

AN ARTISTIC REVOLUTION PHENOMENON: DIAGHILEV'S BALLET RUSSES

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ABSTRACT

The Ballet Russes (1909-1929) was the revolutionary Russian ballet company under the direction of Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev (1872-1929). The Ballet Russes took an important role as a new art form as rarely taking the old traditions. Before the Ballet Russes, the costumes were nearly uniformity. Not only costumes and scenery newly designed but the music was composed as a new music by commissioned composers such as Stravinsky, Debussy and Ravel. The ballet technique was limited as well. The revolutionary choreographers of Ballet Russes', such as Fokine and Nijinsky were employed and they no longer limited body movements in dance. The choreographers extended those innovations and brought their modern spirit to large ensemble productions. Ballet Russes wasn't just a new type and level of ballet performances that surpassed contemporary European ballet, but also a unique artistic phenomenon that shaped the development of Western European in the 20th century. The legacy left by Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes still has an influence on modern ballet companies today.

Keywords: Diaghilev, Ballet Russes, choreography, Russian Art, The World of Art.

SANATSAL BİR DEVRİM FENOMENİ: DİAGHİLEV'İN RUS BALESİ

ÖZ

Ballet Russes (1909-1929) Rus menejer Sergei Diaghilev'in (1872-1929) yönetiminde devrimci bir Rus balesi grubuydu. Bale Russes eski geleneklere nadir olarak yer veren yeni bir sanat formu olarak önemli bir rol aldı. Ballet Russes öncesinde kostümler neredeyse tekdüze idi. Yalnız kostümler ve sahne yeniden düzenlenmedi; müzik de Stravinsky, Debussy ve Ravel gibi bestecilerden ısmarlanarak yeni bir müzik olarak bestelendi. Bale tekniği de sınırlıydı. Fokine ve Nijinsky gibi Ballet Russes'in devrimci koreograflarının istihdamı ile dansa sınırlı vücut hareketleri devam ettirilmedi. Koreograflar yeniliklerini sürdürmeye devam ettirdiler ve modern soluklarını daha büyük topluluk yapıtlarına taşıdılar. Ballet Russes yalnızca bale gösterilerinde Çağdaş Avrupa balesi olarak yeni bir tür ve seviye değildi aynı zamanda 20. yüzyılın Batı Avrupa sanatını şekillendiren eşsiz bir sanatsal fenomendi. Diaghilev ve Ballet Russes tarafından bırakılan miras bugünün modern dans toplulukları üzerinde halen etkisini sürdürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Diaghilev, Ballet Russes, koreografi, Rus Sanatı, Dünya Sanatı.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to discover and understand the reasons why Diaghilev's Ballets Russes was so successful in terms of its ballet productions. It can be seen as an extension of Garafola's thesis *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes*, one of the few treatises that investigates the interplay of social and economic forces of what might be called the company's political economy – those forces that “help explain key developments in its history: shifts in repertory and collaborative styles, changes in the status of dancers and choreographers, the various strategies by which Diaghilev secured and maintained a position in the Western theatrical world” (Garafola, 1989: 148).

Born in the Russian countryside, Diaghilev came to St. Petersburg at age eighteen and eventually co-founded an art journal, *The World of Art*, which introduced new European art to Russia. He also took Russian art, music and opera to western Europe. At the urging of the painter Alexander Benois, who had invited him into a circle of young artists and intellectuals, he brought the Russian ballet to Paris in the summer of 1909, thereby inaugurating an organization, *The Ballets Russes* (eventually *The Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo*) that is still influencing the arts. Today almost every ballet company with a 20th century repertoire contains at least one Diaghilev ballet (Lille, 2009:1).

The adventure began in 1909, when Diaghilev arrived in Paris with a troupe of dancers recruited on their summer break from the imperial ballet of St Petersburg. At 37 years of age, Diaghilev was a significant figure in the Russian cultural sphere, having launched a well-received art review, organised a major exhibition of historical portraits, and taken parties of opera singers to Paris (Jennings, 2010).

As the political situation in Russia grew unstable, the Russian ballet received less funding and creative attention. The repressive and bankrupt Russian regime pushed some of the greatest Russian ballet stars to Paris and to Diaghilev's productions. This included the prima ballerinas Anna Pavlova and Tamara Karsavina, choreographers Mikhail Fokine and Vaslav Nijinsky, and great artists and composers like Léon Bakst and Igor Stravinsky (Weddle, 2004:22).

The Russian Impresario Sergei Diaghilev came to Paris with a hope to rejuvenate music, dance, and art while acquiring fame and fortune. In 1909, his first full season in Paris began with a collection of operas and ballets from his native Russia including *Boris Godunov*. His vision brought forth several exoticist trends in music and dance that were voraciously consumed by the Parisian elite. At the start of a long, successful, twenty-year career, Diaghilev's rise into stardom began in the ballrooms and salons of the Parisian elite. His ability to navigate the complex social scene of Paris provided him with ample opportunity to infiltrate wealthy aristocratic circles and the crowds of bohemian artists, from which he plucked individuals with the goal of establishing his own group, which came to be known as the *Ballets Russes* (Weddle, 2004:11).

As Janet Kennedy (1977:3) provided a translation of this portion of the *The World of Art's* prospectus, which is currently located in the Benois papers (folio 137, no. 669, p. 12), Manuscript Division of the State Russian Museum:

He described his goals at the The World of Art's (Mir iskusstva) future contents as follows: "1) a section of the fine arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and art criticism), 2) a section of applied art or industry, 3) a section with an 'Artistic Chronicle'" reporting on cultural happenings abroad.

Led by the impresario Serge Diaghilev, the Ballets Russes brought together a coterie of designers, composers, choreographers and dancers to create ballet pieces. While today we take this collaborative production process for granted, it constituted a revolutionary move in the early twentieth century, when ballets subordinated visual and musical accompaniment to the demands of choreography (Foster, 1996:74).

This period saw the emergence of many new ideas regarding the world and the human beings who occupied it Fauvism, Symbolism, Cubism, Surrealism, Futurism, Constructivism, Dadaism. This new energy also produced different leaders whose vision galvanized the century; Diaghilev stands above all. The twenty years during which The Ballets Russes existed (1909-1929) witnessed more collaboration and the encouragement of more artists to compose, choreograph, design or just "create" than in any other previous or perhaps subsequent time. In 1905 Diaghilev wrote, "We are witnesses of the greatest moments of summing up in our history in the name of a new unknown culture, which will be created by us and will also sweep us away" (Lille, 2009: 2)

Previously unseen in the West, the Ballets Russes repertoire juxtaposed class and ideologically based classical interpretations with raw exotic Russo-Oriental folk cultures and confrontational modern social idioms led by themes of sexuality. Cocteau, an avant-garde bohemian and darling of Parisien art circles, collaborated to conjure modern theatrical visualisations around psychoanalytical archetypes. Front of house showman Diaghilev promoted, juggled funding, and inspirationally pulled together the artistic genius of those who could do what he could not. Above all, his Ballets Russes consistently entertained. (Stell, 2009:2).

The Ballets Russes of Sergei Diaghilev claims a special position, even a unique one, in the history of the performing arts, in terms of a reawakening of interest in ballet in Europe and America, in bringing Russian culture to the attention of the rest of the Western world, and in presenting ballet as an equal partnership of movement, music, and visual design, in which all of the creative participants -composers, designers, and choreographers, as well as the inventors of plots and authors of scenarios- exerted an influence upon other aspects of their collaborative works. While this was an enterprise that appealed especially to privileged and cultured populations in the largest cities, it exerted an influence on the future of ballet that extended far beyond those cities and endured beyond the impressive immediate accomplishment of having presented some seventy individual ballets that were created and performed through the collaboration of many of the significant artists of the early years of the twentieth century (Harvard College Library: 2015).

CHOREOGRAPHERS IN FOCUS: FOKINE, NIJINSKY, NIJINSKA, MASSINE AND BALANCHINE

The Ballets Russes was first and foremost a dance company that collaborated with dancers, choreographers, artists and musicians. The Ballets Russes was a revolutionary Russian ballet company, which played an important role in the history of music and ballet during the first decades of the twentieth century. There was no other company. The Ballets Russes never performed in Russia and had no official relationship with the country after 1909. It existed only for twenty years, and yet its influence was great: it transformed ballet into modern art, reforming and innovating many aspects of the traditional form of ballet.

Revolutionary choreographers, such as Fokine developed ballet techniques, influenced by Isadora Duncan (1878-1927) who used total body movements and an expressive use of hands and arms (Spilsted, 1977) . Imperial Ballet Master and choreographer Mikhail Fokine and Ballets Russes Regisseur Serge Grigoriev both departed the Kirov for Diaghilev's vision.

While Diaghilev was experiencing great success, another of dance was emerging to rival his productions. This new style of dance was called Free Dance or Modern Dance According to Gay Cheney (1989:2), "It all began at the turn of the 20th century".

The ballets presented by the company were not the full-length story ballets audiences had come to expect, but short, one-act spectacles lasting ten to thirty minutes in which music, dancing, décor and costumes all united to play a role. (They were largely unacknowledged as instances of Richard Wagner's "Gesamtkunstwerke" –total art works which combined music, narrative, singing and design). Choreographers, casting about for terms to label their novel creations, came up with such hybrids as "poeme-danse" and "esquisses-choreographic," "ballet-pantomime" and "tableau choreographic" Diaghilev had urged them to "astonish" and they did their best (Grigoriev, 1953:263).

To break the rigid mold into which ballet had fallen at the end of the nineteenth century, Diaghilev proposed each single piece be set in its own distinct world. The scenario, the music, decor and choreography all were to be created a new for each unique ballet. Fokine, Diaghilev's choreographer, went further. He laid it down as a dictum that a new movement style should be created for each ballet. Since the goal was to "astonish" the audience, fulfilling this demand for three or more new ballets each season was a tall order, but those ballets which "astonished" had an unforgettable impact on the audience (Lozynsky,2007:84).

Michel Fokine was one of the most influential choreographers of the 20th century. He was also a talented dancer and teacher. Fokine restored the vitality to these languishing dialects. Drawing on living sources, he created what came to be known as the genre nouvea, a form independent of the Academy and identified exclusively with national and ethnic styles of movement (Garafola,1998:11).

Alastair Macaulay, chief dance critic of the New York Times (2009), described Diaghilev's first house choreographer Michel Fokine as a grumpy old man. Beyond this personality flaw, Macaulay praised Fokine's versatility, vivid imagination, theatricality, and musicality. Fokine's brand was the high degree of intimacy he created with music, as well as the unprecedented psychological truth of his choreography. He pulled from his dancers performances that etch ballet history's most memorable characters: a dying swan with undulating arms; a broken puppet-man in *Petrouchka*; the exotic golden slave of *Scheherazade*; and an unattainable femme fatale *Firebird*.

For all his revolutionary work, Fokine did not actually share the extent of Diaghilev's vision. There were certain limits that Fokine would not cross, and Fokine eventually expressed distaste for certain developments of modern dance. Fokine also settled in New York with his wife and maintained his friendship with Pavlova, choreographing further ballet commissions for her (Haskell, 2009).

Fokine's creations during the early 1900's, performed at the Ballets Russes. Some of them were *The Dying Swan*, *Le Vigne*, *Le Pavillon d'Armide*, *Les Sylphides*, *Prince Igor*, *Cleopatra*, *Carnaval*, *Firebird*, *Scheherazade*, *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *Petrouchka*, *Daphnis and Chloe* and *Le Cog d'Or*.

Nijinsky's choreographic method began with a definitive posture whose design he extended to gesture and then to the shapes made by groups as well as the ground patterns they described in the stage space. Working from the individual to the crowd is a characteristic of modern choreography which probably derives from the artist creating in solitude for his or her own body. It is not an opera-house method of devising material for soloists or corps de ballet, and implied in the method of spinning movement out of oneself is the notion of discovery finding a new idiom for each dance rather than rearranging academic steps. No doubt Nijinsky adapted this method from what he knew of Isadora Duncan's ways of working, and certainly he tried out the method in embryo when he created *Faune* on his sister in the front room of their apartment in St. Petersburg (Hodson, 1986:15).

Despite all the favoritism, Vaslav Nijinsky also left the Ballets Russes within a matter of years. While he did become a successful star and choreographer with the help of Diaghilev, he eventually ran off to marry the least experienced dancer in the Ballets Russes (Romola de Pulszky) and cut ties with Diaghilev, hoping to create his own company in 1913. He was not ready for managing, and he found no success.

With Léonide Massine the Ballets Russes ceased to be a classical company; it became instead a demi-caractere one... Although Diaghilev never abandoned classical technique as the physical basis of the company's training, with Masinne, *te danse d'ecole* became irrelevant to the company's experiments in choreography. What was studied in class had little organic relation with what was danced onstage, even if elements of the technique coded the work as ballet. The divorce between studio and stage was all but complete (Garafola & oth. 1999:185)

Massine was an “infinitely curious” artist, according to Anderson, who loved museums and was a keen life observer. He saw in everything fodder for a ballet, including a bunch of skateboarding kids he watched as an old man. He took on huge themes and assignments, and pulled them off, most famously in his symphonic ballets of the 1930s. This was a choreographer unafraid of sweeping emotion. He also had a deft hand with comedy and character (Anderson, 2009:2).

Bronislava Nijinska (1891-1972) left the company in 1913 along with her brother and eventually returned to Russia to teach and create her own experimental choreography. She rejoined the Ballets Russes in 1921 and choreographed numerous ballets in a neoclassical style including *The Wedding* (Les Noces, 1923). She also brought to her choreography an interest in modern culture, with works such as *The Blue Train* (Le Train bleu, 1924) taking cues from fashion, leisure, and changing gender roles (National Gallery of Art, 2003:13).

If with Bronislava Nijinska the Ballets Russes launched a major female choreographer on an international career, the company did little else to accommodate female talent, even as performers. Indeed, with the partial exception of Tamara Karsavina, the female star of the company's pre War of the World I years, the ballerina went into eclipse. She did so not only as an individual but also as a category and an idea. Reversing the trend of nearly a century of ballet history, the ballerina became a subordinate or an appendage of the new Diaghilev hero, an absence in the poetics of ballet modernism at large (Garafalo, 2005:180).

Diaghilev's dethronement of the ballerina was reflected not only in the diminished importance and overt misogyny of many female roles but also in the progressive devaluation of pointe work. It was Bronislava Nijinska who put the women of the Ballets Russes back on pointe. Yet Nijinska stressed the percussive rather than the aerial qualities of pointe, an approach that broke with nineteenth-century conventions. Nijinska again put all the women on pointe; now they were flappers with the prancing strut of mannequins. This time she also reintroduced the ballerina and the classical pas de deux (Garafalo & oth. 1995:185).

George Balanchine (1904-1983) regarded as the foremost contemporary choreographer in the world of ballet, came to the United States in late 1933 following an early career throughout Europe. The son of a composer, Balanchine early in life gained a knowledge of music that far exceeds that of most of his fellow choreographers. Diaghilev also had his eye on Balanchine as a choreographer as well, and after watching him stage a new version of the company's Stravinsky ballet, *Le Chant de Rossignol*, Diaghilev hired him as ballet master to replace Bronislava Nijinska. Shortly after this, Balanchine suffered a knee injury which limited his dancing and correspondingly bolstered his commitment to full-time choreography. Balanchine served as ballet master with Ballets Russes until the company was dissolved following Diaghilev's death in 1929. After that, he spent the next few years on a variety of projects which took him all over Europe.

COMPOSERS IN FOCUS: STRAVINSKY, RAVEL AND OTHER MASTERS

The Ballet Russes reformed and innovated a ballet. Not only costumes and scenery newly designed but the music was Diaghilev also featured the next generation of Russian composers, including Nikolai Tcherepnin, whose *Le Pavillon D'Armide* was the very first ballet performed by the company, and who conducted the orchestra for the first several seasons. A student of both Rimsky-Korsakov and Tcherepnin, Igor Stravinsky had his international career launched by Diaghilev, and would become the musician most identified with the Ballets Russes. Between 1910 and 1929 Stravinsky created six ballets, two opera-ballets and an opera for Diaghilev, including such masterworks as *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring*, *Fire bird*, *Pulcinella*, and *Apollon Musagète*. Serge Prokofiev, yet another student of Tcherepnin, also composed for Diaghilev, creating three ballets-*Chout*, *Le Pas d'Acier*, and *Le Fils Prodigue*.

The first commission for Stravinsky was to orchestrate Chopin's *Les Sylphides* and Grieg's *Divertissement* for ballet, which pleased Diaghilev enough to ask Stravinsky to compose based on Russian folk tale "The Firebird". When Stravinsky finished the music of "Petrushka" in May, Diaghilev's company performed it in June at the Theatre du Chatelet, Paris. In *Petrushka*, Stravinsky rejects romantic sound, Stravinsky uses mechanical sounds for his grotesque characters. For example, in Russian Dance scene in the first tableau, his sound imitates the automatic movements of the puppets. After the first performance of *Petrushka*, Stravinsky returned to working on *The Rite of Spring* (1913), which is based on primitivism. *The Rite of Spring* was first performed at the Theatre des Champs Elysees, Paris 29 May 1913. The audience protested against Nijinsky's avant garde choreography and Stravinsky's unconventional style. The fact that this is one of the most famous riots in music history reveals the revolutionary aspects of *The Rite of Spring*. In this work, Stravinsky employs new techniques, particularly in rhythm. More specifically, he uses mechanical repetitions, percussive rhythm, ostinato, and increasing dynamics.

The ballet "Le Chant du Rossignol" (Song of the Nightingale) was based on Stravinsky's opera *Le Rossignol* (The Nightingale). It was Stravinsky's teacher, Rimsky Korsakov, who first encouraged him to consider Hans Christian Andersen's classic story *The Nightingale* (from 1844) as a subject for a stage work. In late 1916 Diaghilev expressed interest in presenting *Le Rossignol* as a ballet, shorn of singers. *Pulcinella* (a variant of the name *Punchinello*, or *Punch*) was a *Commedia dell'Arte*-inspired ballet, composed by Igor Stravinsky, based on music by the Italian baroque composer Giambattista Pergolesi (1918-1921 season). The ballet "Le Renard", produced in 1922, was based on Stravinsky's 1916 work, *Renard*. The choreography was created by Bronislava Nijinska, who often collaborated with Stravinsky, and the costumes and décor were designed by Mikhail Larionov. "Les Facheux" was first seen in Monte Carlo, in January 1924. The music had been commissioned from George Auric, one of the circle of French composers referred to as "Les Six".

Diaghilev had also been impressed with the 1907 performances of a suite (Op. 29A) Tcherepnin had drawn from his *Pavillon d' Armide*, and so the impresario programmed

the complete ballet as one of the company's three offerings in the initial season. With the acclaimed Paris premiere of *Le Pavillon d'Armide*, it became clear that Diaghilev's Ballets Russes was offering the most profoundly important avant-garde theater to be seen anywhere in the world. The mimetic verity and emotional truth of the cast in interaction with the exquisite stage settings were something brand new to ballet, adding a dimension to the extraordinary balletic achievements of Karsavina and Nijinsky. The music was also a surprise to French connoisseurs. Where cynics had expected a half-witted provincial mish-mash warmed over from Rimsky and Tchaikovsky, Tcherepnin provided a beautifully crafted score that recognizably belonged to the same decade as Ravel and Debussy, yet, at the same time remained Russian and personal (Tcherepnin Society, 2015:1).

When it became apparent that Maurice Ravel would not deliver his classical ballet, *Daphnis et Chloé*, on schedule, Tcherepnin took on the ballet *Narcisse* (at first titled *Narcisse et Echo*), which was in fact produced more than a year before the premiere of *Daphnis et Chloé* (Harvard College Library, 2015).

Falla's "The Three-Cornered Hat" was first performed in 1917, is translated as *The Magistrate and the Miller's Wife*. The story itself (about a preposterous official who attempts to seduce a Miller's Wife) has been adapted many times in Spain, including as the basis of several films. Diaghilev prevailed upon de Falla to adapt this work as the ballet *Le Tricorne*.

This impressive 20 foot square curtain was commissioned as part of the set design for the Spanish-themed ballet *The Three-Cornered Hat* (*El sombrero de tres picos* or *Le Tricorne*), choreographed by Leonide Massine (1896-1979) to music by Manuel de Falla (1876-1946) for the renowned Ballets Russes (Maryanski, 2005:1).

ICONIC DESIGNS: FROM BAKST TO MIRO, BENOIS TO PICASSO, AND CHANEL

Mir Iskusstva (The World of Art, 1898) in which, Diaghilev as a leader of a group of young artists provided painters and artists with a change for free creation and self-expression. Diaghilev himself wrote articles on performances that included ballets by the Art Theatre. Benois and Diaghilev shared the idea that a painter could help ballet create a more beautiful setting and that more work needed to be done on establishing a connection between painting and ballet. Painter/designers Alexandre Benois and Leon Bakst followed Diaghilev from the Maryinsky and St Petersburg salons; Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Larionov, and others added lasting modernist dimensions. Coco Chanel created costumes that became iconic. Boris Kochno joined Diaghilev as assistant in 1921 until 1929.

The ballets of this period fell into two styles, each determined by setting. Those set in Europe (such as "La Sylphide" in Scotland and "Giselle" in the Rhineland) belong to a fairy tale style; those set in the Orient ("Le Corsaire" in Turkey, "La Bayadere" in India, and "Scheherezade" in Arabia) follow the Orientalist mode. Ballets with a European setting were instances of the "ballet blanc" or "white ballet," while those with an Asian exemplified Orientalism (Russell & oth.1990:114). And Boyt (2005:91) analysis the period as a valued and influential member of Diaghilev's inner circle of collaborative artists, Bakst designed décor and costumes Ballet Russes productions, particularly those

with exotic themes such as, *Les Orientales* (Fokine: 1910) and *Schéherézade* (Fokine: 1910). As Charles Mayer states in his article, "The Influence of Leon Bakst on Choreography", Bakst had, along with Fokine and Nijinsky, been inspired by Duncan's new freedom of movement, and he created costumes with the idea of enhancing the ability of the dancer to move expressively and "naturally" .

A much underestimated figure in Russian art, Leon Bakst is best known for the decorative art which he created for Sergei Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes. Fired by his love of colour, his brightly painted sets and richly coloured costumes combined extravagant designs with refined details to convey a heady atmosphere of Slavonic orientalism. This mixture of modern art with traditional Russian folk art inspired dancers and audiences alike. He became artistic director for Diaghilev in 1909, and his stage designs rapidly brought him international fame. Among his finest creations were the designs for Tchaikovsky's ballet *Sleeping Beauty* (London, 1921). Bakst also excelled at graphic art, indeed his first real success came in 1898 after he co-founded the influential "World of Art" group, sponsored by Savva Mamontov (1841-1918), and took charge of the illustration of the group's "World of Art" periodical. His exceptional talent at drawing and sketching is exemplified by his pen and ink drawing of Isadora Duncan (1908, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford). Although less well-known than many of his contemporaries, Bakst remains one of the most influential of Russian artists, and was chiefly responsible for the visual impact of the Ballets Russes. He revolutionized the design of theatrical scenery and costumes, and ranks among the most influential modern artists of the early 20th century (Encyclopedia of Visual Artists, 2015).

As Meyer states; "...already considered an expert on the ancient world." He was also dedicated to, and a strong force in the development of, "the symbiosis of music, dance and art. "...in Hellenic forms and sensibilities" according to Diaghilev's vision (Meyer 1978: 127).

For *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* Ballet, Bakst saw fit to particularly accentuate the animal/man duality of the character and its association with nature. But the expressive intimacy of the ballet and its "stripped down" minimalism of movement also offered the designer an excellent opportunity to integrate all aspects of a performance into an experiential whole: "...Bakst indicated an interest in developing the costume as a functional item in dance, capable of extending the range of the body's movement in space rather than regarding the costume as a kind of disguise, in which the body was concealed and to which accessories were added as ornamentation, he used the total costume as a means of adding to the structure of the movement" (Potter 2005: 155).

Léon Bakst designed the costumes and décor for a lavish restaging of Petipa's ballet *The Sleeping Beauty*, which was produced in London (and seen there only) in 1921 and 1922. This production was a departure for Diaghilev—unprecedented and not to be repeated— not only in that the production was run nightly instead of in repertory with other pieces, but also in that this was a single full-length work, rather than a program of several contrasting pieces. The courtly costumes for *The Sleeping Princess* represented a

departure for Léon Bakst; they resemble more closely the illustrations of children's books than other of his costume designs.

Picasso's first project for Diaghilev, in 1917, was *Parade*, an adventurous collaboration with Jean Cocteau, composer Erik Satie, and choreographer Léonide Massine. Picasso was able to draw upon his own Spanish heritage in *Le Tricorne*, with a lively score by Manuel de Falla and choreography again by Massine, who had developed an affinity for Spanish styles of dance. The ballet was first produced in London in 1919, and thereafter it remained in the Ballets Russes repertory as a favorite work.

If there was an artist whose contributions to Diaghilev's Ballets Russes paralleled the musical contributions of Igor Stravinsky, it might have been the artist Pablo Picasso. Although Stravinsky was Russian and Picasso was Spanish, there were striking parallels: they were almost exact contemporaries, and both were struggling young artists, unproven on the stage, when offered a significant opportunity by Diaghilev. Both contributed repeatedly to the Ballets Russes over a period of years, and those contributions have become iconic not only of the Ballets Russes, but of the progressive art of their time, and have only become more celebrated and better appreciated over the past century (Harvard College Library, 2015).

Catalan artist Joan Miró is born in Barcelona. Miró collaborated with Max Ernst to create the sets, costumes, and curtain for *Romeo and Juliet* (1926). This large scene design by the Spanish artist Miró represents the set for this ballet, perhaps the most explicitly surrealist of all Ballets Russes designs. The minimalist line drawings for the costumes, even with their annotations, would have given little guidance to the costume makers.

CONCLUSION

The Ballets Russes (1909-1929) was the revolutionary Russian ballet company under the direction of Russian impresario Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929). Diaghilev was neither a dancer, nor a choreographer, nor a composer, nor did he aspire to become the great impresario of a Russian ballet company that would take the Parisian audiences by storm and that would have a tremendous impact on twentieth-century ballet history.

Established in 1909, the Ballets Russes made an extraordinary impact on Parisian life and monopolized the audiences' attention for almost two decades. More than simply being a ballet company, it promoted and facilitated the interaction of some of the most avant-garde artists of the time. During the twenty-year run (the company disbanded in 1929 after Diaghilev's death), the Ballets Russes collaborated closely with dancers, choreographers and visual artists.

The Ballets Russes also served as a bridge dance and other art forms: the arts of painting, music and avant garde performance, including works by composers such as Igor Stravinsky, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel and Sergei Prokofiev; painters such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse and the poet-filmmaker Jean Cocteau. Their experiments in subject matter, choreographic style, music, scene design, costuming and the dancers'

physical appearance were in fact greatly influenced by these art forms and these experiments extended the possibilities of expression in ballet.

For artists, as for other members of the public, a key attraction of the Ballets Russes lay in the way its choreographers tested the limits of the body as an artistic medium emphasizing its most extreme possibilities and abstract formations. The ballet technique was limited primarily to the lower torso and entire body movements seldom utilized. Reacting against nineteenth-century ballet technique, the troupe employed a variety of unconventional movements: twisting torsos, abrupt shifts of weight, stamping feet and flexed wrists and ankles. The revolutionary choreographers, such as Fokine and Nijinsky were employed and they no longer limited body movements. During its twenty years the Ballets Russes was led by five important choreographers: Michel Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, Léonide Massine, Bronislava Nijinska, and George Balanchine. Each brought to the company a unique approach to creating ballet for the modern era.

Instead of traditional pink tights, tutu and satin ballet shoes, they adopted realistic folk toy costumes in *Petrushka*, and transparent Oriental pantaloons, feathers, elaborate headgear and long golden braids in *The Firebird*. All in all, the Ballets Russes created a new genre of art, combining music, art, and dance.

The Ballets Russes changed the way people viewed dance. The ballets presented by the company were not the full-length story ballets audiences had come to expect, but short, one-act spectacles lasting ten to thirty minutes in which music, dancing, set and costumes all united to play a role. (They were largely unacknowledged as instances of Richard Wagner's "Gesamtkunstwerke" total art works which combined music, narrative, singing and design).

He introduced Paris and London to 19th-century Russian classics, premiering *Swan Lake* in Paris and staging a lavish production of *The Sleeping Beauty* (titled *The Sleeping Princess*) in London in 1921, but his fame resides in the one-act ballets created by Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, Léonide Massine, Bronislava Nijinska, and the very young George Balanchine. These were collaborations. Diaghilev brought Russian music to Paris but also presented ballets to commissioned scores by French composers, such as Francis Poulenc and Erik Satie, and by the transplanted Russian, Igor Stravinsky. Major artists—including Pablo Picasso and Georges Rouault—created sets and costumes. European audiences were enthralled by Fokine's sex-and-violence orientalist ballets like *Cléopâtre* and *Schéhrazade* (fashion designers copied Léon Bakst's exotic color combinations). They also loved his windblown *Les Sylphides*, his fragrant *Spectre de la Rose*, and his ballets based on Russian folklore, like *Firebird* and *Petrouchka*. Nijinsky's *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* (1912) caused a small scandal because of its sexual implications, and his *Sacre du Printemps* (1913) ignited an even bigger one because of its pounding, turned-in movement and Stravinsky's "barbaric" score. *Parade* (1917), with Massine's choreography, Jean Cocteau's scenario, Picasso's sets and costumes, and Satie's score (featuring, at one point, a typewriter) put Cubism on the stage.

Diaghilev also changed the way companies operated—venturing outside the state-supported system to seek funding and presenters. Each season was more dazzling and provocative than the last. He did not have direct subsidy at first, but then the Imperial Theatres loaned him artists, sets, scenery and costumes. Diaghilev raised money for his productions from private patronage for the arts. He had a tremendous long-term influence on 20th century ballet, dancers and choreographers.

Under the aegis of Diaghilev's company, avant-garde artists helped to create visually and conceptually rich works that adapted modernist styles to the temporal, three-dimensional and corporeal medium of ballet. With the performer's body providing the central pivot of their work, these artists produced new forms of figural art and responded to modernity's new forms of embodiment. Given the canonical status of the artists who worked with Diaghilev, it is surprising that the Ballets Russes still occupies such a marginal place in histories of the plastic arts. The Ballets Russes cannot be called "modernist" in the traditional sense neither does the troupe "historical avant-garde," with its radical politics and anti-art stance.

Avant-garde artists who designed for the Ballets Russes demonstrated a keen interest through their experimentation with the themes and aesthetic strategies set forth in the prewar years. For example, Nijinsky's ballets with modern forms of technology, commerce and entertainment, *Moving pictures* by Pablo Picasso.

In conclusion, the Ballets Russes reformed and innovated the traditional ballet as well as developing it into a composite art form with the help of other art forms. The contribution of the Ballets Russes cannot be underestimated in that it helped Russian artists move on to next step. The Ballets Russes also introduced to Western Europe Russian music, art, and dance, faithfully fulfilling Diaghilev's desire to promote the Russian arts in Western Europe.

After Diaghilev's death in 1929 the Ballets Russes disbanded. Later companies appropriated the name and continued some of its traditions. From 1932, a second generation of companies using the Ballets Russes name attracted much of the talent, choreographers and brought the repertoire to an ever expanding audience across the world. Diaghilev's legacy, however, extends beyond the recreations and reinterpretations of his repertoire. His influence is also seen in the work of new companies led by former Ballets Russes dancers and choreographers: Balanchine went on to found the School of American Ballet and the New York City Ballet; Nijinska moved to Los Angeles and opened a ballet school where she trained future prima ballerinas, including Maria Tallchief; Fokine became a founding member of American Ballet Theatre. Diaghilev's daring spirit of innovation and collaboration continues to inspire artists of all disciplines.

Ballets Russes was more than just a dance company; it was a creative movement which, from its inception, drew to itself the greatest musical, theatrical and artistic talents of the day.

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