

DIAGHILEV AND THE BALLETS RUSSES, 1909-1929



**DIAGHILEV**  
AND THE BALLETS RUSSES, 1909–1929:  
WHEN ART DANCED WITH MUSIC

*Edited by Jane Pritchard*

Victoria and Albert Museum, London  
in association with  
National Gallery of Art, Washington

This edition is published to coincide with the exhibition *Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, 1909–1929: When Art Danced with Music* at the National Gallery of Art, Washington 12 May–2 September 2013

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# CONTENTS

- 9 Foreword  
11 Curators' Preface

## ESSAYS

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 15 Serge Diaghilev and the Strange Birth of the Ballets Russes<br><i>Geoffrey Marsh</i>                              | 30 Travel  |
| 33 Diaghilev the Man<br><i>Sjeng Scheijen</i>  | 44 <i>Mir Iskusstva (World of Art)</i><br>46 Diaghilev's Boys  |
| 49 The Transformation of Ballet<br><i>Jane Pritchard</i>   | 64 Paul Poiret and the Ballets Russes<br>66 Diaghilev's Theatres   |
| 71 Creating Productions<br><i>Jane Pritchard</i>   | 92 Daily Class<br>94 Sponsorship and Funding for the Ballets Russes  |
| 103 Léon Bakst, Natalia Goncharova and Pablo Picasso<br><i>John E. Bowlt</i>   | 120 Front Cloths<br>124 Souvenir Programmes<br>126 The Wider Influence of the Russian Ballet   |
| 129 Wardrobe<br><i>Sarah Woodcock</i>  | 164 Diaghilev and Chanel<br>166 Diaghilev under the Hammer   |
| 169 Music and the Ballets Russes<br><i>Howard Goodall</i>  | 182 The Pleasure of his Company<br>184 Beaumont Souvenirs  |
| 187 When Art Danced with Music<br><i>Juliet Bellow</i>   |  |
| 205 A Giant that Continues to Grow – The Impact, Influence and Legacy of The Ballets Russes<br><i>Jane Pritchard</i> | 224 Diaghilev's Death  |
|  | 228 Notes<br>236 Bibliography<br>240 Repertoire<br>242 Tour Locations<br>246 Timeline<br>250 Works Exhibited in Washington<br>258 Lenders to the Washington Exhibition<br>260 Acknowledgements<br>262 Picture Credits<br>264 Index |



I MET DIAGHILEV IN THE AUTUMN OF 1909.... FROM ALL THAT I HAD HEARD OF HIM, I IMAGINED HIM HAUGHTY, ARROGANT, AND SNOBBISH. TO TELL THE TRUTH, I FOUND, AFTER I MET HIM, THAT THE REPUTATION PEOPLE HAD GIVEN HIM WAS NOT ENTIRELY WITHOUT FOUNDATION. HE HAD MANY UNSYMPATHETIC TRAITS – WHICH, HOWEVER, WERE NOT THE ESSENCE OF HIS NATURE.... I THINK THE EXPRESSION ‘RUSSIAN BARIN’ CHARACTERIZES DIAGHILEV’S NATURE AND EXPLAINS HIS AMAZING ACTIVITY AS THE INSPIRER, PROMOTER, AND ORGANIZER OF A LONG SERIES OF ARTISTIC EVENTS ... IT IS ONLY BY UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF A CULTURED BARIN SUCH AS USED TO EXIST IN RUSSIA (A NATURE GENEROUS, STRONG, AND CAPRICIOUS; WITH INTENSE WILL, A RICH SENSE OF CONTRASTS, AND DEEP ANCESTRAL ROOTS) THAT WE CAN EXPLAIN THE CHARACTER AND ORIGINALITY OF DIAGHILEV’S CREATIONS, SO DIFFERENT FROM THE AVERAGE ARTISTIC ENTERPRISES. APART FROM HIS INTELLIGENCE, HIS CULTURE, HIS EXTRAORDINARY ARTISTIC FLAIR, AND HIS SINCERE ENTHUSIASM, HE POSSESSED A WILL OF IRON, TENACITY, AN ALMOST SUPERHUMAN RESISTANCE AND PASSION TO FIGHT AND TO OVERCOME THE MOST INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLES.... HE DISPLAYED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ENLIGHTENED DESPOT, OF THE NATURAL LEADER WHO KNOWS HOW TO DRIVE THE MOST UNYIELDING ELEMENTS, AT TIMES USING PERSUASION, AT OTHERS, CHARM. HIS PASSIONATE DEVOTION TO THE CAUSE HE SERVED AND TO THE IDEAS HE WAS THEN PROMULGATING AND HIS COMPLETE DISINTERESTEDNESS AND LACK OF PERSONAL AMBITION IN ALL HIS ENTERPRISES WON THE HEARTS OF HIS CO-WORKERS. WORKING WITH HIM, THEY REALIZED, MEANT WORKING SOLELY FOR THE GREAT CAUSE OF ART.

FROM IGOR STRAVINSKY, ‘THE DIAGHILEV I KNEW’, *ATLANTIC MONTHLY* (NOVEMBER 1952), VOL.192 (5), PP.33-6

# FOREWORD



*Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, 1909–1929: When Art Danced with Music* celebrates one of the most dazzling cultural enterprises of the twentieth century. The Ballets Russes, established in 1909 by the indefatigable impresario Serge Diaghilev, revolutionized the art of ballet. Combining Russian and Western traditions with a healthy dose of modernism, the company thrilled and shocked audiences with its powerful fusion of choreography, music, design and dance. Though it was based in Paris, the company toured throughout Europe, the United States and South America. Its influence continues to be felt today.

Diaghilev's passion for the arts was matched by his ambition, charm, drive, and intellectual curiosity. Determined to make something extraordinary of his life, the young Diaghilev inaugurated Russia's first art journal, *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*), in 1898 and began to sponsor Russian art both at home and abroad. But it was his establishment of the Ballets Russes in 1909 that broke new ground and radically changed the performing arts in Europe.

Diaghilev's success was primarily due to his ability to identify and bring together the most creative artists of his day. Recognizing the vitality of contemporary art, he called upon Léon Bakst, Natalia Goncharova, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Giorgio de Chirico, among others, to create dynamic set designs and exquisitely decorated costumes that shared a unified aesthetic. They in turn brought the most important artistic developments of the early twentieth century – including Futurism, Cubism and Surrealism – to the ballet stage, reckoning along the way with the challenges and opportunities posed by translating their ideas into live performance.

Music was no less central to Diaghilev's enterprise. By commissioning ballet scores from young, innovative composers such as Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev and Erik Satie, Diaghilev brought together two worlds that had

been at odds for much of the nineteenth century. With dancers noted for their technical brio, the company also became a breeding ground for choreographic innovation. Mikhail Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, Léonide Massine, Bronislava Nijinska and George Balanchine liberated the body from the constraints of classical training and dramatically expanded the vocabulary of movement. From the infamous *Rite of Spring* – now celebrating its one hundredth anniversary – to Balanchine's sublime *Apollon musagète*, the troupe's productions instigated a revolution in dance that changed the history of ballet.

We are deeply grateful to the Victoria and Albert Museum – especially its director Martin Roth, his predecessor Mark Jones and curators Jane Pritchard and Geoffrey Marsh, who organized the groundbreaking exhibition that premiered in London. By selecting from that rich survey and adding related works of art for our presentation in Washington, we have taken the opportunity to highlight the prolific and profound connections between art and dance that Diaghilev fostered. We thank Sarah Kennel for curating our show. We also extend our deepest gratitude to the individuals and institutions who have shared their treasures with us.

The exhibition would not have been possible without the extraordinary commitment of ExxonMobil and Rosneft, our principal co-sponsors. We are tremendously grateful to the companies for their enthusiastic endorsement. We also thank Adrienne Arshnt for her early interest and generous gift. We are grateful for the additional support of The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art and longtime friends Sally Engelhard Pingree and The Charles Engelhard Foundation, Jacqueline B. Mars, and the Leonard and Elaine Silverstein Family Foundation.

Earl A. Powell III, Director  
National Gallery of Art

Adolph Bolm and Tamara  
Karsavina in *Thamar*, 1912.  
Photograph by Waléry.  
V&A: Theatre &  
Performance Collections  
THM/165

# CURATORS' PREFACE

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The signal achievement of the Ballets Russes was the spirit of open collaboration it fostered. For twenty years, the company produced dazzling and innovative spectacles born of the robust dialogues between choreographers, dancers, artists and musicians. The success of such endeavours also depended on the commitment and hard work of countless individuals. Like those productions, *Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, 1909–1929: When Art Danced with Music* has benefited from a vital spirit of collaboration and the tireless efforts of an ensemble cast. I extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every contributor. In particular, I am indebted to the Victoria and Albert Museum curators Jane Pritchard and Geoffrey Marsh, whose multimedia spectacle has encouraged the National Gallery of Art to expand its own repertoire and integrate costume, music and film with fine art; Juliet Bellow, who produced an insightful essay and provided important guidance; Anna Winestein, whose knowledge of the Ballets Russes is outweighed only by her boundless enthusiasm and energy; and, finally, the unflappable, marvellously efficient Sarah Gordon.

Sarah Kennel  
National Gallery of Art, Washington

The exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington is the last of a series celebrating Serge Diaghilev and his collaborators for the Ballets Russes which began at the V&A in 2010. It has been intriguing to see a core of material associated with different loans shedding new light on our own holdings. For the initial *Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes 1909–1929* we were fortunate in the assistance and advice of composer and broadcaster Howard Goodall, Diaghilev's biographer Sjeng Scheijen, life-long enthusiast and collector of Russian art Nina Lobanov-Rostovsky and our exhibition assistant Sarah Sonner. We would like to thank them and John Bowl and Sarah Woodcock who contributed essays to this book along with the V&A curators who provided lively articles on different aspects of the company. For the National Gallery of Art Juliet Bellow has contributed an additional essay presenting the thesis of the new exhibition and revealing the design materials as artworks in their own right.

Appropriately, as almost half the performances by the Ballets Russes took place in Britain, the Theatre & Performance Department of the V&A has substantial holdings on the company and its productions. These include set cloths, the world's largest collection of costumes worn by Diaghilev's dancers, and rich collections of designs, archives and ephemera. We must acknowledge a huge debt to former colleagues and supporters, most notably Richard Buckle and Alexander Schouvaloff, who enabled the museum to acquire its Ballets Russes collections.

Jane Pritchard and Geoffrey Marsh  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Natalia Goncharova,  
costume design for a  
Russian peasant with a flask  
of vodka from *Le Coq d'or*.  
Watercolour and body-  
colours, 1914.  
V&A: E.297–1961

Valentine Gross,  
woodcut-style drawing of a  
coachman and nursemaids  
in *Petrushka*. Ink on  
tracing paper, 1912.  
V&A: S.2310-2009





# SERGE DIAGHILEV AND THE STRANGE BIRTH OF THE BALLETS RUSSES

GEOFFREY MARSH

## *Relishing National Acclaim: Spring 1905*

In the Banqueting Suite of the Metropole Hotel, Moscow, a tall, bulky, elegantly dressed man stands up and acknowledges the appreciative applause of his colleagues – artists, critics, writers and friends (frontispiece, p.2). They have gathered at a gala banquet to honour Serge Pavlovich Diaghilev's creation of the stupendous *Exhibition of Russian Historical Portraits* in the capital, St Petersburg.<sup>1</sup> The tsar, Nicholas II, has already opened the display in person and spent two hours viewing most of his Romanov ancestors among the many famous Russians (pl.1).

As Diaghilev looks down at his speech, provocatively entitled 'The Hour of Reckoning', he is acutely aware of the political turmoil outside and its extreme violence. Seven weeks earlier, and only a few hundred metres away, the Grand Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich, the tsar's uncle and brother-in-law, had been blown apart by a terrorist bomb inside the precincts of the Kremlin.<sup>2</sup>

After reflecting that his tour of country houses, hunting for paintings, had revealed that 'The end was here in front of me', Diaghilev concludes:

We are witnessing the greatest historic hour of reckoning, of things coming to an end in the name of a new, unknown culture – one which we will create but which will also sweep us away ... I raise my glass ... to the new commandments of a new aesthetic. The only wish that I, an incorrigible sensualist, can express, is that the forthcoming struggle should not damage the amenities of life, and that the death should be as beautiful and illuminating as the Resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

As Diaghilev spoke these words, he must have felt at the peak of his artistic success and that full official recognition was within his grasp. At 33, he had assembled an exhibition

recognized as a benchmark in the appreciation of Russian art and identity. Even his enemies acknowledged his astonishing organizational abilities, particularly during the dramatic political upheavals following the 'Bloody Sunday' massacre.<sup>4</sup>

## *Diaghilev's Changing World*

In 1905, Diaghilev would probably have dismissed as absurd the idea that he would manage a commercial ballet company outside Russia. Yet, four years later, it had become his peculiar destiny – a strange mixture of creative adventure, nationalistic responsibility and entrepreneurial burden. Like Diaghilev's complex character, the birth of the Ballets Russes was not straightforward. A coincidence of external circumstances created an unusual opportunity, but it was the infusion of Diaghilev's restless ambition that provided the catalyst for the creation of one of the greatest artistic enterprises of the twentieth century.

If Diaghilev had successfully ridden out the cultural storm predicted in his Moscow speech, his Imperial connections combined with his radical artistic stance might have resulted in the offer of a key position in the Russian art world. Diaghilev aimed high and believed he could be Minister of Culture.<sup>5</sup> Such an appointment would secure his reputation, status and fortune for life. Yet, despite his immediate triumph in 1905, this happy outcome was not to be. Whereas before 1906 his artistic endeavours had been within Russia, after 1906 they were all to take place abroad. In this profound change lay the origins of the Ballets Russes. For the next 20 years Diaghilev's entire life would be devoted to creating great performance, everywhere but in Russia.

To understand the origins of the Ballets Russes in these years, it is essential to appreciate that Diaghilev was intensely driven to succeed, a characteristic that went back to his early years. He was born on 19 March 1872, near

Novgorod, but his mother died a few months later. His father, a colonel in the cavalry, remarried two years later and Diaghilev was brought up by his stepmother Yelena Panayeva. Diaghilev recalled how she instilled in him a will to succeed, telling him never to use the words ‘I can’t’, insisting that ‘when people want to, they can’.<sup>6</sup>

Diaghilev was part of an extensive family of landed nobility, some of whom reached senior government positions. His family’s wealth was based on a monopoly for distilling vodka and spirits in Perm. Soon Serge had two half-brothers, Valentin and Yury, and he seems to have had a generally happy childhood in St Petersburg where there were many relatives. From 1879–90 the family lived in the Perm region near the Urals, first on the family estate and then in a large mansion in Perm itself.

Diaghilev’s drive was accentuated by the financial disaster that overwhelmed his family in 1890, when he was just 18 and about to go to university. His father was made bankrupt and all the family property was auctioned to pay off his debts. Overnight, Diaghilev, who had a small inheritance from his mother, became responsible for his father, stepmother and half-brothers. Instead of being able to live the life of a leisured nobleman, he needed to find a source of income that would provide public recognition without compromising his social status.

His career during his twenties shows Diaghilev trying to make his mark in the world of the arts, as a researcher, critic, editor, publisher and exhibition organizer. Success

might eventually lead to a public position and in 1901 he was arguing for the reorganization of Russia’s art galleries with the clear implication that he was the right man to achieve it. However, all such preferment was dependent on the tsar and just at the time when Diaghilev’s reputation was in the ascendant, the 1905 Revolution was to erupt.

*The Road to Revolution: 1904–5*

If Diaghilev reflected on the months since autumn 1904, even he would have been staggered at the pace of events and the changed condition of Russia. Since graduating in law from the University of St Petersburg in 1896, he had pursued a career as a critic, organized numerous painting exhibitions<sup>7</sup> and co-founded Russia’s first arts magazine *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*).<sup>8</sup> He had met the tsar several times, having briefly held a position in the Imperial Theatre,<sup>9</sup> and had triumphed in 1905 with his spectacular *Exhibition of Russian Historical Portraits* (pl.1).<sup>10</sup> Although political tension was rising during this time, dissent was largely controlled by harsh repression. However, in 1904–5, political and economic pressures built up until they exploded into revolution.

In May 1903 when the capital, St Petersburg, celebrated its 200th anniversary, such upheaval would have seemed improbable, but the underlying problems that would eventually destroy Imperial Russia were clear. Over the previous 40 years the city, Peter the Great’s ‘Window to the West’ built on the marshes at the mouth of the River Neva, had expanded at breakneck speed (pls 2 and 3). Migrants

1. Room of Empress Catherine II, *Exhibition of Russian Historical Portraits*, Tauride Palace, St Petersburg, 1905. Russian Museum, St Petersburg



2. The Nevsky Prospect, St Petersburg, showing the Admiralty Spire, c.1901. The capital’s main street was lined with luxury shops.



3. *St Petersburg: Ifyin* Cartographic Soc., 1911. By 1900 the elegant central boulevards were surrounded by railways, factories and workers’ housing. Courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society



4. Poor citizens in St Petersburg, c.1900. Society for Cooperation in Russian and Soviet Studies

from all over Russia sought economic betterment in its new factories, mills, businesses and shops.

By 1890 the capital's population was nudging nearly a million but over the next decade another 400,000 people moved in. It was estimated that 70 per cent of the population were new arrivals, largely peasants fleeing the countryside. Factories sprang up ringing the elegant centre. It was a city of extraordinary contrasts where industrialists were making vast fortunes while most of the workers lived in very poor conditions (pl.4).<sup>11</sup> At its heart was the tsar, surrounded by the most brilliant court in Europe.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately Nicholas II, who had succeeded in 1894 on the unexpected death of his father at the age of 49, was singularly ill suited to solving the country's problems (pl.5).<sup>13</sup> His reactionary views were backed by the huge influence and wealth of the Orthodox Church.<sup>14</sup>

From the summer of 1904 political tension increased, particularly following the assassination in July of the Interior Minister, Vyacheslav von Plehve. By November there were nationwide demands for liberalization of the press, and in December 1904 the tsar issued a manifesto promising some political reforms. This, however, merely prompted a strike at the huge Putilov engineering works in south-west St Petersburg which in turn led to the tragic events of 'Bloody

Sunday' a few weeks later. From then on Russia descended into escalating violence throughout 1905.<sup>15</sup>

The growing opposition to Imperial rule was exacerbated by the war with Japan over Manchuria, begun in February 1904, which revealed the general incompetency of the administration. The Japanese won a succession of victories culminating in the capture of Port Arthur on 2 January 1905 (pl.6). This defeat by a non-Western power was a huge blow to Russia's international prestige, but worse was to follow. On 27 to 28 May 1905, the Japanese destroyed the Russian fleet at the Battle of Tsushima Strait.<sup>16</sup>

The tsar became the focus of increasing political opposition and by early October there was a de facto general strike across the country, in which the dancers of the Imperial Theatres participated.<sup>17</sup> Diaghilev, who was in St Petersburg organizing the return of the loans from his portrait exhibition, described the atmosphere:

Don't be angry at my silence. It's impossible to describe what's going on here: we're shut in on all sides, in complete darkness, no chemists, trams, newspapers, telephones or telegraphs and waiting for the machine guns!<sup>18</sup>

5. Henri Gervex, *The Coronation of Nicholas II - sketch*. Oil on canvas, 1896. One of the most opulent events of the period, it was also one of the earliest to be filmed. Musée d'Orsay, Paris





6. *The Last Stand of Vice Admiral Makaroff*.  
Woodblock print, 1904.  
The Russo-Japanese War was a disaster for Tsar Nicholas II.  
V&A: E.923–1959.  
Given by James Laver CBE

*Overleaf*  
7. Ilya Repin, *17 October 1905*.  
Oil on canvas, c.1907–11.  
The celebrants in the painting come from every part of society.  
Russian Museum, St Petersburg

When the tsar's uncle refused to take over as dictator, Nicholas signed a manifesto promising constitutional government on 30 October 1905 (new style).<sup>19</sup> St Petersburg exploded in celebration, recorded in Ilya Repin's famous painting *17 October 1905*, which captures the bourgeois nature of the cheering crowds (pl.7).<sup>20</sup> Even the cynical Diaghilev was caught up in the excitement. Lifar records Diaghilev's radical aunt writing the following day: 'We are rejoicing. Yesterday, even, we had champagne. You would never guess who bought the manifesto ... Seriozha [Diaghilev] of all people. Wonderful!'<sup>21</sup>

Diaghilev, who had helped support the strike of dancers at the Imperial Theatre, was personally affected in at least one way. His friend the dancer Sergei Legat,<sup>22</sup> feeling he had sold out his colleagues, slit his throat with a razor on 17 October when he heard of the tsar's capitulation.

*What to do?*

By the end of 1905 Diaghilev was less positive about the progress of events and their impact on his own future. Over the preceding six years the tsar had directly or indirectly funded much of his activity.<sup>23</sup> Thus, as the revolution gathered strength, Diaghilev had to negotiate a tricky path. While he welcomed the overall liberalization, he must have become increasingly concerned that growing instability would result in less subsidy and fewer cultural opportunities.

So things are coming out badly – it can't be helped. One just has to sit and waste time, but when will this wild bacchanal be over, which is not without some elemental beauty but which like every tempest brings so much hideous misery.<sup>24</sup>

Following the closure of his portrait exhibition in October, it was difficult to see how Diaghilev could deliver another similar success, especially with the ongoing political crisis.<sup>25</sup> However, as one door of opportunity closed, another opened. Russia was becoming ever more dependent on French loans<sup>26</sup> and thus maintaining Franco-Russian relations was of critical importance.<sup>27</sup> It was essential to improve French confidence in the aftermath of the disaster of the Russo-Japanese War and the upheavals of 1905. The Russian government was thus willing to support cultural initiatives in Paris, which promoted a positive image of the country as part of the 'European club'.<sup>28</sup>

Diaghilev was well aware of the opportunities this threw up but also the tensions, writing to Rimsky-Korsakov: 'Don't forget that I have to convince the Grand Duke

Vladimir that our enterprise will be useful from a national point of view [and] the Minister of Finance that it will be profitable on the economic side...'<sup>29</sup>

*Two Centuries of Russian Painting and Sculpture: Paris 1906*

Early in 1906 Diaghilev conceived the idea of mounting a major exhibition of Russian paintings as part of the new Salon d'Automne in Paris.<sup>30</sup> However, there is no evidence that Diaghilev saw this as a permanent move to the West. On the contrary, it was a convenient means of occupying his time, making contacts and advancing his reputation while things settled down in Russia.<sup>31</sup> Nor did he head straight to Paris, instead taking his new boyfriend, Aleksey Mavrin, on a tour of the Mediterranean, and arriving in Paris in late May.





8. Valentine Gross, cover of the souvenir programme for Théâtre national de l'Opéra, May-June 1914. The illustration, drawn from a photograph, shows Vera Fokina and Mikhail Fokine in *Schéhérazade*.  
V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



9. Wagon du Nord Train at an interchange station on the Russian-German border, 1903. Diaghilev could travel from St Petersburg to Paris in about 50 hours.  
Sammlung Jürgen Klein

During this tour, Diaghilev visited the 1906 IV Olympic Games held at the Panathenian Stadium in Athens from 22 April to 2 May 1906.<sup>32</sup> Since Athens was difficult to get to and Diaghilev showed little interest in sport it is worth asking why he made this trip.<sup>33</sup> Like any sophisticated Russian of his generation, he was steeped in ancient Greek culture and the Pan-Slavic movement promoted interest in the region.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the homoerotic attraction of 900 athletes should not be underestimated. But there was perhaps a more strategic reason in his mind. The great nineteenth-century international exhibitions typically included major art shows. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who helped found the modern Olympics, considered artistic endeavour to be as important as physical competition, and organized the awarding of medals.<sup>35</sup> Diaghilev may have been seeking opportunities to promote art shows at future Olympics, particularly since the 1908 Games were planned for Rome.<sup>36</sup>

Whatever the precise reasons for Diaghilev's 1906 trip to the Aegean, his main focus in Paris was to secure a Russian section at the Salon d'Automne. By the end of May he had met the organizers and it was agreed that he would supply a summary exhibition of Russian art over the last two centuries. By 2 June he had drawn up a list of artists and set himself the immense task of organizing the loan and transport of 750 works in 15 weeks ready for the opening in October.

The exhibition was a great success and the critical reception alone fully justified Diaghilev's switch to promoting Russian culture abroad. Earlier in the year Diaghilev had met the Comtesse Greffuhle, a hugely wealthy patron of the arts.<sup>37</sup> Impressed by his knowledge of Russian music, then little known in France, she offered to support

a series of 'historic' Russian concerts at the Paris Opéra, arguably the most prestigious venue in Europe.<sup>38</sup> The five concerts in May 1907 would be well received,<sup>39</sup> not least because Diaghilev had persuaded Fyodor Chaliapin, the renowned Russian bass, to sing.<sup>40</sup> The success of the 1906 Russian art exhibition had proved that Russia had the quality of arts to impress Western audiences. However, Diaghilev was shrewd enough to realize that continuing commercial success would depend on playing to their prejudices, particularly the view that Russia had a bloody history and was a vast country full of exotic tribes, music and dancing.<sup>41</sup> Even during Diaghilev's own lifetime, Russia had expanded to colonize many 'exotic' peoples. Opera was an established way of presenting Russia's mainstream history. However, perhaps as early 1906, Diaghilev may have turned to considering ballet as a way of presenting the diverse cultures along Russia's borders.

By the Christmas of 1906, Diaghilev was heading back to Paris to resume his self-appointed task of introducing Russian art and music to Western Europe.<sup>42</sup> Although he did not yet know it, this departure would be one of his last as a resident of St Petersburg. Soon he would dispose of his apartment on the fashionable Fontanka Embankment, where Bakst had painted his famous portrait of Diaghilev with his nanny (see pl.18). From now on he would stay at the nearby luxury Hotel d'Europe on his increasingly brief visits. He would become a wanderer and, in eight years time in 1914, an exile, never to return to his homeland.

The 2,000 kilometres between St Petersburg and Paris represented for Diaghilev far more than a train journey between two Imperial capitals (pl.9). It was a leap from the

double-headed eagle of the Romanov tsars to the tricolour of the Third Republic, from autocracy to democracy, from Orthodoxy to Catholicism, and from state-controlled culture to the creative ferment of the internationally acknowledged capital of fashion and the arts, 'The City of Light',<sup>43</sup> where entertainment has evolved into a quasi-capitalist industry. For Diaghilev the move to Paris was the opportunity to escape the turmoil and chaos of political revolution in Russia, and to savour the cultural, aesthetic and sexual opportunities of a sensual city which had embraced decadence in all aspects of life.

More importantly, Paris would provide a new and a potentially profitable platform for Diaghilev's unique form of cultural entrepreneurship.<sup>44</sup> In 1906 his focus had been promoting Russian painting. In 1907 he would turn to Russian music and opera. But he was also well aware of the latent resources of the Russian Imperial Ballet, commenting:

From Opera to Ballet is but a step. At that time there were more than 400 ballet dancers on the roster of the Imperial Theatres. They had all had a remarkably good training, and they danced the traditional classical ballets ... All these ballets I was very familiar with, having been attached to the Director of the Imperial Theatres for two years or so.<sup>45</sup>

Such was his creative energy that within 28 months he had founded one of the most famous and influential dance companies in history.

#### *Diaghilev: Maverick or Canny Operator?*

Did Diaghilev take a leap in the dark in 1906? Hardly. His move to the West was an astute and pragmatic response to the complex political and cultural situation in Russia. By shifting his activities to Paris and later elsewhere in Western Europe, he could avoid the paralysis back home while notching up high-profile successes abroad. He could also exploit the substantial Imperial subsidies and other support available for foreign projects to underwrite the financial risks, while building a network of his own contacts. As and when things improved in Russia, he would be able to return, covered in glory from his patriotic activities overseas.

However, Diaghilev demonstrated the full extent of his steely ambition in March 1909 when the tsar suddenly withdrew all financial and practical support, and disaster loomed.<sup>46</sup> By April, Diaghilev was rehearsing a group of ballet dancers in St Petersburg and cabling his promoter in Paris: 'No opera this year. Bringing brilliant ballet company, eighty strong, best soloists, 15 performances. Repertory can be enlarged ... three ballets per programme.... Start big publicity.'<sup>47</sup> The group of dancers, choreographers, artists and technicians that was to become the Ballets Russes was underway.<sup>48</sup> The court was amazed that rather than giving up, Diaghilev carried on regardless, albeit at the cost of dropping opera and focusing on ballet, which was much cheaper, for the 1909 season. In truth, however, he had little

alternative. Diaghilev had burnt his bridges in Russia and must have realized that the only way left open to him was to develop a 'mixed' economic model based on a commercial operation combined with subsidies from rich supporters.<sup>49</sup>

Like many new operations he overreached himself financially in the 1909 season but avoided disaster by adroit negotiation. Two years later, on the back of five performance seasons, Diaghilev had his own loyal ballet company, excellent self-generated productions, a growing 'brand' and following, and Nijinsky – who was also his boyfriend – established as an international star. Although he never went back to exhibiting art on a large scale he had the pleasure of being able to commission artists and composers for his ballets as and when he wanted.<sup>50</sup> In addition, he had found a sustainable way to make a reasonable living and to develop his own reputation. Above all, he was absolutely in charge and answerable only to the paying public. The Ballets Russes was never going to make him a fortune but it provided a rich platform for his ambitions, an outlet for his unique mix of talents and a dependent 'family' of his own.

By the end of 1911, with the success of the London Coronation season behind him, Diaghilev felt confident enough to book the Narodny Dom Theatre in St Petersburg for spring 1912 to compete head to head with the Imperial Ballet in its home city.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, at the crucial moment, the theatre burnt down. Diaghilev could not secure another venue in time and the tour was cancelled. Diaghilev would have seen these events as merely delaying his triumphant return to his homeland. However, changing world events outwitted him, and the Ballets Russes was never to perform in Russia.

#### *Finale*

In January and March 1914 Diaghilev visited St Petersburg on brief business trips but then returned to Berlin to begin the Ballets Russes' European and South American tour for the year. He was never to return to Russia and he became a nomadic exile.<sup>52</sup>

Over the next 15 years, until Diaghilev's sudden death in 1929, the Ballets Russes continued to provide a purpose, a living, a status and, ultimately, eternal fame.<sup>53</sup>

He lived and died 'a favourite of the gods'. For he was a pagan, and a Dionysian pagan – not Apollonian. He loved everything earthly – earthly love, earthly passions, earthly beauty. Heaven for him was just a lovely dome above a lovely earth.<sup>54</sup>

10. After Aleksandr Golovin, costume worn by Fyodor Chaliapin as Boris Godunov in the Coronation Scene from *Boris Godunov* for Diaghilev's Saison Russe. Silk and metal thread, glass beads, 'essence d'orient' pearls, metal, painted silk lining, replacement fur, c.1908. V&A: S.459 (& parts)–1979





*Opposite*  
11. After Alexandre Benois,  
costume worn by Vaslav  
Nijinsky as Albrecht from  
*Giselle* (Act II). Silk velvet  
with replica silk shirt, 1910.  
V&A: S.836(&A)-1981



12. Vaslav Nijinsky as  
Albrecht from *Giselle*  
(Act II), 1910.  
Photograph by Bert.  
V&A: Theatre &  
Performance Collections  
THM/165

## TRAVEL

### *Kristian Volsing*

The Ballets Russes toured extensively, traversing the globe during the company's 20-year existence. They travelled by train and ferry across Europe and the USA, Canada and South America, performing in most of the major cities. Diaghilev transported many of the company's first dancers,

who were originally from the Imperial Russian Ballet of St Petersburg, from Russia to Paris for long summer seasons. The train journey was a distance of over 2,000 kilometres and took about two and a half days, with changes at Warsaw and Berlin.

The company's first engagements outside Europe took place in 1913. The journey from Southampton to Rio de Janeiro took over three weeks, and Diaghilev, afraid of crossing the ocean, did not accompany them. His only excursion beyond Europe was during the First World War, when in 1916 he took the ten-day voyage by ship from Bordeaux to New York. Unable to secure a season of performances in France or Britain during this period, he had to take his company to the USA, which had not yet entered the conflict. The Ballets Russes performed in cities traversing North America, from New York to San Francisco.

Transportation systems were prone to disaster. Principal character dancer Lydia Sokolova recalled a train fiasco

during the company's 1917 tour of South America, while travelling from Rio de Janeiro to São Paulo. As the train climbed through the Mantiqueira Mountains, sparks from the timber-powered engine flew past the open truck containing the scenery designed by Léon Bakst for *Le Spectre de la rose* and *Cléopâtre*, setting them on fire. The train was forced to stop in the middle of the mountains while the cast saved what they could from the burning wreckage. Serge Grigoriev, the *régisiseur*, had a nasty surprise when he arrived later in São Paulo by car. A further incident befell Sokolova on a journey back from Monte Carlo to Paris in 1921, during which she shared a berth with singer Zoia Rosovska. On waking at dawn, Rosovska was shocked to find that her necklace had been stolen while she was asleep. During the night, a thief had filled the compartment with chloroform before stealing the performers' possessions.<sup>1</sup>

The 1918 tour of Spain saw the company travelling by more

rudimentary means. Many of the engagements were in small towns, which involved crossing rough terrain by horse and cart. Performances were reduced to the simplest of sets, which could be transported by the cast themselves; the larger sets were seen only in major cities.

Although train travel was the dominant means of transportation at this time, scheduled flights between European cities began to emerge after the First World War. At the beginning of the 1920s, Croydon Aerodrome, near London, established regular passenger services to Paris, Rotterdam and Berlin. The Ekstrom Collection at the V&A Theatre & Performance department holds a single aeroplane ticket from Croydon, purchased for a Ballets Russes conductor.

<sup>1</sup> Sokolova 1960, p.108.



Igor Stravinsky and Serge Diaghilev at Croydon Aerodrome, c.1926.



The company travelling to South America on the *Reina Victoria-Eugenia* in July 1917. Snapshot from Stanislas Idzikowski's photo album. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections THM/376



*Above*

Adolph Bolm, Serge Grigoriev, Léonide Massine, Lydia Sokolova, Hilda Bewicke, Serge Diaghilev, Lydia Lopokova, Lubov Tchernicheva, Olga Kokhlova and Nicholas Kremneff on board a train in Chicago, 1916. Russian State Theatre Museum, St Petersburg

*Right*

Ballets Russes dancers, with Lubov Tchernicheva in the foreground, posing in costumes from *Schéhérazade*, Granada, Spain, May 1918. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections THM/376





# DIAGHILEV THE MAN

SJENG SCHEIJEN

On 14 July 1902, the Campanile of St Mark's Basilica in Venice collapsed and was completely destroyed. A major crack, which had appeared days before, gradually widened, but even once it was declared that the tower could not be saved it took exactly 3 days and 19 hours before it fell down.<sup>1</sup> Watching the mighty structure slowly crumble must have been eerie, and no one knew whether it would take other buildings in its fall – perhaps even St Mark's itself. The collapse of the Campanile was seen by many as symbolic, not only of the fragility of Venice itself, but also of the glories of European civilization, of which Venice was such a stunning example. Although the twentieth century had only just begun and spirits in general were high, many felt that the rapid industrialization and modernization sweeping across Europe were changing the very fabric of the civilized world – not always for the better.

This was certainly the case for the young Russian, Serge Diaghilev, who was already a regular visitor to the city and who that summer had taken a prolonged stay, hoping to heal his ailing relationship with his lover and first cousin, Dimitry 'Dima' Filosofov, to whom he had been dedicated for more than 12 years.

At that time, Diaghilev was far from being the man who would confront the European theatre public with such beacons of modernism as *The Rite of Spring* or *Parade*. Indeed, he firmly believed that 'in music one cannot go further than Wagner, and you cannot undress the art of painting more than Manet and Zorn'.<sup>2</sup> He considered craftsmanship to be, if not the essence of artistic creation, then surely the first condition within which it took place. In his celebrated magazine *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*), there was plenty of room for younger artists, but it was never a soapbox for the newest tendencies in European art. The Impressionists were paid little attention, and Cézanne and Van Gogh were only mentioned for the first time in 1904, the

fifth year of the journal's existence and fourteen years after Van Gogh's death. Meanwhile, Diaghilev devoted much space to the art of bygone years – especially that of the eighteenth century, about which he was passionate.

But in 1902 many things changed for Diaghilev. Although he had only just turned 30 he was already at the forefront of the visual arts world in St Petersburg. Where to go from there? Shortly before his visit to Venice he spent a few months at the clinic of the Viennese psychiatrist, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, where he tried to come to terms with his homosexuality. He also confronted his pathological fear of death. In two long and uncommonly philosophical and poetic letters to his stepmother, written five weeks after he saw the Campanile collapse, he predicted that he would 'manage to act like Wagner and will come to Venice to die'.<sup>3</sup> For Diaghilev, staging the circumstances of his own death was a means of containing his fears, and 27 years later, in the summer of 1929, he duly dragged himself to Venice to die.

The collapse of the Campanile (pl.13) left a lasting impression on both Diaghilev and his cousin. Shortly after the event Dima wrote an essay entitled 'Contemporary Art and the Campanile of San Marco', in which he argued that rebuilding the tower was pointless, and if attempted, should be done by a contemporary architect 'like Olbrich or Mackintosh'.<sup>4</sup> In a heartfelt statement he advocated that it was better to embrace contemporary life, and contemporary art, than to lose oneself in a stultifying respect for the art of the past:

So museums with their bric-a-brac will do no good, if outside, on the street, in schools, in factories, in short in our everyday, working, grey and vulgarized, but at the same time grand life, does not tremble the artistic nerve. We live in an age of trams, train stations, theatres, schools, department stores, restaurants, apartment buildings, factories, newspapers, books. Our artists



13. View across St Mark's Square, Venice, showing pedestrians in front of the rubble left after the collapse of the Campanile of St Mark's Basilica, July 1902.

must, on every side of our new life, impose their stamp.... In this respect the idea of resurrecting the Campanile is in the highest sense unfortunate. Millions will be spent to create a dead, soundless bell tower. I do not say that future architects cannot raise bell towers. But these will be bell towers for new cathedrals, and for a new religion.<sup>5</sup>

Diaghilev himself expressed similar sentiments when he wrote that "The culture of twenty centuries, pressing down on our shoulders, prevents us from creating, and if along with S. Marco's Campanile the whole of our beloved Venice tumbled down, we would go mad with grief, but ... for men of the future there would be one serious obstacle the less."<sup>6</sup> Though expressed less audaciously, there is little difference between this and the Futurists' credo of demolishing museums and libraries for the sake of new art. In Venice that summer of 1902, the modernist spirit was ignited in Diaghilev.

Born on 19 March 1872, Diaghilev was raised from his tenth year in the city of Perm, near the northern Ural Mountains in an administrative district called the Permskij Kraj, an area larger than England and Wales combined. Although Perm is still technically in Europe, it is located at the furthest reaches of the continent.

It is hard to appreciate the isolation and the vastness of such a place. Apart from Perm there were no other cities within a few day's distance. Winters were harsh and long,

with temperatures dropping to minus 40°C, and from October to April it was almost impossible to travel. Only in the city centre were the houses made of stone. Though Russia by then already had a large bureaucracy, the isolation of many regions meant that government control was sparse.

The Diaghilevs owned the Bikbarda Estate, almost 300 kilometres outside Perm, which they visited every summer – travelling for several days by horse and carriage on almost non-existent roads. It must have been an adventurous but tedious and exhausting journey for the ten-year-old Serge and his two- and four-year-old half-brothers. In Bikbarda, which contained only two stone houses and a church, there were no police, courts or judges, and people had to settle their accounts among themselves. The local newspaper, *Permskie vedomosti*, reported violent deaths almost every month. Even the Diaghilevs could not avoid the near proximity of violence. In 1884, when Serge was 12 years old, the estate manager, Afanasay Eskin, committed suicide after killing his wife, his sister and two peasants with a knife.

It is almost impossible to imagine that a man who was considered the ruler of European taste during one of its finest periods of cultural blossoming – perhaps the greatest theatre producer who ever lived – emerged from such remote surroundings. The enigma is that however isolated the environment in which Diaghilev was brought up, it was

not uncultured. Indeed, it was the fervent longing for culture, and the passion and stubbornness with which his family tried to maintain a level of civilization that could compete with the *haute bourgeoisie* in Vienna or Paris, that encouraged Diaghilev to become such a champion of beauty. In the great house at Perm (pl.14) amateur musicians performed operas and concertos, plays were staged and poetry learned by heart. The Diaghilevs did everything possible to reassure themselves that they were not living in the Wild East but in a province of Europe, close to centres of learning and the arts. A German teacher recruited to educate the children, Eduard Dennebaum, not only taught them languages and grammar but was also an able musician, conducting a choir made up of family members and friends. He taught Diaghilev to play the piano well enough to perform the first movement of Schumann's piano concerto just before his 18th birthday. According to his life-long friend, Walter Nouvel, Diaghilev was a competent pianist, but above all, he had a good ear, and could quickly read a score and judge its quality. This proved a very important skill for the later impresario, both in editing the music of Debussy, Stravinsky and Prokofiev, and when searching for

early music by forgotten composers in Italian archives. The teachings of an exiled German in Perm were to have a lasting impact on the future of Western music.

The young Diaghilev had an intense relationship with his stepmother, Yelena Diaghileva, his mother having died three months after he was born, apparently from an infection. Much has been made of Yelena's great appreciation of the arts, and the influence she had on Diaghilev's development, but in some ways she was a typical example of the Russian intelligentsia. She was undoubtedly well-read, and knew her painters and composers, but this was relatively commonplace among women of her social status. Evidently, it was not the substance but rather the intensity of her intellect that was so important for the development of the young Diaghilev. Yelena worshipped the arts with a furious dedication that left no room for critical distance or valuation. However, she succeeded in creating a sanctuary of high culture and stimulation in the cultural desert of the northern Urals, and she passed on her dedication to the arts to her stepson. Whatever can be said about Diaghilev – and in his time he was as often loathed as praised – nobody questioned his unselfish commitment to the arts. However great his artistic

14. The sitting room of Serge Diaghilev's family home in Perm, c.1880. Diaghilev Archive, Pushkinskij Dom Fund 102.N5



victories throughout the world, Diaghilev never amassed any personal wealth, but he didn't seem to care.

While one major influence on the formation of his personality was the cultural enclave harboured by the Diaghilevs in Perm and Bikbarda, another was the sudden and complete destruction of that community. Diaghilev's father, Pavel Pavlovich, had great financial troubles for many years, but the family continued to live in grand style, disregarding their dismal situation. Their wealth had been based on a vodka monopoly, but following the liberalizing reforms of the 1860s and 1870s such monopolies were gradually becoming exposed to the workings of the market and were steadily losing share to newcomers with a more businesslike approach. Pavel's sense of identity and self-esteem were grounded in his position as an officer in the cavalry of the Imperial Guard, the elite corps in the army of the Russian Empire.<sup>7</sup> He took not the slightest interest in the management of his estate or the vodka factories, and witnessed the ruin of the family property with a stubborn carelessness. Debts accumulated rapidly and Pavel had to take a mortgage on the entire estate, which from the beginning imposed an impossible burden on the family.

By 1890, when Diaghilev was 18 years old, his family was declared bankrupt. The estate, the factories in Bikbarda and other family properties, the big house in Perm (pl.15), the

works of art, grand pianos and carriages were all auctioned off.<sup>8</sup> The buyer was a Polish Catholic from Ekaterinburg. Unlike Diaghilev's father, he was not a 'man of honour', indeed his prospect of a State career was greatly hampered by his Catholicism. But he was a serious businessman who had made his fortune selling a European alcoholic drink, beer, to the Russians. Perhaps the strangest consequence of these events was the fact that Diaghilev was now the only member of the family who had any money because he still had the inheritance of his biological mother. Therefore, the care of his two younger half-brothers was given over to the youthful Diaghilev (pl.16). His departure to study law in St Petersburg and the bankruptcy of his father coincided, so from the moment Diaghilev started living independently he also assumed responsibility for his family.

When the declaration of bankruptcy was published in the local newspaper – followed by long descriptions of goods that were to be auctioned – Diaghilev was making his first 'grand tour' through Europe with his cousin and soon to become lover Dmitry Filosofov. There are no accounts of Diaghilev's direct reaction to the loss of his childhood world. It is also unknown whether he saw it coming. The letters he wrote to his stepmother during that period are seemingly carefree – though the collapse of his family life

15. The exterior of Serge Diaghilev's family home in Perm, late 1800s. Diaghilev Archive, Pushkinskij Dom: Fund 102.N5

*Opposite*  
16. Serge Diaghilev and his half-brothers, Yury and Valentin, c.1880. Diaghilev Archive, Pushkinskij Dom: Fund 102.N5





must have come as a heavy blow. He was never to see Bikbarda again and Perm only once more. Indeed it seems that the bankruptcy was a taboo subject, he never spoke about it; neither did Alexandre Benois nor Walter Nouvel, his close friends, although they must have known, even if they decided to remain silent. Nor did Boris Kochno or Serge Lifar mention this significant moment in Diaghilev's life, though both wrote lengthily about him, and both were his lovers and companions for years. Could it be that even they knew nothing about it? Possibly Diaghilev wiped the event from the construction of his own mythology.

It is revealing that everywhere Diaghilev went, and through all stages in his career, he habitually created a family atmosphere in his enterprises. He was neither supported by a professional organization when he published *Mir iskusstva*, nor when he was making his exhibitions, not even during the tremendous collaborative schemes that shaped the Ballets Russes. Instead, he always relied on friends and family members (his cousins Dima and Pavka, for example) to help him with his efforts. At the end of his life in 1929, when he was world famous and had reigned over European ballet for more than 20 years, the management structure of his enterprise was just the same as it had been in 1898 when he first started to publish *Mir iskusstva* in St Petersburg. Walter Nouvel was still there, now acting as a kind of general manager, as was his cousin Pavka, who ran errands as he had always done (indeed it was Pavka who first saw Balanchine dance and told Diaghilev about it). As in the early years, he was still living with his personal secretary, no longer Dima Filosofov (pl.17), but a much younger variant, Boris Kochno. He referred to his most cherished artistic discoveries, the composers Igor Stravinsky and Sergei Prokofiev, as his 'sons' – Stravinsky being his 'first son' and Prokofiev his 'second'. Clearly, this characteristic, if unusual, management structure was the only environment in which Diaghilev could flourish. In some ways, it was also the secret of his success. He could demand a much greater dedication from 'family members' (and for a much lower price – if he paid them at all) than from ordinary employees, and it provided a form of continuity of quality that was extremely important for a company that in so many other respects was very fluid and hybrid.

Another, more profound effect of the loss of his childhood, was his almost paranoid fear of dying. Nobody who knew Diaghilev closely failed to mention his sometimes comically expressed but undeniably genuine terror of diseases and the panic that gripped him when facing the prospect of sea travel – a gypsy once predicted that

he would die on water.<sup>9</sup> His fear of contagious diseases, recorded by so many memoirists who knew him well, bordered on the hysterical, and it seems from a modern perspective that he had an extreme form of mysophobia.

In the popular, often gossip-based, memoir literature that the Ballets Russes inspired Diaghilev is sometimes depicted like an operetta character with a larger than life personality constructed merely to attract attention. Certainly, Diaghilev had a very theatrical, often narcissistic personality, but his fear of death was graver than was earlier recognized. In 1892, when Diaghilev was still a young and none too ambitious law student at St Petersburg University, he appears to have undergone a series of crises that forced him to come to some profound conclusions about his life.

On the day he turned 21, he wrote a long letter to Leo Tolstoy – at the time unquestionably Russia's most celebrated public figure (many people thought him more influential than the tsar). Diaghilev had met Tolstoy in January of that year, and following that visit he wrote him three letters in which he asked Tolstoy's personal advice on a number of issues. Of these, the letter written on his 21st birthday is by far the most important, and it is a key text in Diaghilev's biography.

Today, at the moment of my majority, in trying to sum up a long period of turmoil, I decided to fulfil the long-cherished dream to confess to you, Lev Nikolaevich.... After my childhood years, untroubled by moral dilemmas, the first question that afflicted me was connected to sexuality. I tried to solve that question, as did so many people of my age, by finding a sense of direction as best as I could. It was a hard problem to solve, but not as agonizing and dreadful as the new one that started to dominate my thoughts. This was the question of death.

At first, I experienced fleeting thoughts about the fact that I too would die, and that I too would be outlived and forgotten. But I suppressed them, feeling that they were out of harmony with my age and the powers of my youth. But the questions persisted, occurring more often and with a deeper impact. I often looked behind me and noticed that, even in the most joyous minutes of existence, in the theatre or at a dance ... I thought, looking at the crowd around me: why are you happy? You too will die! And even tomorrow, perhaps, you will be forgotten and replaced by others.

And I thought about this more and more frequently, and started to be consumed with suffering.... Though raised in a religious family, I threw off the old faith when I started to live my own life, as did so many men of my age ... and unwillingly I had to convince myself that many things I had previously accepted were mere fairytales, which couldn't be subordinated to even the simplest logic. And thus appeared the agonizing question of death and the consciousness of the total and irrevocable discontinuity of my existence.

Opposite  
17. Valentin Serov,  
*Portrait of Dimitry 'Dimi'  
Filosofov*. Lithograph, 1899.  
Russian Museum,  
St Petersburg

These problems led to other questions, and he adds, the first question that it evoked was the question of morality.

Why do we need morals? Aren't they mere prejudices? Why do we need to work on ourselves, if without this we can much better live through the few dreams that are granted us? The dream and purpose of my life is to work in the field of art.<sup>10</sup>

The questions that Diaghilev raised with Tolstoy had been disturbing his thoughts for some time. Six months earlier he had discussed with his stepmother the same 'mass of insoluble problems and my continual pursuit by the inevitability, the incomprehensibility and the sensing of death, in short the whole aim of life'. Indeed, they had talked of his anxieties before: 'Do you remember you and I spoke last summer about this? During those long evenings this autumn in the country I was especially led by everything to this never-ending chain of thought.'<sup>11</sup>

But besides his obvious pressing problems concerning the meaning of life and death, caused by the loss of religious certainties, he briefly mentions some other matters that were 'haunting' him and needed some kind of resolution: problems about his sexuality and his wish to lead a life in the realm of the arts. We may be sure – as he confided to Tolstoy – that he had not yet resolved his concerns about his sexuality at that young age, and he was far from the overt and unwavering homosexual he was later to become. Indeed, his very clear-cut sexual preference for men must have presented him with a colossal problem. Though in Russian society it was more or less accepted that before marriage young men could experiment with sexuality, a continuing and openly homosexual life was unheard of, indeed it was illegal.

Most homosexuals at that time conformed to the rules of society, and would marry for outer appearance while secretly leading a double life. It is interesting to speculate what Diaghilev would have done if there had not been any bankruptcy and if his family had stayed together. Would he have had the courage and the will then to choose explicitly for an unmarried life? It seems highly unlikely.

That Diaghilev was, at a young age, seriously contemplating the issue of homosexuality is clearly suggested by a fragment from an earlier letter to Tolstoy, where he asks for the writer's advice in dealing with the sexual education of his brother Valentin, who had turned 16 in 1892. Having told Tolstoy that he had read the latest book by the famous sexologist Veniamin Tarnovsky, he asks if he should confront his younger brother with its conclusions. Diaghilev is quick to claim that he finds the 'spirit of the book inappropriate', but nevertheless he seems to have read it with more than usual attention. This is perhaps not surprising, as Tarnovsky's book was one of the first studies to acknowledge that homosexuality is 'inborn' rather than a question of moral choice. With his conclusions Tarnovsky (whose work was translated into both German and English) had great influence on the more widely

known Austrian psychiatrist, von Krafft-Ebing, in whose clinic Diaghilev had stayed for a few months in 1902.

But in 1893 Diaghilev had not as yet completely come to terms with his sexuality. It is hard to say precisely when he took the decision to stop being secretive about his feelings, but it is significant that from 1902 onwards he starts to feature in various diaries as an overt homosexual. Indeed, there is an elucidating moment in the diary of Vladimir Telyakovsky, then Director of the Imperial Theatres and one of Diaghilev's sworn enemies in the tsarist capital, who in February 1903 records with some amazement that Diaghilev is representative of a group that practises the 'Sodomitic Sin' (*Sodomskey Grekh*).<sup>12</sup> This is especially telling since despite having known Diaghilev for almost four years this was apparently the first time that Telyakovsky had heard the rumours about his behaviour. At the same time Diaghilev starts to appear regularly in the diary of the poet Mikhail Kuzmin, another known representative of the Petersburgian 'small homosexual world', as Kuzmin calls it. Together with the poet and with his friend Walter Nouvel, one of the co-editors of *Mir iskusstva*, Diaghilev starts to cruise the parks and bathhouses in search of romance and sex.

Not everybody was happy with Diaghilev's new self-confidence. The artist Alexandre Benois complained that '[Diaghilev] sickens me with his frankness about his homosexuality. What a bore and vulgarity. It's worse than going to the whores.'<sup>13</sup> But Diaghilev apparently never went back on his decision to be frank about his sex life, consequently risking much more than the irritation of friends.<sup>14</sup> While his scandalous sexuality may have been easier for European moralists to digest because he was a Russian, and therefore an exotic being for whom different rules applied, there was undeniably a degree of opposition to his behaviour, especially in the United Kingdom. Diaghilev's dear friend and staunch supporter of the Ballets Russes, Misia Sert, noticed a 'wave of fine puritan approval' when London was confronted with the news of Nijinsky's marriage (which heralded the end of Diaghilev's long relationship with the young dancer). Much later in the 1920s, when Diaghilev for a short time had a relationship with Anton Dolin, the dancer (and wife of the British economist Maynard Keynes) Lydia Lopokova wrote that it was 'dangerous for Serge to be in sexual relations with a Britt [*sic*]. Shadow of Oscar Wilde.'<sup>15</sup>

By that stage, however, Diaghilev was already 52 years old, and he could not care less about the narrow-mindedness of strangers. The composer Nicolas Nabokov remarked to John Drummond that:

[Diaghilev's] homosexuality is the assertion of a scandal in terms of morality. And this revelation of a scandal was one of Diaghilev's qualities and at the same time weaknesses, and therefore everything he did was a desire, a little bit to shock but always to react. Part of it was showmanship, part of it was superficiality, but the core was a real, very deep, very profound understanding of what he was doing.<sup>16</sup>

18. Léon Bakst, *Portrait of Serge Diaghilev and his Nanny*. Oil on canvas, 1905. Russian Museum, St Petersburg



Diaghilev was indeed very self-aware, and he had been so from a very young age. In 1893, a few months after his letter to Tolstoy, he confided to his stepmother: 'Yes, I start to feel a force in myself and come to realize that I for the devil am not an ordinary person (!!!). This is rather immodest, but I don't care about that.'<sup>17</sup> As he told Tolstoy, he was already very sure about his mission, 'The dream and purpose of my life is to work in the field of art'. But he was not yet aware of the transgressive forces that he was to unleash on that art. Because of the crises he suffered, the loss of his childhood and, later, the loss of his homeland, Diaghilev would become a trans-national and trans-sexual figure, somebody who distorted the boundaries between forms of art and between the old and the new.

But he was not merely an innovator or a transformer. If Diaghilev in the end will be remembered chiefly for his promotion of the avant-garde, historians will have done a bad job. He was a transformer not by purpose but by mentality. Diaghilev was in everything, first and foremost, a man in constant contradiction with himself. And he loved the

contradictory. He loved the friction, the struggle and the fire that was engendered by the new, but not necessarily the new for its own sake. Indeed, it seems that his greatest passion was for the art of the past rather than that of the future. He may have hated routine, but he did not hate tradition.

Diaghilev could not help being an innovator. If the collapse of his family had not cut him off from his youth; if his sexuality had not cut him off from building a family of his own; and if war and revolution had not cut him off from his homeland, he would have been a much more conventional figure. But fate decided otherwise. Diaghilev's reaction to trauma was always to take a grand leap forward without looking back. This approach, together with the unshakeable devotion to the glories of European art, nurtured in the outer reaches of the European continent, was the force behind this man who shook up so much more than just the world of dance. Indeed, it seems, that we are only now starting to recognize the extent of his influence – the imprint he left on our universal comprehension of beauty and what constitutes great art.



19/20. Jean Cocteau, two posters for the opening season of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris. Colour lithographs, 1913. The posters re-used images of Tamara Karsavina and Vaslav Nijinsky in *Le Spectre de la rose*, originally created for the 1911 season at Monte Carlo. V&A: S.562(&3)-1980. Given by Mademoiselle Lucienne Astruc and Richard Buckle in memory of the collaboration between Diaghilev and Gabriel Astruc



# MIR ISKUSSTVA (WORLD OF ART)

Claire Hudson

Diaghilev founded his magazine, *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*), in late 1898. The title refers not only to the journal itself, but also to an exhibiting society for new artists. The aim of both was to educate artistic tastes and to raise the standard of Russian art, making it worthy of international recognition.

Diaghilev's first love had been music, and his passion for art developed comparatively late, around 1893–4, when he began buying pictures to hang in his St Petersburg apartment. He started organizing public exhibitions and writing art criticism before deciding to establish his own art journal. As he tellingly wrote at the time to Alexandre Benois, the articles would 'say openly what I think'. The

magazine's core editorial group would come to consist of himself, Benois, Léon Bakst, Dima Filosofov and Walter Nouvel, but Diaghilev's despotic zeal would always be its motor.

*Mir iskusstva* was published in St Petersburg, appearing in fortnightly numbers until 1900 and then monthly until 1904. Handsomely produced and copiously illustrated, it was clearly influenced by contemporary European art magazines such as *The Yellow Book*, *The Studio*, *Die Kunst* and *Pan*. At the time, this was a form of publication unknown in Russia, so much so that some of the printing had to be conducted elsewhere in Europe. The cover price was ten roubles a year in St Petersburg, more if sent to Moscow or overseas. The

magazine was never funded by subscribers alone (who numbered fewer than 1,500) but was dependent for its existence on a series of patrons and five years of substantial state subsidy approved by Tsar Nicholas II.

The magazine's two initial supporters, the railway magnate Savva Mamontov and the wealthy patron of the arts, Princess Maria Tenisheva, had founded artists' colonies at Abramtsevo and Talashkino respectively. They were both actively involved in the Russian Arts and Crafts movement and the encouragement of progressive artists.

Diaghilev expressed the ideals of *Mir iskusstva* in a series of four essays entitled 'Complicated Questions'. The publication deliberately challenged

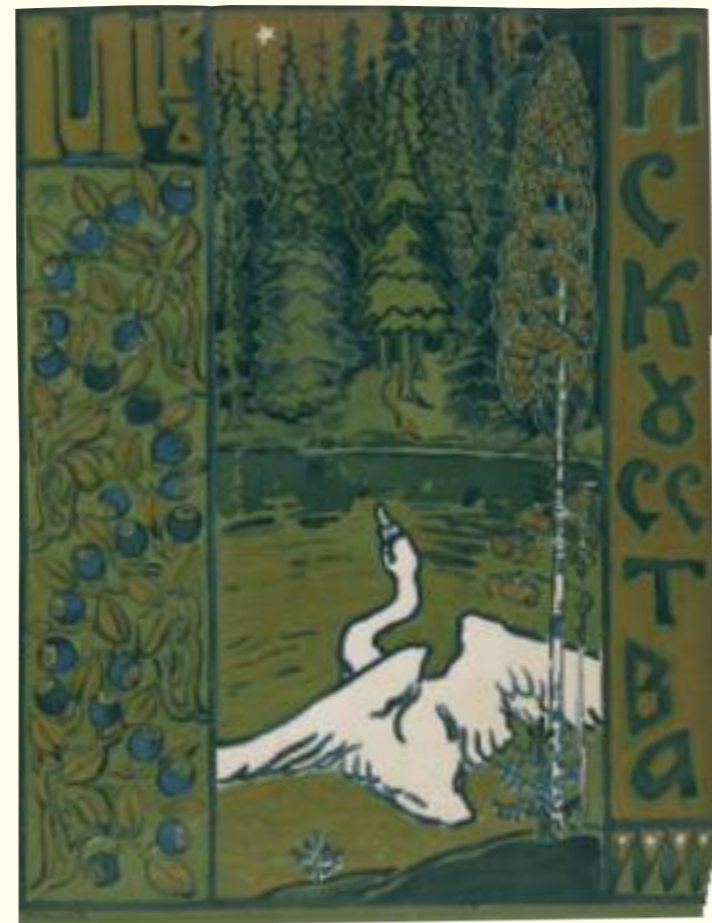
the artistic establishment and championed aestheticism, innovation and artistic freedom, in opposition to the prevailing taste for social realism. While the content reflected the contemporary passion for Russian crafts, decoration and folklore, it also formed a bridge between ancient Russia and work by the best new artists in Russia and the rest of Europe. It introduced its readership to exciting new styles of painting and was the major promoter within Russia of the Post-Impressionists and the Fauves.

Eventually, in what was a period of huge social unrest, other more revolutionary artistic factions began to make the *Mir iskusstva* group seem less like Young Turks and more like

part of the establishment they had set out to challenge. When the money finally ran out in 1904 the magazine ceased publication. The group's careers were leading them in new directions, but the relationships Diaghilev formed with artists such as Benois, Nicholas Roerich, Konstantin Korovin, Aleksandr Golovin and Léon Bakst during the *Mir iskusstva* period were fundamental to his later collaborations with them in creating stage productions of striking originality and artistic harmony.

Ivan Bilbin, title page for *Mir iskusstva* (1904), vol.2. Illustration for 'Folk Art of the Russian North'. V&A: NAL.II.RC.AA.38

Maria Yakunchikova, title page for *Mir iskusstva* (1899), vol.2. Cover showing illustration of a swan. V&A: NAL.II.RC.AA.27



Alexandre Benois, illustrations for *The Bronze Horseman* by Alexander Pushkin. *Mir iskusstva* (1904), vol.1, pp.34–35. V&A: NAL.II.RC.AA.37





Vaslav Nijinsky in a Monte Carlo hotel. Photograph by Igor Stravinsky, c.1913.



Léonide Massine in costume designed by Alexandre Benois for an advance photoshoot to promote *The Legend of Joseph*, 1914. Photograph by Studio Dührkoop



Serge Lifar on the left with the all-male corps de ballet in *La Chatte*, 1927. Photograph by Sasha. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections

## DIAGHILEV'S BOYS

*Oliver Winchester*

Male classical ballet has long been connected to homosexuality in the public consciousness, or to effeminacy at the very least. Yet such a rigid association has not always held firm. Theatrical ballet at the dawn of the

twentieth century was a world dominated by women, and male dancers were of secondary importance to their female counterparts – in many cases male roles were performed by women dressed as men.

It was with the impresario Serge Diaghilev that an explicit and identifiable link between homosexual men and the ballet crystallized in the years prior to the outbreak of the First World War, and it was through the work of the Ballets Russes and its surrounding enterprises and images that the male dancing body first suggested itself as an object available for visual consumption.

Certainly Diaghilev was at ease with his own homosexuality. The composer and collaborator Nicolas

Nabokov noted: 'I think one should never forget the fact that Diaghilev was an assertive homosexual, and the extraordinary thing about Diaghilev was that he was perhaps the first grand homosexual who asserted himself and was accepted as such by society.'<sup>1</sup> Diaghilev's social circle included the prominent homosexuals Jean Cocteau, Marcel Proust and Baron de Meyer, and his promotion of his star protégé male dancers such as Vaslav Nijinsky and Léonide Massine was not confined to the purely balletic, Massine having commented of Diaghilev that as a lover 'it was like going to bed with a nice fat old lady'.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this coming together of a creative circle of homosexual men prompted the composer Igor Stravinsky's assertion that Diaghilev's

entourage constituted 'a kind of homosexual Swiss Guard'.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the Ballets Russes' significance to the aesthetic language of early twentieth-century dance reaches well beyond the biography of its founder or the sexuality of its key figures. The iconography at work within and around the ballet, and the dissemination of its images, is firmly rooted in the history of an emerging gay culture of the period. Many images were produced in limited editions or circulated in specialist magazines such as *Femina*, *La Gazette du Bon Ton* and *Le Théâtre*, with pictures of Nijinsky, for example, playing on the dancer's androgyny and sexless availability. Other images focused on the youthful beauty of Léonide

Massine or the athletic masculinity and confrontational machismo of Anton Dolin.

Writing for *Vogue* in 1928, Hubert Farjeon noted that the young men attending ballet performances 'wear the Ballets Russes like a carnation in their button holes'. Yet, significantly, he also observed a subtle shift in homosexual pathology and, in a nod towards a future identity, noted that these men are 'more formidable than [their] aesthetic predecessor of thirty or forty years ago. He is not so drooping, not so languishing ... on the contrary, he is surprisingly pink in the cheek, surprisingly fit, surprisingly unready to go down like a ninepin.'<sup>4</sup>

The Ballets Russes and the networks within and around it

provided an admissible context for the public spectacle of the male body in motion. Here, supposedly disinterested aesthetic appreciation was interwoven with private sexual desire, and erotic possibilities could be imagined. The early twentieth century thereby saw the opening up of a space, albeit the claustrophobic space of the closet, for the projection of a homosexual identity and desire.

1 Drummond 1997, p.300.  
2 Stoneley 2007, p.67.  
3 Spencer 1974, p.67.  
4 Stoneley 2007, p.89.



# THE TRANSFORMATION OF BALLET

JANE PRITCHARD

The development of dance in the twentieth century owed an enormous debt to Serge Diaghilev. Thanks to his presentations, knowledge of and passion for Russian opera and ballet were augmented. He restored ballet to a position in high culture that it had lost for more than half a century. As Igor Stravinsky stated:

The Ballets Russes are the *creation* of Diaghilev and his collaborators. Nothing of the kind ever existed before him and it is to him that we owe the recent development of choreographic art in the entire world....<sup>1</sup>

Stravinsky, writing in 1953, made a huge, but not unjustified, claim for the Ballets Russes, a company with which he had been closely involved. Giving such credit to the Ballets Russes, however, was nothing new. A 1914 article in the *Tatler* observed 'the Russian Ballet upset all our preconceived ideas concerning ballet dancing and pantomime', arguing that the initial appeal of the Ballets Russes lay in its:

Extraordinary scenery, the even more extraordinary dresses, the most extraordinary colour schemes, rather than the dancing of Karsavina, Nijinski, and Bolm, an understanding of whose art lay beyond us – we, who had been brought up in the belief that ballet dancing meant a series of ungraceful postures, much idiotic gesture, and a great deal of over-muscular leg.<sup>2</sup>

Although Diaghilev had attempted to improve the quality of ballet at the Imperial Theatres with a new production of *Sylvia*, and supported his friends' interest in dance, as a young man he would never have foreseen that after 1909 ballet was to become a central feature in his life. He only turned to promoting dance when he realized that it was probably the most convenient medium for bringing together

in performance the arts he loved, notably music and painting. To promote ballet, although still costly, was less expensive than opera, which was one of Diaghilev's greatest passions: whenever possible, he included operas in his programmes. But Diaghilev was a great opportunist and recognized that, with the contributions of Wagner in Germany and Savva Mamontov and the Private Opera Company in Moscow – both working with new scores and approaches to design – opera had already been revitalized.

While the author of the *Tatler* article was perhaps overstating the situation, the training of *fin de siècle* dancers could result in unflattering physiques. There was certainly an overemphasis on the stage being decorated by attractive women, and there is no doubt that popular ballets set to light music were far less engrossing than the narratives produced by Diaghilev using more varied and dramatic scores.<sup>3</sup>

As far as dance was concerned, the early twentieth century was the ideal moment for change. Individuals including Loïe Fuller and Isadora Duncan had introduced new elements of movement and presentation into dance, and Diaghilev was lucky that in both Russia and Europe ballet was experiencing a period of decline. Marius Petipa's reign as ballet master at the Imperial Russian Ballet ended with his retirement in 1903, and the leading European choreographers Luigi Manzotti (1835–1905), Joseph Hansen (1842–1907), Katti Lanner (1828–1908) and Carlo Coppi (1845–1909), all died just before the advent of the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev's new company filled an extraordinary vacuum.

During the nineteenth century, as Europe became increasingly urbanized, the audience for ballet had both grown and shifted its focus. While in Russia and Eastern Europe audiences happily sat through a whole evening of ballet, such events were rare in Western Europe, where ballets were shorter and programmed with, or as scenes in, operas, operetta and musical productions (pl.21). They also

featured in *féeries*,<sup>4</sup> pantomimes and at variety theatres (pl.22). The rise of ballet in the popular theatres in the late nineteenth century had created new venues and audiences for dance that Diaghilev would use to his advantage when times became difficult for his company.<sup>5</sup>

Two trends dominated European ballet in the nineteenth century. The period between 1830 and 1850 saw the development in France of the Romantic ballet, which portrayed an Arcadian world of idealized rural communities and exotic places. Its subjects enabled audiences to escape their bourgeois urban culture, and it responded to a fashionable obsession with the irrational, especially with the supernatural world and its dangerous and erotic undercurrents. Ballet's fascination with the otherworldly and the exotic continued in what might be described as post-Romantic ballet throughout the century in Europe.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1880s the Italian *ballo-grande*, spectacular brash productions which presented huge numbers of dancers in almost military formations (often more scantily clad than the post-Romantic equivalents), became extremely popular throughout Europe and America. The internationally

acclaimed *Excelsior* (1881), a ballet illustrating the progress of science and civilization, epitomized this genre. The success of the *ballo-grande* was such that in Paris, the stronghold of post-Romantic ballet, the Eden-théâtre was purpose-built in 1883 almost over the road from the new Palais Garnier. Surviving for a decade at the Eden-théâtre, *ballo-grande* was commercially more successful in Paris than Diaghilev's company would ever be. *Excelsior* alone was performed on more than 500 occasions while over 20 years the Ballets Russes staged fewer than 300 performances in Paris. However, although the *ballo-grande* at the Eden-théâtre paved the way for Parisian audiences to accept that ballet could be an imported art, the Ballets Russes exerted a much longer-lasting impact.

While the French and British increasingly presented women *en travesti* (dressed in male attire) as the 'heroes' of ballets, the Italians continued to develop virtuoso male dancers including Enrico Cecchetti who became ballet master for the Ballets Russes and, for specific productions, the distinctive male corps de ballet of 'tramagnini' (originally acrobatic warriors).<sup>7</sup> The virtuoso danseurs



22. The 'Snow Ballet' from *The Voyage to the Moon* (Act III) at Her Majesty's Theatre, London. Colour lithograph, 1883. V&A: S.194--2008



21. Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas, the Ballet Scene from the opera *Robert le Diable*. Oil on canvas, 1876. Giacomo Meyerbeer's 1831 opera remained popular throughout the nineteenth century. V&A: CAL.19

frequently took on roles of an exotic nature. Indeed they often performed as slaves or exotic characters, roles far more similar to those which would be danced for the Ballets Russes by Vaslav Nijinsky than those performed by the virile character danseur, Adolph Bolm.

*Ballo-grande* did not wipe out ballets presented in music halls or ballets in *féeries*, and both combined elements of post-Romantic and spectacular ballets. In parallel with the rise of the *ballo-grande*, *pointe*-work developed from being a new technique to suggest ethereality to a means of deliberately showcasing a ballerina's tricks. Wearing increasingly blocked shoes, dancers with '*pointes* of steel' prioritized multiple turns and sustained balances over the artistry of their roles. Both genres had an impact on teaching and were absorbed into the Imperial Ballet School in Russia. The Russian critic, André Levinson, succinctly summarized the contrast between the two 'schools': 'the Italian, more *terre à terre*, exceeded the limits of technique in regard to pointes and pirouettes; the French strove for elegance and elevation in both the poetic and gymnastic sense of the word.'<sup>8</sup>

During Marius Petipa's tenure as ballet master and choreographer-in-chief at the Imperial Ballet it developed into a company that was second to none. Petipa became a fine choreographer, particularly for women, although many of his large productions may be divided into scenes of narrative, procession, *divertissement* or post-Romanticism in ballet (the so called 'ballet blanc' scenes epitomized by the 'Shades' in *La Bayadère*).<sup>9</sup> An increasingly varied repertoire of ballets was created and, as ballet was court entertainment, its funding was relatively secure. After the

position of resident composer for theatre was abolished with the retirement of Leon Minkus in 1886, the company became more innovative musically, with commissions from Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Alexander Glazunov.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, the Imperial Ballet had developed a fine school, absorbing the best characteristics of the French and Italian dancers, and by the turn of the century its pupils were in demand internationally just as Italian ballerinas had been in the two previous decades.

Before the Ballets Russes it was not possible to have both an international career and to dance with one company. Whereas individual dancers and small troupes travelled, large companies were usually fixed at one theatre. Italian ballerinas would move between *ballo-grande*, music-hall ballets and the Imperial Ballet. The career of Carlotta Brianza (1867–c.1935), who had created the role of Aurora in Petipa's original *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890) and later performed that of the wicked fairy, Carabosse, in Diaghilev's *Sleeping Princess* (1921), indicates dancers' peripatetic lives. Having trained at La Scala, Milan, Brianza toured in the United States and performed at the Eden-théâtre, Paris in 1886. She danced in Cecchetti's production of *Excelsior* at the Arcadia Theatre, one of the commercial summer theatres in St Petersburg (1887), and starred at the Empire Theatre in London. She also danced at the Maryinsky on a number of occasions, commuting in the 1890s and early 1900s between St Petersburg, Paris, London, Milan and Brussels.<sup>11</sup>

Other individual dancers also toured, giving concerts of dance or being presented in popular theatres. Among those who exerted a significant influence were Loïe Fuller

and Isadora Duncan. Both took an aesthetic approach, celebrating movement for its own sake, although for Fuller this involved dance and light while Duncan was more concerned with Hellenism. Both emphasized a continuous flow of movement in which the dancers' *epaulement* or use of the upper torso was significant. Their style of dance was liberating. For decades the body had been encased in corsets or tight-fitting boned bodices, forcing dancers to hold their upper body tilted forward with minimal movement, encouraging static groups and poses. Fuller was equally renowned as a theatre technician and her use of coloured light directed onto billowing Chinese silk resulted in audiences considering her as the embodiment of Art Nouveau. Duncan's impact derived from her danced response to concert-hall music with heightened natural movements enhanced by her free-flowing tunic. Her body was unrestricted by her garments; her bare feet liberated from the steel *pointes* of the late-nineteenth-century ballerina (pl.23).

By the turn of the century, before Duncan made her first visit to Russia in 1904, a division was evident in supporters of the Imperial Ballet. While the old guard sung

the praises of Petipa, whose greatest ballets are performed to this day,<sup>12</sup> devotees of the 'new ballet' favoured the work of Alexander Gorsky<sup>13</sup> who responded to Konstantin Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theatre by making ballets more individual and 'realistic'.<sup>14</sup> Gorsky's influence on Mikhail Fokine, the choreographer on whom Diaghilev depended to launch his ballet in the West, should not be ignored and it was their individualization of dancers and fresh approach to choreography that later enhanced the Ballets Russes.

Recognized for his skills as an organizer of exhibitions and innovative editor of the journal *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*), on 22 September 1899 the 27-year-old Diaghilev was employed as a 'functionary for special assignments for the management of the Imperial Theatres'. Diaghilev's initial task was to edit its Year Book. Always ambitious, Diaghilev seized the opportunity to take a more active artistic role and immediately suggested a range of new productions for the Maryinsky Theatre, including *Sylvia*. It was perhaps surprising that Diaghilev should have suggested a ballet, but Russian opera had already experienced a renaissance through the work of the Private Opera Company, Moscow, which presented new Russian operas designed by fine

artists. Diaghilev seems to have been persuaded by his colleagues, Walter Nouvel and Alexandre Benois, who were passionate about ballet. Although internationally performed, *Sylvia* was little known in Russia<sup>15</sup> but its score had inspired Pyotr Tchaikovsky and its composer Léo Delibes was a particular hero for Benois.<sup>16</sup> The brothers, Nicolas and Sergei Legat, who were sympathetic to new ideas, were invited to choreograph it and the *Mir iskusstva* team set about the designs, their first experience for the stage. Benois took the lead and his design for Act I survives, while other sets were to be created by the artists Konstantin Korovin, Yevgeny Lancerey and Léon Bakst, who was also given responsibility for the costumes. Bakst's design for Olga Preobrajenska as the huntress Sylvia shows his first flowing 'Greek' costume avoiding the traditional short tutu and *pointe* shoes.

In February 1901, just as *Sylvia* was about to be announced, the Director of the Imperial Theatres, Prince Sergei Volkonsky, noticed that Diaghilev's ambitious plans were causing serious resentment among some of his colleagues and withdrew his support. Diaghilev refused to resign and was dismissed. Following this humiliating

episode, he focused on *Mir iskusstva* and exhibitions, only returning to ballet at the end of the decade.

For such an important figure in the development of dance it perhaps comes as a surprise that although he grew up surrounded by music, Diaghilev's first recorded visit to a ballet did not occur until he was 18 years old. He was travelling with Dima Filosofov to Italy when they stopped in Vienna and saw a series of operas and a production of the new ballet *The Fairy Doll* (*Die Puppenfee*) of 1888, choreographed by Joseph Hassreiter (pl.24). With original music by Josef Bayer *The Fairy Doll* had been developed from a pantomime for amateurs and was (indeed still is) an endearing work with a simple narrative in two scenes. In the first a shopkeeper displays his dolls for various customers, while in the second, at night, the toys take on a life of their own. *The Fairy Doll* became one of the most successful ballet creations of the late nineteenth century and new versions were staged internationally from New York (1890) to St Petersburg (1903).<sup>17</sup> The latter production was choreographed by the Legat brothers with charming designs by Léon Bakst, all of whom had been involved with Diaghilev in his abortive production of *Sylvia*.



23. Edward Gordon Craig, *Isadora Duncan Dancing at Breslau, Germany*. Watercolour and pencil, 1905. V&A: S.196-2008

24. Advertising cards for Liebig beef extract featuring scenes from Joseph Hassreiter's ballet *The Fairy Doll* (*Die Puppenfee*) at the Viennese Opera, c.1890. Private collection





Opposite  
25. After Alexandre Benois, costume worn by Lydia Lopokova as a Sylph from *Les Sylphides*. Silk and cotton net, with metal armature for the wings, c.1916. V&A: S.874-1980

26. Vera Willoughby, *Lubov Tchernicheva in Les Sylphides*. Watercolour and gouache on art board, 1921. Tchernicheva is seen dancing the prelude in the set designed by Carlo Socrate in 1917. V&A: S.197-2008



In his productions for the 1908–10 Saison Russe, including *Boris Godunov*, *Le Pavillon d'Armide* and *The Firebird*, Diaghilev followed accepted practice, but when in 1911 he formally established his own year-round company,<sup>18</sup> he both dropped those elements of spectacle which were impractical for touring and found his own voice in the theatre. Writing to a Parisian journalist about his plans for the opera *Boris Godunov* in 1908, Diaghilev stressed that the historical accuracy of the production would impress audiences.<sup>19</sup> This approach looked back to the archaeological stagings of the late nineteenth century, epitomized in Britain in productions by Charles Kean.<sup>20</sup> Soon Diaghilev and his designers were taking a more impressionistic approach to sets and costumes in which colour and imagination triumphed over pedantic research.

Initially Diaghilev tried to reproduce elements of spectacular theatre similar to those used at the Imperial Theatres, or indeed *féeries* at the Théâtre du Châtelet or the *ballo-grande* at the Eden-théâtre. During his first season Diaghilev brought to Paris the great Russian machinist, Carl Waltz, to ensure his special effects, such as the fountains in *Le Pavillon d'Armide*, shot up on stage.<sup>21</sup> In the first production of *The Firebird* (1910) the eponymous bird flew on wires and the Knights of Night and Day rode on horseback. Such elaborate devices were soon found to be unnecessary and were dropped before *The Firebird* returned (after its absence from the stage for a year and a half) as a more efficient, streamlined ballet (pl.27).<sup>22</sup> With his independent company Diaghilev no longer presented great crowds of performers, although he enlisted a number of extras at each venue, and

before the First World War he continued to bring from Russia vast opera choruses for summer seasons in Paris and London (pl.28).<sup>23</sup>

The ballets Diaghilev presented during his 1909 and 1910 seasons are clearly transitional works; *Prince Igor* with its aggressively masculine cast was the greatest novelty (pls 29–31). The other ballets were nevertheless cleverly chosen to appeal to French taste, *Le Pavillon d'Armide* (pl.28) acknowledged the Francophile academic ballet of St Petersburg, as well as French history in its representation of the court of Louis XIV, and *Les Sylphides* the Romantic ballet tradition (pls 25 and 26). The success of Mikhail Fokine's *Les Sylphides* was so great that earlier ballets of the same name or those danced to music by Chopin have been wiped out of history.<sup>24</sup> *Cléopâtre* in 1909, like *Schéhérazade* a

year later, tapped into the French obsession with a perceived sensual Orient, and the audience was stunned by Bakst's designs and the performances of Vaslav Nijinsky, Ida Rubinstein and the other dancers. But the score for *Cléopâtre* was compiled from music by no less than five composers, an approach closer to an earlier ballet score with tunes pasted together than the more cohesive music Diaghilev subsequently presented.

Diaghilev was not alone in promoting Russian Ballet to new audiences, indeed many impresarios tapped into the Russian supply of well-trained dancers, although their choice of production was often backward looking. Raoul Gunsbourg, who became director of the Monte Carlo Opera House in 1893, recognized that as many Russians wintered on the Riviera, he would be advised to cater to their taste, and

27. Tamara Karsavina and Adolph Bolm in *The Firebird*, 1912 production. Photograph by E.O. Hoppé. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



28. Alexandre Benois, set design for *Le Pavillon d'Armide* (Scene II). Watercolour, indian ink, pencil and gouache, 1907. This is the set as designed for St Petersburg; Benois re-worked it to show a symmetrical vista for Paris in 1909. Private collection



in 1895 he programmed stars of the Russian Imperial Ballet including Matilda Kschesinskaya, Olga Preobrajenska, Alfred Bekeffi, Iouzia Kschesinsky and George Kyasht. From 1905 he presented Fyodor Chaliapin as the eponymous Mefistofele ahead of his appearances in Paris, London and New York. Given the Russian population in Monte Carlo, and despite continuing rivalry between Gunsbourg and Diaghilev, it was a sympathetic place in which to launch the Ballets Russes as an independent company in 1911.<sup>25</sup>

In May 1908 Adolph Bolm and Anna Pavlova had toured the Baltic, and in August Bolm visited London to perform at the Empire Theatre with Lydia Kyasht, who found a niche for herself as the Empire's ballerina.<sup>26</sup> Tamara Karsavina arrived in Paris in 1909 via performances in Prague and with a small group of dancers, notably Theodore Kosloff, went on to dance at the London Coliseum immediately afterwards.<sup>27</sup> By the time she first danced for Diaghilev, Anna Pavlova was already well on the way to establishing her independent career, arriving in Paris from touring Central Europe after the Saison Russe had begun. During Diaghilev's 1910 season many impresarios were on the lookout for new stars. Lydia Lopokova, who Diaghilev had promoted, signed up to go to the USA.<sup>28</sup> At that time others were offering far longer and more lucrative contracts than Diaghilev and there was no way the dancers could foresee he would offer anything other than short contracts. By 1911 the capitals of Europe seemed to be flooded with Russian dancers. In Paris at the Théâtre Sarah

Bernhardt, opposite the Théâtre du Châtelet in which Diaghilev's company was again to perform, a rival Saison Russe presented productions drawn from the Maryinsky's repertoire, choreographed by Marius Petipa, his former assistant Lev Ivanov and Nicolas Legat, as well as Russian opera.<sup>29</sup> When the Ballets Russes reached London for the 1911 coronation season the theatres were full of Russian dancers.<sup>30</sup>

Diaghilev's own theatrical apprenticeship was over by 1911. Once he had established his own company, much of the competition dwindled. It was obvious to audiences that the quality of his productions was superior to that of any rival. Others could attract the dancers but they did not have the original settings in which to show off their talents, and his ballets won hands down when it came to music, sets, costumes, choreography and overall production. He benefited from the development of large theatres in the late nineteenth century to provide venues in which his company could perform; the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, opened by the music promoter Gabriel Astruc in 1913, was unusual in being constructed with companies such as Diaghilev's operation in mind. He convinced audiences in Western Europe and America that an evening devoted to dance was an exciting prospect and his productions made ballet a far more varied genre. Finally, Diaghilev was responsible for the creation of ballets in which the elements of dance, music and design fused together, establishing the standards to which subsequent companies throughout the world would aspire.



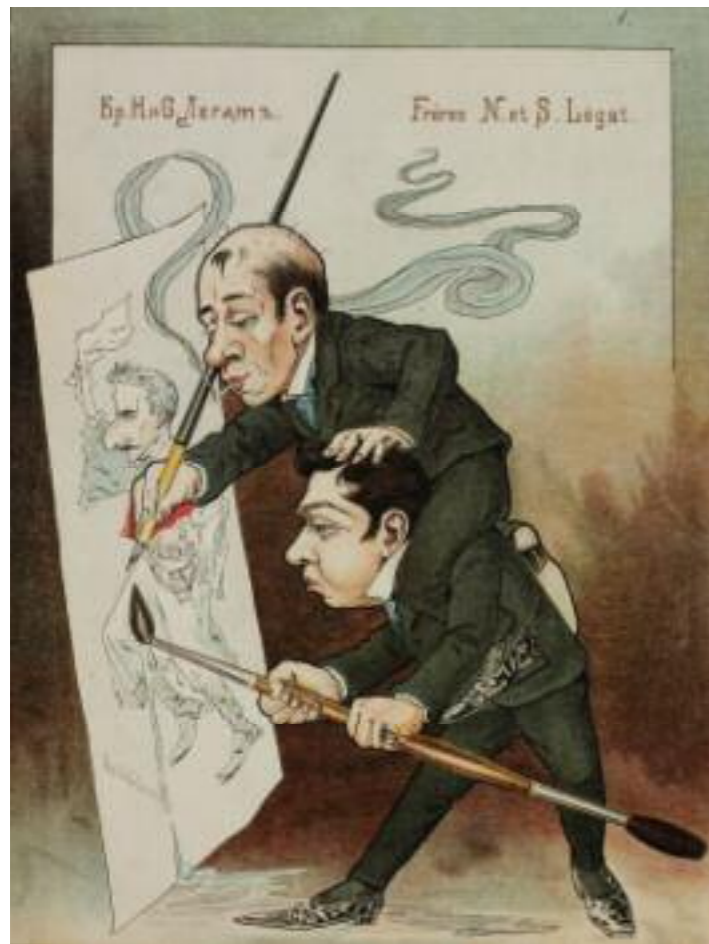
29. The Polovtsian Dances from *Prince Igor* performed at the London Coliseum, c.1924. *Daily Mail* archive



30. After Nicholas Roerich, costumes for two Polovtsian Warriors from *Prince Igor*. Silk ground, silk ikat fabric, cotton metal disks, skull cap embroidered in polychrome thread, c.1909. V&A: S.576(A,B&C)-1980 with S.577-1980; S.588(&B)-1980 with S.587A-1980



31. After Nicholas  
Roerich, costumes for  
two Polovtsian Girls  
from *Prince Igor*. Silk  
ikat fabric, c.1909.  
V&A: S.589-1980;  
S.573-1980



32-35. Nicolas and Sergei Legat, caricatures from *The Russian Ballet in Caricatures*, published in St Petersburg, 1902-5.

*Left*  
32. Nicolas and Sergei Legat.  
V&A: S.5309-2009

*Below, left*  
33. Matilda Kshesinskaya as Esmeralda.  
V&A: S.5310-2009

*Below, right*  
34. Tamara Karsavina.  
V&A: S.5312-2009

*Opposite*  
35. Mikhail Fokine as Mercury.  
V&A: S.5311-2009



# PAUL POIRET AND THE BALLETS RUSSES

*Claire Wilcox*

Paul Poiret (1879–1944) launched his fashion house in 1903, and rapidly became one of the most renowned couturiers in Paris. His designs drew on the revolutionary freedom of dress of the Directoire period, informed by a contemporary interest in non-Western design that reached its height in Paris in the 1910s. Daringly, he banished corsets and totally redefined the fashionable silhouette with high-waisted gowns, tunics worn over harem trousers and hobble skirts. He introduced tassels and bold Ottoman embroidery, Indian-inspired turbans and oversized 'Chinese' opera cloaks in sumptuous fabrics, in an eclectic mélange of influences.

Although Poiret's aesthetic was suffused with colourful exoticism even before the arrival of the Ballets Russes in 1909, Léon Bakst's set and costumes must have had great resonance. While in his autobiography Poiret disputes Bakst's influence on him, the heightened sensuality of the vibrant, and sometimes shockingly revealing, stage garments gave Poiret's designs an additional frisson by association. These links were emphasized in illustrations by Georges Lepape and Paul Iribe, which often used the theatre or auditorium as a backdrop.

Throughout his life Poiret maintained a passion for the theatre.

He designed for many actresses and dancers both on and off stage – including the Ballets Russes stars Ida Rubinstein and Tamara Karsavina – and was one of the few couturiers to maintain a specialized workshop for theatre costume. His love of spectacle was reflected in his impressive fashion shows and the sumptuous interior of his couture house. The photographer Cecil Beaton recalled: 'To enter Poiret's salons in the Faubourg St Honoré was to step into the world of the Arabian Nights. Here, in rooms strewn with floor cushions, the master dressed his slaves in furs and brocades and created Eastern ladies who were the counterpart of the Cyprians and

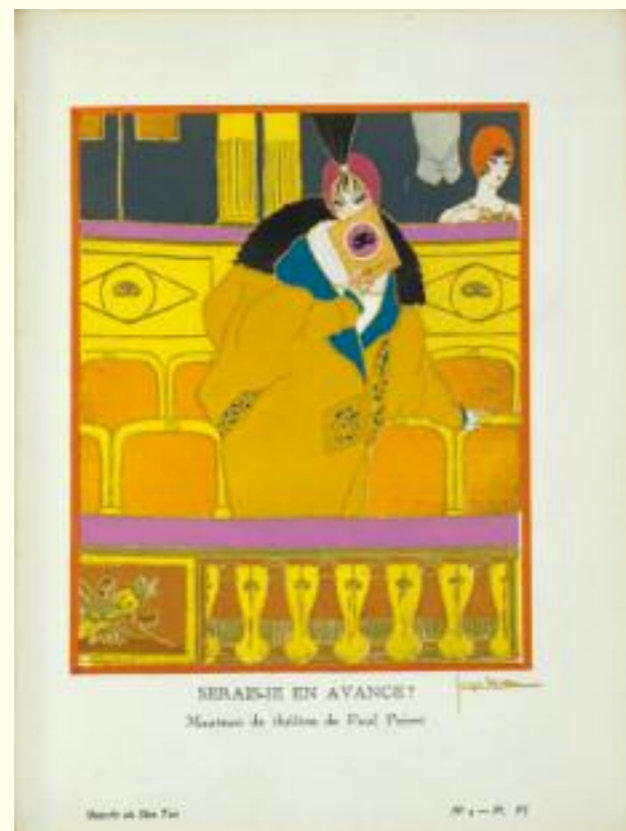
chief eunuchs that moved through the pageantries of Diaghilev.'<sup>1</sup>

However, it was Poiret's extravagant fêtes that epitomized Orientalist fantasies of the time. The most renowned took place in June 1911, a 'Persian' spectacle 'The Thousand and Second Night', which featured dressing-up clothes for guests, storytellers, monkeys, fountains and fireworks, and was undoubtedly influenced by Diaghilev's production of *Schéhérazade* the year before. Poiret's guests lounged on antique carpets drinking sherbet and watching semi-naked dancers, amid 'a mass of silks, jewels and aigrettes that sparkled iridescently, like stained glass in moonlight'.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps most dashing of all were the headdresses and turbans, inspired by Poiret's studies at the V&A. At the premiere of the *Rite of Spring* on 29 May 1913 'every woman wore a head-dress: dazzling tiara, embroidered bandeaux, or turbans with aigrettes and birds-of-paradise plumes'.<sup>3</sup> Poiret's exuberant vision benefited from and reflected the drama of the Ballets Russes, for in the heightened atmosphere of Diaghilev's productions, both dancers and audience became part of the act.

1 Beaton 1954, p.300.  
2 Poiret 1931, p.189.  
3 Mackrell 1990, p.28.

*Right*  
Georges Lepape,  
illustration from *Gazette  
du Bon Ton*, (1912/13),  
vol.1 (2), (pl.VI).



*Far right*  
Illustration from  
*L'Illustration*  
(19 February 1911).  
Photograph by O'Doye.  
Poiret's voluminous  
harem trousers or  
jupe-culottes were  
worn under a long  
tunic or incorporated  
into dresses.



*Far left*  
Paul Poiret, 'Lavallière'  
evening dress and  
turban. Silk with  
embroidery, c.1911.  
Collection Francesca  
Galloway

*Left*  
The ballerina Tamara  
Karsavina wearing a  
dress designed by Paul  
Poiret, c.1914.  
V&A: Theatre &  
Performance Collections

## DIAGHILEV'S THEATRES

*Janet Birkett*

To present his company in style Diaghilev used the most glamorous and well-appointed theatres. The purpose-built opera houses of late nineteenth-century Europe and the Americas fulfilled most of his requirements. They had a dominant location in the city, and contained stages wide and deep enough to accommodate up to 50 dancers plus supernumeraries, a large orchestra pit, up-to-date lighting equipment, and front-of-house facilities that showed off a fashionable audience. The Ballets Russes gave seasons at all the major houses including the Paris Opéra, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Colon in Buenos Aires, the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, and Monte Carlo's Salle Garnier, which became the company's base from 1922. If opera houses were not available

Diaghilev endeavoured to obtain large theatres and, if necessary, improved them to meet his exacting standards. Having secured the Théâtre du Châtelet for the company's debut, he organized the redecoration of the auditorium and foyer, had the size of the orchestra pit increased and the uneven stage renovated, all in five days. At the London Coliseum in 1918 Diaghilev had extra lights installed to supplement the follow-spots and floodlights, and he insisted that the sequins be removed from the theatre's front curtain as the glittering spoiled the subtle lighting effects.

Nevertheless, a company that survived on box office receipts was obliged to keep touring, accepting dates at any venue of suitable size. In North America the company danced at the prestigious Century Theatre in New York and the Boston Opera House, but,



*Above*  
Seating plan from the souvenir programme for the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, 1913. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



*Right*  
Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, showing its location by the Seine, c.1865.



Laura Knight, *In the Coullisse*. Oil on canvas, c.1920. Dancers from the corps de ballet in costumes for *Les Sylphides* and *Le Tricorne* with a dresser (in red) during a rehearsal at the Alhambra Theatre, London. Falmouth Art Gallery

outside the principal cities, it appeared in halls and auditoria which lacked any of the amenities of a theatre. At the Convention Hall, Kansas City, it was necessary to install a proscenium arch and a grid for hanging the scenery.

In Britain, the Ballets Russes was able to appear at the large theatres designed for variety shows. Although Diaghilev may have regarded it as a come down to present one ballet in a mixed entertainment programme, the Coliseum was then London's key venue for dance and it had good sightlines for the audience. His seasons at the Alhambra and the Empire in

Leicester Square, both theatres with long traditions of music-hall ballet, were presented as ballet seasons independently from other variety acts.

Backstage facilities and dressing rooms were usually cramped and sometimes completely inadequate; at times the dancers even lacked water to wash off their make-up. At London's rat-infested Prince's Theatre (now the Shaftesbury) not all the dancers and extras could be accommodated, so the extras had to change at the nearby swimming baths and walk through the streets in full costume. The conditions onstage could also present problems.

Some stages were flat, others raked (tilted down towards the footlights), and wooden floors frequently included traps and grooves in which feet could be caught. At the Coliseum, which was notoriously hard, there was a three-centimetre gap around the stage revolve. In Spain, where many of the theatres were badly maintained, the dancer Alexander Gavrillov, fell through a rotting floorboard, tearing his Achilles tendon. The glamour projected by the company was often achieved in very basic conditions.



*Opposite*  
36. After Georges Braque, costume worn by Alice Nikitina as Flore from *Zéphire et Flore*. Silk satin, cotton tarlatan, metal thread braid, gelatine sequins, paint, silk jersey (tights), silk chiffon replica sleeves, 1925. V&A: S.838(&A)-1980

37. Alice Nikitina as Flore from *Zéphire et Flore*, 1925. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections





# CREATING PRODUCTIONS

JANE PRITCHARD

The ballerina Tamara Karsavina described Diaghilev as being 'rather like Napoleon, who had a wonderful gift for detail'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Diaghilev's ability as an artistic director has never been surpassed. Every aspect of a production underwent his scrutiny, and he was never afraid of asking great artists to rethink their proposals. The composer of the ballet *Zéphire et Flore*, Vladimir Dukelsky (Vernon Duke), explained that Diaghilev did not ask for specific amendments, 'He sits down, screws his eyeglass, and exudes a beneficent cloud of inspiration'.<sup>2</sup> When planning a ballet Diaghilev consulted his friends for ideas and approval, but once it came to stage rehearsals he would become dictatorial, directing everything from dancing to lighting and technical effects. His concentration never flagged, even if at times he appeared to be watching through half-closed eyes. 'If it pleases him, it stands. If it does not, it goes. He does not dance himself, nor paint, and he has only learned the theory of composition. Yet, somehow or other, he knows. And the experts know that he knows, and venerate his advice.'<sup>3</sup>

From the start Diaghilev was aware that his company was Russian ballet for export to audiences fascinated by his homeland, which extended from the frontier with the Baltic and Austro-Hungarian Empire through to Japan. Ballets Russes productions presented the Russian steppes in *Prince Igor*, shaman sites of Mongolia in *The Rite of Spring*, and the Caucasus in *Thamar*. The Indian frontier was reflected in *Le Dieu bleu*, and the sensuous 'Orient' of Samarkand in *Schéhérazade*. Russia was depicted as a country of highly painted wooden villages in *Contes Russes* and kremlins (walled cities) of onion-domed churches in *The Firebird*. While appreciating the coverage given to their dancers, Russian commentators were frustrated by the perceived barbarism of their nation presented by the Ballets Russes, especially by dancers performing an art favoured by their court.<sup>4</sup> Before the 1917 Revolution the company celebrated

the diversity of Russia. In the 1920s it looked back with nostalgia, an approach that appealed to émigré audiences. At the same time, however, it took on board the most recent Russian trends such as Constructivism in *Le Pas d'acier*, possibly in the misguided view that this would enable the company to perform in the Soviet Union.

While Diaghilev's ballets do not all conform to precisely the same template, certain groups of people would always be involved. At the heart of everything was Diaghilev's informal inner cabinet of advisers, friends, colleagues and sponsors, who were consulted on suggestions for and approval of productions. The cabinet frequently came up with the ideas for ballets (and operatic productions) and it served as a sounding board for ideas. Diaghilev's initial group, which included a number of his *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*) partners, would gather in his St Petersburg flat. Key members included the designers Alexandre Benois and Léon Bakst, General Bezobrazov (a privy councillor and balletomane who Diaghilev used as 'Company Manager'), the critic Valerian Svetlov, who Diaghilev sometimes sent to Paris to review his productions for Russian readers, and Walter 'Valichka' Nouvel, who remained involved with the company throughout its existence. Initially, it also included Diaghilev's lover and secretary, Aleksey Mavrin, until he eloped with the dancer Olga Fedorova during the 1909 Paris season. It was augmented by the choreographer Mikhail Fokine, *régisiseur* and ballet master Serge Grigoriev, and occasionally with others, such as the artist Valentin Serov and the composer Nikolai Tcherepnin. The circle of advisers became more fluid when Diaghilev's work was focused on Paris, where it included Misia Sert, the Comtesse Greffulhe and the impresario Gabriel Astruc. While the Russian group focused on artistic concerns, the Parisians also concerned themselves with fundraising and promotion.

Some of the committee's early ideas are revealed in Diaghilev's black notebook where he jotted down points

discussed in meetings from 1910 to 1911.<sup>5</sup> These notes show that in 1911 Diaghilev was developing a three-year programme with proposals for a tour of the United States and preliminary ideas for casting ballets, including suggestions that Ida Rubinstein should be considered for chief nymph in *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and Leonid Leontiev for *Petrushka*. Diaghilev includes notes on how *The Firebird*, *Cléopâtre* and *Le Carnaval* could be improved. *The Firebird* was dropped from the repertoire in 1911, probably to allow for revisions to be implemented. The notebook also details the matters Diaghilev concerned himself with, including supplying publicity photographs to theatres he planned to visit in Rome, London and Russia. It becomes obvious that some ideas went through a long gestation. Proposals for a ballet featuring the Slavic house spirit, Kikimora, appear here, as does an idea from Benois – inspired by the visit of Henri and Marius Casadesus, founders of the Society of Ancient Instruments (which rediscovered and played the scores of long-dead composers) to St Petersburg in 1909 – of reconstructing courtly dance as performed at Versailles to music by Michel de Montéclair. *Kikimora* was staged in San Sebastián, Spain, in 1916 but Montéclair's music was not employed until *Les Tentations de la bergère* in 1924.

During the First World War Diaghilev developed a largely new advisory group which travelled with him to Switzerland, Spain and Italy (pl.38). After the Ballets Russes reformed in 1915, following a gap of nine months when all the dancers were dispersed, there was a strong representation of designers. These included Natalia Goncharova and her partner Mikhail Larionov who was invalided out of the war having been injured in 1914, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, and, from 1916, Pablo Picasso.

After the war patrons assumed a more significant role, but the artistic world was still represented. Describing his commission in the late 1920s to compose the score for *Ode*, Nicolas Nabokov outlined the process of approval:

First the 'foundling' was tested for several months by the closest members of His Majesty's household; these included Roger Desormière, the eminent French conductor, Boris Kochno, Valichka Nouvel. Then, after he had passed the preliminary 'household test,' he was to meet the great ones: Stravinsky, Picasso. Next came the influential friends and patrons of Diaghilev: Princess de Polignac (Singer sewing machines),



38. Mikhail Larionov, *Natalia Goncharova, Serge Diaghilev, Léonide Massine and Beppe Potetti*. Pencil on paper, c.1917. V&A: E.277-1961



39. Laura Knight, *Olga Spessirtseva Backstage Tying her Shoe*. Oil on canvas, c.1921-2. Painted during the run of *The Sleeping Princess* at the Alhambra Theatre, London. Private collection



40. Konstantin Makovsky, *Public Festival during Shrovetide in the Admiralty Square*. Oil on canvas, 1869. This painting was an important source for *Petrushka*. The presentation of the booths and stalls is similar to Benois's fairground scenes and the characters suggest many of the cameo roles in the ballet. Russian Museum, St Petersburg

Lord Rothermere (*Daily Mail*), Coco Chanel (*haute couture*), and Misia Sert, the clever, warm and attractive friend of Diaghilev and of two generations of famous painters and musicians.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly Nabokov added that the 'ritual also included drawing up a list of people the foundling was advised not to see'. These included anyone with whom Diaghilev had quarrelled or those who were his perceived rivals, having joined or set up other companies.

As well as the advisory committee, there would be a librettist who wrote or adapted the narrative, recommending the number of scenes, the characters and the action, keeping it simple enough for an audience to follow. Usually one of the first to be involved was the composer who wrote, or arranged, the music. Fewer than half the Ballets Russes productions had entirely original scores, but many were arranged by fine composers – Ottorino Respighi's orchestration of piano pieces by Rossini for *La Boutique fantasque* (1919) and Igor Stravinsky's reinterpretation of early eighteenth-century music by Pergolesi and his contemporaries for *Pulcinella* (1920) being among the most notable examples – so that they had a unity and often the quality of an original composition. The practice of using established scores for ballet was growing in the early twentieth century and Diaghilev's own training as a musician ensured that the music selected was the best available and that the arrangements enhanced the

original. The design of the sets, costumes and lighting created the ambience for both the ballet and the dancers. Set designers had to allow space for the movement to take place, and costume designers and makers needed to be sensitive to the movement requirements of the dancers and choreographers. Diaghilev not only supervised the overall look of the production, he also served as the company's lighting designer (presumably learning the craft from his first theatrical seasons in 1908 and 1909). He was happy, nevertheless, to give credit to his colleagues; he never even claimed writing a libretto, and there is no credit for his lighting in any published programmes.

Diaghilev initiated most of the productions apparently with an awareness of balancing mixed programmes of works. For the 1909 season he adapted and enhanced existing works from the repertoire of the Imperial Russian Ballet. With *Parade* (1917), one of the most original productions created for the Ballets Russes, the collaboration appears to have been initiated by the artists Jean Cocteau and Pablo Picasso, and the composer Erik Satie, with support from Picasso's Chilean patron, Eugenia Errázuriz, before Diaghilev himself was involved. Even when the original ideas were not his own, all aspects of a production had to meet Diaghilev's exacting requirements. In the late 1920s, when collecting rare books and the letters of the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin took precedence over ballets, he became slightly less involved, and Boris Kochno was encouraged to assume a

more active role as producer. Diaghilev would, nevertheless, appear to whip a production, such as *Ode* (1928), into shape before the first night.

It is rare for collaborators to create their elements at precisely the same time and place, but good collaborations, as the contemporary choreographer Richard Alston has shown, can 'open up work to other people's ideas rather than merely enlist support for one's own already explored concerns'.<sup>7</sup> Henri Sauguet recalled that for *La Chatte* he composed the music in Monte Carlo to the scenario by Sobeka (Boris Kochno) adapted from a fable by Æsop:

I worked during the day and in the evening went to the casino. I met there the company pianist and Balanchine.... The following day it was put into rehearsal. Every day towards noon Diaghilev would come by ... [with guests] and listen to what I had done. Then I came back and got on with the work.<sup>8</sup>

Sauguet did not see the decor – which was being created in Monte Carlo at the same time – until the stage rehearsal, and felt it was Balanchine's choreography and understanding of the effect of the set and costumes as well as Diaghilev's overall vision that brought the elements together.

Diaghilev's production of *Petrushka* is often cited as a close collaboration in which the creators fed off one another, giving the ballet its remarkable unity. The creative process began with part of the score. In 1910 Diaghilev and Nijinsky visited Igor Stravinsky in Lausanne hoping to hear the progress he was making with *The Rite of Spring*. During the visit the composer played them his new composition, *Petrushka's Cry*, and a sketch for a Russian Dance. Diaghilev sensed these could be combined for a ballet about the traditional Russian puppet show held at Carnival. He knew that Alexandre Benois, who was fascinated with old St Petersburg, would make the ideal designer. Benois found the subject irresistible. He recalled his childhood impressions of the Butterweek (traditional pre-Lenten) Fair and studied lithographs of Russian life such as those published by Ignaty Schedrovsky and Vasily Timm, and the painting of the Shrovetide Fair by Konstantin Makovsky (pl.40), for his lively crowd scenes. Mikhail Fokine undertook choreography in Rome after the score and designs were completed and the larger company was assembling for the June season in Paris. He acknowledged that he was brought into the creative process after Stravinsky's score was composed and Benois had drawn up the narrative and designs, yet he, and most reviewers, recognized that Fokine was an integral part of creation of the ballet in which composer, designer and choreographer, each 'in his own language, told about Petroushka's sufferings'.<sup>9</sup> Fokine claimed that *Petrushka* was the ballet that most completely illustrated his reforms, including presenting the story through the dance and only drawing on *pointe* work for specific effects, without which it would have been a far less impressive production.<sup>10</sup> Fokine also observed he was praised for his close collaboration

with the designer Nicholas Roerich on the Polovtsian Dances from *Prince Igor*, but they only met on one occasion when Roerich encouraged Fokine to take up the project which he had been commissioned to design: 'I am sure you will do something wonderful.'<sup>11</sup>

For the 1909 and 1910 seasons, Diaghilev had little difficulty in attracting dancers to his summer companies – many of whom would return to the Imperial Ballet when their season began in September. When Diaghilev decided to establish his year-round company towards the end of 1910 it was a different matter asking them to give up the security of a long-term contract with the Imperial Ballet and expected pension, even for an increased salary. Although he secured the services of Vaslav Nijinsky and his sister Bronislava as a result of Nijinsky's dismissal for wearing what was considered to be an inappropriate costume on the Maryinsky stage, and Adolph Bolm, who had already developed an independent career, most others were cautious. From the start he had to recruit from outside the St Petersburg Imperial Ballet. He contracted dancers from independent ballet schools in Warsaw and Moscow, as well as Russians performing in the West. Regular trips were made to seek out new talent and after the 1917 Revolution Diaghilev persuaded a group from Kiev trained by Bronislava Nijinska to emigrate. In 1924 he absorbed a concert group of four dancers, including George Balanchine and Alexandra Danilova, who left the Soviet Union. Although the nucleus of the company was Russian or Polish Diaghilev also employed British, Italian and American dancers, all disguised under Russian names. Teachers were important to weld the dancers from different backgrounds into a more-or-less cohesive group, and to bring those whose training was originally less complete up to the required standard. While the principal dancers were outstanding, some of the corps de ballet appear to have been little more than acceptable.

Having developed the company it was necessary to create ballets for the dancers to perform and five-sixths of the repertoire comprised newly choreographed productions. Subjects, narratives or themes had to be found or written, although a few ballets, such as the divertissement *Cimarosiana* drawn from the opera-ballet *Le Astuzie Femminili*, were simply an excuse to mount a suite of dances. Subject matter for the Ballets Russes fell into a number of categories with sources including fairy tales and folklore, archaeology and history – tributes to the past often incorporating a particular appeal to a specific country – topicality and a wide range of literature. The literature called upon included stories from the Bible for *Salome*, *The Legend of Joseph* and *The Prodigal Son*, and classical literature for *Narcisse*, *Daphnis et Chloé*, *Midas* and *Apollon musagète*.

Fairy tales and folklore provide the plots for some of the more colourful ballets. Although most of the sources were Russian, Hans Christian Andersen provided the plot of *Le Chant du rossignol* and Æsop's fables the story of the cat-woman who cannot resist chasing a mouse in *La Chatte*.



41. Ivan Bilibin, illustration from *Ivan the Tsar's Son, the Firebird, and the Grey Wolf*. From the series 'Skazki' published in St Petersburg, 1901. The illustration shows Ivan receiving the Firebird's talismanic feather. V&A: NAL.804.AB.0068

*Contes Russes* took several Russian folk tales and combined them into one ballet, although *Kikimora* and *Baba Yaga* also existed as independent ballets. *The Firebird* was an original story that combined characters and elements from several Slavic folk tales collected by Alexander Afanasiev to create an original fairy tale for export to Western Europe (pl.41). The Firebird, her feather, golden apples and the beautiful Yelena all feature in *Ivan the Tsar's Son, the Firebird and the Grey Wolf*, according to the edition illustrated by Ivan Bilibin in 1901, although the immortal demon Kashchei (the name translates as 'boney', hence his skeleton costume), whose soul is hidden in an egg, was drawn from other stories. He had also appeared in Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's eponymous short opera in 1902.

The two productions designed by Nicholas Roerich, *Prince Igor* and *The Rite of Spring*, owed much to his interest in ancient Russian culture. An active archaeologist, his knowledge of shamanism as well as his interest in the Slavic deity Yarilo, associated with vegetation, spring and fertility, fed into *The Rite of Spring*. The Ballets Russes' travels also resulted in other cultures being reflected. Following a period spent in Italy and Spain during the First World War, the company was able to recapture the atmosphere of those countries for British audiences in *The Good-Humoured Ladies* and *Le Tricorne (The Three-Cornered Hat, 1919)*. As the dance historian Cyril Beaumont recalled, 'Masseine did it in a wonderful way'.<sup>12</sup> The Italian ballets *The Good-Humoured Ladies* and *Pulcinella*, and the Spanish *Le Tricorne*, all owed their narratives to earlier stage works. *The Good-Humoured Ladies* drew on the play *Le Morbinose, Le donne de buon umore* by the eighteenth-century Venetian dramatist Carlo Goldoni, while *Pulcinella* was derived from Neapolitan *commedia dell'arte* plays (pl.42).

*Le Tricorne* was inspired by the novella from the nineteenth-century Spanish writer Pedro Alarcón which had been adapted into a play, *El Corregidor y La Molinera* by Gregorio Martínez Sierra, with music by Manuel de Falla. Typically, Diaghilev adapted the original, reducing the role of the Corregidor, who became more a figure of fun, and emphasizing those of the Miller and his Wife in order to clarify the plot.

The Ballets Russes habitually incorporated tributes to the history of the country in which they happened to be appearing: in France with *Le Pavillon d'Armide* and *Les Sylphides* in 1909; in Germany with *Le Carnaval*; and in Britain with *The Triumph of Neptune*. With such ballets, a combination of subject and design was used to reference the past. For *Le Pavillon d'Armide*, Alexandre Benois drew on his passion for the Versailles court of Louis XIV, especially Louis-René Boquet's costumes for spectacular entertainments. Designs by Boquet, along with those by Jean Bérain and Jean-Baptiste Martin, also provided source material for Bakst's costumes for *The Sleeping Princess* – Martin's Apollo for the *Opéra de Phaëton* appears, appropriately, for Apollo was the sun god, to have been the inspiration for Aurora's wedding gown. Bakst's palaces for

the ballet, memorable for their wonderful perspectives, were derived from baroque stage sets by Ferdinando Galli da Bibiena in his *Varie Opere di Prospettiva* (1703–8).<sup>13</sup>

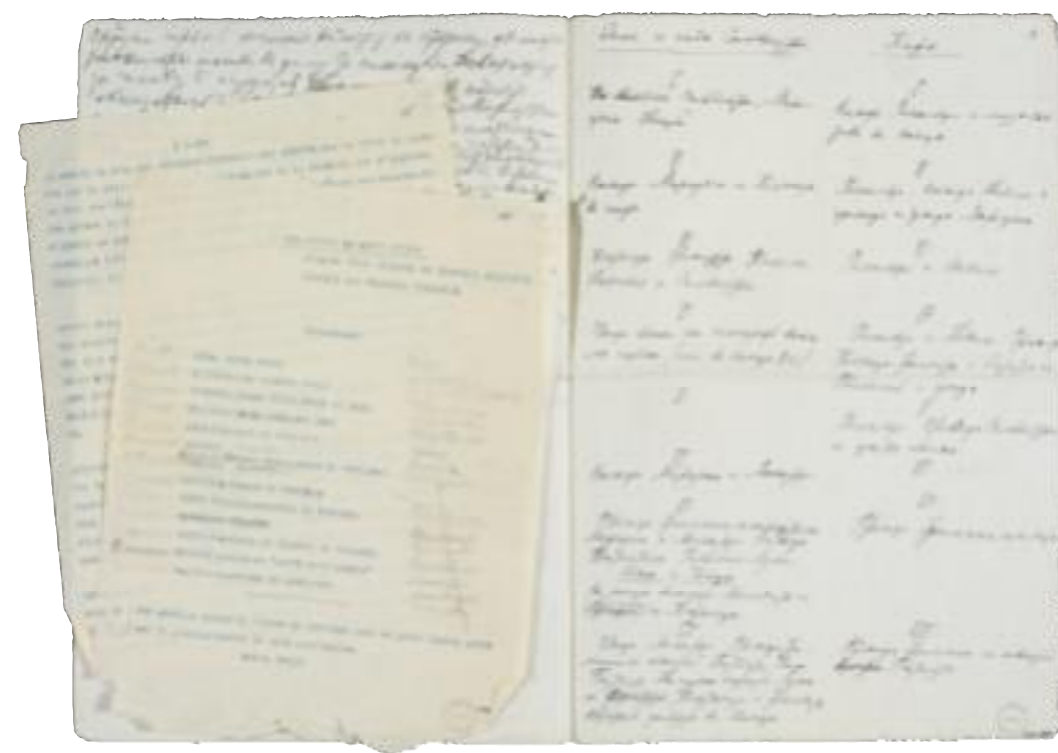
The costumes for *Les Sylphides* in Paris were off-white, long, Romantic-ballet tutus with wings, inspired by those worn in the 1832 ballet, *La Sylphide*. Bakst had designed the costume for the solo Sylph in Fokine's *Chopiniana* in St Petersburg in 1906. In the revised production in 1908 the women wore Romantic tutus from the Imperial Ballet wardrobe but, for Diaghilev, Benois re-worked the costumes giving them a more flattering, streamlined look. For Berlin, Diaghilev premiered *Le Carnaval* acknowledging German interest in *commedia dell'arte* and Biedermeier fashion plates. In Britain, *The Triumph of Neptune* was inspired by nineteenth-century sets and costumes for toy theatres, and included foilstone tunics (costumes encrusted with fake jewels) left over from a Victorian pantomime found at the theatrical costumier C.W. May.<sup>14</sup> The costume for the Fairy Queen was inspired by tinsel prints of the Victorian dancer Mme Auriol as Columbine, and when Cupid was added to the cast of characters in 1927, Stanislas Idzikowski's costume was inspired by prints of the dancer John Reeve perched like Marie Taglioni on an unbending flower.<sup>15</sup> In the 1920s, a ballet based on an American theme was discussed. Projects such as these were unrealized as the company did not return to the USA, but ideas included one ballet with a score by John Carpenter and another based on George Gershwin's *An American in Paris*.<sup>16</sup>

Contemporary folk dress as well as historical artefacts influenced sets, costumes and accessories. Roerich was inspired by collections of folk dress and accessories for

*The Rite of Spring*, and many of the costumes for Prince Igor were ikat-weave tunics purchased in the markets of St Petersburg. Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov were more imaginative and theatrical than Roerich in their use of peasant dress and folk art, although Larionov's outré designs for *Le Soleil de nuit* and *Chout* in particular made them a challenge for performers:

Although the costumes were vivid in colour and wonderful to look at, they were appallingly uncomfortable. All our abandon and zest for dancing was nipped in the bud. We had horrible thick pads tied around our waists, then there were tight heavy costumes on top of them. The tall, mitre-shaped Russian head-dresses, once they had slipped slightly to one side, just refused to stand up straight again.<sup>17</sup>

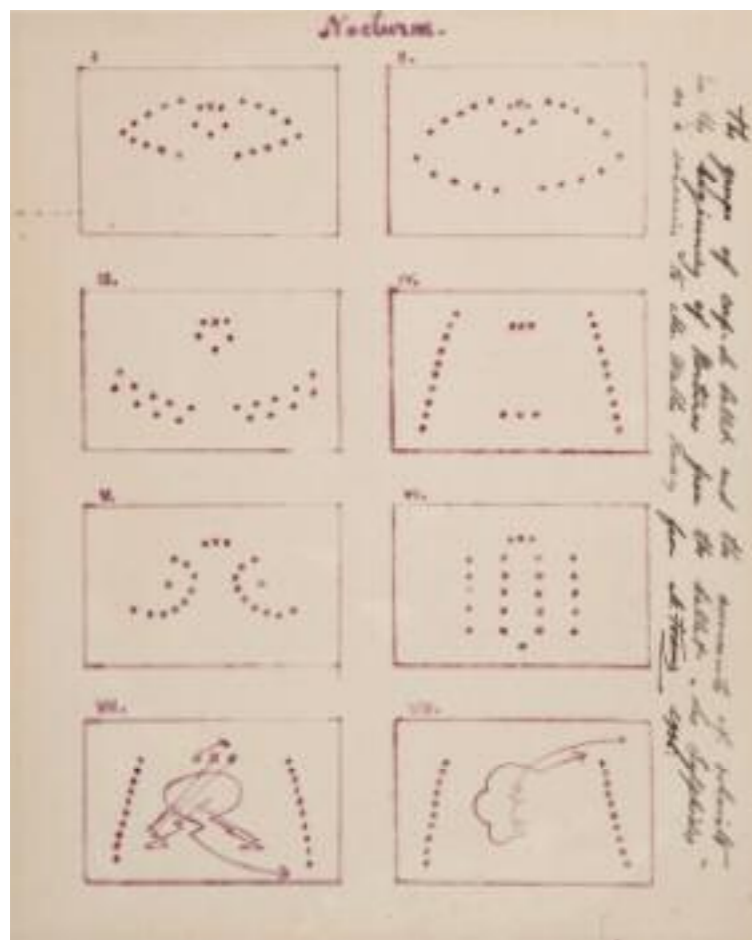
Other exotic elements were incorporated into design and movement. Both Bakst and Fokine were inspired by the St Petersburg performances of a troupe of dancers from the Royal Siamese Court in October 1900, which provided a stimulus for Nijinsky's Siamese dance in the divertissement, *Les Orientales*, as well as the pseudo-Indian/Hindu/Cambodian elements of *Le Dieu bleu* (pl.43).<sup>18</sup> Sculptures from the Chinese-Tibet border inspired designs by Henri Matisse for the 1920 *Le Chant du rossignol*. When Kenneth Archer and Millicent Hodson reconstructed the ballet in 1999 they discovered that the source of the costumes and their colours for the Warriors were the 'guardian kings' in the Buddhist gallery at the Musée Guimet in Paris, which once protected 'the four cardinal points of a temple: North, South, East,



42. Léonide Massine, manuscript for *The Good-Humoured Ladies*. Type and ink on paper, 1917. The pages shown here include a character list annotated with provisional casting, and a suggested plan for parallel action. V&A: S.311–1980

43. After Léon Bakst, costume for a Little God from *Le Dieu bleu*. Metal thread and cotton jersey, silk, brass decorations, papier-mâché, cotton, gauze, brass headdress, 1912. The faces on the child's headdress, like those on the set, are inspired by details from Angkor Thom in Cambodia. V&A: S.613–1980; S.615(A&B)–1980





44. Mikhail Fokine, choreographic floor patterns for the opening of *Les Sylphides*. Pencil on paper, 1909. Pallant House, Chichester CHCPH 0264-2

West', while the scarlet figure of Death with her necklace of skulls was inspired by the Tibetan demi-goddess, the Red Dakini.<sup>19</sup>

Topical events were also influential. Most famously *Le Train bleu* was created to be premiered during the 1924 VIII Olympiad in Paris, while other works tied into anniversaries. *Le Spectre de la rose* was premiered in 1911, the centenary of the birth of Théophile Gautier, who wrote the poem that inspired the ballet. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, who was the first individual not involved with the company in any other way to successfully suggest a subject to Diaghilev, would have been aware of company's interest in Gautier as it was his 1834 novella, *Omphale*, which provided the narrative for *Le Pavillon d'Armide*.<sup>20</sup>

Once ideas for the plots were gathered the detailed libretti were worked out. Frequently designers, choreographers, and/or composers were involved, but libretti were also the province of other collaborators. The two librettists who played the most dominant roles were the poet/artist Jean Cocteau who was responsible for *Le Dieu bleu*, *Parade*, *Le Train bleu* and the text for *Oedipus Rex*, and Boris Kochno, Diaghilev's secretary/assistant in the 1920s. Kochno wrote nine ballets, sometimes under the sobriquet

of Sobeka: *Les Fâcheux* after Molière, *Zéphire et Flore*, *Les Matelots*, *La Pastorale*, *La Chatte*, *Ode*, *The Gods Go A-begging*, *Le Bal* (after a story by Count Vladimir Sologub) and *The Prodigal Son*. However, these ballets, which had quite complex plots, were generally less successful than those that appear to have evolved more organically.

Choreographers, like designers, turned to a range of sources for their inspiration. Diaghilev was lucky in that all five of his leading choreographers took highly original approaches to movement. At times this upset the dancers, particularly when Nijinsky in his two-dimensional *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (pl.45) and the weighty choreography for *The Rite of Spring*, challenged the dancers by having them move in ways that were completely alien to their training. But, with a few exceptions – Idzikovski left when Bronislava Nijinska became ballet mistress as he was unsympathetic to her choreography<sup>21</sup> – most dancers were eager for material to be moulded on their bodies.

Mikhail Fokine was determined to break away from the stereotypical movement of the turn of the century ballets and their formal structures (pl.44). He believed that characters should relate to their surroundings and to other characters rather than be arranged symmetrically with the

dancing 'addressing' the audience. Fokine's movements used the body more naturally, avoiding exaggeration. Rather than standing rigidly in formal positions with their feet turned out, dancers stood normally, assuming asymmetrical shapes, their weight often directed towards one hip. Fokine was a part of the trend for an 'art nouveau' flow of movement (pls 46-49). He had veered towards the style of dance advocated by Isadora Duncan before her visit to St Petersburg and took an interest in her performances. *Pointe* work returned to its original purpose of achieving effects: the other-worldliness of the Sylphs in *Les Sylphides*, the young girl's movement when she is asleep and dreaming in *Le Spectre de la rose* as opposed to her natural walk when awake, or the stiff wooden gait of the puppet Ballerina in *Petrushka*. Fokine tried to fit his movement to his subject and when faced with creating dances for the Polovtsian warriors he had to imagine how they might have danced. Fokine's choreography not only showcased the great dancers Vaslav Nijinsky and Tamara Karsavina but also the corps de ballet who were given a prominence rare in previous times. Much more than merely set dressing, their importance is indicated by the fact that it was considered an honour to dance in *Les Sylphides* which remained one of Diaghilev's favourite works.

Vaslav Nijinsky, who succeeded Mikhail Fokine as choreographer, approached movement in different and original ways. Both Nijinsky and Léonide Massine were absolute novices when Diaghilev thrust them into

choreography and both were prepared to experiment. The artist Mikhail Larionov, who mentored Massine's early ballets, appears to have encouraged his use of character work and folk dance. In the 1920s the choreographers Bronislava Nijinska and George Balanchine returned to using the academic technique but each took it in new directions. Nijinska used *pointe* work to evoke the stabbing braiding of plaits in *Les Noces* in contrast to its use for chic styles of walking in *Les Biches*. Meanwhile, Balanchine offered clear sweeping movements and new ideas such as the sinking turns of *La Chatte* and *Apollon musagète*, while Massine looked on with envy, wishing he could produce such imaginative motion in a production both timeless and modern.

Nijinsky was remarkable in devising totally different styles of movement for each of his ballets. For *L'Après-midi d'un faune* he drew on red-figure archaic vases in the Louvre for some of the poses of the Faun and Nymphs.<sup>22</sup> One of his inspirations for the extraordinary weighty, angular, downward thrust of the movement for *The Rite of Spring* appears to have been a toy duck. Discussing Nijinsky, Edwin Evans recalled:

Like many artists he had a weakness for clever toys. I discovered in Chelsea a jointed wooden duck which was capable of assuming extraordinarily expressive angular attitudes. I procured one for him, and he was delighted with it. The following year, after *The*

45. Valentine Gross, Vaslav Nijinsky as the Faun confronting Lydia Nelidova as the principal Nymph, sketched twice, from *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. Pencil on paper, 1912. V&A: S.182-1999





46–49. Valentine Gross, *Vaslav Nijinsky as the Golden Slave in Schéhérazade*. Pencil on paper, 1911. V&A: S.634–1989 (with Tamara Karsavina as Zobiede); S.636–1989; S.635–1989; S.637–1989

*Rite of Spring* had been produced with his angular choreography, one of his first questions to me was: ‘Well, did you recognise it?’ – ‘What?’ – ‘Why, the duck, of course’, and he told me that some of the most effective angular poses in the ballet had originated with the duck.<sup>23</sup>

The recently developed art of cinema made an impact on Massine’s style, both colouring his movements and the structure of his works. When travelling in Spain in preparation for the creation of *Le Tricorne*, Massine filmed Spanish dance while he was studying with the inspired flamenco dancer Félix Fernández García.

George Balanchine’s choreography for *Apollon musagète* took inspiration from sources as varied as the flat feet of the figures in the painting by designer André Bauchant that was used for the set, the flashing neon lights of London’s Piccadilly Circus and Michelangelo’s image of God reaching out to Adam in the Sistine Chapel. The flat

feet became the Muses’ shuffling walk, the lights of Piccadilly inspired the opening and closing of Apollo’s hands in his second solo, and Michelangelo is referenced at the start of the *pas de deux* for Apollo and Terpsichore. In addition, the ballet is rich in more obvious Apollonian imagery, including the famous arabesques by the Muses evoking the rays of the sun surrounding the god.

Ahead of dress rehearsals a costume parade would take place on stage. Cyril Beaumont was privileged to attend one:

Diaghilev sat in a chair, and Grigoriev stood near him, or sat also on a chair. Then there were one or two persons assisting, and they had the costume designs preserved under a talc sheet, and each dancer came on as he was called. They began with the principals, and Diaghilev compared the costume design with the actual costume realized. And after he had examined this very closely and had approved, he then asked the dancer to do a variation, or some of the steps that he was going

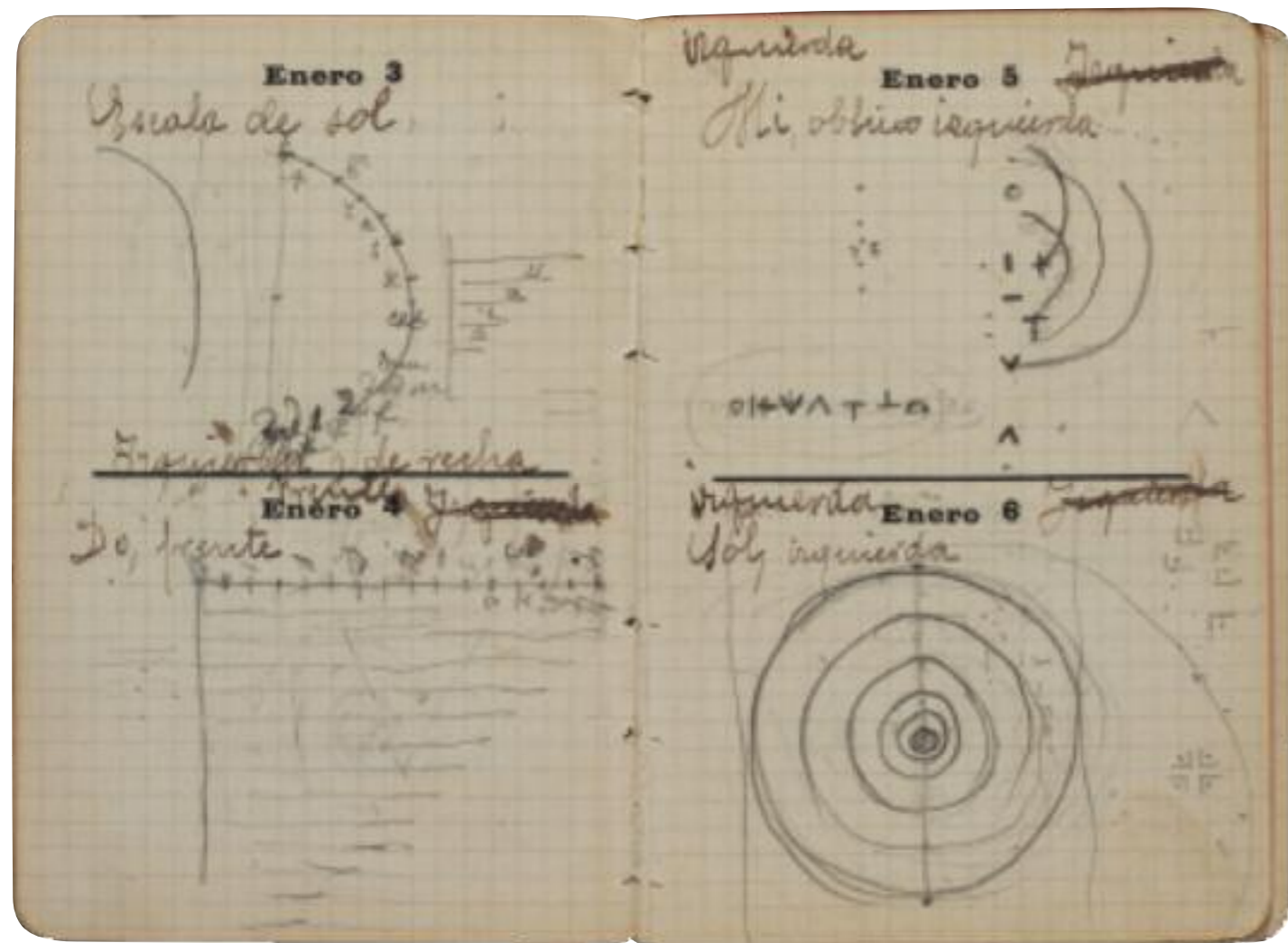
to do. And often the dancer found – especially, I remember, in the *Sleeping Beauty*, they were very heavy costumes with gold braid on them, and he started saying ‘Oh, this will have to go, the skirt will have to be reduced, this trimming will have to come off’, and kept trying things while the costumier was in despair at seeing his creation, as he thought, ruined.<sup>24</sup>

Designers of costumes would find inspiration from watching rehearsals. Pablo Picasso observed Tamara Karsavina rehearsing for *Le Tricorne* to ensure that his costume would move with the dance, telling her ‘I am going to make it round you’ (pls 50–56).<sup>25</sup> Bronislava Nijinska, having rejected Goncharova’s elaborate designs for *Les Noces*, insisting that the peasant wedding should be more of a ritual than a joyful celebration, invited Goncharova to attend rehearsals. The designer adapted the women’s rehearsal tunics and the men’s shirts and breeches into their uniform costumes. The ‘designs’ for the costumes served as storyboards for the

groupings but interestingly Goncharova always showed the women in birch slippers, never the *pointe* shoes of Nijinska’s choreography.

Costumes worn by one dancer might not suit another. The tiny dancer, Alicia Markova, found that her costumes often had to be adapted. In Manchester in 1928, when she was about to make her debut in the *pas de deux* from the *Bluebird*, Diaghilev produced the money for her to replace the ostrich feathers of her headdress with bird of paradise.<sup>26</sup> He kept an eye on all costumes, and decided that the blue tunic for the androgynous dancer of the andantino in *Les Biches* should be chopped to the top of the dancer’s thighs. Since this left Vera Nemchinova feeling naked, Diaghilev suggested that she wear white gloves, but there may well have been more to his suggestion as the choreography draws attention to the dancer’s hands.<sup>27</sup>

Unsung heroes of the Ballets Russes included those who translated the set and costume designs from page to stage, the wardrobe mistresses, the hairdresser who cared



50. Léonide Massine, notes made while studying Spanish dance. Autograph manuscript in bound notebook, c.1918. V&A: S.4-1980



51. Castanets, early 1900s. These castanets were used by Félix Fernández García who gave them to Lydia Sokolova when she worked with Massine, studying Spanish dance and creating the choreography for the Miller's Wife from *Le Tricorne*. V&A: S.284(&A)-1978



Opposite  
52. Lydia Sokolova playing her castanets in *Le Tricorne*, c.1919. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections

53. Pablo Picasso, costume design for the Dandy from *Le Tricorne*. Pochoir print, published 1920. V&A: S.440:25-1979



54. Ethelbert White, backstage at *Le Tricorne*. Ink on paper, c.1919 (see also Picasso's set design, pl.74). V&A: S.190-2008

55. Receipt from L. Gustave of 10 Long Acre, Covent Garden, London, for wigs for *Le Tricorne*, 1919. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections THM/7/4/4/126 A/B



for the wigs, and stage technicians who kept the productions looking fresh and coped with the challenges of transferring productions between stages of different sizes.

Many costumes for the early seasons were made in Russia, but by 1910 the Parisian firm of La Maison Muelle was responsible for making productions, beginning with *The Firebird*. Muelle's involvement continued throughout the company's history and in the 1920s it was joined by the Monte Carlo atelier of Vera Soudeikina (later Mme Stravinsky who also performed as the Queen in *The Sleeping Princess*) and Mme A. Youkin. Many craftspeople would be involved in making, dyeing, painting and decorating the costumes, which had to be fitted on the individual dancers. When new casts took over roles the wardrobe mistress would have to adjust the garments once again. The costumes for some productions wore out constantly – the men's trousers for the vigorous *Prince Igor* look quite different from one photograph to the next.

After the First World War Diaghilev turned to theatrical costumiers in London. The firm of Alias, which had made virtually all the costumes for ballets at the Alhambra for 30 years, now remade costumes for the principals and ladies in *Schéhérazade* and the costume for the Swan Princess in *Contes Russes*, as well as the full productions of *La Boutique fantasque* and *Le Tricorne*.<sup>28</sup> Wigs and accessories came from the rival firms of Gustave and Clarksons, but even the major costumiers could not always cope with requirements. Three weeks before *The Sleeping Princess* opened the actress and dressmaker, Grace Lovat Fraser, was persuaded by Diaghilev into leading a team to complete the task. The costumes had arrived from Paris but many were missing, incomplete or not even begun. Bakst instructed Lovat Fraser how to interpret his designs – the decoration was all to be embroidered, not painted, which would have been much quicker, and, for the backs of the costumes, Bakst's 'Mme Collaboratrice' was to 'invent something très chic'. As so often happens with a huge production, some of the costumes only arrived at the last minute. In the first interval, Lovat Fraser collided with Diaghilev as she raced to fetch the costumes for the hunting scene, which had only just been delivered.<sup>29</sup>

The majority of the sets for the Ballets Russes were painted on canvas to evoke scenes as varied as pastoral glades in ancient Greece, a beach on the Riviera, a monumental temple in Egypt, a Venetian piazzetta or

a collection of yurts on an open plain. Sets for the early productions were painted in Russia, calling on the skills of Oreste Allegri and Boris Anisfeld<sup>30</sup> in particular, but after the war Diaghilev turned primarily to Vladimir Polunin and his wife, and Prince Alexander Schervashidze.<sup>31</sup> At times the artist/designers would play an active part in the painting – André Derain certainly painted parts of *La Boutique fantasque* and Picasso both *Parade* and *Le Tricorne*. Goncharova and Larionov were also hands-on scene painters and it was while assisting Goncharova on painting the sets for *Les Noces* that Gerald Murphy learnt the craft of theatre design.

The sets for the Ballets Russes were painted flat on the floor rather than on large frames. The technical aspects of the craft are discussed in detail in Polunin's *The Continental Method of Scene Painting* and shown in the photographic record of the painting of the front cloth for *Le Tricorne* at his studio in Floral Street, Covent Garden (pl.56).<sup>32</sup> Essentially, the artwork was divided into a grid, or 'squared up' (pl.59), and the canvas was stretched, prepared and also squared up so that the outline could be enlarged onto it before being filled in with paint. Over time, sets had to be repaired and touched up, especially if cloths became damp, and they needed to be well lit to disguise the creases and folds that developed as cloths were toured. On the rare occasions in the late 1920s when traditional painted sets were not used the artist-designers took an active part in visualizing the setting. The sculptors Naum Gabo and Anton Pevsner (who created the central figure of Aphrodite) set up in Monte Carlo to construct their unusual set for *La Chatte*, while the artist Pavel Tchelitchev worked closely with film-maker Pierre Charbonnier on the screens and projections for *Ode*.

All theatre productions are, to some extent, collaborations but few company directors have Diaghilev's ability to orchestrate the roles of everyone involved to produce so many masterpieces. That not every ballet was a complete success was inevitable given the number of creations for the Ballets Russes and Diaghilev's constant search for novelty, but most works intrigue us even a century on. There was very little that he did not try, from productions without dancers to multimedia works. Diaghilev could be distant or he could charm, but above all he could radiate extraordinary authority and power, which enabled him to bring together a group of such innovative individuals to create original works of art.



56. Vladimir and Elizabeth Polunin with assistant Alex Bray painting the curtain for *Le Tricorne* in their Covent Garden workshop, 1919. Private collection



*Opposite*  
57. After Pavel Tchelitchev, costume for a corps de ballet dancer from *Ode*. Artificial silk and cotton, cotton jersey, cellulose nitrate decoration, metal fencing mask, 1928. V&A: S.845-1980 with S.846A-1980

58. *Ode* (Scene III) showing Ira Belianina as Nature and Serge Lifar as the Student with the women of the corps de ballet in their crinoline dresses. Photograph by Lipnitsky. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



## DAILY CLASS

Jane Pritchard

Class at the start of each working day – serving to warm up, tune and align the body – is an indispensable feature of a dancer’s life. Beginning at the *barre*, slower exercises are followed by faster, more virtuosic steps as the dancers gradually move towards the centre of the studio. Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes was no different from other companies and during its 20 years Enrico

Cecchetti, Nicolas Legat and Lubov Tchernicheva were responsible for most of these classes. In addition choreographers, notably Bronislava Nijinska in the early 1920s, sometimes taught, allowing them to try out ideas and assess the potential of dancers when creating new works. At other times (such as during the second tour of the USA) it appears that Nicholas Kremneff, assistant to the *régisseur*, Serge Grigoriev, deputized as teacher.

The Italian, former virtuoso dancer, Cecchetti was invited to join Diaghilev in 1910, and although he was absent touring with Anna Pavlova during the 1913–14 season and did not join the company’s second tour of the USA, he remained its principal teacher until retiring to Italy in 1924. For dancers in St Petersburg at the turn of the century, Cecchetti’s classes were inspirational and he was a key figure in the enriching of the dancers’ *epaulement* – the flowing use of the upper body. By the 1920s, however, younger dancers considered his

classes to be out of date. Alexandra Danilova, who joined Diaghilev in 1924, complained that ‘he never gave us enough exercises at the *barre* to get our muscles warmed up for the centre’, resulting in cramp in her legs.<sup>1</sup> She also resented his formulaic classes, one set for each day of the week. The British dancer, Laura Wilson, found the classes fast: ‘in no part of the class was one allowed to stop after a correction [but] everything had a precise logic.’<sup>2</sup>

Danilova preferred Legat’s classes but Lydia Sokolova considered his method ‘lighter, much less strict and accurate than Cecchetti’s, so that although our classes became gayer, we lost strength and precision’.<sup>3</sup>

Continental opera houses had their own rehearsal studios. Tamara Karsavina recalled that ‘at Monte Carlo we had a pleasant ground floor shaded by a pergola overlooking the promenade below.... In Paris [at the Opéra] we had to toil up the endless flights of stairs to the cupola room. In London we worked in the squalid basement of a sailor’s night-club.’<sup>4</sup>

In London, the Ballets Russes performed at theatres without provision for rehearsals so classes were held at a number of places including Chandos Hall in Maiden Lane, West Street Studios and the London Territorial Drill Hall in Chenies Street, near Tottenham Court Road.

When Diaghilev was particularly interested in a dancer he ensured they undertook additional study to advance their careers. Vaslav Nijinsky and Karsavina had private classes from 1911; Nijinska coached Anton Dolin; Diaghilev invited Legat and his wife on holiday to Venice in 1924 so that Legat could continue Serge Lifar’s tuition; and he advised Alicia Markova to study with the great ballerina Lubov Egorova (one of Diaghilev’s Auroras) when the company was in Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Danilova 1986, p.69.

<sup>2</sup> Giannandrea Poesio, ‘Laura Wilson’, *Dancing Times* (May 1991), pp.757–8.

<sup>3</sup> Sokolova 1960, p.238.

<sup>4</sup> Tamara Karsavina, ‘Family Album Cavaliere Enrico Cecchetti’, *Dancing Times* (December 1964), pp.130–1.

Christopher Wood, the proposed creators of the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. Pencil on paper, 1926. Reflected in a classroom or studio mirror are Bronislava Nijinska, Christopher Wood, Diaghilev (seated), Constant Lambert and Boris Kochno. The drawing was intended for the right-hand wing of Wood’s rejected set. Private collection



Enrico Cecchetti (kneeling) with a class soon after the Ballets Russes reformed in Switzerland in 1915. The men standing are Léonide Massine (on the left) and Adolph Bolm. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections THM/376

Laura Knight, *Enrico Cecchetti Teaching*. Charcoal and pencil on paper, c.1920. V&A: S.195–2008



A class onstage during the 1928 tour of Britain with Vera Petrova, Eugénie Lipkovska, Yadviga Karleveska and Natalie Branitska in the foreground, wearing their black rehearsal tunics. Allied Newspapers, Manchester





Serge Diaghilev, draft telegram from 10 June 1926. The telegram's urgent query to Lady Ripon's daughter, Juliet Duff, translates as 'Have you cashed Rothermere's cheque?' The handwriting is that of Diaghilev's secretary, Boris Kochno. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections THM/7/2/1/4/21

Portrait photograph of Lady Ripon, early 1900s. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



## SPONSORSHIP AND FUNDING FOR THE BALLETS RUSSES

*Sarah Sonner*

Diaghilev brokered and exploited an extensive network of contacts to keep the Ballets Russes operating in a competitive commercial world. Income from patrons and box office receipts were essential. He worked constantly to gather the money necessary for his company to function, astutely identifying and managing multiple sources of capital. Records of Diaghilev's debts illustrate the continual challenge of securing sponsorship in the absence of government funding or a permanent home.

In contrast to Imperial patronage of the theatre in Russia, no single entity exclusively underwrote the Ballets Russes. For Diaghilev's ventures, this meant shifting from state support to a

committee of individuals, gathered and organized by the impresario, and modernizing the practical means of cultural production. Advances and guarantees were necessary to carry the company around the world, as when funds from the United States played a key role in the continuation of the company during the First World War. Support could also take the form of cash payments; after the war, money was sometimes spent directly on a dancer's healthcare.

Diaghilev's commissioning of new artists encouraged innovative productions, but emerging talent also had the advantage of being cheaper than established names. A successful artist could contribute as a patron, as

Jean Cocteau, *Vaslav Nijinsky dances Le Spectre de la rose*. Ink on paper, 1911. Cocteau made this drawing for Lady Ripon at her New Year's Day party. On 31 December 1911 Nijinsky had danced *Le Spectre de la rose* at the Théâtre national de l'Opéra. Stiftung John Neumeier – Dance Collection



did Coco Chanel. The financial success of Ballets Russes productions was not always coincident with artistic acclaim. Sometimes scandals boosted ticket sales, especially following a spectacular protest by the Surrealists during a 1926 performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which they accused the Ballets Russes of creating art at the behest of capitalism.

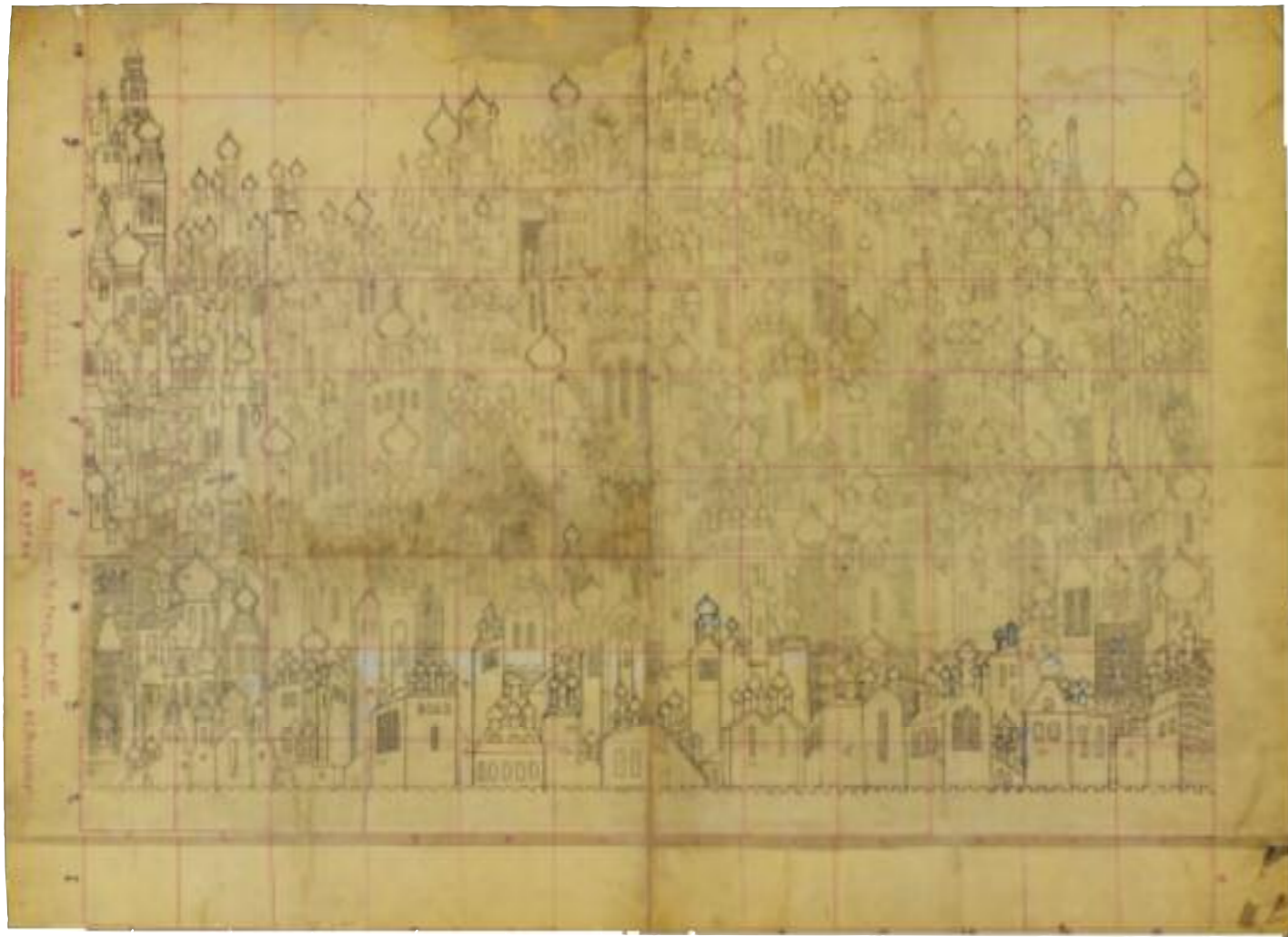
A change of scene sometimes brought a welcome fresh source of capital, as with the company's first visit to London during the gala celebration of George V's coronation in 1911. This coincidence elevated the company's profile, and its timing was credited to the influence of Diaghilev's first London patron, Lady Ripon. Other

urbane society ladies, including the Princesse de Polignac (Winnaretta Singer), Lady Emerald Cunard, the Comtesse Greffuhle and later Lady Juliet Duff (Lady Ripon's daughter), formed a supportive committee of passionate Ballets Russes enthusiasts. Diaghilev also lured sponsors through appeal to their artistic practice, as with Sir Thomas Beecham, a conductor who became one of the company's most significant patrons after his father's financial backing of the initial London appearances, and his inheritance of the operas in 1914.

Diaghilev later found a sponsor in Harold Sidney Harmsworth, first Viscount Rothermere and *Daily Mail* newspaper magnate, who exemplified a

new kind of patronage relationship in the 1920s. Diaghilev did not have the personal access to Rothermere that he enjoyed with other contacts, and had to work harder to orchestrate his financial backing. Soirées with the company were staged to capture his attention, with Diaghilev fostering Rothermere's close relationship with the dancer Alice Nikitina. Though reportedly platonic, this extended unprecedented influence into her role in the company, to the frustration of the impresario.

Diaghilev possessed a canny sense for likely supporters, and which of these should be pressed and when. This fell so totally within his control and influence that the company he created could not sustain itself after his death.



59. Natalia Goncharova, design for *The Firebird* back cloth. Pen and ink, pencil, and white bodycolour on card, 1926. This version of the design shows the squared-up drawing ready for transfer to the vast stage cloth. V&A: S.751-2000



60. Natalia Goncharova, design for the set of the finale of *The Firebird*. Watercolour on card, 1926. Private collection



61. Natalia Goncharova,  
design for a back cloth  
for *The Firebird*.  
Watercolour, 1926.  
V&A: S.1911-1986



62. After Natalia  
Goncharova, back cloth  
for *The Firebird*. Painted  
canvas, 1926.  
V&A: S.455-1980

# LÉON BAKST, NATALIA GONCHAROVA AND PABLO PICASSO

JOHN E. BOWLT

‘CALL FORTH EMOTIONS BY CAPTIVATING THE EYE’<sup>1</sup>

During the 20 years of his enterprise, Serge Diaghilev employed almost 40 different artists to design the sets, costumes, properties and promotional materials for his ballet and opera productions. This host of painters, sculptors and decorators from the Russian Empire, Europe and the USA not only engineered visual celebrations, but also, with their ethnic diversity and cultural versatility, contributed much to the international composition and thematic complexity of the Ballets Russes. In turn, Diaghilev’s designers assembled an extraordinarily varied arsenal of styles, accommodating Decadence and Cubism, Primitivism and Constructivism, Futurism and Surrealism. Needless to say, the principal repositories of Ballets Russes materials in St Petersburg, London, Paris, New York and Hartford,<sup>2</sup> the historic exhibitions devoted to the Ballets Russes, not least, Serge Lifar’s *Ballets Russes de Diaghilev* at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, in 1939, and Richard Buckle’s *Diaghilev Exhibition* at the Edinburgh Festival and Forbes House, London, in 1954, and the countless publications highlight this plurality, sometimes offering bizarre collocations of designs by Alexandre Benois and Georges Rouault, Mikhail Larionov and Pedro Pruna, Giorgio de Chirico and Robert Jones, André Bauchant and Georgii Yakulov.

For the most part studio painters by training, few of these artists entered the grand theatre with a professional understanding of scenography and yet, confronted by the exigencies of the stage, they were able to adjust their sights from two to three dimensions, from surface to depth – just as Diaghilev’s key dancers and choreographers such as Mikhail Fokine, Tamara Karsavina, Léonide Massine and Vaslav Nijinsky grafted elements of the *danse plastique* (free dance), ragtime and even gymnastics on to their Imperial Ballet schooling. In other words, Diaghilev’s most original and composite designers were those who adjusted the modern easel painting to the *bella prospettiva* of the Italian

Renaissance, who restored the picture to its essential metaphor of the window opening on to another space, who reinforced the organic link between the spectacle, the spectacular and the spectator, and who ensured the constant interplay of plane and volume, stillness and movement.

Bringing to bear such a general formula upon the visual resolutions of this or that stage designer is conditional, indeed, and poses severe limits, but it would seem to have stimulated the most accomplished designers of Diaghilev’s company, whether Henri Matisse or Pavel Tchelitchev, while embarrassing the less suited such as Mstislav Dobuzhinsky and Marie Laurencin. Such a criterion implies that the visual resolution of a ballet, opera or drama, especially the sets and costumes, is of paramount importance to the artistic totality of the production, that theatre, by its very nature, demands a three-dimensional perception and reception (which is why television screenings of ballets are so wanting) and that the stage is an architectonic medium created for the virtual interaction and circulation of the audience. After all, the true sign of a successful production is when the spectator experiences an almost irresistible urge to jump on to the stage and become at one with the performance.

Among the primary designers for the Ballets Russes who elicited this kind of audience response were Léon Bakst, Natalia Goncharova and Pablo Picasso. They transcended the frames of their studio paintings to use the theatre as a laboratory of material forms, each applying different strategies, but all united within what Larionov called a ‘universe existing alongside the world of reality’.<sup>3</sup> Bakst, Goncharova and Picasso have long been acclaimed for their decorative contributions to the Ballets Russes, not least, to *Schéhérazade*, *Le Coq d’or* and *Le Tricorne* respectively, and there is no need to repeat the details of their biographies or repertoires.<sup>4</sup> However, by examining the essential methods of each artist and by focusing on exemplary productions, we



may be able to explain why each of them left such a deep and lasting imprint upon the history of twentieth-century stage design, and why their sets and costumes remained so prominent within the historical repertoire of the Ballets Russes. Ultimately, it was to the genius of Diaghilev, too, that all three artists were indebted for their international reputations as stage designers.

#### Léon Bakst

Of the many talented artists of the Russian Silver Age, Léon Bakst (Lev Samoylovich Rozenberg, 1866–1924) merits the highest award for his activities as both studio painter and decorative artist. Among Russian stage designers, he enjoyed the highest laudation for triumphant productions such as *Cléopâtre*, *Schéhérazade* (pl.63), *Le Dieu bleu* and *The Sleeping Princess*, in which he amazed audiences with magnificence of colour, tactility of form and the ability to both vest and expose the primordial energy of the human body. From the first Paris season until his death Bakst was an arbiter of taste in the ballet, fashion and even interior design. Accepting appointments in Russia, France, Italy, England and America, he became an international celebrity who moved closely with the cultural luminaries of his time; and he was lionized for the vigour and gusto of his exotic costumes and sets, which are now regarded as an intrinsic part of modernist design.

In St Petersburg, Paris, London, New York and Monte Carlo, Bakst was both an artistic and a social star, fulfilling numerous commissions for the international stage, contributing statements to *Le Figaro* and the *New York Times*, and painting portraits of the rich and famous. By 1914 Bakst had become a 'legislator of fashion'<sup>5</sup> and although his reputation relied substantially on his successes as portrait painter and stage designer, especially after the reception of *Cléopâtre*, *Schéhérazade* and *Le Dieu bleu*, he continued to manifest his skill and originality in many other activities such as fashion, textiles and furniture design, and even creative literature, writing a romantic, highly autobiographical novel during the last years of his life.<sup>6</sup>

Bakst's achievements do not fall conveniently into easy critical moulds; rather, they contest categorical imposition. He painted and wrote extensively, and, by good fortune, arrived at the right time at the right place, but unlike his immediate literary colleagues such as Andrei Bely, Viacheslav Ivanov and Dmitry Merezhkovsky he chose not to elaborate an intricate philosophical ideology. Rather, his life and his art constituted a prism which refracted the many concepts and caprices of the Symbolist movement. Like Oscar Wilde and Diaghilev, Bakst cosmeticized and cultivated outward appearance, waxing his moustache and hiding his balding pate. He spontaneously rather than deliberately investigated the condition of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), giving pride of place to the ballet, interior design and haute couture as total media. Finally, he shared the Symbolists' reassessment of ancient cultures (Greece, Siam, Egypt, Persia), without imposing

involved, idealist interpretations. Even in his more sophisticated statements on antiquity such as 'The Paths of Classicism in Art' (1909), Bakst avoided eschatological convolutions, posing more as the academic artist who identifies a superior beauty in the formal purity of Greek sculpture, but avoids abstract, metaphysical interpretations of that beauty: 'One may seek art in philosophy,' he wrote, 'but one resents philosophy in art.'<sup>7</sup>

Bakst felt at home with the Ballets Russes, relishing boldness of decoration, plasticity of gesture and sensuality of body. In particular, the sensational productions of the first phase inspired Bakst to investigate the emotional impact of unusual colour combinations and to calculate their spectacular effect. He declared:

I have often noticed that in each colour of the prism there exists a gradation which sometimes expresses frankness and chastity, sometimes sensuality and even bestiality, sometimes pride, sometimes despair. This can be felt and given over to the public by the effect one makes of the various shadings. That is what I tried to do in *Schéhérazade*. Against a lugubrious green I put a blue full of despair, paradoxical as it may seem.<sup>8</sup>

Certainly, Bakst's languid sultanas captivate with their enticing colours and luscious proportions, although he did not expose the body merely for erotic appeal. He regarded the nude body as an aesthetic totality whose artistry had been forgotten under the weight of nineteenth-century social and theatrical dress. As he indicated in his various essays about nudity on stage,<sup>9</sup> Bakst felt that the Ancient Greeks had discovered physical beauty and, therefore, he welcomed the antique evocations of Isadora Duncan and Olga Desmond.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, and however much Bakst praised the human form, he saw its beauty in the tension between the seen and the unseen, something that he achieved so masterfully in his costumes for the Slave-Girl in *Cléopâtre* and for *La Péri*.

While Bakst was fascinated by the exotic vision of the East as a place of liberal desire and consummation (to which his designs for *Schéhérazade* are strong testimony), it would be wrong to associate him too closely with the fashion for nudity and 'sex' on stage. In spite of rumours to the contrary, Bakst was retiring rather than flamboyant and his 'Magdalenian' personality<sup>11</sup> sometimes dictated restrained and sober artistic forms, as is manifest, for example, in his simple costume designs for *Jeux* of 1913. The monochrome, functional sportswear for the Tennis Players in *Jeux* was not so very far from the Constructivist *prozodezhda* (work clothing) of Liubov Popova and her close colleague, the avant-garde designer, Varvara Stepanova, the more so since the action of *Jeux* was cast in the year 1925. Bakst's knee-length skirt for the female Tennis Player represented an audacious development in fashion, at once enhancing her sexuality and, at the same time, symbolizing woman's freedom from the strictures of her nineteenth-century social round:



63. Léon Bakst, costume design for the Blue Sultana from *Schéhérazade*. Watercolour and pencil on paper, 1910. Private collection



64. Léon Bakst, costume design for Columbine from *The Sleeping Princess*. Watercolour and gold paint, 1921. V&A: E.1108–1922

Woman becomes every day more willing to accept the haste which finds its expression in the restlessness of modern life. This woman has two aspects. In the daytime she is pleased to show herself masculine in her tastes, and she wears tailor-made costumes. In the evening in the setting of artificial light which suits her well she regains all her powers of coquetry and elegance, and once more delights in being beautiful, becomes once again 'Woman Triumphant'.<sup>12</sup>

In his Paris stage productions between 1909 and 1914 (12 of which he designed for Diaghilev) Bakst exposed the mobility of the human body, rejecting the traditional notion of the theatrical costume as an ornamental disguise. But the result was still visual, and perhaps too much so, as he implied in his article 'On Contemporary Theatre. "No One Wants to Listen Any More, People Just Want to Look!"'.<sup>13</sup> For Bakst, spectacle, the pictorial, remained the guiding force of the theatre and *Jeux* notwithstanding, he seemed to yearn

constantly for surfeit and what Nikolai Evreinov called the 'theatre of excess'.<sup>14</sup>

In this respect, Bakst's grandiose concept for *The Sleeping Princess* of 1921, his most ambitious and extravagant commission, was an appropriate finale to his career (pl.64). It reinforced a new passion for the glamour of Hollywood and film design, which Bakst cultivated during his visits to America between 1922 and 1924.<sup>15</sup>

*The Sleeping Princess* was a brilliant, but falling, star in the firmament of a new, post-war and post-revolutionary world. It was not Bakst's last scenic commission (*Phaedre*, *La Nuit ensorcelée* and *Istar* following in rapid succession), but it was his most extravagant and epitomized the artistic opulence for which he had become so famous. Perhaps all this richness of colour and lushness of form in *The Sleeping Princess*, this 'beauty in vain',<sup>16</sup> was also Bakst's way of proving that, as he once told the theatre historian, Huntley Carter: 'It is the painter who ... should create everything, see everything in advance and organize everything.'<sup>17</sup>



*Natalia Goncharova*

If Bakst was international, Natalia Sergeevna Goncharova (1881–1962) was national, drawing artistic inspiration from the powerful traditions of Russian Orthodox culture. The most outstanding woman artist of twentieth-century Russia, Goncharova both nurtured an intellectual interest in the handicrafts and rituals of Old Russia and interpreted these subjects in her pictures and designs. She brought a ready appreciation of Russian peasant costume and ornament to her several commissions for the Diaghilev enterprise, especially *Le Coq d'or* (1914), *Liturgie* (1915; not produced) and *Les Noces* (1923).

Diaghilev discovered Goncharova and her companion, Mikhail Larionov, in their artistic prime, beckoning them from the convenient, indigenous environment of Moscow Cubo-Futurism to the urbane and abrasive world of pre-war Paris. Grateful to Diaghilev, Goncharova paid homage to him with the remarkable portrait, which she included in the portfolio *L'Art Décoratif Théâtral Moderne* (1919), emphasizing the large, long head with its mane of hair (pl.65).<sup>18</sup> Thanks to Diaghilev, Goncharova and Larionov attained global acclaim as leading stage designers – but with his passing they lost their celebrity status and financial wherewithal.

It was Goncharova's recognition of the vitality of indigenous Russian art which stimulated her to collect peasant artefacts, to acquire relevant commentaries and compendia such as Vladimir Stasov's album of Slavic and

Eastern ornaments and Dmitry Rovinsky's directory of *lubki* (hand-coloured broadsheets),<sup>19</sup> and in 1913 to help organize the exhibition *Icons and Broadsheets* in Moscow. In turn, Goncharova's appeal to the 'primitive' tradition influenced the formal arrangements of her painting, contributing to her pictorial manipulation of intense stylization, vigorous colour combinations and 'wrong' proportions, qualities which she – and other avant-gardists – tended to associate with Oriental rather than with Occidental culture. As she declared in 1913: 'I have turned away from the West.... For me the East means the creation of new forms, an extending and deepening of the problems of colour.'<sup>20</sup> Attracted to the simple pleasures of life, Goncharova celebrated them in her dancing peasants, ethnic costumes and happy beasts and birds, a revelry which found its strongest expression in the riotous sets and costumes for *Le Coq d'or*:

*Le Coq d'or* is an ebullient fable with sets more like Persian carpets or painted peasant furniture than backdrops for dancing (pl.66). Goncharova's gamut of colours and forms bring to mind the dynamism of Dionisy's 1502 frescoes for the St Ferapont Belozero Monastery. Be that as it may, the designs for *Le Coq d'or* were among her most successful endeavours for the stage and she edited and repeated their motifs many times, even as late as a record sleeve for the EMI Corporation *Hommage à Diaghilev*, released – two years after Goncharova's death – in 1964. Accepting Benois's suggestion that *Le Coq d'or* be staged as a ballet-cum-opera, she insisted that dancers



*Opposite*  
65. Natalia Goncharova, *Portrait of Diaghilev*. Pochoir print, 1919. V&A: NAL, fol. PC 4/5

66. Natalia Goncharova, set design for *Le Coq d'or* (Scene I). Watercolour, 1914. Private collection

should mime the action and that the singers be positioned in choral formation on ramps at either side of the stage.

The problem ... consisted in finding a space to accommodate the mass of 90 soloists and choir which the orchestra pit could not contain. Goncharova proposed putting the singers on the stage, seated and shelved one above the other, just as the Boyard Duma is represented in popular Russian imagery.<sup>21</sup>

Critics who saw the Paris premiere asserted that this resolution had 'inaugurated a new phase of stage decorations',<sup>22</sup> and Fokine, choreographer of *Le Coq d'or*, who, because of Goncharova's notoriety as a Cubo-Futurist, had experienced grave misgivings, now changed his mind:

Goncharova [*sic*] not only provided beautiful decors and costume designs, but she also manifested an extraordinary, fantastic love for her work on *The Golden Cockereel*. It was touching to see how, with their own hands, she and Larionov painted all the props. Each piece on stage was a work of art. What great work! Seeing the enthusiasm of the two artists, I was amused to recall the fears and rumours.<sup>23</sup>

'Beautiful' and 'fantastic' might also describe one of the most ambitious projects of the Diaghilev enterprise: *Liturgie*, a balletic interpretation of the life of Christ. Goncharova and Larionov collaborated with Diaghilev and Léonide Massine on the ballet in Lausanne, a juncture of keen artistic energy in spite of the trials of the First World War. In fact, between arriving there in the summer of 1915 and the end of 1916, when she accompanied Diaghilev to San Sebastián, Goncharova worked on no fewer than four ballets (*Liturgie*, *España*, *Triana* and *Foire Espagnole*) not one of which, unfortunately, was produced. Even so, the intense activity resulted not only in numerous designs for sets and costumes, but also in three portfolios of *pochoirs* (hand-coloured stencils) – *Liturgie*, *Album de 14 Portraits Théâtraux* (Paris, 1916) and *L'Art Décoratif Théâtral Moderne* (Paris, 1919), the last two of which were joint undertakings by Goncharova and Larionov.

The title, concept and structure of *Liturgie* were symptomatic of Goncharova's attitude towards the theatre as being a temple or hallowed space for the interaction of 'proscenium' and 'auditorium' – virtually an ecclesiastical act. With its appeal to sight, sound, smell and taste, the priest, art historian and mathematician, Pavel Florensky, defined the theatre as a 'synthesis of the arts'.<sup>24</sup> As in the Orthodox liturgy, here was the minister of experiences (the dancer or actor as priest) and here was the consumer of those experiences (the audience as congregation), whose colloquy was now enhanced by music, painting and movement. *Liturgie*, therefore, held particular appeal to Goncharova, at once Orthodox believer and stage designer.

But the production was bedevilled by misfortune and, ultimately, Goncharova's labours were in vain. Diaghilev had hoped that Stravinsky would write a score of four interludes for the ballet, but the composer refused to be party to a theatrical presentation of the holy story (which was to have included a Mass). Diaghilev then toyed with the idea of producing mere sounds as an accompaniment:

After twenty-two rehearsals of *Liturgie*, we have come to the conclusion that absolute silence is death... Therefore, the dance action will have to be supported not by music, but by sounds – that is to say, by filling the ear with harmonies.<sup>25</sup>

Even though Diaghilev discussed such a system with Filippo Marinetti, hoping that a Futurist orchestra might help, no score was forthcoming. Massine recalls that Diaghilev also tried to obtain copies of ancient chants from Kiev, but because of the upheavals of the war, they never arrived, much to the chagrin of the young choreographer:

For me *Liturgie* had been not only a technical challenge, but even more the first artistic realization of a theme which had taken root deep in my subconscious when I was a child. I found it profoundly satisfying to interpret the scenes of the life of Christ in ballet form.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, Goncharova had not been Diaghilev's first choice of designer for *Liturgie*. According to Ivan Bunin, Dmitry Stelletsy had been invited to make the costumes, but had refused because – like Stravinsky – he did not approve of the presentation of such a deeply religious subject on stage, so, in turn, he recommended Goncharova:

... and she even made a design for an iconostasis, except that she confused the places of the Virgin and the Saviour. They were supposed to dance without music, on a double floor so that the sounds of their feet would echo. Stravinsky was supposed to compose chorales for the entr'actes.<sup>27</sup>

If Goncharova did position the Virgin and the Saviour wrongly in this iconostasis (a version of which is now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), she would have done so consciously, perhaps justifying her artistic licence by the need for an internal and innovative sequentiality. After all, the fact that she saw fit to compile her images for the album *Liturgie* as a numbered sequence of *pochoirs* also indicates that she was regarding the spectacle more as a procession of personages than as a confirmation of severe hierarchies:

The costumes might intervene with each other mutually or come forth one from the other. One costume, put next to another might hardly be noticed ... This [process] can be compared to a game of cards with its rigid and complex rules and innumerable combinations.<sup>28</sup>



67. Natalia Goncharova, costume design for Shah Shariar from *Aurora's Wedding*. Gouache, gold, silver and pencil on paper, 1922. Private collection



*Opposite*  
68. Natalia Goncharova, choreographic design for four female dancers from *Les Noces*. Pencil, pen and brush with indian ink, 1923. V&A: E.910-1961

69. Natalia Goncharova, set design for *Les Noces* (Scene IV). Pen, indian ink and watercolour, 1923. V&A: E.321-1961



Goncharova returned to this cyclical element whereby ‘innumerable combinations’ could proceed from a highly contrived and controlled exercise (as in a game of cards) in *Les Noces*, which Diaghilev produced in Paris in 1923. Here again was a ritual – a Russian rural wedding – which was both obeisant to the rules of etiquette and decorum and yet also amazingly free within that controlled environment. In any case, both Goncharova and her choreographer, Bronislava Nijinska, envisioned *Les Noces* as the expression of both conditions – of a maiden’s last delight in individual liberty and of its impending curtailment – a mood very different from the tinsel wedding which Goncharova designed for Diaghilev’s Paris production of *Aurora’s Wedding* (*Le Mariage de la Belle au Bois Dormant*) the year before (pl.67). Nijinska recalled:

*Les Noces* opened up a new path in choreography for me: promoting the corps de ballet to a primary artistic level. I did not want there to be a dominant performer (soloist) in this spectacle. I wanted all the artistes to fuse in one Movement and to create a whole. In my choreography the mass of the ensemble was meant to ‘speak’ – able to create just as many choreographic nuances as the orchestra mass does musical ones.<sup>29</sup>

Well before her final rendering for *Les Noces*, Goncharova designed two other versions, one in vivid, folkloristic style and another in half-tones with gold and silver embroidery; but Diaghilev rejected them both, suggesting that she design the costumes as common work clothes with trousers and shirts for the men and tunics for the women (pl.68).<sup>30</sup> The result was costumes ‘very sober ... in the two colours of brown

and white’,<sup>31</sup> a simple resolution which integrated fully with the austere background of a ‘plain backcloth and wings, together with one or two central flats, in which windows of varying colours were inserted to indicate changes of place’ (pl.69).<sup>32</sup> Stravinsky also worked for several years on the score of *Les Noces* (originally called *Les Noces Villageoises*) and Diaghilev refers to the ballet and to Stravinsky’s involvement as early as November 1914. This extended gestation with its varied musical and visual offspring has, in the case of Goncharova, led to a number of misattributions, for example, some of the bright and ‘primitive’ designs for the first version of *Les Noces* are now misidentified as designs for *Le Coq d’or*.

#### Pablo Picasso

If Bakst treated the stage as a spectacular display of ornament, and if Goncharova regarded it as a dramatic temple, then Picasso (1881–1973) seems to have accepted the theatre as a cube, emphasizing the ‘idea of integrating the spectator and the decoration within the decor of the theatre itself’.<sup>33</sup> In other words, for Picasso, the studio painter turned stage designer, the ‘fourth wall’ was an extremely important element in the theatre and the impression of many of his sets and costumes is that they have been engineered more for audience response than for the immediate needs of the actor or the directives of the playwright. This would seem to be especially true of Picasso’s major commissions for Diaghilev, such as *Parade* (1917) and *Le Tricorne* (1919). Within the Ballets Russes they ‘opened the gates of the twenties’,<sup>34</sup> heralding a ‘period of rejuvenation and high spirits’.<sup>35</sup>

Jean Cocteau, librettist for *Parade* (with music by Erik Satie), described his bizarre street scene with Managers and

a 'Chinese' Conjurer enticing passers-by into their booths as 'neither Dadaist, nor Cubist, nor Futurist, nor any other school. *Parade* is *Parade*'.<sup>36</sup> Obviously, Cocteau's sentiment was rhetorical and, in the spirit of his own avant-gardism, utterly paradoxical, because without the apprenticeship to both Cubism and Futurism, *Parade* would not have looked the way it did. On the other hand, Cocteau seemed to be arguing that the synthetic *Parade* transcended all traditional stylistic categories and nominal genres, and could not be accommodated under a single rubric. To some extent, Cocteau was right – in the sense that his Americanism and his insistence on the inclusion of machine noises (which Diaghilev removed) or Picasso's Sandwich-Men as the Managers and his rambunctious Dummy Horse had no legitimate precedents in the ballet and, of course, astonished the Parisian public with their patent absurdity. Picasso's highly autobiographical front cloth with portraits of friends and self, Pegasus, and Fortune, feeding a monkey could not have offered much respite, either.

But *Parade* does connect with at least one prototype within the Diaghilev repertoire, specifically, *Petrushka* (1911), which, if cast in mid-nineteenth-century St Petersburg, was also a theatre within a theatre, with a parade of wayward characters dependent upon a 'Tout or 'Manager' and a Magician, all moving to the 'cacophony' of Stravinsky's

music. On the other hand, *Petrushka* was still a ballet, as the brilliant dancing of Karsavina and Nijinsky demonstrated, and the sets and costumes by Benois, however imaginative, still represented a fairground, while the triangular love affair of Punch and Judy (which returned, incidentally, in *Le Tricorne*) was, after all, a universal and familiar adventure. *Parade* may, therefore, have been a French *balagan* (Russian fairground), but Picasso's costumes looked more like animated Cubist collages than dramatis personae. Put simply, *Parade* was about prancing and glancing, but not about dancing – so, if *Parade* was not a ballet, why did Diaghilev include it in his 1917 Paris programme, offering it to an eager audience which for three weary years had not seen a Ballets Russes performance?

Reasons may be obvious: Diaghilev's sensitivity to genuine innovation, his desire to transport his company from the 'hot house' of Bakst to the 'fresh air' of Picasso,<sup>37</sup> his aspiration to give his company a more international flair and his personal sympathy for Cocteau, Picasso and Satie. But perhaps there was a more perverse motive for Diaghilev's bold gesture, one implicit in Cocteau's outlandish book and Picasso's eccentric visual resolution, namely, a secret desire to remove the dancer from the ballet and to transform the traditional ballet into an industrial entity, wherein the dancer was no longer the star or the centrepiece, but simply a cog in the



70. Pablo Picasso, costume design for the Chinese Conjuror from *Parade*. Pen and ink on paper, 1917. V&A: S.562–1983

*Opposite*  
71. After Pablo Picasso, costume for the Chinese Conjuror from *Parade*. Silk satin fabric with silver tissue and black thread. Cotton hat with woollen pigtail, c.1917. This costume was worn by Léon Woizikovsky both when he danced *Parade* with the Ballets Russes and the solo elsewhere. It survived the war buried in his native Poland. V&A: S.84(&A)–1985



theatrical machine, anonymous, automatic and replaceable. True, Diaghilev's promotion of new dancers such as Anton Dolin and Serge Lifar in the 1920s undermines this allegation, but *Parade*, like *Jeux* in 1913, did herald the Machine Age of the Ballets Russes, anticipating the 'industrial' ballets of *Le Pas d'acier*, *La Chatte* and *Le Train bleu*.

No doubt, the suspension of the human dancer in *Parade* must also have appealed to Picasso who had long been fracturing, dismembering and erasing the human figure in his Cubist paintings. Indeed, the Managers, the Chinese Conjuror and the American Girl (a composite of Charlie Chaplin, the Marx Brothers and Mary Pickford) can scarcely be called dancers, and move more as automatons in an urban procession (pls 70 and 71). Picasso's costumes for these weird characters astonish not by similarity, but by dissimilarity and, ultimately, they comprise a gigantic Cubist canvas on stage, a volumetric picture whose dynamic composition is extended and enhanced by the motor responses of the audience.

*Parade* was an isolated experiment within the Ballets Russes and, if radical in its formal accomplishments, it did not represent a decisive trend in stage design, at least, for Picasso. On the contrary, thereafter, Picasso's visual engagement with the theatre was more traditional or, at least, more narrative, although no less engaging – *Le Tricorne* being a case in point. Set in an old Spanish town (pl.74), the ballet is a tale of love and jealousy, the characters expressing their emotions in farrucas, fandangos and sevillanas. Curiously enough, the distinguishing feature of their costumes is the black, which

Picasso foils with red, yellow or blue to produce bold contrasts (pls 72 and 73) – a black which Douglas Cooper has associated with Picasso's fascination with Francisco de Goya (and, one might add, with Jusepe de Ribera and Diego Velázquez).<sup>38</sup>

But Picasso's designs for *Le Tricorne* echo a distant era not only because the ballet itself concerns a bygone Spain, but also, perhaps unexpectedly, because Picasso seems to have drawn inspiration from his visits to Pompeii and Herculaneum. Accompanied by Cocteau and Diaghilev, Picasso explored the sites in March 1917, observing the artefacts, architecture, mosaics and wall paintings with eager attention, sketching 'many a rather licentious fantasy'<sup>39</sup> and noting qualities of form, perspective and colour which appeared in the sets and costumes for *Le Tricorne*. The sharp ochre ('Pompeian red') of the initial set and the flattened, schematic heroes such as the Corregidor and Las Sevillanas in their flowing garments bring to mind the figural repertoire of the Casa dei Vettii. Picasso himself even referred to his curtain for *Parade* as resembling 'the deteriorated frescoes of Pompeii'.<sup>40</sup> Last, but not least, the strategic arrangement of so many of the Pompeian *pittura parietali* (wall-paintings) with their shepherds, fishes, bulls, grapes and wreaths, surrounding a square courtyard and greeting the visitor, must have struck Picasso as a highly theatrical device. Here was an architectural arrangement which confirmed Picasso's basic concept of the theatre as a space wherein the 'auditorium penetrated the stage.... and the place of action overlapped into the theatre'.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, the idea of theatre within theatre, germane to the Roman villa (and, for that matter, to *Petrushka* and *Parade*) informed most of Picasso's theatrical commissions for Diaghilev, including *Pulcinella* (1920) with its 'Neapolitan street scene conceived in Cubist terms',<sup>42</sup> *Cuadro Flamenco* (1921) and *Mercure* (1924–7). In *Cuadro Flamenco*, Picasso even inserted boxes on either side of the stage (a tactic reminiscent of Goncharova's bilateral placement of choirs in *Le Coq d'or*) from which puppet-like balletomanes gazed at the action unfolding before them. Still, as the author W.A. Propert commented, *Cuadro Flamenco* had nothing to do with the ballet: 'It was a singing and dancing interlude given by a company of ten Spaniards whom Diaghilev had collected in Andalusia.'<sup>43</sup>

The brilliant culmination to Picasso's association with the Ballets Russes was, of course, his drop curtain or front cloth for *Le Train bleu* in 1924. Although Prince Alexander Schervashidze painted the actual cloth after Picasso's preparatory sketches, the basic theme – of two giantesses running along the beach hand in hand – was Picasso's. But beyond a rather distant association with the sounds and sea of the Côte d'Azur (the destination of the Blue Train), the two hieratic and monumental nymphs seem to derive more from primitive Iberian sculptures than from the svelte bodies of chic bathers on the Riviera. Their ample forms, russet flesh and flowing braids bring to mind the heavy limbs of the stone maidens which dotted the Iberian landscape, some of which to this day still carry traces of their blue and red pigments.

If the drop curtain looked back to a distant Iberia, they also carried a peculiar premonition of Vera Mukhina's gigantic statue, *Worker and Collective Farm Girl*, for the Soviet Pavilion at the 1937 Exposition Internationale in Paris, an artefact which also served as a front cloth to the spectacle of Soviet propaganda. It is unlikely that Mukhina knew of Picasso's curtain for *Le Train bleu*, but the conceptual parallel is intriguing, the more so since the flowing scarf of the barefoot *Collective Farm Girl* is a telling reference to the scarves of Russia's practitioners of the *danse plastique* and of their mentor, Isadora Duncan. This is an unlikely deviation, but it returns us to Picasso's special theatrical quality: his ability to combine what Guillaume Apollinaire called 'the plastic and the mimic'.<sup>44</sup>

The artistic destinies of Bakst, Goncharova and Picasso were very different. Bakst, full of plans and projects, died prematurely in 1924; Goncharova faded into relative obscurity; Picasso went on to become the most famous artist of the twentieth century. But under the command of Diaghilev each found inspiration within the creative laboratory of the Ballets Russes, discovered the full force and vitality of the ballet as a medium of artistic expression, and collaborated with choreographers, dancers, musicians and artisans. Designing for Diaghilev transposed these artists from the privacy of the studio to the public domain of the theatre and *Cléopâtre*, *Schéhérazade*, *Jeux*, *The Sleeping Princess*, *Le Coq d'or*, *Les Noces*, *Parade* and *Le Tricorne* all issued from that clement and singular coincidence.



Far left  
72. Pablo Picasso, costume design for the Dancer of the Sevillana from *Le Tricorne*. Pochoir print on paper, 1919. V&A: S.440:29–1979

Left  
73. Pablo Picasso, costume design for the Miller from *Le Tricorne*. Pochoir print on paper, 1919. V&A: S.440:12–1979

74. Pablo Picasso, set design showing a view of a Spanish town for *Le Tricorne*. Pochoir print on paper, 1919. V&A: S.440:32–1979





Opposite  
75. Léon Bakst, costume design for the Young Rajah from *Le Dieu bleu*. Pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper, 1912. V&A: S.338-1981

76. Léon Bakst, costume design for Felicita from *The Good-Humoured Ladies*. Pencil and watercolour on paper, 1917. Bakst's detailed drawing communicates a great sense of character, but required considerable interpretation from the dressmaker to preserve the dancer's modesty. V&A: S.341-1988





## FRONT CLOTHS

Jim Fowler

A front cloth (sometimes referred to as a drop curtain) is the painted canvas hung at the front of the stage. In Diaghilev's productions, such a cloth served two purposes. First, it could be revealed during the overture of a ballet to establish its mood, as with Valentin Serov's Persian-miniature-inspired hunting scene, which was added to *Schéhérazade* in 1911, and the Spanish bullring produced by Pablo Picasso for *Le Tricorné*. Second, it could be used to cover a change of setting without breaking the atmosphere by bringing in the 'tabs' or velvet theatre curtain. An example of the latter is Alexandre Benois's night scene of the St Petersburg Butterweek Fair, which

is used to conceal the scene changes from fairground to puppet cells in *Petrushka*. On several occasions, for example *Les Biches*, *Le Train bleu* and *Apollon musagète*, the front cloth was based on an original painting (by Marie Laurencin, Pablo Picasso and André Bauchant respectively) and then enlarged by a skilled set painter.

The front cloth for *Le Train bleu* was first used by the Ballets Russes as its signature image at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, in Paris, during the 26 May – 30 June 1924 season, when the city was playing host to the VIII Olympiad. Diaghilev had noticed the painting, entitled *Two Women Running along the Beach (The Race)*, in Picasso's

studio and persuaded the artist to allow him to have it copied and scaled up as a front cloth (details overleaf and on previous pages). On its completion, he commissioned a fanfare from Georges Auric to herald its first appearance.

Picasso had painted the image in gouache on plywood while on holiday at Dinard in 1922 with his wife Olga Kokhlova, a former dancer with the Ballets Russes. Although the figures are monolithic in conception, Picasso's original picture was modest in scale at 34 × 42.5cm.

Diaghilev's set painter, Prince Alexander Schervashidze, took less than 24 hours to enlarge the image to 6.78 × 8m onto a canvas 10 × 11m. The

wide border around the painted area allowed the canvas to be folded to fit different stage openings on tour. Picasso was so impressed by its fidelity to the original that he signed and dedicated the new curtain to Diaghilev: *Dedic a Diaghilev. Picasso 24*.

The British dancer Anton Dolin, for whom *Le Train bleu* was created, recalled that it was only when the Ballets Russes returned to the London Coliseum in November 1924, that Diaghilev allocated the cloth to that ballet by which it is now known.<sup>1</sup> According to Richard Buckle, it was Picasso's delight and gratitude on seeing the finished curtain that convinced Diaghilev to use it 'as

the official front cloth for the Russian Ballet'.<sup>2</sup> The association of the *Train bleu* curtain with the Ballets Russes gained Picasso's work a currency and influence it might not otherwise have had. The sculptor Henry Moore remarked that the image had been 'a landmark' in his youth, and had even changed his life.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Buckle 1979, p.576.

<sup>2</sup> Sotheby's catalogue, Scala Theatre, London (17 July 1968), pp.vi, 111.

<sup>3</sup> Buckle 1982, p.232.

Vladimir Polunin, design for a front cloth for the London Coliseum. Watercolour, body-colours and gold paint, 1925. The front cloth for the 1925 Ballets Russes season evoked Russian icon paintings by depicting St George and the dragon. V&A: E.480-1926



Pablo Picasso (in cap) and scene painters on the front cloth for *Parade*, 1917. Photograph by Lachmann. V&A: S.5401-2009

Alexandre Benois, *Portrait of Prince Alexander Schervashidze*. Pencil on paper, 1906. Private collection



Overleaf, and previous pages Alexander Schervashidze after Pablo Picasso, details of the front cloth for *Le Train bleu*. Oil on canvas, 1924. Picasso's signature and dedication of the cloth to Diaghilev is visible overleaf. V&A: S.316-1978





**SOUVENIR PROGRAMMES**  
*Beverley Hart*

In 1912, the future dance historian Cyril Beaumont was seduced. Borrowing a souvenir programme for the Ballets Russes Paris season he recounted: 'I turned over the pages of the ivory and gold programme, with all its coloured reproductions of Bakst's lovely designs ... amazed and captivated. I was all eagerness to go to Covent Garden.'<sup>1</sup>

The cover images by Léon Bakst and Alexandre Benois for the earliest Parisian programmes explode with the exuberance of the dance revolution and their collaboration with Diaghilev, first nurtured on his journal *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*). Relatively expensive at two francs, the programmes are an artful mixture of designs, photographs and full-page advertisements for luxury products – travel, perfume, restaurants,

millinery, Veuve Cliquot champagne, the *grands magasins*, and that staple underpinning of the contemporary theatre programme (and female society), corsetry – elite preoccupations. This canny collision of culture and commerce is echoed in London, albeit with the more prosaic addition of furniture, face powder and Yorkshire Relish, alongside advertisements for cars, and their ominous adjunct, motor insurance. The company also had an influence on the advertising itself: in 1912 Marquise de Sévigné chocolate, which filled the back-page slot for several seasons, references the style and jewel colours of Bakst.

These glossy production values reflect the involvement of Maurice de Brunhoff, co-founder of *Vogue* and art director of *Comœdia Illustré*, one of the

high-end periodicals, along with *La Danse* (from 1919), with which these programmes were originally issued (1909–21). By 1912 the crucial role of De Brunhoff (whose son Jean would later write *Babar the Elephant*) receives a handsome puff, flanked by a pair of nymphs, only a little lower than a profile of Bakst himself. Into these sumptuous programmes a printed flyer in the form of a removable centrefold gives details of specific performances.

As the company's repertoire and reputation grow, the programmes focus on its stars – no less the dancers than the designers and musicians whose vision they enact. Whereas group images dominate early programmes, there is soon a subtle focus on the public's favourites, in both adverts and features. For the ninth Paris season

(1914), Vera Fokina endorses upmarket apparel: '*les maillots du Grand Frédéric sont merveilleux.*'

The covers of the US touring programmes are more restrained in their colour and detail, but lavishly embossed. Diaghilev is prominently featured, perhaps as a safeguard against those who had traded on the company identity in America with pirated versions of Ballets Russes productions. In contrast, the European programmes emphasize the collaboration between young artists destined to become household names: Picasso, Stravinsky and Massine.

An increasingly international outlook, attracting brilliant new talent from across Europe, leads to a less 'Russian' appearance. Picasso's stylized tricolour Chinese Conjurer from

*Parade* (Empire Theatre, London, 1919) appears to lean nonchalantly against the decorative border echoing the palette of his costume. From 1923 Boris Kochno, whose *Guardian* obituary in 1990 was headlined 'Diaghilev's Man Friday', supervised the programmes. Henceforward artists' illustrations appeared in addition to designs. The 1924 Monte Carlo season featured five Picasso line drawings. This departure from the design-based formats of the early covers is noticeable in De Chirico's witty surreal illustration inspired by *Le Bal* (Paris, 1929), quite clearly a commission: the art itself has become the story.

<sup>1</sup> Beaumont 1940, pp.7–8.

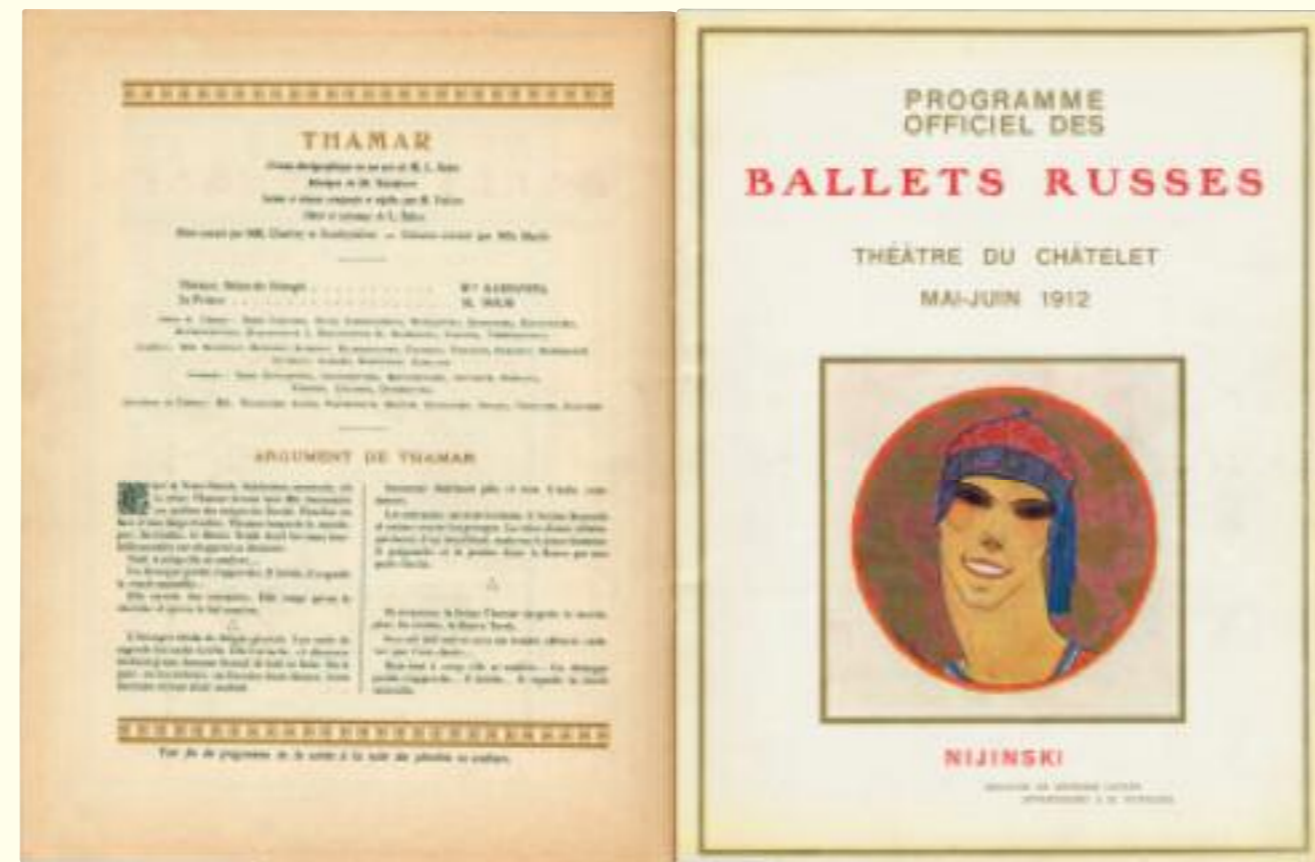
Advertisement for chocolate from a souvenir programme for the Théâtre du Châtelet, 13 May–10 June 1912. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



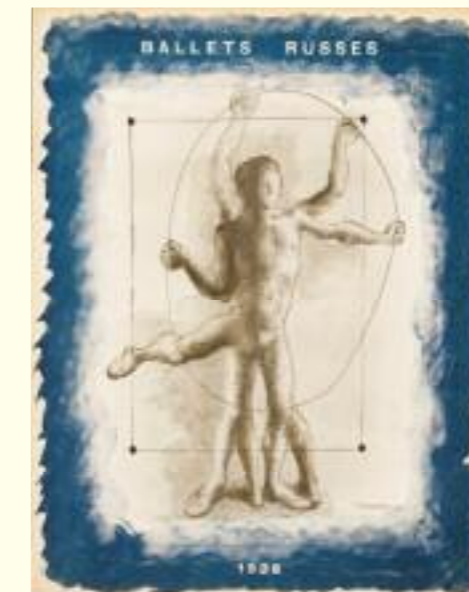
Souvenir programme for a matinee at the Théâtre national de l'Opéra, 29 December 1915. The cover shows an illustration by Mikhail Larionov of *Le Soleil de nuit*. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



Souvenir programme for the Théâtre du Châtelet, May 1912. The illustration shows a portrait of Vaslav Nijinsky by Georges Lepape. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



Souvenir programme for the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, 6–23 June 1928. The cover shows an illustration by Pavel Tchelitchev inspired by *Ode*. V&A: S.34–1976



Giorgio de Chirico, illustration for the souvenir programme for the Ballets Russes seasons in Monte Carlo and Paris, 1929. Graphite, tempera



and/or watercolour on paper, 1929. The illustration reflects costume designs for *Le Bal*. Wadsworth Atheneum 1933.438

## THE WIDER INFLUENCE OF THE RUSSIAN BALLET

*Stephen Calloway*

Diaghilev's choice of Paris, the vibrant centre of innovation in the fine and decorative arts, for his inaugural seasons was astute. All Paris was alive to the breathtakingly novel, stylized beauty of the music and dance, but it

was artists and designers who responded most excitedly to the explosion of saturated hues and sumptuous fabrics of the Russian costumes and decors. Accustomed to Orientalist fantasies in Salon paintings, Parisian couturiers and interior designers rapidly assimilated Léon Bakst's strident colour effects for fashionable women's dresses and the decoration of rooms. *Schéhérazade*, the hit of the 1910 season, especially seized the imagination, epitomizing the exoticism of 'le style ballets russes'.

First to espouse the look was Paul Poiret, who daringly proposed harem trousers and turbans, and silks and velvets boldly splashed with colour for day or evening wear; other 'Oriental' accessories included overstated aigrettes and ropes of pearls with contrasting tassels. A fad for coloured jewels such as emeralds and rubies, carved jades or coral temporarily



Osbert Lancaster, *First Russian Ballet Period*, from *Homes Sweet Homes*, 1939. Courtesy of Clare Hastings

eclipsed demand for conventional diamonds. Through his Atelier Martine (founded 1911) Poiret also popularized highly coloured interiors, often replacing all conventional furniture with divans and tasselled cushions. Georges Lepape's *pochoir* (hand-coloured stencil) illustrations for *Les Choses de Paul Poiret* showcased the languid luxury of this world.<sup>1</sup>

Diaghilev's 1911 London season sparked a similar reaction. That year two important furnishing boutiques opened: Marcel Boulestin's Decoration Moderne – selling Poiret's wallpapers and silks by Raoul Dufy – and Speall's, the creation of that enterprising, eccentric Edwardian *grande dame* Victoria, Lady Sackville. In her diary for 1918 she described the bedroom she decorated for her daughter Vita Sackville-West: 'Her walls are shiny emerald green paper, floor green, doors and furniture sapphire blue; ceiling apricot colour. Curtain blue

and inside curtains yellowish. The decoration of the furniture mainly beads of all colours ... six bright orange pots on her green marble mantelpiece and ... salmon and tomato-colour cushions and lampshades.'<sup>2</sup>

In *Homes Sweet Homes* (1939), Osbert Lancaster celebrated this style as 'First Russian Ballet Period': 'Before one could say Nijinsky the pastel shades which had reigned supreme on the walls of Mayfair for almost two decades were replaced by a variety of barbaric hues – jade green, purple, every variety of crimson and scarlet, and, above all, orange.' The style's adherents possessed, he added, 'a tendency to regard a room not so much as a place to live in, but as a setting for a party'.<sup>3</sup>

Although Diaghilev's return to London in 1918 inspired a new generation of avant-garde aesthetes including the Sitwells and Lord Berners, following the war English taste retreated

into patriotic insularity, equating 'Mock-Tudor' and Neo-Georgian styling with 'Homes for Heroes'. In Paris, the leading designers, Groult, Iribe and Ruhlmann continued flirting with pre-war exoticism and, as prosperity returned, created furnishings of extraordinary luxury. This trend culminated in the great 1925 *Exposition des Arts décoratifs* in which the French offerings, now highly experimental in form and employing rich and rare materials such as ivory, silver leaf, vellum, green shagreen and black or scarlet lacquer, still seemed redolent of that first, unforgettable frisson caused by the designs of Bakst.

<sup>1</sup> Lepape 1911.  
<sup>2</sup> Glendinning 1983, p.95.  
<sup>3</sup> Lancaster 1939, p.58.



Georges Lepape, illustration from *Les Choses de Paul Poiret*. Hand-coloured pochoir stencil, 1911. V&A: CIRC.262-1976

*Opposite*  
After Paul Poiret, room decoration for Atelier Martine, c.1920. Collage and hand-coloured pochoir print. Published in Jean Badovici, *Intérieurs français*, 1925. V&A: NAL.47.A.52





# WARDROBE

SARAH WOODCOCK

Like Diaghilev, who always looked immaculate, but sometimes had holes in his shoes, theatre costumes do not always bear close examination. Displayed in glass cases, protected from dust and light, they are often perceived as tatty, tawdry and crude, perhaps only tolerated because of their association with an iconic artist. Yet they were never conceived as 'art' objects, but rather as one element in a stage performance. Redolent of the disreputable, ephemeral, hurly-burly of theatre, costumes reek of life and perspiration, of the nightly stress of performance, when they were thrown on and ripped off, struggled into by other bodies than those for which they were made, then packed into skips still soaked with sweat. They bear honourable scars – hasty repairs alongside more careful darns and patching, alterations for different dancers, the rotted fabric under arms and around belted waists, make-up ingrained into the necks, the names of the first casts neatly written on labels; those of later ones scrawled onto the lining.

Given the association with respectable artists and secondarily with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (which is often treated as an offshoot of an art movement, not as theatre) costume and set designs were readily admitted into museums as art objects in their own right. Meanwhile, the costumes for which they were the blueprints were overlooked, partly because of their poor condition, partly because boldness was confused with 'crudeness'. Such an attitude has not completely died out and some still prefer to imagine a heavenly stage on which the animated designs dance forever. Yet the success of a design lies not so much in its artistic worth, as in whether the drawing translates successfully into fabric and decoration, or works with the choreography on the dancer as part of the stage picture.

Following the sale of over 1,500 Ballets Russes costumes in the 1960s, those that remain are now scattered across the world. Many principal costumes did not survive

the ravages of performance and some of the most successful ballets are represented only by a few walk-ons or late, often bad, remakes. Surviving examples are from failures or near-failures, which saw fewer performances.

The accident of survival benefits some designers and ballets more than others. Only a single example of a costume from *Les Sylphides* remains, yet it was one of the company's most successful works. Most examples of Alexandre Benois's costumes are from *Le Pavillon d'Armide*, *Giselle* and *Petrushka*, which have less obvious theatricality. Henri Matisse's costumes from the little-performed *Le Chant du rossignol* are collected avidly by those desperate to prove that the artist painted every last petal on every costume; some costumes have even been framed and hung like a painting. Few, however, have survived from André Derain's *La Boutique fantasque*, one of the most successful of all the Ballets Russes designs, or from popular works like *Les Matelots*, *Le Soleil de nuit* or *Contes Russes*. If costumes were the only evidence of the company's existence, *Chout* would seem more important than *Schéhérazade*.

Although little exists from *Cléopâtre* or *Schéhérazade*, the range of Léon Bakst's talents is well represented in the costumes from *Daphnis et Chloé* (Greek), *Le Dieu bleu* ('Oriental exotic') and *The Sleeping Princess* (period costume). A single example conveys little of the designer's skill, which lies in creating dozens of costumes to be seen on stage in constant movement. The costumes for Brigands and Greeks designed for *Daphnis et Chloé* (pls 77 and 78) show how the designs worked on stage. Moving in an idyllic, verdant landscape, the Greeks wore tunics in supple fabrics decorated with fluid patterns in soft earth colours. Into the harmony and calm burst the Brigands, dressed in belted tunics and breeches in heavier fabrics, the intense purples, dark blues and ochres painted and appliquéd with hard-edged 'unstable' checkerboards, zigzags and lozenges.

The destruction present in choreography and music is thus carried through into the designs.

The wide range of styles and subjects represented by such costumes would have been inconceivable before the design reforms initiated by Mikhail Fokine. In the 1890s, the prevailing style was detailed realism. There were no trained stage designers in the modern sense; scenery was devised by highly skilled but unimaginative scene painters, who pedantically replicated place and period. In mime roles the performers wore period costumes, while national dances took a few characteristics from the relevant national dress. Almost without exception the ballerina, soloists and corps de ballet wore the bell-skirted tutu decorated with symbols indicating period or country – lotus for Egypt, key pattern for Greece, grapes or leopard skin for a Bacchante – and *pointe* shoes. The men were invariably arrayed in variations on tunics and tights. There was no concept of a harmonious stage picture: frequently, the set designer never saw the costume designs and vice versa. By the end of the nineteenth century stage realism had become an outworn convention, professional but stale, applied without imagination or theatrical flair.<sup>1</sup> Bakst summed up the difference between the old and the new:

...it is goodbye to scenery designed by a painter blindly subjected to one part of the work, to costumes made by any old dressmaker who strikes a false and foreign note in the production; it is goodbye to the kind of acting, movements, false notes and that terrible, purely literary wealth of details which make modern theatrical production a collection of tiny impressions without that unique simplicity which emanates from a true work of art.<sup>2</sup>

Generic costuming was no longer possible because the style and range of the choreography changed with each ballet and individual characters replaced types. Designers had to think dynamically, not statically, and pedantic reconstruction gave way to rhythmic patterning and clear colours, suggesting mood and emotion. Detail was refined to create a heightened reality in which the theatrical became more real than the real. In *Le Tricorne*, Massine and Picasso created such a convincing picture of ‘Spain’ that when Diaghilev presented *Cuadro Flamenco*, performed by authentic Spanish gypsies, audiences found it strangely un-Spanish.

77. Two pages from *Comœdia Illustré*, 15 June 1912, including photographs of the dancers wearing costumes designed by Bakst for the Brigands from *Daphnis et Chloé*. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections PN 2003 Folio



*Right*  
78. After Léon Bakst, costumes for three Brigands from *Daphnis et Chloé*. Wool, cotton and paint, 1912. V&A: S.639(&A,B)–1980; S.508(&A,B)–1979; S.835(&A,C)–1980

*Overleaf, right*  
80. After Léon Bakst, costume worn by Pierre Vladimirov as Prince Charming from *The Sleeping Princess* (Act III, the Wedding Scene). Silk velvet, cotton, silver tissue and paint, replica sash with original metal bullion fringe, wool hat with metal thread and feather, 1921. V&A: S.829(&B)–1980 with U.1–2009

*Overleaf, left*  
79. After Léon Bakst, motifs from the costume for the Fairy of the Songbirds from *The Sleeping Princess*, 1921. The motifs were transferred onto a cheaply made tutu decades later. V&A: S.2492–1986



The old and the new existed briefly side-by-side in Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes. In 1911, he purchased costumes from the Moscow Imperial Ballet’s 1901 production of *Swan Lake*. Designed in traditional manner by the painter Aleksandr Golovin, there is only a vague sense of period, with no consistency of style or making, and some frankly ugly creations. Upholstery brocades and velvets jostle against painted silks, felted wool, indiscriminate fur and feather trims; the waltz costumes in metallic silver fabric, the bodices swathed with shaded pastel silks and skirts appliquéd with satin flowers are of stupefying vulgarity. By contrast, Bakst’s designs for *The Sleeping Princess* in 1921 (pl.79) have cohesion, not only in concept, but also in the making, even though several independent costumiers were employed.

Choreographers and designers began to cross boundaries. Choreographers studied art to learn the significance of gesture, pose and grouping, while designers learned to watch movement, so that their designs would enhance the choreography of each individual ballet. Nicholas Roerich’s costumes for *The Rite of Spring* (pls 81 and 82) evolved from his researches into antique and ethnic textiles in the collection of Princess Maria Tenisheva at Talashkino. The basic pattern is the T-shape decorated with an astonishing diversity of patterns – circles and curves, squares, lozenges, lines, bars, various crosses, amoeboid and ‘mushroom’ shapes – but arranged formally and in symmetrical repeats. The visual complexity added to the

overall effect of primitivism and disorder, but the formality of the patterns created an anchor within the choreography’s asymmetry. The intricate mixture of dyeing, stenciling, painting and printing was executed by Caffi, the theatrical costumiers in St Petersburg.

In *Cléopâtre*, E.O. Hoppé noted how the costumes enhanced the gestures and sensuous attitudes, emphasizing the angularity of Fokine’s choreography: ‘[Bakst’s] concern is to present a series of gorgeous Oriental patterns in which movement and sound, colour and design, are inextricably mingled, and produce an irresistible appeal to the senses.’<sup>3</sup> In *Narcisse* the curving, flowing scarves in Bakst’s designs were built into Fokine’s choreography, extending the movements beyond the body.

Picasso sat in on rehearsals for *Le Tricorne* and Massine acknowledged the influence of the evolving designs on the choreography. In *La Boutique fantasque*, the movement of the English ladies as they entered the shop interacted with the sway of André Derain’s costumes. Although Derain’s costume drawings appear naive and sketchy, his figures ungainly and dumpy, they convey precisely the information that a costumier requires.

Not all artists produced such practical drawings. Matisse’s designs for *Le Chant du rossignol* are highly prized, but Tamara Karsavina, who was dancing the Nightingale remembered ‘... the bewilderment of the costumier, who could not understand the intention of Matisse’s sketch,







*Previous pages, left*  
81. After Nicholas Roerich, costumes for Elders and a Young Man from *The Rite of Spring*. Wool, napped cotton, wood, leather and fur, 1913. V&A: S.683(&A)–1980 with S.651B–1980; S.659(&B)–1980 with S.658A–1980

*Previous pages, right*  
82. After Nicholas Roerich, costumes for Maidens from *The Rite of Spring*. Wool, metal necklace, leather and metal belts, 1913. V&A: S.669(&A)–1980; S.681–1980 with S.667A–1980; S.676(&A)–1980

*Opposite, and detail overleaf*  
83. After Léon Bakst, costume for Vaslav Nijinsky as the Prince from the *pas de deux* 'L'Oiseau d'or' from *Le Festin*, 1909. V&A: S.837–1981

*Right*  
84. After Léon Bakst, costume for Vaslav Nijinsky as the Prince from the *pas de deux* 'L'Oiseau et le Prince', 1914. V&A: S.548–1978



and the half-finished costume pinned in places, feathers moulting off me on the first night'.<sup>4</sup> He visualized each costume as part of a static stage picture, and was aghast when he realized that the dancers wearing them would be constantly moving and regrouping. Massine did, however, retain Matisse's idea for the finale, when the Emperor, restored to life, stands up and his black mantle, lined with vermilion, flows dramatically across the stage.

Two surviving costumes designed by Bakst for a male dancer in *L'Oiseau d'or* show how different makers can interpret the same design. One costume (pl.83), which was probably made in Russia, is more exuberant, less refined and inhibited, and the ovals, which cover the costume, are embroidered in gold metal strip. The other (pl.84), which may have been made in Paris or London, is more elegant,

with the ovals executed in a deeper gold thread. Both are legitimate interpretations.

Making theatre costumes is a different skill from dressmaking. Costumiers need the imagination to see drawings on paper as a finished costume, the ingenuity to translate the fine detail into bold decoration which will register at a distance, and the ability to construct a garment that will withstand the stresses and strains of the choreography, as well as the rigours of touring. They also have to work out the back of the costume, as most designs show only the front,<sup>5</sup> as well as how to execute the decoration – appliqué, embroidery, painting or stencilling. The Bayadère costumes from *Le Dieu bleu* (pl.85) display an astonishing range of techniques, including appliqué, painting and dyeing, embroidery using flossing, flocking, beading and metal studs.





It is an indication of the Ballets Russes' financial buoyancy that this was only one of dozens of equally lavish and expensive costumes. Their cost often lies in the extravagance of the trimmings, such as the expensive *passementerie* on the court costumes in *The Sleeping Princess* or the gold acorn weights on the nymphs in *Narcisse*.

Painted decoration was an alternative to appliqué or embroidery, sometimes mimicking a patterned fabric, as on the courtly costumes in *The Sleeping Princess* and *Le Chant du rossignol*. André Derain took the technique a step further in *La Boutique fantasque*, using it to define structure by painting scallops on the skirts of the Russian Girls, achieving the effect of ruching without the bulk.

Creating Bakst's extravagant and sensuous costumes required a bolder approach than Benois's more precise creations. Massine's early choreography had an energy and childlike exuberance, which found its visual expression in Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov's decorative, folklorique style for *Soleil de nuit*, with its bold, schematic

animal and plant forms, and stylized fantasy and playfulness. The ideal technique for realizing their vision was appliqué, using a diversity of fabrics to give visual richness on stage. The results were like illustrations from a child's picture book (pl.86).

The choice of fabrics and colour was vital – especially for Bakst, who used colour symbolically as well as decoratively. Fabrics range from authentic ethnic textiles to furnishing materials, expensive silk velvets and stamped linens to the cheapest cottons. Innovative materials, like American cloth, were used for the work clothes in *Le Pas d'acier*, while mica was perfect for the futuristic *La Chatte*. An inappropriate fabric could ruin the choreographic effect; although the flowing scarves in Bakst's designs for *Narcisse* appear filmy and delicate, lightweight fabrics are difficult to control so a fine wool was used. In *The Rite of Spring*, the obvious choice, given the strenuous choreography would seem to be cotton, but the women's costumes were made in a very fine wool and the men's in even heavier flannelette; not

*Opposite*

85. After Léon Bakst, skirt for a Bayadère from *Le Dieu bleu*, 1912 (detail).  
V&A: S.622–1980

*Right*

86. After Mikhail Larionov, costume for the Snow Maiden added to Massine's ballet *Soleil de nuit*, 1918.  
V&A: S.830(&A)–1981





Opposite  
87. Vaslav Nijinsky  
as the Negro Slave from  
*Schéhérazade*, 1910.  
Photograph by Bert.  
V&A: Theatre &  
Performance Collections  
THM/165

88. Nicholas Zverev as an  
acrobat from *Parade*, 1917.  
Photograph by Lachmann.  
V&A: S.5424–2009



only was this more authentic, it also gave a greater weight to the movement. Most breathtaking of all are the silks used for the Polovtsian Girls in *Prince Igor* – authentic ethnic ikats woven in Uzbekistan – which Nicholas Roerich bought in the markets of St Petersburg.<sup>6</sup> The myriad weaves and colours intensified the power, energy, sensuousness and new freedom in Fokine's choreography, but the kaleidoscopic effect was lost in later remakings when ikat fabrics were no longer available.

Those who affect to despise costume point to the discrepancy between Bakst's designs for *Schéhérazade* and their realization. Hardly surprisingly, the completed costumes lack the eroticism that oozes from the designs, in which wisps of fabric barely cover breasts, thighs and body hair. In fact, the dancers in *Cléopâtre*, *Schéhérazade* and *Le Dieu bleu* were covered, neck to ankle, with prosaic silk for the principals and cotton for the corps de ballet. Although creases at elbows or knees are clearly visible on un-retouched photographs, on stage and in movement, audiences 'saw' bare flesh, as proved by the impact of *Cléopâtre* and the scandalous success of *Schéhérazade* (pl.87).

In 1909 this was a legacy of the Imperial Russian Ballet, where tights like gloves, with a 'finger' for each toe, discreetly concealed bare legs and feet. But it was also a practical solution to a practical problem. Fokine's ballets ran between 20 and 60 minutes, so the dancers appeared in three or four works every evening, each requiring a change not only of costume but also make-up. Covering arms and legs left only

face and hands to be made up, a boon since this consisted of greasepaint and few theatres had adequate washing facilities. Costume inventories reveal that differently toned all-overs were integral to the design. In *Cléopâtre* Nijinsky's fleshings were grey silk, those of the Male Egyptians, Servants and Slaves chestnut-coloured cotton, Amoun's were hazel-coloured silk, the Priest and Female Slaves' 'yellowish' silk, the Priestesses' olive silk, and the Negroes' dark grey cotton.<sup>7</sup> In *Le Dieu bleu* tones included blue-black, olive-black and brown-olive. However, by autumn 1912 the boundaries had changed and although bare midriffs were still built into costumes, legs and arms were uncovered. Diaghilev ignored the dancers' protests.

During the Ballets Russes' lifetime, fleshings evolved into a costume in their own right. Decorating body-tights was a new technique, and makers soon realized that, to avoid distortion, designs had to be applied while the dancer was wearing the costume. Bakst discovered this for himself at the dress rehearsal of *Le Spectre de la rose*; he and Diaghilev stood over dressmaker Maria Stepanova as she removed and redistributed all of the petals while Nijinsky was still wearing the costume. In *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, the tights and body were painted with patches which overlapped fabric and skin. Sometimes the designer executed the painting – Picasso painted the whorls and stars on the Acrobats in *Parade* (pl.88), and Georges Braque the flowers on Flore's tights and bodice in *Zéphire et Flore*. For *Ode*, Pavel Tchelitchev designed unadorned white leotards and tights, the hair



89. Léon Woizikovsky as the Golfer with Lydia Sokolova as La Perlouise from *Le Train bleu*, 1924. Photograph by Sasha. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections

covered by close-fitting white helmets, transforming the dancers into abstract sculptures.

Ballets reflecting society and contemporary themes posed the challenge described by Karsavina as reconciling the 'so often jarring, incompatibility of the balletic and the secular elements'.<sup>8</sup> *Jeux*, based on an episode during a game of tennis, created a stir in 1913 as the first 'contemporary' ballet, in which the women wore fashionable jumpers and skirts supplied by the couturier Paquin when Bakst's costumes were judged unsuitable. However, couturiers did not always appreciate the importance of adapting clothes to accommodate the choreography. In 1924, Chanel dressed *Le Train bleu* from her current collection. Her knitted swimsuits were potentially dangerous as their loose fit made it difficult for Léon Woizikovsky, as the Golfer, to get a firm grip on his partner in the complex throws and catches devised by Bronislava Nijinska. Lydia Sokolova, as La Perlouise, was given fake pearl stud earrings, which became the fashion accessories of the decade but were



90. Alexandre Benois, costume design for a Peasant and Child from *Petrushka*. Watercolour on paper, 1911. V&A: S.554–2009

unsuitable for stage wear, and so heavy that she could hardly hear the music. Chanel also forgot about shoes, so Sokolova chose rubber bathing slippers, which, not surprisingly, were most uncomfortable to dance in (pl.89).

On the whole, the artists, even those new to stage design, did not make the same mistakes. Picasso gave the American Girl in *Parade* a smart blazer and easy-to-move-in pleated skirt; for *Les Biches* Marie Laurencin created simplified 1920s dresses, executed in chiffons to reflect the superficiality and flightiness of the flappers, while the Hostess' heavier lace dress and rows of pearls indicated a greater sophistication.

In the theatre, everything changes with time. Existing costumes were occasionally modified in line with prevailing fashion. When *Narcisse* was briefly revived in 1924, the ankle-length tunics from 1911 looked dowdy and old-fashioned in a world of short, tubular dresses, so the skirts were shortened. Updating had to be applied with caution, however: in 1926 Natalia Goncharova gave the *Firebird* Princesses fashionable shorter hair, making nonsense of the

original hair-brushing movement. Occasionally, a costume was reinvented – for example De Chirico's up-to-date Sylph in *Le Bal*, wore a costume akin to that of *Les Sylphides*, but with eccentric, surreal wings.

*Petrushka* was a rarity – a ballet showing the lives of ordinary people enjoying themselves at the traditional Butterweek Fair. Benois's costumes establish at a glance the social level or occupation of each individual, whether peasant, middle class, upper class, nursemaid, stable boy, rich merchant or drunkard (pl.90). From this background emerge the colourful fairground characters – an organ grinder, gypsies, street dancers, various showmen – all of whom set the scene for the exotic, fantastical Showman and the tawdry brightness of the puppets.

Theatre is fluid, but the records are not. Production changes are only intermittently recorded and most writings are based on rehearsal images and records of first nights. Photographs of *Apollon musagète*, taken during the 1928 seasons in Paris and London, show the Muses wearing Chanel-designed knee-length tarlatan skirts with pleated bodices and fitted flower-strewn 'bathing-cap' headdresses (pl.91). These were already replacements for the original André Bauchant Greek tunics, which Diaghilev had rejected, and were themselves jettisoned in 1929, when Chanel produced beautifully flattering jersey Grecian tunics fastened with ties.

How practical were the costumes in performance? Assessing evidence is difficult, as dancers always complain that everything is too heavy or cumbersome. Anything on the head obstructs movement and destroys the line of the head and neck, while wigs are hot and tight. Likewise, they object to the minutest amount of hip padding and surreptitiously remove bones from bodices. Many of Diaghilev's dancers came from traditional state theatres where conventional costuming was still the rule. They had difficulty adjusting to appearing in several works in an evening, each with its own costume and make-up, besides constantly adapting to different stages.

Bronislava Nijinska described the problems. Having mastered the fast, turning solo for Papillon in *Carnaval* in rehearsal, she then tried it in costume and found that she had to dance even more quickly to counteract the drag of the crinoline skirt. She added:

When I tried to dance my Papillon for the first time onstage in Paris, in costume, I discovered that I had to increase my speed as I circled the stage to hold a precarious balance at a forty-five-degree angle. With the slightest deviation I would fall over, and so I had to do my dance time and time again until finally I had mastered the effect of the incline and was dancing the Papillon on the outermost point of this equilibrium, which contributed so much to my speed, lightness, and freedom of movement.<sup>9</sup>

An unstable or uncomfortable costume could have a detrimental effect on performances. Larionov's painted

designs for *Soleil de nuit* were charming, but the costumes were thick and padded, with kokoshnik headdresses that slipped and were then impossible to adjust. As Sokolova remarked: 'if our movements had been less hampered we could have danced with as much enthusiasm as we did in *Prince Igor*.'<sup>10</sup> In *Le Bal*, the dancers found it difficult to dance the fast, syncopated tarantella with the necessary speed, weighed down as they were by De Chirico's heavy costumes.

Lopokova remembered the aching misery of mastering the positions Massine demanded in *The Good-Humoured Ladies*: 'the knee was always bent and the arms akimbo – the limbs never in a straight line.'<sup>11</sup> Then she saw Bakst's padded, boned eighteenth-century style costume. 'We felt like rugby football players dressed as Eskimos pretending to be the most elegant and dainty females of the eighteenth century.'<sup>12</sup> She also had problems manipulating the can-can costume in *La Boutique fantasque* to give the impression that the heavy lace underskirts were a mass of froth (pl.105).

Some costumes could be positively dangerous, like Chanel's *Train bleu* swimsuits. José-Maria Sert's enormous costumes for *Las Meninas* (the skirts were twice the length of arms and the wigs twice width of shoulders) looked wonderful on stage, but the iron hoops supporting the vast panniers cut into the dancers' shins, making them bleed. Others were simply too cumbersome. The wicker and buckram extensions of the *Chout* costumes swamped the choreography, although they could hardly be seen against the violently coloured Rayonniste scenery with elements 'hurtling rhapsodically through the air in a way which suggests some of the ecstatic pictures of Chagall'.<sup>13</sup>

Usually the dancers came to accept the costumes and their relation to the choreography, although this was no consolation to the barefooted Bacchante in *Narcisse*, manipulating a scarf, cup and jug props while stifling under a red wig. In *Ode*, the dancers felt horribly exposed in Tchelitchev's all-revealing white, unadorned leotards and tights, but Danilova admitted that they were appropriate for the shifting geometrical patterns of Massine's choreography: 'many of the lifts, for instance, would have looked vulgar in a tutu, with the partner's hand visible between the ballerina's legs...'<sup>14</sup>

Dancing in *The Rite of Spring* was always a disagreeable experience – Nijinsky's energetic choreography, the wool and flannel costumes, so many dancers packed together on stage, sweating with exertion, excitement and fear, generated heat like a furnace. Adding to the unpleasantness was the overpowering smell of hot, damp wool. When the original costumes were reused in Massine's *Rite of Spring* in 1920, the dance of the Chosen Maiden was so strenuous that the wool dress had to be replaced by one in silk, and instead of wearing the heavy wig, Lydia Sokolova wore her own hair stitched down with criss-cross tacking stitches.

That a generation of Russian and European painters produced not just memorable but also practical theatrical costumes was largely due to Diaghilev's understanding of what would work on stage and his constant vigilance during



the design process.<sup>15</sup> Some were more successful than others. Although Sert's *Las Meninas* was stunning, Sokolova judged his lead costumes in *Cimariosiana* – decorated with loosely fixed pom-poms and tassels which never bounced on the beat – as the most unattractive she had ever worn. Georges Braque generally got the thumbs down for his unflattering sludge-coloured, unwieldy costume for *Les Fâcheux* and dresses for the Muses in *Zéphire et Flore*, which, according to Alexandra Danilova 'were awful – wool dresses with drop waists that made us look as if we were wearing burlap sacks'.<sup>16</sup> However, he made amends with a delicious costume for Alice Nikitina as Flore, flattering her typically 1920s androgynous figure with an upwards curving neckline, voluminous chiffon cap sleeves to soften the arms and a little half-tutu to give shape at the back.

The design revolution extended to make-up and each costume and character now had an individual look. Nijinsky's make-up was key to his interpretation, and observers related how he became transformed into the character as the make-up went on. Benois marvelled at Bakst's transformation of the dancers in *Schéhérazade* 'to make them creations of his own. Although I knew every performer well, I could recognize none of them in this performance – and this not only from the distance of the auditorium, but also from the proximity of the stage...'<sup>17</sup>

Benois supervised Tamara Karsavina's make-up as the Ballerina in *Petrushka*, which included a red spot on each cheek and eyes outlined to create a doll-like vacancy. Bakst made a detailed sketch for each character in *The Good-Humoured Ladies*, showing the snub noses and curlicued eyebrows, and when in the theatre would add a star, crescent or 'wiggly' to each dancer. Nijinska in *The Sleeping Princess* wore a fantastical make-up with bee-stung lips. For Death in *Le Chant du rossignol*, Matisse experimented on Lydia Sokolova, using illustrations of original Chinese theatrical face paint, before settling on a red foundation to match the costume with white gashes down the cheeks, a black slit for the mouth and slanting black eyes and eyebrows.

Glamour was no longer the aim. For Kikimora (pls 92 and 93), the Russian witch of folklore in *Contes Russes*, Larionov designed one of his most outlandish and repellent costumes, a stained, patched blouse and skirt with gaudy red

91. Serge Lifar and Alexandra Danilova in *Apollon musagète*, 1928. Photograph by Sasha. This shows the first version of the costumes designed by Coco Chanel. Serge Lifar, as Apollo, wore a red tunic with gold accessories; Alexandra Danilova, as Terpsichore, wore a pale mauve tutu and headdress. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



92. Bronislava Nijinska  
as Kikimora from *Contes  
Russes*, 1922.  
Photograph by Man Ray



93. Mikhail Larionov,  
make-up design for  
Kikimora from *Contes  
Russes*, 1919.  
V&A: S.199-2008

stockings, a wig of matted hair, and the face reduced to three vertical strips, with the contrasting horizontal slash of bared teeth (pl.93). When Nikitina did her standard elaborate make-up in *Barabau*, Diaghilev reprimanded her: ‘You’re a peasant – and you have stuck false lashes on your eyes. Go and take them off. I want your hands to stink of garlic from afar.’<sup>18</sup>

With even principals dancing several roles in an evening, the process of reapplying make-up was a race against the interval clock. Sokolova once danced Ta-Hor in *Cléopâtre* (face, shoulder, arm and leg make-up, bare feet and black wig), followed by the Girl in *Le Spectre de la rose* (demure Victorian maiden): ‘Tired and hot, I had to undo the thirty safety-pins with which my long, thick sash was fixed tightly around me. I was standing in a hot bath, scrubbing the brown make-up and dirt off my feet and legs, when the stage manager flew into my dressing-room.’ He told her to re-dress and take another call. ‘How I got myself cleaned up or put on the new white make-up with tights and ballet shoes, in order to open *Spectre* looking like a débutante radiant after her first ball, I simply do not know. It is the sort of thing that still happens to me in nightmares.’<sup>19</sup> All while trying to mentally shed one character and assume another.

In establishing his own company, Diaghilev lost access to the workshops and wardrobe that supported the Imperial Theatres on which he had relied for the early seasons. Costumes were usually made in London, Paris or Monte Carlo, but suppliers for the day-to-day running wardrobe had to be found everywhere, as did laundries for daily washing of hundreds of towels, tights, shirts and tunics. The only permanent staff consisted of a wardrobe-mistress and her assistant, so temporary seamstresses were taken on in each venue. Every garment was inspected, repairs were made and costumes that needed dry-cleaning were identified. Then began the endless chore of ironing hundreds of costumes as they came out of the travelling skips. Few costumes were duplicated, so any cast change meant altering the existing costume. Excess baggage costs were a major drain on company finances; in 1926 nearly a thousand costumes were toured, including 150 for *The Firebird*, 100 for *Petrushka*, 65 for *Children’s Tales*, 60 for *Prince Igor*, 70 for *Aurora’s Wedding* and 150 for *Le Chant du rossignol* (pl.94).<sup>20</sup> A century on, hurried repairs in the wings have been replaced by conservation, often taking hundreds of hours at a cost that would have mounted a small ballet for Diaghilev.

*Régisseur* Serge Grigoriev kept an eagle eye on the wardrobe, evaluating the condition of the costumes and deciding whether replacement was really necessary or if a costume could be adapted from one in store. When a Nymph in *L’Après-midi d’un faune* pleaded that her costume was so ragged she would soon be appearing naked, Grigoriev merely observed ‘That will be charming, Madame.’ What he said when a costume had to be remade because a dancer had given the original to an admirer is not recorded, even though it ensured the survival of Lydia Lopokova’s Can-Can (pl.105) and *Les Sylphides* costumes, both given to the dance historian Cyril Beaumont.

Diaghilev’s dictum that the audience must only see perfection depended on his own vigilance and that of his backstage staff. Each dancer was checked before going on stage and was fined for any changes to the costume and make-up or for wearing unsuitable jewellery. In the 1920s, Chanel and Misa Sert also acted as arbiters of taste, scrutinizing the costumes, deciding whether a tutu was the correct length, whether colours were right, whether trims should be added or removed, but always testing the costume in movement before making a final decision.

Although now divorced from the movement for which they were created, the Diaghilev ballet costumes have a poignancy and emotional force that bring us closer to the performing life of the company than any other remaining artefacts. Designers and makers never thought of the long term when creating the costumes; their horizon was bounded by the first night and the hope that the ballet would be a success. They never dreamed that their work would feed back into live performance, both as an inspiration to generations of theatre designers, and studied by costumiers remaking the costumes for those ballets still in the repertory. Nor that, a hundred years later, they would still influence fashion. Above all, they could never have foreseen that the costumes, independent of the choreography, would become stars of numerous exhibitions and revered as works of art: at once a memorial to the past and an inspiration to the future.



Opposite  
94. After Henri Matisse,  
costume for the  
Mandarin from *Le Chant  
du rossignol*. Satin, paint  
and tinsel, 1920.  
V&A: S.742(&A)–1980



95. After Henri Matisse, costume for a Courtier from *Le Chant du rossignol*. Satin with gold studs, paint and gold braid, 1920. V&A: S.745-1980

*Opposite*  
96. After Henri Matisse, costume for a Mourner from *Le Chant du rossignol*. Wool felt and velvet, 1920. V&A: S.750-1980

*Overleaf, left*  
97. After Natalia Goncharova, costume worn by Adolph Bolm as the Prince from *Sadko*. Cotton velvet, silk satin with 'essence d'orient' pearls, 1916. V&A: S.740(&A)-1980

*Overleaf, right*  
98. After Natalia Goncharova, costume worn by Doris Faithful as the Sea Princess from *Sadko*. Silk satin with appliquéd sequins, tissue and metal, raffia plaits, 1916. V&A: S.741(&A,B)-1980









*Previous pages, left*  
99. After Mikhail Larionov, costume for the Buffoon's Wife from *Chout*. Cane-stiffened felt and cotton, 1921. V&A: S.762(&A,B)-1980

*Previous pages, right*  
100. After Mikhail Larionov, costume for the Buffoon from *Chout*. Steel- and cane-stiffened felt and cotton, 1921. V&A: S.761(&B,C)-1980

*Opposite*  
101. After Mikhail Larionov, costume for the Buffoon from *Chout* (reverse). Steel- and cane-stiffened felt and cotton, 1921. V&A: S.761(&B,C)-1980



102. Mikhail Larionov, design for the Buffoon from *Chout*. Watercolour and body-colours on paper, 1915. When the costume was made the mask was moved to the dancer's back – rather than covering his face. V&A: E.283-1961



103. Léon Bakst, design for the Fairy of Wisdom. Gouache and pencil on card, 1921. This design is heavily annotated with instructions for the costumiers, however there was no Fairy of Wisdom in the Ballets Russes production of *The Sleeping Princess*. Private collection



Opposite  
104. After Léon Bakst, costume for a Duchess from *The Sleeping Princess* (Scene III, Hunting Scene), 1921. V&A: S.799(&B)-1980; S.800A-1980



105. After André Derain,  
costume worn by Lydia  
Lopokova as the  
Can-Can Dancer from  
*La Boutique fantasque*,  
1919 (with detail).  
V&A: S.877-1980



DIAGHILEV  
AND CHANEL  
*Keith Lodwick*

Coco Chanel was introduced to Diaghilev after the First World War by their mutual friend, Misia Sert. Chanel provided a home for Igor Stravinsky and his family at her house in Garches, near Paris, enabling him to complete the score for *Pulcinella*. She also sponsored the 1920 revival of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, with new choreography by Léonide Massine, donating a gift of three hundred thousand francs on the condition that no one should know she was the benefactor.

In the 1920s Chanel joined Diaghilev's inner circle of advisers, and he turned to her whenever he was unhappy with costumes designed, or

needed a truly contemporary approach. Most famously Chanel provided the outfits (clothes rather than costumes) for the Jean Cocteau/Bronislava Nijinska ballet *Le Train bleu*. The ballet was named for France's luxurious Paris-Riviera express and concerned the fashionable sports of tennis, golf and sea bathing. With *Le Train bleu*, Chanel became a fully-fledged artistic collaborator, designing all the costumes and conferring upon the ballet an air of smart contemporaneity that perfectly suited its theme.

For the Tennis Champion, based on the great tennis star Suzanne Lenglen, Chanel designed a dapper white

sporting outfit complete with eyeshade and bandeau. For the Golfer, she specified a sweater and plus fours, an ensemble associated with the young Prince of Wales, later the Duke of Windsor. The rest of the cast wore striped, knitted bathing suits consisting of a pullover worn over the top of loose mid-thigh trunks. To complete the outfit of the bathing belle, Chanel added a head-hugging swimming cap, which soon became an essential part of beach attire, and large fake-pearl earrings. The light-hearted ballet or 'danced operetta' was premiered as part of the main event at the 1924 VIII Olympiad in Paris.

Chanel was asked to step in on a number of productions. To keep *Les Biches* absolutely up-to-date, when Felia Doubrovskia took over the role of the stylish Hostess in 1927, Diaghilev sent her to Chanel for a new dress. Chanel designed the costumes for Alexandra Danilova in *The Gods Go A-Begging*, when Diaghilev was generally re-using those from *Les Tentations de la bergère* by Juan Gris (the ballets shared similar plots), and she gave a fresh look to costumes for the three Muses in *Apollon musagète* a year after the ballet's premiere. Her solution exemplified to perfection the simplicity that had taken her to the

top of her field. For each of the women she created a tricot tunic bound around the body in three places with elegant neckties from the House of Charvet.

Chanel worked for Diaghilev without seeking personal glory, and her final act for him demonstrates her kindness and generosity. In the summer of 1929, while cruising along the Dalmatian coast with Misia Sert on the Duke of Westminster's yacht, they received a message from Diaghilev summoning them to Venice. They found him dying at the Grand Hotel des Bains. After his death it was Chanel who paid for his funeral, including interment on the island of San Michele.

Lubov Tchernicheva as Calliope in *Apollon musagète*, 1929. Photograph by Vladimir Dimitriev. This shows the second version of the costumes for the Muses by Chanel. *Dancing Times* archive

Alexandra Danilova in *The Gods Go A-begging*, 1928. Photograph by Sasha. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



Felia Doubrovskia as the Hostess in *Les Biches*, 1924. Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection



Léon Woizikovsky, Lydia Sokolova, Bronislava Nijinska and Anton Dolin in *Le Train bleu* photographed on the set of *Baba Yaga* at the London Coliseum, December 1924. Photograph by Sasha. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections





Lydia Sokolova arranging dancers from The Royal Ballet School in costumes from *Le Chant du rossignol* for the Sotheby's, London, auction, 1968. Photograph by Sotheby's Photo Studio. Collection of Thilo von Watzdorf

Sotheby's auction at the Scala Theatre, London, of the costume for Flore from *Zéphire et Flore* with the front cloth for *Le Train bleu* in the background, 1968. Photograph by Nesta MacDonald. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



## DIAGHILEV UNDER THE HAMMER

Jane Pritchard

'Diaghilev fashions pop up' and 'How to cover yourself in history' were just two of the newspaper headlines in the years 1967 to 1973 which announced Sotheby's London auctions of sets and costumes created for the Ballets Russes.<sup>1</sup> Buyers 'eager for fresh fields' to collect, encouraged auction houses to diversify into selling everything from vintage motorcars to costumes from Diaghilev's ballets.<sup>2</sup>

The Ballets Russes auctions heralded celebrity sales as events in their own right. The first sale, held at 9pm on Tuesday 13 June 1967, was preceded by a succession of soirées, which were intended to woo survivors of the company to come forward with material for future sales as well as raise funds for charity. For the three first major sales of costumes Lydia

Sokolova, Diaghilev's British *premiere danseuse*, arranged groupings in which students of The Royal Ballet School modelled the costumes, striking poses from the ballets.

The 1967 sale was built round a few star items including Nijinsky's costumes from *Le Festin*, *Le Dieu bleu* and *Giselle*, and Sokolova's Hostess costume from *Les Biches*. Its success was significant, not least for the publicity it received; even the *Sun* newspaper published photographs of dancers modelling Picasso's costumes for the two acrobats in *Parade*, which were bought by the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.<sup>3</sup>

This 'taster' sale encouraged Anthony Diamantidi, chairman of the Diaghilev and de Basil Ballet Foundation, to auction the sets and



Meriel McCooley's article in the *Sunday Times*, 25 February 1973, previewing the sale at the Chenil Galleries, Chelsea, was illustrated with sketches of hippies dressed in the colourful costumes from *The Sleeping Princess* and *Thamar*.

costumes in its possession, stored for three decades in a Parisian suburb. The impact on those who sorted the material was compared to Howard Carter's opening of Tutankhamen's tomb, particularly when many of the costumes for *The Sleeping Princess*, long thought destroyed, were rediscovered. Three days of sales, from 16–18 July 1968, were devoted to the Ballets Russes. The first and third dealt with archives and drawings, designs and sculpture, but the second day, at the Scala Theatre, London, was devoted to the auction of set cloths and costumes. Memorably, students in costumes from *The Sleeping Princess* danced the polonaise from the ballet's final act and Richard Buckle acquired the '*Train bleu*' front cloth for the British nation.

Further sales were held on

19 December 1969 at Drury Lane (at which Natalia Goncharova's *Firebird* cloths were sold) and finally at the Chenil Galleries, Chelsea, on 3 March 1973 when almost a quarter of the sum raised came from bids placed by the 11-year-old Andrew Strauss, guided by his father, from the nascent National Gallery of Australia. Use of the Chenil Galleries, located among the fashionable boutiques of the King's Road, acknowledged that the costumes were not so different from clothes then on sale in 'swinging London' and many were bought to wear at parties.

Sales of Ballets Russes designs and ephemera became a regular feature in London and New York in the 1970s and 1980s, and there were two further significant costume sales. In 1983 Robin Howard sold, through Christie's,



Marie Rambert posing in Lubov Tchernicheva's costume from *Le Pas d'acier* at a preview for the Sotheby's, London, sale, 1967. Photograph by Nesta MacDonald. Private collection

the collection he had acquired in the earlier sales to help fund his Contemporary Dance Trust, and in 1995 the Castle Howard collection was also sold. Thanks to purchases from the 1960s sales, and the generosity of supporters buying on behalf of the proposed British Theatre Museum, the Theatre & Performance Collections at the V&A now possesses the world's largest holdings of Ballets Russes sets and costumes.

1 Timothy Giles and Valerie Knox, 'Diaghilev fashions pop up', *Sunday Times* (5 May 1986); Meriel McCooley, 'Look! How to cover yourself in history', *Sunday Times* (25 February 1973).  
2 G.W., 'Dance and Drama in the Sale-Room', *Apollo* (October 1969), pp.356–60.  
3 Katherine Castle, 'Picasso, When he was a Dress Designer', *Sun* (9 May 1967).



# MUSIC AND THE BALLETS RUSSES

HOWARD GOODALL

It is extremely rare in musical history that the agent of greatest transformation upon the development of music at any one moment should lie outside its own immediate community. Serge Diaghilev is one such figure, as influential on music's twentieth-century journey as he was on that of dance and design. He was a catalyst whose imaginative entrepreneurialism between 1909 and 1929 was to cause as great a revolution in the sound and style of music as, for example, the technological advances brought about by the invention of recorded sound or the mass exodus of Russian Jews to the USA – both of which unfolded in the two decades preceding his arrival in Paris. That the commissioning policy of one man and his company of exiled ballet dancers should have brought about change in not one, but three art forms, and precipitated something close to an earthquake in one of them – music – is almost without precedent.

The two cities of St Petersburg and Paris were to be the turbines behind the cultural revolution orchestrated by Diaghilev at the Ballets Russes. This should be seen not as a sudden, unexpected turn of events but rather the culmination of a process that had been in the making for at least half a century. The pervasiveness of French culture in aristocratic circles in the Russian Empire meant that Paris was the natural goal of many an exile from the East. The influx of aspiring, usually impoverished, young musicians to Paris from elsewhere in Europe continued until the First World War, fuelled by a popular, somewhat idealized conception – captured fondly in Henri Murger's 1851 novel *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, which formed the basis of Puccini's *La Bohème* (1896) – that the bohemian life of the artist was 'understood' better in Paris than any other industrialized capital. Young composers, singers and instrumentalists in Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth, were likely to have been financially maintained by one or other of two outstanding patrons,

whose impact on the music that was subsequently produced makes them worthy of investigation.

The first of these was Georges Hartmann, a publisher-philanthropist-librettist-dramatist to whom Claude Debussy's career was profoundly indebted, and who also nurtured the work of Jules Massenet, Georges Bizet, Camille Saint-Saëns, Édouard Lalo and César Franck. Though his interest in the arts was not confined to music (Renoir's 1874 *Portrait of a Woman* at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, is thought to be Hartmann's wife, posing appropriately in front of a grand piano), Hartmann's championing of the leading French composers of the later nineteenth century was to set a standard for publishers that few matched, especially so since the enterprise bankrupted him at least once and left him virtually ruined at his death in 1900. He cultivated relationships with journalists, opera-house directors and concert promoters on behalf of his composer clients in a manner that would not be out of place in the early twenty-first century. His entrepreneurialism therefore sketches him as a worthy precursor to Diaghilev, even if unlike Diaghilev he was himself often creator as well.

By 1900, the year of Hartmann's death, it was already obvious in Paris and across Europe that Debussy was producing music of startling originality, which was at the time somewhat overshadowed by developments in Vienna, the experiments of the so-called 'Second Viennese School' of composers Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern. Critics, university professors and musicologists swallowed the complicated methodology of the Austrian intellectuals wholesale, believing it to be the dawn of a new era in music, a hypnosis that prevented them from fully grasping the enormity of the transformation Debussy was bringing about to the texture, harmony and organization of melody in Paris. Audiences, then as now, seemed less susceptible to the logic of the Viennese experiment, known

as ‘serialism’ or ‘atonality’. Meanwhile a wave of French composers wrestled with Debussy’s re-imagining of the musical canvas, chief among these being Erik Satie and Maurice Ravel. Satie (whose lean, acerbic musical style looked forward to a modernist, utilitarian twentieth century) and Ravel (whose rich, nostalgic soundscapes evoked a fast-fading belle époque) were among several leading composers of the early twentieth century to have benefited from the patronage and vision of Winnaretta Singer-Polignac. One of the outstanding supporters of the arts she was an indispensable sponsor of Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes.

The daughter of Isaac Merritt Singer, of the sewing machine fortune, and Isabella Eugenie Boyer (rumoured to have been the model for Bartholdi’s Statue of Liberty) Winnaretta and her family emigrated from New York to Paris at the outbreak of the American Civil War before moving to Paignton, Devon, at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. By 1875, Isaac having died, the family returned to Paris, where by the age of 22 Winnaretta was married to the first of two husbands, both princes, both marriages of convenience. From 1894, Singer and her second husband, Prince Edmond de Polignac, established a salon in their Paris home which soon became the epicentre of Parisian musical life; composers and musicians the de Polignacs nurtured, commissioned or befriended included Claude Debussy, Gabriel Fauré, Maurice Ravel, Emmanuel Chabrier, Vincent d’Indy, Erik Satie, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Kurt Weill, Manuel de Falla, Karol Szymanowski, Germaine Tailleferre, Percy Grainger, Sergei Prokofiev, Nadia Boulanger, Arthur Rubinstein, Vladimir Horowitz, Igor Stravinsky and Ethel Smyth (with whom Winnaretta had a passionate affair). This extraordinary list overlaps revealingly with the composers engaged by Diaghilev for the Ballets Russes. That Diaghilev himself was also a part of the Singer circle, as were Marcel Proust, Claude-Oscar Monet, Jean Cocteau, Colette and Cole Porter, reveals the extent to which the prince and princess lay at the heart of the artistic community of early twentieth-century Paris.

The phenomenon of Winnaretta Singer’s musical patronage highlights two other important aspects of the city’s pre-eminence around the turn of the twentieth century, which help us understand the apparently spontaneous firework display of talent set alight by Diaghilev.

The first of these is the issue of gender, the second, sexuality. Underestimating the significance of these factors has been a hallmark of the, specifically, musical criticism and analysis of the period until very recently. Looking at the evidence from a century’s distance, it now seems glaringly obvious that the evolving of a society that tolerated homosexuality and allowed, perhaps even encouraged, the professional advancement of women in the arts will have played a critical role in such an extravagant flowering of creativity. It is possible to cite the following noted female composers at work in Paris during the Singers’ salon years: Ethel Smyth, Nadia and Lili Boulanger, Augusta Holmès, Mélanie Bonis, Germaine Tailleferre, Louise Hérítte-Viardot, Henriette Renié and Cécile Chaminade, the first woman

composer to be awarded the *Légion d’honneur*, and whose *Scarf Dance* for solo piano sold in excess of five million copies. This impressive list, which is by no means exhaustive, should be seen against the backdrop of the disadvantaged position of all women in European society at the time – French women did not get the vote until 1944 (French Muslim women would have to wait until 1958). That the two most influential patrons of the contemporary arts in Paris between 1900 and 1930, Winnaretta Singer and Misia Sert, were both women, both foreign, both themselves musicians, suggests that Paris at this time offered stimulation, encouragement and challenge to artists unlike any other city.

The hostility and anguish experienced by Pyotr Tchaikovsky in Russia’s most liberal city, St Petersburg, in the final three decades of the nineteenth century, or the aggressive homophobia accompanying Oscar Wilde’s trial in England in 1895, affords us some measure of context for the unabashed community of gay men and women that prospered in the artistic community of turn of the century Paris. That homosexual men and women had thrived in the arts in every century goes without saying, but the relative openness with which the group centred around Diaghilev, Proust and Winnaretta Singer and were able to express their sexuality in their salon society gatherings is no less startling than many of the artistic innovations they concocted between them. It would be odd not to acknowledge that personal and creative freedom, adventure and experiment were profoundly interwoven.

That Paris was unusually open to new ideas and social attitudes by the very end of the nineteenth century helps us understand why creative artists were drawn to it and felt at ease in its milieu, but it does not fully explain the distinctly Russian dimension to the cultural excitement that built around Diaghilev and his circle. With respect to music and dance, this dimension is inescapable.

Despite the high status accorded to culture by Parisians, it would be inaccurate to perceive a huge gulf between the aspirations of the average educated citizens of St Petersburg around 1900 and their counterparts in France. The *All-Russia Exhibition* of October 1896 in Nizhny Novgorod, with its displays of cutting-edge technology, can be compared to the Exposition Universelle held in Paris in 1889. The Imperial capital in the years leading up to the October Revolution in 1905 had been the focus of a re-awakened public interest in Russian ethnic art and architecture, a fashion to some extent promoted by the nationalist leanings of tsars Alexander II and Nicholas II.

After the 1905 Revolution, the relaxing of censorship led to the emergence of a vigorous, modernist artistic community in St Petersburg, most of whom relished the opportunity to develop something new that was explicitly Russian in character. Diaghilev was eager to exploit the potential of a French vogue for Russian culture, rather than a Russian interest in what Paris had to offer. His desire to showcase the best of Russian art and music, in any case, had begun in Russia, for Russians: the extensive exhibition of



106. Léonide Massine and Alexandra Danilova in *Le Pas d’acier*, 1927. Photograph by Sasha. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections

107. Ernest Ansermet (conductor), Serge Diaghilev, Igor Stravinsky and Sergei Prokofiev after a rehearsal at the Prince's Theatre, London, 1921. Photograph by Sydney J. Loeb. V&A Theatre & Performance Collections



portrait paintings he mounted in St Petersburg in 1905 was intended to show the educated classes of the Imperial capital the great wealth of the country's artistic talents beyond the city's parochial horizon, a collection that he had spent a year researching throughout Russia. It was another exhibition of Russian visual art that he first took to Paris, in 1906, the success of which encouraged him to present a season of Russian concerts there in the following year and to mount Mussorgsky's folklore-imbued opera *Boris Godunov*, starring Fyodor Chaliapin, the year after that. By the time he unleashed his first season of Russian ballet, in 1909, Diaghilev was providing for a Parisian fascination he had himself largely created. He would not, however, have been able to generate such excitement were it not for the fact that St Petersburg had for the previous half-century or so been producing composers of outstanding, world-class talent. It would be hard to find a period in the history of any country that could match the creative timeline that includes Alexander Borodin, Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Mikhail Glinka, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Alexander Gretchaninov, Alexander Glazunov, Alexander Scriabin, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich. This (with the exception of Shostakovich) was the raw material Diaghilev had to present, in music alone, to the Parisian public. With hindsight, it would have been odd had audiences not responded with some degree of enthusiasm, if not awe.

While it is true that Russian society was convulsed in political turmoil of a calamitous nature for the first 40 years of the twentieth century, it is worth stressing that the rise of Bolshevik communism did not, at first, imperil artistic freedom. Even the loss of aristocratic patronage, which might have been traumatic, was replaced by state subsidy: at the height of Stalinist interference in the arts in the late 1930s and 1950s, the scale of subsidies to the performing arts in the USSR put those of most other countries to shame and it is often overlooked that for many Jewish musicians fleeing Nazi Germany in the 1930s, their destination was the USSR, not the West. Between 1890 and 1930, Russia's musical activity was vigorous and unshackled. Anatoly Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar for Education in the post-1917 Revolution Bolshevik government, once remarked to his friend Prokofiev: 'You are a revolutionary in music, we are Revolutionaries in life. We ought to work together.' Repression of creative artists, along with the rest of the population, began in earnest in the second half of the 1930s under Stalin, by which time the modernist experiments of the Ballets Russes composers were all but exhausted (pl.106).

Thus, cutting-edge Russian composers like Stravinsky and Prokofiev (pl.107) were not compelled to make their daring works known in Paris as an outlet or as a last resort, they *were* modernist, being invited to create works for an interested international audience gathered in Paris. What Stravinsky did find in France that he could not at home, however, was the towering presence, genius and influence of Claude Debussy (pl.108).



108. Claude Debussy, 1908

Traditionally, Debussy was categorized as an 'Impressionist' composer, a sub-section of the 'Late Romantics', who included Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Edward Elgar and Jean Sibelius, but the term is at best vague, at worst dangerously misleading. First, Debussy's music is not contemporaneous with the Impressionist movement in painting. Second, while there are aspects to his style that attempt to create an overall 'wash' of colour from the deliberate merging of components in the sound, Debussy had no intention of creating a parallel in music to the mostly figurative images of Monet, Renoir or Pissarro. In his treatment of harmony, inspired by the complex resonances of the Javanese gamelan orchestra he heard at the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle, he was attempting an atmospheric or emotional effect rather than a descriptive one. By transplanting the exotic clash of sonorities of Eastern music into the Western palette, he radically challenged the established 'rules' of nineteenth-century music, as dominated – almost exclusively by the 1870s – by Wagner and his use of representative *leitmotifs*.

Wagner, obsessed with the psychological journeys of his music drama characters and archetypes, needed to perfect a mechanism by which audiences could identify them (and how

they were transformed) in the music itself. The *motif* was such a mechanism. All his music is underpinned by the relationship between the *motifs*, cells of melody continuously modified and regurgitated. At its best a *motif* could summon up in the mind of the listener the character (or concept) without needing to see it physically at all. It was music's equivalent of figurative art. So Debussy's almost total abandonment of Wagnerian cell-construction in favour of the colours available to him in shifting blocks of sound alone was a shocking departure. His idea was more analogous to Abstract Expressionism and Colour Field painting than to the scenes, people and watery vegetation portrayed by the Impressionists.

However, because Debussy's taste in harmony and melody was still attached to the 'tonal' world of the late nineteenth century and not to the destructive dissonance of the modernist serialist school with which he was contemporaneous, he seemed to pose no threat to the musical status quo. Because his music was enjoyed, not rejected by the listening public, 'Impressionist' and 'Late Romantic', therefore, seemed more appropriate descriptors of Debussy's music than 'radical' or 'expressionist'. Significantly, a handful of visionary musicians at the time did grasp the enormity of Debussy's approach and followed it. The chief among these, 2,000 kilometres away in St Petersburg, was Igor Stravinsky; the city in which he unveiled his dramatic response to Debussy's challenge, Paris; the impresario who conjured the opportunity, Diaghilev.

The three ballets for Diaghilev in which Stravinsky laid out his stall were *The Firebird* in 1910, *Petrushka* (pl.110) in 1911 and *The Rite of Spring* in 1913 (pl.109). When he was commissioned to compose the first of these he was unknown (and third choice for the job). By the morning after the premiere of the third, he was both the most notorious and the most eagerly championed composer in all Europe. The essential ingredients brought together into Stravinsky's ballet style were the result of his Russian training, especially from his revered mentor Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, colliding with his fascination for Debussy.

In terms of musical construction, he doubly rejected the German-Austrian tradition by abandoning both the *motif*-led approach of Wagner and the symphonic development approach inherited from Beethoven that was still alive in the works of, for example, Gustav Mahler, Anton Bruckner, Jean Sibelius and Richard Strauss. This latter method began with small ideas (fragments or melodic phrases, a progression of chords, a short rhythmic pattern) and took them, during the course of a movement, on a journey, playing with them in various ways so that there was a sense of transformation and of destination. Stravinsky bulldozed these methods of construction and started afresh with the notion of musical tapestry, collage and episode. Musical ideas were crudely juxtaposed, one following seemingly randomly after another. There was a clear intention not to expand upon or modify them, they were

110. Alexandre Benois, *Stravinsky Playing Piano for Petrushka*. Pencil on paper, 1952. This is a copy by Benois of an original he made in 1911. Private collection



109. Valentine Gross, *The Rite of Spring*. Pencil on paper, 1913. The drawing shows the tall young women in the centre with the Maidens dancing as the tribal square fractures into frenzy towards the end of Scene I. V&A: S.179-1999

presented and discarded in their initial form. The joining up of one section to the next, while not arbitrary, jolted and confused the listener, but gradually created its kaleidoscopic effect by the sheer force of its combinations. It should not surprise us that Stravinsky's music is often easier to describe in pictorial rather than narrative terms. He was consciously circumventing the developmental, narrative approach.

Colour is a key element in his orchestral sound, too, a skill Stravinsky undoubtedly learnt from Rimsky-Korsakov. Precursors to the style of Stravinsky's *Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *Rite of Spring* are hard to find; it is as if he imagined his magnificent, jangling cacophony from scratch. But the Russian legend-inspired operas of Rimsky-Korsakov are close enough to a template: *Kashchei the Immortal*, *Le Coq d'or*, *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh* and *The Maiden Fevroniya*, *Pan Voyevoda*, *The Tsar's Bride* and *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, alongside the symphonic suite, *Schéhérazade*. Rimsky-Korsakov, though, was regarded by the time of his death in 1908 as a conservative composer and he disapproved of Stravinsky's early experiments in modernist techniques. In common with the other great Russian composers of the period, he was schooled in traditional, Austro-German techniques (Tchaikovsky, considered then as now as the archetypal Russian composer, nevertheless wrote music that could have been composed in Munich,

Leipzig or Vienna). Rimsky-Korsakov's protégé Stravinsky made no secret of his intention to move away from this pan-European legacy.

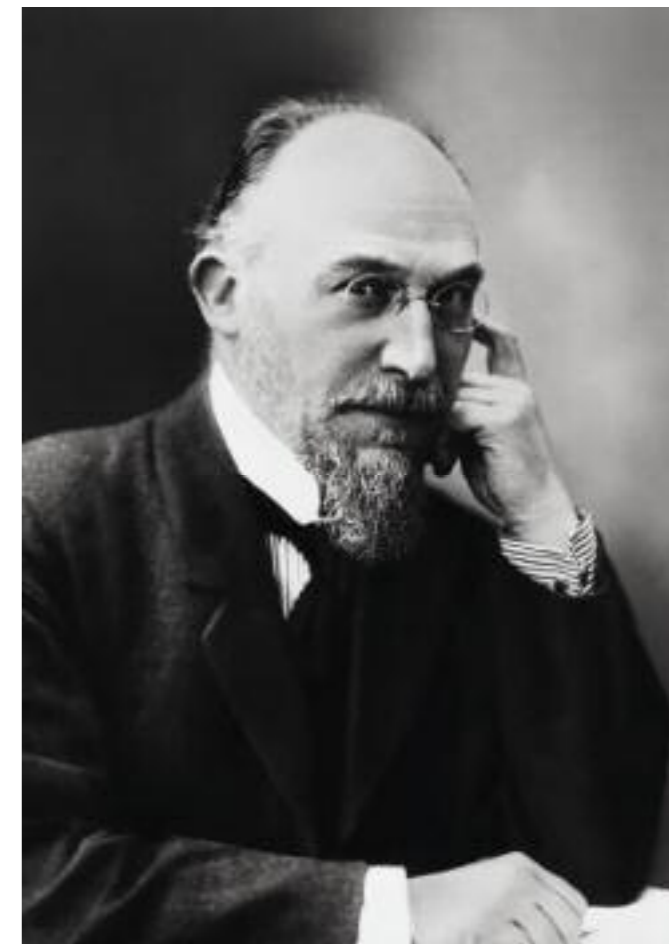
Stravinsky's novel combinations of sound and the startling liberties he took with musical architecture both stemmed from his Russian way of looking at the world. His undoubted cosmopolitanism and the ease with which he settled into Parisian artistic society from 1910 onwards should not blind us to the importance of his not being a Western European with respect to the exotic universe of his composing style.

In 1908, the Hungarian composers Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály set off into the countryside to record native Magyar folk songs that they would later absorb into an invigorated, modernist Hungarian style. In Britain, Cecil Sharp and others were undertaking a similar process. The potential for similar collection and transcription in Russia was vast, given the size of the Empire, and two musical ethnographers were to play a major part in disseminating the folk songs and choruses of rural Russia through primitive phonograph recordings in the first decade of the twentieth century, Yuly Melgunov and Evgeniya Lineva. The raw, non-Western character of the melodies captured on the recordings made a deep impression on Stravinsky, who unashamedly subsumed them into his own works in the



Opposite  
111. Fortunino Matania,  
*The Destruction of Kashchei*.  
Pen and ink, 1912.  
This illustration of *The  
Firebird for The Sphere*  
(July 1912) shows Ivan  
Tsarevitch (Adolph Bolm)  
breaking the egg that  
contained the soul of  
Kashchei (Enrico  
Cecchetti) on stage at  
Covent Garden.  
V&A: S.473–1989

112. Erik Satie,  
undated photograph



years that followed, particularly the ballet *Petrushka*. A conservatoire professor of composition like Rimsky-Korsakov would never have dared dip his melodic pen so shamelessly into the peasant well, but for Stravinsky it was both a liberation and a calling-card. For all his comfortable upbringing and his dandyish posing as a young man, he was excited by the primitive, ancient rituals still somehow preserved in obscure serf communities beyond St Petersburg's neo-classical walls. Whether it was instinct or guesswork, his compulsion to put it before an audience in Paris that considered itself the very height of sophistication was brilliantly provocative.

He was not just making mischief, though. By being outside Russia, he seemed to clarify his sense of what it meant to him, musically and personally. His increased solidarity with the liturgy, art and ritual of the Russian Orthodox Church as his exile drew on was more than homesickness or nostalgia for the pre-revolutionary Imperial Russia of his childhood: he was clearly more at ease with the perspective of the Orthodox world, encapsulated, perhaps, by the decidedly non-Western representation of the icon. No horizon, landscape, symbolic passer-by or hidden narrative clouds our focus on the Madonna or saint at the gold-leafed centre of the image, mesmerizing the eye. Icons are often

described as having 'reverse perspective'. Similarly, Stravinsky leaves no room for developmental ambiguity or Wagnerian sub-text in his uncompromisingly powerful musical evocations. For all these reasons, ballet, with its short, woven episodes and its restless, physical slideshow, was the form Stravinsky was born to compose.

From the very different background of belle-époque France, Debussy was confronting the very same issues of architecture and form as Stravinsky, and the two composers – who quickly became close friends – arrived at remarkably similar conclusions. Both rejected a Wagnerian mould, but whereas Stravinsky harnessed the raw power and energy of Russian folklore, Debussy's response was to intensify harmony at the expense, almost entirely, of rhythmic pulse. There is a seductive, hallucinogenic quality to much of Debussy's music, like a languorous summer day in the Midi, in contrast to the forceful erotic charge and ritualistic hypnosis of Stravinsky. Standing still on the Russian steppes or the Siberian permafrost might have resulted in hypothermia, after all. It is often overlooked that *Jeux*, Debussy's ballet score for Diaghilev, produced two weeks before *The Rite of Spring*, was almost as harmonically challenging and disorientating as the latter, but it was the primal violence and orgiastic pounding of Stravinsky's work that caused the riot.

The extent to which Stravinsky had broken with orchestral music's Germanic past with his three 'Russian' ballet scores can be starkly revealed by comparing the gorgeously lush, antique sentimentality of Richard Strauss's immensely popular opera *Der Rosenkavalier* of 1910 with Stravinsky's *Firebird* of the same year (pl.111). It scarcely seems possible that the works were written within a century of each other, never mind weeks, or conceived within a few hundred kilometres. Another planet would seem more plausible. After *The Rite of Spring* (1913), composers wherever they were had to address the now inescapable reality of modernism. The shockwaves it sent out were of a far greater magnitude even than the attempts of the Second Viennese School to re-engineer completely the mechanics of Western music ten years earlier. The reason for this is that Schoenberg's radicalism was an internal, musicological debate. Stravinsky, by collaborating with Mikhail Fokine, Alexandre Benois, Vaslav Nijinsky and Léon Bakst at the behest of Diaghilev in the cosmopolitan goldfish bowl of pre-war Paris, took his Russian revolution to the world at large and in turn fed off the creative energies and competing disciplines of others around him. His next two ballets, in 1920, *Le Chant du rossignol* and *Pulcinella*, had sets designed by Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso, respectively: this was a

collaborative hothouse of an unprecedented order. Music could not, as it had done so many times before, immunize itself against the trends in other forms.

However, the Stravinsky of the first three ballets, culminating in the controversy of the premiere of *The Rite of Spring*, pursued a quite different musical path to the Stravinsky of the post-war years, and the subsequent Ballets Russes productions reflected the new wave of painters, designers and composers of a changing artistic world. This second wave of modernist ballets was to have its own impact on subsequent twentieth-century musical developments, but the interruption of the First World War, the Russian Revolution and the death of Debussy meant that it was quite distinct from its previous incarnation.

The word that perhaps best sums up Erik Satie's (pl.112) score for Picasso and Cocteau's *Parade* (1917) and that of Prokofiev for *The Prodigal Son* (1929), is irony. A sense of mockery and playfulness mingles with a desire to scandalize, though no later scandal matched that of the thoroughly non-ironic *Rite of Spring*. Though a press review of *Parade* is thought to have coined the term 'surrealist', according it a sheen of seriousness, as it did the works that followed imitatively in its wake, it is hard not to conclude with the benefit of distance that much of what the Ballets



113. Igor Stravinsky, score for *Pulcinella*. Ink and coloured pencil on paper, bound in vellum with patterned stencilled paper boards, 1919–20. British Library Zweig 94

Russes circle got up to in the 1920s sounds like student buffoonery. Not that being jocular, self-indulgent or facetious was anything unusual in the post-war years. In some respects, the musical exploits of the Ballets Russes composers in this period were prophetic of the pre-occupations of our own time. The integrated use of non-musical sounds, from typewriters to milk bottles, anticipated the technique of sampling developed by the American composer Steve Reich in the 1960s and 70s and its widespread adoption across all genres of music by the twenty-first century. The deliberate simplification of melody and harmony, the eschewing of any layer of complexity, a change led by Erik Satie, Darius Milhaud, Georges Auric and to some extent Francis Poulenc, can be seen as a precursor to the minimalism of Philip Glass, Michael Nyman and Ludovico Einaudi from the 1980s to the present. Then there is the question of the influence of the then brand new American genres of ragtime and jazz.

While a family link can be made between the piano-derived harmonies pioneered by Chopin and Debussy and later jazz composers, especially in the late 1940s and early 50s, the importation of jazz chords, figurations and rhythm patterns in the classical music of the 1920s and 30s is crude, simplistic and often patronizing. What's more, the transaction between the two worlds has always been of more interest to classical commentators than to their counterparts in jazz. If this era has sometimes been categorized as the birth of what we would now call 'crossover', it is a crossing over with an uneven exchange of goods. While Debussy paid successful tribute to ragtime in some short piano pieces, Stravinsky and Satie misunderstood its underlying logic and regurgitated it as back-of-an-envelope pastiche. At least in the case of Darius Milhaud, whose ballet *Le Train bleu* was the Ballets Russes premiere in 1924, he had experienced jazz (and Brazilian dance music) at first hand during his transatlantic travels. Though his later music betrays some jazz influence, Ravel's only ballet for Diaghilev, *Daphnis et*

*Chloé* (1912), is – and this is no criticism – as close to Debussy in style as a composer can be.

The fashion among composers of the 1920s and 30s to delve into the works of composers of previous eras has a variety of sometimes contradictory origins and produced a variety of equally contradictory processes. Sometimes, a particular work of a past master would be resurrected in order for it to be added to, modified and edited by the modern composer. Stravinsky's re-working of music he thought was originally by Pergolesi (an early eighteenth-century Italian composer) in his ballet for Diaghilev, *Pulcinella* (1920), exemplifies an approach that is either cheekily inventive (by 're-composing' the pieces with a twentieth-century, Stravinskian twist), or derivative and lazy, whichever way one may choose to appraise it (pl.113).<sup>2</sup>

An alternative to this approach was to re-orchestrate an existing work or works to enrich and modernize the sound with the prevailing tastes of the new era, while leaving the scored notes largely untouched. Ottorino Respighi's orchestral embellishing of early nineteenth-century piano pieces by Rossini for the 1919 ballet *La Boutique fantasque* (one of the few Ballets Russes premieres to be held in London) falls into this category. In the post-war economic climate, though, the general trend was to reduce rather than increase the instrumental forces available to composers and one explanation for a return to seventeenth- or eighteenth-century genres is straightforward expedience. Orchestral forces, including the size of the instruments themselves, had steadily grown since Bach's time, so that the kind of ensemble he would have expected to perform a concerto, perhaps 20 players, had expanded into a standard symphony orchestra of 80 players or more by 1900. The First World War and its aftermath (including revolutions in Russia and Germany) instigated a tightening of musical belts and a return to the relative austerity in scale and sound of the early eighteenth century. No doubt the pendulum swing of taste also had its part to play – the titanic scale of some of Richard

Strauss and Giacomo Puccini's orchestral and operatic works seemed to modernist composers of the 1920s excessive on almost every level, including that of emotional gesture. Stravinsky's disdain was typical: 'I would like to admit all Strauss operas to whichever purgatory punishes triumphant banality.'<sup>3</sup>

The music of previous centuries had one other key role to play in the musical upheavals that followed the First World War, namely its ability to lend ready-made form and structure to new music. One upshot of the turbulence that gripped music between 1890 and 1930 as modernism, experiment and the avant-garde took centre stage was a loss of confidence in the structures that had sustained classical music for most of the preceding two centuries – symphony, concerto, sonata, theme and variations. The popularity of the 'symphonic poem' in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was evidence that composers were seeking freer forms, since the symphonic or 'tone' poem had virtually no given architecture at all. It may as well have been called 'uninterrupted piece for orchestra of any length or shape'. Absence of architectural template, however, was not a state many composers were comfortable with for long and by the 1920s a desire to resurrect the more rigid forms of the eighteenth century became ubiquitous. Thus, composers like Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Poulenc and Bartók, despite employing dissonances and sounds that would have terrified Vivaldi or Mozart, nevertheless borrowed their

textbook symphony, concerto and sonata forms. This phenomenon can be seen worked out in virtually all the Ballets Russes commissions from *Pulcinella* onwards, with antique dance forms from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries dusted down and put back into service, more often than not combined on stage with *commedia dell'arte* themes. Prokofiev's *Chout (The Tale of the Buffoon)* (1921), Poulenc's *Les Biches* (1924) and Satie's *Jack-in-the-Box* (1926) followed the vogue. In Stravinsky's words: 'In borrowing a form already established and consecrated, the creative artist is not in the least restricting the manifestations of his personality. On the contrary, it is more detached and stands out better, when it moves within the limits of a convention.'<sup>4</sup>

One outcome of this antiquarian trawl through the attic of mostly Italian, French and Spanish music and dance forms was that Stravinsky's style, weathervane of twentieth-century musical trends, became for a while less Russian in flavour. One of his Ballets Russes commissions of the 1920s bucked this westward drift in a spectacular manner, paving the way for developments that even Diaghilev could not have foreseen. The ballet was *Les Noces*, premiered in June 1923, and though its reception did not repeat the clamour of the opening of *The Rite of Spring* ten years earlier, nor in the ensuing decades did it enjoy the multitude of concert performances and theatrical revivals, it can be seen from the perspective of the twenty-first century to have had a

114. Poster for the Théâtre Gaîté-Lyrique, Paris, 13–21 June 1923. Lithograph, 1923. The poster advertises the premiere of *Les Noces* and features Picasso's design for the Chinese Conjurer from *Parade*, 1923. V&A: S.4605–1995



remarkable musical impact (pl.114). Its sound world is one that still captures the imagination of composers today.

The basic premise of the work is the re-creation of a peasant wedding ritual, using as its often-bewildering libretto spoken, declaimed and sung fragments of speech Stravinsky compiled with the help of the 1911 anthology, *Songs Collected by P.V. Kireevsky*. The use of voices, chorus and soloists as quasi-instrumental, sound-effect texture was revolutionary enough in itself, but the nature of the rest of the ensemble is more startling still: a battery of pitched and unpitched percussion, including four pianos. Stravinsky had at various points in the genesis of the work toyed with the inclusion of synchronized pianolas (mechanical roll-operated pianos), harmoniums and keyboard-controlled cimbaloms (a hammered-string folk instrument prevalent in Eastern Europe and Russia). The resulting amalgamated sound, which is brittle, full of attack, sharp edge and a kind of out-of-tune resonance, would have been – literally – unimaginable to audiences of the day but to other composers it proved irresistible. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the impact of this soundscape can be heard in the contemporary work of composers in every decade since.

This then is the background against which we must view Serge Diaghilev's historic involvement with the development of Western music. He was neither, strictly speaking, patron (in the mould of individuals like Winnaretta Singer and companies like Hartmann's) nor was he a creative protagonist like Nijinsky, Matisse or Stravinsky. His role was one we recognize easily in the twenty-first century – nurturing, promoting and developing talent through an enlightened policy of commissioning and the inventive combining of personalities and skills. Stravinsky later described it thus:

Diaghilev did not have so much a good musical judgement as an immense flair for recognizing the potentiality of success in a piece of music or work of art in general. In spite of his surprise when I played him the beginning of the *Sacre* [*The Rite of Spring*] at the piano, in spite of his at first ironic attitude to the long line of repeated chords, he quickly realized that the reason was something other than my inability to compose more diversified music; he realized at once the seriousness of my new musical speech, its importance and the advantage of capitalizing on it.<sup>5</sup>

Stravinsky reported Diaghilev's response to the controversial first performance of *The Rite of Spring* in May 1913 in similar terms:

He certainly looked contented. No one could have been quicker to understand the publicity value and he immediately understood the good thing that had happened in that respect. Quite probably he had already thought about the possibility of such a scandal when I first played him the score, months before...<sup>6</sup>



115. *Aurora's Wedding*, showing the company's orchestra in performance at Montreux, Switzerland, June 1923. Private collection



Opposite  
The Hotel Majestic,  
Paris

Right  
Group photographed at  
the Ritz Hotel, Madrid,  
1916. Seated left to right:  
Massine, Del Campo,  
Ansermet, Diaghilev,  
Miguel Salvador,  
Stravinsky, de Falla, Bolm.



Below  
Igor Stravinsky's personal  
invitation to the party  
given by Gerald and Sara  
Murphy, on the barge  
*Le Marechal Joffre*,  
Paris, 1 July 1923.  
Igor Stravinsky  
Collection, Paul Sacher  
Foundation, Basel



## THE PLEASURE OF HIS COMPANY

*Catherine Haill*

Parties associated with productions by Diaghilev's company were vital for its success. These were not just for the cast, but were events at which Diaghilev could win or cultivate the patronage of wealthy influential art lovers and enhance the position of the Ballets Russes in society. Superbly catered and elegantly-dressed gatherings in opulent surroundings were opportunities for the hosts to demonstrate their munificence, their enlightened appreciation of contemporary arts, and their familiarity with the rising stars of modernism.

Diaghilev's ease in social situations had developed from his university days in St Petersburg. He mastered French and German from an early age, and was a skilled pianist and singer. His subsequent genius as an impresario

relied as much on his ability to find backers by making friends and influencing the right people, as on his boundless energy and talent for cultivating brilliant performers.

Elegant surroundings suited Diaghilev's style and image. He made the Savoy Hotel his London base, and he would 'hold court' with Lady Ripon and other patrons in the Savoy Grill. After the penultimate performance of *The Rite of Spring* at Drury Lane Theatre on 22 July 1913, a party was held at London's imposing Carlton Hotel, at the corner of the Haymarket and Pall Mall, at which the young virtuoso pianist Arthur Rubinstein entertained the guests and the hotel chef was the legendary Auguste Escoffier. In 1916, when Diaghilev and his company were

on tour in the United States, the dancers performed in the ballroom for an after-show party at Washington's stately Russian Embassy. They socialized, too, as Lydia Sokolova recalled in a letter: 'We drank champagne and got home at four o'clock.'<sup>1</sup>

Diaghilev had a flair for organizing events. After the first public performance by the Ballets Russes of *Le Renard* at the Paris Opéra on 18 May 1922, the wealthy English couple, Violet and Sydney Schiff, hosted a legendary supper party for 40 or 50 guests in a private dining room at the luxurious Hotel Majestic in Avenue Kléber, and delegated the arrangements to Diaghilev. They invited the leaders of European modernism to a champagne-fuelled evening, including Pablo

Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, Marcel Proust, Mikhail Larionov and James Joyce.

Diaghilev, recovering from a financially disastrous London season and keen to cultivate the Schiffs and their wealthy friends, was both guest of honour and master of ceremonies.<sup>2</sup>

Another memorable party in Diaghilev's honour took place at a more unusual venue in Paris. The wealthy Americans, Sara and Gerald Murphy, rented a converted barge on the Seine for a dinner on 17 June 1923 to celebrate the premiere of *Les Noces* at the Théâtre Gaîté-Lyrique. Forgetting that flowers were unavailable on Sundays, Sara decorated the tables instead with inspired Surrealistic flair using cheap toys from Montparnasse market. The informal surroundings, coupled with

copious cocktails and champagne, encouraged more riotous behaviour than usual. Diaghilev and Boris Kochno were there, with Serge Lifar, Vera Nemchinova, Larionov, Natalia Goncharova and Léonide Massine, among others. Stravinsky rearranged the place cards, Cocteau purloined the captain's uniform, Goncharova read everyone's palms, while Picasso, captivated by the toys, 'rearranged them into a giant assemblage that culminated in a stuffed cow atop a fire truck's ladder'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sokolova 1960, p.78.

<sup>2</sup> See Davenport-Hines 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Vaill 1998, p.119.

# BEAUMONT SOUVENIRS

Andrew Kirk

When the Ballets Russes first performed in Britain, Cyril Beaumont was already an established bookseller, working from his shop at 75 Charing Cross Road in London's West End. A keen follower of Diaghilev's company, he soon identified a demand for souvenirs among fellow enthusiasts.

Beaumont's first idea was for painted wooden figures, 'something between a photograph and a statue ... that would preserve the *pose*, feeling and colour of the dancer'. The artist Adrian Allinson produced the initial designs, with later ones by Eileen Mayo, Vera Willoughby, Randolph Schwabe and Ethelbert White. Accuracy was always paramount. To assist this, Diaghilev

gave Beaumont and his artists passes to watch the company's performances and gain access backstage, where they could see the dancers in their costumes close-up. The wooden figures were cut by the Aldon Studios and then hand-painted by the artist who had done the design. The figures could be bought at Beaumont's shop or by post (being advertised in his book catalogues), and cost seven shillings and sixpence each.

Combining the role of publisher and dance historian, Beaumont's next project was to create souvenir books, each dedicated to an individual ballet. Early drafts by his chosen author were not as he had intended, so Beaumont undertook the writing himself. The text

gave both an artistic and thematic description of the ballet followed by a more technical account of 'the dancers' actions and movements' (a skill later developed in Beaumont's 1937 work *The Complete Book of Ballets*). Each book was individually decorated and illustrated with scenes from the named ballet. The artists (all of whom also illustrated volumes published by the Beaumont Press) were Adrian Allinson (*Cleopatra*, *The Good-Humoured Ladies*, *Le Carnaval*, *Schéhérazade*), Michel Sevier (*Children's Tales*, *Petrushka*, *La Boutique fantassque*) and Ethelbert White (*L'Oiseau de Feu*, *Tamar*, *The Three-Cornered Hat*). Since Beaumont could not afford to have the illustrations

printed in colour, he and his wife hand-tinted them. Deluxe editions printed on Japanese vellum cost ten shillings and sixpence, while the standard editions printed on cartridge paper were six shillings each. The series appeared under the title *Impressions of the Russian Ballet* and between 1918 and 1919 Beaumont published ten volumes. In 1921 he produced a further two volumes for *The Sleeping Princess* illustrated by Randolph Schwabe. There is evidence of at least six further works being planned but never realized.

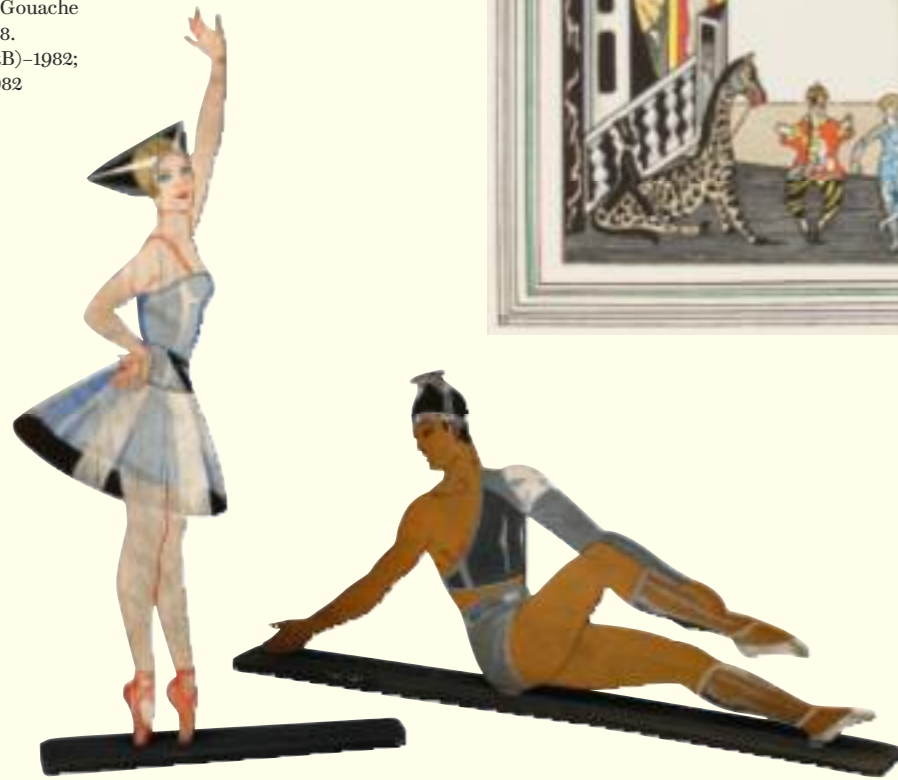
To expand the artistic record of the ballets, Beaumont next decided to issue souvenir prints. Once again he called on his pool of artists and, as with the figures

and the books, demanded absolute accuracy in the representation of costume and scenery. Twenty-two prints have been identified, from existing works and also Beaumont's catalogues, the artists being Allinson (3), Mayo (4), Schwabe (1) and White (14).

The importance of the Beaumont souvenirs to dance historians cannot be overestimated. The figures, books and prints give a contemporary account of the performances of the Ballets Russes, both in words and coloured illustrations, using the costumes, sets and dancers directly as their source.

Right  
Ethelbert White, hand-coloured souvenir print of *Parade*, c.1925. The print shows the finale of the ballet in London.  
V&A: S.487-2000

Below  
Eileen Mayo, wooden figures showing Alice Nikitina as the Cat, and Serge Lifar as the Youth from *La Chatte*. Gouache and wood, c.1928.  
V&A: S.952(A&B)-1982; S.953(A&B)-1982



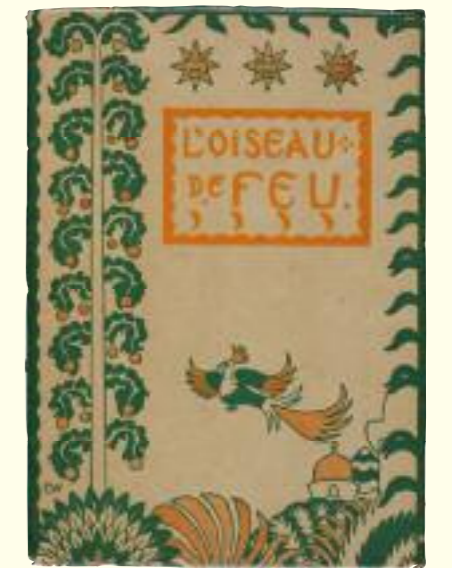
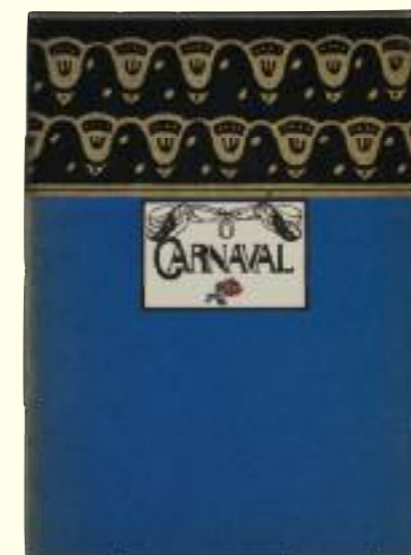
Adrian Allinson, Michel Sevier and Ethelbert White, covers for titles in the series *Impressions of the Russian Ballet*, published by C.W. Beaumont, 1919-20. Titles given as the title-pages of the books.  
V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections

*Carnaval*  
V&A: GV1790.C24

*Children's Tales*  
V&A: GV1790.C58

*Tamar*  
V&A: GV1790.T52

*L'Oiseau de Feu*  
Private collection





# WHEN ART DANCED WITH MUSIC

JULIET BELLOW

The Ballets Russes has ‘turned our customs upside down, brought us something new, destroyed our prejudices’, noted critic Jean Marnold in 1914 as he looked back at the troupe’s initial seasons in Paris. There, in the space of five years, this avant-garde import had become ‘an important ferment in the evolution of our artistic life’.<sup>1</sup> By no means alone in hailing the Ballets Russes’ impact on the French capital’s art world, Marnold wrote at a pivotal moment in the troupe’s trajectory – though he could not have known it at the time. That year, Diaghilev moved outside the circle of Russian designers who had established the Ballets Russes’ reputation, making his first alliances with artists based in Western Europe. Such alliances eventually would run the gamut of vanguard movements, from Futurism to Cubism, Orphism, Constructivism and Surrealism. By the time of Diaghilev’s death in 1929, the impresario had engaged nearly every prominent artist in Paris to work as a designer for his company, making the Ballets Russes’ stage one of the chief venues for the development and exhibition of modernism.<sup>2</sup>

Why and how did art dance with music so intensively for those 20 years of the troupe’s history? While the opportunity to design for Diaghilev allowed visual artists to reach a different, perhaps wider, audience, their motivations encompassed aesthetic as well as commercial concerns. Vanguard artists produced visually and conceptually complex designs that adapted styles originally developed for static, inorganic artistic materials to a temporal and bodily medium. Engaging in a collaborative process, visual artists developed new scenographic forms – which both derived from and in turn inspired inventive choreographic and musical idioms – and brought insights gleaned on the stage back to their traditional artistic practice. These designs thus open up our view of modernism beyond the traditional parameters of painting and sculpture by closing the seemingly wide gap between high art and theatrical decoration.

The engagement of visual artists with the Ballets Russes also extended beyond the realm of applied design to images of the troupe and its dancers. Fernand Léger’s *Exit the Ballets Russes* (pl.116) – to take one example among many – finds productive parallels between the dynamism of Ballets Russes performances and the abstract geometries of his painterly vocabulary. The painting’s nearly non-objective style and its ambiguous title suggest that *Exit the Ballets Russes* is meant not merely to illustrate a specific production, but rather to fulfil as an autonomous work the promise of the interrelation of art forms spearheaded by Diaghilev. *Exit the Ballets Russes* gives us a glimpse of the vibrant dialogue that took shape on the Ballets Russes’ stage – a dialogue that reframed visual artists’ perceptions of their own craft. The troupe’s productions provided an expansive concept of the ‘plastic’ – encompassing sound and rhythm, gestures and bodies – which gave new force to avant-garde style.

### *Towards a Total Artwork*

The Ballets Russes’ innovative conception of a ballet production as a synthetic artwork harmonizing aural, kinetic and visual elements was intended in part to reform the values and practices of nineteenth-century ballet. As its choreographer Mikhail Fokine wrote in a 1914 manifesto, the troupe dispensed with multi-act extravaganzas that adhered to the ‘strictly established system of steps, gestures and attitudes’ in academic balletic vocabulary.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the Ballets Russes presented several short one-act ballets on a single bill. While their choreographies built upon the academic *danse d’école*, the troupe invented for each production ‘a new form corresponding to the subject’ and designed to ‘serve as an expression of [the ballet’s] dramatic action’. But the approach to composition outlined in Fokine’s five principles was not simply a reaction against traditional balletic conventions. Inspired by Richard Wagner’s theory of



Left  
116. Fernand Léger, *Exit the Ballets Russes*, 1914, oil on canvas. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Peter A. Rübél (partly by exchange), 1958



Above  
117. Yelena Polenova, *Wall Cabinet*, c.1880-90, painted, carved and gilded birch. V&A, Bought with the aid of a bequest from Mrs. Mowbray Garden

the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total artwork), Diaghilev's company envisioned ballet as a vehicle for the convergence of music, dance and visual art into a unified whole. First articulated in the 1849 treatise 'Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft' ('The Artwork of the Future'), Wagner's concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* attributed to lyric drama the capacity to unite the three sister arts of poetry, music and dance.<sup>4</sup> By the late nineteenth century, Wagner's ideal came to serve as a potent model of artistic interrelation, taken up and creatively interpreted by visual artists across a diverse spectrum. For the Nabis and the Symbolists, as well as the Jugendstil, Vienna Secession and British Arts and Crafts movements, a loosely defined *Gesamtkunstwerk* served as the impetus and the justification for a decorative approach to art-making. Decoration was conceptualized and manifested variously, in applied art projects such as theatrical sets and interior designs as well as in a move towards an abstracting treatment of line and colour. Works exemplifying both ways of construing the decorative appeared in *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*), the journal published by Diaghilev with the assistance of several artists who later designed for the Ballets Russes, including Alexandre Benois and Léon Bakst.<sup>5</sup> During its brief run (1898-1904), *Mir iskusstva* juxtaposed reproductions of paintings by Camille Pissarro, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes and Edward Burne-Jones with graphics by Aubrey Beardsley and Félix Vallotton, and interiors by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Joseph Maria Olbrich, creating in the pages of the journal a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of sorts.

In Russia, interest in a total approach to art-making was linked with a nationalist revival of peasant (*kustar*) handicraft centred in artistic colonies established in the late nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Several artists who designed for the Ballets Russes during the troupe's initial seasons in Paris, including Nicholas Roerich and Aleksandr Golovin, studied *kustar* artworks at Talashkino, a workshop near Smolensk sponsored by Princess Maria Tenisheva, or at Abramtsevo, the estate of the wealthy industrialist Savva Mamontov north-east of Moscow.<sup>7</sup> These artists' ornamental style was rooted in the indigenous, vernacular tradition of *kustar* products and, simultaneously, affiliated with the international decorative aesthetic just described. Diaghilev featured many of these artists' designs in *Mir iskusstva*, a choice probably influenced by Princess Tenisheva's financial support for the journal and its ancillary exhibitions. *Mir iskusstva* promoted works such as Yelena Polenova's *Wall Cabinet* (pl.117) as representative of a *style russe moderne*, a Russian variant of Art Nouveau. *Kustar*-inspired works also featured prominently in the Russian pavilion at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris and were widely disseminated through photographs published in *L'Illustration*.<sup>8</sup> Along with the exhibition of Russian art at the 1906 Salon d'Automne curated by Diaghilev, the *kustar* display at the 1900 Exposition set expectations about Russian culture for French audiences. Crossing Russian craft with Pan-European forms of fine art, these installations paved the way for the reception of the Ballets Russes a few years later.

Though Bakst, Benois and Roerich – the primary designers of the Ballets Russes' pre-war productions – each brought distinctive styles to the stage, all three adapted the hybrid *style russe moderne* to weave together national and international strands in their productions. Seeking to achieve a Wagner-inspired unity onstage, these designers also, each in his own way, adapted modernist aesthetic principles to theatrical decoration. Their work directly opposed the dominant style of French design, which echoed the illusionism favoured during the nineteenth century in the Académie in its perspectival rendering of the *mise-en-scène* and use of *trompe l'oeil*.<sup>9</sup> Rather, as critic Pierre Lalo noted in 1912, the Ballets Russes brought 'a principle of decoration completely different from our own, whose effect is extremely powerful and striking'. Instead of attempting to 'imitate and reproduce nature', Lalo wrote, Diaghilev's designers presented 'décor executed simply and broadly, limited to suggesting the milieu, to enveloping the action with a coloured atmosphere'.<sup>10</sup> The critic pointed to their 'frank and violent colours, which vigorously oppose and contrast with one another' – an effect evident in Roerich's designs for the Polovtsian dances, which premiered in the troupe's 1909 season (pl.118). Initially part of Alexander Borodin's opera *Prince Igor*, a medieval tale of Russian imperial conquest set on the steppes of Central Asia, the Polovtsian dances were such a crowd-pleaser that Diaghilev made the piece into a separate production. Roerich's backdrop, depicting the encampment of the Polovtsy tribe, bombarded the spectator with bold colour. Bands of yellow, green and orange sky hung over a simplified, flattened

landscape, with the semi-circular tents of the Polovtsy nestled into hillocks of similar shape. Roerich surrounded this image on three sides with a deep-red decorative border that harkens back to the *kustar* products he studied at Talashkino. This ornamental frame produced the opposite effect of the stage flats that designers traditionally used to enhance the illusion of perspectival depth: it openly declared the flatness of the backdrop, underscoring Roerich's abstract treatment of the depicted landscape. As Lalo noted, sets like Roerich's operated indirectly, evocatively suggesting the ballet's setting rather than representing it naturalistically.

While Roerich's backdrop in itself conveys a great deal about the aesthetic of early Ballets Russes productions, this work cannot be considered in isolation. Instead, it must be understood as it was originally intended, as a piece of a larger whole. The set functioned in tandem with costumes fabricated in silk and cotton ikat textiles in bright green, vibrant pink, deep blue and rich yellow. Obtained in St Petersburg markets, these products from present-day Uzbekistan gave the production its seeming ethnographic accuracy as well as its dazzling optical effects, with Roerich's costumes projecting continually changing patches of colour onto the background as the dancers performed (pls 30 and 31). Fokine's choreography for this production took full advantage of the visual material supplied by Roerich's designs. As critic Fernand Gregh noted, male dancers in the Polovtsian dances 'advanc[e] in a colourful horde, arches [bows] in hand and begin to stamp their feet'. Then 'the lines of their warrior ballet intertwine, intersect and merge with one another', culminating in the finale, in which 'all the dancers throw

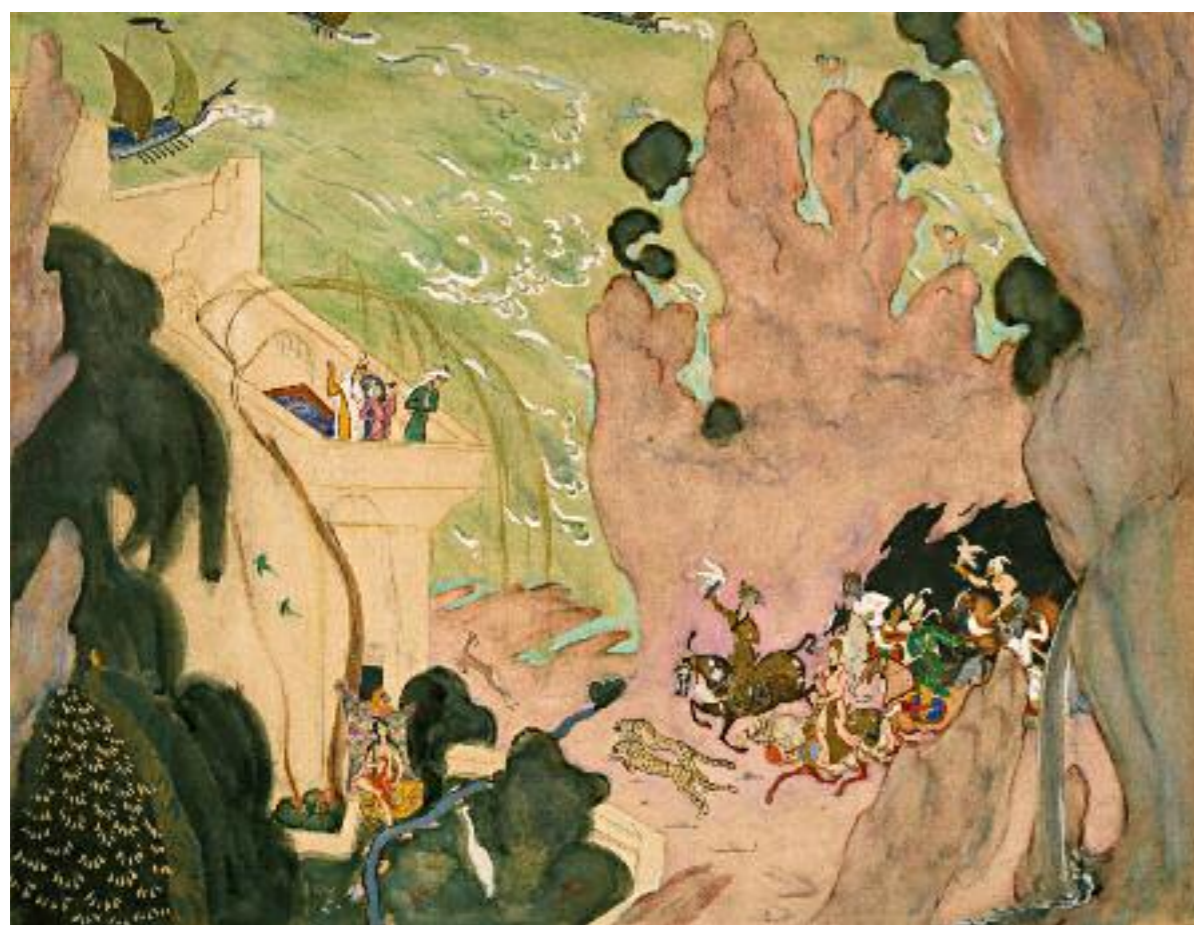
118. Nicholas Roerich, set design for the Polovtsian dances from *Prince Igor*, 1909, tempera and body-colour on canvas. V&A



themselves bounding towards the spectators'.<sup>11</sup> Roerich's and Fokine's contributions worked together with the 'Oriental undulation' of Borodin's music, achieving harmony in the overall spectacle.

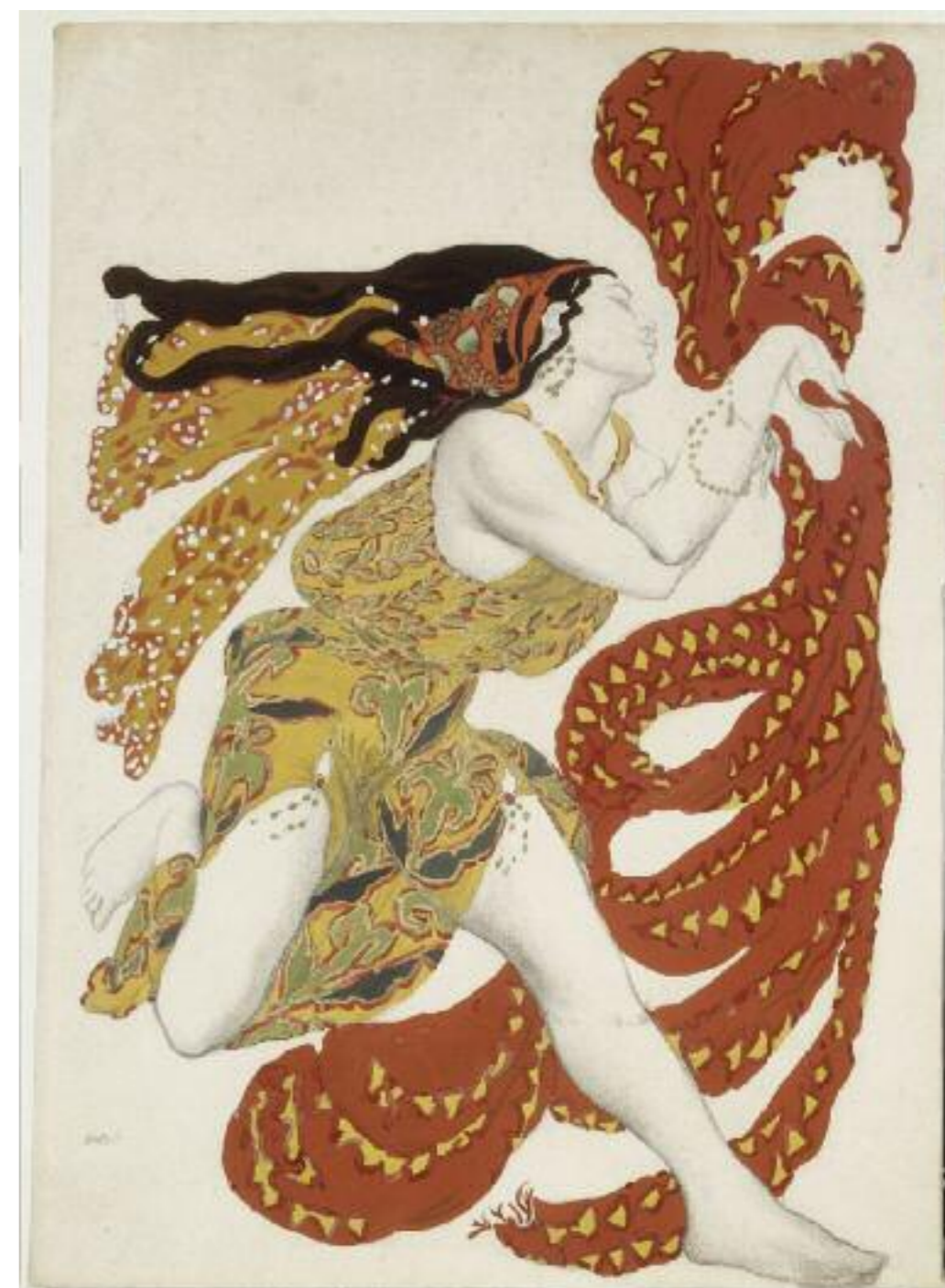
Where Roerich showed Russia's Eastern face in the Polovtsian dances, Benois pursued an interest in the refined, courtly style shared by France and Russia in the eighteenth century – a result of Peter the Great's Westernization of Russian elite culture – in productions such as *Le Pavillon d'Armide* and *Petrushka*. Still, both artists worked towards the creation of a total aesthetic onstage, as *Petrushka* attests. Choreographed by Fokine, with a rollicking score by Igor Stravinsky, the ballet centred on three puppets – a Ballerina, a Moor and Petrushka, a Russian equivalent of Punch or Pierrot – who are enslaved by a cruel Magician and forced to perform in his carnival booth.<sup>12</sup> Benois's designs, set in 1830 on St Petersburg's Admiralty Square, ranged close to the *trompe l'oeil* illusionism of the French tradition. His backdrop for Scenes 1 and 4 of the ballet, rendered in believable perspective, supplied a wealth of details about the fairground milieu. In like fashion, his elaborate costumes individuated not only the three main characters, but also the numerous onstage extras, such as organ-grinders, merchants and peasants. Once all of these figures crowded together onstage, however, these particularities were subsumed within the festive atmosphere of the larger *mise-en-scène* in a manner akin to Roerich's Polovtsian dances.

The aspiration towards such a Wagner-inspired aesthetic totality was arguably manifested most fully in Bakst's *Schéhérazade*. Far and away the most popular of the troupe's ballets, *Schéhérazade* defined the visual aesthetic of the Ballets Russes in its early years, and cemented Bakst's reputation as chief among its designers.<sup>13</sup> Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's 1888 symphonic suite, typical of the Russian nationalist style developed by the Mighty Five group of composers during the late nineteenth century, provided the musical accompaniment and the thematic inspiration for this ballet. Loosely based on *The Arabian Nights*, *Schéhérazade* followed events in the court of the fictitious Shah Shahriar. Upon discovering his concubines in the midst of an orgy – represented allusively by Fokine's whirling chains of dancers – the Shah orders the death of his harem and their lovers, but hesitates to kill his favourite, Zobeïde. Wracked with remorse, she grabs his dagger and stabs herself. Valentin Serov's overture curtain, added to the production in 1911, established an exoticizing tone to complement the style of Rimsky-Korsakov's suite (pl.119). Cascading washes of pink mountains in the foreground directly abut an expanse of green sea beyond, both rendered in meandering arabesques that create an otherworldly setting for the palace. Making direct reference to the tradition of Islamic miniature painting, Serov cast the ballet's action and music as Eastern in origin. However, the flattened background and abruptly varied scale of figures



119. Valentin Serov, curtain design for *Schéhérazade*, 1910, gouache on paper. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

120. Léon Bakst, costume design for a Bacchante in *Narcisse*, before 1911, gouache, silver paint and pencil on paper. Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne/ Centre de création industrielle, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Léon Baratz in memory of Mr. and Mrs. A. Dobry



and objects also aligned this curtain with hallmarks of avant-garde art from this period, typified by works such as Henri Matisse's *Bonheur de vivre* (1905–6) and his decorative panels *Music* and *Dance*, both exhibited at the Salon d'Automne in the year of *Schéhérazade*'s premiere. Once Serov's curtain was raised, its exoticizing and its modernist qualities were reasserted in Bakst's set and costumes. Like Roerich and Benois, Bakst bathed the stage in vibrant colour. An electric green curtain, spotted with pink, draped vertiginously over the scene; bright orange columns punctuated walls in dark blue; richly decorated rugs and pillows in red, pink and yellow were strewn about the stage floor. Bakst employed the same overall palette in his costumes for the ballet, allowing the dancers' bodies to merge visually with one another and

into the surrounding space. Activated by the movements in Fokine's choreography and the rhythmic and harmonic swings in Rimsky-Korsakov's score, Bakst's designs created a kaleidoscopic optical mixture – the interdependence of all three conveying the Ballets Russes' ideal of correspondence among the arts.

Far from functioning simply as technical production drawings, Bakst's sketches served several purposes. They projected his overall vision of a given ballet; provided illustrations for the souvenir programmes, supplementing the performances; and functioned as artworks in their own right, shown in such prominent Parisian galleries as Bernheim-Jeune. Works such as his costume design for a Bacchante in *Narcisse* (pl.120) convey little that would assist



121. Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Vaslav Nijinsky in Siamese Dance*, c.1910, oil on canvas. Collection of Ann and Gordon Getty, San Francisco

a costumier in fabricating a garment. Instead, this sketch captured Bakst's ideal image of the costume in motion. Taking inspiration from Fokine's energetic choreographic style, Bakst depicted a dancer who is about to burst out of the framing edges of the paper support. Her right leg, dramatically foreshortened, pushes backwards, while her left leg is fully outstretched, her toe nearly touching the lower-right corner of the drawing. Bakst projected the power of the dancer's gesture onto her clothing, creating a complex interplay of body and textile. The thick black contour lines surrounding the dancer's thighs complement the beaded strands draped across them, as well as the patterns on her costume as they wind around her torso. In similar fashion, scarf and headdress blur the boundaries between costume and decor, creating a sense of continuity between the figure and her surroundings. Another drawing for *Narcisse*, depicting two dancers together, indicates the powerful visual effect of multiplying these figures onstage. Bakst carefully balanced echoes in form (the repetition of the upraised arms, mirrored in the sweeping draperies) with contrasts of colour (the dominant blue of one dancer's costume juxtaposed with the orange of the other's). In these designs for *Narcisse*, Bakst's innovative approach to costume lay primarily in combinations of colour and line created by the movement of simple, flowing garments. With other ballets, such as *Le Dieu bleu*, he experimented more radically with costume construction, imposing new shapes on the body. For the character of the Goddess, he began with a simple, sleeveless gold garment and added several complex layers. An embellished pyramidal headdress with large, dangling earring-like ornaments lengthened her form, while a series of flame-like textile extensions, emanating from the dancer's wrists and wrapping around her body, extended her presence into space. Both on the flat page and the three dimensions of the stage, then, Bakst creatively negotiated relationships of figure to ground in ways that manifest his debt to and participation in modernist debates about problems of form. His work mediated between the worlds of art, design and fashion: he took painterly styles into the theatre; brought theatrical drawings into exhibitions as independent pieces; and inspired a *style Bakst* that melded modernist aesthetics with clothing and interior design.

Bakst's productions – and the troupe's early repertoire, broadly speaking – crossed geographic, temporal and cultural divides. Russian history and folklore were represented in the Polovtsian dances, *Petrushka* and the fairytale ballet *The Firebird*. French ballet and the romantic tradition underpin *Le Pavillon d'Armide*, a rococo fantasy loosely based on Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1575); *Les Sylphides*, Fokine's reworking of Filippo Taglioni's *La Sylphide* (1832) set to music by Frédéric Chopin; and *Le Spectre de la rose*, based on Théophile Gautier's 1837 poem of the same name. Ancient Greek mythology was depicted in *Narcisse* and *Daphnis et Chloé*; and an expansively defined Orient, in the vaguely defined Middle East of *Schéhérazade*, the Cambodia

of *Le Dieu bleu* and the Caucasus of *Thamar*. With several of these short ballets shown together on the same bill, in the space of an evening spectators went from Paris to the Mediterranean, from Russia to South Asia, and back again. Applying modernist styles to exotic subjects, the Ballets Russes infused the seemingly moribund, academic Orientalist tradition with new life. The troupe also offered the thrill of adventure and the potential satisfaction of cultural stereotype as it brought distant lands and their unfamiliar inhabitants to its audience.

#### *Performing Avant-Gardism*

The diversity of Ballets Russes productions crystallized in the figure of Vaslav Nijinsky, who first as a performer and later as a choreographer reinforced the Ballets Russes' ties to the artistic vanguard. Like his fellow male leads Fokine and Adolph Bolm, Nijinsky attracted more attention in the French press than female stars such as Tamara Karsavina and Ida Rubinstein. Part of the public's fascination with these *danseurs* stemmed from the novelty of seeing men dance onstage: in many late nineteenth-century French ballets dancing roles were performed *en travesti*, that is, with female dancers playing male roles, although character roles were mimed by men.<sup>14</sup> Enter Nijinsky, who combined the powerful athleticism and strength of the male dancer with the ballerina's grace and lightness. While at times he assumed conventional male roles, such as Albrecht in *Giselle*, more often he took on parts that highlighted his chameleon-like ability to inhabit a wide range of characters. He moved easily between different racial and gender identities, often combining contradictory aspects in one performance. In *Spectre de la rose*, for example, he played the title role, a supernatural apparition much like the female Sylphs and Wilis who populate romantic ballets. In a tight pink body stocking decorated with petals (pl.148) – a feminizing costume – Nijinsky danced the masculine part in a *pas de deux* with Karsavina that ended with a famously high leap offstage.

Nijinsky's onstage malleability is evident not only in Bakst's myriad sketches of the dancer in his various roles, but also in the many images produced by artists outside the troupe, who appropriated and manipulated his persona for distinct aesthetic ends. In a full-scale painted portrait, Jacques-Émile Blanche chose to depict Nijinsky costumed for the Siamese dance from *Les Orientales* (pl.121). The patterned rug below and the folding screen behind Nijinsky created an elaborately decorated backdrop that not only complements Nijinsky's bejewelled elegance and the sinuous lines of his pose, but also sets off his elongated, tapered fingers. By contrast, Auguste Rodin opted for brute muscularity in a small sculpture depicting the dancer in *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, Nijinsky's choreographic debut. Rodin imposed onto Nijinsky's figure his own ideas about dance as a natural, highly physical practice akin to sculpture.<sup>15</sup> With its rough, worked surface texture and ungainly pose, the sculpture stresses the powerful aspects

of Nijinsky's form of movement – a drastic departure from Bakst's drawing of Nijinsky as the Faun (pl.155), which highlights the dancer's lyrical side.

Nijinsky's ascendance to chief choreographer in 1912 drew the Ballets Russes into a more explicit dialogue with avant-garde style. Expanding the physical language of dance to include seemingly unnatural and even grotesque forms, Nijinsky experimented with bodily incarnations of modernism and asserted the status of dance as an art form on a par with music and painting.<sup>16</sup> The three ballets he created during his brief tenure – *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, *Jeux* and *The Rite of Spring* – employed unmistakably modernist idioms in their choreographies, scores and designs. Bakst's sets for *L'Après-midi d'un faune* – and the other Greek-inspired ballet also set in a primeval grove and premiering in 1912, *Daphnis et Chloé* – further explored the anti-mimetic tendencies in his earlier sets, particularly through an emphasis on flatness (pl.163). His sketch for *Daphnis et Chloé* presents an eye-boggling jumble of arid yellow-green rocks that pile up in the mid-ground, rising to meet a yellow sky and a decorative band of hanging vines at the very top. Thin trees line the foreground, stretching from the stage boards to the top of the curtain. All of these elements combine to thwart the viewer's perception of depth, a quality that – as critics noted at the time – echoed landscape paintings by Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin.<sup>17</sup>

While the backdrop for *L'Après-midi d'un faune* closely mirrored Bakst's designs for *Daphnis et Chloé*, Nijinsky's contribution to the former ballet contrasted starkly with the choreographic vocabulary of Fokine, on display in the latter. Where Fokine reformed the *danse d'école*, Nijinsky shed all vestiges of balletic movement, restricting the dancers to the simplest actions (walking, bending, pivoting). He arranged the performers' bodies to appear either frontally or in strict profile, as if in bas-relief, with bent knees and elbows. This 'attempt to render dancers as flat figures in a seemingly two-dimensional "choreographic picture"', as dance historian Hanna Järvinen described Nijinsky's technique, dovetailed with the cultivation of representational flatness in Bakst's set.<sup>18</sup> Positioning the backdrop just eight feet from the lip of the stage further reinforced these effects, as the dancers had only a shallow space in which to perform. For many critics, the resulting 'Cubist' angularity of Nijinsky's choreographic style seemed an intentionally disjunctive counterpoint to Claude Debussy's flowing 'Impressionist' score, disrupting the apparent unity of the staged *Gesamtkunstwerk*.<sup>19</sup> Its archaic subject did little to temper viewers' associations of the ballet with modernity. Whereas *Schééhérazade* clothed modernism in a distancing exoticism, the stylized rendering of *L'Après-midi d'un faune* only underscored its congruence with recent primitivist art.

This perception of the Ballets Russes' increasing thematic and stylistic affiliation with the Parisian vanguard increased in 1913 with the premiere of *Jeux*. A love triangle set on a tennis court in 1920, accompanied by a new orchestral piece from Debussy, this production was the first

that did not separate the troupe temporally or geographically from its Parisian audience. Costumes designed by Bakst and fabricated by the couturier Jeanne Paquin further connected the ballet to modern life.<sup>20</sup> Like many critics at the time, Paul Souday noted that in *Jeux* Nijinsky employed the 'rigid and geometrical dance system' of *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, which 'makes one think of our irritating Cubists'.<sup>21</sup> Others saw in the 'angles and jerks' of Nijinsky's choreography a machine aesthetic: 'three characters,' Adolphe Jullien wrote, 'move with the stiffness of marionettes, then stop all of a sudden as if they had a broken spring, remaining then fixed in some bizarre posture and finally resuming their movements with a mechanical click.'<sup>22</sup>

Critics' perceptions of *Jeux* as a modern dystopia set the stage for the reception of Nijinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, which premiered two weeks later. Described in the souvenir programme as 'pictures of pagan Russia', *The Rite of Spring* echoed the Polovtsian dances in subject, in sets and costumes designed by Roerich, but not in choreography. Whereas Fokine's style was free flowing, Nijinsky's dancers moved in what looked like convulsive fits, stamping their feet, pumping their fists in the air, contorting their bodies in visibly uncomfortable ways. While Fokine sought to liberate the dancer from the rigid constraints of the *danse d'école*, Nijinsky reimposed an external style upon the body, one that renounced idealism in a seemingly deliberate attempt at ugliness. This technique – described by critic Maurice Touchard as 'the jerky gestures of prehistoric automatons' – apparently was suited to the 'musical cubism' of Stravinsky's rhythmically complex, harmonically dissonant score.<sup>23</sup> *The Rite of Spring* performed avant-gardism in a variety of ways, not least in its daringly experimental spirit. But the aspect most apparent to viewers at the time was the ballet's choreographic rendering of a modernist picture. Translating Cubism (critics' shorthand for a variety of avant-garde tendencies) from the flat canvas to the live body, Nijinsky made visible the implications of modernism for dance and for everyday life.

#### *Turning to the Vanguard*

Capitalizing on the troupe's increasingly overt embrace of avant-garde aesthetics during its first five seasons, Diaghilev began expanding the ranks of his designers in 1914. His alliances with vanguard artists represented not a change in direction for the company but an extension and amplification of key stylistic, conceptual and thematic strands. Indeed, Diaghilev's initial salvo, a series of collaborations with Futurist artists from 1914 to 1917, points to parallels between Futurist theory – articulated in several manifestos around this time, including Filippo Marinetti's 'The Variety Theatre' (1913) and Enrico Prampolini's 'Futurist Scenography' (1915) – and existing practices on the Ballets Russes' stage. Marinetti's critique of theatre that 'vacillates stupidly between historical reconstruction (pastiche or plagiarism) and photographic reproduction' might be seen to include much of the Ballets Russes' repertoire.<sup>24</sup> Yet the ideal Futurist



122. Giacomo Balla, *Study for Feu d'artifice (Fireworks)*, 1914, oil on canvas. Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan

theatre, as the dance historian Lynn Garafola noted, 'posited new relationships between the performer and the larger stage environment, visualized new ways of filling that space and making it expressive'.<sup>25</sup> Bakst, Benois and Roerich mined precisely this territory in their designs for the Ballets Russes, though their formal solutions differed from those of Futurist artists. Likewise, Marinetti's call for a dynamic spectacle drawing on modern life and popular entertainment correlated with aspects of the troupe's pre-war productions: for example, Giacomo Balla's idea for a typographical ballet entitled *Macchina tipografica* – in which 12 actors impersonate the movements and sounds of a printing press – relates to the mechanistic appearance of Nijinsky's angular choreographic technique.<sup>26</sup> Diaghilev considered producing Balla's *Macchina* but opted instead to stage another one of his theatrical concepts, the dancerless ballet *Feu d'artifice (Fireworks)*,

set to Stravinsky's score for *The Firebird* (pl.122). Balla's sketches show a sculptural set, comprising geometric constructions, onto which coloured electric lights were projected, glancing off the set at changing intervals. Dispensing with narrative, subject matter and even performers, this spectacle of light, colour and sound took the Ballets Russes' conception of a balletic *Gesamtkunstwerk* to its breaking point. Staged only once, on 12 April 1917 at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome, *Feu d'artifice* might seem a footnote in the history of the Ballets Russes – especially as neither the troupe nor its audience proved willing to give up the expressive possibilities of the body as an artistic material and of choreography as an art form ever again. Nevertheless, *Feu d'artifice* prefigured significant trends in the troupe's subsequent productions, including its radically abstract approach to scenography and its treatment of the performer more as a formal element than as an expressive human actor.

While Diaghilev's alliance with the Italian Futurist movement yielded few staged productions, his engagement of the expatriate Russian artists Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov proved more fruitful and enduring.



Working intermittently for the troupe from 1914 to 1929, primarily on ballets and operas with Russian folkloric themes, the pair addressed an abiding concern from their earlier paintings – the collision of Western or European aesthetics and vernacular or Eastern traditions.<sup>27</sup> Goncharova's work for Rimsky-Korsakov's opera-ballet *Le Coq d'or* encapsulated this hybrid aesthetic with designs that visibly shifted in style from one act to the next. The opening set (pl.66) pointed to several sources – including Russian *lubki* (woodcut prints), the designs of Bakst and Roerich, and the bright palette and stylized forms of Fauvist paintings – while the overture curtain for Act III hovered on the edge of total abstraction (pl.123). Jagged Rayonist lines weave through a series of circular *kustar*-inspired forms. Some resolve into recognizable objects such as barnyard animals or landscape elements; others remain firmly non-representational and are perhaps manifestations of movement or sound. The scalloped border recalls Roerich's three-sided curtain ornament for the Polovtsian dances. Whereas his decoration echoed a theatrical proscenium, Goncharova's four-sided border acted simultaneously as the frame of a canvas and the edge of a textile or carpet. This dual

evocation of *kustar* handicraft and modernist painting took heightened meaning on the Ballets Russes' stage, as if commenting self-consciously on the troupe's positioning between various cultural, national and artistic spheres.

Applying the Cubo-Futurist interest in interpenetration of forms with space, Larionov and Goncharova also invented new approaches to costume construction. Goncharova's costume sketches for *Le Coq d'or* stridently depart from the kinetic quality of Bakst's drawings. In her design for a Peasant Woman (pl.124), the body is parallel to the paper support, with depth only suggested by the slight angling of the head. The dress, triangular and extremely flattened, is patterned like the sets and seems equally two-dimensional. The costume itself did not fully realize Goncharova's concept:

*Above*  
123. Natalia Goncharova, project for the overture curtain for *Le Coq d'or*, c.1914, watercolour, gouache and graphite on board. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Gift of Robert L.B. Tobin

*Opposite*  
124. Natalia Goncharova, design for Peasant Woman in *Le Coq d'or*, 1914, gouache and pencil on cardboard. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Purchased 1986



the difficulty of translating this modernist vision into three dimensions, evident in the resulting costume, became ever more acute in the ensuing years. In Larionov's costume for the Buffoon in *Chout* (pl.102), the body is composed of a series of severely stylized geometric shapes. Visually dissecting the figure with abstract patterning, the garment cuts into space with eye-catching extensions (pl.101). The disconcerting asymmetry between the two sides of the body, marked out by the varying length in the cut of the dancer's jacket, recalls the Futurist concept of 'anti-neutral dress', employing dynamic lines and bright colours to promote movement.<sup>28</sup> Larionov's division of the body into discrete parts also may have been designed to work in concert with the choreographic style of Léonide Massine, who began to choreograph for the troupe in 1915. Drawing equally from Nijinsky's technique and from vanguard art, Massine developed an approach to composition that often put the upper and lower body in opposition.<sup>29</sup> *Chout* put on view a complex, dialectical interchange between painting and choreography, as Larionov and Massine looked to each other's art forms to extend their expressive means.

#### *Incorporating the Popular*

With the 1917 premiere of Picasso's ballet *Parade*, Diaghilev made a splashy public declaration of the company's avant-gardism. By engaging Picasso, a figurehead of the Parisian vanguard, the Ballets Russes asserted its cultural status and addressed a shifting of allegiances within the art world initiated in part by the war – developments that *Parade* directly confronted. This ballet, set on a Paris fairground, also drew upon existing themes in Picasso's oeuvre: the unstable border between elite art and popular culture; the collision of heterogeneous styles; and the complex relationship between

spectator and artwork.<sup>30</sup> The concept came from the poet Jean Cocteau, who envisioned a burlesque sideshow featuring three acts – a Chinese Conjuror, a Little American Girl and a pair of Acrobats – accompanied by the shouts of offstage barkers who attempt to lure the audience into an imaginary circus tent. In place of those voices, Picasso staged three new characters: Managers in Cubist costume. In several sketches, Picasso depicted these characters wearing billboards suspended from their shoulders, a common form of walking advertisement. Elaborating on this concept – part human, part object or image – Picasso developed over-life-size papier-mâché costumes for the Managers, drawing upon recent artworks in which he had substituted inorganic matter such as chair legs, wainscoting and pipe smoke for body parts. The disjunction between these cubistically rendered characters and the naturalistic costumes worn by the parade acts echoed the contrast between Picasso's overture curtain, a pastoral image of picnicking commedia performers, and the set, a Cubist-inspired cityscape. These juxtapositions stemmed from Picasso's meditations on the history of avant-garde engagement with popular culture, evident in several drawings that reference Georges Seurat's *Parade de cirque* (1887–8) in reproducing elements such as the string of gaslights and the crowd of spectators or employing a version of Seurat's pointillist technique (pl.125). Like Seurat, Picasso used the sideshow to contrast high art with lowbrow entertainment and live performance with static painting. *Parade*'s score and choreography by Erik Satie and Massine followed suit, contrasting a solemn fugue in the overture with march, ragtime and waltz, and combining pantomime, jig and a balletic *pas de deux*. *Parade* reflected upon the complex relationship between the arts during the modernist



*Left*  
125. Pablo Picasso, sketch for overture curtain for *Parade*, 1917, watercolour and pencil. Musée Picasso, Paris

*Opposite*  
126. Sonia Delaunay, costume for title role in *Cléopâtre*, 1918, silk, sequins, mirror and beads, wool yarn, metallic thread braid, lamé. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Costume Council Fund (M.68.51.18a-b) Costume and Textiles Department



period, when dance (earlier viewed as a form of light entertainment) aligned with painting and music as a means to gain in status while painters and composers increasingly looked to popular forms, including dance, to secure their avant-garde bona fides.<sup>31</sup>

The links between art, ballet and mass culture at the Ballets Russes – already evident in the *style Bakst* of the early 1910s – also came to the fore in new designs for *Cléopâtre*, commissioned by Diaghilev from Robert and Sonia Delaunay in 1918 after a fire had destroyed Bakst's original set and several of the principal costumes. Juxtaposing fragmented planes of deeply saturated hues, the Delaunays had developed an abstract style that represented 'the synchronic movement (simultaneity) of light', a pictorial concept that lent itself to balletic incarnation.<sup>32</sup> In his backdrop picturing the Egyptian palace, Robert allowed the deep blues, bright oranges and dusky pinks of its interior to interpenetrate the orange-yellow pyramid and green-blue sky beyond (pl.164). And in her design for Cleopatra (pl.124), Sonia employed a bright palette, keyed to the set, that encouraged a visual interpenetration of figure with ground – at once alluding to Bakst's design style and fulfilling the Delaunays' goal of simultaneous contrast through the dynamic interaction of light, colour and motion. Furthermore, this costume foregrounded the troupe's reputation for chic on- and offstage with several instantly recognizable marks of period couture. The tightly tapered hobble skirt, high bodice, straight waist and tasselled fringes made this Cleopatra look as if she had just stepped out of the pages of a fashion magazine. Its star dancer was both dressed as a chic Parisienne and rendered as an abstract painting, pointing to the Ballets Russes' position at the nexus of high art and high fashion.

Diaghilev solidified these connections in 1924 with the premieres of two works choreographed by Bronislava Nijinska. *Les Biches*, a modern-day *fête galante* with a jazzy score by Francis Poulenc, sported designs by Marie Laurencin, a painter in the Cubist orbit known for her images of Parisian *femmes nouvelles*.<sup>33</sup> *Le Train bleu*, named for the train running from Paris to the Riviera, featured music by the composer Darius Milhaud, who like Poulenc was associated with the modernist group Les Six; Henri Laurens' set, a simplified bathing retreat with vaguely Cubist cabanas; and costumes by Coco Chanel derived from her Deauville swimwear.<sup>34</sup> Chanel's streamlined style, created for the boyish *garçonnes* who threatened to upset traditional gender roles, meshed with Nijinska's choreography, which parodied the sexual division of labour in the *danse d'école*.<sup>35</sup> A neoclassical overture curtain by Picasso, which obliquely referred back to *Parade*, depicted two enormous bare-breasted women in white togas running headlong through a barren seascape (pp.118–19, 122–3). This prelude to the ballet not only provided a tongue-in-cheek contrast with the sleek modernist bodies of the Chanel-dressed dancers, but also served as a potent reminder that the Ballets Russes, with its melding of popular and elite, had by 1924 moved squarely into the artistic mainstream.

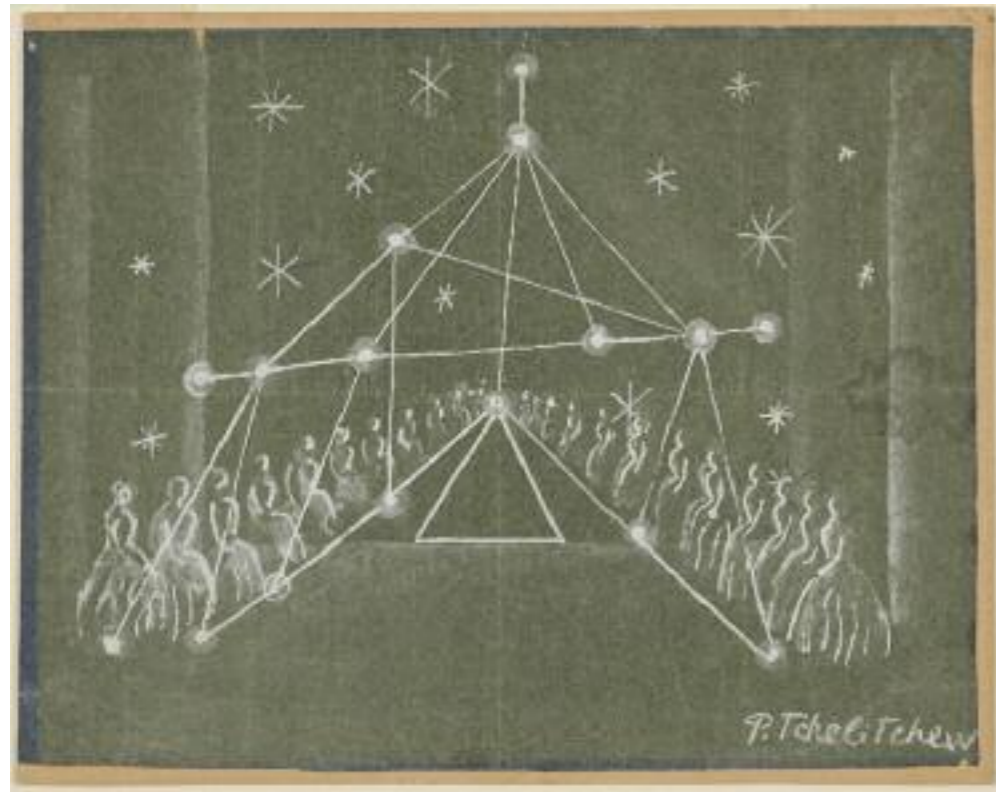
#### *Embodying Decoration*

As Picasso's gloss on *Le Train bleu* indicates, the collaborations with Futurist, Cubist and Orphist artists during the war years cemented the Ballets Russes' identification with the avant-garde. The litany of artists who vied for the opportunity to work with the troupe is one mark of its success in blurring the boundaries between easel painting and theatre design. The ever-expanding ranks of Diaghilev's designers yielded a stylistic eclecticism that diversified the troupe's existing repertoire. Within this dizzying array, however, we can detect a trend towards *mise-en-scènes* that place the performing body in more direct and complex interaction with the decorative environment – a trend signalled in Matisse's contribution to *Le Chant du rossignol*. Based on Hans Christian Andersen's 1843 fairytale, the ballet centres on the pet nightingale of a Chinese Emperor that is replaced at court by a mechanical bird, but returns to save the Emperor from death with its magical voice. The first incarnation of *Le Chant du rossignol* was as a Stravinsky opera with designs by Benois. In 1919, Diaghilev and Matisse settled upon a spare, minimalist design featuring a large white throne – scallop-edged, with flanking columns – against a simple turquoise backdrop.<sup>36</sup> For the dancers, Matisse designed simple tunics in pale pinks, yellows and greens, as well as white costumes with bolder accents in navy, black and orange (pls 95 and 96). A small number of brightly coloured costumes – long electric yellow gowns for Mandarins of the Emperor's court (pl.94) and a scarlet costume for the dancer playing Death – stood out starkly against an otherwise rather colourless *mise-en-scène*. Heavy, boxy and often lined with thick padding, these costumes shielded the bodies of the dancers underneath. Combined onstage by Massine in 'constructed groups', they created shapes and patterns that ranged from abstraction to allusive representation, forming – in dance critic André Levinson's words – a 'living scaffolding of three stories in the form of pagodas'.<sup>37</sup> Matisse and Massine worked jointly to conceive a tableau in which choreography and design converged, together incarnating a form of decoration.

As the Ballets Russes' influence grew during the 1920s, its formula and core principles were appropriated by a variety of avant-garde movements. The Ballets Suédois (1920–25), founded by Rolf de Maré, competed directly in Parisian theatres with experimental productions that often upstaged Diaghilev's troupe. They included Léger's *La Création du monde*, a primitivist ballet inspired by Blaise Cendrars's *Anthologie nègre*, which transformed the performers into mobile scenery with painted boards that acted simultaneously as costume and decor; and Francis Picabia's set for *Relâche*, which assaulted the spectators with a wall of blinding klieg lights.<sup>38</sup> During the same years, artists in the Soviet Union introduced Constructivist principles to the stage and Oskar Schlemmer established the Theatre Workshop at the Bauhaus Dessau.<sup>39</sup> For a time, the most vanguard forms of theatrical *Gesamtkunstwerk* were pursued outside the framework of the Ballets Russes, provoking Diaghilev to reassert the troupe's



127. Anton Pevsner, model for the statue of Aphrodite for *La Chatte*, 1927, plastic. Tate, London



*Left*  
128. Pavel Tchelitchev, set design for figures, Scene 3, in *Ode*, 1928, gouache, wash on dark blue machine-made woven paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

*Opposite*  
129. Giorgio de Chirico, costume for a Male Guest in *Le Bal*, 1929, painted gabardine, flannel, silk and wool. V&A

relevance in the final years of the decade. In 1927, the Ballets Russes offered two different Constructivist ballets: *Le Pas d'acier*, set in a factory with designs by Georgii Yakulov; and *La Chatte* (pl.127), drawn from Æsop's fables and designed by Naum Gabo and Anton Pevsner, who created a laboratory of geometric shapes in mica, celluloid and wire. Wearing costumes made of the same materials, the dancers resembled the quasi-figural sculptures on stage, especially when arranged in the acrobatic formations George Balanchine conceived in emulation of Massine's choreography.<sup>40</sup> The following year, Pavel Tchelitchev merged Constructivism with Surrealism in his designs for the mystical, mostly non-narrative *Ode* (pl.128). A complex set comprised lengths of rope draped around the stage, from which Tchelitchev suspended identical but variously sized dolls wearing ball gowns. Behind this apparatus, films projected a sequence of disparate images: stars, comets and blossoming flowers. Mannequin-like in dark bodysuits and blank masks, the dancers manipulated Tchelitchev's structure, setting up productive confusions between performing subject and designed object.

The fusion of design with the human body in these productions of the late 1920s reached its apogee in *Le Bal*, a ballet about a thwarted romance at a masked ball. In his designs, Giorgio de Chirico rendered the stage and the dancers as classical ruins, featuring a jumble of eroded arches, overgrown temples and empty pedestals (pl.129), while Balanchine's intentionally awkward choreography exploited De Chirico's surreal intersections of natural and man-made elements. With terracotta necks, stone hands, marble hair and legs made of columns, the dancers moved stiffly in spaces where 'the air seems to have been sucked

out and every quiver of organic life banished'.<sup>41</sup> So fully did De Chirico and Balanchine merge performer with design scheme that, according to the critic André George, 'one no longer knows ... if walls are fossilized dancers, or if the characters are not instead animated stones'.<sup>42</sup> De Chirico derived the design motifs from paintings such as his 1927 *Conversation among the Ruins* (pl.167), heightening in the transfer from canvas to stage the confrontation of past with present, of animate bodies with their artificial surrogates. Resurrecting classical antiquity with architectural ruins and sculptural fragments, *Le Bal* staged a history of art that included modernism and the Ballets Russes in its survey. Whereas Nijinsky had translated modernist painting into ballet in *The Rite of Spring*, De Chirico and Balanchine reversed the process in *Le Bal*, mirroring back an image of avant-garde practice that had been wholly refigured by the Ballets Russes.

*Le Bal* cast a retrospective glance on 20 years of intertwining dance, music and visual art, a period in which each of these three art forms was profoundly changed by its interactions with the others on the Ballets Russes' stage. The collaborations engineered by Diaghilev brought modernism into the spotlight: he took vanguard styles out of the salons and galleries, and introduced them to new viewers. This literal staging of modernism was a complex process of transposition; making the pictorial incarnate often involved distilling, clarifying, or heightening essential aspects of the painter's craft. And with ballet – by its very nature an embodied art form – Diaghilev's troupe made painting responsive to other media and expressive of the conditions of contemporary life.





# A GIANT THAT CONTINUES TO GROW – THE IMPACT, INFLUENCE AND LEGACY OF THE BALLETS RUSSES

JANE PRITCHARD

From the earliest Saison Russe in 1909, the artists Diaghilev brought to Paris had an impact on many aspects of life. They revitalized opera, dance and stage design, introduced an innovative palette of colour combinations, influenced fashion and furnishings, and lent glamour to Russian culture. That the company's art and productions seeped into the consciousness of West-European society is evident from the wealth of Ballets-Russes inspired cartoons that appeared wherever they danced. Diaghilev's ballets made it respectable for artists and composers to collaborate. Painters and sculptors welcomed the heightened profile gained by their involvement in stage works, and the concert hall benefited from many fine new dance scores.

Among the immediate influences was the change in the public's perception of dancers. The male dancer was restored to a central role which had been lost for much of the nineteenth century and ballet ceased to be a meditation on femininity performed by women to satisfy the masculine gaze. From 1909 it was the men who attracted the greatest attention: the virile Adolph Bolm and his Polovtsian hordes in *Prince Igor* (pl.131) contrasted with the virtuosity of the constantly transformed Vaslav Nijinsky. The number of men equalled or exceeded the women in the company, but they were never effeminate, even when the male body was knowingly dressed or unclothed to satisfy a homosexual perspective. This interest in male dancers continued after 1929, but they did not attract anything like the same attention again until the emergence of Rudolf Nureyev as a superstar in the 1960s.

Female dancers were also undergoing a metamorphosis in the early twentieth century. With the Ballets Russes it is possible to see the evolution of a slim, long-limbed ballerina, her small head emphasized by her parted and sleekly dressed hair. The statuesque Ida Rubinstein heralded the trend in the first seasons, but the style only really emerged in the

1920s with Olga Spessivtseva, the boyish Alice Nikitina and the elegant Felia Doudrovskaya – George Balanchine's Film Star in *La Pastorale* (pl.132) and Siren in *The Prodigal Son*.

The new dancers also became models for the latest fashions. With the advent of the illustrated periodical, performers found a sideline displaying haute couture, and the chic dancers of the Ballets Russes were soon in great demand. There was a very clear symbiosis between fashion and the Ballets Russes. The interchange between the designers Paul Poiret and Léon Bakst is evident. As well as designing for the stage, Bakst created dresses for Jeanne Paquin, and it was the House of Paquin that came to the rescue to modify the costumes for Nijinsky's futuristic game of tennis in *Jeu*. Chanel's role with the Ballets Russes is well known if confusingly documented, but just as fashion was contributing to the ballet, Diaghilev's stage designers were influencing fashion. Natalia Goncharova, like Bakst, used glorious fabrics in vivid hues, and her appliquéd decorations enhanced the evening clothes produced by the House of Myrbor in Paris (pl.130). Similarly Sonia Delaunay, responsible for the striking 1918 costumes for Cleopatra and Amoun in *Cléopâtre*,<sup>1</sup> was creating coats, dresses, bathing costumes and knitwear in colourful geometric patterns. In the mid-1920s the Ballets Russes presented a succession of what one critic described as 'unglamorous modern ballets' in contemporary dress.<sup>2</sup> These included *Les Biches*, *Le Train bleu* and *La Pastorale*, and were costumed in street and leisurewear rather than a romanticized form of fashion, a precursor to design for dance much later in the twentieth century.

The designs of the Ballets Russes have influenced fashion ever since the 1920s, particularly following the 1960s rediscovery of the costumes. In 1976 Yves Saint Laurent produced his iconic Russian Collection, and the impact of Bakst's palette and costumes, and Matisse's decorations,



*Previous pages, left*  
130. Natalia Goncharova  
for Myrbor, evening  
mantle (detail).  
Multicoloured silk  
appliqués, c.1925.  
V&A: T.157-1967

*Left*  
131. Boris M. Frödmann-  
Cluzel, sculpture of  
Adolph Bolm as the  
Polovtsian Chief from  
*Prince Igor*.  
Bronze, 1909.  
V&A: S.874-1981

*Opposite*  
132. Felia Doubrovskia  
as the Film Star in  
*La Pastorale*, 1926.  
Photograph by Sasha.  
V&A: Theatre &  
Performance Collections





133. Yves Saint Laurent, original sketch with notes and swatches for the Fall/Winter Collection, 1976. Pencil, ink and fabric on paper, 1976. Fondation Pierre Bergé - Yves Saint Laurent



134. Paul Scheurich, Meissen figures of Eusebius, Estrella, Columbine and Harlequin, Pierrot and Chiarina from *Le Carnaval*. Polychromed glazed ceramic, c.1914. V&A: S.706–2009; S.707–2009; S.708–2009; S.710–2009; S.709–2009 Purchased with assistance from the Friends of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the London Archives of the Dance



135. Una Troubridge, Vaslav Nijinsky as the Faun from *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. Plaster, 1912. V&A: S.86–1976

were also evident in other seasons' presentations (pl.133). It was not only fashion that derived an interest from the colours and geometric patterns of designs for the Ballets Russes. Clarice Cliff, the prolific designer of Art Deco ceramics, allegedly found inspiration for her 'Bizarre' design in Vladimir Polunin's front cloth for the 1925 Ballets Russes season at the London Coliseum.

The Ballets Russes has been celebrated in a wide range of exhibitions. During the company's lifetime these focused on the designers, a new development in recognizing the crossover between fine art and stage design. As early as 1912 the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris organized an exhibition of Léon Bakst's designs (and acquired much of the collection), and this was followed in 1913 by a similar display at the Fine Art Society, London. After the First World War, Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov exhibited their theatre work in Paris at the Galerie Sauvage (1918) and contributed to the exhibition of Russian Arts and Crafts at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (1921).

Artists captured the essence of dancers' performances and life behind the scenes in a variety of materials. Sculpture ranges from Maurice Charpentier-Mio's bas-reliefs and Auguste Rodin's Nijinsky to Paul Scheurich's figures for Meissen (pl.134). In the 1920s the Russian Lomonosov Porcelain Factory reproduced Karsavina as the Firebird,

a role she never even danced in Russia. One of the first exhibitions of sculpture was held in 1910 at the Galerie Hébrard, Paris, with 22 statuettes of French and Russian dancers by Boris M. Frödmann-Cluzel, including the famous bronzes of Adolph Bolm performing the Polovtsian Dances from *Prince Igor* and Ludmila Schollar in *Cléopâtre*. Notable, too, was the March 1914 exhibition of Nijinsky portraits at the Fine Art Society, London. The display comprised 19 works by Valentine Gross, Una Troubridge's bust of the Faun (pl.135) from *L'Après-midi d'un faune* with four studies and a statuette of Nijinsky in *Les Sylphides*, further works by the artists Alberto Montenegro, John Singer Sargent, Glyn Philpot and Jacques-Émile Blanche, and Jean Cocteau's poster of Nijinsky in *Le Spectre de la rose*.

Leading portrait painters, including Blanche and Augustus John, immortalized many of the stars. Sketches by Pablo Picasso (a number of which were directly copied from photographs) and Valentine Gross in France, Ernst Oppler and Arthur Grunenberg in Germany, and Duncan Grant and Eileen Mayo in London (pl.136), were shown in exhibitions either during the lifetime of the company or in subsequent years, and many also featured in programmes and periodicals. Their immediacy when drawn from life often gives a greater sense of movement than any other form of documentation. Photographs can look static next to the lively sketches



136. Eileen Mayo, scene from George Balanchine's *La Chatte* designed by Antoine Pevsner and Naum Gabo. Hand-coloured print, c.1927. V&A: S.496-2000

(action photography was still in its infancy) but with the major photographers eager to record the leading dancers in their studios, these too have become the subject of exhibitions.

The British artist Laura Knight had rare permission from Diaghilev to draw and paint backstage in dancers' dressing rooms and from the wings, and in 1920 she held an exhibition at the Leicester Galleries, London, in which the Ballets Russes featured strongly. After the war Cyril Beaumont commissioned a significant and sometimes unlikely collection of British artists to record the company and he, too, was privileged to take his artists behind the scenes.

After Diaghilev's death a succession of exhibitions was presented in homage to his work. Among the earliest was the display of Serge Lifar's collection of set and costume designs at Claridges in London. These were acquired in 1934 by the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, enabling Lifar to pay off debts incurred while touring in the USA. April to May 1939 saw the largest of all the Ballets Russes exhibitions at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. The catalogue listed 556 exhibits, including eight cloths and three further fragments of sets together with designs, sculptures, posters and books, but only eight costumes.

The French exhibition became the inspiration for Richard Buckle when in 1954 he was invited to curate a modest show for the Edinburgh Festival of designs for the Ballets

Russes. Never one to accept restrictions, Buckle decided it was his mission 'to collect every single surviving Diaghilev design in the world'. Such ambition may have been unrealistic, but his innovative exhibition, which created a range of ambiances and pioneered the inclusion of aural and odoriferous experiences, moved in an expanded form with 650 exhibits to Forbes House, London, and provided welcome nostalgia, exoticism and colour in austere post-war Britain.<sup>3</sup>

Performances have naturally been significant in extending the influence of the Ballets Russes. Productions have been reproduced, both officially and unofficially, from the company's earliest years. As the copyrighting of ballets was not widely recognized until the end of the twentieth century some were mounted without the permission or collaboration of the creators, although others were recreated with care. Much to his irritation, ballets by Mikhail Fokine were the most frequent target of piracy, particularly the iconic *Les Sylphides* and adaptations of *Schéhérazade* and *The Swan*. Almost two decades after Theodore and Alexis Kosloff first copied *Schéhérazade* in the USA and Britain, Fokine was continuing to write his letters of complaint over the repeated performances of their adaptation of his ballet.<sup>4</sup>

Even during the existence of Diaghilev's company certain ballets created for him were officially presented elsewhere. In 1913 and 1914 Fokine staged *Cléopâtre*, *Les Sylphides*, *Le Spectre*

137. Gluck (Hannah Gluckstein), *Léonide Massine Waiting for his Cue to go on Stage in 'On with the Dance'*. Oil on canvas, 1925. The painting shows the London Pavilion theatre, where Massine's ballet was part of the C.B. Cochran revue 'On with the Dance'. V&A: S.83-1986



*de la rose*, *Le Carnaval* and *Schéhérazade* for the Royal Swedish Ballet<sup>5</sup> and in 1921 he mounted *Daphnis et Chloé* for the Paris Opéra.<sup>6</sup> Vaslav Nijinsky's repertoire for his ill-fated 1914 season at the Palace Theatre, London, was drawn from the Ballets Russes although a revised arrangement of the music for *Les Sylphides* and new setting suggested a different production.<sup>7</sup> Other choreographers also presented versions of their ballets elsewhere. Massine took *The Good-Humoured Ladies* on tour to South America after his dismissal from the Ballets Russes and his divertissement programmes included extracts from Ballets Russes works including his solo from *Le Tricorne*. In 1926 Bronislava Nijinska mounted *Le Train bleu* for the Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires.

Diaghilev was less concerned by productions mounted in countries he rarely visited but disliked 'his' choreographers creating new ballets in his own arenas. There was particular resentment concerning Léonide Massine (pl.137), a charismatic dancer as well as successful arranger of ballets, who owed his breakthrough to Diaghilev more than any other dancer/choreographer in the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev seemed unhappy about Massine's creations for C.B. Cochran's revues in London when his own company was dancing at the London Coliseum – they were rivals in popular theatre – and when plans were afoot for the Ballets Russes to return to the USA in 1928 the American management was determined

that Massine should perform with the Ballets Russes rather than concurrently present his own ballets at the Roxy in New York.<sup>8</sup>

Diaghilev never appeared to have a strong 'ownership' of the operas he presented. Certainly in 1914 the British conductor and impresario Thomas Beecham kept the sets and costumes for *Le Chant du rossignol* designed by Benois and *Le Coq d'or* by Goncharova, both of which he had subsidised. He subsequently mounted the two operas in London in 1918/19 without any acknowledgement of Diaghilev, or indeed the designers of the productions.<sup>9</sup>

Diaghilev was concerned when his most important collaborators became involved with, or set up, high profile rival companies. Ida Rubinstein, who had risen to stardom through the Ballets Russes productions of *Cléopâtre* and *Schéhérazade* where her roles in Fokine's ballets were tailored to her strengths, produced independent productions, initially in collaboration with Bakst. Correspondence between Diaghilev and Lifar<sup>10</sup> suggests Diaghilev felt especially threatened by her ballet company in 1928–9 when the choreographers were Massine and Nijinska, the designer Alexandre Benois, and for which Stravinsky had composed *Le Baiser de la fête* (*The Fairy's Kiss*). In reality Rubinstein curtailed her success by claiming the ballerina role in all productions despite her limited technique. Her company is therefore best remembered for the

richness of the scores she commissioned and for launching the international careers of the dancer/choreographers Frederick Ashton and David Lichine.

Other rivals in the 1920s also followed the template for Diaghilev's productions, inviting major artists and composers to collaborate with innovative choreographers. The Ballets Suédois, which operated out of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, was one of two serious rivals between 1920 and 1925, a period when the identity of the Ballets Russes was at its weakest in Paris. While Diaghilev was struggling for funds, the Ballets Suédois called on the Swedish art collector Rolf de Maré to pay for their productions. The other rival, Soirée de Paris, existed only for one season and was again the creation of a wealthy patron, Comte Étienne de Beaumont, who quickly discovered that running a company both drained his purse and failed to suit his lifestyle.<sup>11</sup>

Inevitably, the restaging of ballets increased after Diaghilev's death in 1929. As a result of the perceived vacuum in the world of dance there were two developments: the rise of 'national' companies and a succession of new

international companies, many of which included the words 'Ballets Russes' in their title. Whereas the former mixed popular ballets created for Diaghilev with new works, the second-generation Ballets Russes called on choreographers and dancers from Diaghilev's original company and combined these with newly discovered talent. They inherited Diaghilev's sets and costumes and toured worldwide, reaching countries such as Australia, where Diaghilev's company never performed. Most relied on nostalgia and glamour, although others, like the short-lived Les Ballets 1933, were more interested in extending the frontiers of dance with a varied repertoire of new works. Boris Kochno, working with Balanchine, was at the heart of Les Ballets 1933 and was responsible for the equally innovative Ballets des Champs-Élysées in the late 1940s. The latter, as the critic Richard Buckle noted, created as much excitement in London after the Second World War as Diaghilev's Ballets Russes had after the First.<sup>12</sup> Its initial choreographer, Roland Petit, took a lead in collaborating and invited the finest array of artists and couturiers to design his ballets.<sup>13</sup>

138. Alicia Markova as the Nightingale in Balanchine's *Le Chant du rossignol*, 1926. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



139. Alicia Markova teaching the title role of Balanchine's *Le Chant du rossignol* to Iohna Loots, 1995. Photograph by Graham Brandon. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



140. Eileen Mayo, *Serge Lifar as Apollo in Apollon musagète*. Pencil, pastel, gouache and gold paint on paper, 1928. V&A: S.454-2000



While many of the Ballets Russes companies flourished in the 1930s, the new national companies were also putting down roots. Their members had to dance core works from the Ballets Russes to an impressive standard to win the approval of audiences and critics, who might then return to watch novelties. In Britain, the involvement with the Ballets Russes would continue for half a century: Marie Rambert, Ninette de Valois, Alicia Markova (pls 138 and 139) and Anton Dolin, all former dancers with the Ballets Russes who established companies in Britain, called on the services of Tamara Karsavina, Stanislas Idzikowski, Léon Woizikovsky, Lydia Sokolova, Lubov Tchernicheva and Diaghilev's régisseur Serge Grigoriev. In the late 1940s, after her Sadler's Wells Ballet had moved into the Royal Opera House, de Valois invited Léonide Massine to dance, choreograph and mount ballets for them. In the 1960s Bronislava Nijinska revived *Les Biches* and *Les Noces* for The Royal Ballet, and in the 1970s Massine set *Parade* and *Le Tricorne* for London Festival Ballet.

But it was not only in Britain that these ballets were being kept alive. In Australia the Borovansky Ballet and later the Australian Ballet performed a selection of works from the Ballets Russes. In the USA, the Ballet Theatre (later American Ballet Theatre), founded in 1939, included Fokine, Massine and Nijinska among its first choreographers while the younger Joffrey Ballet performed works by the Ballets Russes in the 1970s. The growth of such productions for the Joffrey Ballet coincided with the demise of the official Ballets Russes companies, which after 1950 operated primarily on the American continent. Robert Joffrey's Ballets Russes project began with an invitation to Massine to produce *Le Tricorne*, *Parade*, *Pulcinella* and Fokine's *Petrushka*, and at the end of the 1970s Joffrey turned his attention to ballets danced by and choreographed by Nijinsky, inviting Millicent Hodson to reconstruct *The Rite of Spring* in 1987. Meanwhile, Balanchine's New York City Ballet, also a descendant of the Ballets Russes, focused on being choreographically creative, albeit often with little emphasis on decorative design.

Balanchine only retained an interest in two of his creations for Diaghilev, *Apollon musagète*, which he altered considerably, and *The Prodigal Son* (pl.140).

Productions by the original choreographers while they were still alive commanded authority, even though they, like Balanchine, might introduce changes to suit new dancers and altered times. But many of the ballets were passed on like 'Chinese whispers' from dancer to dancer, so that some became ghosts of their former productions or were distorted. At the same time, particularly following the Ballets Russes auctions of the 1960s, there was a desire to reproduce designs accurately.

There have been several approaches to reconstructing works. Serious attempts have been made to decipher notation written down by the original choreographers, for example the productions of *L'Après-midi d'un faune* by Ann Hutchinson Guest and Claudia Jeschke, based on the choreographic score written by Nijinsky while under house arrest as an enemy

alien in Budapest between 1914 and 1916. Since the 1980s there has also been an archaeological approach, in which every surviving shred of information about a production is unearthed before being pieced back together. Although it involves informed guesswork, there can be an excitement at seeing such evocations of lost ballets (pls 141 and 142). The leading exponent of this genre is the choreographer Millicent Hodson, working with her partner Kenneth Archer who supervises the reconstruction of the designs. Together, they have recreated Nijinsky's ballets *The Rite of Spring* (1987), *Till Eulenspiegel* (1994), *Jeux* (1996, pl.142) and Balanchine's *La Chatte* (1991), *Le Chant du rossignol* (1999) and *Le Bal* (2005). Although their work is controversial, Hodson is honest about the limitations of their sources and much has been discovered about the Ballets Russes through their research.<sup>14</sup>

In the twenty-first century some reconstructions have moved further away from their origins. In mounting *Pas d'acier* at Princeton in 2005 the team of musicologist Simon

143. Ivan Putrov and Roberta Marquez of The Royal Ballet in Jerome Robbins's *Afternoon of a Faun*, 2006. Photograph by Graham Brandon. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



141. Vaslav Nijinsky in *Jeux*, 1913. Photograph by Gerschel. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections THM/165

142. Deborah Bull, Bruce Sansom and Gillian Revie in The Royal Ballet's reconstruction of *Jeux* by Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, 2000. Photograph by Graham Brandon. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections





Morrison and dance/theatre historian Lesley-Anne Sayers decided that although they were reconstructing the set and presenting Prokofiev's score as faithfully as they could, Massine's 1927 choreography had failed to fulfil the intentions of the composer and designer developed two years earlier. Therefore, they invited Hodson to choreograph the work afresh according to the 1925 synopsis.

Certain recent Russian productions, particularly those by Andris Liepa, have taken their interpretations further, cashing in on the brand name of 'Les Saisons Russes'. Thus Leipa's *Thamar* and *Le Dieu bleu* have entirely new choreography by Jurius Smorighines and Wayne Eagling respectively, with sets and costumes that are only very loosely based on the original designs. *Le Dieu bleu* used a score by Alexander Scriabin not Reynaldo Hahn, and *Thamar* opened with a green laser display.

The scores created for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes have been a treasure trove for choreographers. To date there have been more than 200 different choreographic works to *The Rite of Spring*, over 100 to *The Firebird* and 75 to *Les Noces*. While some modern interpretations are bewildering and remote from the original creators' intentions, others give the scores a greater immediacy for contemporary audiences. One of the most effective is *Afternoon of a Faun* by Jerome Robbins, created in 1953, which subtly quotes from the 1912 work (pl.143). With just two dancers it presents a similar narrative and mood to Nijinsky's original choreography but instead of Nymphs and Faun set in a rural Greek landscape Robbins's production concerns dancers in a ballet studio.

In Britain, creative collaborations between choreographer, composer and artist/designer have been used to extend the traditions established by Diaghilev, although usually lacking a Diaghilev-figure to supervise or guide the collaborators. During the 1980s a number of leading artists became involved in stage productions. In 1981 the British team of John Dexter and David Hockney produced two triple bills at New York's Metropolitan Opera House, clearly developed in the spirit of Diaghilev. The first, *Parade*, used Satie's score and a cast derived from Picasso's designs to introduce the characters for Francis Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and the Colette/Ravel collaboration *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. The second was a Stravinsky programme of *The Rite of Spring*, *Le Chant du rossignol* (pl.144) and *Oedipus Rex*. At the same time in London, the former Director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, Bryan Robertson, encouraged Ballet Rambert and The Royal Ballet to invite fine artists

including Bridget Riley, Howard Hodgkin and John Hoyland to design ballets, often in collaboration with up and coming choreographers. More recently, for The Royal Ballet, the choreographer Wayne McGregor collaborated with architect John Pawson and the artists Julian Opie and Tatsuo Miyajima to create the visual settings, and the composers Joby Talbot, Max Richter and Kaija Saariaho the scores for *Chroma* (2006), *Infra* (2008) and *Limen* (2009) respectively. The involvement of artists and innovative composers in dance works is not restricted to collaborations. The American modern choreographer, Merce Cunningham, worked alongside artists including Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Frank Stella and Andy Warhol, and composers John Cage, David Tudor and Gavin Bryars. Their creations simply occupied the same time and space, any other links emerged entirely by chance as the creators only ever brought their elements together in performance.

Many of Diaghilev's collaborators were active for decades after his death. Composers who had learnt their craft under his guidance continued to write for ballet. Stravinsky famously composed for Balanchine in America and Prokofiev created three full evening ballets in the Soviet Union, two of which, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella*, have become staples of virtually every ballet company. French ballet in the 1930s and 1950s in particular drew on the work of Diaghilev's French composers such as Henri Sauguet, who collaborated on several of Boris Kochno's projects including the score for Roland Petit's *Les Forains*. Meanwhile in Britain, Constant Lambert, who had first been exposed to working with a ballet company when composing *Romeo and Juliet* in Monte Carlo in 1926, became the influential founding musical director of The Royal Ballet.

Similarly, many of Diaghilev's designers retained an interest in theatre alongside other art forms. Picasso never again created designs as effective as those for *Le Tricorne* but Matisse went on to devise sets and costumes for Massine's symphonic *Rouge et Noir* (1939). André Derain produced lively stage designs throughout his career, working with many of the twentieth century's great choreographers. Pavel Tchelitchev, who in 1928 had projected film onto gauzes in *Ode*, continued to experiment with light and fabric, although the use of projection in set design only became commonplace in the late twentieth century. Natalia Goncharova continued to design for ballet, particularly for Boris Kniazeff's companies in France and South America, but her work had long been out of fashion

144. After David Hockney, costume for the Bonze from *The Nightingale (Le Rossignol)*. Costume and headdress in crêpe, lamé, velvet and cotton, with plastazote mask, 1983. V&A: S.26:1 to 6–2003

145. The breaking of the egg that contains Kashchei's soul in The Royal Ballet Company's production of *The Firebird* at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, 2006. Photograph by Graham Brandon. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



by the time *The Firebird* was revived by the Sadler's Wells Ballet in 1954 (pl.145). The production reminded the art world of her talent and her work again became in demand. Since her death in 1962, Goncharova has been the focus of numerous high-profile exhibitions and in June 2008 her early Rayonniste painting, *Les Fleurs*, from about 1912, created a new record for a female artist, selling at auction for over 5.5 million pounds.

Alexandre Benois never went out of fashion and his nostalgic designs for early ballets such as *Petrushka* and revived classics including *Giselle* and *The Nutcracker* were repeated many times. He also established a dynasty of designers with his son Nicola (who became principal scenographer for La Scala, Milan) and niece Nadia (who designed for the British stage), both continuing in his footsteps. Benois was also one of the key figures in shaping the way in which subsequent generations would view the Ballets Russes. In the first generation of literature Walter Nouvel (pl.146), who had supported Diaghilev from the days of *Mir iskusstva* throughout the existence of the Ballets Russes, Alexandre Benois and Serge Lifar were the main sources of first-hand information. While the Ballets Russes was active, illustrated monographs on star dancers, the stories of the ballets and art volumes on designers' work were published. After Diaghilev's death, Nouvel lent his unpublished manuscript of the company's history to Arnold Haskell for his *Diaghilev: His Artistic and Private Life* (1935) while Benois guided Prince Peter Lieven before publishing the story under his own name. Both approached the history from the perspective of *Mir iskusstva* and Benois allowed

himself a far more central role in the company's evolution than now appears justified. Inevitably, they privileged the Russian creations over Diaghilev's avant-garde French productions. In Paris, Lifar and his associates at the centre of Russian émigré society, also emphasized the Russian aspects in *Serge Diaghilev: His Life, His Work, His Legend: An Intimate Biography* (1940), which reinforced Lifar's line of succession as Director of the Paris Opéra Ballet.

This perspective remained unquestioned until Nesta MacDonald's investigation of newspaper reports in *Diaghilev Observed by Critics in England and the United States: 1911-1929* (1975) and Lynn Garafola's analysis of the company's business dealings in *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (1989). It was not until 2009 that the first complete biography of Diaghilev was published – Sjeng Scheijen's *Diaghilev: A Life* – detailing his early years in Russia and presenting a fully rounded perspective of the man. Comprehensive itineraries of the company's extensive tours were also published in the same year, providing a clearer picture of what was performed and just how far its members travelled.<sup>15</sup>

It has been an ongoing frustration that Diaghilev's Ballets Russes were never officially filmed. Diaghilev wrote a clause into his contracts that forbade dancers from performing in front of the camera.<sup>16</sup> There is a certain irony in this, since several of Massine's ballets, including *Parade* and *The Good-Humoured Ladies*, were influenced by film characters or techniques, and Massine used film to assist in his studies of Spanish dance leading to the creation of *Le Tricorne*. In addition, from 1910 to the late 1920s several of Diaghilev's dancers, including Vera Karelli, Anna Pavlova,



146. Lubov Tchernicheva, Frederick Ashton, Tamara Karsavina, Ninette de Valois, Margot Fonteyn, Serge Grigoriev and Harijs Plucis after a rehearsal of *The Firebird*, 1954. Photograph by Douglas Elston. Private collection

Opposite  
147. Walter Nouvel, Serge Diaghilev and Serge Lifar on the Lido, Venice, August 1927. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections



Tamara Karsavina and Lydia Kyasht, performed in feature films in Russia, Hollywood, Germany and Britain respectively.<sup>17</sup> Preliminary plans to film the Ballets Russes were made on three separate occasions. Soon after the debut of Diaghilev's company at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris in 1909, it was hoped that the Polovtsian Dances from *Prince Igor* would be recorded. As Prince Peter Lieven recalled: 'Everything was arranged, a field was found outside Paris to represent the Russian Steppes, and a day was fixed. Unfortunately, at the last moment the scheme collapsed over money matters, and a valuable and very interesting document was thus lost.'<sup>18</sup> On 29 December 1921, *The Times* announced the forthcoming filming of *The Sleeping Princess* in colour with synchronized music, but this also came to nothing. Correspondence in the V&A's Ekstrom Archive indicates that the USA tour planned for the autumn of 1928 or 1929 was to have included a period of filming the company's repertoire using film with sound, but none of these arrangements were ever realized.

Given that in America an awareness of Russian ballet coincided with the development of film it is little surprise that on the silver screen most ballerinas are 'Russian'. But it was really the idea of Diaghilev as a Svengali figure that intrigued film producers. This becomes evident with the 1931 Warner Brothers film *The Mad Genius*, choreographed by Adolph Bolm, in which John Barrymore plays a cripple who nurtures a talented boy dancer, only to destroy him when he falls for a ballerina. It instigated a succession of ballet films leading to the famous 1948 Emeric Pressburger and Michael Powell production, *The Red Shoes*. While providing inspiration for film-makers, Diaghilev and Nijinsky did not appear as characters in film until Herbert Ross's 1980 film *Nijinsky*; the challenge of finding performers to evoke such personalities delayed the recording for decades.<sup>19</sup>

The lack of film material meant that makers of documentaries turned to recordings of ballets created for the Ballets Russes as danced by later companies. The entertaining documentary, *Ballets Russes* (2005) by Dayan Goldfine and Dan Geller, is enriched by footage from 'home movies' recorded by J. Ringling Anderson during the 1930s tours in Australia. From the 1950s a number Ballets Russes creations were recorded for television and film, often in stagings by Serge Grigoriev and his wife Lubov Tchernicheva. For example, *The Firebird* danced by The Royal Ballet was recorded by both Paul Czinner in colour on film in a stage setting with Margot Fonteyn in the title role, and by Margaret Dale in a careful adaptation for black and white television starring Nadia Nerina. One of the best television recordings of a ballet remains Bob Lockyer's *Les Noces* in a programme that also showed Nijinska at work in the studio. Lockyer had been the picture researcher on the most significant television recording concerning the Ballets Russes, John Drummond's two-part *Omnibus* entitled *Diaghilev: The Years Abroad and The Years in Exile* (1968). Made over a period of two years, Drummond began by persuading dancers, particularly Karsavina and Sokolova, to appear on camera in old age

and went on to interview 18 individuals who participated in or witnessed the Ballets Russes. He allowed their words, supported by designs, photographic images and music, to convey the complexity of the man and the atmosphere of the company. Rightly, he refused to have other dancers impersonate performers of the Ballets Russes: 'I am convinced that a still photograph of Nijinsky is more eloquent than any other dancer dancing' (pl.148).<sup>20</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century the influence of the Ballets Russes, its designers, ballets and dancers reached unlikely places. In the 1920s, although the Ballets Russes never visited Asia, designs by Léon Bakst were printed on fabrics in Japan, and a teashop in London was named 'The Good-Humoured Ladies'. Not only did Osbert Lancaster satirize the first Russian period of interior decoration, that style also became evident in set design for Amanda's flat in the National Theatre's 1999 production of Noel Coward's *Private Lives*. Indeed the myth of Nijinsky has resonated beyond the world of dance. The racehorse named after him, ridden by Lester Piggott, won the English Triple Crown and was voted by *Sun* readers as the 'horse of the millennium'.

Since 1989 (60 years after Diaghilev's death), and with the growth of Glasnost and the fall of the Berlin Wall, new opportunities to study the Ballets Russes have opened up. This is particularly so in Russia, where Diaghilev's reputation has grown with a greater understanding of his contribution to the arts in the rest of Europe and the Americas. In 2003 a regular festival of performances and events, *Diaghilev Seasons*, began in Perm in the Urals, and in 2009, to celebrate the centenary of the Ballets Russes, there was a major exhibition in Moscow, and a festival in St Petersburg. In March 2010 it was announced that the British architect David Chipperfield would renovate and extend the Perm Opera House and Ballet Theatre, to create an appropriate memorial to one of the city's most famous citizens.

Today there are still a few people in Britain who can recall seeing the Ballets Russes in its last years in the late 1920s, but the majority of us rely on the music, pictures, costumes, archives and interviews to evoke this fascinating chapter in the evolution of the performing arts. Diaghilev and the artists he cajoled into creating some of their finest work continue to inspire their successors in many walks of life. More than ever, it seems that the composer Sergei Prokofiev was prescient in his observation that Diaghilev was 'a giant ... whose dimensions increase the more he recedes into the distance'.<sup>21</sup>

148. Signed photograph of Vaslav Nijinsky in *Le Spectre de la rose*, 1911. Photograph by Bert. Marie Rambert said 'When he danced *Spectre*, he was the very perfume of the rose, because in everything he extracted the essence.' V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections THM/165



## DIAGHILEV'S DEATH

*Nina Lobanov-Rostovsky*

Serge Diaghilev died in Venice at the Grand Hotel des Bains on 19 August 1929. His death signalled the end of an extraordinarily creative 20 years in the history of ballet, music and stage design. In addition to the dancers, choreographers, musicians and painters whom he discovered and nurtured, he left a legacy of uncompromising ideas and ideals for dance, which still influence us today. His death was front-page news in Europe and the USA, and numerous obituaries and reminiscences appeared in the countries in which the Ballets Russes had danced. In the USSR his death was mentioned in only one journal devoted to literature and art.

Two days later, a large funerary gondola containing Diaghilev's coffin

set off from the Grand Hotel on the Lido, followed by two other gondolas transporting a few close friends, among them: Boris Kochno, Serge Lifar, Coco Chanel, Misia Sert and Diaghilev's cousin Pavel Koribut. They headed across the lagoon for the island of San Michele where Diaghilev was buried in the Greek Orthodox section of the cemetery. A Greek Orthodox priest held a brief service during which a grief-stricken Lifar had to be restrained from throwing himself into the grave. Diaghilev's tomb, designed by the Greek artist Paolo P. Rodoconachi, was erected in the late summer or autumn of 1931. It is engraved with the words: '*Venise, inspiratrice éternelle de nos apaisements*' (Venice, source of peace). According

to Lifar, Alexandre Benois suggested the quotation, which comes from Théophile Gautier.

Diaghilev fell deeply in love with Venice on his first trip there aged 18, and returned repeatedly for his summer holidays during the last 20 years of his life. Like many others before him, Diaghilev saw Venice as a fantastic stage. His hero Richard Wagner had died there and Diaghilev was convinced that he too would end his days in the city, predicting this as early as 1902 in a letter to his beloved stepmother.

Diaghilev died suddenly of blood poisoning. He was bedridden for the last week of his life, nursed devotedly by a former lover Boris Kochno and one of his last lovers Serge Lifar. It is mistakenly believed that he died penniless. In fact

he had a large sum of money in the hotel safe, which he asked Kochno to withdraw and re-deposit in his name. He had also assembled an important and valuable collection of Russian books, pictures and letters, which later went to Kochno and Lifar. Furthermore, the summer of 1929 was one of the few times in his hectic professional life that Diaghilev could have relaxed without financial worries. The 1928 season had been successful in every way, and good contracts were signed for 1929.

In later years, Diaghilev's close friend Misia Sert reminisced about the last time she saw him, on the eve of his death. He was lying upon his bed dressed in his dinner jacket. It was terribly hot: 'We evoked old memories and you then said to me – you who had

discovered one after another all the composers who were to influence and shake up the music of our time – that your secret favourites were Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* and Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*.<sup>1</sup> Diaghilev's temperature soared and he was only semi-lucid towards the end, but he hummed and sang snatches of these two favourite works. He died as he had lived, celebrating music.

<sup>1</sup> *Ballets russes de Diaghilev. 1909 à 1929, 1939*, p.10.



*Left*  
Diaghilev's funeral gondola.

*Left, below*  
Diaghilev laid out on his deathbed, 21 August 1929. Archives Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, Serge Lifar Collection

*Opposite, left*  
Diaghilev's grave on the island of San Michele, Venice, Italy.

*Opposite, right*  
Diaghilev's final complete hotel bill, from the Grand Hotel des Bains, Venice, 1929. V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections THM/7/4/5/50





NOTES AND  
REFERENCES

# B

## SERGE DIAGHILEV AND THE STRANGE BIRTH OF THE BALLETS RUSSES

*Geoffrey Marsh*

- 1 Held in the Tauride Palace, St Petersburg 19 March–9 October 1905 with settings designed by Léon Bakst. The exhibition contained over 4,000 portraits. See Scheijen 2009, p.132.
- 2 On 17 February 1905. Grand Duke Sergei was Governor General of Moscow from 1891–1905.
- 3 *Vesy* (1905), no.4, pp.45–6.
- 4 On 22 January 1905, troops stationed outside the Winter Palace fired into a huge crowd of over 200,000 peaceful demonstrators, killing and wounding hundreds.
- 5 Almost all such posts were part of the Imperial bureaucracy with most organizations formally led by the tsar or one of his numerous relatives. Ironically, following the overthrow of the tsar in 1917, Diaghilev was invited to become Minister of Culture by Kerensky's provisional government. However, by then he was fully occupied with the Ballets Russes and declined the offer.
- 6 Zilbershteyn and Samkov 1982, ii, p.335.
- 7 In 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903 and 1906. For precise dates see O. Brezgin, 'Sergei Diaghilev: A Chronology', in Boulton, Tregulova and Giordano 2009, pp.313–16.
- 8 Established in 1898 with Alexandre Benois, Léon Bakst and Diaghilev's cousin Dima Filosofov.
- 9 On 22 September 1899 he was appointed Special Projects Administrator under Prince Volkonsky, Director of the Imperial Theatres. There he produced the well-regarded Year Book in 1900 for the 1899/1900 season. He was fired in March 1901 from this post and from all future government service after upsetting key figures in the Establishment. The latter penalty was removed by Imperial Decree on 31 January 1902 and Diaghilev received a post in the tsar's personal chancery. See Scheijen 2009, p.121.
- 10 He was also an accomplished academic researcher and writer. His monograph *Russian Painting in the Eighteenth Century: D.G. Levitsky*, published in April 1902, was given the Supreme Uvarov Award by the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1904.
- 11 For a vivid impression of the city see Andrei Bely's *Petersburg*, first published in 1916, which captures the febrile atmosphere in this period.
- 12 The Imperial Theatres, providing drama, opera and dance in St Petersburg and Moscow, were a department of the Imperial bureaucracy.
- 13 On his accession he apparently stated: 'What am I going to do? I am not prepared to be a Tsar. I never wanted to become one.' See Figs 1996, p.18.
- 14 For example, the Holy Synod banned the performance of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, see Scheijen 2009, p.177.
- 15 Culminating in the 'Bolshevik' uprising in Moscow in December 1905 when over 1,000 people were killed. It was followed by mass arrests and summary executions. See Figs 1996, p.201.
- 16 The victory established Japan as the world's sixth strongest naval power while the Russian navy declined to being barely stronger than that of Austro-Hungary.
- 17 In February there had been protests at the Conservatoire, which led to its director Rimsky-Korsakov being fired. Among the 12 delegates elected by the strikers were Anna Pavlova, Tamara Karsavina and Mikhail Fokine, all of whom were to work for the Ballets Russes. See Garafola 1989, pp.3–5.
- 18 Letter to Benois, 16 October 1905, quoted in Scheijen 2009, p.138.
- 19 The title and date of Repin's painting is given in old style. It promised personal immunity and freedom of religion, speech, assembly and association. It also proposed broad participation in the Lower House of Parliament (Duma), the introduction of universal male suffrage and acceptance that no law should come into force without the consent of the Duma.
- 20 In the preliminary sketch, now in the State Central Museum of Contemporary Political History of Russia, Repin gave prominence to a marching band of sailors. Their removal in the final version accentuates the bourgeois mix of professors, intellectuals, students and middle-class women with the workers relegated to the background.
- 21 See Lifar 1940, p.160. Diaghilev's aunt, Anna Filosofova, was a noted radical and campaigner for women's rights.
- 22 Brother of the famous dancer Nicolas Legat. He was a teacher of Nijinsky and married to Marius Petipa's daughter Marie.
- 23 This included an annual subsidy from 1900 of 15,000 roubles a year for *Mir iskusstva* reduced to 10,000 roubles from 1903. There was also a subsidy for the 1905 portrait exhibition.
- 24 Letter to Benois, quoted in Scheijen 2009, p.138.
- 25 'I closed the exhibition almost without any scenes ... But I am not sure the pictures sent back will get to their right places! ... but at present I am just tediously and dully waiting for events without knowing where they will take one', Scheijen 2009, p.137. Many of the portraits were subsequently destroyed in the upheavals of 1905–21.
- 26 By the end of 1905 Russia was effectively bankrupt. On 16 April 1906 the largest-ever Russian loan of 2,250 million francs was raised in Paris with British support. There was concerted political opposition from the Left who claimed the loan would just support political repression. Gorky famously wrote: 'I spit in your eyes, beautiful France!'
- 27 Until 1891 Russia's international strategy had been based on alliance with Germany. However, the growing belligerence of the Kaiser led to a reassessment and a growing rapprochement with France. This was sealed by a military pact in December 1893. From then on Russia's rapid industrial expansion became increasingly

dependent on French investment. See Lincoln 1983, p.17.

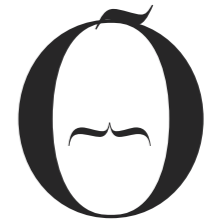
- 28 The effectiveness of this strategy is revealed in the writings of Sir Arthur Nicholson of the British Foreign Office in 1914. 'I wish indeed that we could bring the feelings of the public in this country in a similar state towards Russia as they are towards France ... You may laugh at me for saying so, [but] both the Russian ballet and the Russian opera have done good. Knowledge of Russian literature too is tending to show that Russians are not such barbarians as most people tend to think', letter to the British Ambassador, Berlin, 17 April 1914, in Nicholson Papers, FO 800/373.
- 29 See Rimsky-Korsakov 1942, p.436, quoted in Garafola 1989, p.171.
- 30 The idea may have originated with Benois, see Scheijen 2009, p.148. The Salon d'Automne was started in 1903 by a group of painters and sculptors led by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Auguste Rodin, Albert Marquet, Georges Rouault, André Derain and Henri Matisse as an alternative to the strict conservative policies of the official Paris Salon.
- 31 Duma elections took place from mid-March to late April, with the opening on 27 April. By then political reaction was setting in with a crackdown on the press in late March, and 70 per cent of country remained under martial law. That Diaghilev was abroad at this time gives an indication of his interest in domestic politics.
- 32 I am indebted to Sjeng Scheijen for this information. These were the so-called Intercalated Games, which were considered a major success after the relative failures in Paris (1900) and St Louis (1904) where the games were overshadowed by the concurrent International Exhibitions. Medals were awarded as normal but these Games were subsequently 'demoted'.
- 33 In 1906 the Greek railway system was not yet connected to the European network. Diaghilev seems to have taken a boat from Constantinople to Athens.
- 34 The artists Léon Bakst and Valentin Serov, who were both fascinated by Greece, undertook a major tour around this time.
- 35 In architecture, sculpture, painting, literature and music.
- 36 Due to the eruption of Vesuvius on 7 April 1906, the Rome Games were cancelled and moved to London where they were combined with the Franco-British Exhibition at the White City.
- 37 The countess's account of her meeting with Diaghilev, given in Lifar 1940, pp.167–8, places the date in June 1906 when he had only just arranged his painting show. In October a concert of Russian music was presented to coincide with the Russian painting exhibition.
- 38 In 1906, Diaghilev had also met Gabriel Astruc a leading French-Jewish music promoter and

publisher in Paris. Astruc provided a strong organizational base in Paris and probably did much to boost Diaghilev's confidence in the viability of promoting performing arts events. He was also helped by Robert Brussel, the music critic of *Le Figaro*.

- 39 The first concert was attended by four grand dukes and the Russian ambassador. As soon as the 1907 season was over, Diaghilev began to plan for a full opera season in 1908, to showcase *Boris Gudonov* starring Chaliapin.
- 40 Buckle 1979, pp.95–101, gives a detailed description of the concerts.
- 41 Along with the other major European countries, Russia's empire expanded throughout the later nineteenth century through a mixture of conquests, protectorates and other agreements.
- 42 It is not certain exactly when Diaghilev left St Petersburg but he was in Paris on 23 December 1906.
- 43 For most Europeans, Russia was simply remote and undeveloped. By contrast, Paris was recognized as the international city *par excellence*. This reputation was actively promoted by the series of great international exhibitions in 1855, 1867, 1878, 1889 and 1900, which attracted millions of visitors, including, in 1900, Diaghilev.
- 44 The sources of Diaghilev's income are obscure for much of his life. In 1895 he inherited 60,000 roubles from his mother on coming of age. However, much of this seems to have been spent on paintings and furniture for his apartment. Like many cultural entrepreneurs Diaghilev was probably adept at 'top slicing' gifts and subsidies to give him the income to cover his own requirements.
- 45 Letter of 1928, quoted in Lifar 1940, pp.176–7. Also during 1899–1901, he worked on the abortive production of Delibes's ballet *Sylvia*.
- 46 The events at this time are complicated. See Scheijen 2009, pp.177–82. The sudden death of Grand Duke Vladimir, who had been Diaghilev's key protector at court in February 1909, was undoubtedly a severe blow. Arguably this was the key turning point for Diaghilev. His critical success in 1909, despite these problems, must have been a huge boost to his confidence and gave him the resolve to fight Astruc's temporary efforts in late 1909 to force him out of Paris.
- 47 Performing Arts Section, New York Public Library, Astruc Papers, telegram 6 April 1909.
- 48 The rehearsals, which started on 15 April 1909, are often taken as the starting point of the company. In reality, Diaghilev was hiring the tsar's dancers during their vacations from the Imperial Ballet. It was only after two ballet seasons that, in the autumn of 1910, Diaghilev decided to establish his own permanent company and began signing contracts with key individuals.
- 49 He did seek renewed subsidy from the tsar in 1910 but was ultimately rebuffed.

50 He organized exhibitions of ballet-related designs on several occasions.

- 51 Diaghilev would also have been well aware that 1913 was the tercentenary of the Romanov dynasty, which would have been a great opportunity to show off his Ballets Russes, particularly in Moscow, if he could secure a venue.
- 52 Buckle suggests this was his last visit (Buckle 1979, p.272). Scheijen presents evidence that he may have returned briefly as late as August 1914, following the death of his father (Scheijen 2009, p.303). Thereafter, Diaghilev largely lived in hotels although he did rent an apartment in Paris in the late 1920s to house his outstanding book collection.
- 53 Although there were various successor companies, the Ballets Russes came to an end with his death.
- 54 Letter of 30 August 1929, Nouvel to Stravinsky, quoted in Scheijen 2009, p.443.



## DIAGHILEV THE MAN

*Sjeng Scheijen*

- 1 Heyman 1997, p.109.
- 2 Letter from Serge Diaghilev to V.V. fon Mekh, 9 January 1900. N.L. Prijmak, 'Pis'ma S.P. Diaghileva v.v. Fon Mekku', in Belyaeva 1987, p.131.
- 3 From a letter to his stepmother. S.P. Diaghilev to E.V. Diaghileva, 22 August 1902, Institute of Russian Literature, St Petersburg, fond 102, ed. khr. 84, L406-7.
- 4 These architects were the Austrian, J.M. Olbrich, and the Scot, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Dmitry Filosofov, 'Sovremennoe Iskusstvo i Kolokol'nja Sv. Marka', in Filosofov 2004, p.237.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp.243–5.
- 6 Zilbershteyn and Samkov 1982, ii, pp.463–4. The document referred to is located in the manuscript division of the Russian National Library in St Petersburg, fond 124 d. khr. 1608e.
- 7 For an extensive description of the career of Diaghilev's father in the army see Panchulidzeva 2008, p. 258.
- 8 The declaration of bankruptcy and the subsequent auctions are published in the *Permskiye gubernskiye vedomosti*, nos 76, 78, 87, 97, 102, between 22 September and 22 December 1890.
- 9 The source for this story is Diaghilev himself, who told it to many people including a journalist. See 'Around the world with the Russian Ballet', a previously unpublished interview with Serge Diaghilev in *Dance Magazine* (September 1979).
- 10 S.P. Diaghilev to L.N. Tolstoy, 19 March 1893, ORGMT (Tolstoy Museum, Moscow), fond. 1, op. 2, 148/139.
- 11 Diaghilev to Diaghileva, 14 October 1892, Institute of Russian Literature, St Petersburg, fond 102, ed. khr. 84, L23–4.
- 12 Telyakovsky 2002, p.439.
- 13 Aleksandr Benua, *dnepniki* 1906, diary entry of 4–8 June in *Nashe Nasledie* (2008), no.86.
- 14 Harry Graf Kessler, diary entry of 30 October 1911. Kessler 2005, pp.734–5.
- 15 Lopokova to Keynes, 14 January 1924. Hill and Keynes 1989, p.141.
- 16 Drummond 1997, p.301.
- 17 Serge Diaghilev to Yelena Diaghileva, 19 November 1893, Institute of Russian Literature, St Petersburg, fond 102, ed. khr. 87, p.18 (427).

# B

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF BALLET

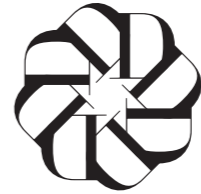
*Jane Pritchard*

- 1 Igor Stravinsky, 'The Diaghilev I Knew', *The Atlantic Monthly* (November 1953), vol.192 (5), pp.33–6.
- 2 'The Russian Influence on English Art', *Tatler* (2 December 1914), pp.202–3.
- 3 This was hardly surprising in British productions, most of which were presented in music halls under the 1843 Theatres Regulation Act which remained in operation until 1912 and forbade the presentation of narrative works in theatres licensed as music halls.
- 4 *Féeries* were entertainments, often but not exclusively derived from fairy tales, incorporating two or three ballets on specific themes. Among the most successful were *The Black Crook* (which in an 1866 adaptation in the USA would contribute to the development of the American musical) and Jacques Offenbach's *Le Voyage dans la lune* (1875). *Voyage*, with its acclaimed 'Snow Ballet' by Henri Justamant, was presented internationally, launching a flurry of ballets on the same theme including the 'Land of Snow' in the Imperial Ballet's *The Nutcracker*, a ballet that was at its premiere condemned, in spite of Tchaikovsky's score, for being like a *féerie*.
- 5 For example in 1918, the Ballets Russes was rescued from collapse by Oswald Stoll inviting Diaghilev to present his company at the London Coliseum. Although Diaghilev felt that performing in variety was a come down, the Coliseum in the 1910s and 1920s was London's primary dance house.
- 6 The post-Romantic ballet did not die with the advent of the Ballets Russes, indeed in 1922–3, when the company first made Monte Carlo its base, Diaghilev's dancers had to participate in ballets produced by M. Belloni such as *Coppélia*, *La Korrigane* and *Les Deux pigeons*, a curious mixture of old ballets and new dancers.
- 7 See Giannandrea Poesio, trans. Anthony Brierley, 'The Story of the Fighting Dancers', *Dance Research* (Spring 1990), VIII (1), pp.28–36.
- 8 André Levinson, in Beaumont 1930, p.xi.
- 9 *La Bayadère*, created at the Bolshoi Theatre, St Petersburg on 4 February 1877, included the hero's drug-induced multiple vision of the ghost of his beloved temple dancer. 'Ballet blanc' is a commonly used shorthand reference for the scenes in nineteenth-century ballet in which the corps de ballet, usually representing visions, ghosts and spirits is dressed in pale colours, if not actually in white.
- 10 The divertissements that Diaghilev presented under the title *Le Festin* included dances to music by Russian nationalist composers; in its 1909 form: Mikhail Glinka, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Alexander Glazunov and Modest Mussorgsky.
- 11 Carlotta Brianza toured in the United States for the Kiralfy Brothers (1883–4) before achieving fame in Europe in 1886 dancing in *Brahma* and

- Vivienne* at the Eden-théâtre, Paris. After *Excelsior* at the Arcadia Theatre, St Petersburg (1887) she starred in 'music-hall' ballets choreographed by Katti Lanner at the Empire Theatre, London, and in 1888 creating the title role in *Dilara*. Brianza danced in St Petersburg on a number of occasions, commuting in the 1890s between the Maryinsky, St Petersburg, the Eden-théâtre, the Empire and La Scala. Brianza then danced at the Théâtre royal de la Monnaie, Brussels (1902) and at the Opéra Comique, Paris (1903–4).
- 12 Ballets by Marius Petipa included *La Bayadère* (1877), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890) and, with his assistant Lev Ivanov, contributions to *The Nutcracker* (1892) and *Swan Lake* (1895).
  - 13 Gorsky never choreographed for Diaghilev although there were plans for him to create a ballet to music by Nikolai Tcherpnin based on Edgar Allan Poe's *The Mask of the Red Death* in 1913. A czardas (a Hungarian dance) he choreographed was included in *Le Festin*.
  - 14 In productions by Stanislavsky (1863–1938) actors appeared as rounded characters and the crowd became a collection of individuals rather than a uniform chorus.
  - 15 In St Petersburg, extracts from *Sylvia* Act II had been danced by Antoinette del'Era at the Arcadia Theatre in 1886 and the complete ballet seen in Georgio Saracco's production starring Adelina Rossi at the Mikhailovsky Theatre.
  - 16 *Sylvia* had been presented as a full evening's entertainment at its premiere at the Théâtre national de l'Opéra, Paris, in 1876, choreographed by Louis Mérante. Within a decade it was being performed in the USA and Vienna.
  - 17 This last was choreographed by the Legat brothers and was the first ballet designed by Léon Bakst. Possibly, because Diaghilev had found this work charming, he used it as the basis for his *La Boutique fantasque* 16 years later, which premiered at the Alhambra, London to enormous acclaim. London had seen earlier adaptations of *Die Puppenfee* including *The Dancing Doll* at the Empire Theatre in 1905 and Anna Pavlova's *The Fairy Doll*.
  - 18 Diaghilev's company gave its first performance at Monte Carlo on 6 April 1911; previous performances were given by artists on leave from the Imperial Theatres.
  - 19 Letter from Diaghilev to a French journalist, in which he states that the costumes for Boris Godunov will be 'exact replicas ... based on ... the famous engraving *The Embassy of Ivan the Terrible to Emperor Maximilian* ... The accessories are from authentic documents shut away in the secret rooms of the Moscow museums.' I am grateful to Lynn Garafola for drawing my attention to the letter in the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (NYPL (S)\*MGZMC-res.10).

- 20 Charles Kean (1811–1868) was an actor-manager whose antiquarian revivals of plays had designs for sets and costumes based on archaeological and historical evidence to give them a 'reality' and magnificence. His most famous productions included Byron's *Sardanopolis* (1853), Sheridan's *Pizarro* (1856) and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1858).
- 21 The Théâtre du Châtelet, built close to the Seine, had a long tradition of water effects.
- 22 The horses appear to have been cut during the first run and by the ballet's return bold *jetés* or jumps replaced the flying at the start of the ballet, although the Firebird was still 'hovering' over the coronation finale when the ballet was first performed in London in 1912.
- 23 The Ekstrom Collection includes payments to dancers and staff including some extras – see V&A: THM/7/4/2. The account book for the 1913 season (V&A: THM/7/4/2/33) gives information on the chorus from the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, employed in the season's operas.
- 24 Following on from the romantic ballet *La Sylphide* (1832) there were numerous divertissement ballets called *Les Sylphides*, including one performed at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in 1861. In Stockholm in 1897, just two years after the Glazunov arrangements of Chopin's Polonaise, Nocturne, Mazurka and Tarantella were published, Max Glaseman choreographed *Chopiniana* adding a Waltz to the arrangement just as Fokine did for his first version in 1906. Prior to Fokine's ballet a *Chopin Tänze* was created in Vienna in 1905. Obviously any discussion of the use of Chopin has to take in Isadora Duncan's use of Chopin's music. See Nesta MacDonald, 'Isadora, Chopin & Fokine', *Dance and Dancers* (December 1983), pp.30–32.
- 25 After 1917 Monte Carlo provided a refuge for Russians escaping the Revolution contributing a logic to the Ballets Russes long residencies there in the 1920s. For the émigrés it was surely a nostalgic evening when in 1924 the Ballets Russes star, Vera Trefilova, performed in *Swan Lake*. For all his concern with novelty, Diaghilev would use the past to his advantage.
- 26 Lydia Kyasht, sister of George, was a contemporary of Tamara Karsavina at the Imperial Ballet School graduating in 1902. She became ballerina at the Empire Theatre, London in 1908–13 and later made the London Coliseum her primary performance base. She remained in Britain establishing her own company. She danced with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes for its winter tour 1912–13, including the title role of the Firebird, and again for Diaghilev's 1919 season at the Alhambra, London.
- 27 Tamara Karsavina and Theodore Kosloff presented a divertissement at the London Coliseum, 28 June–7 August, 1909, their

- troupe also involving Maria Baldina, Alexis Kosloff, Georges Rosay, Nicolai Kremnev, Leonide Leontiev and Alexander Orloff, all of whom had danced for Diaghilev. Their success was such that Karsavina and Kosloff signed to return the following summer from 16 May–23 July and Karsavina had to beg special leave to perform with Diaghilev in Paris as the Firebird.
- 28 Among the early ventures by Russian dancers in the USA were Anna Pavlova's tours, and during the 1911–12 season the All-Star Imperial Ballet and Gertrude Hoffmann's Saison Russe.
  - 29 The Grande Saison Russe Opéras et Ballets at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt appears to have run from 2 May–6 June 1911. The announced repertoire included the opera *La Roussálka* (Dargomyński), *The Demon* (Rubinstein), *La Fiancée du Tsar*, *La Nuit de Mai* (both Rimsky-Korsakov) and *The Queen of Spades* and *Eugene Onegin* by Tchaikovsky, and ballets *The Enchanted Forest* (Ivanoff) and extracts from *The Little Hump-backed Horse*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake* as well as a divertissement. The ballet company was led by Lubov Egorova, Julie Sedova, Marie Piltz and Nicolas Legat.
  - 30 The Russians in London during 1911 included Anna Pavlova and company at The Palace, Olga Preobrajenska and a company of 20 presenting *Swan Lake* and a divertissement at The Hippodrome, and stars from the Bolshoi in Moscow performed *The Dance Dream* (a potpourri of choreography from productions by Alexander Gorsky arranged by him into a new ballet) at the Alhambra Theatre.



## CREATING PRODUCTIONS

*Jane Pritchard*

- 1 Tamara Karsavina in Drummond 1997, p.85.
- 2 Beverley Nichols, 'Woad! Celebrities in Undress: XIV – Diaghilev', *The Sketch* (30 June 1926), p.526.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Hanna Järvinen, 'The Russian Barnum: Russian Opinions on Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, 1909–1914', *Dance Research* (2008), vol.26 (1), pp.18–41.
- 5 Brian Blackwood, 'The Black Notebook of Serge Diaghilev', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations* (October 1971), pp.345–56.
- 6 Nabokov 1951, p.75.
- 7 Richard Alston 'Collaborations' in Rupert Martin, *Artists Design for Dance 1909–1984* (exhib. cat., Bristol, 1984), p.52.
- 8 Henri Sauguet in Drummond 1997, pp.233–4.
- 9 Fokine 1961, p.183.
- 10 Fokine's reforms were presented his letter to *The Times* of 6 July 1914 reproduced in Beaumont 1945, which also translates and reproduces Fokine's 'The New Ballet', *Argus* (1916), vol.1.
- 11 Fokine 1961, p.149.
- 12 Beaumont in Drummond 1997, p.126.
- 13 Deborah Howard, 'A Sumptuous Revival: Bakst's Designs for Diaghilev's Sleeping Princess', *Apollo* (1970), vol.XCI (98), pp.301–8.
- 14 Edward Ricco, 'The Sitwells at the Ballet', *Ballet Review* (1977–8), vol.6 (1).
- 15 John Reeve (1799–1838) was a comic actor and *bon viveur* whose popularity was reflected in numerous theatrical prints. In 1832 he appeared as the eponymous Cupid in a light-hearted production described as a 'Burlatta Burlesqued' initially at the Olympic and then the Adelphi theatres in London. Prints of him in this role show him initially in a simple white tunic and ballet shoes, dancing *en pointe* on the head of a sunflower. Mme Auriol (d.1862) was a dancer who regularly featured as Columbine in the harlequinades at the end of pantomimes.
- 16 Ekstrom Collection, Theatre & Performance Collections, V&A: THM/7/2/1/225.
- 17 Sokolova 1960, pp.70–2.
- 18 Nicoletta Misler, 'Siamese Dancing and the Ballets Russes', in Baer 1988, pp.78–83.
- 19 Kenneth Archer, 'A Modern Ming Fantasy with Traces of Tibet: Matisse's Designs for Le Chant du Rossignol', in *Reconstruction: Le Chant du Rossignol* (Theatre Programme, London, 2004).
- 20 Other productions for which poems or songs provided inspiration included *Thamar*, with a narrative based on Mikhail Lermontov's poem concerning the Georgian Queen who lured passers-by to their deaths, and *Barabau*. Conversely, it was Debussy's score for *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* rather than Nijinsky's choreography that was inspired by Stéphane Mallarmé.
- 21 Idzikovski's leaving and rejoining the Ballets Russes is documented in correspondence in the Cyril Beaumont Archive, Theatre & Performance

- Collections, V&A: THM/239, and the Ekstrom Collection, Theatre & Performance Collections, V&A: THM/7/1/2/11/3.
- 22 Nectoux 1989, pp.18–22.
  - 23 Edwin Evans, 'Ballet Memories', *Radio Times* (25 June 1937), p.9.
  - 24 Beaumont in Drummond 1997, pp.127–8.
  - 25 Karsavina in Drummond 1997, p.98.
  - 26 Dolin 1953, p.110.
  - 27 Buckle 1979, p.420.
  - 28 Ekstrom Collection, Theatre & Performance Collections, V&A: THM/7/4/4.
  - 29 *Grace Lovat Fraser Remembers* (BBC Radio 1962).
  - 30 Allegri painted sets for *Le Pavillon d'Armide*. Annisfeld painted the sets for *Prince Igor*, *Cléopâtre*, *Le Carnaval*, *Les Orientales*, *Petrushka* and the first production of *Sadko*, which he also designed. Both Allegri and Annisfeld contributed to *Giselle*. Other scene painters included Nikolai Charbé, G. Golov, Peter Lambin, Nikolai Sapunov, Serge Sudeikin and Stepan Yaremich.
  - 31 The sets painted by Vladimir and Elizabeth Polunin for Diaghilev include *La Boutique fantasque*, *Cléopâtre*, *The Good-Humoured Ladies*, *Le Tricorne*, *Pulcinella*, *Le Astuzie Femminili*, *Les Tentations de la bergère* and *Mercur*. Those by Schervashidze included: *Les Fâcheux*, *Zéphire et Flore*, *Les Matelots*, *Barabau*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *La Pastorale*, *Jack-in-the-Box*, *Triumph of Neptune*, *Apollon musagète* and *The Prodigal Son*, as well as the front cloth for *Le Train bleu*.
  - 32 Brigitte Léal. 'The Polunin Album' in Clair and Michael 1998, 106–11.



## LÉON BAKST, NATALIA GONCHAROVA AND PABLO PICASSO

*John E. Bowlt*

- 1 Léon Bakst, 'The Theatre of the Future', *Music Magazine* (1911), no.5, p.9.
- 2 St Petersburg State Museum of Theatre and Music; Theatre & Performance Collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Musée de l'Opéra, Paris; Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, New York; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford.
- 3 M. Larionov, 'The Art of Stage Decoration', *Continental Daily Mail* (13 December 1949).
- 4 On Bakst see, for example: Schouvaloff 1991; on Goncharova: *M. Larionov. N. Goncharova* 1999; and *Mikhail Larionov. Natal'ia Goncharova* 1999; on Picasso and the stage: Cooper 1967.
- 5 Movshenson 1960, p.68.
- 6 Parts of Bakst's novel, 'Zhlestokaiia pervaiia liubov', the manuscript of which is in the Department of Manuscripts at the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (Call No. f. 111, ed khr. 2337–2338), will be published in the forthcoming collection of Bakst's writings edited by Elena Terkel, Olga Kovaleva and John E. Bowlt (Iskusstvo XXI vek, Moscow).
- 7 Bakst 1911, pp.8–9.
- 8 From an interview with Bakst conducted by Rose Strunsky dated Paris, 29 July [1915] and entitled 'Léon Bakst on the Modern Ballet. Art is strong when it is too young to be weakened by civilization; it is great enough to conquer when it is sincere – This is the faith of the artist who has expressed in line and color the gorgeous emotions of the Russian ballet', *New York Tribune* (5 September 1915), Special Feature Section, front page.
- 9 See, for example, 'Nagota na stsene Beseda s L.S. Bakstom o vystupleniiaakh A. Dunkan i I. Rubinshtein', *Peterburgskaia gazeta* (10 December 1909).
- 10 See A. Potemkin, 'Krasota ili pornografiia? Kvystupleniui Ol'gi Desmond', *Peterburgskaia gazeta* (20 November 1908).
- 11 Letter from Bakst to Walter Nouvel dated 3 November 1897, Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, Moscow (Call No. f. 938, op. 1, ed. khr. 46, I. 66).
- 12 Anon., 'Gowns of Two Sexes: Women's Dress Masculine by Day, Feminine in Evening', *Daily Mirror* (3 April 1913).
- 13 L. Bakst, 'O sovremennom teatre. "Nikto v teatre bof'she ne khochet slushat, a khochet videt!"', *Petersburgskaia gazeta* (21 January 1914), no.20, p.5.
- 14 N. Evreinov, 'Ekstessivnyi teatr dlia seb'ia', in *Teatr dlia seb'ia* (St Petersburg, 1915), Part 1, pp.139–208.
- 15 See Viktor Flambeau, 'Colored Movies and Radio Accompaniment. Such is Léon Bakst's Conception of Film Possibilities. Great Russian Artist Seeks to Bring Art into Closer Relations with Life of Everyday World', *Washington Herald* (23 March 1924), p.5.
- 16 This is the title of one of the reviews of the 1917 *Masquerade*, quoted in Lansere 1941, p.35.
- 17 Letter (undated) from Bakst to Huntley Carter in the Manuscript Department of the Victoria

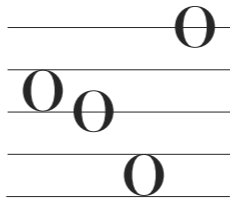
- 18 and Albert Museum, London. I would like to thank Alexander Schouvaloff for this reference.
- 18 *Abstract Portrait of Sergei Diaghilev* is the title accompanying the original gouache (50 × 31 cm) of the *pochoir* sold as lot 35 by Sotheby's, London, at the auction, 'Ballet and Theatre Material and Related Reference Books', 4 March 1982.
- 19 The Goncharova and Larionov library, still maintained in the 1970s by Larionov's second wife, Aleksandra Tomilina, in their apartment on the rue Jacques Callot, Paris, contained, for example, V. Stasov, *Slavianskii I vostochnyi ornament po rukopisiam drevniago I novago vremeni* (St Petersburg, 1887); and D. Rovinsky, *Russkiiia narodniia kartinki* (St Petersburg, 1900).
- 20 N. Goncharova, Preface to catalogue of one-woman exhibition (Moscow, 1913). Translation in Bowlt 1988, p.59.
- 21 Goncharova, Larionov and Vorms 1955, p.32.
- 22 Beaumont 1939, p.127.
- 23 Fokine 1961, p.316.
- 24 P. Florensky, 'Khramovoe deistvo kak sintez iskusstv', *Makovets* (Moscow, 1922), no.1, pp.28–32.
- 25 Letter from Serge Diaghilev to Igor Stravinsky dated 8 March 1915. Quoted in Kochno 1970, p.101.
- 26 Massine 1968, p.74.
- 27 Diary entry by Ivan Bunin for 16 August 1929, in Grin 1981, pp.230–1.
- 28 N. Goncharova, 'Le Costume Théâtral', in Georges-Michel and George 1930, p.22. For a detailed discussion of the entire episode of *Liturgie*, see V. Antonov, 'Neudavshiiisa zamysel Diaghileva', in *Russkie nocosti* (1953), no.427, p.6. For further commentary see A. de Stael, 'Apostoly Goncharovoi', *Teatr* (1922), no.14, pp.8–9.
- 29 B. Nijinska, 'Svadebka' Stravinskogo', *Novoe russkoe slovo* (9 November 1983), p.5.
- 30 Kochno 1970, p.189.
- 31 S. Grigoriev, 'Gontcharova et Larionov. Peintres-Décorateurs des Ballets de Diaghilev', in Loguine 1971, p.113. For more information on Bronislava and the production of *Les Noces* see N. Van Norman Baer, 'The Choreographic Career of Bronislava Nijinska', *Experiment* (1996), no.2, pp.60–78.
- 32 Grigoriev 1953; reprinted New York, n.d., p.186.
- 33 D. Milhaud on *Le Tricornem*. Quoted in Lifar et al. 1969, p.159.
- 34 Buckle 1979, p.330.
- 35 Propert 1931, p.7.
- 36 J. Cocteau in *Comœdia* (21 December 1920). Quoted in Kahane et al. 1992, p.103.
- 37 V. Polunin. Quoted in Schouvaloff 1998, p.275.
- 38 Cooper 1967. Quoted in Migel 1978, p.viii.
- 39 Lemaire 1987, p.40.
- 40 Buckle 1979, p.123.
- 41 D. Milhaud on *Pulcinella*. Quoted in Lifar et al. 1969, p.170.
- 42 Buckle 1979, p.362.
- 43 Propert 1931, p.8.
- 44 G. Apollinaire: Programme note for *Parade*, 1917. Quoted in Kochno 1970, p.121.



## WARDROBE

*Sarah Woodcock*

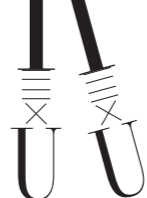
- 1 Fokine and Diaghilev were not alone in using painters as designers. Across Europe a younger generation challenging accepted values in theatre was often reaching the same conclusion.
- 2 Quoted in Schouvaloff 1991, p.33.
- 3 E.O. Hoppé, *The Art of the Theatre: The Russian Ballet*, Valentine Gross Archive, Theatre Collection V&A.
- 4 Tamara Karsavina, 'Dancers of the Twenties', *Dancing Times* (February 1967), p.253.
- 5 Exceptions are Picasso's drawing of the Chinese Conjuror for *Parade* and Braque's designs for *Les Fâcheux*.
- 6 Nicholas Roerich's passion for authenticity extended to lining the men's jackets with all-over patterned printed cottons, which the audience would never have seen. These are traditional linings for ikat robes and decorative hangings, inspired by French designs, but produced in Russia for the home market.
- 7 Inventory of costumes, Ekstrom Collection, Theatre & Performance Collections, V&A: THM/7/8/5/1.
- 8 Tamara Karsavina, 'Dancers of the Twenties', *Dancing Times* (February 1967), p.252.
- 9 Nijinska 1982, p.294.
- 10 Sokolova 1960, p.71.
- 11 Newman 2004, p.228.
- 12 Newman 2004, p.228.
- 13 Sokolova 1960, p.180.
- 14 Danilova 1986, p.93.
- 15 It is often forgotten that theatre design was a new experience for Bakst and Benois as well as for Picasso and Matisse.
- 16 Danilova 1987, p.78.
- 17 Alexandre Benois, quoted Lieven 1973, p.123.
- 18 Nikitina 1959, p.55.
- 19 Sokolova 1960, p.92.
- 20 'The Russian Ballet's Thousand Costumes', *Daily Mail* (19 November 1926).



## MUSIC AND THE BALLETS RUSSES

*Howard Goodall*

- 1 Nice 2003, p.142.
- 2 In fact, the source material has since been identified as mostly the work of Pergolesi's contemporaries Carlo Ignazio Monza, Domenico Gallo, Alessandro Parisotti and Unico Wilhelm van Wassenaer.
- 3 Stravinsky and Craft 1959, p.75.
- 4 Stravinsky 1936, p.215.
- 5 Stravinsky and Craft 1959, p.46.
- 6 Stravinsky and Craft 1959, pp.46–7.



## WHEN ART DANCED WITH MUSIC

*Juliet Bellow*

- 1 Jean Marnold, 'Musique: Ballets russes', *Le Mercure de France* (1 July 1914), vol.110, p.168.
- 2 I am indebted to Garafola 1998; Baer 1989; and Schouvaloff 1998, among many others; my own contribution, *Modernism on Stage: The Ballets Russes and the Parisian Avant-Garde*, is forthcoming from Ashgate Press.
- 3 Mikhail Fokine, letter to the editor, *The Times* (London: 6 July 1914); reprinted in Copeland and Cohen 1983, pp.257–61.
- 4 Koss 2009; Lista 2006; and Finger and Follette 2011.
- 5 On *Mir iskusstva*, see Claire Hudson in this catalogue (pp.44–5); Kennedy 1977; and Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, 'Opening up to Europe: The *Peredvizhniki* and the *Miriskustniki* Respond to the West', in Roman 1989, pp.45–60.
- 6 Salmond 1996; and Wendy Salmond, 'A Matter of Give and Take: Peasant Crafts and their Revival in Late Imperial Russia', *Design Issues* (Spring 1997), vol.13 (1), pp.5–14.
- 7 John Bowlt, 'Nikolai Roerich at Talashkino', *Experiment* (2001), vol.7, pp.103–21; and Kenneth Archer, 'Nicholas Roerich and his Theatrical Designs: A Research Study', *Dance Research Journal* (Winter 1986–7), vol.18 (2), pp.3–6.
- 8 As Salmond, 'A Matter of Give and Take', 1997, p.11, notes, articles in the Western European press also reported on the workshops at Talashkino, including Gabriel Mourey's 'L'Art populaire russe', *Art et décoration* (August 1903), vol.14, pp.237–46.
- 9 Bablet 1965.
- 10 Pierre Lalo, 'La Musique: La Saison Russe', *Comœdia* (1912), clipping in the Archives Rondel, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ro12523 (hereafter designated as AR).
- 11 Fernand Gregh, 'Ce que disent les *Danses du Prince Igor*', *S.I.M.: Revue Musicale* (July–August 1913), vol.9 (7–8), pp.9–10.
- 12 Wachtel 1998.
- 13 Mayer 1977.
- 14 Lynn Garafola, 'The Travesty Dancer in Nineteenth-Century Ballet', *Dance Research Journal* (1985–6), vols 17 and 18 (1 and 2), pp.35–40. See also Garafola 2000; Burt 1995; and Tirza True Latimer, 'Balletomania: A Sexual Disorder?' *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* (1999), vol.5 (2), pp.173–97.
- 15 Bellow 2002–3.
- 16 Kennel 2003; Hanna Järvinen, 'Dancing without Space – On Nijinsky's *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*', *Dance Research* (May 2009), vol.27 (1), pp.28–64; and Järvinen, 'Critical Silence: The Unseemly Games of Love in *Jeux*', *Dance Research* (November 2009), vol.27 (2), pp.199–226.
- 17 Alfred Bruneau, '*L'Après-Midi d'un Faune et la Critique*', *Le Matin* (5 June 1912); clipping in the Nijinsky file in the archives of the Musée Rodin, Paris.
- 18 Järvinen, 'Dancing without Space', 2009, p.28.
- 19 Bellow 2002–3; and Stephanie Jordan, 'Debussy, the Dance, and the Faune', in Briscoe 1999, pp.119–34.
- 20 Peter Wollen, 'Out of the Past: Fashion/Orientalism/the Body', in Wollen 1993, pp.1–33; Troy 2003; and Davis 2010.
- 21 Paul Souday, 'Les Premières: Théâtre des Champs-Élysées', AR, Ro12526(2)–12532(1).
- 22 Pierre Lalo, 'La Musique: Au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées', *Temps* (3 June 1913); Adolphe Jullien, 'Revue Musicale', *Journal des débats* (25 May 1913); AR, Ro12526(2)–12532(1).
- 23 Maurice Touchard, 'Ballets Russes et Français', reprinted in Bullard 1971, vol.2, pp.197–8.
- 24 Filippo Marinetti, 'The Variety Theatre' [1913], in Apollonio 1970, p.126.
- 25 Lynn Garafola, 'The Making of Ballet Modernism', *Dance Research Journal* (Winter 1989), vol.20 (2), p.23; see also Marianne W. Martin, 'The Ballet Parade: A Dialogue between Cubism and Futurism', *Art Quarterly* (Spring 1978), vol.1 (2), pp.85–111; and Berghaus 2000.
- 26 *Macchina tipografica* was never staged theatrically, but a rehearsal was performed for Diaghilev in Rome in 1916. For more, see Poggi 2008, p.120.
- 27 Sarah Warren, 'Spent Gypsies and Fallen Venuses: Mikhail Larionov's Modernist Primitivism', *Oxford Art Journal* (2003), vol.26 (1), pp.25–44; Jane A. Sharp, 'Beyond Orientalism: Russian and Soviet Modernism on the Periphery of Empire', in Blakesley and Reid 2007, pp.112–33; and Sharp 2006.
- 28 Stern 2004.
- 29 Garafola, 'The Making of Ballet Modernism', 1989, p.26.
- 30 Axsom 1974; Rothschild 1991; Silver 1989; and Weiss 1994.
- 31 Weiss 1994; and Thomas Crow, 'Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts', in Crow 1996, pp.3–37.
- 32 Bellow 2009. Robert Delaunay's essay 'La Lumière' (1912) was translated into German by Paul Klee for *Der Sturm* (February 1913), pp.144–5, and into English for Cohen 1978, pp.81–6.
- 33 Perry 1995; and Birnbaum 2011.
- 34 Davis 2010.
- 35 Banes 1998; and Baer 1986.
- 36 Rémi Labrusse, 'Matisse's Second Visit to London and his Collaboration with the "Ballets Russes"', *Burlington Magazine* (September 1997), vol.139 (1134), pp.588–99; and Bellow, forthcoming.
- 37 André Levinson, 'Une escale des "Ballets Russes"', *Candide* (3 January 1929); AR, Ro12569.
- 38 Baer 1996; and Kennel 2003.
- 39 Baer 1991.
- 40 'Design and Movement in the Theatre of the Russian Avant-Garde', in Baer 1991, p.54.

# DIAGHILEV

## A GIANT THAT CONTINUES TO GROW – THE IMPACT, INFLUENCE AND LEGACY OF THE BALLETS RUSSES

Jane Pritchard

- 41 Henry Malherbe, 'Chronique Musicale: Au Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt', *Temps* (20 June 1928); AR, Ro12566; Waldemar George, 'L'art à la scène: En marge des Ballets Russes', *Scène* (5 June 1929); André Levinson, 'Le deuxième spectacles des Ballets Russes', *Comoedia* (30 May 1929); AR, Ro12570.
- 42 André George, 'Aux Ballets Russes: Le Bal', *Nouvelle littérature* (8 June 1929); AR, Ro12570.

- 1 Robert and Sonia Delaunay were responsible for the new designs for *Cléopâtre* at the London Coliseum on 5 September 1918. Robert's design for the set with temple and pyramids was described as the first modernist set seen in Britain. Sonia designed new costumes for the principal dancers while other characters wore those of the first production originally designed by Bakst.
- 2 *The Queen* (8 July 1925), p.7.
- 3 The exhibition in Edinburgh ran at the College of Art, Edinburgh, 22 August – 11 September 1954 and at Forbes House, London, 3 November 1954 – 16 January 1955.
- 4 'Open letter to Mr. A. Kosloff from Michel Fokine', 28 May 1928. Carbon copy in Cyril Beaumont Archive V&A: THM/239.
- 5 *Cléopâtre* and *Les Sylphides* were first performed at the Opera House in Stockholm on 14 March 1913, *Le Spectre de la rose* on 10 January 1914 and *Le Carnaval* and *Schéhérazade* on 25 January 1914. Mikhail Fokine and his wife Vera danced in all these productions. See Strömbeck et al. 1974, p.137. Studio and production photographs taken in Stockholm are often presented as being performances for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.
- 6 The Paris Opéra's production of *Daphnis et Chloé* opened on 20 June 1921.
- 7 The 'Saison Nijinsky' opened at the Palace Theatre on 2 March 1914 with *Les Sylphides* (with an apparently different or partially different selection of Chopin orchestrated by Maurice Ravel), *Danse Orientale* and *Le Spectre de la rose*, all designed by Boris Anisfelt. On 16 March Nijinsky was scheduled to present *Le Carnaval*, *L'Oiseau et le Prince*, *Danse Grecque* and *Danse Polotsian* but his illness prevented this and the remainder of the season was cancelled.
- 8 Details of the insistence on Massine's involvement in the USA season are found in telegrams and letters from the impresarios Goetz and Seligsberg in V&A: THM/7/2/1/56.
- 9 *Le Chant du rossignol* and *Le Coq d'or*.
- 10 Diaghilev's letters to Lifar are reproduced in Lifar 1954, pp.269–73.
- 11 *Soirée de Paris* at the Théâtre de la Cigale 17 May–30 June 1924 was presented as a benefit season in aid of war widows and Russian refugees had a collaborative team including Léonide Massine, Lydia Lopokova, Stanislas Idzikovski, Georges Braque, André Derain, Jean Hugo, Marie Laurencin, Pablo Picasso, José-Maria Sert, Darius Milhaud, Henri Sauguet, Jean Cocteau, Loie Fuller and Tristan Tzara. There was every reason for Diaghilev to be jealous.
- 12 Buckle 1982, p.53.
- 13 See Mannoni 1990; Fiette and Jeanmaire 2007.
- 14 See Hodson 1996; Hodson 2007. From the former it is evident that Hodson has supporting evidence for about 10 per cent of the ballet.

- 15 Jane Pritchard, 'Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes – An Itinerary' Part 1, *Dance Research* (Summer 2009), 27.1, Part 2, *Dance Research* (Winter 2009), 27.2, and Boris Courrège et al in Auclair and Vidal 2009.
- 16 Clause 23. In January 2011, thirty-three seconds of newsreel showing Diaghilev's Company rehearsing *Les Sylphides* on the open-air stage at Montreux, Switzerland, for the June 1928 *Fêtes des Narcisses*, was found in the Pathé archive. It is unlikely that Diaghilev was aware of this recording.
- 17 Vera Karelli made many important Russian films with Evgeni Bauer including *After Death* (1915) and *The Dying Swan* (1916). Anna Pavlova featured in *The Dumb Girl of Portici* (1916), Tamara Karsavina starred in *The Old Wives' Tale* (1921) and Lydia Kyasht in *The Black Spider* (1920). Lydia Lopokova, Anton Dolin and George Balanchine were filming the dance sequences in the film *Dark Red Roses* in 1929 when Diaghilev died.
- 18 Lieven 1936, p.96.
- 19 Alan Bates played the role of Diaghilev with George de la Pena as Nijinsky and London Festival Ballet as the Ballets Russes. Romola Nijinsky had published her biography of her husband (written with assistance from Lincoln Kirstein) with an eye on it being turned into a film.
- 20 John Drummond, 'Big Serge on the Box', *Dance and Dancers* (April 1968), pp.28–31, 51.
- 21 Prokofiev to Asafiev, 29 August 1929. Quoted in Scheijen 2009, p.441.



Léon Bakst, costume design for the Pilgrim from *Le Dieu bleu*. Gouache and metallic paint with graphite on paper, c.1911. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Bequest of Margareta A. Hinchman, 1955

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Alexander Schervashidze  
after Pablo Picasso, the  
front cloth for *Le Train bleu*.  
Oil on canvas, 1924.  
V&A: S.316-1978

# REPERTOIRE

	First Performance	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	Last Performance		
<i>Boris Godunov</i>	19 May 1908																							24 July 1914	<i>Boris Godunov</i>	
<i>Le Pavillon d'Armide</i>	(18) 19 May 1909																								28 January 1916	<i>Le Pavillon d'Armide</i>
<i>Prince Igor</i> (Act II)	(18) 19 May 1909																								23 July 1929	<i>Prince Igor</i> (Act II)
<i>Le Festin</i>	(18) 19 May 1909																								4 March 1925	<i>Le Festin</i>
<i>Ivan the Terrible</i>	(24) 26 May 1909																								6 July 1914	<i>Ivan the Terrible</i>
<i>Les Sylphides</i>	(2) 4 June 1909																								3 August 1929	<i>Les Sylphides</i>
<i>Cléopâtre</i>	(2) 4 June 1909																								12 May 1929	<i>Cléopâtre</i>
<i>Ruslan and Ludmila</i> (Act I)	(2) 4 June 1909																								12 June 1909	<i>Ruslan and Ludmila</i> (Act I)
<i>Judith (Orgy and Finale)</i> (Serov)	7 June 1909																								15 June 1909	<i>Judith (Orgy and Finale)</i> (Serov)
<i>Le Carnaval</i>	20 May 1910																								3 August 1929	<i>Le Carnaval</i>
<i>Schéhérazade</i>	(2) 4 June 1910																								12 May 1929	<i>Schéhérazade</i>
<i>Giselle</i>	18 June 1910																								29 April 1914	<i>Giselle</i>
<i>The Firebird (L'Oiseau de feu)</i>	25 June 1910																								4 May 1929	<i>The Firebird (L'Oiseau de feu)</i>
<i>Les Orientales</i>	25 June 1910																								30 June 1910	<i>Les Orientales</i>
<i>Le Spectre de la rose</i>	19 April 1911																								11 May 1929	<i>Le Spectre de la rose</i>
<i>Narcisse</i>	29 April 1911																								2 June 1925	<i>Narcisse</i>
<i>Sadko: In the Underwater Kingdom</i>	6 June 1911																								13 February 1919	<i>Sadko: In the Underwater Kingdom</i>
<i>Petrushka</i>	13 June 1911																								24 July 1929	<i>Petrushka</i>
<i>L'Oiseau d'or/The Enchanted Princess</i>	3 November 1911																								30 July 1921	<i>L'Oiseau d'or/The Enchanted Princess</i>
<i>Swan Lake (Le Lac des cygnes)</i>	30 November 1911																								1 August 1929	<i>Swan Lake (Le Lac des cygnes)</i>
<i>Le Dieu bleu</i>	13 May 1912																								13 March 1914	<i>Le Dieu bleu</i>
<i>Tamar</i>	20 May 1912																								11 May 1929	<i>Tamar</i>
<i>L'Après-midi d'un faune</i>	29 May 1912																								25 July 1929	<i>L'Après-midi d'un faune</i>
<i>Daphnis et Chloé</i>	8 June 1912																								30 April 1924	<i>Daphnis et Chloé</i>
<i>Jeux</i>	15 May 1913																								25 July 1913	<i>Jeux</i>
<i>The Rite of Spring</i> (Nijinsky)	29 May 1913																								23 July 1913	<i>The Rite of Spring</i> (Nijinsky)
<i>Khoranshchina</i>	5 June 1913																								20 July 1914	<i>Khoranshchina</i>
<i>La Tragédie de Salomé</i>	12 June 1913																								24 April 1914	<i>La Tragédie de Salomé</i>
<i>Papillons</i>	16 April 1914																								6 May 1928	<i>Papillons</i>
<i>The Legend of Joseph</i>	14 May 1914																								25 July 1914	<i>The Legend of Joseph</i>
<i>Le Coq d'or</i>	24 May 1914																								22 July 1914	<i>Le Coq d'or</i>
<i>Le Rossignol</i>	26 May 1914																								23 July 1914	<i>Le Rossignol</i>
<i>Midas</i>	2 June 1914																								21 July 1914	<i>Midas</i>
<i>Prince Igor</i>	8 June 1914																								27 June 1914	<i>Prince Igor</i>
<i>La Nuit de Mai</i>	26 June 1914																								13 July 1914	<i>La Nuit de Mai</i>
<i>Soleil de nuit</i>	20 December 1915																								11 May 1929	<i>Soleil de nuit</i>
<i>Las Meninas</i>	21 August 1916																								17 July 1929	<i>Las Meninas</i>
<i>Kikimora</i>	25 August 1916																								29 August 1916	<i>Kikimora</i>
<i>Till Eulenspiegel</i>	23 October 1916																								21 February 1917	<i>Till Eulenspiegel</i>
<i>Feu d'artifice (Fireworks)</i>	7 April 1917																								12 April 1917	<i>Feu d'artifice (Fireworks)</i>
<i>The Good-Humoured Ladies</i>	12 April 1917																								20 May 1927	<i>The Good-Humoured Ladies</i>
<i>Contes Russes</i>	11 May 1917																								5 May 1929	<i>Contes Russes</i>
<i>Parade</i>	18 May 1917																								5 July 1926	<i>Parade</i>
<i>La Boutique fantasque</i>	5 June 1919																								4 August 1929	<i>La Boutique fantasque</i>
<i>Le Tricorne</i>	22 July 1919																								4 August 1929	<i>Le Tricorne</i>
<i>Le Chant du rossignol</i> (Massine)	2 February 1920																								20 July 1920	<i>Le Chant du rossignol</i> (Massine)
<i>Pulcinella</i>	15 May 1920																								13 July 1928	<i>Pulcinella</i>
<i>Le Astuzie Femminili</i>	27 May 1920																								25 January 1921	<i>Le Astuzie Femminili</i>
<i>The Rite of Spring</i> (Massine)	14 December 1920																								25 July 1929	<i>The Rite of Spring</i> (Massine)
<i>Cuadro Flamenco</i>	17 May 1921																								20 July 1921	<i>Cuadro Flamenco</i>
<i>Chout</i>	17 May 1921																								14 April 1924	<i>Chout</i>
<i>The Sleeping Princess</i>	2 November 1921																								4 February 1922	<i>The Sleeping Princess</i>
<i>Aurora's Wedding</i>	18 May 1922																								26 July 1929	<i>Aurora's Wedding</i>
<i>Le Renard</i> (Nijinska)	18 May 1922																								6 June 1922	<i>Le Renard</i> (Nijinska)
<i>Mavra</i>	3 June 1922																								13 June 1922	<i>Mavra</i>
<i>Les Noces</i>	13 June 1923																								14 July 1928	<i>Les Noces</i>
<i>Fête Merveilleuse</i>	30 June 1923																								30 June 1923	<i>Fête Merveilleuse</i>
<i>Le Astuce Feminine/Cimarosiana</i>	24 December 1923																								4 August 1929	<i>Le Astuce Feminine/Cimarosiana</i>
<i>La Colombe</i>	1 January 1924																								15 January 1924	<i>La Colombe</i>
<i>Les Tentations de la bergère</i>	3 January 1924																								10 April 1926	<i>Les Tentations de la bergère</i>
<i>Le Médecin malgré lui</i>	5 January 1924																								22 January 1924	<i>Le Médecin malgré lui</i>
<i>Les Biches</i>	6 January 1924																								25 July 1928	<i>Les Biches</i>
<i>Philémon et Baucis</i>	10 January 1924																								20 January 1924	<i>Philémon et Baucis</i>
<i>Une Education manquée</i>	17 January 1924																								29 June 1924	<i>Une Education manquée</i>
<i>Les Fâcheux</i>	19 January 1924																								24 July 1929	<i>Les Fâcheux</i>
<i>La Nuit sur le Mont Chauve</i>	6 April 1924																								13 April 1924	<i>La Nuit sur le Mont Chauve</i>
<i>Le Train bleu</i>	20 June 1924																								20 June 1925	<i>Le Train bleu</i>
<i>Le Bal du lac des cygnes</i>																										

# TOUR LOCATIONS

Country	Town/City	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	Town/City	Country		
ARGENTINA	Buenos Aires																							Buenos Aires	ARGENTINA	
AUSTRIA	Vienna																								Vienna	AUSTRIA
BELGIUM	Antwerp																								Antwerp	BELGIUM
	Brussels																								Brussels	
	Liège																								Liège	
	Ostend																								Ostend	
BRAZIL	Rio de Janeiro																								Rio de Janeiro	BRAZIL
	São Paulo																								São Paulo	
CANADA	Vancouver																								Vancouver	CANADA
*CZECHOSLOVAKIA	Brno																								Brno	*CZECHOSLOVAKIA
	Prague																								Prague	
ENGLAND	Birmingham																								Birmingham	ENGLAND
	Bournemouth																								Bournemouth	
	Leeds																								Leeds	
	Leicester																								Leicester	
	Liverpool																								Liverpool	
	London																								London	
	Manchester																								Manchester	
	Nottingham																								Nottingham	
	Sheffield																								Sheffield	
FRANCE	Bayonne																								Bayonne	FRANCE
	Bordeaux																								Bordeaux	
	Cannes																								Cannes	
	Deauville																								Deauville	
	Le Touquet																								Le Touquet	
	Lyons																								Lyons	
	Paris																								Paris	
	Pau																								Pau	
	Marseilles																								Marseilles	
	Nice																								Nice	
	Vichy																								Vichy	
GERMANY	Berlin																								Berlin	GERMANY
	Braunschweig																								Braunschweig	
	Breslau																								Breslau	
	Chemnitz																								Chemnitz	
	Cologne																								Cologne	
	Darmstadt																								Darmstadt	
	Dresden																								Dresden	
	Frankfurt																								Frankfurt	
	Freiburg																								Freiburg	
	Hamburg																								Hamburg	
	Hanover																								Hanover	
	Leipzig																								Leipzig	
	Munich																								Munich	
	Stuttgart																								Stuttgart	
HUNGARY	Budapest																								Budapest	HUNGARY
ITALY	Florence																								Florence	ITALY
	Milan																								Milan	
	Naples																								Naples	
	Rome																								Rome	
	Turin																								Turin	
MONACO	Monte Carlo																								Monte Carlo	MONACO
THE NETHERLANDS	Amsterdam																								Amsterdam	THE NETHERLANDS
	The Hague																								The Hague	
	Rotterdam																								Rotterdam	
PORTUGAL	Lisbon																								Lisbon	PORTUGAL
SCOTLAND	Edinburgh																								Edinburgh	SCOTLAND
	Glasgow																								Glasgow	
SPAIN	Alcoy																								Alcoy	SPAIN
	Alicante																								Alicante	
	Barcelona																								Barcelona	
	Bilbao																								Bilbao	
	Cartagena																								Cartagena	
	Córdoba																								Córdoba	
	Granada																								Granada	
	Logroño																								Logroño	
	Madrid																								Madrid	
	Malaga																								Malaga	
	Murcia																								Murcia	
	Salamanca																								Salamanca	
	San Sebastián																								San Sebastián	
	Seville																								Seville	
	Valencia																								Valencia	
	Valladolid																								Valladolid	
	Zaragoza																								Zaragoza	
SWITZERLAND	Berne																								Berne	SWITZERLAND
	Geneva																								Geneva	
	Lausanne																								Lausanne	
	Montreux																								Montreux	
	Zurich																								Zurich	

\* Names follow post-Second World War designations.

Country	Town/City	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	Town/City	Country	
USA	Albany, NY																							Albany, NY	USA
	Atlanta, GA																							Atlanta, GA	
	Atlantic City, NJ																							Atlantic City, NJ	
	Austin, TX																							Austin, TX	
	Baltimore, MD																							Baltimore, MD	
	Birmingham, AL																							Birmingham, AL	
	Boston, MA																							Boston, MA	
	Bridgeport, CT																							Bridgeport, CT	
	Brooklyn, NY																							Brooklyn, NY	
	Chicago, IL																							Chicago, IL	
	Cincinnati, OH																							Cincinnati, OH	
	Cleveland, OH																							Cleveland, OH	
	Columbia, SC																							Columbia, SC	
	Dallas, TX																							Dallas, TX	
	Dayton, OH																							Dayton, OH	
	Denver, CO																							Denver, CO	
	Des Moines, IA																							Des Moines, IA	
	Detroit, MI																							Detroit, MI	
	Fort Worth, TX																							Fort Worth, TX	
	Grand Rapids, MI																							Grand Rapids, MI	
	Hartford, CT																							Hartford, CT	
	Houston, TX																							Houston, TX	
	Indianapolis, IN																							Indianapolis, IN	
	Kansas City, MO																							Kansas City, MO	
	Knoxville, TN																							Knoxville, TN	
	Los Angeles, CA																							Los Angeles, CA	
	Louisville, KY																							Louisville, KY	
	Memphis, TN																							Memphis, TN	
	Milwaukee, WI																							Milwaukee, WI	
	Minneapolis, MN																							Minneapolis, MN	
	Nashville, TN																							Nashville, TN	
	New Haven, CT																							New Haven, CT	
	New Orleans, LA																							New Orleans, LA	
	New York, NY																							New York, NY	
	Oakland, CA																							Oakland, CA	
	Omaha, NE																							Omaha, NE	
	Philadelphia, PA																							Philadelphia, PA	
	Pittsburgh, PA																							Pittsburgh, PA	
	Portland, OR																							Portland, OR	
	Providence, RI																							Providence, RI	
	Richmond, VA																							Richmond, VA	
	Rochester, NY																							Rochester, NY	
	Salt Lake City, UT																							Salt Lake City, UT	
	San Francisco, CA																							San Francisco, CA	
	Seattle, WA																							Seattle, WA	
	Spokane, WA																							Spokane, WA	
	Springfield, IL																							Springfield, IL	
St Louis, MO																							St Louis, MO		
St Paul, MN																							St Paul, MN		
Syracuse, NY																							Syracuse, NY		
Tacoma, WA																							Tacoma, WA		
Toledo, OH																							Toledo, OH		
Tulsa, OK																							Tulsa, OK		
Washington, DC																							Washington, DC		
Wichita, KS																							Wichita, KS		
Worcester, MA																							Worcester, MA		
URUGUAY	Montevideo																						Montevideo	URUGUAY	

# TIMELINE

	WORLD EVENTS	CULTURAL EVENTS	DIAGHILEV AND THE BALLETS RUSSES
1870	Franco-Prussian War. 4 September: capture of Paris and foundation of French 3rd Republic.	25 May: creation of the ballet <i>Coppélia</i> at Paris Opéra.	4 May: Alexandre Benois born in St Petersburg.
1871			
1872			31 March: Serge Pavlovich Diaghilev born near Novgorod. 31 March: the great art patron Misia Sert is born in St Petersburg.
1873	15/16 September: last German troops leave France.	13 January: premiere of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera <i>The Maid at Pskov (Jean the Terrible)</i> in St Petersburg.	
1874			14 October: Diaghilev's father marries second wife Elena V. Panaeva; family moves to St Petersburg.
1875		Leo Tolstoy publishes the first chapters of <i>Anna Karenina</i> in the <i>Russian Herald</i> .	
1876	1 May: Queen Victoria proclaimed Empress of India. 10 March: first telephone call made by Alexander Graham Bell.	14 June: premiere of the ballet Sylvia choreographed by Louis Mérante at Paris Opéra.	
1877	April: Russia declares war on Turkey.	4 March: premiere of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's first ballet, <i>Swan Lake</i> , at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow.	
1878	13 June–13 July: Congress of Berlin settles Russia's advance into the Balkans and Caucasus.		
1879	Thomas Edison files patents for the electric light bulb.		Diaghilev moves with his family to their estate in Perm.
1880	1880–1: the first Boer War.		23 April: Mikhail Fokine is born in St Petersburg.
1881	1 March: Alexander II is Assassinated, Alexander III succeeds as Tsar of Russia.	11 January: premiere of the ballet <i>Excelsior</i> at La Scala, Milan.	25 October: Pablo Picasso is born in Malaga, Spain.
1882			17 June: Igor Stravinsky is born in Oranienbaum, near St Petersburg.
1888		13 February: Richard Wagner dies in Venice.	
1884		Summer: Société des Artistes Indépendants founded in France.	
1885	Karl Benz patents the 'Motorwagen', the first petrol-powered automobile.	Savva Mamontov forms the Russian Private Opera in Moscow. First performances: <i>A Life for the Tsar</i> (Mikhail Glinka), <i>The Snow Maiden</i> (Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov).	9 March: Tamara Karsavina born in St Petersburg.
1886	28 October: Statue of Liberty unveiled in New York.	Last Impressionist exhibition in Paris.	
1887		Construction of Eiffel Tower begins for 1889 Paris Exposition Universelles.	
1888	15 June: Wilhelm II Becomes Emperor of Germany and King of Prussia.		20 February: Marie Rambert born in Warsaw, Poland (then under Russian rule).
1889			

	WORLD EVENTS	CULTURAL EVENTS	DIAGHILEV AND THE BALLETS RUSSES
1890		First performaces of Alexander Borodin's <i>Prince Igor</i> , Tchaikovsky's <i>Queen of Spades</i> and <i>The Sleeping Beauty</i> in St Petersburg.	12 March: Vaslav Nijinsky born in Kiev, Ukraine. Diaghilev's father bankrupted. Diaghilev meets Alexandre Benois in St Petersburg. Diaghilev first visits Western Europe. September: Diaghilev begins a Law degree at St Petersburg University.
1891	Construction of Trans-Siberian Railway begins.		23 April: Sergei Prokofiev born in Sontsovka, Ukraine (then under Russian rule).
1892	Summer drought triggers a famine in Russia.		Diaghilev and Dima Filosofov meet Leo Tolstoy in Moscow.
1893		29 October: premiere of Tchaikovsky's 6th Symphony ( <i>Pathétique</i> ). 6 November: Tchaikovsky dies in St Petersburg.	
1894	1 November: Tsar Alexander III dies at the age of 49, succeeded by Nicholas II.	22 December: <i>Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune</i> by Claude Debussy performed in Paris.	Diaghilev graduates.
1895	Wilhelm Röntgen discovers X-rays.	28 December: Auguste and Louis Lumière show first Cinématographe film in Paris.	
1896	First modern Olympic Games held in Athens, Greece.	Fyodor Chaliapin makes his Moscow debut in <i>A Life for the Tsar</i> . 17 October: Anton Chekhov's <i>The Seagull</i> premiered at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St Petersburg.	
1897		22 June: Konstantin Stanislavsky founds the Moscow Art Theatre. Vienna Secession is founded with Gustav Klimt as first president.	
1898	Russian Museum opens in St Petersburg.	7 January: <i>Sadko</i> by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov premieres in Moscow, presented by the Russian Private Opera; sets designed by Korovine, Maliutin and Vrubel.	Diaghilev and Alexandre Benois found <i>Mir iskusstva (World of Art)</i> , magazine.
1899	1899–1902: the second Boer War.	<i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> by Sigmund Freud is published in Vienna.	September: Diaghilev employed by the Imperial Theatres for special assignments, including editing the Theatres' Year Book.
1900	Eastman Kodak introduces the Brownie camera. Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin invents the first rigid airship.	Exposition Universelles in Paris, which includes Loïe Fuller's theatre.	
1901	22 January: Queen Victoria dies, succeeded by Edward VII.	Alexandre Benois appointed Scenic Director of Maryinsky Theatre in St Petersburg.	Diaghilev dismissed from the Imperial Theatres.
1902		Georges Méliès's film <i>La Voyage dans la lune</i> plays in Paris.	Diaghilev and Filosofov travel in Europe, and visit Baron Richard von Krafft-Ebing's sanatorium in Graz, Austria.
1903	Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and Bolshevik / Menshevik Split.	First Salon d'Automne held at Grand Palais, Paris, organized by Henri Matisse, Georges Roualt and André Marquet.	
1904	8 February: outbreak of Russo-Japanese War. 8 April: Entente Cordiale between the UK and France.	17 January: Stanislavsky directs the premiere of <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> at Moscow Art Theatre. 15 July: death of Anton Chekhov. 15 July: Isadora Duncan dances in Russia.	<i>Mir iskusstva (World of Art)</i> , ceases publication. 22 January: George Balanchine born in St Petersburg.

	WORLD EVENTS	CULTURAL EVENTS	DIAGHILEV AND THE BALLETS RUSSES
1905	1905 Revolution. 9 January: 'Bloody Sunday' Massacre outside Winter Palace, St Petersburg. Russia changes from Absolute to Constitutional Monarchy.	Salon d'Automne exhibition opens in Paris, where 'Fauvism' is first defined.	6 March: opened by the tsar, Diaghilev's <i>Exhibition of Russian Historical Portraits</i> goes on display at the Tauride Palace, St Petersburg.
1906			Diaghilev's survey of Russian Art opens at the Salon d'Automne, Grand Palais; the exhibition tours to the Schulte Salon, Berlin.
1907			Diaghilev's Russian art exhibition appears at the eighth Venice Biennale. Diaghilev and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov organize Russian music concerts at the Paris Opéra.
1908	Henry Ford begins production of the Model T automobile. Summer Olympiad held in London.		Diaghilev produces <i>Boris Godunov</i> , directed by Alexander Sanin, starring Fyodor Chaliapin and featuring the chorus of the Bolshoi, Moscow at the Paris Opéra.
1909		F.T. Marinetti publishes the 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism'.	Diaghilev's first season of ballet and opera at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, makes a significant loss but achieves critical success.
1910	Death of King Edward VII, accession of King George V.	20 November: death of Leo Tolstoy. 8 November: Roger Fry's <i>Manet and the Post-Impressionists</i> exhibition opens at the Grafton Galleries, London.	Diaghilev returns to Paris for a second season, when Stravinsky's first ballet, <i>The Firebird</i> , is presented. Diaghilev also presents ballet in Berlin and Brussels.
1911		Edward Gordon Craig publishes <i>On the Art of Theatre</i> .	Nijinsky dismissed from the Imperial Ballet. The Ballet Russes becomes a permanent company, giving its first performances at Monte Carlo, Rome and the Coronation Season in London. Ida Rubinstein leaves the Ballets Russes.
1912	April: RMS Titanic sinks. 8 October 1912–17 May 1913: Balkan Wars in Europe.		First tours of Central Europe. Nijinsky choreographs <i>L'Après-midi d'un faune</i> . Fokine leaves the Ballets Russes.
1913	300-year anniversary of Romanov rule in Russia.		First performances in South America. Fokine is invited back following Nijinsky's marriage and dismissal.
1914	1 August: outbreak of World War I. St Petersburg renamed Petrograd.		Diaghilev's last season in Paris and London of Russian opera and ballet before the war. July: Company disperses after last night at Drury Lane.
1915		8 February: premiere of D.W. Griffith's film <i>The Birth of a Nation</i> in Los Angeles.	May: company reforms in Switzerland; only two performances, one each in Geneva and Paris. Massine emerges as the company's choreographer.
1916	1 July: beginning of the Battle of the Somme.	Picasso's <i>Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)</i> is displayed at the Salon d'Antin, in a gallery on the premises of Paul Poiret's fashion house, Paris.	Two long tours of the United States; first performances in Spain. Nijinsky rejoins the Ballets Russes in America and Spain.
1917	Russian Revolutions of 1917: Tsar Nicholas II abdicates. July–October, Provisional Government headed by Alexander Kerensky.	27 September: death of Edgar Degas. 17 November: death of Auguste Rodin.	Only Ballets Russes season in Paris during the war includes creation of <i>Parade</i> . Last tour to South America.

	WORLD EVENTS	CULTURAL EVENTS	DIAGHILEV AND THE BALLETS RUSSES
1917 (ctd)	25 October (Julian calendar), 7 November (Gregorian calendar): Bolsheviks take over with Lenin as head. 30 October: Kerensky repulsed outside Petrograd. Russian Civil War begins.		
1918	11 November: end of World War I.		Company invited to perform at the London Coliseum.
1919	5–12 January: Spartacist uprising in Berlin.	The Ballets Suédois performs first season at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris.	The Ballets Russes give 375 performances in Britain, including the premieres of <i>La Boutique fantasque</i> and <i>Le Tricorné</i> , and three in Paris.
1920	10 August: Treaty of Sèvres, Ottoman Empire dismantled.		The Ballets Russes restarts tours of Europe.
1921		Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova publish 'Constructivist Art'.	Massine leaves the Ballet Russes. <i>The Sleeping Princess</i> is presented at the Alhambra, Leicester Square, London.
1922	Soviet Russia becomes USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). 3 April: Stalin becomes General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. 22 October: Benito Mussolini becomes Prime Minister of Italy.		February: Diaghilev bankrupted and company suspended. May: company reforms in Monte Carlo. Ballets Russes becomes resident opera-ballet company in Monte Carlo for the winter season.
1923			
1924	Lenin dies. Creation of Triumvirate headed by Stalin. Summer Olympics held in Paris.	Soirée de Paris season at Théâtre de la Cigale, Paris (17 May – 30 June 1924).	Diaghilev presents French Opera season at Monte Carlo; first major post-war tour of Germany. Bakst dies. Balanchine joins the Ballets Russes.
1925	Adolf Hitler publishes vol. I of <i>Mein Kampf</i> .	Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris. Sergei Eisenstein directs <i>The Battleship Potemkin</i> . 1 July: death of Erik Satie. 2 October: Josephine Baker first performs at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris.	
1926	General Strike in Britain.	Frederick Ashton choreographs <i>A Tragedy of Fashion</i> . Fritz Lang directs <i>Metropolis</i> .	
1927		Martha Graham opens school of dance in New York. Premiere of <i>The Jazz Singer</i> , the first feature-length talking picture.	Diaghilev's half-brother Valentin is deported to the Solovki prison camp.
1928	Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin.	Ida Rubinstein commissions and performs in Maurice Ravel's <i>Boléro</i> . Rudolf Laban publishes <i>Labanotation</i> , a system of recording human movement.	
1929	February: Stalin Expels Trotsky from the USSR. October: United States stock market crashes.		4 August: last performance by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes at Casino Theatre, Vichy. 19 August: Diaghilev dies in Venice. 21 August: Diaghilev is buried on the island of San Michele. Weeks later, Diaghilev's half-brother Valentin is executed.

# WORKS EXHIBITED IN WASHINGTON

## *Boris Godunov*

Aleksandr Golovin, costume worn by Fyodor Chaliapin as Boris Godunov in the Coronation Scene, c.1908, silk and metal thread, glass beads, 'essence d'orient' pearls, metal, painted silk lining, replacement fur. V&A (pl.10)

## *Prince Igor*

Boris M. Frödmann-Cluzel, Adolph Bolm as the Polovtsian Chief, 1909, bronze. V&A (pl.131)

Nicholas Roerich, costume for a Polovtsian Girl, 1909, silk ikat fabric. V&A (pl.31)

Nicholas Roerich, costumes for two Polovtsian Warriors, c.1909, silk ground, silk ikat fabric, cotton metal disks, skull cap embroidered in polychrome thread. V&A (pl.30)

Nicholas Roerich, set design for the Polovtsian dances, 1909, tempera and body-colour on canvas. V&A (pl.118)

## *Le Festin*

Léon Bakst, costume for Vaslav Nijinsky as the Prince from the *pas de deux* L'Oiseau d'or, 1909, silk, satin and jersey with metal studs and artificial pearls. V&A (pl.83)

## *Les Sylphides*

Alexandre Benois, costume worn by Lydia Lopokova as a Sylph, c.1916, silk and cotton net, with metal armature for the wings. V&A, Cyril Beaumont Bequest (pl.25)

Alexandre Benois, scene design, 1909, watercolour, ink and pencil on paper. Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University, Gift of Howard D. Rothschild, 1990, MS Thr 414.4 (42) (pl.149)

Alexandre Benois, set model, 1909, gouache, watercolour, pencil and chalk on card, with bamboo supports. V&A

Valentin Serov, Chatelet poster featuring Anna Pavlova, 1909, colour lithograph. V&A

## *Schéhérazade*

Léon Bakst, costume design for an Odalisque, 1911, gouache, graphite, ink and metallic paint on paper, mounted on board. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Gift of Robert L. B. Tobin (pl.150)

Léon Bakst, costume design for the Blue Sultana, 1910, watercolour and pencil on paper. Private collection (pl.63)

Léon Bakst, costume design for the Eunuch, watercolour, pencil and silver paint on paper. Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University, Gift of Howard D. Rothschild, 1990, MS Thr 414.4 (20) (pl.151)

Léon Bakst, costume for Zobeïde, 1911, chiffon. V&A

Léon Bakst, costume (made by Marie Muelle) for a Dancing Girl (*almée*) or Odalisque, c.1910, rayon, silk, metallic and other paint, metallic and rayon braid, gelatine paillettes, glass beads, metal fasteners, wire. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Léon Bakst, costume (made by Marie Muelle) for the Chief Eunuch, 1910, silk, silk appliqué, cotton, metallic braid, rayon, metallic paint, acetate, ornament, feathers, imitation jewels, cotton wadding, cork, cane, newspaper and wood; exhibited with reproduction jacket. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (pl.152)

Léon Bakst, variation of the original scene design, after 1910, watercolour, metallic paint and graphite on paper. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Gift of Robert L. B. Tobin

George Barbier, The Slave and Zobeïde, 1913, pochoir print. V&A, Cyril Beaumont Bequest

Auguste Bert, Vaslav Nijinsky as the Golden Slave, 1910, gelatin silver print. V&A, Gift of Jean Hugo (pl.87)

Earrings worn by Vaslav Nijinsky, 1910, gilded copper-alloy mounts with pearlized glass. V&A

Roberto Montenegro, Vaslav Nijinsky as the Golden Slave, cover of the program for the second American Ballets Russes tour, 1916–17. Collection of Ms. Anna Winestein and Mr. Leonid Winestein

## *Giselle*

Alexandre Benois, costume worn by Vaslav Nijinsky as Albrecht (Act II), 1910, silk velvet with replica silk shirt. V&A (pl.11)

## *Le Spectre de la rose*

Léon Bakst, costume design for Vaslav Nijinsky as the Rose, 1911, graphite, watercolour and silver paint on machine-made laid paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

Léon Bakst, costume for the Rose, designed 1911, fabricated 1922, silk, velvet and elastic. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The J. Herbert Callister Fund and the Florence Paul Berger Fund, the Costume and Textile Purchase Fund and the Costume and Textile Flood Fund (pl.153)

Auguste Bert, Vaslav Nijinsky as the Spirit of the Rose, 1911, gelatin silver print. V&A, Gift of Richard Buckle and Annette Page (pl.147)

Jean Cocteau, poster of Tamara Karsavina for the opening season of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, 1913, colour lithograph. V&A, Gift of Mademoiselle Lucienne Astruc and Richard Buckle in memory of the collaboration between Diaghilev and Gabriel Astruc (pl.19)

Jean Cocteau, poster of Vaslav Nijinsky for the opening season of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, c.1913, colour lithograph. V&A, Gift of Mademoiselle Lucienne Astruc and Richard Buckle in memory of the collaboration between Diaghilev and Gabriel Astruc (pl.20)

## *Narcisse*

Léon Bakst, costume design for a Bacchante, before 1911, gouache, silver paint and pencil on paper. Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Léon Baratz in memory of Mr. and Mrs. A. Dobry (pl.120)

Léon Bakst, costume for a Beotian Girl, 1911, painted cotton with red buttons and beads. V&A

Léon Bakst, costume for a Beotian Shepherd, 1911, painted cotton. V&A

Léon Bakst, costume for a Nymph, 1911, painted cotton. V&A

Léon Bakst, Bronislava Nijinska and Vera Fokina, 1911, watercolour and pencil. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.



149



150



151



152



153

*Sadko: In the Underwater Kingdom*

Natalia Goncharova, costume design for a Sea Horse, c.1916, watercolour, pencil and body-colour with foil. V&A

Natalia Goncharova, costume for a Fish with Silver Scales, 1916, silk with ribbons, paint, lamé. Dansmuseet - Museum Rolf de Maré Stockholm

Natalia Goncharova, costume for a Red Spotted Fish, 1916, silk with appliqué, lamé and paint. Dansmuseet - Museum Rolf de Maré Stockholm

Natalia Goncharova, costume for a Sea Horse, c.1916, silk-cotton satin, lamé, paint and wire. Dansmuseet - Museum Rolf de Maré Stockholm

Natalia Goncharova, costume worn by Adolph Bolm as the Prince, 1916, cotton velvet, silk satin with 'essence d'orient' pearls. V&A (pl.97)

Natalia Goncharova, costume worn by Doris Faithful as the Sea Princess, 1916, silk satin with appliqué sequins, tissue and metal, raffia plaits. V&A (pl.98)

*Petrushka*

Alexandre Benois, costume design for Petrushka, c.1936, pencil and watercolour on paper. V&A

Alexandre Benois, costume design for the Ballerina, c.1936, pencil and watercolour on paper. V&A

Alexandre Benois, costume design for the Blackamoor, c.1936, pencil and watercolour on paper. V&A

Alexandre Benois, design for front cloth (Copenhagen Revival), 1925, pen, ink, tempera on machine-made laid charcoal paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

Alexandre Benois, set design for the Butter Week Fair (Scenes 1 and 4), 1911, graphite, tempera and watercolour on machine-made laid paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

Valentine Hugo, sketches of Vaslav Nijinsky as Petrushka, 1911, pencil on paper. Gift of Jean Hugo. V&A

*Le Dieu bleu*

Léon Bakst, costume design for a Temple Dancer, 1922 after 1912 original, watercolour, gouache, metallic paint and charcoal on paper, mounted on board. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Gift of Robert L. B. Tobin (pl.154)

Léon Bakst, costume design for the Pilgrim, c.1911, gouache and metallic paint with graphite on paper. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Bequest of Margaretta A. Hinchman, 1955 (p.235)

Léon Bakst, costume design for the Young Rajah, 1912, pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper. V&A (pl.75)

Léon Bakst, costume for a Little God, 1912, metal thread and cotton jersey, silk, brass decorations, papier-mâché, cotton, gauze, brass headdress. V&A (pl.43)

Léon Bakst, costume (made by Marie Muelle and M. Landoff) for the Blue God, c.1912, silk, silk moiré faille, satin, velvet ribbon, braid and embroidery thread, rayon, metallic embroidery thread and ribbon, metal studs and fasteners, gelatin imitation mother-of-pearl discs, metallic gauze, braid and paillettes, silk embroidery thread, gelatin sequins, metallic and other paint. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (pl.156)

Léon Bakst, study for the décor (Bayonne with Snakes), 1911, watercolour and gouache on paper. Collection Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, The George Riabov Collection of Russian Art, donated in memory of Basil and Emilia Riabov (pl.160)

Souvenir program for the first American Ballets Russes tour, 1916. Collection of Ms. Anna Winestein and Mr. Leonid Winestein

*L'Après-midi d'un faune*

Léon Bakst, costume design for Vaslav Nijinsky as the Faun, 1912, graphite, tempera and gold paint on laid charcoal paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund (pl.155)

Léon Bakst, costumes for three Nymphs, c.1912, silk chiffon, lamé, metallic ribbon, cotton. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (pls 157-9)

Adolph de Meyer, Nijinsky and a Dancer, from the album *Sur le Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, pl.IV, 1914, colotype. Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Gift (don manuel) of M. Michel de Bry, 1988

Adolph de Meyer, Nijinsky and six Dancers, from the album *Sur le Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, pl.XIV, 1914, colotype. Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Gift (don manuel) of M. Michel de Bry, 1988 (pl.161)

Una Troubridge, *Vaslav Nijinsky as the Faun*, 1912, plaster. V&A (pl.135)



154



155



156



157



158



159



160



161

*Daphnis et Chloé*

Léon Bakst, costume design for a Villager, 1912, watercolour, pencil on paper. Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University, Gift of Howard D. Rothschild, 1990, MS Thr 414.4 (8)

Léon Bakst, costume design for Likenion, 1913, pencil and watercolour on paper. V&A

Léon Bakst, costumes for three Brigands, 1912, wool, cotton and paint. V&A (pl.78)

Léon Bakst, décor (Act I), 1912, watercolour, gouache and pencil with gold and silver highlighting. Les Arts Décoratifs, musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris (pl.163)

*Jeux*

Léon Bakst, costume study, 1913, watercolour, graphite and black chalk on laid paper. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Howard Sturges

*The Rite of Spring*

Jean Cocteau, *Stravinsky at the Piano*, 1913, pencil and ink on paper in custom-made gold gilt frame. V&A

Nicholas Roerich, costume design for two Clowns, 1913, watercolour and pencil on illustration board. Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University, Gift of Howard D. Rothschild, 1990, MS Thr 414.4 (119) (pl.162)

Nicholas Roerich, costume for an Elder of the Tribe, 1913, wool, napped cotton, wood, leather and fur. V&A (pl.81)

Nicholas Roerich, costume for a Young Man, 1913, wool and cotton, with leather, wood, paint and metal. V&A

Nicholas Roerich, costumes for four Maidens, 1913, wool, metal necklace, leather and metal belts. V&A (pl.82)

*Le Coq d'or*

Natalia Goncharova, front curtain design (Act III, Scene 3), c.1914, watercolour, gouache and graphite on board. Collection of the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Gift of Robert L. B. Tobin (pl.123)

Natalia Goncharova, set design, 1914, watercolour. V&A

Natalia Goncharova, set design (Scene 1), 1914, watercolour. Private collection (pl.66)

*Parade*

Pablo Picasso, costume design for the Chinese Conjuror, 1917, pen and ink on paper. V&A (pl.70)

Pablo Picasso, costume for the Chinese Conjuror, c.1917, silk satin fabric with silver tissue and black thread; cotton hat with woolen pigtail. V&A (pl.71)

Ethelbert White, souvenir print, c.1925, hand-coloured print. V&A (p.184)

*Cléopâtre*

Robert Delaunay, set design, c.1918, watercolour, gouache, metallic paint and graphite on paper. Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of William S. Lieberman, 2005 (pl.164)

Sonia Delaunay, costume design, 1918, watercolour, metallic paint and graphite on paper. Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of William S. Lieberman, 2005 (pl.165)

Sonia Delaunay, costume for Cleopatra, 1918, silk, sequins, mirror and beads, wool yarn, metallic thread braid, lamé. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Costume Council Fund, M.68.51.18a-b, Costume and Textiles Department (pl.126)

*Le Chant du rossignol*

Henri Matisse, costume for a Mourner, 1920, wool felt and velvet. V&A (pl.96)

Henri Matisse, costume for a Warrior, 1920, felt, velvet, satin and silk with paint, gold tinsel, studs and braid and brass decorations. V&A

Henri Matisse, costume for the Mandarin, 1920, satin, paint and tinsel. V&A (pl.94)

*Chout*

Mikhail Larionov, costume for a Soldier, 1921, cotton, buckram, flannel, satin and calico, with metal, straw and paint. V&A

Mikhail Larionov, costume for the Buffoon, 1921, steel-and-cane-stiffened felt and cotton. V&A (pls 100 and 101)

Mikhail Larionov, costume for the Buffoon's Wife, 1921, cane-stiffened felt and cotton. V&A (pl.99)

Mikhail Larionov, design for the Buffoon, 1915, watercolour and body-colour. V&A (pl.102)



163



164



165



162

*Le Train bleu*

Coco Chanel, costume for a Gigolo, 1924, wool. V&A

Coco Chanel, costume for La Perouse, 1924, knitted wool. V&A

Alexander Schervashidze, after Pablo Picasso, front cloth, 1924, oil on canvas. V&A (pp.238–9)

*The Firebird (L'Oiseau de feu)*

Natalia Goncharova, back cloth for the final scene, the Coronation, 1926, painted canvas. V&A (pl.62)

Natalia Goncharova, costume for the sorcerer Köstchei, 1926, flannel, ribbons, appliqué, lamé, cotton, velvet, lace and gold braid. Dansmuseet - Museum Rolf de Maré Stockholm.

Natalia Goncharova, design for the back cloth for the final scene, the Coronation, 1926, watercolour. V&A (pl.61)

Natalia Goncharova, design for the back cloth for the final scene, the Coronation, 1926, watercolour, gouache, gold and silver on card. V&A

Natalia Goncharova, set design for the final scene, 1926, watercolour on card. Private collection (pl.60)

*Les Orientales*

Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Vaslav Nijinsky in Siamese Dance*, c.1910, oil on canvas. Collection of Ann and Gordon Getty, San Francisco (pl.121)

Eugène Druet, Vaslav Nijinsky in Siamese dance, 1910, gelatin silver print. Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gilman Collection, Gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation, 2005

*Ode*

Studio Lipnitsky, Ira Belianina as Nature and Serge Lifar as the Student with the women of the corps de ballet in their crinoline dresses, 1928, gelatin silver print. V&A (pl.58)

Pavel Tchelitchev, costume design for a female dancer in a crinoline skirt, 1928, pen, ink and tempera on Bristol board. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

Pavel Tchelitchev, costume for a corps de ballet dancer, 1928, artificial silk and cotton, cotton jersey, cellulose nitrate decoration, metal fencing mask. V&A (pl.57)

Pavel Tchelitchev, set design for figures (Scene 3), 1928, gouache, wash on dark blue machine-made woven paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund (pl.128)

Pavel Tchelitchev, souvenir program for the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, 6–23 June 1928, showing an illustration inspired by *Ode*. V&A (p.125)

*Le Bal*

Giorgio de Chirico, costume design for a Male Guest, 1929, graphite and tempera on laid paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

Giorgio de Chirico, costume design for André Bobrow as the Astrologer, 1929, graphite and tempera on handmade laid paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

Giorgio de Chirico, costume for a Male Guest, 1929, gabardine, flannel, silk and wool, with painting and appliqué medals. V&A

Giorgio de Chirico, costume for a Male Guest, 1929, painted gabardine, flannel, silk and wool. V&A (pl.129)

Giorgio de Chirico, costume for a Sylph, 1929, silk and tarlatan, with braid. V&A

Giorgio de Chirico, costume worn by André Bobrow as the Astrologer, 1929, wool flannel with appliqué silk. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, Purchased through the gift of James Junius Goodwin and the Special Gift Account (pl.166)

Giorgio de Chirico, design for the cover of the souvenir program of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes for the 1929 season in Monte Carlo and Paris, 1929, graphite and tempera on handmade laid paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

Giorgio de Chirico, set design for The Ball (Scene 2), 1929, graphite and tempera on handmade laid paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

*The Prodigal Son*

Georges Rouault, design for the back cloth for Home (Scenes 1 and 3), 1929, pastel, ink, tempera and watercolour on paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund

Georges Rouault, design for the banqueting tent for In a Far Country (Scene 2), 1929, pastel and gouache on paper. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund



166

*Related artworks*

Catalogue of *Exposition de l'art russe*, 1906, printed paper. V&A

Giorgio de Chirico, *Conversation among the Ruins*, 1927, oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection (pl.167)

Diaghilev and John Brown, New York, 1916, photograph by Bain News Service. Collection of Ms. Anna Winestein and Mr. Leonid Winestein

Henri Gervex, *The Coronation of Nicholas II – sketch*, 1896, oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (pl.5)

Albert Gleizes, *Portrait of Igor Stravinsky*, 1914, oil on canvas. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Bequest of Richard S. Zeisler, New York, 2007

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167

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Amedeo Modigliani, *Léon Bakst*, 1917, oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection (pl.168)

Vaslav Nijinsky, *A Mask*, 1918–19, crayon and pencil on paper. Bethlem Art and History Collections Trust, Kent

Pablo Picasso, *Harlequin (Portrait of Léonide Massine)*, 1917, oil on canvas. Museu Picasso, Barcelona, Gift of Pablo Picasso, 1919 (p.264)

Pablo Picasso, *Madame Picasso*, 1923, oil on linen. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection (pl.169)



168

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Vaslav Nijinsky, Romolo Nijinsky and Kyra Nijinsky, New York, 7 April 1916, photograph by NYH Service New York. Collection of Ms. Anna Winestein and Mr. Leonid Winestein

Max Weber, *Russian Ballet*, 1916, oil on canvas. Brooklyn Museum, New York, Bequest of Edith and Milton Lowenthal, 1992.11.29 (p.259)



169

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Max Weber, *Russian Ballet*.  
Oil on canvas, 1916. Brooklyn  
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Pablo Picasso, *Harlequin (Portrait of Léonide Massine)*. Oil on canvas, 1917. Museu Picasso, Barcelona, Gift of Pablo Picasso, 1919

# INDEX

Numbers in (brackets) are primary citations; those in *italics* refer to illustrations.

## A

advertisements  
 advertising cards 53  
 souvenir programmes 124, 124, 125  
 Æsop's fables 75  
 Afanasiev, Alexander 77  
*Afternoon of a Faun* 197, 199  
 air travel, Ballets Russes 31  
 Alarcón, Pedro 77  
 Aldon Studios 184  
 Alexander II, tsar 170  
 Alhambra Theatre 66, 67  
 Alias (theatrical costumiers) 88  
 Allegri, Oreste 88  
 Allied Newspapers, photograph 93  
 Allinson, Adrian 184, 185, 185  
 Alston, Richard 75  
 American Ballet Theatre 214  
 Ancient Greece, and Bakst 104  
 Anderson, J. Ringling 222  
 Angkor Thom, Cambodia, influence 79  
 Anisfeld, Boris 88  
 Ansermet, Ernest 172, 183  
*Apollon musagète* 75, 81, 82, 120, 145, 146–7, 164, 165, 213, 215  
*L'Après-midi d'un faune* 72, 80, 81, 81, 143, 150, 193, 194, 209, 209  
 reconstruction 215  
*The Arabian Nights* 190  
 Archer, Kenneth 78, 214, 215  
 art nouveau 52, 81  
 Ashton, Frederick 212, 220  
 Astruc, Gabriel 57, 71  
 Atelier Martine 127, 127  
 Athens 25  
 auctions, Ballets Russes 166–7  
 Auric, Georges 121, 178  
*Aurora's Wedding* 109, 111, 150, 180–1  
 Australian Ballet 214

## B

*Baba Yaga* 77, 165  
 backstage 73, 87  
 facilities 67, 150  
 passes for artists 184, 210  
 Bakst, Léon 103, (104–5), 188, 190–1, 193  
 Nijinsky as the Faun 194  
 appreciation of designs 56  
 artistic destiny 115  
 costume design for a Bacchante in *Narcisse* 191  
 on changing design styles 130  
 designs 30, 53, 56, 64, 77–8, 79, 88, 102, 105, 116, 117, 130, 131, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136–9, 138, 140, 141, 160, 161, 194  
 in Diaghilev's cabinet of advisers 71  
 exhibitions 191  
 influence 126–7, 205, 222  
 make-up for dancers 147  
 in *Mir iskusstva* editorial group 44  
 and Poiret 64, 205  
 portrait of Diaghilev 25, 41  
 realization of costume designs 141, 142, 144, 145  
 Siamese dancers, influence on  
 designs 78  
 souvenir programmes 124  
 surviving costumes 129  
*Le Bal* 80, 125, 125, 145, 202, 215, 215  
 reconstruction 215  
 Balanchine, George 39, 75, 94, 212, 214, 215, 217, 202  
 and *La Chatte* 75  
 choreography 81, 82, 212  
 collaboration with Stravinsky  
 in America 218  
 joins Ballets Russes 75  
 New York City Ballet productions 214, 215  
 recreation of ballets 215  
 Balla, Giacomo 195  
 Study for *Feu d'artifice (Fireworks)* 195  
 ballet  
 changing audience 49  
 copyrighting 210  
 cost 49  
 Diaghilev's influence 51–7  
 funding 51, 94–5  
 Russian and Italian schools  
 compared 51  
 'ballet blanc' 51  
 ballet class *see* dance, daily class  
 Ballet Rambert 217  
 ballet scores *see* Ballets Russes, ballet scores  
 Ballet Theatre, USA 214  
 Les Ballets 1933 212  
 Ballets des Champs-Élysées 212  
 Ballets Russes 187, 193, 196, 200  
 adoption by dancers of Russian names 75  
 auctions 166–7  
 ballet scores 56, 74, (169–81), 217  
 ballets as representation of Russia 71  
 Diaghilev's need of perfection 150  
 emergence 15, 25  
 employment of inexperienced dancers 94–5  
 and fashion 205, 209  
 finances 36, 141  
 front cloth 118–19, 120–1, 122–3  
 impact, influence and legacy 126–7, 205–222  
 influence on fashion 193  
 interior design, influence on 104, 126, 127, 222

international touring 30–1, 30, 31  
 and musical form and structure 179  
 peripatetic lives of dancers 51  
 reconstructions 215–6  
 recruitment 75  
 restagings 210–2  
 rival companies 211–2  
 subject matter of ballets 75  
 unrealised projects 78, 222  
 use of ballet scores by other choreographers 217  
 Ballets Suédois 200, 212  
*ballo-grande* 50–1, 55  
*Barabau* 150  
 Bartók, Béla 175, 179  
 Bauchant, André  
 costume design 145  
 design of front cloth 120  
 designs in exhibitions 103  
*La Bayadère* 51  
 Bayer, Josef 53  
 Beardsley, Aubrey 188  
 Beaton, Cecil, on Poiret 65  
 Beaumont, Cyril  
 costume collection 150  
 quoted 77, 82–3, 124  
 souvenirs 184–5  
 work backstage 210  
 Beaumont, Comte Étienne de 212  
 Beaumont Press productions 184–5, 185  
 Beecham, Sir Thomas 95, 193, 193  
 Bekeffi, Alfred 57  
 Belianina, Ira 91  
 Benois, Alexandre 72, 188, 190–1, 195, 200, 220  
 on Bakst 147  
 costume designs 28, 47, 54, 78, 112, 141, 144  
 designs, in exhibitions 103  
 in Diaghilev's cabinet of advisers 71  
 on Diaghilev's homosexuality 40  
 and Diaghilev's tomb inscription 224–5  
 drawings 121, 175  
 front cloth for *Petrushka* 120  
 images for souvenir programmes 124  
 make-up for dancers 147  
 in *Mir iskusstva* editorial group 44, 45  
 and *Le Pavillon d'Armide* 77  
 and *Petrushka* 75  
 possible influence on Diaghilev 53  
 set designs 57, 112, 211  
 surviving costumes 129  
 and *Sylvia* 53  
 Benois, Nicola 220  
 Bérain, Jean 77  
 Berners, Lord 127  
 Bert, photographs 8, 29, 142, 223  
 Bewicke, Hilda 31  
 Bezobrazov, General 71  
*Les Biches* 83, 144, 164, 165, 165, 166, 180, 200, 205, 214  
 front cloth 120

bohemian life, Paris 169  
 Bolm, Adolph 8, 31, 56, 57, 75, 92, 154, 176, 183, 193, 205, 206, 209, 222  
 Bolsheviks *see* Soviet Union  
 Boquet, Louis-René 77  
*Boris Godunov* 27, 55, 173  
 Borodin, Alexander 189, 190  
 Borovansky Ballet 214  
 Boston Opera House 66–7  
 Boulestin, Marcel 127  
*La Boutique fantasque* 74, 88, 129, 131, 141, 145, 150, 162, 163, 178, 178  
 set painting 88  
 surviving costumes 129  
*La Boutique fantasque* (Beaumont souvenir) 185  
 Brandon, Graham, photographs 212, 218  
 Branitska, Natalie 93  
 Braque, Georges, designs 68, 143, 147  
 Brianza, Carlotta 51  
 Britain  
 adaptations of Fokine's ballets 210  
 British disapproval of Diaghilev 40  
 Diaghilev exhibition 210  
 Diaghilev's theatres 67  
 English taste 127  
 folk song 175  
 involvement with Ballets Russes 214, 217, 222  
 rehearsal class 93  
 Brunhoff, Maurice de 124–5  
 Bryars, Gavin 217  
 Buckle, Richard  
 exhibitions 103, 210  
 front cloth for *Le Train bleu* 121, 167  
 Buenos Aires, Teatro Colón 66, 211  
 Bull, Deborah 214  
 Burne-Jones, Edward 188

## C

Cage, John 217  
 can-can *see* *La Boutique fantasque*  
*Le Carnaval* 78, 145, 209, 211  
 Diaghilev's notes 72  
 as German tribute 77  
 Meissen figures 209  
 in proposed US tour 72  
*Carnaval* (Beaumont souvenir) 185, 185  
 Carter, Huntley 105  
 Casadesus, Henri and Marius 72

castanets *84, 85*  
 Castle Howard collection 167  
 Cecchetti, Enrico *50, 92, 92, 176*  
 Cendrars, Blaise 200  
*Anthologie nègre* 200  
 Cézanne, Paul 194  
 Chaliapin, Fyodor *25, 57, 173*  
   costume design *27*  
 Chaminade, Cécile 170  
 Chanel, Coco (164–5), 200, 205  
   ballet costumes 144, 145  
   costume designs 144, 145, *146–7, 164, 165*  
   as Diaghilev’s adviser 74, 150, 164  
   and Diaghilev’s funeral 165, 224  
   as patron of Ballets Russes 94–5  
   scrutiny of costumes 150  
*Le Chant du rossignol* 177, 200, 211, *212, 216, 217*  
   costumes 78, 131, 137, 141, 147, 150, *151, 152, 153, 166, 177, 211*  
   make-up 147  
   reconstruction 215  
   recreation 215, 217  
   sources 75, 78, 80  
   surviving costumes 129  
   touring costumes 150  
*see also The Nightingale*  
 Charbonnier, Pierre 88  
 Charpentier-Mio, Maurice 209  
 Charvet, House of 165  
*La Chatte* *47, 75, 80, 88, 141, 184, 202, 210, 215, 252*  
   choreography 81  
   reconstruction 215  
 Chavannes, Pierre Puvis de 188  
*Children’s Tales* 150  
*Children’s Tales* (Beaumont souvenir) 185, *185*  
 Chipperfield, David 222  
 Chirico, Giorgio de 202  
*Conversation among the Ruins* 202  
   costume for a Male Guest in *Le Bal* 202, *203*  
 Chopin, Frédéric 193  
*Chopiniana* 78  
*Chout* 78, 129, 145, *156, 157, 158, 159, 179, 198*  
 Christie’s auction 167  
*Chroma* 217  
*Cimarosiana* 75, *147*  
*Cinderella* 217  
 cinema *see* film  
 Clarksons (wig makers) 88  
 class *see* dance, daily class  
*Cleopatra* (Beaumont souvenir) 185  
*Cléopâtre* *36, 72, 104, 115, 210*  
   costumes 129, 131, 143, 205  
   make-up 150  
   scenery burnt 30  
 Cliff, Clarice 209  
 Cochran, C.B., revues 211  
 Cocteau, Jean 46, 112, 170, 183, 198  
   drawing *95*  
   as librettist 80  
   and *Parade* 74, 111–12  
   posters *42, 43, 209*  
 Colette 170, *217*  
*commedia dell’arte* 77, 78, 179  
*Comœdia Illustré* 124–5, *130*  
 composers  
   involvement in ballets 74  
   women, in Paris 170  
 conservation of costumes 150  
 Constructivism 71, 103

‘contemporary’ ballets 144  
 Contemporary Dance Trust 167  
*Contes Russes* 77, 88, 129  
   Kikimora character 72, 147, *148, 149*  
   make-up 147, 150  
   as representation of Russia 71  
 Coppi, Carlo 49  
 copyrighting, ballets 192  
*Le Coq d’or* *10, 103, 107–8, 107, 111, 115, 175, 211*  
 corps de ballet  
   increased importance 81  
   *Les Noces* 111  
   quality, Ballets Russes 75  
   ‘tramagnini’ male dancers 50  
 costume design 74, 83  
   adaptation for different dancers 83  
   artists 144  
   by couturiers 65, 144  
   *Le Coq d’or* 10  
   costume parades 82–3  
   performers’ comfort 78  
 costume makers 88  
 costumes 129–50  
   as art objects 129  
   changing styles 130  
   and choreography 145  
   cost 141, 150  
   fabrics and colour 141  
   influence 150  
   makers 150  
   practicality 145  
   surviving examples 129  
 Coubertin, Baron Pierre de 25  
 couturiers  
   and Ballets des Champs-Élysées 212  
   Ballets Russes dancers as models 205  
   costume design 65, 144  
   influence of Bakst 104, 126  
   problems of ballet costumes 144  
*see also* Chanel, Coco; Poiret, Paul  
*Le Coq d’or* 196  
 Coward, Noel 222  
 Croydon Aerodrome *30, 31*  
*Cuadro Flamenco* 115, 130  
 Cubism 9, 103, 114, 187  
 Cubist 200  
 Cunard, Lady Emerald 95  
 Cunningham, Merce 217  
 Czinner, Paul 222

**D**  
 Dale, Margaret 222  
 dance  
   change in public perception 205  
   changing styles 50–2, 81  
   daily class 92–3, *93*  
   Diaghilev’s influence 49–57  
   dance training, and physiques 49  
 Danilova, Alexandra 75, 92, 145, *146–7, 147, 164, 165, 171*  
*La Danse* (periodical) 124–5  
*danse plastique* 103, 115  
*Daphnis et Chloé* 75, 129–30, *130, 131, 178, 193, 194, 211*  
 De Chirico, Giorgio 103, 125, 145  
   illustration *125*  
 de Valois, Ninette 214, *220*  
 Debussy, Claude 169, 170, *173, 194*

and Stravinsky 173, 174, 176  
 Decadence, and Diaghilev’s designs 103  
 Degas, Hilaire-German-Edgar, *Robert le Diable* 50  
 Delaunay, Robert 72, 200  
 Delaunay, Sonia 72, 198, 200, 205  
   costume for title role in *Cléopâtre*, 199  
 Delibes, Léo 53  
 Dennebaum, Eduard (tutor) 35  
 Derain, André 88, 129, 141, 217  
   costume design *162, 163*  
 Desmond, Olga, and Bakst 104  
 Dexter, John 217  
 Diaghilev and de Basil Ballet Foundation 166–7  
 Diaghilev, Pavel Pavlovich (father) 36  
   bankruptcy 16, 36

DIAGHILEV, SERGE PAVLOVICH *30, 31, 32, 37, 41, 72, 93, 106, 172, 183, 187, 200, 202, 221*  
 CAREER  
   advisers’ groups 71, 72  
   aims for Ballets Russes 112–13  
   as artistic director 71  
   ballet as central feature 49  
   competition from rival Russian dancers’ groups 57  
   dismissal from Imperial Ballet 53  
   embraces modernism 34  
   as entrepreneur 26, 39  
   first Paris exhibition 21  
   in his twenties 16  
   influence 49–57, 126–7, 169, 205–222  
   management structure 39  
   need for perfection 150  
   notebook 71–2  
   ‘ownership’ of operas 211  
   role 180  
   Salon d’Automne 188  
   supervision of productions 74, 145, 147, 150  
 CHARACTER AND INTERESTS  
*26, 34–5, 225*  
   appearance 129  
   artistic taste 33–4, 44  
   collecting 74, 225  
   favourite works 225  
   fear of death 33, 39, 40  
   fear of disease 39  
   fear of sea travel 30, 39  
   lack of interest in wealth 36  
   musical ability 35  
   opera 49  
   self-awareness 41  
   social life 182–3  
   as Svengali figure 222  
   view of morals 40  
   views on revolution 18

PERSONAL LIFE  
   background 16  
   death 165, 224–5  
   on deathbed *224*  
   Diaghilev’s boys 46–7  
   early life in Perm 15–16, 34–5, 36, 38  
   as exile 25, 26  
   final hotel bill *225*  
   first complete biography 220  
   first visit to the ballet 53  
   fortune at death 225  
   funeral 165, *224, 224*  
   funerary gondola *224*

‘grand tour’ of Mediterranean 21  
 homosexuality 33, 40, 46  
 move to Paris 26  
 responsibility for family 16, 36  
 in St Petersburg 16, 18, 20, 25  
 tomb *224, 225*

Diaghilev, Valentin (half-brother) 16, *37*  
 Diaghilev, Yury (half-brother) 16, *37*  
 Diaghileva, Yelena 16, 35  
 Diamantidi, Anthony 166  
*Le Dieu bleu* *102, 104, 116, 137, 140, 143, 193, 217, 236*  
   auction of costumes 166  
   Cocteau and 80  
   exotic influence 78  
   as representation of Russian frontier 71  
   surviving costumes 129  
 Dimitriev, Vladimir, photograph *164*  
 Dobuzhinsky, Mstislav 131  
 documentaries, about Ballets Russes 222  
 Dolin, Anton 40, 47, 93, 114, 121, *165, 214*  
 Doubrovska, Felia 165, *165, 205, 207*  
 dressing rooms, Diaghilev’s theatres 67  
 drop curtains *see* front cloths  
 Drummond, John 40, 222  
 Duff, Lady Juliet 95  
 Dufy, Raoul 127  
 Dukelsky, Vladimir (Vernon Duke) 71  
 Duncan, Isadora *48, 49, 51–2, 52, 81, 104, 115*

**E**  
 Eagling, Wayne 217  
 Eastern Europe, ballet tradition 49  
 Eden-théâtre, Paris 50  
 Egorova, Lubov 93  
 Einaudi, Ludovico 178  
 émigrés, ballets as representation of Russia 71  
*L’Enfant et les sortilèges* 217  
*epaulement* 52, *92*  
 Errázuriz, Eugenia 74  
 Escoffier, Auguste 182  
 fear of disease 39  
 Europe, ballet traditions 49–50  
 European souvenir programmes 125  
 Evans, Edwin 81–2  
 Evreinov, Nikolai 105  
*Excelstior* 50  
 exhibitions 103, 107, 127, 170, 209, 210  
   *Exhibition of Russian Historical Portraits* (St Petersburg) 15, *16*  
 exoticism  
   costume design 78, 80  
   Italian male dancers 51  
   Orientalist fantasies 65  
   Russian 25  
*Expositions des Arts décoratifs* 127

**F**  
 and Diaghilev’s designs 103  
 Futurist 194–5, 198, 200

*Les Fâcheux* 80, *147*  
*The Fairy Doll (Die Puppenfee)* *53, 53*  
 fairy tales, as subjects for ballets 75–6  
 Faithful, Doris, costume *155*  
 Falla, Manuel de 77, 170, *183*  
 Farjeon, Hubert 47  
 fashion  
   and Ballets Russes 205, 209  
   and costume design 144  
*see also* couturiers; interior design  
 Fedorova, Olga 71  
*fêries*, and ballet 50, 51  
 female dancers, metamorphosis in 20th century 205  
*Femina* 47  
*Le Festin* *137, 138–9, 166*  
*Feu d’artifice (Fireworks)* 195, *195*  
 film  
   ballet films 222  
   and Ballets Russes 220, 222  
   Massine and 82, 220  
   unrealised projects 222  
 Filosofov, Dimitry ‘Dima’ 33, 36, *38, 44*  
*The Firebird* *55, 56, 77, 96, 97, 98–9, 100–1, 144–5, 174, 176, 185, 185, 193, 195, 209, 218–19, 220*  
   auction of costumes 167  
   Diaghilev’s notes 72  
   film 222  
   new choreography 217  
   as representation of Russia 71  
   source *76*  
   touring costumes 150  
 fleshings 143  
 Florensky, Pavel 108  
*Foire Espagnole* 108  
 Fokina, Vera 24, 125  
 Fokine, Mikhail *24, 56, 63, 75, 187, 189–91, 193–4, 214*  
   adaptability 103  
   choreography 80–1, *80*  
   on *Le Coq d’or* 108  
   design reforms 130  
   in Diaghilev’s cabinet of advisers 71  
   Gorsky’s influence 52  
   piracy of ballets 210  
   restaging of Diaghilev’s ballets 210–1  
   Siamese dancers’ influence 78  
 folk dress, influence 78  
 folk songs, composers’ interest in 175  
 folklore, as subjects for ballets 75–6  
 Fonteyn, Margot *220, 222*  
*Les Forains* (Petit) 217  
 France  
   ballet in 19th century 50  
   Ballets Russes and 77  
 Franck, César 169  
 Frödmann-Cluzel, Boris M., sculpture 206, 209  
 front cloths 120–1  
*Le Train bleu* 9, 115, *118–19, 120–1, 122–3, 166*  
 Fuller, Loïe 49, 51–2  
 funding for Ballets Russes 94–5  
 fundraising  
   ladies’ committee 95  
   Paris supporters 71  
 Futurist 187

**G**  
 Gabo, Naum 88, 202, *210*  
 Galerie Hébrard, Paris 209  
 Galerie Sauvage, Paris 209  
 Galli, Ferdinando 77–8  
 Garafola, Lynn 220  
 Garcia, Félix Fernandez 82  
   castanets *84*  
 Gauguin, Paul 194  
 Gautier, Théophile 80, 193, *224–5*  
 Gavrilov, Alexander 67  
 gay culture 46–7, 170  
*La Gazette du Bon Ton* 47, *64*  
 Geller, Dan 222  
 gender, and Paris 170  
 George, André 202  
 George V, coronation 95  
 Germany, representation in Ballets Russes production 77  
 Gervex, Henri, *The Coronation of Nicholas II* 19  
*Gesamtkunstwerk* 104, 188, 194, 195, 200  
*Giselle* *28, 29, 193, 220*  
   auction of costumes 166  
   surviving costumes 129  
 Glass, Philip 178  
 Glazunov, Alexander 51  
 Gluck, Hannah, painting *211*  
*The Gods Go A-Begging* 80, *164, 165*  
*The Golden Cockerel* *see Le Coq d’or*  
 Goldfine, Dayan 222  
 Goldoni, Carlo 77  
 Golovin, Aleksandr *27, 45, 188*  
 Goncharova, Natalia (106–11), 183, 195, 196, 205, 217  
   design for Peasant Woman in *Le Coq d’or* 196, *197*  
   project for the overture curtain for *Le Coq d’or* 196, *196*  
   artistic destiny 115  
   auction of costumes 167  
   choreographic design *110*  
   costume designs *10, 83, 107–8, 109, 128, 141, 144–5, 152, 153, 204, 211*  
   as Diaghilev’s adviser 72  
   exhibitions 209, 220  
*Les Fleurs* 220  
   and *Liturgie* 108  
*pochoir* portfolios 108  
   portrait of Diaghilev *106*  
   Russian influences in designs 107  
*Serge Diaghilev* 72  
   set designs *96, 97, 98–9, 100–1, 107, 107, 111, 211*  
   set painting 88  
   use of fold art 78

*The Good-Humoured Ladies* 77, 78, *117, 145, 147, 211, 220*  
*The Good-Humoured Ladies* (Beaumont souvenir) 185  
 Gordon-Craig, Edward, *Isadora Duncan Dancing at Breslau* *48, 52*  
 Gorsky, Alexander 52  
 Goya, Francisco de, influence on Picasso 114  
 Granada 187

Grant, Duncan 209  
 Greffuhle, Comtesse 25, 71, 95  
 Grehg, Fernand 189  
 Grigoriev, Serge (*régisseur*) 30, *31, 71, 150, 214, 220, 222*  
 Gris, Juan 165  
 Gross, Valentine  
   drawings *12–13, 81, 83, 84, 174, 209*  
   souvenir programme cover 1914 *24*  
 Groult, Iribe and Ruhlmann 127  
 Grunenberg, Arthur 209  
 Guest, Ann Hutchinson 215  
 Gunsbourg, Raoul 56–7  
 Gustave (wig makers) *87, 88*  
 gymnastics 103

**H**  
 Hahn, Reynaldo 217  
 Hansen, Joseph 49  
 Harmsworth, Harold *see* Rothermere, Harold Sidney Harmsworth, first Viscount  
 Hartmann, Georges, as patron of Ballets Russes 169  
 Haskell, Arnold 220  
 haute couture, and Ballets Russes dancers 205  
 headresses, Poiret 65  
 Herculeaneum, influence on Picasso 114  
 Kean, Charles 55  
   costume design *216*  
 Hodgkin, Howard 217  
 Hodson, Millicent 78, 214, 215, 217  
*see also Contes Russes*  
 Kniaevff, Boris 217  
 Knight, Laura  
   production *214*  
   *In the Coullisse* 66  
   *Olga Spessitsova Backstage Tying her Shoe* 70, 73  
   work backstage 210  
 Kochno, Boris (‘Sobeka’) 39, 72, 75, *93, 183, 212, 217, 225*  
   at Diaghilev’s funeral 224  
   as librettist 80  
   as producer 74–5  
   and souvenir programmes 125  
   telegram 94  
 Kodály, Zoltán 175  
 Kokhlova, Olga *31, 121*  
 Koribut, Pavel ‘Pavka’ 39, 224  
 Korovin, Konstantin 45, 53  
 Kosloff, Theodore 57  
 Krafft-Ebbing, Richard von 33, 40  
 Kremneff, Nicolas *31, 92*  
 Kschesinskaya, Matilda 57, *62*  
 Kschesinsky, Iouzia 57  
*Die Kunst* 44  
 Kuzmin, Mikhail 40  
 Kyasht, George 57  
 Kyasht, Lydia 57, 220, 222

**I**  
 Idzikowski, Stanislas 78, 80, 214  
 ikats 78, 143  
*L’Illustration* 188  
 Imperial Ballet *see* Russian Imperial Ballet  
*Impressions of the Russian Ballet* 185, *185*  
*Infra* 217  
 interior design, influence of Ballets Russes 104, 126, 127, 222  
 Iribe, Paul 64  
 irony 177  
 Italy  
   ballet in 19th century 50–1  
   representation in Ballets Russes productions 77  
*Ivan the Tsar’s son ...* 76, 77  
 Ivanov, Lev 57

**J**  
*Jack-in-the-Box* 179  
 Japan 18, 222  
 Järvinen, Hanna 194  
 jazz 178  
 Jeschke, Claudia 215  
*Jeux* 104, 144, 176, 194, 205, *214*  
   reconstruction 215  
 Joffrey Ballet 214  
 John, Augustus 209  
 Johns, Jasper 217  
 Jones, Robert, designs in exhibitions 103  
 Joyce, James 183  
 Jullien, Adolphe 194

**K**  
 Karelli, Vera 220, 222  
 Karlevska, Yadviga *92*  
 Karsavina, Tamara *8, 42, 56, 57, 62, 65, 65, 83, 92, 112, 144, 193, 209, 214, 220, 220, 222*  
   adaptability 103  
   make-up 147  
   private classes 93  
 Kateshinskaya, Matilda *62*  
 Kean, Charles 55  
*Kikimora* 72, 77  
*see also Contes Russes*  
 Kniaevff, Boris 217  
 Knight, Laura  
   production *214*  
   *In the Coullisse* 66  
   *Olga Spessitsova Backstage Tying her Shoe* 70, 73  
   work backstage 210  
 Kochno, Boris (‘Sobeka’) 39, 72, 75, *93, 183, 212, 217, 225*  
   at Diaghilev’s funeral 224  
   as librettist 80  
   as producer 74–5  
   and souvenir programmes 125  
   telegram 94  
 Kodály, Zoltán 175  
 Kokhlova, Olga *31, 121*  
 Koribut, Pavel ‘Pavka’ 39, 224  
 Korovin, Konstantin 45, 53  
 Kosloff, Theodore 57  
 Krafft-Ebbing, Richard von 33, 40  
 Kremneff, Nicolas *31, 92*  
 Kschesinskaya, Matilda 57, *62*  
 Kschesinsky, Iouzia 57  
*Die Kunst* 44  
 Kuzmin, Mikhail 40  
 Kyasht, George 57  
 Kyasht, Lydia 57, 220, 222

**L**  
 Lachmann, photographs *121, 143*  
 Lalo, Edouard 169  
 Lalo, Pierre 189

Lambert, Constant *93*, 217

Lancaster, Osbert, *Homes Sweet Homes* *126*, 127

Lancerey, Yevgeny *53*

Lanner, Katti *49*

Larionov, Mikhail *183*, 195, 196, 198

costume designs *141*, *141*, *145*, *156*, *157*, *158*, *159*, 183

designs in exhibitions *103*

as Diaghilev's adviser *72*

illustration in souvenir programme *124*

and *Liturgie* *108*

make-up for dancers *147*, *1168*

and Massine *81*

*Serge Diaghilev* *72*

set painting *88*

*The Last Stand of Vice Admiral Makaroff* *20–1*

Laurencin, Marie *103*, 120, 144, 200

Laurens, Henri *200*

Legat, Nicolas *53*, *57*, *62*

as dance teacher *92*, *93*

Legat, Sergei *53*, *62*

suicide *20*

*The Legend of Joseph* *47*, *75*

Léger, Fernand *187–8*, 200

*Exit the Ballets Russes* *186*, 187, *188*

*La Création du monde* *200*

Leontiev, Leonid *72*

Lepape, Georges *64*, 127

illustrations *64*, *124*, *126*

Levinson, André (critic) *51*, 200

librettists *74*, 80

Lichine, David *212*

Liepa, Andris *217*

Lieven, Prince Peter *220*, *222*

Lifar, Serge *39*, *47*, *91*, *146–7*, 183, *184*, 210, *213*, 220, *221*, *225*, *252*

at Diaghilev's funeral *224*

on Diaghilev *20*

Diaghilev's promotion *114*

exhibition in Paris *103*

private classes *93*

lighting design *74*

*Limen* *217*

Lineva, Evgeniya *175*

Lipkovska, Eugénie *93*

Lipnitsky, photograph *91*

*Liturgie* *107*, 108

Lockyer, Bob *222*

Loeb, Sydney J., photograph *172*

Lomonosov Porcelain Factory *209*

London

- Empire Theatre *67*
- influence of Ballets Russes *127*
- Prince's Theatre *67*
- rehearsal rooms *92–3*

London Coliseum *58*, 66, 67, 211

front cloth design *120*

London Festival Ballet *214*

Loots, Iohna *212*

Lopokova, Lydia *31*, 40, *54*, *57*, 145, 150

costume designs for *162*, *163*

Lovat Fraser, Grace *88*

Lunacharsky, Anatoly *173*

**M**

*Macchina tipografica* *195*

McCooley, Meriel, article *167*

MacDonald, Nesta *220*

photographs *166*, *167*

McGregor, Wayne *217*

Machine Age, and Ballets Russes *114*

Mackintosh, Charles Rennie *188*

*The Mad Genius* (film) *222*

make-up *147–50*

Makovsky, Konstantin, *Public Festival During Shrovetide ...* *74*, *75*

male dancers *205*

- corps de ballet 'tramagnini' *50–1*
- and homosexuality *46*

Mamantov, Savva *45*, 188

Man Ray, photograph *148*

Manzotti, Luigi *49*

Maré, Rolf de *200*, 212

Marinetti, Filippo *108*, *194–5*

- 'The Variety Theatre' *194*

Markova, Alicia *83*, *93*, *212*, 214

Marnold, Jean *187*

Marquez, Roberta *215*

Martin, Jean-Baptiste *77*

Martine, Atelier *127*, *127*

Maryinsky Theatre *52*

Massenet, Jules *169*

Massine, Léonide *31*, 46, *47*, *47*, *92*, 108, 130, 137, *171*, 183, *183*, 198, 202, *211*, 214, *264*

adaptability *103*

choreography *81*, 145, 164

costumes *141*

Diaghilev's resentment *211*

influence of film *220*

manuscript notes *78*, *84*

South American tour *211*

and souvenir programmes *125*

Matania, Fortunino, drawing *176*

*Les Matelots* *80*, 129

Matisse, Henri *191*, 200

adaptability *131*, 137

*Bonheur de vivre* *191*

designs for *Le Chant du rossignol* *78*, 103, 129, 131, 137, *147*, *151*, *152*, *153*, *177*

influence *205*, 209

make-up for dancers *147*

sets and costumes after Diaghilev's death *217*

- surviving costumes *129*

Mavrin, Aleksey *21*, 71

Mayo, Eileen *184*, 185, 209

- painting *213*
- print *210*
- wooden figures *184*

Melgumo, Yuly *175*

*Las Meninas* *145*, 147

*Mercur*e *115*

Metropolitan Opera House, New York *66*, 217

Meyer, Baron *46*

Meyerbeer, Giacomo, *Robert le Diable* *50*

*Midas* *75*

Milhaud, Darius *170*, 178, 200

Minkus, Leon *51*

*Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*) *16*, 33, *44–5*, *44*, 124, 188 *220*

Miyajima, Tatsuo *217*

modernism *34*, 177, 183, 187

Monte Carlo Opera *56–7*

- rehearsal rooms *92*
- souvenir programmes *125*, *125*

*see also* Salle Garnier

Montéclair, Michel de *72*

Montenegro, Alberto *209*

Moore, Henry, on front cloth for *Le Train bleu* *121*

Morrison, Simon *215*, 217

Moscow Art Theatre *52*

Muella, Maison, costume makers *88*

Mukhina, Vera, statue of farm girl *115*

Murger, Henri *169*

Murphy, Gerald *88*, 183

Murphy, Sara *183*

Musée des Arts Décoratifs *209*

music

- adaptation of music by composers of previous eras *178*
- company orchestra *180–1*
- form and structure *179*
- post-war *177–8*
- re-orchestration of existing works *178*
- Second Viennese School *169–70*

music halls *see* variety theatres

Mussorgsky, Modest *173*

*see also* *Boris Godunov*

Myrbor, House of *204*, 205

**N**

Nabokov, Nicolas *40*, 46, *74*

*Narcisse* *75*, 141, 144, 145, 191, 193

National Theatre, London *222*

Nemchinova, Vera *83*, 183

Nerina, Nadia *222*

New York

- Ballets Russes auctions *167*
- Diaghilev's theatres *66–7*

New York City Ballet *214*

Nicholas II, tsar *15*, 18, *19*, 20, 26, 45, 170

*The Nightingale* *216*

*see also* *Le Chant du rossignol*

Nijinska, Bronislava *75*, *93*, *165*, 200 *214*

choreography *80*, 81

and costume designs *83*, 144

on costumes *145*

as dance teacher *92*

make-up *147*, *148*

and *Les Noc*es *111*

restaging of Diaghilev's ballets *211*

*Nijinsky* (film) *222*

Nijinsky (racehorse) *222*

Nijinsky, Vaslav *26*, *29*, *43*, *46*, *46*, *47*, 56, *78*, *95*, *124*, *142*, 193–4, 198, 205, 209, *209*, *214*, 215, *223*

adaptability *103*

auction of costumes *166*

choreography *80*, 81, 145, 194, 214

dismissal from Imperial Ballet *75*

fleshings *143*

joins Ballets Russes *75*

make-up *147*

marriage *40*

Palace Theatre season *211*

and *Petrushka* *112*

private classes *93*

recreation of ballets *215*

Nikitina, Alice *69*, 95, 147, 150, *184*, 205

*Les Noc*es *107*, *110*, 111, *111*, *179*, 180, 214

- costume design *83*
- first-night party *183*
- influence *179–80*
- new choreography *217*
- pointe* work *81*
- television recording *222*

notation of choreographers *215*

Nouvel, 'Valicka' Walter *39*, 40, 44, 71, 72, 220, *221*

on Diaghilev *35*

- in *Mir iskusstva* editorial group *44*

Nureyev, Rudolf *205*

Murphy, Gerald *220*

Nyman, Michael *178*

**O**

*Ode* *72*, 75, 80, 88, *90*, *91*, *125*, 143–4, 145, 202

O'Doyé, *L'Illustration* *64*

*Oedipus Rex* *80*, 217

*L'Oiseau de Feu* (Beaumont souvenir) *185*, *185*

*see also* *The Firebird*

*L'Oiseau d'or* *136*, 137, *137*, *138–9*

'L'Oiseau et le Prince' (*pas de deux*) *136*, 137, *137*

Olbrich, Joseph Maria *188*

Olympic Games

- 1906, Diaghilev's visit *25*
- 1924, premiere of *Le Train bleu* *80*, 120, 165

'On with the Dance' (revue) *211*

opera

- Diaghilev's ballets *66*
- Diaghilev's interest *49*
- in Russia *52–3*

Opie, Julian *217*

Oppler, Ernst *209*

Oriental fantasies *65*

*Les Orientales* *78*, 193

**P**

*Pan* (art magazine) *44*

pantomimes, ballets in *50*

Paquin, Jeanne *194*, 205

*Parade* *74*, 111–12, *112*, *113*, 114, 143, *143*, 144, 177, *179*, *184*, 198, 214, 220, *222*

- auction of costumes *166*
- Cocteau and *80*
- front cloth *120*
- new production *217*
- set painting *88*
- souvenir programme *125*

*Parade de cirque* *198*

Paris *26*, 126, 169, 187, 198, 210

Galleries *191*

influence of Ballets Russes *126–7*

Russian cultural initiatives, and Diaghilev *21*, 25, 170

souvenir programmes *124*, *125*

theatres *50*

Paris Opéra *25*, 66, 211

- rehearsal rooms *92*
- Russian concerts *25*

*Le Pas d'acier* *71*, 141, *167*, *171*, 202, 215, 217

*La Pastorale* *80*, 205, *207*

patrons and sponsors *71*, 72, 94–5, 169

*Le Pavillon d'Armide* *55*, 56, *57*, 77, 80, 190, 193

- surviving costumes *129*

Pavlova, Anna *57*, 220, *222*

Pawson, John *217*

performances, of Ballets Russes

- ballets after Diaghilev *210–2*

Pergolesi, Giovanni Batista *74*, 178

*La Péri* *104*

Perm *16*, 34–5, *35*, *36*, 222

Petipa, Marius *49*, 51, *52*, *57*

Petit, Roland *212*, 217

Petrova, Vera *93*

*Petrushka* *12–13*, 112, *144*, 145, 174, 175–6, 214, 220

- casting *72*
- as collaborative work *75*
- make-up *147*
- pointe* work *81*
- source *74*, 175–6
- surviving costumes *129*
- touring costumes *150*

*Petrushka* (Beaumont souvenir) *185*, 190, 193

Pevsner, Anton *88*, 202

Philpot, Glyn *209*

photographs, limitations *209–10*

Picabia, Francis *200*

Picasso, Pablo *111–15*, 183, 198, 200, 209, 217

- artistic destiny *115*
- auction of costumes *166*
- collaboration with Diaghilev *9*
- costume designs *83*, *86*, *112*, *113*, *114*, 144, *179*
- Les Ddemoiselles d'Avignon* *9*
- design of front cloths *118–19*, 120, 120–1, *121*, *122–3*
- as Diaghilev's adviser *72*
- painting of costumes *143*
- and *Parade* *74*
- set designs *88*, *115*
- sketch for overture curtain for *Parade* *198*
- and souvenir programmes *125*
- and *Le Tricorn*e *114*, 130
- Two Women Running along the Beach* (*The Race*) *120–1*
- piracy, of ballets *210*
- Pissarro, Camille *188*
- Plucis, Harijs *220*
- pointe* work *51*, 75, 81
- Poiret, Paul *64–5*, 126–7, 205
- designs *65*, *127*

Polenova, Yelena *188*

*Wall Cabinet* *188*

Polignac, Princesse de *see* Singer, Winnaretta

Polovtsian dances *see* *Prince Igor*

Polunin, Elizabeth *88*, *89*

Polunin, Vladimir *88*, *89*

- front cloth design *120*, 209

Pompeii, influence on Picasso *114*

Popova, Liubov *104*

Poulenc, Francis *170*, 178, 179, 200

*Les Mamelles de Tirésias* *217*

Powell, Michael *222*

Prampolini, Enrico *194*

- 'Futurist Scenography' *194*

Preobrajenska, Olga *53*, *57*

Pressburger, Emeric *222*

Primitivism, and Diaghilev's designs *103*, 107

*Prince Igor*, Polovtsian dances *56*, *58*, *59*, *60–1*, 75, 78, 88, 143, 189, *189*, 205, *206*

- choreography *81*
- as representation of Russia *71*, 77
- touring costumes *150*

*The Prodigal Son* *75*, 80, 177, 215

programmes, souvenir programmes *124–5*

Prokofiev, Sergei *170*, *172*, 177, 179

- ballet scores after Diaghilev's death *217*
- on Diaghilev *222*

Proust, Marcel *46*, 170, 182

Pruna, Pedro *103*

Puccini, Giacomo *169*, 178–9

*Pulcinella* *74*, 77, 115, 164, 177, 178, 214

*Die Puppenfee* (*The Fairy Doll*) *53*, *53*

Putrov, Ivan *215*

**R**

ragtime *103*, 178

Rambert, Marie *167*, 214

- on Nijinsky *223*

Rauschenberg, Robert *217*

Ravel, Maurice *170*, 178, 217

*The Red Shoes* *222*

*régisseur* *see* Grigoriev, Serge

rehearsal studios *92–3*

Reich, Steve *178*

*Le Renard* *183*

Repin, Ilya, *17 October 1905* *14*, *22–3*

Respighi, Ottorino *74*, 178

restagings of Diaghilev's ballets *210–12*

Revie, Gillian *214*

Richter, Max *217*

Riley, Bridget *217*

Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai *21*, 77, 190–1, 196

- influence on Stravinsky *174*, 175

Ripon, Lady *94*, 95–6

*The Rite of Spring* *174*, *174*, 194, 202, 214, 217

- Chanel's support *164*
- choreography *80*, 81, 145
- costumes *134*, *135*, 141, 143, 145
- and Diaghilev *180*
- folk dress as influence *78*
- new choreography *217*
- party *182*
- premiere *65*
- reconstruction *215*
- as representation of Russia *71*, 77
- toy duck *81–2*

Robbins, Jerome, *Afternoon of a Faun* *215*, 217

Robertson, Bryan *217*

Rodin, Auguste *193*, 209

Rodoconachi, Paolo P. *224*

Roerich, Nicholas *45*, 75, 77, 188–91, 195

costume designs *59*, *60–1*, 78, *134*, *135*, 143

Roman villas, influence on Picasso *114–15*

Romantic ballet *50*

Rome *195*

- Teatro Costanzi* *195*

*Romeo and Juliet* *217*

Rosovska, Zoia *30*

Ross, Herbert *222*

Rossini, Gioachino *74*, 178

Rothermere, Harold Sidney

- Harmsworth, first Viscount *74*, 95

Rouault, Georges, designs in exhibitions *103*

*Rouge et Noir* *217*

Rovinsky, Dmitry *107*

Royal Ballet *214*, 217, *218–9*

- dancers *214*, *215*
- films *222*

Royal Ballet School dancers *166*, *166*

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden *66*

Royal Swedish Ballet *211*

Rubinstein, Arthur *170*, 182

Rubinstein, Ida *56*, 65, 72, 193, 205, 211–2

Russia, 188

- ballet tradition *49*
- 'Bloody Sunday' *18*
- ethnic art and architecture *25*, 170
- 'exoticism' *25*, 65, 78, 80
- folkloric themes *196*
- Franco-Russian relations *21*, 170, 173
- general strike *18*
- Imperial Theatres, and general strike *18*
- lubki* (woodcut prints) *196*
- peasant (*kustar*) handicraft *188*, 189, 196
- promotion by Diaghilev *25–6*
- renewed interest in Diaghilev's ballets *222*
- representation in ballets *71*, 107
- war with Japan *18*

*The Russian Ballet in Caricatures* *62*

Russian Imperial Ballet *26*

- dancers in Ballets Russes *75*
- dancers in Europe and USA *57*
- growing division *52*
- stars in Monte Carlo *57*

Russian Imperial Ballet School *51*

- adaptability of dancers *103*

Russian Revolution, 1905 *16*, 18

**S**

Saariaho, Kaija *217*

Sackville, Victoria, Lady *127*

Sackville-West, Vita *127*

*Sadko* *128*, *154*, *155*

Sadler's Wells Company *220*

Saint Laurent, Yves *205*

- sketch *208*

St Petersburg *16–18*, *17*, *18*, 169, 170, 173, 222

- in 1911 (map) *17*
- before 1905 *16*
- 'Bloody Sunday' *18*
- Diaghilev's 1905 exhibition *15*, *16*
- Diaghilev's apartment *25*
- Narodny Dom Theatre *26*
- Nevsky Prospect *16*
- poverty *18*, *18*

Saint-Saëns, Camille *169*

Saisons Russes *55*, *57*, 217

sales *see* auctions

Salle Garnier, Monte Carlo *66*

*Salome* *75*

Salon d'Automne, Paris, 191

- and Diaghilev *25*
- Two Centuries of Russian Painting and Sculpture* *21*, 25

Sansom, Bruce *214*

Sargent, John Singer *209*

Sasha, photographs *47*, *144*, *147*, *164*, *165*, *171*, *206*

Satie, Erik *74*, 111, 112, 170, 177, *177*, 178, 179, 198

Sauguet, Henri *75*, 217

Sayers, Lesley-Anne *215*, 217

- scandals, and ticket sales *95*

Schedrovsky, Ignaty *75*

*Schéhérazade* *24*, *31*, 56, 88, 104, *105*, *142*, 143, 190, 191, 193, 194, 210, 211

- front cloth *120*
- influence *65*, 126
- make-up *147*
- as representation of Oriental Russia *71*
- surviving costumes *129*

*Schéhérazade* (Beaumont souvenir) *185*

Scheijen, Sjeng *220*

Schervashidze, Prince Alexander *88*, 115, *121*

- front cloth *118–19*, *121*, *122–3*

Scheurich, Paul *209*

- Meissen figures *209*

Schiff, Violet and Sydney *183*

Schlemmer, Oskar *200*

- Theatre Workshop at the Bauhaus Dessau *200*

Schoenberg, Arnold *169*, 177

Schwabe, Randolph *184*, 185

Scriabin, Alexander *217*

sculptures *209*

Serov, Valentin *190*

- curtain design for *Schéhérazade* *190*
- in Diaghilev's cabinet of advisers *71*
- front cloth for *Schehérazade* *120*
- Portrait of Dmitry 'Dima' Filosofov* *38*

Sert, José-Maria *145*, 147

Sert, Misia *40*, 71, 74, 164, 224, 225

- scrutiny of costumes *150*
- sets, painting *88*

*17 October 1905* *14*, 20, *22–3*

Seurat, Georges *198*

- Parade de cirque* *198*

Sevier, Michel *185*, *185*

- shamanism *70*, 77

Sharp, Cecil *175*

Siamese dancers, influence *78*

Singer circle *170*

Singer, Winnaretta (Princesse de Polignac) *72*, 95, 170

Sitwells *127*

*The Sleeping Princess* *77*, 88, 104, 105,

Soirée de Paris 212  
 Sokolova, Lydia 30, 31, 85, 92, 144, 144, 145, 165, 166, 166, 183, 214, 222  
 make-up 147, 150  
*Le Soleil de nuit* 78, 124, 129, 141, 141, 145  
*The Song of the Nightingale* *see* *Le Chant du rossignol*  
 Sotheby's  
 London auctions 166, 166, 167  
 Photo Studio, photograph 166  
 Soudeikina, Vera (later Stravinsky) 88  
 South America, Ballets Russes in 30, 30, 66, 211  
 souvenirs  
 Beaumont 184–5  
 books 184–5  
 prints 185  
 programmes 124–5, 191  
 Soviet Union  
 and artistic freedom 173  
 Prokofiev ballets 217  
 Spain  
 Ballets Russes in 30–1, 31, 67  
 representation in Ballets Russes productions 77  
 Speall's 127  
 spectacle/special effects, in  
 Diaghilev's staging 55  
*Le Spectre de la rose* 42, 43, 80, 95, 143, 193, 209, 210–11, 223  
 make-up 150  
 pointe work 81  
 scenery burnt 30  
 Spessivtseva, Olga 205  
 staging, Diaghilev's 55–6  
 Stanislavsky, Konstantin 52  
 Stasov, Vladimir 107  
 Stella, Frank 217  
 Stelletsy, Dmitry 108  
 Stepanova, Maria 143  
 Stepanova, Varvara 104  
 St Petersburg 190  
 Admiralty Square 190  
 markets 189  
 Strauss, Richard 177, 178–9  
 Stravinsky, Igor 30, 72, 74, 108, 111, 170, 172, 174–7, 175, 178, 183, 183, 190, 194–5, 200  
 on Ballets Russes 49, 174  
 and Chanel 164  
 collaboration with Balanchine in America 218  
 as collaborative artist 177  
 compositional change post-war 177, 179  
 compositions after Diaghilev's death 217  
 and Debussy 173, 174, 176  
 on Diaghilev 7, 46–7, 49, 180  
 as Diaghilev's 'son' 39  
 in France 173  
 influence of folk culture 175–6  
 and *Petrushka* 75, 112  
 photograph of Nijinsky 46  
 and souvenir programmes 125  
 and Richard Strauss 177, 179  
 Stravinsky, Vera *see* Soudeikina, Vera  
*The Studio* (art magazine) 44  
 Studio Dührkoop, photograph 47  
 styles of dance *see* dance  
 Surrealism  
 and Diaghilev's designs 103  
 'surrealist' as new word 177

Svetlov, Valerian, in Diaghilev's cabinet of advisers 71  
*The Swan* 210  
*La Sylphide* 78  
*Les Sylphides* 54, 56, 66, 66, 77, 78, 80, 193, 209, 210  
 corps de ballet 81  
 costumes 78, 129, 150  
 pointe work 81  
*Sylvia* 49, 52, 53  
 Symbolist movement, and Bakst 104

## T

Taglioni, Filippo 193  
*La Sylphide* 193  
 Talbot, Jody 217  
*Tamar* 8, 71, 167, 217  
 Tarnovsky, Veniamin 40  
 Tasso, Torquato 193  
*Gerusalemme liberata* 193  
 Tchaikovsky, Pyotr 51, 170, 175  
*Pathétique* symphony 225  
 Tchelitchev, Pavel 88, 90, 103, 125, 143–4, 145, 202, 202, 217  
 set design for figures, Scene 3, in *Ode* 202, 202  
 Tcherepnin, Nikolai, in Diaghilev's cabinet of advisers 71  
 Tchernicheva, Lubov 31, 55, 164, 167, 214, 220, 222  
 as dance teacher 92  
 telegram 94  
 television, and ballet 103, 222  
 Telyakovsky, Vladimir, and Diaghilev's homosexuality 40  
 Tenisheva, Maria 45, 188  
*Les Tentations de la bergère* 22, 165  
*Thamar* (Beaumont souvenir) 185, 185, 193  
*Le Théâtre* 47  
 theatre costumes *see* costumes  
 Théâtre des Champs-Élysées 57, 212  
 front cloth 120  
 posters 42, 43  
 seating plan 67  
 Théâtre du Châtelet 66, 67  
 souvenir programme 124  
 Théâtre Gaité-Lyrique 183  
 poster 179  
 Théâtre national de l'Opéra, souvenir programme 124  
 Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, Paris 57  
 souvenir programme 125  
 theatres, Diaghilev's 66–7  
*The Three-Cornered Hat* (Beaumont souvenir) 185  
*see also* *Le Tricorne*  
*Till Eulenspiegel* 215  
 Timm, Vasily 75  
 Tolstoy, Leo, Diaghilev's letter 39  
 topical events, influence on designs 80  
 Touchard, Maurice 194  
*Le Train bleu* 80, 115, 144, 145, 165, 178, 200, 211, 214  
 Chanel and 164–5  
 Cocteau and 80  
 front cloth 9, 115, 118–19, 120–1, 122–3, 166, 167  
 trains and travel 30–1  
 Chicago 31

train from St Petersburg to Paris 25–6, 25, 30  
*Triana* 108  
*Le Tricorne* (*The Three-Cornered Hat*) 66, 77, 86, 88, 89, 111, 114, 114, 115, 130, 211, 214, 220  
 castanets 84  
 front cloth 120  
 Spanish dance 82, 85  
*The Triumph of Neptune* 77, 78  
 Troubridge, Una, Nijinsky 209, 209  
 Tudor, David 217  
 turbans, Poiret 65

## U

United States  
 Ballets Russes ballets after Diaghilev 214  
 Ballets Russes in 30  
 Diaghilev's parties 182–3  
 Diaghilev's theatres 66–7  
 funding for Ballets Russes 94  
 proposed tour 72, 222  
 touring souvenir programmes 125

## V

V&A, Theatre and Performance Collections 167  
 Vallotton, Félix 188  
 variety theatres, and ballet 50, 51  
 Vaudoier, Jean-Louis 80  
 Venice 221  
 Campanile collapse 33, 34  
 and Diaghilev 33, 207  
 Diaghilev's death and funeral 224–5  
*Vogue* 124–5  
 Volkonsky, Prince Sergei 53  
 von Krafft-Ebbing, Richard 33, 40  
*The Voyage to the Moon*, 'Snow Ballet' 51

## W

Wagner, Richard 173–4, 187–90, 225  
*Tristan and Isolde* 225  
 Wagon de Nord train 25  
 Waltz, Carl 55  
 wardrobe *see* costumes  
 Warhol, Andy 217  
 Western Europe, ballet tradition 49–50  
 White, Ethelbert 184, 185, 185  
 backstage at *Le Tricorne* 87  
 souvenir print 184  
 wigs, receipt 87  
 Willoughby, Vera 184  
*Lydia Tchernicheva* in *Les Sylphides* 55  
 Wilson, Laura 92

Woizikosky, Léon 113, 144, 144, 165, 214  
 women in the arts 170  
 Wood, Christopher, drawing 93

## Y

Yakulov, Georgii, designs in exhibitions 103, 202  
 Yakunchikova, Maria, *Mir iskusstva* title page 44  
*The Yellow Book* (art magazine) 44  
 Youkin, Mme A. 88

## Z

*Zéphire et Flore* 68, 69, 80, 143, 147, 166  
 Zverov, Nicholas 143



Serge Lifar and Alice Nikitina in *La Chatte*, 1927. Photograph by Sasha V&A: Theatre & Performance Collections

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