



The Sissy Revolt of the Annapolis Tercentenary

MARYLAND, 1949: In addition to his academy, Adolphe Robicheau, 37, was dean of dance at Boston College and a show producer, having previously directed the Haverhill Tercentenary, which featured a cast of 300. On the Front page of the Evening Capital, 3 May 1949 - Adolphe Robicheau and Alan Levitt will direct the Annapolis Tercentenary pageant: *The Song of the Severn*.

Alan J Levitt, a director with an American theatre background, had arrived in Annapolis in February to write his pageant, after a long tour of camp shows in Europe during the war. Levitt went on to become a writer for the Norman Lear Group and, in that capacity, wrote episodes of *Maude*, *Three's Company*, and scripts for Lucille Ball.

The Tercentenary Commission hired both Pageant leaders on a budget of \$18,000. The plan called for hundreds of performers, choruses, bands, orchestras; over 40 animals and a real locomotive on rails. A specially built, two-story, 200-foot-wide stage worthy of a papal mass was equipped with ramps and the most modern lighting equipment, as well as bleachers to seat 4,500 spectators.

Rehearsals lasted for weeks. Ten days passed when a group of 36 teenagers revolted against Robicheau and his choreography. The Hagerstown Daily Mail declares, "When a Bostonian comes to Annapolis to teach minuet, brother, you know he's in trouble."

The problem of sissiness came out when the teens arrived for their first rehearsal. While the girls enjoyed the colonial dances and costumes, the boys rebelled. "This is too Sissy for us!" they said to the producers after glancing at the tiny costumes and lightweight minuet steps. The debacle almost derailed the entire production.

The story of the sissy revolt was quickly picked up by the Associated Press and Adolphe Robicheau's name was spread all over the country. More than fifty newspapers

carried the story in headlines: Pageant with a Problem: Youngsters Revolt against the Sissy Minuet; Pageant Directors Find Boys Hard to Sell on Minuet; Teenagers Object to the Sissy Dance!

Robicheau and Levitt spent a week of crisis convincing the teens that there was nothing wrong with the minuet. They eventually convinced most of the boys, and the girls put on ties to replace the few who were ousted for being "a little too, shall we say... aggressive," according to Robicheau. "They don't scare me!" calling them shriveled violets.

"I told them that men in those days were just as manly as they are today, maybe even more so!"

The Associated Press network, always on the lookout for a juicy conclusion, announces the victory. The headlines follow: Minuet not a sissy dance, Adolphe assures!; Youngsters convinced by Bostonian: Minuet not a Sissy dance; Master sells manly minuet to the city!; Professor wins, they'll do the minuet! "Revolt Against Sissy Minuet Finally Ended!"

The Song of the Severn.

Six hundred powdered wigs and costumes are prepared. A cavalry of twenty-three horses pull numerous wagons. A pair of oxen pull the locomotive and other elements of the giant set. WANN radio provides the entertainment and broadcasts everything live on 215 stations simultaneously. The 853 members of the troupe, aged between 9 and 82, prepare to take the stage.

It was the premiere night, on 21 May 1949. The show started 45 minutes late due to bad weather. Nevertheless, 2500 people attended. Popular singer Pat Boone made a cameo as a sailor.

Five shows were scheduled. The second show was cancelled due to flooding. The third went well; for the first time they presented the entire production. During the fourth presentation a horse spooked and ran towards the stage, adding a touch of excitement. An castmember near the carriage was seriously injured and taken to hospital. The last performance was also interrupted due to bad weather.

The reviews are glowing: The Song Of The Severn is a MUST! Four more performances were announced. All in all, more than twenty thousand spectators attended all the performances.

Despite a week of crisis, bad weather, flooded sets and a spooked horse, The Song Of The Severn was for Adolphe Robicheau the moment when he most showed himself the master of his art, his biggest production, and the greatest media coverage of his career.



...solve the German question up to now.

WELL, AIN'T IT?

**Boys Balk, Minuet
Called 'Sissy Stuff'**

(By the Associated Press)
ANNAPOLIS, Md., May 12- | maybe even more," he related,
the minuet stuff. | speaking with a Paris accent.

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**'Dancing the Minuet Not Sissy,
Annapolis Boys Finally Agree**

ANNAPOLIS, Md., May 12.— (AP) showed up the first time. The girls

**DANCING MASTER SELLS
MANLY MINUET TO CITY**

ANNAPOLIS, Md., May 13 (AP) ing an interepid band of 36 teen-
To the minuet sissy stuff?

Minuet Not Sissy Stuff, Adolphe Assures Cast Preparing for Pageant

Annapolis, Md.—(AP)—Is the minuet sissy stuff?

Not everyone will be wildly excited by that question, raised in the rug cutting age.

But Adolphe Robicheau and Annapolis, they care.

Robicheau, a proper Bostonian from Beacon st., came here to teach the old dance for the city's gala tercentenary pageant. It is going to provide a peek back into 300 years of history. Obviously, a minuet is called for.

The problem of sissiness reared its head when volunteers showed up the first time. The girls like it fine, but the boys balked.

"That's not for me," was the lads' chorus after taking a look at the mincing steps of the colonial dance.

Thursday a week after this crisis, Robicheau had the joy of watching an intrepid band of 36 teen agers rehearse the minuet for the pageant, which opens May 22.

"I told them the men in that period were just as manly as today, maybe even more," he related, speaking with a Paris accent. "They weren't scaring me."

Celebrations crowd the week of May 20-27 to mark the 300th anniversary of the founding of Annapolis by 10 Puritan families from Virginia.

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They'll Direct Tercentenary Pageant



(Evening Capital Photo by Warren)

MESSESS. **ROBICHEAU** AND **LEVITT**, respectively dance director and pageant master for the historical spectacle, "Song of the Severn", confer in Tercentenary headquarters on the many dance routines that spice the pageant. Adolphe Robicheau, choreographer for "Song of the Severn", arrived in Annapolis yesterday and immediately began rehearsals for such routines as the Rose Ballet, White Waltz and others—all with local dancers. Alan J. Levitt, (right) has authored the script for the colorful drama which will trace Annapolis' 300 years in song in dramatic episode during Tercentenary week.