

BASED on a fairy tale, "Baby Stork" is a subtle interweaving of fancy and reality.

In a little house on the banks of a great river lives a little boy called Kolya. One day Kolya who is not yet old enough to go to school finds a baby stork in the garden which has evidently been abandoned by its parents. The stork has not yet learned to fly and there is nobody to teach it. Autumn comes and the birds are preparing to fly away to warmer lands. It looks very much as if the baby stork would be left to freeze during the winter months. But Kolya and his comrades come to the aid of their feathered friend. With the help of a fluffy rabbit, a hard-boiled rooster, a shaggy dog and a sleek cat, they teach the storklet to fly just in time to join the last flock of migrants on their way to Africa. There the stork and the other birds and animals defend a little Negro child whose parents have been killed by a cruel planter. The following spring the stork, now a baby no longer, comes back to Kolya's garden bringing with him a little black boy, some mischievous monkeys, a jolly camel and even a kind old elephant. You can imagine what a welcome the children give them!

Naive though it is, this touching story of the two orphans—the baby stork and the little Negro—who find true friends and protectors in the Soviet Union, has a deep meaning that is clear to every Soviet child for whom this charming ballet is intended.

Incidentally, the USSR is the only country in the world where ballets specially designed for children are written by the best composers, staged in the best theaters and performed by the best actors. And one has but to see the rapturous reaction of the children to the choregraphic tale of friendship and justice, of young warm hearts, of reliable comradesly mutual aid, to realize that the country's leading corps de ballet has not been wasting its time.

Both the acting and dancing of the adult performers led by the new prima ballerina R. Struchkova are superb. The performance of the junior pupils of the Moscow Choregraphic School in the roles of the baby stork, Kolya and the Negro child is intensely moving and sincere. The production by N. Popko, L. Pospokhin and A. Radunsky is vivid and ingenious. The ballet has many interesting dances, the music is tuneful and fresh, with a generous sprinkling of folk song and dance motifs.