

Shakespeare and the Ballet.

By ROBERT HELPMANN.

My first professional appearance, at the age of six was made in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," in Australia, as one of the children engaged to appear in the wood scene. Now I am to play Oberon. It is difficult for me to say anything about it, but I regard it as one of the very important things in my life.

Ever since I joined the Vic-Wells ballet almost five years ago, it has been one of my ambitions to play at the Old Vic. Most dancers have a desire to act, but unlike most dancers I have already acted. My last appearance in Australia was in "The Barretts of Wimpole Street" with Margaret Rawlings, who upon our return to London introduced me to Miss de Valois, and I joined the ballet.

I have no desire to leave the Ballet which I love but I believe my ballet training will help me with my acting. For I realise that my past experiences as an actor have helped me with regard to certain aspects of the ballet. I consider that there is a close relationship between ballet and the Shakespearean plays, inasmuch as many of Shakespeare's works would make admirable subjects for ballet production. I believe that in the production of Shakespeare the collaboration of a producer and a choreographer would have very interesting results.

I do not mean that the verse in any way should be sacrificed, but if the movements, groupings and climaxes are produced on some of the principles generally thought applicable only to choregraphy, the dramatic value of such movements should only enhance the verse.

I consider it a great honour to be given the opportunity to play such a wonderful role as Oberon. As the last article I wrote for this magazine was just before Miss de Valois produced "The Haunted Ballroom" (which contains my first original role in the ballet) I can only say once again that I will do everything in my power to justify this wonderful belief. Further, I know that I will meet with the same help that it has been my good fortune to have had ever since I joined the personnel of these two great theatres.