Only Polite Applause is Awarded To Ballet Russe

By HERBERT GARON

The so-called "original" Ballet Russe, the latest entry in the nationwide golden gloves tournament now being waged by the three leading ballet troupes, entered the local ring last night hoping for a knockout decision from Houston balletomanes. But the music hall, accustomed to sending its fisticuffs cheers to the rafters, had only polite applause for the troupe and, at best, only a doubtful draw could be claimed.

THE REPERTORY of the first engagement consisted of those tried and true chestnuts of the ballet hierarchy reheated for popular consumption. For the second time in as many months, "Swan Lake" was viewed on the local stage. Nina Novak danced the title role with a fine sense of characterization and a display of bravura technique. Her Swan Queen was invested with poise and a right amount of queenliness, but Miss Novak is not a Danilova, and the memory of Danilova's superb delineation of the role dimmed the lustre of Miss Novak's artistry.

Igor Youskevitch danced the role of the prince with skill and assurance. His lifts were accomplished with remarkable grace, and the pas de deux with Miss Novak was beautifully contrived. The orchestra under the baton of Ivan Boutnikoff performed the Tchaikovsky music in a lackadaisical manner.

"SCHEHERAZADE," always a popular favorite, found new friends among last night's audience. The drama of Oriental splendor, set to Rimsky-Korsakov's lush score, is still corn that is sold to the general public as art; but the deep familiarity with the music, plus the visual opulence of the libretto, still packs a wallop with that public.

Eugene Collins, as the slave, was an outstanding performer. He threw himself through the air in phenomenal leaps. The sultan's favorite was handsomely danced by Helene Trailine, who was strong and sure-footed in her movements.

The Ballet Russe appeared under the auspices of Edna W. Saunders.