyd's already svelte frame, but she still looks on her ballet work as fun—and projects that feeling into these rehearsal photos as well as the finished TV show.



Cyd and choreographer Gene Loring caught in mid-air during a practice session.



Few people realize the long rehearsal hours every dance requires. Here Cyd and Herman Boden (upper right) work out together. Dance-in Jack Dodds goes through a routine (upper left) she'll actually do with James Mitchell. The shot below previews their performance.



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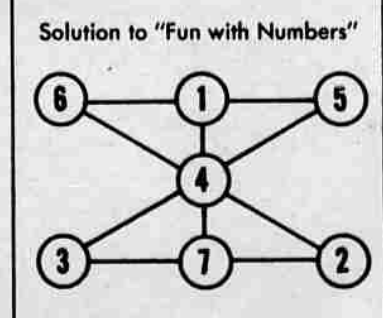


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