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City University of New York PH.D. 1985

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ART AND ENTERPRISE IN DIAGHILEV'S BALLETS RUSSES

by

LYNN GARAFOLA

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1985

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LYNN GARAFOLA

1985

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 20, 1984
date

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The City University of New York

"Art and Enterprise in Diaghilev's Ballets Russes" began life as an influence study. It was conceived over a glass of wine with an old and sympathetic friend, who urged me to throw academic caution to the winds and follow my instincts. At the time -- the late seventies -- I was enthralled by dance and the literature of the moderns, and in pursuing the latter, kept stumbling upon the former. At every turn, the Ballets Russes, that intrepid band of Russians who under the leadership of Serge Diaghilev had captured the imagination of Europe, seemed to leap from the pages of its literary contemporaries. The idea of James Joyce and Marcel Proust, my heroes, meeting for the only time at a Diaghilev party for Igor Stravinsky's Le Renard excited my imagination, as did those glowing passages in Beginning Again where Leonard Woolf evoked Bloomsbury's enchantment with the "Russian Ballet". And then, there was that curious affinity for dance among those madwomen of the literati, Lucia Joyce and Zelda Fitzgerald, and the unlikely collaboration of Ninette de Valois and W.B. Yeats in the late twenties. Yes, here was a juicy subject for a dissertation, and with the hubris born of enthusiasm and a few stray facts, I concocted something resembling a proposal. The title: "The Influence of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes on Intellectuals and Writers of Imaginative Literature."

So, rather lightheartedly, I plunged into the

subject. I started with the dance memoirs of the period, appalled to find how badly most were written and how few alluded even in passing to the writers of the great tradition. I went on to the standard secondary sources: Arnold Haskell's classic biography of Diaghilev, Richard Buckle's more recent life of Nijinsky, Cyril Beaumont's season-by-season annals of the Ballets Russes in London, and Nesta Macdonald's chronicle of the troupe in that city and the United States. With the exception of Proust, the literary giants of the period still eluded me.

A providential grant from the Social Science Research Council, awarded at a time when bad checks and part-time jobs were taking an emotional no less than physical toll on my enthusiasm, enabled me to spend 1978-1979 in Europe. That year, the first engaged wholly in research, radically transformed the scope of my project.

My readings in the literature of the period confirmed what I already suspected: apart from Jean Cocteau, no major writer succumbed to to the "influence" of the Ballets Russes. There were references, to be sure, in letters, diaries, and even an occasional novel, but the allusions were disappointingly few and the impressions sparse. They testified, moreover, only to a writer's presence in the theatre, not to the translation of that experience into the forms and material of literary art. At the same time, they conveyed the feeling that the center of

the audience lay elsewhere, in a social world far removed from the intellectual's modest writing table.

The London Theatre Museum's five Diaghilev scrapbooks, which I examined later that year, evoked this privileged world in photographs, reviews, and miscellanea. So, too, did the rare books I saw for the first time at the British Museum Library and the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra, limited editions as exquisite as the tastes of their readers. Society memoirs and chatty histories of the period told a similar tale: the world that swooned over the Ballets Russes belonged to the elite. Except for the years between 1918 and 1922, when modernism brought London's intelligentsia in droves to the West End, the painters, journalists, and illustrators who made up Diaghilev's artistic following were defined by their proximity to the upper class.

That first year in Europe opened other vistas. In the pages of the Dancing Times, the flourishing dance culture of the teens and twenties came alive. Far from being the sole standard bearer of the art of Terpsichore, the Ballets Russes stood at the apex of a veritable explosion in theatrical and recreational dancing that Diaghilev himself had partially ignited. But as the magazine, which grew more compendious as the twenties advanced, made equally clear, the relationship between the era's premier dance organization and these other phenomena

was not one-sided: forms, performers, and audiences passed back and forth, enriching the texture of each. In the official chronicles of the Ballets Russes, the dance tapestry of the period has been shorn of all but its most vivid thread.

My researches that year challenged another set of assumptions: the implicit notion that in the modernist adventure beginning with the production of Parade in 1917, the Ballets Russes entered the European vanguard. Certainly, the painters who designed for Diaghilev in the late teens and twenties sounded a roll call of international modernism. But they were hardly new discoveries. Rather, they alighted on Diaghilev's horizon at the moment their fame began to circulate beyond the avantgarde, among the brokers and publicists of contemporary art who formed the hub of his social world in Paris. They were discoveries only in the sense that they were new to his fashionable public. Indeed, the more I read about these twenties productions, the greater the discomfort I experienced. How was one to reconcile the subversive aesthetic of modernism with the rash of baroque and rococo pastiches that made their appearance in 1923-1924 or the stream of contemporary ballets whose only outstanding merit was their aura of chic? Questions like these led to other speculations. Did Cocteau and his protégé composers of "Les Six", who played so important a

role in the early years of Diaghilev's residence in Monte Carlo, comprise an authentic avantgarde, or were they merely the artistic vanguard of Wyndham Lewis' despised "High Bohemia"?

Recent years have seen an outpouring of books, articles, and exhibitions about the Ballets Russes. New archival sources have entered the public domain, and at least a dozen dissertations on this side of the Atlantic have examined facets of the company's twenty-year history. Often illuminating, none of these works resolved the baffling contradictions that returned with me to America.

Chastened by my year abroad, humbled by the knowledge of my ignorance, I closeted myself in archives. The Gabriel Astruc Papers at the New York Public Library's Dance Collection and the mountain of records kept by Diaghilev's <u>régisseur</u>, Serge Grigoriev, now at the Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation, opened my eyes to the day-to-day operations of the company, the mysteries of its finance, and the economic realities faced by its dancers. I was by no means the first to examine these archives. Richard Buckle's biography of Diaghilev, which had just appeared, quoted liberally, perhaps too liberally, from them. Neither Buckle nor the others who had studied these materials seemed to have gleaned the substance in the trivia. They accepted what transpired as being foreordained, rather than the consequence of circumstance

and choice.

In the ensuing two years, half of which was spent in Europe, archives became my obsession. The first hundred pages I wrote, a mélange of half-baked ideas and second-rate sources, ended up in the rubbish bin. Holidays in Paris found me copying reams of material at the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra and the Archives Nationales; visits to my husband in Cambridge coincided with days spent in the archives of King's College. For weeks at a time, the British Library's Newspaper Division at Colindale, with its fine collection of English and French dailies and weeklies, claimed me. A happy memory of these years is the time I spent on "Stage Level C" of the Metropolitan Opera House, ploughing through boxes of material about Diaghilev's American tours. Racks of costumes stood off to the side, and over the loud speaker rehearsals from the stage above lightened the hours of toil with music.

The deeper I plunged into the life and times of the Ballets Russes, the more convinced I became of the inadequacy of existing works. What was needed was not a problematic study of non-influence, a fundamentally negative endeavor, but a radical new way of conceptualizing the relationship of the Ballets Russes to the broad cultural contexts of the early twentieth century. Such an approach would explain the lightning speed with which Diaghilev established his enterprise in the West and

subsequently maintained its supremacy on the landscape of high art. At the same time, it would illuminate the magnitude of Diaghilev's achievement in wrenching the art and enterprise of ballet into the twentieth century.

Between 1909 and 1929, ballet moved from the periphery to the center of Europe's artistic consciousness. In part, this stemmed from a transformation of the art itself. For the first time since the Romantic era of the 1830's and 1840's, ballet in Western Europe was allied with significant movements in music, painting, and drama. From this rapprochement came new ideas that shattered dance canons and invested ballet with the aura of modernity. A man of the most refined taste, a perspicacious judge of music and painting, Diaghilev transformed each of ballet's component arts. In calling on gifted easel painters and composers, he elevated the spectacle and music of ballet from banality to artistic beauty. At the same time, he insisted on the integrity and interdependence of these allied arts within the overall concept of a ballet. Under his aegis, choreography was also transformed. Indeed, it was in these decades that the art of making dances acquired its modern name. Opening the <u>danse d'école</u> to a range of new influences, Diaghilev added to the received contexts of classicism other frames of reference whose sources lay in drama, painting, fashion, music, and the popular theatre, elements that seemed at times to overshadow the very

centrality of movement. At the same time, peace was made with the past. In the repertory Diaghilev willed to later generations, one finds the stepping stones of that remarkable journey from the inherited classicism of St. Petersburg's Imperial Ballet to neoclassicism.

Art, however, was only one of the legacies of the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev's great creation was also a vast enterprise, a traveling circus of dancers, musicians, composers, designers, scene painters, rehearsal pianists, wigmakers, and publicists, whose very survival seems a miracle of finance. High art in the marketplace is a kind of oxymoron, all the more so in the case of an enterprise that defined itself as a creative organism. In 1909, Diaghilev launched his artistic progeny in the eddies of the Paris marketplace, and for the next twenty years he guided its passage across the whirlpools and dead waters of Europe's changing economies. His alliances with opera impresarios and West End producers, like his part-time residency at the Monte Carlo Opéra, were fortuitous: arrangements that materialized as a response to the accidents of fate, not by some premeditated design. But once cemented, these relationships precipitated a host of changes affecting every aspect of his company's life. They explain the appearance and prolongation of key trends in the repertory as well as changes in the status of the dancer and successive transformations of the collaborative

process itself. No art form is immune to the claims and constraints of economics. This is particularly true in the case of the theatre where even before the curtain rises vast sums must be expended. It is a measure of Diaghilev's genius that he preserved so much of his independence in the face of adversity and financial pressure.

There was still another area where Diaghilev left his mark, a creation that ranks on a par with the art and enterprise he gave to the twentieth century. Between 1909 and 1929, Diaghilev conjured into being a new audience for ballet, whose contours can be discerned even today. For the first time since the Romantic era, a cultured public in the West materialized for ballet, an elite of connoisseurs, patrons, collectors, and dilettantes who brought both passion and cachet to Diaghilev's art. The enormous vogue for the Ballets Russes brought tastemakers of all kinds to the theatre. Never in the twentieth century has ballet been so fashionable a pastime as it was for most of these two decades. After World War I, moreover, it acquired a London following that anticipated today's popular audiences. In these immediate post-Armistice years, too, British intellectuals joined the crowds thronging the music-halls and theatres of the West End. For a moment, the Ballets Russes transcended Diaghilev's vision of an audience dressed in the Imperial state of the Mariinsky and the elegance of <u>le tout Paris</u>.

I have organized this study along the lines of Diaghilev's threefold achievement -- art, enterprise, and audience. A section is devoted to each of what I envisage as three concentric circles. At the center, my opening chapters, stands the artistic achievement, the artefact unveiled on the stage. Next comes the second circle, my middle chapters, analyzing the enterprise of the Ballets Russes, the web of human and material relationships that made the artistic vision flesh. In the outermost orbit, my concluding chapters, lies the audience that transformed the art immanent in rehearsal into the living art of performance. Although these sections have been imagined as concentric circles, they narrate events that occurred simultaneously and in tandem with one another: hence, the patterns that weave from one order of phenomena to another. In the vast tapestry of the Ballets Russes, the threads lose their discrete hues in the closeness of the weave.

To the many archivists and librarians who guided me to material and the Social Science Research Council I owe a very special debt of gratitude. At this time, too, I would like to thank the many friends who generously encouraged me along what proved to be a long and arduous journey: Mary Pat Kelly, at whose urging I embarked on this study; Mrs. Parmenia Migel Ekstrom, who opened her home, her collection, and her memories to me; Millicent Hodson, Mary Ann de Vlieg, Joan Acocella, Gerald Ackerman,

Hamideh Sedghi, and Debra Goldman, who shared thoughts, ideas, and research with me; Professor Arno Meyer, who read the earliest chapters with an enthusiasm I sorely needed at the time; Susan Cook Summer and Irene Huntoon, who translated the Russian material. The patience of my department over these years is a matter of record: I trust Professors Robert Day and Burton Pike feel it has been rewarded. To my husband Eric Foner I owe a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. Without his unflagging belief in the importance of this study and the inspiration of his own example, "Art and Enterprise in Diaghilev's Ballets Russes" would never have been completed.

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CHAPTER I

THE LIBERATING AESTHETIC OF MICHEL FOKINE

From 1909 to 1929, the Ballets Russes transformed the art of ballet, bringing it from the periphery to the very center of European cultural life. Its repertory embraced aesthetic styles as diverse as the movements that traversed the landscape of Europe between 1890 and 1930, and at key moments in its history it seemed to embody what was most modern and exciting in the arts. In the course of twenty years, the language of ballet was transformed, enriched by procedures of drama, music, and painting, and by material drawn from the arenas of fashion and popular entertainment. In the crucible of experiment that was the Ballets Russes in these two decades, the twentieth-century repertory was born.

The pre-War Ballets Russes came into being under a double sign. On one side stood the legacy of symbolism, Wagnerism, and the decadence of the fin-de-siècle that flowed from the Mir iskusstva circle of painters, critics, and connoisseurs that crystallized around Serge Diaghilev in the 1890's. On the other stood the legacy of St. Petersburg's Imperial Ballet, the classicism of Marius Petipa and his Mariinsky Theatre, transformed by

choreographer Michel Fokine under the impulses of liberal individualism and collective pluralism stirred by Russia's failed Revolution of 1905. The merging of these two aesthetics yielded the very rich harvest that has passed into legend: the immensely creative period of Diaghilev's pre-War Ballets Russes.

It is to the dramatic events of 1905 that we turn first. From this unlikely quarter came the spark that ignited the choreographic imagination of Michel Fokine and created the loyal band of interpreters who accompanied him on a journey into the artistic unknown. On January 9th, striking workers from the outlying districts of St. Petersburg converged on the Winter Palace with a petition begging the Tsar, "in the name of all the laboring class of Russia" to end the war with Japan and "eliminate the tyranny of capital over labor". The watchwords of the petition, which precipated the massacre that has passed into history as "Bloody Sunday", were autonomy, individual freedom, and hostility to the Tsarist bureaucracy.[1]

In the ensuing months, the cry of civil liberties and autonomy moved from the factory districts of St. Petersburg to Tsardom's most privileged institutions. In February, a student strike broke out at the Conservatory. "Some of the students' demands are very sensible," wrote

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[1]Sidney Harcave, First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905 (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 285-289.

the mother of one Conservatory student, Serge Prokofiev.

> They want monthly opera productions with students participating: singers, conductors, and a full orchestra, with students playing on the instruments they are studying . . . They want a library, a higher level in academic studies, and polite treatment from the attendants and the professors. For example, they say that Auer hits his students over the head with his bow. The situation right now can be compared to an impending storm when the air is heavy and it is hard to breathe.[2]

In March, amid a wave of protest, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov was dismissed from his post as Conservatory director. Alexander Glazunov and Alexandre Benois, then members of the faculty, tendered their resignations. Forty students were expelled, and after a private performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera Kostchei the Immortal turned into a huge political demonstration, the Tsar banned the "revolutionary" composer's works from the Imperial Theatres.[3]

In the overall panorama of the Revolution, the dancers' strike at the Imperial Ballet in the autumn of 1905 is certainly a minor footnote. Unfortunately, with the exception of two recent books, Bronislava Nijinska's Early Memoirs and Keith Money's biography of Anna Pavlova, it is a minor footnote in histories of the Ballets Russes

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[2]Quoted in Serge Prokofiev, Prokofiev by Prokofiev: A Composer's Memoir, trans. Guy Daniels (Garden City: Doubleday, 1979), p. 131.

[3]Ibid., pp. 136-138.

as well. Fokine, who played a leading role in the events, omits all mention of it, while Tamara Karsavina, who was equally involved, dismisses the strike as an expression of misguided, if youthful idealism. Diaghilev's biographers follow suit. Arnold Haskell's 1935 classic Diaghileff: His Artistic and Private Life sees Mir iskusstva, the World of Art movement spearheaded by Diaghilev that introduced Symbolism to Russia, as the only substantive force shaping Fokine's creative imagination. Diaghilev's most recent biographer, Richard Buckle, in a volume replete with details on every conceivable subject, disposes of the strike in one sentence.[4]

The dancers' strike at the Mariinsky, however, had a major impact on the genesis and aesthetics of the early Ballets Russes. Among the twelve delegates elected by the troupe to press its claims, Fokine, Pavlova, and Karsavina figured prominently, as did Olga Preobrajenska, one of the Imperial Ballet's senior ballerinas. Even the

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[4]Bronislava Nijinska, Early Memoirs, trans. and ed. Irina Nijinska and Jean Rawlinson, introd. Anna Kisselgoff (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), pp. 152-155; Keith Money, Anna Pavlova: Her Life and Art (New York: Knopf, 1982), pp. 53-56; Michel Fokine, Memoirs of a Ballet Master, trans. Vitale Fokine, ed. Anatole Chujoy (Boston: Little Brown, 1961); Tamara Karsavina, Theatre Street: The Reminiscences of Tamara Karsavina, foreword J.M. Barrie (London: Heinemann, 1930), pp. 190-191; Arnold Haskell, Diaghileff: His Artistic and Private Life, in collaboration with Walter Nouvel (London: Gollancz, 1935); Richard Buckle, Diaghilev (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), p. 83.

closely guarded pupils of the Imperial Ballet School were touched by the "endless talk about strikes and risings",[5] and "assembled, without having obtained permission, to discuss their needs".[6] Nijinsky was one of the students who attended this meeting, which demanded improvement of education, instruction in theatrical makeup, and the right for advanced students to wear their own shoes, collars, and cuffs with the School uniform.[7]

The strike articulated grievances intensified by the leadership crisis and artistic malaise that followed the golden age of the Imperial Ballet in the 1890's. Even though higher salaries, a voice in budgetary decisions, and a five-day work week figured among the strikers' demands, the key issues, as at the Conservatory, were artistic. The dancers demanded the right to choose their own régisseurs, company directors who took charge of rehearsals and represented management in day-to-day relations with the dancers, and the return to active duty of balletmaster Marius Petipa, his assistant Alexander Shiraev, and teacher Alfred Bekefi, all forced out of the company for reasons of

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[5]Recalled by ballerina Yelena Lucom and quoted in Natalia Roslavleva, Era of the Russian Ballet 1770-1965, foreword Ninette de Valois (London: Victor Gollancz, 1966), p. 169.

[6]Vladimir Teliakovskii, diary entry, 15 Oct. 1905, quoted ibid., p. 170. Teliakovskii was the Director of the Imperial Theatres.

[7]Nijinska, Early Memoirs, pp. 153-154.

politics.[8] The aim of the dancers, Karsavina explained to her disapproving mother, "was to raise the standard of art. We were going to ask for autonomy, choose our own Committee to decide artistic questions . . . do away with the methods of bureaucratic organization."[9]

The Revolution of 1905 was carried out in the name of "liberty". It stood for the principle of individual freedom in social and cultural as well as economic life. For the dancers and other personnel of the Imperial Theatres, the strike kindled a feeling of group artistic identity akin to that of the actors of Stanislavsky's studio and the artist-intellectuals grouped around Mir iskusstva. "Bear in mind," a striking régisseur reminded the dramatic troupe as he rang down the curtain at the Alexandrinsky Theatre, "we are striving for an honourable freedom. Not long ago the Russian actor was a serf."[10] Implicit in the assertion of political unity was a transformation of the strikers' artistic and social consciousness.

Karsavina's remarks notwithstanding, life at the Imperial Ballet did not resume its "normal course" in the

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[8]Roslavleva, p. 169; Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 153.

[9]Karsavina, Theatre Street, p. 191.

[10]Ibid., p. 194.

aftermath of the disturbances of 1905.[11] A commission of enquiry was set up to investigate the disturbances, and despite an official amnesty, Pyotr Mikhailov and Valentin Presniakov, leaders of the striking dancers, were dismissed, while another ballet activist, V.V. Kisselov, was sent off to a psychiatric hospital.[12] Josef Kschessinsky, the brother of Mathilde Kschessinska, the Mariinsky's prima ballerina assoluta and the Tsar's former mistress, was also dismissed for his role in the strike, although thanks to his sister's influence within the Imperial Court, he did not lose his pension.[13] Even Pavlova, the brightest star of the younger generation, was warned by Baron Fredericks, the all-powerful Minister of the Imperial Court who controlled the Imperial Theatres, to desist from further trouble or suffer the consequences.[14] "Many of the other artists involved were eventually dismissed without cause," recalled Nijinska, "or were not

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[11] Ibid., p. 201.

[12] Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 155; Roslavleva, p. 168; Yuri Slonimsky, "Fokine and His Time", introd. to Mikhail Fokine, Against the Tide: Memoirs of the Balletmaster, Articles, and Letters (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1962), p. 27.

[13] Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 155. Both Presniakov and Kisselov appeared with Diaghilev's saison russe in 1910, while Kschessinsky's name appears in Diaghilev's preliminary notes for the composition of the troupe that year. "Tableau de la troupe," Comoedia Illustré, 15 June 1910, n.p.; Black Notebook of Serge Diaghilev, p. 1, Dance Collection, New York Public Library.

[14] Money, p. 88.

given the chance to dance good roles, or simply were not duly promoted."[15]

Further polarizing an already divided company, such measures prepared the ground for the talent exodus that eventually drained the Imperial Ballet of the flower of its younger generation. Beginning in 1907, Mariinsky dancers began to sound European waters for engagements outside the Imperial domain. Adoph Bolm and Pavlova made a number of forays abroad in 1907-1908, including a Scandinavian tour that went as far as Berlin and met with resounding success everywhere.[16] Bolm also partnered Lydia Kyasht, who cited unspecified "intrigues" among her reasons for abandoning Russia, on her first appearance at the Empire Theatre in London in 1908, while Karsavina herself danced in the English capital during Lent 1909, anticipating the Diaghilev enterprise by several months.[17]

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[15]Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 155.

[16]Money, pp. 67-69, 75-78; Adolph Bolm, autobiographical typescript, Part II, pp. 1-8, and autobiographical notes, p. 4, Adloph Bolm Collection, George Arendts Research Library, Syracuse University.

[17]Bolm, autobiographical transcript, p. 9; Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 239; "Ballet and Dancers in London," Diaghilev Scrapbooks, Vol. 2, n.p., Theatre Museum (London); Lydia Kyasht, Romantic Recollections, ed. Erica Beale (London: Brentano, 1929), pp. 150-152. Vera Trefilova's premature resignation from the Mariinsky in 1910 has been attributed to intrigues instigated against her by Kschessinska. Horst Koegler, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ballet (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 534.

Other dancers of the company's left-wing soon followed. George Kyasht, Ludmilla Schollar, and the Bekefi sisters all made London appearances in 1909-1910, as did Preobrajenska, who also danced at the Paris Opéra in 1909.[18] (Not to be outdone, the doyen of the traditionalists, Mathilde Kschessinska, arranged a series of guest performances at the Opéra to coincide with Diaghilev's production of Boris Godunov in 1908 at the same house.)[19] If monetary considerations made foreign engagements attractive, even more compelling was the excitement of working outside the bureaucracy and artistic stagnation of the Imperial Theatres. "There are many of us in the theatres of St. Petersburg and Moscow," wrote Bolm, "who are eager to use our art for better purposes. We are helpless, though, because the administration of our theatre is strictly reactionary. We dare not criticize them

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[18]"Ballet and Dancers in London"; "Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 20 May 1909, p. 6, col. 3.

[19]Robert Brussel, "La Vie de Paris. Mathilde Kschesinska," Figaro, 22 May 1908, p. 1, cols. 2-3. Russian dancers had previously appeared on European opera house stages, although their appearances were infrequent. In 1902, for example, Raoul Gunsbourg, director of the Monte Carlo Opéra, asked R.E. Drigo, a ballet conductor at the Imperial Theatres, to compose the music for La Côte d'Azur, a ballet to a subject specially written by the Prince of Monaco for touring Russian artists. The work, presented for the first time in Monte Carlo on 30 March 1902, was staged by Alexander Shiraev. The dancers included Lyubov Roslavleva, Ekaterina Geltser, Olga Preobrajenska, and Vera Trefilova. Roland John Wiley, "Memoirs of R.E. Drigo," Part II, Dancing Times, June 1982, p. 662.

openly. We are not even allowed to make suggestions. Petipa is dead. The masters still use his creations, but they have forgotten his spirit. Such an atmosphere is stifling after the freedom of travel."[20]

From the ranks of the Imperial Ballet's left-wing strikers came the raw material for Fokine's experiments and the prototypical Diaghilev dancer. These "innovators", as the "Diaghilevtsy" called themselves, differed from the traditionalists in the Imperial Ballet not only in their receptivity to new forms of dance but in their attitudes toward the aim and method of creative work. They were animated by an individualist ideal expressed through collective action, an ideal catalyzed by the events of 1905 and experienced as a transformative force.

Like all institutions, the Mariinsky was a microcosm of society at large where politics, social relations, and artistic goals were inextricably linked. The revolutionary impulse kindled responses to all these facets of the dancer's experience. It colored attitudes toward the "old classical technique" epitomized by Kschessinska and Nikolai Sergeyev, the Imperial Ballet's chief <u>régisseur</u>, as well as the careerism such traditionalists represented. It politicized "aspirations for new creativity in dancing", while sensitizing Fokine's

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[20]Bolm, autobiographical typescript, p. 9.

future ensemble to the creative demands of group effort.[21] The ideals of 1905 altered not only the habits of mind and patterns of behavior among the younger generation of Mariinsky dancers. They also charged the imaginative landscape of Fokine's early choreography with an emotional tension that surpassed both the influence of Duncanism and that of Mir iskusstva. The unique dialectic of collective and individualist strivings catalyzed the themes and methods of Fokine's earliest ballets, crystallizing the various sources of his work into a coherent statement of liberal ideology.

Fokine's emergence as a choreographer coincided with the Revolution of 1905 and reflected the social and artistic discontents that contributed to the turmoil within the Mariinsky. Like the other strike leaders, he was connected with the Gogol School, a charitable institution founded and supported by the dancers, which became a focal point of the company's left-wing.[22] He strongly opposed A.D. Krupensky, the conservative manager of the Petersburg office of the Imperial Theatres, and at the six-hour meeting on October 15, 1905 when striking dancers and administration supporters met in acrimonious confrontation,

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[21]Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 313.

[22]Roslavleva, pp. 166-167; Slonimsky, p. 26.

he openly denounced Sergeyev as "the Directorate's spy".[23]

Fokine's rebellion against the artistic and bureaucratic strictures of the Imperial Ballet anticipated the Revolution, but it was the events of that tumultuous time that released his creative energies. Between March 1906 and 1908, Fokine choreographed no fewer than nine ballets, a veritable outburst of creativity compared with the single work he had staged previously. Almost without exception, these ballets were created outside the Mariinsky's official repertory in the freer atmosphere of school performances and charity events, where Fokine could pick and choose the material for his experiments among students and innovation-minded colleagues. From this core of artistic and political sympathizers came the nucleus of Diaghilev's early company, that splendid ensemble both inspired by Fokine's choreographic ideas and capable of translating them into dramatic form.

In 1904, on the very eve of the Revolution, Fokine submitted the libretto of Daphnis and Chloë to Vladimir Teliakovskii, Director of the Imperial Theatres. To the draft of his proposed two-act ballet, he attached a memorandum explaining the principles to be observed in its production. Couched in the form of suggestions, the Preface stands as Fokine's earliest aesthetic statement, a

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[23]Roslavleva, pp. 170-174.

statement, it should be noted, that anticipated Isadora Duncan's appearance in the Russian capital. It was time, Fokine wrote, to "make an experiment in producing a Greek ballet in the spirit of the [Hellenic] age." "No ballet-master could commit the following mistake: arrange dances for Russian peasants in the style of Louis XV or . . . create dances in the manner of the Russian trepak to a French theme. Then why permit the constant error in productions based on subjects from Ancient Greece: shall Greeks dance the French way?"[24]

Fokine's call for authenticity in the staging of ethnic and period material was an integral part of his aesthetic, the focus around which his many dissatisfactions with the Imperial Theatres crystallized. An heir to the Russian naturalist tradition, he found in the direct observation of nature not only a rich vein of dance material but an empirical method he never completely disavowed. Echoing Tolstoy, Fokine discovered in the spontaneity and expressiveness of national dancing "truth itself -- unspoiled and undistorted".[25] He perceived in the distortions of national dances the influence exerted by a narrow circle of upper-class balletomanes on the

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[24]Quoted ibid., p. 175.

[25]Fokine, Memoirs, p. 103.

choreography, casting, and content of ballets.[26]

Fokine transformed the traditional character dances of the academic canon into what came to be known as the genre nouveau,[27] a form independent of the danse d'école and identified exclusively with national and ethnic styles of movement. The "new genre" translated into choreographic terms Taine's definition of art as an expression of "race, moment et milieu". Founded, above all, on Fokine's respect for both the diversity and uniqueness of cultural expression, it represented a form of choreographic naturalism completely at odds with the idealism of Isadora Duncan's vision. "I believe in the obedience of the movement to costume, and its proper adaptation to period," he told Arnold Haskell in 1934 by way of explaining the differences between Isadora's approach and his own. "She had only one plastic conception for all periods and nationalities, while I am essentially interested in the movements of each individual."[28] Throughout his life, Fokine's conception of style remained

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[26]Ibid., pp. 60, 104.

[27]When Serge Oukrainsky joined the Pavlova company just prior to World War I, his contract specified that he was to dance principally the "genre nouveau" such as the Persian dance he had used to audition. Serge Oukrainsky, My Two Years with the Dancing Genius of the Age: Anna Pavlowa (Hollywood, Suttonhouse, [1940]), p. 56.

[28]Arnold Haskell, Balletomania: The Story an Obsession (London: Gollancz, 1934), p. 136.

historically conditioned.

The genre nouveau was of a piece with Fokine's other artistic interests. An amateur plein air painter and balalaika musician, he spent youthful holidays combing the hinterlands of Russia, far from Peter the Great's Imperial capital on the Neva. There he completed the education begun in the classrooms of the Mariinsky, and there his youthful aesthetic took shape. Thus, from early on, the danse d'école and national dancing seem to have inhabited distinct spheres in Fokine's mind: the one stood for snobbery, artificiality, and convention; the other for naturalness, spontaneity, and expressiveness. Although he continued to choreograph in the classical mode, this contradiction was never resolved.

For an admiring critic like Valerien Svetlov, Fokine marked the transition between "the routine classicism of the old ballet and the violent daring of the balletmasters who succeeded him."[29] Karsavina, too, stressed Fokine's continuity with tradition: "while his choreographic invention was woven after finer designs," she wrote, "its tissue was worked on the same loom as that of his great predecessor."[30] André Levinson, a self-confessed

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[29]Valerian Svetloff, "Saison russe 1912," Collection des plus beaux numéros de Comoedia Illustré, n.p.

[30]Karsavina, Theatre Street, p. 212.

paladin of the "traditional style",[31] saw his achievement less sanguinely. "Fokine," he wrote in 1926, "sacrificed the forms of abstract movement for expression, pure dance for pantomime. Finding the routines of the Classic Dance . . . cold and inhuman to his warmed sensibilities," he adopted a course that "was fundamentally false."[32]

Late nineteenth-century ballet was founded on the dualities of romanticism long since canonized and conventionalized -- narrative vs. lyrical elements, character vs. classical forms, "realistic" vs. abstract styles of choreography and presentation -- divisions which offended Fokine's sense of dramatic and stylistic consistency:

> When I played a "mime" role, I represented an authentic image of the period. But when I danced a "classic" part, I portrayed a leading dancer -- outside the confines of place or time time with marcelled hair, pink cheeks, and ballet tights . . . I felt that, the more historically authentic were the costumes of the mimes, of the performers of character dances and of the supers, the more idiotic we, the classic dancers, must have appeared in the midst of them. On the same stage appeared ladies in long dresses with trains and with high ornaments on their heads (reminiscent of the medieval miniatures which enliven the sculpture of Gothic cathedrals) side by side with dancers in pink tights and short skirts looking like open

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[31]André Levinson, Ballet Old and New, trans. Susan Cook Summer (New York: Dance Horizons, 1982), p. XV.

[32]André Levinson, "A Crisis in the Ballets Russes," Theatre Arts Monthly, Nov. 1926, p. 786.

umbrellas.[33]

In the juxtaposition of "classic" and "realistic" styles, Fokine saw only absurdity. He failed to discern in the creation of images outside the framework of "history" the universalizing intent of classicism at its best. For him, the "classic dance" was, above all, a historical style identifiable with a particular moment in the evolution of the arts.[34]

Although naturalism signified a radical departure from the canons of ballet tradition, it was a motivating force of theatrical reform throughout the Silver Age and a common ground linking dance to innovative approaches in other branches of theatrical art. In Russian Theatre From the Empire to the Soviets, Marc Slonim calls the "archaeological-historical . . . realism" of the Moscow Art Theatre "one of the most important trends" contributing to changes in Russian theatrical production.[35] As was the case with Fokine, Stanislavsky viewed theatrical style as the creation of historical illusion based on direct observation of reality and intellectual reconstruction.

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[33]Fokine, Memoirs, pp. 49-50.

[34]Ibid., p. 137.

[35]Marc Slonim, Russian Theatre From the Empire to the Soviets (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1961), p. 116.

> Stanislavsky applied the same method of research and authenticity to all historical and period plays, whether it was the Merchant of Venice or Julius Caesar. For the latter, he went with his actors to Rome and reproduced on the Moscow stage the narrow streets, the Forum, and the picturesque southern crowd of Caesar's city. In the same way, the company made an expedition to the island of Cyprus in preparation for Othello. In order to make the public understand the seriousness of these efforts, productions of new plays were accompanied with matching exhibitions. The spectators of Julius Caesar, for instance, could see in the foyer stalls Russian translations of Shakespeare, as well as genuine objects of the period -- coins, armor, and and paintings and engravings.[36]

Stanislavsky's earliest productions coincided with Fokine's debut as a dancer, a time when by his own admission, he was searching for new creative outlets. Fokine's own family had many connections to the theatre. His brother Alexander founded the Troitsky Miniature Theatre, another brother Vladimir became an actor.[37] It is not difficult to imagine Stanislavsky's epoch-making productions of Ibsen and Chekhov impressing his youthful imagination with their artistry and evocative reconstructions of character and place. Doubtless, they left suggestions of future possibility, intimations of the high seriousness that art at its best can communicate, and images of stylistic unity, dramatic coherence, and psychological plausibility -- all of which found their way into his early work.

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[36] Ibid., p. 116.

[37] Dawn Lille Horwitz, "Michel Fokine in America, 1919-1942," Diss. New York Univ. 1982, p. 1.

Admittedly, Fokine never abjured academic technique. However, his reforms, carried to their logical extreme, spelled the effective dismemberment of classicism and fragmentation of the totality of Petipa's universe. In his search for dramatic consistency, Fokine mistook the narrative padding of Petipa's work for its poetic essence. Basing his revolution on the secondary rather than primary text of ballet, he viewed the pure dance sequences -- the third-act vision and dream scenes -- as interruptions of the dramatic flow rather than an abstract distillation of its meaning. He rejected the framing of the ballerina by the corps de ballet, the traditional language of mime, and the formal design of the pas de deux on the grounds that they were neither expressive nor conducive to the creation of a poetic image. With the exception of Les Sylphides, from which Diaghilev pruned the naturalistic trappings of two earlier versions, Fokine's work remained rooted in the material world, its poetry framed within historical time and place, its characters anchored to a precise social and psychological reality.[38]

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[38]In his zeal for reform, Fokine occasionally took authenticity to absurd lengths. To heighten the pastoral realism of Pavillon d'Armide, he originally planned to have a flock of sheep driven across the stage. In the original production of Firebird, moreover, two horses were used, a black one to suggest night and a white one to represent day, a practice that even the Mariinsky had discontinued and Diaghilev abandoned after two performances. Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 300.

Thrilled with the "barbarity" of Diaghilev's Russians, few Western enthusiasts appreciated Fokine's reworking of traditional Russian and Oriental themes. Such themes, of course, abounded in the Mariinsky repertory, where the Pan Slavism of the mid-nineteenth century found ready theatrical expression as a variant of romantic exoticism. Numerous ballets exploited the rich vein of Russian folklore, even as they mirrored the eastward expansion of Russia's vast and growing empire. One of the ballets that Benois saw "with unabated excitement" as a child was Roxane. Performed in 1878, it "was an indication of the Russian attitude in favor of freedom for the Slavs in the Balkans."[39] Another popular ballet, The Hunchbacked Horse, ended with a grandly nationalistic finale. "At the back of the stage," recalled Benois, "rose the Novgorod monument of Russia's thousandth anniversary, and marching past it were all the nations of the Russian Empire come to pay homage to the Simpleton, who had become their master. There were Cossacks and Karelians, Tartars, Little-Russians and Samoyeds."[40] But where these ballets echoed the Imperial and imperialist ideology of the Court, Fokine's cultural pluralism, by contrast, exalted the diversity of

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[39]Alexandre Benois, Memoirs, trans. Moura Budberg (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), I, p. 136.

[40]Ibid., p. 137.

Russia's native traditions, not the fact of Empire.

Although Fokine stressed the importance for the choreographer of empirical research, he both idealized and romanticized his material. Where ethnographic or historical evidence was lacking, he turned to inspiration. The Polovtsian Dances in Prince Igor were staged "from the music alone": "I had faith in the fact," he wrote, "that, if the Polovtzy did not actually dance this way to the music of Borodin, that is exactly how they should have danced."[41] (In this instance, however, Fokine overstated the workings of imagination. His Polovtsian Dances bore considerable resemblance to an earlier divertissement choreographed by Lev Ivanov, Petipa's long-disparaged assistant balletmaster.)[42] A similar idealism animated his vision of the romantic ballet as expressed in his choreography for the second Chopiniana. Did the legendary ballerinas of the thirties dance thus? he asks rhetorically in his memoirs. "I do not really know. And no one can be sure. But if my imagination is any criterion, that is exactly how they danced."[43] One is grateful that Fokine followed the promptings of his imagination, especially in

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[41]Fokine, Memoirs, p. 150.

[42]Roslavleva, pp. 127-128. Acis and Galatea, Fokine's first choreographic work, was also a restaging of a ballet originally mounted by Ivanov and dropped from the Mariinsky repertory. Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 140.

[43]Fokine, Memoirs, p. 129.

the retrospective works that comprise one of the most felicitous veins of his early choreography. Indeed, in Les Sylphides, Carnaval, and Petrushka, his most compelling ballets to a contemporary eye, nostalgia for a lost past, rather than archaeological reconstruction, invests the choreography with emotional intensity.

Fokine's idealizing of ethnic and historical material seems at odds with his insistence on mimesis. But it is precisely this subjectivity of vision that belongs to the early twentieth century. As was the case of many artistic contemporaries on Europe's periphery, Fokine's reform of balletic language merged a late-blooming naturalism with more recent fin-de-siècle impulses, especially the cult of Beauty. Fokine warred against "ugliness" in dance. He sought to abolish preparations ("what could be more ugly than the preparation for a pirouette en seconde or en quatrième?"); the extremes of turn-out ("could anything be worse than a first or fifth position as done in the old school?"); and ungainly lifts.[44] In an interview with Pierre Tugal, he insisted on the need to go beyond nature, Duncan's source of beauty, and idealize movement. "In Dance one cannot be content with what is merely natural. Isn't the aim of art to

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[44]P.J.S. Richardson, "Fokine," Dancing Times, July 1921, p. 782.

improve on nature by exalting Beauty and expressiveness? If singing is the idealization of the voice, so dance is the exaltation of movement."[45]

Yet, the appearance of naturalness was Fokine's trademark, and nowhere was this noted more than in his handling of masses on the stage. "The absorbing interest of 'Petroushka'," editorialized Philip J.S. Richardson in the Dancing Times in 1921, "lies not so much in the dancing and acting of the principals, but in the marvellous handling of the crowd of pleasure seekers who throng the Admiralty Square . . . The movements and the groupings are so natural and so apparently unpremeditated that you feel certain that if you saw the ballet a second time everybody would be doing something different."[46]

Structurally, the ensembles in Petipa's works reflected the source of ballet decorum in Europe's absolutist courts. His groupings indicated rank more often than role. The ballerina danced alone with her cavalier, coryphées in groups of no more than eight. The enormous and disciplined corps, the "padding," wrote Svetlov, "contrived for the moments of the ballerina's rest, for grand closing marches and for the final transformation

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[45]Interview with Pierre Tugal, Diaghilev Scrapbook, Vol. 5, p. 128, Theatre Museum (London).

[46]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Dec. 1925, p. 260.

scenes,"[47] offered an abstract and hierarchical vision of humanity. By contrast, Fokine's preferred ensemble was the crowd. Transforming the corps de ballet into what Svetlov called "a sort of collective artist, imbued with the idea and style of the production, living in it and collaborating,"[48] Fokine discovered in the fluid arrangement and interaction of the crowd a theatrical correlative of the collective impulse that had animated the events of 1905.

Fokine discarded the diagonals and rectangles of Petipa's regimented formations. He abolished what Osip Mandelstam called the "currant smiles of the ballerinas" and "vegetable obedience of the corps de ballet."[49] He humanized and individualized his dancers, transforming them into actors, and assigning to each a motivated role in the larger dramatic action. "The group is not merely an ornament," he told Arnold Haskell. "The new ballet advances from the expressiveness of the face or the hands to that of the whole body, and from that of the individual body to groups of bodies and the expressiveness of the

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[47]Valerian Svetloff, "The Diaghileff Ballet in Paris," Dancing Times, Dec. 1929, p. 264.

[48]Ibid., p. 264.

[49]Osip Mandelstam, "The Egyptian Stamp" in The Prose of Osip Mandelstam: The Noise of Time, Theodosia, The Egyptian Stamp, trans. and introd. Clarence Brown (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 174-175.

combined dancing of the crowd."[50] Fokine's handling of the crowd as a living social entity presents striking similarities to Stanislavsky's method of staging at the Moscow Art Theatre. "For the contemporary viewer," wrote a Soviet critic in 1930, "'Petrushka' offers a model of the transfer to the ballet of the principles of scenic realism affirmed by the Art Theatre."[51]

Fokine was drawn to the apparent formlessness of the crowd as an antidote to ballet's visual and social hierarchies. He was also attracted by its volatility: under the appearance of calm lurked the potential for violence. The anticipation of movement implicit in stillness is central to the excitement of dance. Fokine enlarged upon this suspense: he collectivized it by transposing it to the group and dramatized it by heightening its appearance of spontaneity. "In nearly every one of Fokine's ballets," wrote André Levinson, "there is a moment where all the participants, irrespective of their earlier roles, join hands and form a long chain -- farandole -- which closes up into concentric circles and

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[50]Haskell, Balletomania, p. 137.

[51]V. Iving, introd. to A.N. Benua, Petrushka: Libretto, quoted in Janet Elspeth Kennedy, "The 'Mir Iskusstva" Group and Russian Art 1898-1912," Diss. Columbia 1976, I, p. 362. It is interesting to note that Benois called Petrushka a "street ballet". Roland John Wiley, "Benois' Commentaries, Part VII, Dancing Times, April 1981, p. 464. This article was originally published in Rech' on August 4, 1911.

carries on to an ever-accelerating tempo."[52] In this "modified coda", dancers and colors ran riot: the crowd erupted in an orgasm of collective violence and release, a vehicle for psychic and physical liberation. "A thrill," wrote Arnold Bennett of Schéhérazade's "shocking brutality".

> In the surpassing fury and magnificence of the Russian ballet one saw eunuchs actually at work, scimitar in hand. There was the frantic orgy, and then there was the barbarous punishment, terrible and revolting; certainly one of the most sanguinary sights ever seen on an occidental stage. The eunuchs pursued the fragile and beautiful odalisques with frenzy; in an instant the seraglio was strewn with murdered girls in all the abandoned postures of death. And then silence, save for the hard breathing of the executioners.[53]

Fokine's work demanded, if not a new technique, then movement of a kind that would amplify the physical and emotional dimensions of both dancer and the stage. In teaching, Fokine stressed the extension of the lines of the body. He freed the torso, elongated the attitude and insisted on épaulement, the art of presenting the dancer to the audience not flatly, but in perspective.[54] He virtually did away with mirrors: it was necessary, he told

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[52]Levinson, Ballet Old and New, p. 41.

[53]Arnold Bennett, "Russian Imperial Ballet at the Opéra," Paris Nights and Other Impressions of Places and People (New York: George H. Doran, 1913), pp. 76-77.

[54]Fokine, Memoirs, pp. 69-70.

an American student, to train the "third eye" to look inside yourself and visualize what you look like on all sides. Above all, Fokine sought to create a flow based on natural movement and involving the entire body.[55] The essence of the Fokine style," his former student Lille Horwitz has written,

> was its stress on natural body flow . . . Fokine taught everything by looking at the picture of the entire body, not anatomically, but as it formed a total image. He talked about the harmony of line and the necessity of following through a movement to its ultimate conclusion. To him, dance meant a beautiful line -- one that was long and unbroken. This continuous line or shape was a complete body movement, coordinated and harmonious from all sides, and involving a sense of outward flow and inward feeling. Many of his movements were light, with a sense of the torso reaching from the diaphragm. He would not tolerate cautiousness in the use of the torso, demanding that it be experienced in its greatest capacity. The torso was never squared off, but always had a slight twist. This resulted in the asymmetry he favored. The head went with the body and was never still, helping to carry the line to its final point . . .
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> The flow of movement that created the line eventually went through the arms and hands. Fokine . . . often talked about the relationship [of the hands] to the rest of the body. Oreste Sergievsky remembers him saying, "Arms are not pictures on the wall, but horizons.[56]

Fokine's classes also stressed the use of space.

> Fokine taught his students to move and cover

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[55]Dawn Lille Horwitz, "A Ballet Class With Michel Fokine," Dance Chronicle, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1979), pp. 39-42.

[56]Ibid., pp. 42-43.

> space . . . His pas de chat was to the front or back, not to the side, and he held out his teaching stick and would make his pupils move under it in order to progress backward. This constant spatial emphasis also involved many different and rapidly changing levels.[57]

The stress on flow, elongated line, space, and even the diaphragm (Duncan's "crater of motor power", "the central spring of all movement") aimed at releasing and dramatizing the three-dimensionality of the dancer in motion. Fokine was concerned, above all, with the creation of dynamic movement, images and after-images that would kindle the sense memory of the spectator. "With his body," wrote Jacques Rivière in the first important article about Fokine's choreography in France, "the dancer marks out two different kinds of figures simultaneously. The one stands out against the decor, the other against the background of our memory."[58]

Reflecting Tolstoian thought, Fokine defined the true aim of art as the "innoculation of the audience with feeling".[59] In those early ballets, created before fame and the marketplace converted their themes and typical devices into formulas exploited ad nauseam by imitators and even Fokine himself, he achieved this. With the crowd as

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[57] Ibid., p. 42.

[58] Jacques Rivière, "Des Ballets russes et de Fokine," Nouvelle Revue Française, July 1912, p. 176.

[59] Fokine, Memoirs, p. 62.

his vehicle, he established a community of feeling between dancers and spectators, inviting the latter to partake of the collective experience enacted on stage. If his tales of seraglio amour seem hopelessly dated, "Oriental seduction" and "sensuality" of movement[60] spoke directly to a generation whose social and sexual mores were in transition. The crowds of warriors rushing the footlights in Prince Igor leapt the bounds of social as much as stage decorum. "There was a moment," wrote a columnist for Le Temps in 1909, "when the entire hall, carried away by the frenzy of the dances of the Oriental slaves and Polovtsian warriors at the end of Prince Igor, was ready to stand up and actually rush to arms. That vibrant music, those archers, ardent, wild, and fierce of gesture, all that mixing of humanity, those raised arms, restless hands, the dazzle of the multicolored costumes seemed for a moment to dizzy the Parisian audience, stunned by the fever and madness of movement."[61]

Just as the Revolution of 1905 utilized collective forms to express fundamentally individualist strivings, so Fokine's choreography reflected a similar tension. In the atmosphere of artistic community that

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[60]Jules Claretie, "La Vie à Paris," Le Temps, 21 May 1909, p. 2, col. 5.

[61]Ibid.

reigned between 1906 and 1911, Fokine elaborated his vision of the crowd as a liberating collective protagonist. But from these years also date his most memorable solos -- the Dying Swan for Pavlova, the Firebird for Karsavina, Petrushka for Nijinsky -- all variations on the theme of individualism. The events of 1905, as we have said, liberated the artistic consciousness of the Mariinsky's younger generation of dancers, transforming them into ideal interpreters and collaborators in Fokine's "improvisations", a term he often used to describe his best work.[62] Between choreographer and a chosen dancer exists a special kind of intimacy, an unspoken bond that completes the image only immanent in the steps and that, in Fokine's case, transcended the choreographer's eschewal of technical virtuosity in the name of a higher poetry. This living collaboration was not one-sided. For the dancer, the journey to artistic "personhood" can be completed only with the aid of the choreographer, that magician who conjures from the body and soul of his interpreter an individuality that transcends the mere assertion of ego. In the solos Fokine created for Nijinsky, Pavlova, and Karsavina, roles now inseparable from their originators, he shaped the artistic personas of his most famous interpreters. Intuitively, Fokine discerned the "soul" immanent in the

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[62]Haskell, Balletomania, p. 138.

dancer's still unripened personality, and this individual essence he distilled in his choreography. The flower of her generation at the Mariinsky, Pavlova passed into legend as the Dying Swan, while Petrushka came to be seen as presaging Nijinsky's tragic fate. To artist and audience alike, Fokine revealed the gift of a dancer's individuality.

Fokine's magic in evoking expressiveness and poetry from his closest collaborators is mirrored in Pavlova's own assessment of her "method". "In countries abroad, it was said that there was 'something novel' in my dancing," she told Valerian Svetlov in the early 1920's.

> Yet what I had done was merely to subordinate its physical elements to a psychological concept: over the matter-of-fact aspects of dancing -- that is, dancing *per se* -- I have attempted to throw a spiritual veil of poetry, whose charm might screen the mechanical element. When dancing, it often happens that I extemporise, especially when my part fascinates and inspires me. I borrow from the palette of choreography any colour which happens to suit my fancy, and turn the slightest thing to the best possible account. That is how I may be able to suggest impressions which are considered as fresh. So far as I know, therein lies the only secret of my art.[63]

Quite apart from what individual interpreters brought to their roles, Fokine's solos were themselves meditations on individualism. Pavlova's flutterings as she

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[63]Valerian Svetloff, *Anna Pavlova*, trans. A. Grey (Paris, 1922; rpt. New York: Dover, 1974), p. 156.

collapsed on an empty stage, Karsavina's struggle against capture by Ivan Tsarevich, Nijinsky's arms beating in protest of his puppethood all express the tragedy of the beleaguered individual, his oppression by society, and his aspiration to being. In transforming the Swan Queens and puppets of the ballet repertory from passive to self-reflexive victims and even protesters, Fokine touched a theme explored by existential modernists. In a contemporary account Benois, who wrote the ballet's libretto, analyzed Petrushka's "tragic quality" as stemming from "the very collision of Petrushka's solitary soul with the soul of the mass". Nijinsky's "whole role," he stated, "consists of expressing the pathetic downtroddenness, the powerless attempts to save personal happiness and dignity."[64] For both Fokine and Benois, the tragedy of Petrushka lies in the struggle for being; it remains an expression of human possibility. The puppet dies, but his spirit lives on, just as the Firebird, with the magic feather she plucks from her plumage, frees the kingdom from the monster Kostchei and regains liberty. Fokine sets his dramas within a social rather than metaphysical context, and in particular, within a dialectical framework in which individualism and collectivity, the aspirations of 1905,

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[64]Roland John Wiley, "Benois' Commentaries, Part VII," Dancing Times, April 1981, p. 465. This article was originally published in Rech' on 4 August 1911.

are defined in opposition to authority.

A distinctive blend of historical empiricism and individual subjectivity, of collective identity and individualist aspirations defined Fokine's style prior to World War I. A similar tension animated the work of the company's leading pre-War designers. In Nicholas Roerich's designs for Prince Igor and Sacre du Printemps, Benois' designs for Le Pavillon d'Armide and Petrushka, and Leon Bakst's designs for Cléopâtre, Schéhérazade, and L'Après-midi d'un faune, a concern for "accuracy" guided the treatment of historical and ethnographic subjects. At the same time, these artists invested their creations with an emotional suggestiveness and formal coherence that derived primarily from music. In particular, Diaghilev and his early collaborators sought to embody in the pre-War repertory of the Ballets Russes symbolist and Wagnerian ideas that enjoyed wide currency in Russian artistic circles around the turn of the century.

As was the case of many dancers, Fokine looked to the musician friends of his youth as an escape from the artistic malaise of the Imperial Theatres. Moreover, in the white acts of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker and Swan Lake, choreographed by his Mariinsky predecessor Lev Ivanov in the early nineties, he saw the first Russian attempts to transpose symphonic music into dance images. From the beginning Fokine laid great stress on the role of music in guiding the choreographer from inspiration to poetry. He

gleaned his movement ideas from music rather than the visual arts, and his dances adhered to the principle laid down early in his career "to invent in each case a new form of movement corresponding to the subject and character of the music."[65] In teaching sections of his ballets, he went phrase by phrase, insisting that movement had to breathe with the musical pauses and fill them out.[66] Most importantly, music was the catalyst around which his ideas of expressiveness in both choreography and interpretation crystallized.[67]

Fokine came to maturity during what Benois termed the "renaissance of idealism",[68] an era which held music to be the most expressive of the arts, the medium through which the artist's "soul" was illumined with greatest immediacy. Music, Prince Volkonsky wrote in the first volume of Mir iskusstva, superimposed on nature the "spiritual" content of the artist's inner life and experience.[69] More directly than painting or poetry, it made palpable the emotional suggestiveness Diaghilev and his circle believed essential to art while evoking in its listeners the emotional response they deemed equally

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[65]Haskell, Balletomania, p. 137.

[66]Horwitz, "A Ballet Class With Michel Fokine," p. 43.

[67]Fokine, Memoirs, p. 62.

[68]Kennedy, p. 345.

[69]Ibid., p. 341.

necessary to aesthetic pleasure. Music was "the basic element of all my association with art", wrote Benois, a statement that sums up the role of Calliope in forming the tastes and aesthetic of the Young Pickwickians, the informal study circle of the early 1890's that formed the nucleus of both the World of Art movement and Diaghilev's initial circle of artistic collaborators. It "is capable of evoking in me the strongest emotions and agitations, and in my theatrical activity it is precisely music which has given birth to the most felicitous ideas and supported me in the creative process."[70]

For the former miriskusstniki who sat on Diaghilev's first organizing committee, Baudelaire's dictum that "all arts constantly aspire towards the state of music" articulated an ideal they sought to embody in the operas and multi-media dance spectacles of the company's earliest seasons. Among the Diaghilev circle, "the common denominator they instinctively felt was an emotional one. For Diaghilev the 'thirst for beauty' was an aspiration towards the ideal which could be expressed equally in any of the arts: in 'sound, colors, rhythm, line'."[71] The idea of synaesthesia enjoyed wide currency in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly among

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[70]Quoted ibid., p. 341.

[71]Ibid., pp. 340-341.

symbolists. Baudelaire's musing in his poem "Correspondences" that "scents, colors, and sounds answer to one another" was the first of numerous speculations on the correlation of sense impressions and their relation to emotional states and mental images.

In Bakst's work for Diaghilev's pre-War seasons, European audiences saw the application of symbolist color theory to theatrical design. Bakst "used colors symbolically; to convey emotion, or induce a desired reaction from the audience."[72] "I have often noticed," he wrote in 1915,

> that in each color 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. This is what I tried to do in "Sheherazade." Against a lugubrious green I put a blue full of despair, paradoxical as it may seem. There are reds which assassinate and there are reds which are triumphal. There is a blue which can be the color of a St. Madeleine, and there is a blue of a Messalina. The painter who knows how to make use of this, the director of the orchestra who can put with one movement of his baton all this in motion, without crossing them, who can let flow the thousand tones from the end of his stick without making a mistake, can draw from the spectator the exact emotion he wants him to feel.[73]

Ideas such as these, often larded with

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[72]Charles Mayer, "The Theatrical Designs of Leon Bakst," Diss. Columbia 1977, p. 182.

[73]Quoted ibid., p. 182.

theosophical mysticism, circulated widely in Russia after 1905 among Symbolist writers like Andre Biely and V. Ivanov, both friends of Bakst, as well as composers. Alexander Scriabin's Prometheus, written in 1909-1910, ended with a call for a keyboard of light which would throw a play of color onto a screen. "According to the composer's idea," wrote L. Sabaneiev in the Blaue Reiter Almanac, "the whole hall would be filled with blinding rays at the same time that all the forces of the orchestra and the chorus were mobilized and the main theme was played by the trumpets against a background of broad orchestral and organ harmonies."[74]

Scriabin played for Diaghilev in 1907, and three of his pieces were performed in the series of Russian concerts presented by the latter that year in Paris. But Scriabin was not alone in equating notes with colors. Rimsky-Korsakov, with whom Diaghilev had himself studied musical composition, and whose tone poem Schéhérazade was a clou of Bakst's "coloristic" revolution, held similar ideas.[75]

The analogue with music yielded fruitful results in the hands of Bakst, a painter whose true genius lay in stage and costume design. As applied by Fokine, it

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[74]Quoted ibid., p. 184.

[75]Ibid., p. 185.

transformed ballet from an art independent of the score to one subservient to its expressive vagaries. After Sacre, however, a ballet in which the structure of the choreography united music and movement, the limitations of his "pictorial" method became apparent. "As for Fokine, that inventor of dances, his importance today appears to me considerably diminished," wrote Jacques Rivière in a review of Diaghilev's 1914 season.

> In the end he cannot make dance grow out of music; in his ballets, one strolls over the music or treads above it or tramples it almost by chance; one never receives it from below, it never passes through the body, it neither leads nor inspires him. For Fokine, music is a pretext rather than a law. He listens to it, and it gives him the tone; and in his head he invents, with elements already invented, a corresponding movement tableau that will produce a symmetrical impression. He translates it whole, at once, and seeks only to be faithful to its exterior, to preserve its color in his choreography. Actually, Fokine is above all a very skillful theatre producer.[76]

The Symbolist legacy to the pre-War Ballets Russes lay in the "private" domain of expressiveness and communication of the ineffable, in the creation of artistic intimacy and artistic immediacy through music. Music, however, played still another role. "Ballet," wrote Benois in 1911, is "musical drama in which the visual

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[76]Jacques Rivière, "La Musique. La Saison russe," Nouvelle Revue Française, July 1914, p. 160.

impression . . . must be absolutely in keeping with the music."[77] In the music-dramas and theoretical writings of Richard Wagner, Diaghilev and his circle discovered the structural principle on which they modeled the creations of the company's pre-War seasons.

According to Janet Kennedy, "the ideas associated with Wagner and his operas were . . . the greatest single influence on the attitude of the Mir iskusstva group towards the theatre."[78] The Ring was performed in St. Petersburg in 1889, and in the early 1890's Diaghilev heard the performance of Lohengrin that converted him into a Wagner enthusiast. By the end of the 1890's the group regarded Wagner not simply as a great composer, but as a "major influence on recent art in general."[79]

> The Wagnerian concept of the opera as a higher form of drama, harking back to the ritual unity of art enjoyed by the Greeks and achieved through an emotional synthesis of music and word, was both in its general trend and in certain specific details a model for the Mir iskusstva group. Specifically, the Mir iskusstva group absorbed the idea of music as a determining element dictating gesture and action on the stage and of music as an essentially dramatic art evoking an emotional response.[80]

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[77]Roland John Wiley, "Benois' Commentaries, Part V," Dancing Times, Feb. 1981, p. 320.

[78]Kennedy, p. 344.

[79]Ibid., pp. 344-345.

[80]Ibid., pp. 345-346.

Although the group seems not to have known Wagner's writings at first hand, a Russian translation of Henri Lichtenberger's Richard Wagner: Poète et penseur appeared in Mir iskusstva in 1899, only a year after its publication in Paris. In 1900, the journal published a Russian translation of Nietzsche's "Wagner and Bayreuth", an interpretation of Wagner's art in which the Mir iskusstva group found a number of sympathetic ideas. Of particular appeal was Nietzsche's contrast of Wagner's "moral force" with the fashionable vulgarity of contemporary theatre, his assertion that meaning in Wagner's art lay not in its specific content, but a combination of "sacred feeling" with a "semi-subterranean convulsion", and his contention that Wagner's fusion of art, religion, and folklore restored to opera the organicity of Greek drama.[81]

To the "dithyrambic dramatist", Nietzsche's term for the composer, dramatic action was threefold: it existed simultaneously as word, gesture, and sound. In theory as in practice, however, music took precedence. If, as he asserted, the world of sound sought to incarnate itself, the visible or material world, by contrast, desired to be "spiritualized, absorbed, and lost in a world of

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[81] Ibid., p. 346.

sounds".[82] The purer stratosphere of feeling that music alone could induce brought the spectator closer than either spoken drama or dance to the ideal of beauty.

Wagner cast a long shadow over Diaghilev's pre-War seasons, quite apart from theory. "Music remains the fundamental element which enlivens this movement," wrote Benois in 1911.[83] If anything, these were years in which the ballet was dominated by opera, a view supported by the attention Diaghilev gave to this branch of musical art in the autobiographical notes written toward the end of his life.[84] Diaghilev frequently returned to the mixed repertory format of the 1909 season even if ballet and opera only occasionally shared the same bill. In 1913 and 1914 he produced major seasons of Russian opera at the newly-opened Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in Paris and at London's Drury Lane Theatre, where opera and ballet were presented on alternate evenings. Apart from actual productions of operas, many ballets were staged to music from the opera repertory. In 1909 the Polovtsian Dances were set to Borodin's Prince Igor, while the score of Cléopâtre was pieced together from a hodge-podge of

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[82] Ibid., p. 347.

[83] Wiley, "Benois' Commentaries, Part V," p. 320.

[84] "Autobiographie de Serge de Diaghilev," ed. and trans. Boris Kochno, Pièce 122, Fonds Kochno, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra (Paris).

excerpts from Rimsky-Korsakov's Mlada, Taneev's Orestia, and Moussorgsky's Khovantchina. Subsequent seasons saw the production of ballets to Rimsky-Korsakov's Sadko (1911) and Coq d'Or (1914), Balakirev's Thamar (1912), and Stravinsky's Le Rossignol (1914). Moreover, to add cachet to the dance repertoire, Diaghilev commissioned ballets from such opera luminaries as Richard Strauss and Claude Debussy.

Throughout the pre-War years, works continued to be identified by composer, lending credence to Benois' assertion that music was "the center of gravity in ballet", the yardstick against which the efforts of Diaghilev's early circle were measured.[85] Following the production of Firebird in 1910, each season offered premieres of at least two commissioned scores, often with libretti by their composers. Strictly speaking, several "ballets" were what today would be called "mixed media" spectacles. Prince Igor, Sadko, and Daphnis and Chloë were often performed to choral accompaniments; in Coq d'Or the singers stood in the pit while the dancers mimed the action on the stage. Not only did music permeate the repertoire to a degree impossible to appreciate from today's slashed-budget revivals, but increasingly, ballet took on the shape of its music, conforming in the manner of an applied art to the

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[85]Roland John Wiley, "Benois' Commentaries, Part II," Dancing Times, Nov. 1980, p. 102.

structural demands imposed by the score. A measure of this may be gleaned from the fact that of the twenty-eight productions staged between 1909 and 1914, only five had the word "ballet" in their subtitles. Cléopâtre, Schéhérazade, and Thamar bore the Wagner-inspired sobriquet of "choreographic drama"; there were "poèmes dansés", "legends", "burlesque scenes", "mimodramas", "romantic reveries", and "tableaux". With categories nearly equal to the number of productions, running times lengthening and shortening as the music demanded, by 1914 "ballet" encompassed virtually any form of stylized movement adapted to music.

Wagner had envisioned a theatre in which the "elemental mixture of visual and aural impressions" would create a "total art work". This ideal of Gesamtkunstwerk about which Wagner had "dreamed", Benois argued in a review of the 1910 season, the Diaghilev group had achieved in its productions of the "new ballet".[86] To what extent this was true remains a matter of debate, as does the more perplexing question of whether Gesamtkunstwerk itself is theoretically possible without destroying the properties inherent in the individual component arts. André Levinson, a passionate critic of the new ballet, argued throughout the pre-War period that Fokine's attempts to appropriate to

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[86]Quoted in Kennedy, p. 343.

ballet procedures derived from music, painting, and drama had ended by subordinating the choreographic element to these other media. (Isadora Duncan reached the same conclusion during her sojourn at Bayreuth. "The Master has made a mistake," she intrepidly announced to Cosima Wagner. "Man must speak, then sing, then dance. But the speaking is the brain, the thinking man. The singing is the emotion. The dancing is the Dionysian ecstasy which carries away all. It is impossible to mix in any way, one with the other. Musik-Drama kann nie sein.")[87] Levinson further argued that all the arts suffered in the attempted fusion.

> Besides Fokine's unnecessary, superficial and jejune attempt to dramatize ballet, another weak spot in his compositions is . . . [the] predominance of the pictorial. If all the action of Sheherazade and Firebird could have been replaced by a skillfully-arranged series of living pictures, the audience might have been at leisure to discern more freely the extraordinary beauties of the set design and the ornamentation lavished by Bakst and Golovin. Sometimes all the mad moving about on stage seems like nothing more than an annoying commotion and distraction . . .[88]

In the zeal of partisanship, Levinson is grossly unfair to Fokine, ascribing to the choreographer a

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[87]Isadora Duncan, My Life (New York: Liveright, 1955), pp. 151-152.

[88]Levinson, Ballet Old and New, pp. 45-46.

preeminence that he did not in fact enjoy. The ascendancy of painters in Diaghilev's organization explains in part the dominance of visual effects in Fokine's works beginning in 1909. But another impulse was at work as well: the acclamation by Diaghilev's Parisian audience of precisely that note of luxuriant opulence that became a hallmark of his company's style. Comtesse Anna de Noailles, a minor poet and fashionable Ballets Russes enthusiast, recalled the impact of Cléopâtre, the first Bakst work to fire the Parisian imagination and the model for Diaghilev's subsequent exotic extravaganzas:

> When I entered the box to which I had been invited . . . I realized that I was seeing a miracle, something that had never before existed. Everything that could dazzle, intoxicate, seduce, arrest seemed to have been dredged up and brought to the stage to luxuriate there . . . On the stage of the Ballets Russes, the kings of India and China, skillfully clasped to the center of a slender and violent drama, appeared in the enormous luxury of palm trees spreading their greenery against indigo skies. Their costumes, gold with heavy embroideries . . . amplified them in such a way as to make their sovereignty formidable and superhuman. The angel, the genius, the triumpher of the spectacle, the divine dancer Nijinsky, took hold of our hearts, filling us with love, while the soft or sharp sonorities of the Asiatic music completed this stupefying and luxuriant work.[89]

To Diaghilev's fashionable audience, works like

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[89]Comtesse Anna de Noailles, "Adieux aux Ballets russes," Revue Musicale, 1 Dec. 1930, pp. 4-5.

Cléopâtre and Schéhérazade marked a radical departure from accepted stage practices. Theatrical reformers, however, did not share this assessment. Gordon Craig's journal The Mask, wrote Levinson, correctly "identified the theatrical novelty of the 'Russian plagiarists' as a deceptive recycling of the old, moribund pre-reform theatre. Beneath the luxuriant raiment of exotic decors the principles of staging have remained untouched."[90] The emphasis on material luxury, a major production value up to 1914, indicates imperatives of a quasi-commercial order. "In the ballet conceived as Gesamtkunstwerk," theatre historian Denis Bablet has written, "painting remains painting and is applauded as such. The stage becomes an exhibition hall."[91]

If Firebird or Schéhérazade indicated the shortcomings of the Wagnerian method when applied to ballet, yet judged by the prevailing standards of the day, they were models of artistic harmony. In the company's superb ensemble playing and choreography, in the apparent absence of stylistic incongruities, and in Diaghilev's repeated avowals of artistic as opposed to commerical intent, contemporaries glimpsed a practical realization of Wagner's ideal Gesamtkunstwerk. But if Wagner provided the

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[90]Levinson, Ballet Old and New, p. 33.

[91]Denis Bablet, Esthétique Générale du Décor de Théâtre de 1870 à 1914 (Paris: Editions du C.N.R.S., 1965), p. 190.

theoretical scaffolding of the Ballets Russes' pre-War aesthetic while dictating the expectations of knowledgeable members of its audience, the practical achievement of this ideal rested on a social imperative. Diaghilev's organizing committee was shaped by the semi-feudal habits of the Tsarist theatres and the informal networks of non-profit oriented enterprise. This contradictory experience prepared them to work within a collective framework while, at the same time, impelling them toward the creation of democratized structures in which each member functioned essentially as an individual. It was precisely this collective-individualist impulse that enabled the former _miriskusstniki_ to achieve the exemplary consistency and high artistic merit which distinguished the company's early works.

In their writings about the Diaghilev ballet, the early French critics revealed a profound admiration for precisely this ability of the "magnificent and anonymous" troupe of Russians -- the phrase is _Figaro_ critic Robert Brussel's[92] -- to pool individual talents to common artistic purpose. Jacques-Emile Blanche, for example, looked upon the French artistic world as being stifled by excessive individualism. By contrast, "the Russian artists

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[92]Robert Brussel, "Théâtre du Châtelet. Grand saison de Paris: _Ballets russes_," _Figaro_, 8 June 1911.

had demonstrated an ability to subordinate personal values and goals for the benefit of a larger whole which was born of collaboration."[93] "Who is the author of Sacre du Printemps?" mused Jacques Rivière in the Nouvelle Revue Française.

> Who created it? Nijinsky, Stravinsky or Roerich? This preliminary question, which we cannot evade, surely only has meaning for the Occidentals that we are. With us everything is individual; a strong and distinctive work always bears the mark of a single mind. This is not so among the Russians . . . they have an extraordinary ability to meld their souls, to feel and think the same thing collectively.[94]

Rivière's quasi-mystical perception of Russian "differentness" was doubtless heightened by readings of Dostoievsky, who, as T.S. Eliot later recalled, "was very much a subject of interest amongst literary people" during his stay in Paris three years before the premiere of Nijinsky's ballet. In fact it was Rivière's secretary at the Nouvelle Revue Française, novelist Alain Fournier, who introduced Eliot to French translations of Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, and The Brothers Karamazov.[95]

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[93]Quoted in Truman Campbell Bullard, "The First Performance of Igor Stravinsky's Sacre du Printemps," Diss. Eastman School of Music, Rochester 1971, I, p. 41.

[94]Jacques Rivière, "Le Sacre du Printemps," Nouvelle Revue Française, Aug. 1913, p. 311.

[95]Quoted in Loretta L. Johnson, "T.S. Eliot's Criterion: 1922-1939," Diss. Columbia 1980, p. 71.

Employing the racialist language of the time, Rivière ascribed the brilliant collaboration of Sacre to some atavistic Slavic instinct.

> I was a fool to fear your catching the Parisian contagion! This little troupe of men has not not been broken. They have lived in our midst as if on the steppes. The air they breathe is not the same. Nor are the ideas that spring from their brains. Between them and us lies the distance of race. Nothing of ours will ever reach them.[96]

Although Rivière saw Nijinsky's masterpiece as a perfect blending of individual and collective impulses, Sacre jettisoned the liberal promptings of the company's early aesthetic. Nijinsky eschewed not only the empiricism and psychological naturalism of Fokine's choreographic approach but its positivist underpinnings as well -- the liberal individualism, ethnic pluralism, and historicity woven into the texture of Fokine's ballets. Sacre, by contrast, was an encounter with the primitive, irrational soul of man. It projected a vision of life at its most tragic and dramatized that vision in a choreographic language derived from ritual. At the same time, Nijinsky "purged", as Jacques Rivière wrote, "the sauce" from Fokine's choreography, restoring expression to dance,

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[96] Ibid., p. 310.

movement to the body.[97]

Of all Diaghilev's pre-War ballets, Sacre stands alone as an artistic statement wrenched, literally, from the loins of its creator. It was a work produced against the grain of social and artistic expectations, and if Diaghilev begged and borrowed to finance it, he remained a doubting Thomas as to its ultimate validity as a choreographic experiment. The balletomanes and prominent Russian newspaper critics who formed part of his entourage echoed this attitude, failing even to conceal their disapproval of Nijinsky's choreography at rehearsals. More disillusioning than rebukes from the philistines was rebellion in the ranks. The dancers not only protested what they considered Nijinsky's unreasonable demand for exactness in every detail but on occasion refused even to work with him. Unlike Fokine, Nijinsky commanded little personal loyalty among his colleagues. As Diaghilev's chosen one, he had rarely socialized with them, circulating instead among the beau monde of his lover's acquaintance, and now this isolation within the social microcosm of the company dogged his creative efforts.[98]

Only Nicholas Roerich, the unsung hero of the

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[97]Jacques Rivière, "Le Sacre du Printemps," NRF, Nov. 1913, pp. 716-719. This was the second article Rivière devoted to Sacre.

[98]Nijinska, Early Memoirs, pp. 460-461.

collaboration who created both libretto and designs for Sacre, supported Nijinsky's efforts to transpose ritual movement into choreographic form. Painter, mystic, Stone Age scholar and archeologist, he brought to the production extensive knowledge of tribal life and rituals among the ancient Slavs, particularly the little-known Yarilo cult. Unlike earlier generations, which plundered myths of the Greco-Roman world for decorative or metaphorical purposes or, as in the case of Russian Symbolists, gilded the ancient heritage with trappings of opulence and exotica,[99] Roerich viewed ritual as the organic link between primitive man's fear of the unknown and his attempt to control irrational nature. This emphasis on the organic function of ritual to restore the vital substance to myth echoed trends in other disciplines, notably psychology and comparative religion. Significantly, Sacre coincided with such major revisionist interpretations of the subject as Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough and Freud's Totem and Taboo, which shares the tragic determinism underlying Sacre's encounter of man and nature.

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[99]Meyerhold's staging of Richard Strauss' Elektra at the Mariinsky in 1913 and Bakst's designs for Diaghilev's Narcisse, Daphnis and Chloë, and L'Après-midi d'un Faune are examples of what the Soviet theatre historian Konstantin Rudnitsky has called the "Russian style moderne". For a discussion of this style, see his Meyerhold the Director, trans. George Petrov, ed. Sydney Schultze, introd. Ellendea Proffer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981), pp. 178-197.

The stress on functionality implies the timelessness and ahistoricity of mythic experience. Not only does man's encounter with the abyss occur universally, but its expression as ritual obviates the need for narrative structure and development implicit in historical causality. The passage from dance narrative to non-representational forms via ritual, analogous to the impact of primitive African sculpture on the evolution of the early Cubists, was described by Roerich in 1910:

> The new ballet will depict several scenes of a sacred night of the ancient Slavs. At the start of the ballet it is a summer night, and it ends with the first rays of the sun. Strictly speaking the choreographic part comprises the ritual dances. This will be the first attempt to reproduce antiquity without any explicit story.[100]

Just as Roerich incorporated totemic emblems, colors, and designs into the costumes, Nijinsky transposed into the fabric of his choreography movements common to ritual dance -- trembling, stamping, jumps, and choral rounds -- with an obsessive, trance-inducing repetitiveness.

Sacre passed into legend as a scandale of the highest magnitude, in part, because it was pre-War Europe's last glimpse of Nijinsky as a choreographer before his tragic breakdown. Nijinsky's role in the production has

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[100]Quoted in Nijinska, Early Memoirs, pp. 460-461.

been consistently maligned as has been Roerich's. Beginning in 1921, Stravinsky reversed his original opinion of Nijinsky's "incomparable choreography" for Sacre and took the line reiterated in his subsequent memoirs that musical ignorance, "lack of understanding", and "clumsiness" indicated Nijinsky's "complete inability to accept and assimilate those revolutionary ideas which Diaghilev had made his creed and industriously strove to inculcate."[101] Roerich's part in the production was also disparaged. His decors, wrote Natalia Goncharova, "were always marked by an impressionism or exoticism sufficiently attractive so as not to shock the traditional tastes of the public."[102] By the early twenties, both Stravinsky and Goncharova were aligned with the Cubo-Futurist vanguard that now marked the parameters of Diaghilev's ballet modernism. Neither Stravinsky's evolving neo-classicism nor Goncharova's decorative primitivism sought to evoke ritual representations of human life or the tragedy of human existence. For them, the struggle between "mechanical civilization" and "the culture of the spirit"

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[101]"Stravinsky on Art and Artists: Comments and Quotations," ed. John Taras, Dance Magazine, April 1981, p. 64.

[102]Nathalie Gontcharova, Michel Larionov, Pierre Vorms, Les Ballets russes: Serge di Diaghilew et la décoration théâtrale, rev. ed. (Belves Dordogne: Pierre Vorms, 1955), p. 17.

that so disturbed Roerich had little relevance.[103] Ironically, the one work of the twenties that expressed this tragic vision happened to find them both cast as collaborators. Over Bronislava Nijinska's Les Noces hovers not the disposable chic of so many of that decade's ballets but the spirit of Nijinsky, from the music, conceived in the wake of Sacre's premiere, to the designs recast at Nijinska's behest along the stark and unyielding lines of the choreography. In the tragic vision shared by brother and sister lies the key not only to the power of their masterpieces but the reason why their great works spawned no imitation. In the era of chic that coincided with Diaghilev's Monte Carlo years, not even style could commercialize their high seriousness.

"The First Revolution," Russian literary historian D.S. Mirsky has written of the events of 1905, "was a deep-reaching and infectious movement [that] for a moment dominated the whole of intellectual life."[104] With its promise of individual freedom and the impetus it gave to collective enterprise, the Revolution of 1905 must be seen as a major factor propelling the Ballets Russes into existence and conditioning initial artistic policy and operation. Throughout Russian society, the Revolution

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[103] N Jarintzov, "A Russian Painter: N.K. Roerich," Diaghilev Scrapbook, I, p. 149a, Theatre Museum (London).

[104] D.S. Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, ed. Francis J. Whitfield (New York: Knopf, 1949), p. 372.

raised hopes for far-reaching changes, and briefly, it seemed, such expectations would be met. The Revolution did not succeed. To speculate on what might have happened had history taken another course is always tempting. In this case, surely, one can state the obvious with certainty. Had the Revolution made good its promises, had the administration of the Imperial Theatres changed its policy, had Diaghilev been appointed Minister of Culture, the Ballets Russes would never have come into being. In the climate of pessimism and disillusionment that followed close on the euphoria of 1905, Diaghilev, like many artists, looked abroad for the arena denied him at home. Diaghilev's pre-War seasons did indeed reveal Russia to the West. But it was a Russia striving to leap in one bound from the semi-feudal to the modern. With the exception of Nijinsky's Sacre, what Europe saw from 1909-1914 was the final flowering of the great artistic traditions of the nineteenth century.

By 1914 this nineteeenth-century inheritance had spent itself. Although Cleopatras continued to grace the stage, including Diaghilev's own, and miniature Pavlovas fluttered at private recitals, symbolism, Wagnerism, and orientalism had reached a creative impasse.

The Fokine years coincided with the birth of major artistic movements that altered radically the cultural landscape of Europe. As countesses and aesthetes applauded the last exquisite blooms of an earlier,

Proustian era, cubism, futurism, and the modern movement in design were taking shape in the unfashionable studios and workshops of the avantgarde. Diaghilev had little truck with the self-contained Bohemias of London, Paris, and even Moscow before the war. Enamoured of the great tradition in art and the grand tradition in society, he patronized artists who had scaled the heights of social fashion. Not until the very eve of war did he offer his first commission to an artist with links to the Russian and French avantgarde.

The hallmarks of the pre-War Ballets Russes were the tensions and ambiguities between naturalism and idealism, the collective and the individual, the belief in music as the "center of gravity" in ballet and the desire for Gesamtkunstwerk. Only Nijinsky broke out of this paradigm, signaling in his works a new creative direction. Yet, however much Sacre, undeniably the company's greatest pre-War work, prefigured later developments in dance, the trail it blazed was not one Diaghilev chose to follow. What shattered the paradigm of the pre-War Ballets Russes was neither a natural evolution from the premises of Fokine nor the iconoclastic genius of Nijinsky, but Diaghilev's alliance with the Cubo-Futurist avantgarde in the years after 1914.

CHAPTER II

THE PARADOX OF BALLET MODERNISM

> With good warrant one may call the era between the wars the time of full mechanization. At one sweep, mechanization penetrates the intimate spheres of life. What the preceding century and a half had initiated and especially what had been germinating from mid-nineteenth century on, suddenly ripens and meets life with its full impact.[1]
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> Rhythms of "mechanics," "railways," "factories" appeared, following on the rhythms of sport and the cinematograph, and the high priests of all these new "rhythms" attempted to express them in dance.[2]

The second phase of the creative life of the Ballets Russes opened on the shores of Lake Geneva in early 1915. Here, Diaghilev's inner circle set about fashioning an aesthetic attuned to the new spirit sweeping the arts. In these crucial wartime years, the broad outline of the company's postwar identity was sketched. Modernity entered the ballet, and with it the ikons, myths, and creative devices championed by the Cubo-Futurist avantgarde and embodied in the company's most distinctive modernist works.

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[1]Siegfried Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 41.

[2]Valerian Svetloff, "The Old and the New," Dancing Times, July 1929, p. 329.

For the cubists and futurists who painted and versified and wrote manifestos in the twilight years just before the war, the machine kindled the imagination as the supreme artefact of modernity. Apollinaire's "The New Spirit and the Poets", written in 1911, ends with a lyrical paean to a visionary "machine-ized" world that captures the optimism and sense of wonder with which the last generation of pre-War Bohemians greeted the technological wonders of the twentieth century:

> These marvels impose on us poets the duty not to let our imagination and subtlety lag behind those of the craftsmen who perfect a machine. Already there is a deep gulf between the language of science and that of poetry. This is an intolerable state of affairs. Mathematicians have the right to say that their dreams and their concerns often go far beyond the halting imagination of poets. It is up to the poets to decide whether or not they will enter resolutely into the new spirit . . .
>
> In a word, poets want eventually to machine-ize poetry just as the word has been machine-ized. They want to be the first to provide an entirely new lyricism for the new means of expression that are adding movement to art, i.e. the phonograph and the cinema. They are still at the stage of Incunabula, but wait! The marvels will speak for themselves, and the new spirit, which is causing the universe to swell with life, will manifest itself powerfully in literature, in the arts, and in all things known.[3]

Although critics devoted many an unfavorable page

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[3]Guillaume Apollinaire, "The New Spirit and the Poets," Francis Steegmuller, Apollinaire: Poet Among the Painters (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1963), p. 344.

to the various "isms" that flitted through the postwar repertory of the Ballets Russes, "The New Spirit and the Poets" suggests the context in which Diaghilev's modernism was initially framed. In particular, it invokes the imaginative power of the machine as the symbol of the modern age, its idealization by an avantgarde thrilled by inventions in "leisure" technology, and the extent to which the machine offered a model for experiments in aesthetic form.

In May 1917 Parade premiered to a wartime Paris audience. A program note by Apollinaire entitled "'Parade' and the New Spirit" was included. This short essay marked the coming of age of ballet as a legitimate form of avantgarde experiment. Under the rubric of "surrealism", making its first appearance in print, Apollinaire announced the alliance of dance with contemporary painting, while reiterating as a cornerstone of the New Spirit the union of the arts with scientific and industrial progress.

> The cubist painter Picasso and that most audacious of choreographers, Leonide Massine, have realized [this New Spirit], in consummating for the first time the alliance of painting and dance, plastic art and mime that is the plain sign of the future of a more complete art . . . From this new alliance . . . in Parade has come a sort of surrealism, which I see as the point of departure for a series of revelations of the New Spirit that promises to transform . . . arts and manners in the universal joy, for good sense demands that these keep at least abreast of scientific and industrial progress.

Beginning with Parade, the artefacts of

Apollinaire's "machine-ized" world made their appearance in the repertoire of the Ballets Russes. Picasso's skyscrapers were followed by the bicycle ridden by Serge Lifar as a Telegraph Boy in La Pastorale and the airplane that wafted him and Karsavina offstage at the end of Romeo et Juliet. Le Pas d'Acier was set in a factory; the architectural and sculptural constructions designed by Gabo and Pevsner for La Chatte were made of celluloid.

From props to decor the machine age left its mark on the accoutrements of production, but its impact on dancing was if anything even more remarkable. "Machine-ization" radically altered the shape of choreography, styles of movement and performance as well as general assumptions about the nature of ballet itself. By 1917, when Massine's Parade, Les Femmes de bonne humeur, and Les Contes russes premiered in Paris, Apollinaire's new aesthetic had taken root in dance.

For avantgarde artists of the 1910's and early 1920's, the machine was an ideal construction, a masterfully conceived assemblage of geometric planes and volumes, a cogent symbol of intellectual rationality. Throughout Europe, it triumphed over the curves and flowing lines of Art Nouveau and cast a modern stamp on art, fashion, and design. The machine entered the company's imaginative firmament during the war not only through connections with the Paris-based avantgarde but also through extensive contact with futurists in Italy. From

this merging of cubist and futurist influences, amply documented in Massine's collection of paintings exhibited in Rome in 1917,[4] evolved the distinctive style of Ballets Russes modernism.

Cubists and futurists alike conceived theatrical performance as a play, in Marinetti's words, of "purely geometrical movements produced . . . by geometralized volumes."[5] "We must have gestures," proclaimed his 1921 manifesto "La Danse Futuriste", "imitating the movements of motors, pay assiduous court to wings, wheels, pistons, prepare the fusion of human and machine, and so arrive at the metalism of Futurist dancing. Music is fundamentally nostalgic, and on that account rarely of any use in Futurist dancing. Noise, caused by friction and shock of solid bodies, liquids, or high-pressure gases, has become one of the most dynamic elements of Futurist poesy. Noise is the language of the new human-mechanical life."[6]

To illustrate, Marinetti described several of his

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[4]I am indebted to Mary Ann de Vlieg for providing me with a copy of the catalogue. Prominent among the painters represented in the show's fifty-one titles were canvases by Picasso, Braque, Léger, Juan Gris, Goncharova, Larionov, Giacomo Balla, Fortunato Depero, and Carlo Carra. The exhibition was organized in connection with an all-Stravinsky musical program.

[5]Quoted in Theodore Komisarjevsky, "Settings and Costumes in Europe," in Theodore Komisarjevsky and Lee Simonson, Settings and Costumes of the Modern Stage (New York: Studio Publications, 1933), p. 12.

[6]Quoted in "Futurist Dancing as Seen by a Pastist," Literary Digest, 15 March 1921, p. 27.

dances. In one, an Aviator simulated an airplane taking off and in flight, while "organized noises" imitated meteorological phenomena and screens announced changes in altitude.[7] Marinetti's approach to choreography was mimetic. Like Isadora Duncan as a child imitating the waves of the California sea, his dancers imitated the artefacts of modern life: the products were different only because the originals differed. Yet his call for a language capable of presenting the "new human-mechanical life" did not fall on deaf ears. In Massine's efforts to extend the vocabulary and technique of ballet, an idiom responsive to the style of the modern age came into being.

Thanks to Massine, wrote French critic Fernand Divoire in the 1930's, "the invention of the later Ballets Russes in the area of dance was the angular angle, the angle more or less deforming, more or less comic and caricaturing."[8] To the lexicon of national dance and classic forms Massine added stiff poses that hardened ballet's soft and "beautiful" line. He staunched the flow and cramped the openness of classical movement and substituted contorted gestures for the rounded arms of the traditional port de bras. "All that is plastic, graceful, free from angularity is excluded," wrote émigré ballet

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Fernand Divoire, Pour la Danse (Paris: Editions de la Danse, 1935), p. 266.

critic Valerian Svetlov in one of many critical articles. "The times of 'the choreographic tenor,' M. Fokine, in the smart phrase of Massine, are gone for ever. All the movements of the dancers are short, angular, mechanical."[9]

The machine not only suggested sleek lines and geometrized planes, but as a manual of engineering, it suggested the triumph of abstract, intellectual design over nature. Not unexpectedly, modernists borrowed from the language of mathematics their favored metaphors for artistic form. Edward Varèse, for example, attempted to write a music of pure abstraction, a "geometry of sound," and he named his compositions after the calculus. "For me," he told Edmund Wilson, "there is more musical fertility in . . . the high poetry of certain mathematical expositions than in the most sublime gossip of human passions."[10] Stravinsky, whose Le Chant du Rossignol Jacques Rivière described as being "gorged with intelligence",[11] also regarded musical form as akin to mathematics rather than literature because, as he told

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[9]Valerian Svetlov, "The Diaghileff Ballet in Paris," Dancing Times, Dec. 1929, p. 274.

[10]Edmund Wilson, "Stravinsky," The American Earthquake: A Documentary of the Twenties and Thirties (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 105-106.

[11]Jacques Rivière, "Les Ballets russes à l'Opéra: la Boutique fantasque, le Tricorne, le Chant du Rossignol," Nouvelle Revue Française, 1 March 1920, p. 465.

Robert Craft, "it is ideal, and form is always ideal."[12] Cocteau drew a similar analogy with language: "I write with an apparent simplicity -- which is really a ferocious mathematical calculation."[13] A Call to Order opened with a manifesto of the new attitude: "Art is science in the flesh."[14]

Early criticism of the cubists as "geometer intellectuals"[15] set the tone for reviews in the Twenties of modernism in the ballet theatre. "Auric's art," wrote Boris de Schloezer in a 1925 review of Les Matelots, "appears to me to be extremely intellectual . . . the part of reflection and will in [his] score . . . very important: everything here is 'intended'." Although he went on to praise the music ("the dryness here is not an index of impotence or sterility: this dryness is about emotion mastered"),[16] few critics were so discerning. Putting themselves in the imagined stead of the "normal average

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[12]Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, Conversations with Igor Stravinsky (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 20.

[13]Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, ed. George Plimpton, introd. Alfred Kazin (New York: Viking, 1967), p. 67.

[14]Jean Cocteau, A Call to Order, trans. Rollo H. Myers (London: Faber and Faber, 1926), p. 7.

[15]Henri Ghéon, "Les Cubistes contre le Salon d'automne," Nouvelle Revue Française, Dec. 1911, p. 627.

[16]Boris de Schloezer, "Les Ballets russes. Erik Satie," NRF, 1 Aug. 1925, pp. 248-249.

person",[17] reviewers attacked with increasing virulence as the decade progessed the "intellectualizing" tendency of balletic modernism, its propensity under the banner of "realism" for "cold colour", not "wonderment".[18] "The 'Russian Ballet'," wrote Svetlov in a resounding condemnation of the company's last seasons, "has now drifted from its original conception of plastic beauty and lovely fairy-tales. It has become 'cerebral,' of the mind only, dried-up and shrivelled."[19]

Svetlov's sentiments were echoed by many of his contemporaries, critics whose tastes and aesthetics had been formed by Fokine. They were troubled by Diaghilev's frantic search for novelty, the cultishness that had grown up around his "advanced" productions, and the "insincerity" of many Twenties' ballets that seemed to rip through trends in artistic fashions without commitment to any one aesthetic. Most of all, critics were put off by modernism's dehumanizing effects, the failure of the new ballet to be "expressive". The insistence on artificiality, well expressed by Chanel's statement, "I am

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[17]G.E. F[ussell], "Notes on Decor," Dancing Times, Feb. 1921, p. 441.

[18]G.E. F[ussell], "Notes on Decor. The Swedish Ballet," Dancing Times, Dec. 1922, p. 357; Svetloff, "The Old and the New," p. 3.

[19]Valerian Svetloff, "The Diaghileff Ballet in Paris," Part III, Dancing Times, Feb. 1930, p. 572.

a fashion artisan. I don't want a rose or a lily of the valley; I want a perfume that is a compound",[20] aimed at desentimentalizing both the aesthetic artefact and aesthetic perception. "Modernism," Maurice Beebe has written, "is characterized by an attitude of detachment and non-commitment."[21] In reaction to the "expressiveness" of pre-War art and the emotional transports anticipated by pre-War audiences, the dance modernists of the Twenties sought to create distancing effects that would keep their audiences at arm's length.

Fokine's ballets were founded on nineteenth-century ideas of characterization and psychology. His dancers were actors who impersonated characters, tracing the shape of their destinies and charting the course of their emotions. The cubist, on the other hand, rejected the correlation of character and role. He saw the actor as a mechanical puppet, psychologically static, a depersonalized representation of some aspect of humanity. Above all, he sought to transform him into an abstract element of visual design. He painted his face "cubistically", fitted him out with masks, and invented for

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[20]Quoted in Pierre Galante, Mademoiselle Chanel, trans. Eileen Geist and Jessie Wood (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1972), pp. 67-68.

[21]Maurice Beebe, "What Modernism Was," Journal of Modern Literature, 3, No. 5 (July 1974), p. 1073.

him stiff costumes of canvas, cardboard, and celluloid.[22]

If music had been the "center of gravity" in ballet productions before the war, design now assumed this role. Under the influence of Larionov and Goncharova, Diaghilev came to understand that decor "should be conceived as one of the integral parts" of ballet in tandem with music and movement.[23] Massine put the designer's case more strongly. He believed that in the new ballet's synthesis of movement and form, choreography and plastic art, "the two essentials would be balanced with an inclination towards the plastic element."[24] Thus it came about that decorative effects not only supplanted music as the unifying element of Diaghilev's postwar productions, but significantly altered the relationship of dance to the overall composition of the works. Specifically, dance came to be regarded as an element of ballet design. The real choreography" of Les Fâcheux, wrote Cocteau, was the "dance . . . of beiges, browns, and greys" created by Braque that "Nijinska could only follow".[25] As visual texts and

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[22]Komisarjevsky, p. 12.

[23]Michel Larionov, "Diaghilev and His First Collaborators," Ballet and Opera, Sept. 1949, p. 15.

[24]Leonide Massine, "On Choreography and A New School of Dancing," Drama, Dec. 1910, p. 69.

[25]Jean Cocteau, Georges Auric, Georges Braque, Louis Laloy, Les Fâcheux: Réalisation Scènique. Théâtre Serge de Diaghilev (Paris: Editions des Quatre Chemins, 1924), n.p.

artists gained ascendancy in the ballet, the goal of the choreographer was to enhance the inventions of the designer.

This dramatic change in the function of choreography ended by reducing the dancer to a piece of "moving scenery", Cocteau's term for the performers in Le Boeuf sur le toit.[26] It spurred a radical shift in stage proportion as, increasingly, dancers became indistinguishable from decor. Against the geometric verticals of Laurens' backdrop for Le Train bleu, the welded constructions of Gabo and Pevsner for La Chatte, the cogwheels and pulleys of Yakoulov's factory in Le Pas d'acier or the monumental and faceless mannequins of de Chirico's decor for Le Bal, the dancer, if one can believe the evidence of photographs, had ceased to stand out. In Le Ballet Mécanique, a milestone of experimental filmmaking, he was left out altogether. In this avantgarde collaboration involving Fernand Léger, American cameraman Dudley Murphy, and composer George Antheil, a cinematic choreography of visual rhythms was created by the action and interaction of graphically expressive images.[27] Dance was banished from this filmic ballet.

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[26]Jean Cocteau, Nouveau Théâtre de poche (Monaco-Ville: Editions du Rocher, 1960), p. 16.

[27]Standish D. Lawder, The Cubist Cinema (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1975), p. 169.

The postwar years gave enormous leeway to the designer in the choice of theatrical dress, and beginning with Parade contemporary styles made regular appearances on the ballet stage. Nevertheless, in those productions reflecting a purer distillation of Cubo-Futurist theory, costume served as a means of masking the dancer's body and dehumanizing him. For the 1920 production of Le Chant du Rossignol, Matisse designed voluminous white and turquoise kimonos that matched the decor. Crown-like headpieces added to the mask-like effect created by the make-up. In Larionov's costumes for Chout, produced the following year, the dancers appeared in oversized, cardboard constructions so heavy and cumbersome that they hampered movement. Nijinska's make-up for her role as the Buffoon "geometrized" the planes of her face, transforming it into a cubist artefact. Dehumanization was also reflected in the appearance of anthropomorphic motifs. In Le Renard, for which Larionov again designed both costumes and decor, the dancers wore grotesque noses suggestive of the horns created by the artist for the headdresses. Even ballets staged in period style had costumes that tended to enhance the effect of abstract design rather than personalizing the dancers. If inspiration came from the dress of an earlier age, the geometric detailing was insistently modernist, while exaggerated wigs and headdresses completed the dancer's transformation into a burlesque or mechanical puppet.

In Fokine's ballets, the dancers had been compelled to "act" their roles in the sense of interpreting them. Like Bernhardt and Duse, the divas of pre-War drama, they projected glamor and an individual persona onto the roles they played. The triumph of mechanistic concepts in movement and design, however, called for a new style of performance: the arabesques of individuality ill-suited the depersonalized figures of Diaghilev's postwar ballets. In the Twenties, therefore, performance itself became increasingly impersonal. Dancers were encouraged to suppress emotion, to tone down feeling, to express nothing save impassivity. What the new works demanded was a performer capable of presenting a role from which he had distanced himself. The difference, speculated T.S. Eliot, was "between the conventional gesture of the ordinary stage which is supposed to express emotion, and the abstract gesture of Massine, which symbolises emotion." In the "inhuman, impersonal, abstract" art of the period's leading dancer-choreographer, Eliot discerned the acting style of the "future stage".[28]

As a model of idealized design, the machine radically altered the form and spirit of ballet in the late teens and twenties. But the machine was kinetic as well as static. It suggested, as Edith Sitwell observed, "a wild

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[28]T.S. Eliot, "Dramatis Personae," Criterion, April 1923, p. 305.

race for time, confined within limits . . . at once mad and circumscribed."[29]

Few modernists had firsthand knowledge of the assembly lines and speed-ups of the modern factory. Rather they gleaned their images of mechanized motion from the consumer technology then transforming contemporary life. If futurist artists deified the automobile, it was from movies and jazz that Diaghilev and his imitators and collaborators culled the typical rhythms of modernist ballet.

Reviewing Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur in 1917, Svetlov early discerned in Massine's choreography an expression of the era's "cinematographic tendencies."[30] Diaghilev, Massine, and their wartime confreres were ardent enthusiasts of the new mechanical art. In particular, they were charmed by that transplanted English vaudevillean, Charlie Chaplin. "Chaplin was an event in my life, recalled Stravinsky, "as he was in Diaghilev's."[31] The two saw a Chaplin film in Spain in September 1916, and three months later the company, touring America under the direction of Nijinsky, visited the star on his Hollywood

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[29]Edith Sitwell, Taken Care Of: An Autobiography (London: Hutchinson, 1965), p. 305.

[30]Svetloff, "The Diaghilev Ballet in Paris," p. 272.

[31]Quoted in Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 194.

set.[32] Chaplin's influence on the young and impressionable Massine was palpable not only in the collage techniques of Parade but in the characters he invented in The Good-Humoured Ladies and La Boutique fantasque. In 1925, a British observer described both Les Matelots and Zéphyre et Flore as "moving pictures."[33]

"Expressive" dancers like Pavlova and Serafina Astafieva, a prominent Russian teacher in London and occasional guest performer with the Ballets Russes, found a logical connection between the "expressive" style of Fokine's pre-War ballets and the relative "naturalism" of silent screen acting.[34] Massine, and later Balanchine, were attracted, on the other hand, by the stylization of the early cinema, the extent to which it eluded realism. "My first influences," Balanchine told an interviewer in 1979, "were . . . German cabaret performers and German films with stars like Conrad Veidt -- you know, elegant and decadent."[35]

Apart from a gallery of characters, Massine found in Chaplin's early films what appealed to Eliot, an escape

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[32] Ibid., p. 320.

[33] Unidentified review, Diaghilev Scrapbooks, V, p. 12.

[34] Martel Epique, "New Schools for Old. A Chat on Mime with Mme. Astafieva," Dancing Times, May 1917, pp. 244-246.

[35] Alexander Bland, "Talking to Balanchine," Observer, 23 Sept. 1979, p. 14.

from realism through the invention of rhythm.[36] Just as he had replaced balletic line with cubist-inspired angularity, Massine substituted mechanical rhythms and speed for balletic flow. He sought to create pure motion, not speed, and he might have been one of the painters and poets whose technical experiments Edith Sitwell describes as responses to the problem of "how to attain speed".[37] In shortening the dance gesture, he both concentrated and accelerated movement; he stressed dynamism through continual and uninterrupted motion; he sought to correlate bodily rhythm to musical rhythm on a "scientific" basis, to create a choreographic "counterpoint to the musical design" of the composer.[38] What he did in effect was to substitute rhythm for the musical phrase as the basis of choreographic phrasing. "One could describe Massine's style," wrote André Levinson, "as perpetuum mobile, a movement falling on each note, a gesture on each semiquaver, a continual fidget to which we owe the breathless and spirited animation of the Good-Humoured Ladies; now, this restless style, with its insistance on distorted or broken lines, is bound to the imperative of polyrhythmic musical movement or tyrannical syncopation that a Stravinsky imposes on the

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[36]Eliot, "Dramatis Personae," p. 306.

[37]Edith Sitwell, Taken Care Of, p. 142.

[38]Massine, "On Choreography and A New School of Dancing," pp. 69-70.

orchestra."[39]

From the cinema came other borrowings that stressed a similar alteration of the relationship of movement to time. Under the influence of Cocteau, Nijinska worked slow motion effects into the choreography of Le Train bleu.[40] The scene changes in The Triumph of Neptune, noted Svetlov, took place "with an almost cinematographic rapidity".[41] Set in a Victorian toy theatre blown up to the size of the stage, the ballet, with a libretto by Sacheverell Sitwell and music by Lord Berners, conceived dramatic action as a kaleidoscope in which the earthly and the fantastic were intercut, and the disparate elements -- a classical sequence reminiscent of the Nutcracker, a

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[39]André Levinson, Serge Lifar: Destin d'un Danseur (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1934), pp. 26-27.

[40]Marie-Françoise Christout, "Cocteau et la Danse," Les Saisons de la Danse, May 1972, p. 19. Slow motion effects had been used previously by Cocteau in Boeuf sur le toit and had even found their way into the 1922 Christmas pantomime at the London Hippodrome. As early as 1921, moreover, French commercial film companies were applying slow motion techniques specifically to dance. "A big publishing house," reported La Danse in September 1921, "has just finished shooting in slow motion a whole series of modern dances." By the following spring, the Pathé-Revue included a regular slow-motion dance feature. "This astonishing slow motion process," enthused La Danse, "enables us to applaud almost every week . . . dances executed by the best dancers from the great theatres of Paris and foreign ballet companies." "La Danse àtravers le monde," La Danse, Sept. 1921, n.p.; R.J., "La Danse et le Cinéma au Ralenti," La Danse, May 1922, n.p.

[41]Svetlov, "The Diaghileff Ballet," Part III, p. 569.

hornpipe, jig, and transformation scene -- achieved unity through their flow. The cinema, moreover, suggested a new principle of artistic synthesis in the concept of montage. By contrast with the idea of optical and aural unity, montage was based on juxtaposition of the incongruous, a recipe Diaghilev tested with varying degrees of success in the Twenties.[42]

As mentor to the young generation of composers, Stravinsky reigned over musical high culture in the Twenties. For a time, however, jazz seemed to offer a new lingua franca for serious composers as well as a source of useful rhythmic and harmonic devices.[43] Knowledge of jazz came from many sources: American musicians who had crossed the Atlantic with the doughboys of World War I and the lost generation of the Twenties; visits to America by composers like Maurice Ravel, Darius Milhaud, and Vladimir Dukelsky; and the enormous commercialization of jazz both through the dance halls and gramophone. Jazz had indeed cast a spell on European music from which, apparently, not even Hungarian gypsy melodies were immune. Stravinsky's Ragtime and Piano Rag-Music, the Blues movement of Ravel's Violin Sonata, Poulenc's Rhapsodie Nègre, Constant Lambert's Rio Grande, Darius Milhaud's "Negro-Jazz ballet" La Création du

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[42]Levinson, Serge Lifar, p. 26.

[43]Richard Shead, Music in the Twenties (London: Duckworth, 1976), p. 70.

Monde for the Ballets Suédois were all compositions of the Twenties marked by the presence of jazz. In August 1925, Boris de Schloezer, music critic of the Nouvelle Revue Française, breathed a sigh of relief on discovering that Vladimir Dukelsky's score for Zéphyre et Flore contained no trace of the "Negroid Americanism that has become the very trademark of musical modernism."[44]

For Massine, jazz was the highest expression of the modern age. The classical dance, he told the London Morning Post in 1925, "is out of touch with modern life. What we have to do to-day in order to make dancing vital is to learn all we can from the Italo-French School of three hundred years ago, and transpose it into terms of the best in modern jazz. We have to alter the direction of the ancient school, and, by adapting its conventions, its forms, and its steps, create a new spirit representative of the spirit of the age."

> Jazz represents us. It is an art form which represents the speed of modern life, worked out on a scientific basis. Jazz is a multiple of life, just as speed is a multiple of the moyen de transport. Moreover, jazz is music. It has as much melody as the valse and the quadrille, and it has, pre-eminently, rhythm, the essential part of it . . . We cannot resist or get away from jazz, because we cannot avoid our own life, of which it forms so large a part -- more than we realise. Modern expres-

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[44]Schloezer, "Les Ballets russes. Erik Satie," p. 248.

sion finds its highest expression in jazz.[45]

Observing Europe's "intellectual primitives" gyrating to the rhythms of the Charleston "with the regularity of a machine", an American observer noted as a curious phenomenon that "the highly individualized intelligentsia of our great centres should look back to the art and dances of the African jungles for the renewal of their ebbing creative forces."[46] Jazz and movies were not the only "popular" arts taken up by artists of les années folles. Taking their cue from Cocteau, Diaghilev and his imitators culled the "folk-lore de banlieue", in Paul Morand's phrase,[47] for modernist subjects and forms. Cocteau is "in love with all the droll and homely aspects of the Parisian world," wrote Edmund Wilson,

> the music halls, the revues, and the bals musettes, the Eiffel Tower with its photographer and its post-cards of beautiful bathers, the popular fairs with their side-shows and their jingling merry-go-round tunes. Cocteau has protested repeatedly that he want to make something real; and it is true that, for all his nonsense, he does make something real. When he turns a bourgeois wedding into a side-splitting harlequinade, we none the less get the feeling of a vivid reaction to life, of a bodying

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[45]Quoted in "Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Aug. 1925, p. 1139.

[46]Maria Theresa, "The Dance in Europe," Theatre Arts Monthly, April 1928, pp. 285-286.

[47]Paul Morand, "Ballets Suédois: Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel," NRF, 1 Aug. 1921, p. 225.

forth of objects which the artist has seen and felt.[48]

Cocteau's cult of the "commonplace" was shared by an important segment of the postwar Paris avantgarde, which found in the haute école of the circus, jazz band, and music-hall, in clowns, negroes, and aerialists a potent antidote to the "clouds and sirens" of pre-War "debussysm".[49] Despite its pretensions, the cult was in reality a highly sophisticated blending of those aspects of popular culture made fashionable by society. Acrobatism and "buffoonery", lifted from the circus and incorporated into dance, offer one such example. Their appearance in the ballet repertoire parallels the popularity of the circus among the avantgarde and the upgrading of sophisticated acts, like the Fratellini trio of clowns and the transvestite aerialist Barbette, from circus ring to revue stage. The commedia dell'arte, a staple of late nineteenth-century music-hall and provincial theatres of the European periphery, likewise rose in status with the passage of its iconography into symbolist and modernist literary and visual texts. A similar pattern may be discerned with regard to swimming, golf, and tennis, all of

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[48]Quoted in Francis Steegmuller, Cocteau: A Biography (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), p. 517.

[49]Georges Auric, "Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Les ballets russes: à propos de Parade," NRF, 16, No. 89, 224.

which found a place in Twenties' ballet.

Nijinsky, of course, had introduced tennis motifs in 1913 in Jeux, but he had used them, metaphorically, to explore the game of human relationships and as a point of departure for his neo-classical idiom. Postwar works, on the other hand, employed the vocabulary of sport mimetically. Following the cubist-realist method of Cocteau, they transposed sporting movement and its socio-cultural allusions directly into the substance of choreography. Le Train bleu was intended to be a succession of picture postcards of various Riviera beach games, a playacting of almost every conceivable fashionable pastime.[50] The dancers performed handstands, mimed diving and swimming strokes; the tennis champion, modeled on the legendary Suzanne Lenglen, carried a racket; there was even an F. Scott Fitzgerald-style golf player. A staple of the revue stage, acrobatism was an essential part of Cocteau's ideal of vigorous "modern" dance. To him the artificiality of sport and the artificiality of dance were analogous:

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[50]Frank W.D. Ries, "Acrobats, Burlesque and Cocteau: The Creation of 'Le Train Bleu'," Dance Scope, Fall/Winter 1976/1977, p. 58.

both exemplified "la grande gesticulation".[51] A similar theatricality appealed to him in the music-hall and circus. In the hands of a great artist like Barbette, the tricks of a mundane act scaled the heights of theatre's most profound illusions.

Acrobatism was not limited to sporting ballets. It was an element of many Diaghilev productions in the middle and late Twenties, with dancers and circus acrobats actually sharing the stage in Le Renard, Serge Lifar's maiden effort as a choreographer. "Acrobatism" was a complaint levied at much of Balanchine's choreography during the Twenties and many of Massine's later works for the company, and it was an essential ingredient of the "neo-classical" style invented by Balanchine for Lifar. "All this new choreography," wrote Svetlov in the late Twenties, "has moved away from classicism to evolve toward the circus."[52] For lovers of the classical dance, there was more than amusing irony in the double pirouette/ cartwheel/fish dive that Cocteau devised for Anton Dolin in Le Train bleu. The poet seemed to be debunking the very idea of classicism as a means of artistic expression.

Are these ballets really ballets, and if not, what are they? were questions raised with increasing

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[51] Ibid., pp. 55-58.

[52] Svetlov, "The Diaghileff Ballet," Part III, p. 572.

frequency as the decade progressed. With his usual impeccable timing, Cocteau had anticipated the debate when he described his vision of the new theatre in his 1922 preface to the printed text of Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel:

> Before our very eyes a new theatrical genre is being born in France -- one that is not ballet properly speaking, and whose proper home is neither the Opéra nor the Opéra Comique nor any of the boulevard theatres. The new genre, on the fringe of all that, is an adumbration of the future . . . It expresses the modern spirit, and is still a world unmapped, rich in discoveries, a revolution that opens the door wide to explorers. Our young people can experiment with new combinations of féerie, the dance, acrobatics, pantomime, drama, satire, orchestra, the spoken word. With limited funds at their disposal they will mount productions of a kind that official artists consider amateur theatricals, but which are nonetheless the plastic expression of poetry.[53]

What was this new theatrical genre? From the evidence of the time, it appears to have been a highbrow mutant of variety, a sophisticated reworking of revue.

"From the point of view of dance," wrote Jean Brun-Berty in the opening of his review of Train bleu, "the theatre gives us today what the music-hall once presented; the reverse is true as well. Le Train bleu . . . confirms

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[53]Quoted in Steegmuller, Cocteau, p. 268, ff.

this rule."[54] Connections between ballet and revue, that favorite entertainment of postwar audiences, were close. Classical dancers and choreographers passed from one form to another joining the "excentric", "exotic", "acrobatic", and "exhibition" dancers who were the bread and butter attractions of the revue stage. "Stars" like Massine gladly worked for West End producer Charles B. Cochran, whose shows enjoyed the cachet of designers like Bakst and couturier Paul Poiret. They staged mini-ballets or "mimo-dramas", as their contributions were sometimes called, which followed Diaghilev's multi-media approach and reflected trends set by the Ballets Russes. The relationship between revue and ballet was thus two-way. As revue popularized the "high art" spectacles of Diaghilev and his Parisian competitors, its loose format, mixed genres, contemporary themes, and chic style found their way back to ballet through the ideas of Cocteau and other modernists.

Beginning with Parade, critics detected a palpable change in the narrative structure of many Diaghilev ballets. Increasingly, they noted a shift away from dramatic narrative to short sketches and the tendency to divide the dancing into "turns" -- typical features of

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[54]Jean Brun-Berty, "22 Juin.-Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Ballets russes (le Train bleu)," La Danse, Aug./ Sept. 1924, n.p. The French term "music-hall" encompassed both variety and revue.

revue. "Here again," wrote a critic of Cimarosiana, there was no plot, but just a series of detached turns -- a pas de trois, a pas de six, a tarantella and so on . . . "[55] "Jack-in-the-Box" is Parade all over again. It would have been the easiest and most natural thing in the world to have combined the two ballets into one by giving some of the actors of the first a few of the variety turns of the second; 'The Clown,' the 'Black Ballerina', the two 'White Ballerinas' and two 'Carriers of Clouds'.[56]

Ballet had indeed reached a creative impasse. Pulled, on the one hand, toward non-dance forms of theatre, and on the other, toward aesthetically significant design that nevertheless stopped short of abstraction, modernist ballet seemed to flounder among the numerous theatrical experiments of the Twenties. Relâche, the Dadaist-inspired swan song of the Ballets Suédois, illustrated the dead end of one such vein of experimentation. Describing the work as "a ballet which is not a ballet, nor an anti-ballet," the publicity warned prospective spectators, "above all, don't forget your dark glasses and some cotton to stop up your ears."[57] Relâche, which literally means "no show",

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[55]Unident. review, Diaghilev Scrapbook, V, p. 9.

[56]Svetlov, "The Diaghilev Ballet," Part II, Dancing Times, Jan. 1930, p. 463.

[57]Quoted in Sally Banes, "An Introduction to the Ballets Suédois," Ballet Review, 1978/1979, p. 51.

staked out a vanguard position ballet could transcend only by destroying itself. Rather than retreat, Rolf de Maré, the avantgarde producer par excellence, dissolved the troupe. Two years later, assuming the direction of the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, he transformed that pre-War temple of high art into a music-hall.

Diaghilev, by contrast, seized the middle ground between the two extremes. On the one hand, he held the line on abstraction, to the chagrin of at least one of his Twenties' choreographers. Diaghilev "could not," wrote Bronislava Nijinska, "readily discard the idea of a literary libretto."[58] At the same time, he steered the company from the more extreme experiments of his avantgarde competitors. Essentially, he adopted the divertissement formula, creating ballets that were suites of dances, as Cuadro Flamenco and Cimarosiana were actually called, strung together by the barest semblance of a plot. Unlike the "entertainments" that played an important role in Petipa's ballets, these modernist divertissements were not pure dance sequences intercalated into a larger narrative. Rather, they were sketches of stories, analogous to the semi-autonomous "turns" of revue. Indeed, in 1924, when Diaghilev commissioned American composer John Alden

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[58]Bronislava Nijinska, "Reflections About the Production of Les Biches and Hamlet in Markova-Dolin Ballets," trans. Lydia Lopokova, Dancing Times, Feb. 1937, p. 617.

Carpenter for a ballet about the modern city that was never staged, he suggested writing the music without regard to story or action.[59]

World War I coincided with a major shift in cultural relations between Old World and New. Though American writers and artists continued to expatriate themselves from Main Street, beginning in the 1910's, the hit songs, social dances, and movies of American mass culture found an enthusiastic welcome across the Atlantic. "The modern Bohemian cultivates an American air," wrote Alexandre Mercereau.[60] From the mass-produced artefacts of Hollywood and New York, the European imagination fashioned an America of myth, a fabulous land of skyscrapers and nickel-plated bars, Buffalo Bills and P.T. Barnums, cinema stars and jazz bands. Parade caught the whimsical mood of the early days of Europe's American romance, as did Boeuf sur le toit, which virtually catalogued every American cliché that had caught Parisian fantasy, from its English subtitle ("The Nothing Doing Bar") to the cocktail swigging, cigar smoking black boxer. Even rough-riding Teddy Roosevelt was touched by poetry: an advertisement in

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[59]Verna Arvey, Choreographic Music: Music for the Dance (New York: Dutton, 1941), p. 289.

[60]Quoted in Joanna Richardson, The Bohemians: La Vie Bohème in Paris, 1830-1914 (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1971), p. 167.

the Parade program for Michel Georges-Michel's "Roman de bonne humeur" L'Assassinat du Président Roosevelt shows the ex-President as a toothy, swashbuckling cowboy.

Unlike Cocteau, Diaghilev had been in the United States. In interviews, he professed admiration for New York's skyscrapers and the "endless variety" of "Broadway at night time".[61] Otherwise, he found little to charm him. "He detested our democratic ways," recalled Merle Armitage, the youngest member of his American touring staff, and "assumed that all of Otto Kahn's subordinates" (Kahn being the Chairman of the Metropolitan Opera under whose auspices the Ballets Russes had gone to the U.S.) "even those in executive positions, were, as in Russia, menials."[62] Diaghilev went so far as to strike a stagehand who refused to carry out an order. The rest of the crew was outraged, and that night, as Diaghilev strode across the empty stage, a chunk of pig iron fell ninety feet from the overhead grid, stripping the rim from his derby.[63]

Diaghilev's response to America raises the issue of modernism's profound ambivalence to modernity. Diaghilev and his contemporaries lifted themes, rhythms, styles, and techniques from the stockpile of modern

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[61]Quoted in Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 300.

[62]Merle Armitage, Dance Memoranda, ed. Edwin Corle (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1947), p. 26.

[63]Ibid., p. 27.

culture. These new materials of industrial society they then transformed, not only into the stuff of high art, but into aesthetic raritès whose very uniqueness belied the reproducibility inherent in both industrial production and mass culture. The modernist adopted the forms of modernity while adhering to a traditional concept of the function of art.

Nowhere is this split between formal radicalism and cultural conservatism clearer than in Diaghilev's attitude toward film. As we have seen, Diaghilev not only went to movies but was inspired by them, and many cinematic elements found their way into ballets, including the filmed projections designed by Pavel Tchelitchew for Ode. Ode was not the first dance work to incorporate film: Relâche had featured a cinematic interlude by René Clair some years before. In principle, Diaghilev accepted the application of film to ballet, provided the final product retained an aesthetic aura of uniqueness. What he objected to was the

reproduction of ballet implicit in the very technology of motion pictures.[64]

Diaghilev's dancers, on the other hand, were intrigued by the new medium. With Pavlova's Hollywood venture in The Dumb Girl of Portici as an example, and inspired perhaps by the dancing in contemporary American movies, they lent their talents to a variety of cinematic undertakings. Following her West End success in J.M. Barrie's The Truth About the Russian Dancers, Karsavina played the role of the Parisian dancer in the Ideal Film Company's 1921 production of Arnold Bennett's The Old Wives' Tale. Later in the decade, she danced a pas de deux from Sylvia for a German camera buff who also filmed her at the barre. From the mid-twenties comes a sixty second short of Lydia Lopokova filmed by one of the era's many newsreel companies. And, in one of the greater ironies of fate, Balanchine, Dolin, and Lopokova learned of Diaghilev's death at the British Sound Film studios in

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[64]In late 1921, however, Diaghilev seems briefly to have toyed with the idea of filming The Sleeping Princess. "A Film to Music. 'The Sleeping Princess'," Times, 29 Dec. 1921, p. 6, col. 3. Mechanical reproduction was not only an isue for Diaghilev. In 1923 the Union of French Dramatic and Lyrical Artists insisted that a provision be inserted in their agreement with the Paris Opéra forbidding "transmission from the stage or hall of all or part of the performance . . . without prior agreement with the Union." Union des Artistes Dramatiques et Lyriques de Langue Française, Letter to Jacques Rouché, 19 June 1923, AJ13/1205(II), Archives Nationales (Paris).

Wembley where they were filming Dark Red Roses.[65]

Diaghilev's attitude toward "popular" culture echoed his ambivalence toward film: it was acceptable so long as it remained distinct from mass culture. The circus of which Cocteau, Picasso, and Diaghilev were so fond was, significantly, the one that had yielded least to modernization as exemplified by Barnum and Bailey's "Greatest Show on Earth", which had taken Europe by storm in the late 1890's. Where other circuses had introduced new acts and spectacle in response to their American competitor, the Cirque Médrano steadfastly adhered to the traditions of the French circus. Thus, by 1920, this "temple of the classical circus" was an anachronism.[66] Yet it was precisely this quality of "affected archaism", a term Irvin Ehrenpreis has used in connection with Ezra Pound's work,[67] that attracted both an avantgarde and society following. To the culture consumer, preciousness was a guarantee of rarity: the Cirque Médrano was not a

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[65]Dancing Grace - Novel Studies of Madame Lopokova, the Famous Dancer and Back to Nature (containing the Sylvia pas de deux) are in the archives of the British Film Institute (London). The Karsavina barre footage is at the Dance Collection, New York Public Library, and the excerpt from Dark Red Roses was shown in 1984 in the Public Broadcasting System's two-part tribute to Balanchine. I have not succeeded in locating a print of The Old Wives' Tale.

[66]Roland Auguet, Histoire et légende du cirque (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), pp. 161-162.

[67]Irvin Ehrenpreis, "Love, Hate, and Ezra Pound," New York Review, 27 May 1976, p. 8.

spectacle for the masses.

Jazz may have been a genuinely popular art in America, but it entered Europe through high society. Paul Morand, a diplomat at the French legation, first heard it in London in 1916 at "a most amusing party with 'coons'".[68] In midsummer 1918, Cocteau's friend and sometime patron, Comte Etienne de Beaumont, gave a "great Negro fete" that included a performance of Francis Poulenc's Rhapsodie Nègre.[69] This musical soiree was apparently the first private party in Paris to feature American jazz, supplied on this occasion by American black soldiers. After the Armistice, black and white jazz musicians alike crossed the Atlantic to try their luck. In April 1919, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, a white New Orleans group, made its European debut at the London Hippodrome. From there, it moved to Rector's, a posh London nightspot where its fame began to grow and then to the Hammersmith Palais de Danse, where it was an overnight sensation, nearly six thousand people paying to hear it play on opening night alone.[70] The first jazz group to make recordings, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band owed its spectacular success to more

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[68]Quoted in Steegmuller, Cocteau, p. 210.

[69]Ibid., p. 210. The phrase is Cocteau's.

[70]Chris Goddard, Jazz Away From Home (London: Paddington Press, 1979), p. 23.

than the novelty of its sound. Thanks to music publishers and record manufacturers and the enormous "palais de danse" that sprang up from London to Liverpool, the vogue for jazz was rapidly commercialized as a mass phenomenon.

In Europe, jazz was rarely a sophisticated art. The early white bands "reduced the subtleties of black music to a sure-fire formula" that combined the "shock tactics of dynamic rhythmic momentum" with freak musical and staging effects.[71] The jazz craze, moreover, was overwhelmingly a dance phenomenon, and it carried an implicit set of social values from looser dress codes to opportunities for sexual and class mingling that was little short of revolutionary.[72] Like Irene Castle's best-selling book Modern Dancing, the passion for dancing reconciled different social attitudes, suggesting "a more relaxed, flexible approach to life, an absence of restraint", and "a new freedom from outworn social attitudes".[73] To the upholders of traditional social and cultural values, the thousands who turned out nightly to dance the one-step, foxtrot, and "hesitation" to the new discordant sound spelled the ruin of civilized society.

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[71] Ibid., pp. 24, 31.

[72] Lewis A. Erenberg, Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), pp. 146-171.

[73] Goddard, pp. 28-29.

Diaghilev hated jazz.[74] He pretended not to know that Cole Porter was a composer, even though he often met him in society and had seen his satire on American life, Within the Quota, when it was produced by the Ballets Suédois in 1923.[75] He looked unkindly on the touches of American "folklore" in John Alden Carpenter's Skyscrapers and dashed George Gershwin's hopes that he would stage Rhapsody in Blue. Despite his patronage of the "Les Six" group of composers, in private life Diaghilev's gramophone "gods" were Tamagno, Caruso, and Chaliapin.[76]

Diaghilev regarded jazz as a commodity, in every way socially and aesthetically repulsive. He changed hotels in Venice in August 1926, just at the time jazz began to wane in popularity among such influential artistic trendsetters as Cocteau, Auric, and Milhaud, because of Cole Porter's "jazz" and "Negroes". Porter "has started an idiotic nightclub on a boat moored opposite the Salute," he wrote to Boris Kochno, "and now the Grand Canal is swarming with the very same Negroes who have made us all flee from London and Paris. They are teaching the 'Charleston' on

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[74]Richard Buckle, Homage to the Designers of Diaghilev (1909-1929). An Exhibition Made on Behalf of the Theatre Museum, London, Palazzo Grassi-Venice, 15 June - 14 Sept. 1975, p. X.

[75]Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 415.

[76]Boris Kochno, Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, trans. Adrienne Foulke (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 222-223.

the Lido beach! It's dreadful!"[77]

The feeling that jazz exemplified the mechanization and materialism destroying the very fabric of European culture was shared by many contemporaries. Edith Sitwell denounced "modern syncopated dance-music" on the grounds that it delivered music into the "world of machinery", removing it from the inner world of the artist's "inspiration".[78] Eliot regarded the mechanization of culture with pessimism as well. He ended his splendid tribute to Marie Lloyd, the "greatest music hall artist in England", by prophesying the decay of the "entire civilised world" with the triumph of leisure-time technology. By contrast with his French counterparts, Eliot early discerned in the "cheap and rapid breeding cinema", the gramophone and wireless the makings of modern mass society and its inevitable absorption of both elite and popular culture.[79]

The postwar avantgarde had welcomed the machine as a sign of the future. By 1926, the vision had lost its brightness as the romance of mechanization foundered on the evident invasion of Europe by American finance and American

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[77]Quoted ibid., p. 222.

[78]Edith Sitwell, Taken Care Of, p. 142.

[79]T.S. Eliot, "In Memoriam: Marie Lloyd," Criterion, Jan. 1923, pp. 194-195.

technology, not to mention American tourists. A climate of anxiety gripped French cultural circles, and there was widespread talk of European decadence compared to the extraordinary vitality of the United States. "It seems as if we were indeed in the presence of a new '*mal de siècle*'," wrote Henri Peyre in his survey of recent French literature for *The Dial* in 1928, "and one deeper than a century ago, since the mechanistic development of civilization and what the French call the 'Americanization of Europe' provide new reasons for anxiety."[80]

This *mal de siècle* could be discerned in a number of cultural trends, all of which betrayed a yearning for personal and artistic transcendence. "At this moment in France," Paul Morand told *Dial* readers in his April 1926 Paris letter, "two phenomena . . . are to be noted. The first is a great Neo-Catholic revival . . . The second . . . is that the Super-Realistic writers, the one-time Dadas, have gone over to Bolshevism."[81] The most spectacular evidence of the "whirlwind of religiosity" sweeping France at the time was the "re-conversion" of Jean Cocteau and his "sensational" exchange of letters with Catholic theorist and philosopher Jacques Maritain. "In salons, bars, and

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[80]Henri Peyre, "East and West in Recent French Literature," *Dial*, May 1928, p. 383.

[81]Paul Morand, "Paris Letter. March 1926," *Dial*, April 1926, pp. 313-314.

smoking dens, at the tables fronting the cafes, and between the acts of *répétitions générales*, there is no other topic of conversation. Having come, or more accurately returned, to God about eighteen months ago, Cocteau proposes to arrive at religion not naked, but with all his past, his friends, his era, and his aesthetic."[82]

If many "dissatisfied children of the Spirit of the West", in Romain Rolland's phrase,[83] looked to Roman Catholic orthodoxy as a solution to the contemporary spiritual malaise, others gazed eastward. Paul Morand linked the "lure of Asia" to the leftward turn of the surrealists' politics.[84] Keyserling's doctrines enjoyed an enormous vogue, as did Spengler's apocalyptic vision of the fall of Western civilization. Malraux's *La Tentation de l'Occident* and Morand's *Bouddha Vivant*, both published in 1928, attacked in no uncertain terms the material civilization of the West. "Many people in France," wrote Peyre, "seem to have developed a new taste for mysticism, suffer from a lack of confidence in our rational methods, our frenzy of haste, and our material pleasures." "The conflict between East and West," he concluded,

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[82]Paul Morand, "Paris Letter. August 1926," *Dial*, Sept. 1926, p. 237.

[83]Quoted in Peyre, p. 377.

[84]Morand, "Paris Letter. March 1926," p. 314.

> thus expresses, in a forcible way, the hesitations of many a mind in France -- hesitations between an industrial and material production copied from America, and a respect for the individual himself, as an independent creature. The conflict, in this regard, becomes, as André Siegfried puts it in his penetrating study, America Comes of Age, "a dialogue between Ford and Gandhi".[85]

The middle and late Twenties were years of aesthetic crisis for the Diaghilev organization. With hindsight, however, two contending impulses may be discerned underlying the production of company novelties. Through Diaghilev's patronage of Soviet and émigré artists in the second half of the decade, an element akin to the cultural russophilia of French and German intellectual circles entered the ballet. A paean to the machine, Le Pas d'acier was even more a paean to the Russian Revolution. It honored the efforts of its leaders to mobilize the country's masses in the enormous task of industrialization and utilized the aesthetic procedures developed by Soviet Constructivists after the Revolution. By contrast with the Parisian avantgarde, Prokofiev and Yakulov were fascinated by the machine as a force capable of transforming society rather than as a style of modern living.

Le Pas d'acier reflected the sentiments of exiles like Larionov and Goncharova who supported the Revolution from abroad. Ode, by contrast, suggested the retreat of

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[85]Peyre, p. 383.

many émigrés from politics, the feeling that as all purely humanitarian ideals had failed after the fire test of the Revolution, a new system of religious values was needed.[86] As Tchelitchew's scenario makes clear, Ode was conceived as a metaphysical work; its innovative scenic effects were aimed at expressing a mystical vision of the universe.[87] "It is impossible," wrote Emile Vuillermoz, "to describe all there is of curious and ingenious newness in the different tableaux which compose this strange fantasy . . . M. Tchelitchew has created an extremely evocative atmosphere from the further dimensions of outer space and of terrestrial realms beyond reality."[88]

The second major impulse underlying Diaghilev's later seasons was neo-classicism. Although officially launched with the production of Apollon Musagète in 1928, neo-classicism predated this unquestionable turning-point in the Balanchine oeuvre. "It seems Diaghileff has taken a sudden fancy to becoming very classical again," wrote Ruth Page in 1925. "You should see the things they have been doing in the divertissements -- more classical and old-

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[86]Robert C. Williams, Culture in Exile: Russian Emigres in Germany, 1881-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1972), p. 261.

[87]Parker Tyler, The Divine Comedy of Pavel Tchelitchew (New York: Fleet Publishing, 1967), pp. 329-334.

[88]Quoted ibid., p. 336.

fashioned than Pavlova's."[89] Among generally disparaging remarks about Balanchine's "modernist" ballets, Svetlov noted with approval the "classical" touches of Jack-in-the-Box, allusions to the Nutcracker "Snowflakes" scene in The Triumph of Neptune, and the "beautiful ensembles for the corps de ballet" in Les Dieux Mendiants.[90] Nor should one overlook Diaghilev's classical revivals, even after the Sleeping Princess debacle in 1921-1922. Both Aurora's Wedding and Swan Lake were presented at various times throughout the decade, with Olga Spessivtseva and Vera Trefilova, great exponents of Mariinsky classicism, in the leading roles. A revival of Giselle, moreover, was planned for 1930.

As a style and approach to the past, moreover, neo-classicism long anticipated the choreographic innovations of its most exemplary practitioner. Its roots lie embedded in the trauma of the war years and in the tangled web of impulses that gave rise to modernism itself. Following the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, Paris cultural life ground to a halt. Theatres closed, and young men from stagehands to premiers danseurs joined other Frenchmen in the trenches. By 1916, however, homefront

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[89]Ruth Page, Letter to Mrs. LaFayette Page, 13 March 1925, Ruth Page Collection, Dance Collection.

[90]Svetlov, "The Diaghileff Ballet," Part II, p. 463, and Part III, pp. 569, 573.

audiences were restive. "Distraction must be had," Paris Opéra director Jacques Rouché told a Musical America correspondent, "and none could be morally and psychologically more efficacious than music of the elevating sort."[91] Beginning in 1915 the Opéra initiated semi-weekly matinee performances. At these "concerts", described by Rouché as "an oral history of dramatic music", and the charity benefits that multiplied as the war dragged on, the parameters of musical neo-classicism were established.

By contrast with the cosmopolitan character of the Opéra's pre-War special events, Rouché's programming was overwhelmingly historical and French. In a flush of nationalism, Boche composers were banished from the stage, and in their place audiences heard Lulli, Destouches, and Rameau, founders of French opera. Plans were made to produce "the fantastic ballets in which Louis XIV danced in his youth and the so-called 'musical suppers' which diverted him in his old age; an act of the tragedy of 'Esther,' with the music of Moreau, . . . a private concert given before Louis XIII."[92]

But it was not only to masterpieces of French musical classicism that Rouché paid tribute; in the

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[91]Quoted in R.B.D., "Historical Review of Music in the Paris Opera Season," Musical America, 26 Feb. 1916, p. 38.

[92]Ibid., p. 38.

historical settings of the concerts he honored the aristocratic traditions associated with cultural life of that era of French national greatness.

> It is not only the music of other times that we reproduce but also the settings in which that music was given. The rehearsal of "Esther" by the daughters of the nobility before Mme. Maintenon; a musical soiree at the home of Pouplinière, the protector of Rameau; a session of the French Academy at which Baif essayed his ingenious coupling of music with the rhythms of Horace and Sappho, and a concert in the Château of Compiègne before the imperial court.[93]

Cultural xenophobia among patrons and purveyors of high art did not end with the Armistice. If anything, the emphasis on France's classical and monarchist past increased with the return to normalcy. In the salons and at gala entertainments eighteenth-century themes displaced the Orientalism of pre-War events. A telling example of this shifting taste was the outdoor performance given by Fokine and Fokina in June 1921 at the home of Madame Louis Stern. Here, the famed purveyor of choreographic exotica performed dances from the era of Louis XV on the lawn.[94] In an unpublished study of painters and the ballet in this period, Melissa McQuillan documents the obsession with the grand period of France's monarchical past that crystallized

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Femina, July 1921, pp. 14-15.

in the immediate postwar period. The Versailles peace conference stirred a flurry of press interest in the architecture, gardens, history, and need for restoration of the chateau that epitomized more than any other public monument the era of le roi soleil. In 1920 the Musée de Costume opened its doors with a history of French costume, while the following year saw major exhibitions of Fragonard and Watteau and a production by the Théâtre de l'Odéon of Molière's Les Fâcheux. The music for this comic-ballet was by "Les Six" composer Georges Auric, and it was used by Diaghilev in the ballet mounted under the same title in 1924. The post-Armistice period also saw heightened interest in seventeenth and eighteenth-century dancing. A spate of illustrated articles appeared on the subject just after the war, and in January 1923 a music and dance exhibition at the prestigious Hôtel Charpentier gallery featured many prints of ballets presented at the courts of the Sun King and his grandson Louis XV. The same month saw the production at the Opéra of a Louis XIV period ballet Cydalise et le Chèvrepied, a replacement for Diaghilev's Sleeping Princess, a work set in the same era, whose

anticipated premiere the previous May had failed to take place.[95]

Diaghilev's interest in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries dated to the war years as well. It was in Italy, at the height of his absorption in futurist experiment, that he combed libraries for manuscripts of baroque masters and conceived the first wave of his "time-travelling" postwar ballets.[96] Rather than being mere revivals, works such as La Boutique fantasque, Pulcinella, and Le Astuzie Femminili revitalized music of earlier historical periods. But as in the case of Diaghilev's French revivals, they invoked an era preceding German

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[95]Melissa A. McQuillan, "Painters and the Ballet, 1917-1926: An Aspect of the Relationship Between Art and Theatre," Diss. New York Univ. 1979, I, pp. 149-151. Among the most lavish fancy dress occasions of the early Twenties featuring eighteenth-century themes was the Opéra's 1922 "Bal du Grand Prix", a brilliant pageant representing in detail a reception given by the Doge of Venice. "No such fête has been seen in Paris for many years, reported the Times. "There was nothing of the Carnival in it, no wild scenes of merriment, but such soft laughter, gay smiles, and murmured gallantries marked it as a true revival of eighteenth-century modes and manners." "Grand Prix Ball. Brilliant Spectacle," Times, 27 June 1922. No less splendid were the elaborate costume balls given by Comte Etienne de Beaumont, orgaof the short-lived 1924 season of avantgarde dance and theatre, the Soirées de Paris. His 1923 "Bal Louis XIV" and the "Entrées d'opéras" ball of the following year reflected the fascination with the French classical era among key Diaghilev collaborators and devotees. Au Temps de "Boeuf sur le toit," 1918-1928, introd. Georges Bernier (Paris: Artcurial, 1981), pp. 68-74.

[96]The phrase is Constant Lambert's. See his section on "Diaghileff and Stravinsky as Time Travellers" in Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline, introd. Arthur Hutchings (New York: October House, 1967), pp. 71-78. The book was originally published in 1934.

musical ascendancy in the nineteenth century. In their celebration of Latinity and its sway over the tastes of baroque and classical Europe, they provided a logical point of cultural identification for the displaced Russian elite at whose hub stood Diaghilev and his Ballets Russes.

Diaghilev's rediscovery of the Latin musical patrimony was the first indication of the peculiar symbiosis of modernist procedure and classicist modes of thought that characterized an important segment of his Twenties' repertoire. In its amalgam of contemporary jazz rhythms and patterns derived from eighteenth-century dance manuals, Massine's choreography reflected a similar tension, as did Nijinska's grafting of Constructivist-influenced concepts onto a classical balletic base. By 1923-1924, when Diaghilev took up residence in Monte Carlo, his company's artistic identity was torn by seemingly contending forces. Along with Les Biches and Le Train bleu, works epitomizing the trend toward contemporary chic in ballet, Diaghilev produced a string of operas and dance entertainments, all of which looked to the French classical past. His "Fête Merveilleuse" in June 1923 was one of many events staged that summer at the Palace of Versailles to raise money for its refurbishment. The Gala in the Hall of Mirrors was followed in quick succession by other classical-era works: Monteclair's Les Tentations de la Bergère ou l'amour vainqueur, Les Fâcheux, which rode the

crest of renewed interest in Molière, whose tercentenary was celebrated in 1922, Chabrier's "saynète", Une Education manquée, Gounod's Philémon et Baucis and his comic operas La Colombe and Le Médecin malgré lui. Diaghilev's interest in the baroque and classical legacy climaxed during the company's initial residence at Monte Carlo, when he harbored plans to turn the fashionable resort into an elite artistic capital, with audiences shuttling between Paris and the Riviera on the famous "Blue Train". Most of these plans failed to materialize. Nevertheless, classical themes continued to figure in the repertoire, particularly in such ballets as Zéphyre et Flore, La Chatte, and Apollon Musagète, which exploited the eighteenth century's fondness for mythological themes and subject matter.

Despite the choice of Alexandre Benois, that encomiast of Petersburg classicism and one-time resident of Versailles, to design Philémon et Baucis and Le Médecin malgré lui, one can hardly describe the impulse underlying these classically-oriented operas and ballets as simple retrospectivism. With Juan Gris and Georges Braque receiving the lion's share of Diaghilev's commissions, such works transformed historical style in accordance with modern concepts of design, updating the "look" of productions without modifying the ideological bias of their originals.

The postwar obsession with classical material has been linked to the stand taken by the "authentic

avantgarde" of the pre-War years against the nihilism of the Dadaists' attack on art inherited from the past.[97] "Something like an attempt to hold on to, to fix, history -- or the past -- seems to have come to a head in these years."[98]

It was indeed in les années folles that France's artists and intellectuals sought an encounter with history, as the ongoing debate in French literary circles on the relevance of classicism to modern literature attests. But the larger framework of that encounter reflected contexts as compelling as art. As will be shown in a later chapter, the cultural landscape of Paris between 1905 and 1914 was dominated by an amalgam of international banking and financial interests, wealthy Jews, foreign millionaires, and aristocrats from Europe's periphery -- the social and economic core of the era's le tout Paris. This influential group ensured not only Diaghilev's success but that of almost every innovative musical and theatrical enterprise that came from abroad to the French capital, causing the nationalist press to label them as "foreign" and even "Jewish". Thus, if the war prompted interest in France's classical legacy, the postwar obsession with that heritage cannot solely be ascribed to the German invader. Implicit in the taste for "lost" masterpieces of the era of Louis

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[97] McQuillan, I, p. 160.

[98] Ibid., I, p. 153.

XIV was an affirmation of those equally enduring values of French history -- cultural chauvinism, national aristocracy, and Roman Catholicism -- which rejected out of hand the ethnic and artistic pluralism of the pre-War years.

Apollon Musagète revealed a new Stravinsky. "His classicism," wrote music critic Henry Prunières, "is no longer a pose as before; one feels that he is responding to an intimate need of his heart and mind."[99] Boris de Schloezer also linked the neo-classicism of the work to a spiritual source. "Apollo . . . reveals Stravinsky's thirst for renunciation, his need of purity and serenity . . . What this peace and clarity have cost him can be witnessed only by the long series of precedent works whose exasperated dynamism wd. almost seem, by comparison with the Apollo, to be a vain agitation . . . What should we expect from Stravinsky now in the strength of his age and full expansion of his genius? What will his next work be? . . . Logically, after Apollo, he ought to give us a Mass."[100]

For Stravinsky, as for Cocteau, there was a direct correlation between neo-classicism and neo-

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[99]Henry Prunières, "Ballets russes," Revue Musicale, 1 July 1928, p. 287.

[100]Boris de Schloezer, "A Classic Art," trans. Ezra Pound, Dial, July 1929, p. 608.

orthodoxy. In a 1924 article Jacques Rivière spoke of the crisis of the romantic concept of literature as young writers, tormented by the yearning for absolutes, labored under a "radical powerlessness to produce something in which they have faith and that stands for something greater than themselves, a creation comparable to the creations of God."[101] This "radical powerlessness", intensified by the social and aesthetic iconoclasm of the post-Armistice avantgarde, yielded by mid-decade to a yearning for personal and artistic transcendence.

Cataloguing the Diaghilev works produced between 1917 and 1929, one cannot fail to be struck by the transitory character of the vast majority. Few aspired to a place of permanence in the ballet canon, few claimed to offer any critical comment on contemporary life, few evoked the sensation of the abyss that distinguished Sacre du Printemps or Les Noces. By and large, Diaghilev's ballets of the Twenties were works of studied inconsequence. Commenting on the "ultra-modern sauce" in which Cocteau "cooked up" his version of Antigone, Gide contrasted his own belief in the immortality of art with the younger man's time-bound vision of the modern. "Nothing is more foreign to me than this concern for modernism which one feels influencing every thought and every decision of Cocteau. I

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[101]Jacques Rivière, "La Crise du concept de littérature," NRF, 1 Feb. 1924, p. 161.

do not claim that he is wrong to believe that art breathes freely only in its newest manifestation. But, all the same, the only thing that matters to me is what a generation will not carry away with it. I do not seek to be of my epoch; I seek to overflow my epoch."[102] In returning to the religious orthodoxies and classical traditions of his youth, the modernist sought to "overflow" the transitoriness of the avantgarde aesthetic, making peace with the world of his generation's fathers.

The extent to which the crisis of the Twenties' avantgarde afflicted the Ballets Russes can be judged by the solipsism of the company's less distinguished repertoire. The scenarios devised in the middle and late Twenties, largely by Boris Kochno, exhibited a lack of internal coherence, a failure of belief in the possibility of art to communicate meaning at any level. Critics spoke of a "cynical misuse" of myth and allegory in ballets like Zéphyre et Floré, La Chatte, and even Le Fils Prodigue, where calculated misinterpretations of the letter and spirit of the originals were served up under the guise of extreme modernity.

In structure, as we have said, many ballets approximated the sketches typical of contemporary revues.

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[102] The Journals of André Gide, trans. Justin O'Brien, Vol. 2 (New York: Knopf, 1948), pp. 321-322, 228.

But they were sketches on another level as well. Although specific details of modern life were mimetically transposed into the choreography and mise-en-scène, reality itself was evoked indirectly. Many ballets, in fact, were representations of modern life as perceived through other theatrical forms. Parade, which depicts the "come-on" rather than an actual music-hall performance, anticipated such later Diaghilev works as Romeo et Juliet, La Pastorale, and Triumph of Neptune. The first of these showed a ballet rehearsal and dancing class; the second juxtaposed a motion picture run-through and actual shooting; the third, set in a toy theatre of the Victorian period, was a genre piece in the style of a traditional children's pantomime. The play-within-a-play is a time-honored theatrical device that can both shade and intensify dramatic meaning. In these ballets, however, the device is a trick of form resonating within the closed circle of the text, never radiating outward. Like a series of Chinese boxes, these ballets invoke a solipsistic and purely self-reflexive universe untouched by any but the most superficial links to the larger arena of human concern.

Solipsism, however, was implicit in the transformational method of modernism itself, in its obsessive recycling of preexisting themes, genres, and typologies. The modernists remade reality not from scratch but as a pastiche or gloss of existing texts of that reality. To a greater or lesser degree, imitation has

always been a means of creation. Traditionally, however, discourse was not confined solely to texts, but sought to articulate fresh views of a reality that was directly apprehended even if expressed through time-honored artistic categories and devices. The modernist, on the other hand, fashioned his texts within a closed circle of discourse with other texts. Meaning became the transformational process itself, with only the initiate enjoying the keys to its code. At its best, such elitism reflected the modernist's ironic view of the social microcosm, his detachment, chosen or otherwise, from the historical forces shaping his life. At its worst, however, it constituted pure snobbery, as the pale of discourse converged on an increasingly narrow public. The first situation characterizes the early phase of Diaghilev's modernist adventure during World War I when the aesthetic product became the sole fact within a universe of uncontrollable flux. The latter describes the company's aesthetic practice throughout most of the Twenties.

The new spirit that animated the artists and poets of Paris' pre-War Bohemia did not, as common wisdom holds, expire on Flanders fields or in the trenches. It was extinguished, rather, by that international High Bohemia which lionized the survivors from those innocent years and commercialized their creations. Redeemed by a scant handful of works, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes likewise fell victim to the tyranny of fashion. Another era's

artistic showcase, it became a "magasin de luxe, an exclusive salon designed to exhibit international art at its most chic and esoteric".[103] Its novelties, no longer crafted by the divine light of inspiration or collective animus, were stitched together like a Chanel dress. The basic stuff was mass-produced while hand detailing provided the rarité demanded by an exclusive clientele. At no point during the twenty years of Diaghilev's enterprise was the relationship of audience and repertory so close or so disastrous as in the period of modernism's decline.

In its Parisian avatar, modernism marked an interregnum between the elite culture of the nineteenth century and the mass culture of the twentieth. In his art, the modernist sought to embody the ideal forms of mechanization that at one swoop had penetrated the intimate sphere of life. He did this through the myth he elaborated of the machine. At first a symbol endowing his experience of modernity with coherence, by the end of the decade, the machine came to epitomize the forces undoing the very fabric of social and cultural life, against whose seeming permanence and values the modernist had originally rebelled.

Thus, modernism may be seen as a dialectic between the form and substance of modernity. The modernist

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[103]Alan Storey, "A Ballet-goer's Causerie (2)," Ballet Today, July-Aug. 1949, p. 8.

envisioned a mechanized paradise ruled by an aristocratic confraternity of artists. He found, instead, a culture transformed by mass society in which the artist had become obsolete. The paradox of modernism was precisely its ambivalence toward the implications of technology, mechanization, and mass culture.

The modernist of 1920 ventured into the world of creative experiment with the freedom of a trailblazer. But implicit in his new spirit was a traditional sense of himself as a cultural arbiter. Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, like the enfant terrible of modernism, never escaped the definition of itself in the traditional terms of a European cultural elite. In the artistic crisis of its final years, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes epitomized the crisis of modernism itself as it had earlier embodied its triumphs. But this was only appropriate to an enterprise which for twenty years had stood at the cutting edge of European culture in all its splendors, failures, and contradictions.

CHAPTER III

RUSSIAN ORIGINS

On May 19, 1909, in the refurbished hall of the Théâtre du Châtelet, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes conquered Paris. This triumph, the first of many over the next twenty years, sparked a renaissance in the art of ballet that endured to the Second World War. But however much the Ballets Russes looked to the future, the making of Diaghilev's enterprise lay rooted in the particularities of Russia's Silver Age. It is to the cultural landscape of that era, therefore, that one must turn to explain the whys and wherefores of the company's maiden triumph and the interplay of cultural forces that led it westward.

The closing years of the nineteenth century and the opening decade of the twentieth saw a revitalization of Russian art in all its forms. To a large extent, this renaissance owed its impetus to the private sector which, for the first time, challenged government sway over cultural life. Throughout the Empire, a network of private theatres and opera houses came into being, and from Kharkov to Odessa commercial enterprise brought audiences of the Imperial hinterlands popular versions of the era's musical

and balletic repertory.[1] Far more influential on Diaghilev and his early collaborators, however, was the sphere of private "amateur" activity. Patronized by the era's great industrial barons and centered largely in Moscow, this milieu offered an alternative to State production methods, aesthetic values, and artistic training that eventually found its way into the early Ballets Russes.

The relationship of railway builders, merchant capitalists, bankers, and manufacturers to the Silver Age renaissance has long fascinated scholars. Emerging from society's outcasts -- Old Believers, Skoptsy, Jews, and serfs -- this indigenous capitalist class rose in the course of the nineteenth century to become the patrons extraordinaires whose passion for art, music, and theatre is reflected to this day in Soviet museums and collections.[2] By the last third of the century, merchant

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[1]Bronislava Nijinska, Early Memoirs, trans. Irina Nijinska and Jean Rawlinson, introd. Anna Kisselgoff (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), chapters 1-8.

[2]See, for example, Thomas C. Owen, Capitalism and Politics in Russia: A Social History of the Moscow Merchants, 1855-1905 (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981); Valentine T. Bill, The Forgotten Class: The Russian Bourgeoisie From the Earliest Beginnings to 1900 (New York: Praeger, 1959); William L. Blackwell, The Industrialization of Russia: An Historical Perspective (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970); William L. Blackwell, The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization, 1800-1860 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968); Beverly Whitney Kean, All the Empty Palaces: The Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Russia (New York: Universe Books, 1983); Jo Ann Ruckman, "The Business Elite of Moscow: A Social Inquiry," Diss. Northorn Illinois 1975.

families were creating "new undertakings that implicitly challenged the old estate structure of Russian society".[3] These enterprises, expressing an aspiration to replace the gentry as leaders of public life, frequently lay in the domain of culture. "The gentry envied the merchants," wrote playwright Vladimir I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, co-founder of the Moscow Art Theatre, "and the merchants flaunted their striving for civilization and culture."[4]

Such "flauntings" took many forms, from architectural commissions for buildings in the neo-Slavic style to founding public libraries, establishing literary salons, and underwriting such "serious" publishing efforts as the Symbolist journal The Golden Fleece.[5] The outstanding legacy of this entrepreneurial class, however, lay in the domain of pictorial art, and in particular, the fabulous collections amassed by several of its members. Pavel Tretiakov's gallery, deeded to the city of Moscow in 1892 "to further the development of art in Russia",[6] housed

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[3]Owen, p. 147.

[4]Quoted ibid., p. 147.

[5]Ibid., pp. 149-157; Bill, p. 34; John E. Bowlt, The Silver Age: Russian Art of the Early Twentieth Century and the "World of Art" Group (Newtonville, Mass.: Oriental Research Partners, 1979), chap. 2; John E. Bowlt, "Nikolai Ryabushinsky: Playboy of the Eastern World," Apollo, 98 (December 1973), pp. 488-489.

[6]Bill, p. 158.

Russian paintings beginning with the great fifteenth-century ikons. Sergei Shchukin collected canvases by French moderns from Monet to Picasso. Others like Alexis Bakrushin, Ivan Morozov, and Dmitrii Botkin created smaller, but no less exquisite collections of theatrical material and Impressionist and Spanish art.[7]

In addition to collecting, these merchant barons acted as the era's leading patrons. From the late 1850's onward, a number of merchants "had encouraged the work of young Russian painters".[8] In the following decades, pride of place in supporting the Realist school, among which figured such talents as Ilya Repin, Vasilii Surikov, and Ivan Kramskoi, passed to Tretiakov, who two years before his death in 1898 purchased one of Alexandre Benois' early paintings, The Castle.[9] Mikhail Vrubel, a "decadent" much admired by the Diaghilev group, was another artist who owed a large part of his success to merchant patronage, in this instance, to Savva Mamontov's "unerring artistic

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[7]Owen, p. 157; Bill, pp. 157-158; Janet Elspeth Kennedy, "The 'Mir Iskusstva' Group and Russian Art, 1898-1912," Diss. Columbia University 1976, p. 132; Mary Chamot, Gontcharova, trans. Helen Gerebzow (Paris: Biblioteque des Arts, 1972), pp. 6-8.

[8]Owen, p. 154.

[9]Ibid., p. 154; Alexandre Benois, Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet, trans. Mary Britnieva (London, 1941; rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), pp. 176-177.

perspicacity and energetic support".[10] In 1896, the railroad magnate financed the building of a special pavilion outside the All-Russian Exhibition grounds in Nizhni Novgorod after the artistic committee had rejected Vrubel's paintings. Thanks to Mamontov's flair for joining art and enterprise (in this case, publicity for his plans to develop Russia's north), Vrubel's work "created a sensation among public and art critics alike."[11]

Hostility traditionally marked relations between Moscow and St. Petersburg, and little contact existed between the youthful aesthetes of Diaghilev's circle and the captains of Russian industry until the mid-nineties, when Diaghilev began making "frequent visits to Moscow".[12] There he met the enlightened patron Savva Mamontov, leader of the circle that played a major role in the development of Russian art from 1870-1900, and founder of the Private Opera troupe that provided an artistic and organizational model for the Ballets Russes. Through Mamontov, Diaghilev established a "direct link" with the painters and designers

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[10]Bill, p. 128.

[11]Ibid., p. 129. For a discussion of Mamontov's role in this exhibition, see Stuart R. Grover, "Savva Mamontov and the Mamontov Circle: 1870-1905 Art Patronage and The Rise of Nationalism in Russian Art," Diss. University of Wisconsin 1971, pp. 262-277.

[12]Arnold Haskell, Diaghileff: His Artistic and Private Life, in collaboration with Walter Nouvel (London, 1935; rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), p. 53.

of the Moscow school.[13] The Exhibition of Russian and Finnish Artists, organized by Diaghilev in 1898, featured several Mamontov proteges -- Konstantin Korovin, Valentin Serov, Mikhail Nesterov, Apollinarii Vasnetsov, and Mikhail Vrubal -- whose work appealed especially to the "Slavophile" wing of the St. Petersburg circle.[14]

The launching in 1898 of the journal Mir iskusstva, to which Mamontov contributed five thousand rubles,[15] and the series of exhibitions organized under its aegis multiplied contacts between the two cities. Not only did the magazine foster the "cross-fertilization of ideas within the country",[16] but as Benois' volume on The Russian School of Painting[17] so magnificently attests, it helped erode the regional parochialism of collecting and patronage patterns. Benois' partly bilingual work, which reproduced material from a score of private collections, including art work owned by Diaghilev and his associates, suggests that by 1904 a national patronage network had crystallized

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[13]Kennedy, pp. 134, 250; Haskell, Diaghileff, pp. 54-55, 64; Grover, pp. 277-292.

[14]Kennedy, pp. 17, 33-34.

[15]Grover, p. 284.

[16]Ibid., p. 182.

[17]Alexandre Benois, The Russian School of Painting (St. Petersburg: L. Golike and A. Vilborg, 1904). I am grateful to Mme. Asya Yefimova Kounina of Moscow for allowing me to see this priceless volume.

around Mir iskusstva. This network, embracing such connoisseur collectors as Baron Dmitrii Gunzburg, Sergei Botkin, Grand Duke Vladimir, Ilya Ostroukhov, G. Hirschman, and Baron Vladimir von Meck, represented the nucleus of supporters who promoted Diaghilev's earliest activities in the West. Along with other familiar names, many of these same collectors, including Diaghilev, appeared as guiding lights of the Society of Free Aesthetes, an exhibition group financed by Hirshman.[18]

Contacts such as these lay primarily in the realm of pictorial art. The visit of Mamontov's Private Opera company to the Imperial capital in 1898, however, revealed both a new style of theatrical artmaking and new standards of theatrical artistry. A decade later, these became the cornerstones of Diaghilev's first stage venture, the production of Boris Godunov at the Paris Opéra.

Mamontov's "folly", as disparaging Petersburgers dubbed his experiments,[19] grew out of the amateur musicales and informal performances that were a feature of social life among the leisured classes in the late nineteenth century. Constantin Stanislavsky has recorded his impressions of these events in the domestic life of Abramtsevo, the railroad magnate's estate outside Moscow

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[18]Chamot, p. 32.

[19]Benois, Reminiscences, pp. 196-197.

where painters, composers, musicians, and singers frequently gathered. "Oftener than not, the plays were of [Mamontov's] own making or his sons'. Now and then composers of his acquaintance produced an opera or an operetta".[20] In the audience sat sympathetic relations and friends who had come from all over Moscow to mix paints, stitch costumes, and work on the props for these "famous productions".[21]

Gradually, however, these amateur events assumed a more professional character. In 1883, Mamontov staged his first opera, a Russian translation of The Merry Wives of Windsor with a small orchestra from the Moscow Conservatory.[22] Two years later, he presented an operatic version of his play The Vermillion Rose. With music by N.S. Krotkov, designs by the well-known painters Vasnetsov and Vassily Polenov, and young singers chosen from among habitués of the Abramtsevo circle as well as the Conservatory, the opera represented a "great event for the Moscow musical world".[23] In 1885, Mamontov invited Krotkov to be a collaborator in a Moscow-based Private Opera Company.

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[20]Constantin Stanislavsky, My Life in Art, trans. J.J. Robbins (Boston: Little, Brown, 1924), p. 141.

[21]Ibid, pp. 141-142.

[22]Grover, p. 159.

[23]Ibid., p. 162.

Conceived as a commercial venture, Mamontov's opera aspired to challenge the Imperial Theatres where their productions were weakest: in the areas of repertory, casting, and overall unity of music, visual design, and dramatic action. His preference was for Russian works performed by young Russian artists in settings that were both attractive and dramatically coherent. Few of these goals were met in the company's first phase, which ended in 1892 when lack of sustained interest in the Russian repertoire and a paucity of experienced young performers forced Mamontov to import singers from France and Italy and produce such operatic crowdpleasers as Carmen, Aida, and La Traviata.[24] In large measure, however, they were realized in the years 1896-1902 when the entrepreneur-turned-impresario brought to a newly receptive public the "model performances" of the Russian lyrical repertoire that fired the imagination of Diaghilev and his collaborators and secured Mamontov a place in opera history.[25]

In business, the merchant class clung to the ideological habits of a simpler era. "Personal dealings based on mutual trust remained typical well into the

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[24]See Grover, pp. 158-217 for an extended discussion of the company's first phase.

[25]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 196. For a detailed description of the second phase of Mamontov's Private Opera, see Grover, pp. 293-342.

twentieth century,"[26] and many merchants viewed as ideal an economic relation that made no distinction between employer and employee.[27] If practice often belied ideology where business was concerned, in cultural life no contradiction existed. Men of business poured not only money but a "never-ending stream" of "moral support, loyalty, friendship, admiration, and advice . . . to Russia's painters and composers".[28] Like that other great product of merchant theatrical culture, Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theatre, Mamontov's private opera epitomized a cooperative form of organization from which the hierarchical usages of the State Theatres were absent.[29] The painter Viktor

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[26]Owen, p. 151.

[27]Ibid., p. 151.

[28]Bill, p. 156.

[29]The Moscow Art Theatre was lavishly supported by Savva Morosov, who not only paid for the construction of the group's innovative theatre building but personally conceived and designed its structure. Among its features was a revolving stage, in those days an innovation even for Western Europe. Like Diaghilev, Morosov took charge of lighting, surprising experts with his knowledge of sophisticated electrical techniques. Bill, pp. 28-29. For the 1908 production of Boris Godunov in Paris, Diaghilev invited Alexander Sanin from the Moscow Art Theatre to serve as company stage director. Kennedy, p. 363. The following year Sanin performed a similar function for Prince Igor which was staged with opera singers and chorus as well as dancers. Nijinska, p. 264. Stanislavsky himself came from a prominent textile manufacturing family with strong cultural interests. Because of his family's prominence and his own position as a director of the Russian Musical Society, he adopted the pseudonym by which he is known when he moved from the amateur to the professional stage. Stanislavsky, pp. 21, 146.

Vasnetsov described the "small, friendly artistic family of Abramtsevo" as a community where "the artistic impulse of creativity of the Renaissance and middle ages had come to life again".[30] At the Mariinsky, Fydor Chaliapin complained, artists jumped to attention when the director came backstage. They were expected to present themselves at the director's office on New Year's Day in a show of respect, even if only the doorkeeper was there to receive them.[31] By contrast, relationships among artists in Mamontov's company, which Chaliapin joined in 1898, were "simpler". "Even more important they were sincere." A feeling of equality reigned, and when Madame Winter, the company manager, gave one of her many "interesting and stimulating parties", the entire troupe was invited.[32]

The informal give-and-take that marked relationships among artists and between artists and management anticipated the backstage atmosphere of Diaghilev's early seasons. Chaliapin's statement that "collective consciousness is only possible if all those engaged in it strive for some unity of purpose and realize

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[30]Quoted in Kennedy, p. 136.

[31]Fydor Chaliapin, Chaliapin: An Autobiography As Told to Maxim Gorky, trans. and ed. Nina Froud and James Hanley (London: MacDonald, 1968), p. 118.

[32]Ibid., p. 121.

the vital necessity of achieving it"[33] echoes the euphoric recollections of 1909 in the literature of the Ballets Russes.

> How different things are in the new Diaghilev ballets [wrote critic Valerian Svetlov]. Composers, painters, ballet masters, authors and those interested in the arts come together and plan the work to be done. Subjects are proposed, discussed, and then worked out in detail. Each makes his suggestions, which are accepted or rejected by a general consensus of opinion.[34]

The contrast between the "air of official severity" of the "Imperial Ecole de Danse" and the "atmosphere of friendly and eager collaboration" impressed Benois as well. In the Catherine Hall where the company rehearsed for its Paris debut "there was no trace of red tape or officialdom; our gatherings were very informal and gay."[35] Years later, he described that atmosphere as "family-like".[36] Bronislava Nijinska recalled the "genuine cooperation" among the dancers. "We all tried to help each other, pointing out mistakes as we noticed them and together finding ways to correct them . . . We younger dancers even suggested to the

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[33] Ibid., p. 160.

[34] Quoted in Serge Lifar, Serge Diaghilev: His Life, His Work, His Legend. An Intimate Biography (1940; rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), p. 130.

[35] Benois, Reminiscences, pp. 282-283.

[36] Quoted in Boris Kochno, Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, trans. Adrienne Foulke (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 198.

older artists that the Imperial Theatres' custom of wearing personal jewelry . . . could spoil the artistic details of the performance in Paris. We were so thrilled when they happily agreed."[37]

Like the Moscow Art Theatre, Mamontov's troupe suggested the atmosphere of an artist's studio, as indeed Stanislavsky's theatre became known. As a form of cultural organization, the studio encouraged artistic experiment and collaboration. Most importantly, it offered an ideal model for the expression of individual talent within a collective framework. The appeal of such a model to those formed in the habits of "amateur" endeavor can scarcely be underestimated. Benois' disastrous experience at the Academy of Arts, a department, like the Imperial Theatres, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Court, left him with a "loathing" for the "bureaucratic world of red tape that seemed to have attached itself to art" and an abhorrence for "any sort of state service".[38]

One of the goals of Mir iskusstva, wrote Diaghilev's cousin Dmitrii Filosofov, who served as the journal's literary factotum, was "the defense of personal, individual creativity".[39] Diaghilev, too, in his essays

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[37]Nijinska, p. 265.

[38]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 108.

[39]Quoted in Kennedy, p. 24.

for the journal emphasized personal feeling as the source of art,[40] and elsewhere described it as the task of the critic to "celebrate" the uniqueness and individual-ity of each artist's personality.[41] This anti-authoritarian stance, in contrast to the conformism and semi-feudal practices of Tsardom's official culture, expressed an attitude shared by the merchant class, whose patronage activities showed "no trace . . . of governmental guidance or tutelage".[42] It was an attitude, moreover, that wove a vivid and often contradictory thread into the historical texture of the Ballets Russes. At its most creative moments -- namely, the intial seasons when Russian art was first revealed to the West and during World War I when the Cubo-Futurist aesthetic was integrated into the ballet -- the Diaghilev company displayed in purest form the social dynamics of the creative studio, replicating the informal structure and artistic vitality of its Russian predecessors.

Despite a "certain roughness in technique" and occasional poor planning, Mamontov's company "amazed" Benois by the "high artistic value" of its productions, "the very quality which was so often missing [on] the

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[40] Ibid., p. 71.

[41] Quoted ibid., p. 58.

[42] Bill, p. 160.

Imperial stage."[43] "Artistic" meant that "the decorations had to contribute a tone and atmosphere to the entire production, and the singers had to match this tone in their portrayals of the roles. It also meant that the production placed the staging and dramatic sphere of opera above the music -- or at least on the same level."[44] Mamontov revealed to Russian audiences, as Diaghilev later revealed to the West, the finest compositions of the national repertory. At a time when Moussorgsky was "pronounced anathema by the wiseacres and called a crazy musician," Mamontov produced Boris Godunov with Chaliapin.[45] He commissioned Snegourochka, Sadko, The Tsar's Bride, and Coq d'Or from Rimsky-Korsakov and staged them for the first time in his theatre.[46] Prince Igor, Khovanshchina, and The Legend of Tsar Saltan were other works he rescued from official neglect.[47] Virtually all of these works Diaghilev subsequently staged in the West. The passion for high artistic value was especially evident in the visual quality of productions. Even in the days of his children's performances, Mamontov invited such painters as Repin and

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[43]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 197.

[44]Grover, p. 168.

[45]Stanislavsky, p. 14.

[46]Ibid., p. 14.

[47]Kennedy, p. 135.

Korovin to design costumes and scenery for his home productions. This preference for "real painters" (the emphasis is Benois') as opposed to "professional artists"[48] radically departed from accepted practice and brought to the stage a "daring" and "original" approach to the treatment of scenic painting.[49] Korovin's efforts, in particular, impressed Benois, who esteemed his ability to integrate "all the inevitable conventions of a scenic picture, without disturbing the fundamental character of the scheme."[50] Golovin's early work also "created a . . . sensation". Diaghilev pronounced his decors for The Ice Palace a "revelation", and the St. Petersburg aesthetes had high praise for his "combinations of original and beautiful colouring".[51] Both these artists designed productions for Diaghilev's 1909 and 1910 seasons.

Like Korovin, Golovin was what Benois called a "free artist".[52] Although both eventually joined the staff of the Imperial Theatres, they embarked on their chosen work in the private amateur sector outside the State qualifying system where "graduation with distinction from

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[48]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 197.

[49]Ibid., p. 197.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid., pp. 198-199.

[52]Ibid., p. 203.

the Academy [of Arts] led to a rank in the civil service".[53] Because their status as artists rested on achievement outside the Imperial hierarchy and its system of ranks (such as the title of akademik, a "distinction awarded to almost any successful artist"),[54] Tsarist law did not recognize them as professionals. Indeed, as late as the 1860's, a musician had no recognized position in Russian society except insofar as he was an attache of the theatre or pedagogue in the employ of a school. Thus, Anton Rubinstein, at the height of his fame as a concert pianist, was legally a "merchant of the second guild", as his father had been.[55]

Beginning with the Mamontov organization, a subtle shift may be discerned in official attitudes toward the free artist and work performed in the "free" sector. The amateur sphere came to be seen as a professional training ground where artists might test their mettle and allow their suitability for employment within the Imperial system to be judged. In siphoning talent from the private sector, however, the State tacitly accepted the existence of the free artist qua artist. It acknowledged achievement as the

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[53]Kennedy, p. 38.

[54]Ibid., p. 39.

[55]Anton Rubinstein, Autobiography of Anton Rubinstein, 1829-1889, trans. Aline Delano (Boston: Little, Brown, 1903), pp. 90-93.

basis of professional status and in certain instances allowed that success in the marketplace could be a means of validating artistic worth. When Chaliapin left the Mariinsky to join Mamontov's private troupe, he was earning a modest salary of two hundred rubles a month. Mamontov trebled this sum and agreed to pay the singer's fine for breaking his contract with the Imperial Theatres. Three years and several triumphs later, Chaliapin rejoined his former company as a star.[56] His proven worth in the cultural marketplace at home and abroad effectively breached the Imperial monolith. In this, as in so many other instances, Mamontov anticipated relationships that Diaghilev would make commonplace.

Although the key values of the Silver Age's "private" culture had their origins in the distinctive mores of the merchant class, the era did not altogether lack its complement of aristocratic patrons. Princess Maria Tenisheva, whose estate at Talashkino became a center for the craft revival and neo-Slavic movement, had collected Bakst water colors as far back as the early 1890's[57] and had paid Benois a stipend of one hundred rubles a month for three years while he was a student.[58]

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[56]Bill, p. 129.

[57]Kennedy, p. 279.

[58]Grover, p. 281.

She also bought his drawings, and beginning in 1896, employed him on a number of commissions. He purchased watercolors for her collection in Paris, assisted in organizing exhibitions of her art work, and helped install the Russian portion of her collection in the new Russian Museum of Alexander III.[59] During the first two years of its existence, she lent considerable financial support to Mir iskusstva, no less than 12,500 rubles in the banner year of the journal's publication.[60] Although her falling out with the Diaghilev circle precluded further support of its activities, it was at Talashkino that Nicolas Roerich and Igor Stravinsky gathered the Slavic ritual and cult material incorporated into Le Sacre du Printemps. In 1897, Prince Oldenburg, possibly acting through the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts (a private organization with an Imperial charter), "charged" Diaghilev with organizing an exhibition of Scandinavian painting.[61] Bakst's early patron and "pupil", Count Dmitrii Benckendorf, also supported Diaghilev's activities. Kinsman of the Grand Marshal of the Imperial Court, he, along with Ivan Morozov, Alexander Glazunov, and Nikolai

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[59]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 184; Kennedy, p. 253.

[60]Grover, p. 283.

[61]"Autobiographie de Serge de Diaghilev," trans. Boris Kochno, Fonds Kochno, Pièce 122, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.

Rimsky-Korsakov, lent his name to the distinguished patronage committee of Boris Godunov when it was staged at the Paris Opéra in 1908.[62] Identified even more closely with the Diaghilev circle was Prince Vladimir Argutinsky-Dolgorukov, a passionate collector and longstanding intimate of both Diaghilev and Filosofov.[63] A diplomat in the Paris Embassy during Diaghilev's initial ballet seasons, he advised the Imperial Museum on proposed purchases.[64] It was Argutinsky-Dolgurakov, moreover, who personally guaranteed the last-minute loan from an English bank that enabled Diaghilev to complete preparations for the 1909 season.[65] He came to the rescue again the following spring, countersigning a three-month bill for one thousand pounds borrowed from a friend of Walter Nouvel's mother.[66] Shortly thereafter, when the promised Imperial subsidy of 25,000 rubles was suddenly withdrawn, he, together with Filosofov's brother-in-law, A.N. Ratkoff-

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[62]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 277; Charles Spencer, Leon Bakst (London: Academy Editions, 1973), pp. 18, 24; Nijinska, p. 321; Boris Godunov program, Astruc Papers, NYPL.

[63]Bowlt, Silver Age, pp. 60, 92.

[64]Prince Peter Lieven, The Birth of the Ballets-Russes, trans. L. Zarine (London, 1936; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1973), p. 251.

[65]I am grateful to Professor Ilya Samoilovitch Zilburstein of Moscow for providing me with this information.

[66]Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 193.

Rognoff, signed a short-term bill for the requisite sum.[67]

If select members of the aristocracy provided occasional aid and support, their contribution pales by contrast to that of the merchant class. To the future organizers of the Ballets Russes, this group offered both an aesthetic and an organizational alternative to the Imperial stage. From the world of merchant, industrial, and financial capital, moreover, came Diaghilev's early patrons and the substantial contributions that ensured the successful outcome of his projects. Mamontov's support of Mir iskusstva has already been mentioned. To his name must be added several others whose aid suggests the "mixed" financial character of Diaghilev's early undertakings. With Mamontov's arrest in 1899 for embezzlement and Princess Tenisheva's decision the following year to discontinue her patronage, Mir iskusstva received a three-year subsidy of 10,000 rubles from Nicholas II.[68] Imperial subsidy ensured the continued publication of the journal from 1901 until 1904, when owing to the costly war with Japan it was not renewed. In the interim, however, help came from friends and admirers in the private sector,

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[67]Lieven, pp. 116, 248.

[68]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 209; "Valentin Serov v vospominaniiakh, dnevnikakh i perepike sovremennikov," T.I.L., 1971, p. 675. I am indebted to Prof. Zilburstein for the Russian source material on which the following discussion is based.

including Ilya Ostroukhov, a wealthy Moscow merchant who sat on the Tretiakov's Board of Trustees and was an intimate of the Mamontov circle, and Sergei S. Botkin, heir to a famous Moscow tea importing fortune and future member of Diaghilev's ballet "organizing committee".[69] Both Botkin and Ostroukhov collected the work of Mir iskusstva artists such as Konstantin Somov.[70] Botkin purchased Valentin Serov's original drawing of Pavlova in Les Sylphides that was used as the poster for the 1909 season. He also performed administrative duties for the Diaghilev company prior to his death in 1910.

The resounding success of Diaghilev's exhibition of Russian Historical Portraits at St. Petersburg's Tauride Palace in 1905 attracted additional supporters in commercial and industrial circles. For the exhibition of Russian art at the Paris Salon d'Automne the following year, Diaghilev succeeded in raising 30,000 rubles in Moscow, although precisely how he amassed so large a sum

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[69]Serge Diaghilev, Letter to I.S. Ostroukhov, 13 April 1900, Manuscript Dept., Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow; D. Filosofov, "S.S. Botkin," Moscow, 31 Jan. 1910; Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 94. A longstanding intimate of the Diaghilev circle, Botkin, like his brother Alexander, married one of Pavel Tretiakov's daughters. Sergei Shchukin, the art patron and collector was a first cousin. Through marriage, he became a brother-in-law of Bakst. Benois, Reminiscences, p. 183. For genealogical tables of the leading Moscow merchant families, see Owen, pp. 222-227. Ostroukhov's superb collection of ikons now hangs in the Tretiakov Gallery. Grover, p. 159, n. 6.

[70]Kennedy, p. 226.

remains unclear.[71] The patronage committee, over which Comtesse Elisabeth Greffuhle presided, comprised "major collectors of St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Kiev", and one may speculate that backers materialized opportunely from among that group.[72] As we shall see, Diaghilev's foreign enterprises from 1906-1909 reaped both the prestige and material benefit of Imperial patronage. Additional cash outlays were always required, however, and these appear to have come not from traditional patronage circles but from a newer group of capitalists who were willing to invest in Diaghilev's undertakings in exchange for patents of nobility or other payoffs. The most important of these were the directors of the Russian-American Rubber Manufacturing Company, who helped underwrite both the 1907 series of Russian Historical Concerts and the 1908 production of Boris Godunov. They also contributed to the

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[71]Walter Nouvel, Letter to Alexandre Benois, 30 July/12 Aug. 1906, Manuscript Dept., Russian State Museum, Leningrad.

[72]Comtesse Elisabeth Greffuhle, Draft letter, 6 Oct. 1906, GA103-12, Astruc Papers, NYPL. Benois called the Hirshmans, a Russian couple temporarily installed in Paris, the "Maecenas" of the Exhibition. Alexandre Benois, Memoirs, trans. Moura Budberg (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), II, 232n. What relationship, if any, they bore to Genrietta Leopoldovna Girshman, the nouvelle riche subject of a 1910-1911 portrait by Somov, remains to be clarified. Bowlt, Silver Age, pp. 204, 210.

1909 ballet season.[73] For their generosity, Messieurs Gilse van der Pals and Neuscheller were rewarded with a place on the Boris patronage committee.[74] Another contributor to the Boris season, although not similarly honored, was the famous millionaire-grocer Eliseev, whose emporium on the Nevsky Prospekt was the St. Petersburg equivalent of Fortnum and Mason.[75] Gabriel Astruc, whose Société Musicale produced the 1909 ballet season, claimed

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[73]A.A. Ziloti, Vospominaniia i pis'ma (Leningrad, 1963), p. 419; Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 150n. Ziloti does not mention their contribution to the 1909 season. Haskell states on Nouvel's authority that 10,000 rubles were contributed to the concert season by "a rich St. Petersburg music lover, Gilse van der Pals, through the intermediary of Nouvel". He does not mention Gilse's contribution to the Boris season in 1908 nor whether this was the same N. van Gilse van der Pals who authored the German-language studies of Rimsky-Korsakov published in Leipzig in 1914 and 1929. In 1909, still another rubber manufacturer materialized as a backer. Identified only as Mr. K., he contributed 100,000 gold rubles to the Diaghilev enterprise on the condition that Grand Duke Vladimir intervene favorably on his application for a patent of nobility. Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 182. Lieven identifies him as "a Riga manufacturer". Lieven, p. 219. Benois calls him "a manufacturer of galoshes", adding this his "ambitious dreams had been guessed by Diaghilev's clever but unscrupulous financial adviser, D." Benois, Reminiscences, p. 279. The identity of "D.", like that of "Mr. K.", remains a mystery.

[74]Gilse Van der Pals was also a member of the organizing committee for the 1907 concert season. The full membership included the chairman, A.S. Taneev, A. Khitrovo, Reineke, N. van Gilse van der Pals, Pedro Galiara, Messager, Broussan, Camille Cheviliara, Arthur Nikitsch, F.M. Blumenfeld, N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, A.K. Glazounov, S.V. Rachmaninoff, Comtesse Greffuhle, and Aristide Briand. A.V. Lunacharsky, V mire muzyki, ed. G.B. Bernandt and I.A. Sats (Moscow, 1958), p. 507.

[75]Petersburgskaia Gazeta, 22 June 1908.

that the enterprise that year rested on Diaghilev's promise to raise 300,000 francs from "Russian capitalists".[76]

The grocers and galoshes manufacturers who helped finance Diaghilev's initial activities in the West signaled a change in the character of patronage. The merchant patrons of the late nineteenth century had been great connoisseurs and collectors. More than that, they had been men of action, who had shared with the artists they patronized the very act of creation. As late as 1929, Stanislavsky could point out a ramp at the Moscow Art Theatre "which had been personally made by S.T. Morozov".[77] Mamontov, too, participated at every level in the dramatic work of his Abramtsevo circle.[78] A veritable Renaissance man, he even devoted the months of his imprisonment to writing the script for an opera, translating the libretto of Mozart's Don Giovanni, and sculpting miniature busts of his jailers.[79] Unlike Stanislavsky's relationship with Morozov, Diaghilev's connection with his newer patrons was essentially economic. The directors of the Russian-American Rubber Manufacturing Company sought more than

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[76]Gabriel Astruc, "Rapport Confidentiel sur la Saison Russe" submitted to Baron Fredericks, Minister of the Imperial Court, 19 Nov. 1909, GA25-17, Astruc Papers, NYPL.

[77]Quoted in Bill, p. 29.

[78]Stanislavsky, pp. 141-143.

[79]Bill, pp. 132-133.

glory or aesthetic pleasure; they wanted a return on their money. That the pay-off came in the form of a title enhancing their social standing rather cash does not alter the character of the exchange. What is important is a question of attitude. Messieurs Neuscheller, Eliseev et al. viewed their investment in terms of the marketplace rather than as an expression of disinterested appreciation.

The merchant class made enormous contributions to Russian culture in the late nineteenth century. To its wealth, taste, and energy may be traced the era's most creative undertakings and the revitalized landscape that nurtured the modernist flowering of the immediate pre-War years. Yet for all its achievements, it did not fundamentally alter the structure of high culture. Like St. John, it discerned in the wilderness of official culture a new way of making art. It prophesied a new age it ultimately lacked the means to create. The habits of patronage of the merchant class, like its "messianic" vision of art,[80] grew out of the philanthropic impulses of the Old Believers. They "bore the stamp of the old merchant psychology of religiosity, peasant orientation, and a striving for gentry rank."[81] When merchant patrons like Tretiakov, Mamontov, and Morozov embarked on cultural

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[80]Kennedy, p. 138.

[81]Owen, pp. 153-154.

adventure, they left their business genius in the factory or mill. They turned their instinct for empire building into a passion for collecting and abandoned the quest for profits to follow the path of glory. Ironically, the class that had laid the foundation of Russia's capitalist economy failed to apply its expertise to cultural enterprise. Holding to the "amateur" ideal, it never created the commercial infra-structure that would have enabled such enterprises to exist independently in the marketplace. Like the Moscow Art Theatre, Mamontov's private opera teetered on the market's edge. It sold tickets and paid performers, but its continued existence depended on the largesse of patrons, and even that had its limits. Thus, its creations, like its personnel, were eventually absorbed by the State which, in the cultural realm at least, enjoyed virtually unlimited resources. Historians have spoken of the "firm alliance" that existed "between the autocracy and capitalism" in the declining years of the Imperial Regime.[82] In artistic as in many other areas the private sector proved to be a "satrap", ancillary rather than equal to the State.[83]

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[82]Lionel Kochan, Russia in Revolution, 1890-1918 (London: Granada, 1970), p. 67.

[83]Ibid.

The failure of the merchant class to develop viable institutions capable of producing high culture on a permanent and self-sustaining basis left theatre artists little recourse outside the official sector. For Benois, "state service" was "unbearable". But as with most artists, "material considerations" prompted him "several times to enter service".[84] An even greater dearth of opportunities faced Diaghilev. An "animateur" without the means of a patron, the constricted sphere of private activity held no place for him. If Diaghilev and his circle had found the operational and artistic model for their undertakings in the "amateur" enterprises of Moscow's merchant barons, they were compelled to look elsewhere for the prestige, political protection, and economic resources to work on a grand scale. For want of an alternative, they turned to the only institutions that could provide them, those of the Imperial State.

Autocracy in Russia was not only sovereign, it was everywhere. Like an octopus, it spread its tentacles into preserves long since appropriated in Western Europe by the private sector or relegated to professionals in the employ of the government. In the realm of cultural activity, particularly, State and Tsar were synonymous. Institutions like the Imperial Academy of Arts, Imperial Ballet School,

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[84]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 108.

and Mariinsky Theatre existed as departments under the bureaucratic jurisdiction of the Court. They were funded by the Imperial Chancellery (and, hence, out of the Tsar's own purse), and headed by relations of the emperor or aristocrats personally appointed and responsible to him. To all intents and purposes, the Imperial Theatres and Imperial training academies existed as fiefs of Nicholas II.

Even if they did not enjoy entree into the highest Court circles, Diaghilev and his colleagues grew up in the shadow of the State and its official culture. Benois came from a family of court architects. His brother Leontii was also an architect and eventually became rector of the Imperial Academy of Arts.[85] Bakst and Somov, whose father was the curator off the Department of Painting at the Hermitage,[86] studied for several years at the Academy of Arts, which Benois also attended in 1887-1888.[87] Both Diaghilev and his cousin Filosofov took degrees at St. Petersburg University, and in 1898 Diaghilev finished the course at the Conservatory.[88] Their families, moreover, had a history of State service. Diaghilev's father served

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[85]Kennedy, p. 244.

[86]Ibid., p. 214.

[87]Ibid., p. 38.

[88]"Autobiographie de Serge de Diaghilev," Fonds Kochno, Piece 122.

many years as an officer in the Chevaliers-Gardes, the most "exclusive" cavalry regiment of the guards, and his step-brothers entered the cadet corps.[89] The Filosofovs enjoyed even closer ties to the government. Dima's father had occupied the post of Military Prosecutor, while a cousin, Dmitrii Aleksandrovitch Filosofov, became the Minister of Commerce and Industry in 1906.[90]

The early Diaghilev circle grew to artistic maturity in the cultivated atmosphere of the era's "amateur" culture. Benois' memoirs paint a vivid picture of the family puppet shows and musicales that encouraged the artist's creative development as a child. Diaghilev, too, breathed music almost from the time he could remember in the musical salon of his stepmother in Perm. Sophisticated as it was, however, amateur activity bowed before the grand spectacle of the Imperial Theatres. With their sumptuous decor, armies of dancers and supernumeraries, and guest artists culled from the finest theatres of Western Europe, their productions left a mark on the young and impressionable aesthetes that neither time nor involvement with the avantgarde eradicated.

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[89]Haskell, Diaghileff, pp. 10, 36.

[90]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 117; V.I. Gurko, Features and Figures of the Past (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1939), pp. 608-609; "Notes autobiographiques de Serge de Diaghilev," trans. Boris Kochno, Fonds Kochno, Piece 122, p. 16.

"Unforgettable matinee!" rhapsodized Bakst about the Mariinsky's original production of Sleeping Beauty in 1890. "I lived in a magic dream for three hours, intoxicated with fairies and princesses, splendid palaces flowing with gold, in the enchantment of the old tale. My whole being was as if swayed in cadence to the rhythms, the radiant flow of refreshing and beautiful melodies . . . That evening, I believe, my vocation was determined."[91] That same year the young Pickwickians, as the group styled itself, also attended the first performances of Borodin's Prince Igor.[92] Decades later, Diaghilev would present both these works in the West.

To a remarkable degree, the audience that attended the ballet at St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre mirrored the State that produced it. At performance after performance (two were given every week during the season) the same faces could be discerned in the hall. "If any audience ever became what is often referred to as 'one big family,' it was the ballet audience at the Mariinsky

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[91]Bakst recalled this production in a note in the Alhambra program when the Tchaikovsky-Petipa masterpiece was amounted in London in 1921. For this first full-length production in the West Bakst did the designs. Quoted in Richard Buckle, Homage to the Designers of Diaghilev (1909-1929). An Exhibition Made on Behalf of the Theatre Museum, London (Palazzo Grassi-Venice, 15 June - 14 Sept. 1975), n.p.

[92]Richard Buckle, Diaghilev (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), pp. 18-20.

Theatre."[93] Not only was this public a stable one; it was also remarkably homogeneous. Indeed, as Anatole Chujoy has noted in a monograph on Russian balletomania, few members of that privileged public were not in some way connected with the Imperial Court.[94]

For nearly a decade, the Mariinsky conditioned the tastes and expectations of the Diaghilev circle. It

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[93]Anatole Chujoy, "Russian Balletomania," Dance Index, 7, No. 3 (March 1948), 50.

[94]Ibid., p. 49. "The Russian Imperial Court," writes Chujoy, "was a rather big institution. At the beginning of our century there were nineteen separate courts in St. Petersburg: the Czar's, the dowager Czarina's and seventeen grand-ducal courts. With the families of the Czar and the grand dukes, courtiers of many callings and ranks. ladies and gentlemen-in-waiting, relatives of these dignitaries, the well-staffed Ministry of the Court, etc., etc., the courts comprised several thousand people. In addition, there were His Majesty's Convoy, the Guard Regiments -- cavalry, artillery and infantry -- and the naval Guard Equipage. Foreign embassies with their large staffs of socially prominent secretaries, dragomans, etc. were also close to the Court and finally there were the aristocratic clubs, such as the Nobles' Club, the English Club, the Yacht Club and others.

In short, there were enough people in the Czar's entourage to fill all three St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres open to the public and the three smaller ones, the Hermitage (attached to the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg) and summer theatres at Czarskoye Selo and Krasnoie Selo, to which the general public was not admitted.

Now if we consider that of all the theatres in and around St. Petersburg ballet was given regularly only at the Mariinsky, with a seating capacity of some twenty-five hundred, and that the entire ballet season consisted of fifty performance of which forty were by subscription, it follows that there was not much room left for people who, in one way or another, were not connected with the Court, the Guard, the Government, the press or the theatre itself."

inculcated the high standard of professionalism that distinguished Ballets Russes productions from the beginning. It provided the opera-house model replicated in the lavish scale and character of Diaghilev's pre-War repertory and the prestige that enabled him to elevate the Ballets Russes to the status of a major attraction in the international operatic marketplace. As an art form, ballet in Imperial Russia was inseparable from both the substance and form of aristocracy. Splendor of appearance vied for distinction with nobility of caste, and if the aristocracy of blood won out in the opera house of the Tsars, its grandeur was replicated in the aristocracy of taste that frequented Diaghilev's theatrical rituals in the West. From the cream and blue hall of the Mariinsky, moreover, came the myth of Imperial succession, consciously nurtured by Diaghilev, that attached itself to the Ballets Russes long after the company had severed all but the most tenuous connection with the Imperial Theatres.

Diaghilev's appointment in 1899 to the post of special assistant to the Director of the Imperial Theatres recruited Mir iskusstva to State service. Under the enlightened administration of Prince Serge Volkonsky, who succeeded his uncle, Ivan Aleksandrovich Vsevolojsky, a "barin" of the old school,[95] in the post of Director, Bakst

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[95]"Notes autobiographiques de Serge de Diaghilev," p. 3.

and Benois received their first theatrical commissions. Le Coeur de la Marquise, a French pantomime-ballet presented at the Hermitage Theatre, had designs by Bakst. The same theatre, a private domain of the Imperial family to which the public was not admitted, provided the setting for Benois' debut as a professional designer in Cupid's Revenge, a lackluster opera by Aleksandr Taneev, head of the Imperial Chancellery. These represented the first of many assignments undertaken for the Imperial Theatres over the next decade. Other members of the Mir iskusstva group received commissions as well, including Dmitrii Filosofov, who was appointed to the repertory committee of the Alexandrinskii Theatre. Valentin Serov, then engaged in painting a life study of Nicholas II, brought Mir iskusstva even closer to the center of power. Thanks to cordial relations with his Imperial subject, he successfully

petitioned the Tsar for the subsidy that enabled the journal to survive.[96]

While Diaghilev's dismissal for insubordination under Point No. 3 of the Civil Service Contract in 1901 barred him from re-entering the Imperial service,[97] it did not prevent him from cultivating powerful alliances within the Imperial family. Even during the battle of wills over the production of Sylvia that precipitated Volkonsky's request for his dismissal, Diaghilev had enjoyed the protection of Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch, then allied with Mathilde Kschessinska, the Mariinsky's prima ballerina assoluta and one-time mistress of the Tsar.[98] In composer Aleksandr Taneev, head of the Imperial Chancellery (a post that afforded personal access to the Tsar) and father-in-

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[96]Valentin Serov v vospominaniakn dnevnikakh i perepiske sovremennikov," T.I.L., 1971, p. 675. I am grateful to Prof. Zilberstein for this reference. Other members of the Mir iskusstva circle found employment in State service. Upon his return to St. Petersburg in 1901, Mstislav Dobuzhinskii took up a minor post in the office of the Ministry of Communications. Kennedy, p. 311. Walter Nouvel held a position in the Imperial Chancellery until the Revolution, according to Lieven (p. 50). Michel Georges-Michel described his post as "attache for special missions to the Minister of the Court." Michel Georges-Michel, Ballets Russes: Histoire anecdotique suivie du Pòeme de Shéhérazade (Paris: Editions du Monde Nouveau, 1923), p. 11. A friend since the early 1890's, Nouvel assisted Diaghilev in his various pre-War enterprises and returned to his side after emigrating from the Soviet Union in the 1920's.

[97]Bowlt, Silver Age, p. 160.

[98]Prince Serge Wolkonsky, My Reminiscences, trans. A.E. Chamot (London: Hutchinson, [1925]), II, 74.

law of the Tsarina's lady-in-waiting, Anna Vyrubova,[99] Diaghilev found another sympathetic ally. Thanks to Taneev's intercession, the dismissed civil servant received a nominal post in the Ministry of the Court and a regular salary until 1917.[100] Taneev also contributed financial support to Diaghilev's Paris season of historical concerts in 1907,[101] and at Diaghilev's insistence his name appeared on the posters, circulars, and programs for that enterprise.[102] From the era of his involvement with the Imperial Theatres also dates the beginning of what Diaghilev described as his "ten years" of "Court service" under the Tsar's uncle, Grand Duke Vladimir.[103] This "highly cultivated" President of the Imperial Academy of Arts, who controlled "all the artistic institutions of the country",[104] took a close interest in the Diaghilev circle and was regarded by his cousin Grand Duke Alexander

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[99]Alex de Jonge, The Life and Times of Grigorii Rasputin (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1982), pp. 158-159.

[100]Bowlt, p. 160.

[101]A.N. Skriabin, Pis'ma (Moscow, 1965), pp. 471-472. I am grateful to Prof. Zilberstein for providing me with this information.

[102]Serge Diaghilev, Telegram to Gabriel Astruc, 22 April 1907, Astruc Papers, NYPL.

[103]"Around the World with the Russian Ballet: A Previously Unpublished Interview with Serge Diaghilev," ed. Parmenia Migel Ekstrom, Dance Magazine, Sept. 1979, p. 48.

[104]Ibid.

Mikhailovich as Diaghilev's "original financial backer".[105] He confided the artistic education of his children to Bakst, made frequent purchases at Mir iskusstva exhibitions, and came to Diaghilev's aid in securing the vast halls of the Imperial Academy of Arts for the group's third and most ambitious show.[106] After 1906, this eldest uncle of the Tsar, who bore Diaghilev great personal affection,[107] stood godfather to his various undertakings, securing subsidies and other forms of material assistance and protecting him from intriguing enemies at Court. Still another Grand Duke contributed to the web of Imperial influence through which Diaghilev hoped to regularize his position. In 1903, he obtained the patronage of the Tsar's cousin Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovitch, the most scholarly and historically-minded of the Grand Dukes,[108] for the 1905 Exhibition of Russian Historical Portraits then in the planning stage. The idea behind the project had originated with Benois, who had collaborated on a show organized along similar if more modest lines by Baron N.N. Wrangel in 1902. Diaghilev had refused to take part in that venture, wrote

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[105]Alexander, Grand Duke of Russia, Once a Grand Duke (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1932), p. 137.

[106]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 267; Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 93.

[107]"Notes autobiographiques de Serge de Diaghilev," p. 14.

[108]Alexander, Once a Grand Duke, pp. 146-147.

Benois, "on the pretext that it was not on a sufficiently serious footing".[109] By contrast, the magnificent testimonial to the Russian portrait tradition which came to life at the Tauride Palace proved a tribute to Diaghilev's utter professionalism, a measure of the distance he had traveled from his debut in the circles of "amateur" culture. But Diaghilev did more than prove his professional mettle. He succeeded in transforming the exhibition into a State occasion, as if to demonstrate once and for all the absurd injustice of his dismissal from government service. Through the influence of Nikolai Mikhailovitch, Diaghilev received a "very substantial subsidy from the Emperor".[110] which ironically offset the straitened material circumstances in which the withdrawal of the Tsar's support of Mir iskusstva had left him.[111] At the request of his cousin, moreover, the Tsar lent his "Most August Protection" to the exhibition, and surrounded by his family and suite paid a formal visit to the opening, which took place in the aftermath of "Bloody Sunday".[112]

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[109]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 232.

[110]Ibid.

[111]Serge Diaghilev, Letter to I.S. Ostroukhov, [1905], Manuscript Dept., Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow. After the journal ceased publication Diaghilev was compelled to sell part of his art collection. I am grateful to Prof. Zilberstein for providing me with this information.

[112]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 234.

If the patronage of the Imperial family gave promise of regularizing Diaghilev's position, the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres eluded him on political grounds. From 1902 to 1904, Mir iskusstva waged open war against Vladimir Teliakovskii, the retired officer of the Household Cavalry who had succeeded Volkonsky as director in 1901.[113] Benois wrote severely critical reviews of Teliakovskii's productions of Don Quixote, Sylvia, The Magic Mirror, and Ruslan and Ludmilla, while Diaghilev in an article on "The Ballets of Delibes" voiced strong dissatisfaction with the banality of works mounted by the Imperial Theatres.[114] On September 15, 1905 Diaghilev launched a major attack on Teliakovskii and the theatre administration in the newspaper Rus'. Entitled "The Program of the Director of the Imperial Theatres", his article blamed the lack of interesting new plays and operas on a director who had no artistic policy and provided no field in which new talent might flourish.[115] Two months later, with the country still in the throes of revolution, Diaghilev submitted a report to the Minister of Education proposing a radical restructuring of the cultural

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[113]Kennedy, pp. 348-349; Benois, Reminiscences, pp. 220-223.

[114]Kennedy, pp. 348-349.

[115]Ibid, p. 349.

bureaucracy. Advocating the transfer of the Academy of Arts and the Imperial Theatres from the Ministry of the Imperial Court to the Ministry of Education, he called upon the new government to undertake a sweeping program of cultural reform.

> In a time of forthcoming reforms and reorganization of Departments and Ministries, the question of the artistic life of the country and the distribution of responsibility to art-administrative organs is extremely important. This question, apparently at first glance not sufficiently substantive in comparison with the major reforms of government structure, nonetheless ought of necessity to arise at one of the first meetings of the State Duma . . . The government will have to take artistic life under its protection in the name of the eternal and uncompromising demands of culture . . . Those reforms which were carried out decades ago in the West -- reforms of art education, theatrical institutions, museums and storehouses, organization of exhibition pavilions, preservation of monuments of the past, finally the material position of people working in the field of the arts -- have not touched Russia.[116]

Diaghilev's bid for the theatre Directorate signified an open attack on Baron Vladimir Borisovich Fredericks, the powerful Minister of the Imperial Court who, through his access to the emperor, controlled appointments to major posts. Teliakovskii was a protégé of Fredericks, by some accounts his "neveu adopté". A former Lieutenant-General and Aide-de-Camp General to the Tsar, Fredericks had filled the most important posts at court

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[116]Quoted ibid., p. 45.

with former regimental colleagues, among whom there existed bonds of unshakeable loyalty.[117] In the enmity of Baron Fredericks lies one of the keys to Diaghilev's ultimate failure to secure either the coveted Directorate or significant funding for his ballet undertakings.

From 1906 to 1908, however, Diaghilev's star continued to rise. Intrigue failed to dam the flow of Imperial patronage, and there was even talk that he would "build a new theatre".[118] Despite his later assertion that he had "never received a single kopek from the Russian government",[119] his activities in these years depended heavily on government financing. Crown monies covered the deficit on the Paris exhibition of 1906, which cost 300,000 rubles and brought in only 25,000.[120] The concert season at the Paris Opera the following year and the production

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[117]Haskell, Diaghilev, p. 119; Gurko, p. 649. The allusion to Teliakovskii being Fredericks' "adopted nephew" appears in miscellaneous notes in Folder 8 Box 8 of the Joseph Paget-Fredericks Collection, University of California, Berkeley. Paget-Fredericks was a great-nephew of Baron Fredericks and allegedly the recipient of ministerial documents that were brought out of Russia by Lady Muriel Paget who organized relief work after the Revolution. The original documents, on which Paget-Fredericks' surviving manuscripts were based, disappeared after his death in 1963.

[118]Vsevolod Meyerhold, Letter to his wife, [1906]; quoted in Konstantin Rudnitsky, Meyerhold the Director, trans. George Petrov, ed. Sydney Schultze, introd. Ellendea Proffer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981), p. 81.

[119]"Notes autobiographiques de Serge de Diaghilev," p. 15.

[120]Lieven, p. 220.

there in 1908 of Boris Godunov were also subsidized by the Russian Crown,[121] its contribution to the latter being, in the words of Diaghilev's second-in-command, M.D. Calvocoressi, "a huge one".[122] Gabriel Astruc's breakdown of capital for the 1909 gives a figure of 50,000 francs under the rubric of government subsidy, while in their memoirs Lieven and Kschessinska mention sums ranging from Frs. 30,000 to Frs. 71,000.[123] The planning for Boris found Diaghilev scuttling from one government office to the next. "Don't forget," he admonished Rimsky-Korsakov on May 2, 1907, "I have to convince the Grand Duke Vladimir that our undertaking is useful from the national point of view; the Minister of Finance -- that it is profitable from the economic point of view; and even the Director of Theatres that it will be of benefit for the Imperial Theatres. And

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[121] Ibid.

[122] M.D. Calvocoressi, Musicians Gallery: Music and Ballet in Paris and London (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), p. 191.

[123] "Saison russe (mai-juin 1909)," GA26-6, Astruc Papers, NYPL; Lieven, p. 220; H.S.H. Princess Romanovsky-Krassinsky, Dancing in Petersburg: The Memoirs of Kschessinska, trans. Arnold Haskell (1961; rpt. New York: Da Capo, 1977), p. 111. The exchange rate at the time was 2.6 francs to the ruble and 25.2 francs to the pound. William Tate, Tate's Modern Cambist, 25th ed. (London: Effingham, Wilson, 1912), p. 108.

how many others!"[124] Imperial largesse underwrote these enterprises in still other ways. Many of the priceless works of art included in the 1906 exhibition were personally loaned by the Tsar from Imperial collections.[125] For Boris Godunov, Diaghilev chose his principal artists from among the best the Imperial Theatres had to offer; he "borrowed" his chorus from the Bolshoi as well as his team of carpenters and stagehands; even the orchestra came from the Imperial Theatres.[126] The following year, through the influence of Grand Duke Vladimir, "permission" was obtained from the Tsar for Diaghilev "to select a troupe from the Imperial Ballet".[127] In 1908 and 1909, moreover, the Tsar's private Hermitage Theatre was loaned to Diaghilev for rehearsals, another indirect subsidy for which Grand Duke Vladimir was reponsible.[128] Indeed, Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich's later assertion that through the "generosity" of his brother-in-law Nicholas II Diaghilev "joined the list of the subsidized theatres" aptly describes the impresario's position in the years

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[124]Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov, My Musical Life, trans. Judah A. Joffe, ed. Carl van Vechten (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), p. 436.

[125]Benois, Reminiscences, p. 237.

[126]"Notes autobiographiques de Serge de Diaghilev," p. 11; Benois, Reminiscences, p. 267.

[127]"Around the World With the Russian Ballet," p. 48.

[128]Benois, Reminiscences, pp. 280-281.

immediately following the 1905 Revolution.[129] If private capital underwrote the lion's share of costs, Diaghilev's undertakings bore the official imprimatur of a "State enterprise".[130]

Economic aid was more than a sign of personal favor. It reflected a larger design on the part of the regime, a game of international cultural politics in which Diaghilev, like today's Bolshoi Ballet, was but one among a host of finance and foreign office players. On April 16, 1906, an international banking consortium composed primarily of French and British capital negotiated the largest loan ever made to the government of Nicholas II.[131] This transaction not only saved Russia from financial collapse, but enabled the regime to reestablish its authority after the disastrous war with Japan and the Revolution of 1905. Despite liberal opposition to the loan

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[129]Alexander, Grand Duke of Russia, Once a Grand Duke, pp. 159-160.

[130]Soviet ballet historian Yuri Slominsky makes this point in his introduction to the Russian edition of Fokine's memoirs. Yuri Slonimsky, "Fokine and His Time," in Mikhail Fokine, Against the Tide: Memoirs of the Balletmaster, Articles, and Letters (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1962), p. 37.

[131]Olga Crisp, "The Russian Liberals and the 1906 Anglo-French Loan to Russia," The Slavonic and East European Review, 39 (1960-1961), p. 497.

in France, diplomatic pressures forced it through.[132] Russia comprised an essential link in France's vision of an alliance to contain German power, and the French foreign office successfully exploited Russia's dire need for financial aid to prevent a Russo-German rapprochement and encourage the Anglo-Russian convention signed in 1907.[133]

Diaghilev's initial enterprises in the West coincided with the cementing of these new diplomatic alignments. They publicly acknowledged the Tsar's gratitude to the French for saving his regime from collapse and testified to a renewal of commitment between the two allies. As cultural missions, moreover, they were living proof of the vitality of Russian art and of the existence of a national patrimony on a par with that of any European state. Above all, the cultural politics of the years 1906-1909, in which Diaghilev played a central role, sought to confirm the status of Russia as a major power.

Thus, it is of particular interest to note the close links between Diaghilev and Imperial representatives

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[132] Ibid., pp. 497-498, p. 501. To still opposition to the loan in the Paris press, the Ministry of Finance resorted to nothing less than bribery. On April 26, 1906 Le Petit Journal, Le Petit Parisien, Le Temps, and L'Auxiliaire each received 100,000 francs; Le Journal was paid 80,000, L'Echo de Paris, 70,000; Le Matin and L'Eclair each received 60,000. René Girault, "Sur Quelques Aspects financiers de l'alliance franco-russe," Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine, 8 (1961), 76.

[133] Crisp, pp. 506-507.

in the French capital that lent his activities the status of an official mission. In an interview conducted shortly before his death, Diaghilev stated that "in 1906 I was sent to Paris to organize, at the Grand Palais in the Champs-Elysées, a retrospective exhibition of the art treasures of the Russian court and the Imperial museums."[134] Although Diaghilev does not actually identify who sent him, the context suggests that it was Grand Duke Vladimir, who served as president of the exhibition and headed the list of patrons named in the catalogue. Two of the three honorary presidents held government positions: A.J. Nelidov, the Russian Ambassador to France, and Dujardin-Beaumetz, the French Under-Secretary of Fine Arts, both of whom lent Diaghilev their patronage up to 1909, as did Grand Duke Vladimir before his death in the spring of that year. Nelidov was not alone among the Embassy staff in assisting Diaghilev. The 1906 Exhibition ejoyed the "strong and solid support" of the Embassy, wrote Benois, as did Boris Godunov two years later.[135] The Embassy also used its considerable prestige to influence the press. In April 1909, for instance, "a gentleman", acting "on behalf of the Embassy", asked the editor of Le Temps to insert a

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[134]"Around the World With the Russian Ballet," p. 48. The italics are mine.

[135]Benois, Memoirs, II, p. 230. For Embassy support of Boris Godunov, see Chapter 8 below.

favorable notice about the forthcoming ballet season in the newspaper. The caller added that such a notice "would be very agreeable to the Grand Dukes".[136] Moreover, it was from among the banking and financial connections of Arthur Raffalovich, the Russian Government's powerful financial agent in Paris, that significent amounts of the guaranty capital for the 1909 season were raised.[137] Among Diaghilev's backers that year were Baron Henri de Rothschild, whose banking firm had a history of investments in Russia,[138] André Bénac, "administrateur" of the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas, the leader of the so-called "Christian" group of banks that had participated in the 1906 loan,[139] and Basil Zaharoff, a Turkish-born financier

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[136]Gabriel Astruc, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 22 April 1909, Astruc Papers, NYPL.

[137]Pierre Michaut, "Souvenir de Serge de Diaghilew," L'Opinion," 1 Sept. 1934. In an article published after Diaghilev's death, Astruc claimed that Raffalovich was also a subscriber. Gabriel Astruc, "Le premier feu d'artifice," La Revue Musicale, 1 Dec. 1930, p. 45.

[138]Blackwell, The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization, pp. 243-244.

[139]"Bénac, André," Dictionnaire de Biographie française, 1951 ed.; The Memoirs of Count Witte, trans. and ed. Abraham Yarmolinsky (London: Heinemann, 1921), pp. 293-29. Edoard Netzlin, the representative of the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas in the 1905-1906 loan negotiations was head of the Russian banking syndicate in Paris and the "unofficial agent of the French government" in 1905. Out of My Past: The Memoirs of Count Kokovtsov, Russian Minister of Finance, 1904-1914, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, 1911-1914 (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1935), pp. 42-43.

of Russian parentage whose shipbuilding, oil, and munitions enterprises made him "one of the world's richest men".[140] Other subscribers from the Raffalovich circle were Comte Isaac de Camondo and Henri Deutsch de la Meurthe.[141] Such support within Embassy circles attests to a public link between Diaghilev's enterprises and the Imperial Government, a link that remained operative until the spring of 1910, when "the Tsar was persuaded to command all Russian embassies to refuse any support to the Diaghileff enterprise".[142] One should also note that the title Diaghilev used in signing contracts through 1909, "Attaché to the Personal Chancellery of His Majesty, the Emperor of Russia," conveyed to the French that he was conducting business under an "official mandate".[143]

Diaghilev's success proved the value of the Tsarist policy of cultural export. But Diaghilev did not reap the fruits of his labors on behalf of the Imperial government for long. As early as June 1909, Pierre Gheusi, a highly placed Paris Opéra official whom Diaghilev had approached for support, was writing privately, "There will be no <u>official</u> Russian season next year in Paris. This is

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[140]Gurko, p. 618.

[141]See Chapter 8 below.

[142]Lieven, p. 116.

[143]Gabriel Astruc, "Rapport confidentiel sur la saison russe," 19 Nov. 1909, GA25-17, Astruc Papers, NYPL.

the express will of the Russian court and the Grand Dukes."[144] The following year, Diaghilev met open hostility and contempt in Embassy circles.[145]

In exhibition and musical activities, Diaghilev knew no equal; he enjoyed a monopoly of those fields in terms of representing the Imperial government abroad. In ballet, however, a new element had appeared on the horizon, a star who could garner Imperial prestige without treading on bureaucratic toes. Anna Pavlova's triumphant tour of 1908 was sponsored by the Mariinsky management,[146] and her performances of the traditional repertory in Central Europe the following year took place under similar auspices.[147] For both these seasons, the claim has been made that Pavlova turned down a government subsidy.[148]

Pavlova enjoyed Imperial favor not only because of her unmatched talent as a dancer. For several years, she had lived under the protection of Baron Viktor Emilianovich

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[144]Pierre Gheusi, Letter to Misia Sert, 27 June 1909, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[145]Lieven, p. 116.

[146]Keith Money, Anna Pavlova: Her Life and Art (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), p. 75.

[147]Ibid., p. 80.

[148]Resumé of documentation for "Russia's Last First Minister and Russian Arts, 1896-1917" and "The Unforgettable Anna Pavlova", Paget-Fredericks Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Dandré, a wealthy contemporary of Diaghilev, who owned considerable property in the Baltic and a vast estate in Poltava.[149] The Baltic connection, like Dandré's business instinct and conservative taste in the arts, endeared him to tradition-minded Baron Fredericks who, it has been alleged, considered appointing him to a post in the Imperial Theatres at the time Diaghilev served as Volkonsky's assistant.[150] There are also suggestions that Diaghilev broached to Dandré the possibility of organizing a ballet organization around Pavlova,[151] and that Fredericks with Dandré "secretly" planned the 1908 Pavlova tour with the backing of the Tsar and Council of Grand Dukes as yet another link in the chain of "politico-cultural gestures" cementing the Entente Cordiale.[152]

These claims must remain conjecture until the documents on which they were based reappear or corroborating evidence turns up in the Soviet archives.

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[149]Joseph Paget-Fredericks, "Russia's Last First Minister and Russian Arts, 1896-1917," TS, n.p., Paget-Fredericks Papers, Bancroft Library. The Fredericks family was known as "the lumber barons of the Baltic". Joseph Paget-Fredericks, "Pavlova Dances: Impressions and Drawings," TS, p. 1, Paget-Fredericks Papers, Bancroft Library.

[150]Paget-Fredericks, "Russia's Last First Minister and Russian Arts, 1896-1917," n.p.

[151]Paget-Fredericks, Resumé of documentation for "Russia's Last First Minister and Russian Arts, 1896-1917" and "The Unforgettable Anna Pavlova".

[152]Paget-Fredericks, "Pavlova Dances," pp. 16, 5-6.

Nevertheless, there exists sufficient circumstantial evidence to lend credence to the argument that with the death of Grand Duke Vladimir in the spring of 1909, Baron Fredericks gained the upper hand in an intrigue designed to blacklist Diaghilev and sever the connection between his foreign enterprises and the Court. Diaghilev had many enemies in Court circles from Kschessinska's protector, Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch (who "kept an historic record" of Pavlova's 1907 and 1908 tours),[153] to the Tsar himself, who, according to several memoirists, never trusted the ambitious young man.[154] Volkonsky has written of the ill-feeling created in the Imperial Theatres by Diaghilev's high-handed ways,[155] and there are suggestions that Diaghilev's homosexuality played a role not only in his dismissal but in Fredericks' active dislike of him.[156] Diaghilev's fund-raising techniques raised eyebrows as well. Galoshes manufacturers and caviar purveyors brought

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[153]Paget-Fredericks, "Pavlova Dances," p. 5.

[154]Lieven, pp. 220-221; Benois, Memoirs, II, 230. Diaghilev apparently also believed this. "The Emperor did not like me," he wrote to W.A. Propert on February 17, 1926. "He thought I was a 'wily' one, and once told my cousin the Minister of Commerce, that he was afraid one day or other I might play him some scurvy trick." Quoted in Lifar, Serge Diaghilev, p. 98.

[155]Haskell, Diaghileff, pp. 111-112; Benois, Reminiscences, pp. 205-207, 210-217; Wolkonsky, My Reminiscences, II, 69-74.

[156]Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 113; Paget-Fredericks, "Pavlova Dances," pp. 6, 15, 17b.

the unsavory odor of money-making to a glorious mission, a taint that caused Grand Duke Vladimir's widow, Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna, to withdraw her patronage.[157] "It was largely due to Diaghileff's methods of obtaining money," Paget-Fredericks later claimed to have been told by his uncle, "that government support was not forthcoming."[158]

In repertory, composition, and structure, the company Diaghilev brought to Paris in 1909 differed radically from the Imperial Ballet. Its aesthetic, like the vast majority of the dancers, represented the aspirations of the "left-wing" innovators who had played an active role in the 1905 strike at the Mariinsky and formed the nucleus of Michel Fokine's supporters. Diaghilev, too, may well have been viewed in Court circles as a liberal after 1905. Patronage of the Exhibition of Russian Portraits that year had come from the "most radical" of the grand dukes, nicknamed "Philippe Egalité" by the elite guard units.[159] The Minister of Education to whom he addressed his 1905 report and under whose jurisdiction he advocated transfer of the Imperial Theatres and Academy of

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[157]Benois, Reminiscences, pp. 279-280; Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 182.

[158]"Pavlova Dances," p. 22.

[159]Alexander, Grand Duke of Russia, Once a Grand Duke, pp. 146-148.

Arts was Count Ivan Tolstoi, a "well-meaning idealist"[160] who had previously served as secretary and vice-president of the Academy.[161] A man sympathetic to Diaghilev's ideas,[162] he lost his post when Count Witte's govern-ment fell from power in April 1906. Subsequently, he served as one of the honorary presidents of Diaghilev's 1906 exhibition.[163] To the arch-conservative Minister of the Court, political differences could easily have compounded personal dislike.

Theoretically, Pavlova was the "star" around whom the 1909 company centered. In reality, however, this was not the case. The Wunderkind of the season turned out to be Nijinsky. The new Vestris created by Diaghilev's publicity not only undermined Pavlova's position, but as a public symbol of Diaghilev's personal inclinations caused no little consternation in Court circles.[164] With attention centered on Nijinsky, Pavlova left the company.

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[160]Gurko, p. 408.

[161]Ibid., p. 667.

[162]Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 125.

[163]"Diaghilev "persuaded me," he wrote on August 8, 1906, "to loan my name, and I could not bring myself to refuse him, since my entire participation was to consist in Diaghilev's signing my name on all the invitations sent out." Count Ivan Tolstoi, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 8 Aug. 1906, Archive of the Academy of Arts. I am grateful to Prof. Zilberstein for providing me with this material.

[164]Paget-Fredericks, "Pavlova Dances," p. 21.

To her withdrawal, Paget-Fredericks claims, Diaghilev later "attributed his lack of success in obtaining from Fredericks further subsidies from the Czar".[165] Certainly, unlike Diaghilev, Pavlova continued to enjoy the blessing of the Imperial Theatres. She returned periodically to grace the Mariinsky stage, and the Imperial government "loaned" to the Max Rabinoff producing organization (upon receipt of a $250,000 bond) the troupe that danced on her first tour of America in 1910.[166] Indeed, as late as November 1915, there was a flurry of interest in the American press about a "project of co-operation" between the "Russian Imperial Opera Company" and the Boston Grand Opera, with which Pavlova and her troupe were then performing.[167] After 1912, when legal difficulties exacerbated in some way by Diaghilev caused him to flee

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[165] Ibid., p. 22.

[166] Money, p. 112.

[167] The statement issued to the New York Times came from Prince Peter Lieven, whose memoir has been cited extensively in these pages. At the time, he was in the United States "representing the Russian Government in financial matters connected with the war and war supplies." Although it was "not represented that Prince Liven [sic] is directly connected with Russian operatic institutions, the statement says that 'his influence both at the Russian court and in all circles of society is questionable'." "Pavlova May Gain An Ally. Hopes for Co-operation of Russian Imperial Opera House," New York Times, 1 Nov. 1915, p. 11, col. 3.

Russia,[168] Dandré linked his life with that of the Pavlova company abroad, becoming the dancer's manager and consort. Whatever "hopes of rehabilitation in the highest circles" Diaghilev may have continued to harbor found no hearing within the Imperial Court.[169]

By 1909, the Imperial regime had rightly discerned in the success of Diaghilev's foreign enterprises an explicit challenge to its cultural monopoly. The effort to destroy him failed, however, because by then he had found the contacts, wherewithal, and expertise to survive in the international marketplace even without government backing. Capital from bankers, financiers, and private patrons flowed into his coffers; artists, disenchanted with the Imperial Theatres, eagerly followed him; in Paris an audience awaited his new creations. By 1909, Diaghilev had created the means for an independent ballet company.

The company that so dazzled Paris audiences in

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[168]Lifar, Diaghilev, p. 136; Paget-Fredericks, "Pavlova Dances," p. 20.

[169]Slonimsky, "Fokine and His Time," p. 38. Bypassing Teliakovskii, Diaghilev asked Baron Fredericks for permission to organize a Paris-style "season" on the Imperial stage. Slonimsky does not give a date for this proposal, which was turned down, but it may well have been for the winter of 1911-1912 when Diaghilev did in fact organize a season at St. Petersburg's Narodny Dom theatre. The season, scheduled to begin in February 1912, was canceled when the "People's Palace" burnt to the ground. The following year, the Mariinsky presented a special "Fokine Month". André Levinson, Ballet Old and New, trans. Susan Cook Summer (New York: Dance Horizons, 1982), p. 64. By that time, Diaghilev had severed all connection with his erstwhile choreographer.

1909 did more than export the subsidized artefacts of the Imperial Theatres. Drawing on the dual legacy of State and merchant patron, he created a new and vital form of artistic organization. With Diaghilev's first saison de danse at the Châtelet Theatre, ballet became a denizen of the modern marketplace.

CHAPTER IV

INTO THE MARKETPLACE

In the annals of ballet, the years 1909-1914 mark a legendary peak of artistic creativity and innovation. But art was not the only sphere where creativity and innovation flourished. As a company with a large payroll and enormous production expenses, the Ballets Russes was an economic undertaking that demanded financial and organizational relationships of a new kind to establish itself in the West.

Abandoning the Imperial Theatres and Russia's "amateur" networks, between 1909 and 1914 Diaghilev linked the fortunes of his enterprise to the European opera house. Here he found the impresarios who promoted his seasons, underwrote his productions, and created the backbone of his influential public. Guiding Diaghilev's plunge into the operatic world was one of the most remarkable impresarios of the era. Producer, publisher, talent manager, and founder of the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Gabriel Astruc stood at the Paris crossroads of the international music world, a major figure in its rapidly-expanding trade in properties and attractions. From 1905-1913, under the aegis of his Société Musicale, he produced the most

imaginative and prestigious events on the Parisian landscape: a Beethoven Festival and season of Italian opera in 1905; a Mozart Festival and the London Symphony in 1906; Richard Strauss' Salomé with its original German cast in 1907; the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 1908; the Metropolitan Opera in 1910, along with virtually all of Diaghilev's "Russian seasons".[1] Through Astruc and his numerous connections in the music capitals of Europe and the New World, Diaghilev negotiated the contracts that enabled him to form an independent organization, secure major financial backing, and appropriate for ballet the ready-made audience of opera's Golden Age.

Although the 1909 season represented a blazing artistic triumph for Diaghilev, it was also a financial disaster. Box office receipts failed to cover the gap between production costs and capital raised from Russian sources, leaving a deficit of some Frs. 86,000. Through Astruc's good offices, one of the season's French guarantors contributed Frs. 10,000. Astruc also arranged to sell Diaghilev's entire stock of costumes, scenery, and accessories -- 668 items in all -- to Raoul Gunsbourg, director of the Monte Carlo Opéra, at the bargain price of Frs. 20,000. This sale ensured that the material for these

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[1]Gabriel Astruc: A Register of His Papers in the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library: Biographical Note; Gabriel Astruc, Le Pavillon des fantômes (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1929).

productions would remain in the West, where they could be used even if Diaghilev himself failed to return.[2]

As a capitalist of art, Astruc was hardly unaware of the new opportunities for profit created by Diaghilev's success. Indeed, in the months immediately following Diaghilev's triumph, he sought to corner the market, appropriating to himself the exclusive role of presenting Russian ballet in the West. During this period, he sounded connections in St. Petersburg for clues to Diaghilev's position. On August 2, 1909, he wrote to Kschessinska, whose relations with Diaghilev were particularly strained, asking when she would be free to review the events of the previous season. "I have learned," he added, "that Monsieur Diaghilev has just negotiated a season at the Paris Opéra for the coming year. Are you aware of this and does it interest you?"[3] Unfortunately for Astruc, the proposed engagement coincided with his plans to produce the stellar event of the 1910 season. With Russian ballet playing at the Opera on the same nights, the success of the Metropolitan Opera on its first visit to Paris would be

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[2]Contract between Serge de Diaghilev/Gabriel Astruc and Raoul Gunsbourg, 7 July 1909, GA28-10; Contract between Serge de Diaghilev and Gabriel Astruc, 29 June 1909, GA27-5; Gabriel Astruc, "Rapport Confidentiel sur la Saison Russe" to Baron Fredericks, Minister of the Imperial Court, [19 Nov. 1909], GA25-17, Astruc Papers.

[3]Gabriel Astruc, Letter to Mathilde Kschessinska, 2 Aug. 1909, GA13-10, Astruc Papers.

seriously jeopardized. "One small detail worries me," he wrote to Emile Enoch. "The Russian with whom I conducted my business last year has the nerve to return to Paris this year and try to compete with me."[4] By late fall, Astruc had embarked on a campaign aimed at discrediting Diaghilev among potential backers of a 1910 season and challenging his exclusive access to Imperial dancers.[5] In mid-November, he called on Grand Duke André, Kschessinska's lover and a sworn enemy of Diaghilev and his enterprise.[6] The day after their interview, he wrote to Baron Fredericks, requesting permission to submit a report of Diaghilev's activities during the previous Russian season.[7] This self-serving document detailed Diaghilev's repeated failures to live up to his contractual obligations and insisted that his behavior had "compromised in France the good name of the administration of the Imperial Theatres." He ended by suggesting that in the future the Minister of the Imperial Court withhold his "official authorization" of an "'amateur impresario' whose credit in Paris has been so

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[4]Gabriel Astruc, Letter to Emile Enoch, 14 Dec. 1909, GA15-12, Astruc Papers.

[5]For drafts of letters written in October and November advising potential backers of the 1909 financial disaster at the Châtelet, see GA14, Astruc Papers.

[6]F. de Coube, Letter to Gabriel Astruc, 17 Nov. 1909, GA15-3, Astruc Papers.

[7]A. Mossoloff, Letter to Gabriel Astruc, 17/30 Nov. 1909, GA20-5, Astruc Papers.

severely damaged".[8] In his eagerness to quash competition in the marketing of Russian ballet talent abroad, Astruc's ruthlessness knew no bounds.

At the same time, Astruc was deep in correspondence with a St. Petersburg impresario about an alternative ballet enterprise for the summer of 1910. His co-conspirator was Boris Schidlowsky, ballet critic for a small St. Petersburg newspaper and husband of Julie Sedova, a première danseuse of the Imperial Ballet whom Diaghilev had failed to engage in 1909. Counting on a campaign in the Russian press to discredit Diaghilev and thus prevent him from raising production money for a 1910 season, Schidlowsky proposed the organization of a troupe headed by Sedova and Pavlova's one-time partner Adolph Bolm (whose ambitions both as a performer and choreographer Diaghilev was unwilling to further), and including other artists "unhappy" with the "small roles" allotted to them in Diaghilev ballets. He suggested that this company be engaged to dance in the opera ballets and divertissements during the Metropolitan season and that if the Diaghilev enterprise should fall through at the last minute (as he thought likely), the two companies could merge and programs of Russian ballet alternate with Italian opera at the

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[8]"Rapport Confidentiel sur la Saison Russe," GA25-17, Astruc Papers.

Châtelet.[9]

On December 24th Diaghilev signed a 100,000 franc contract with the Paris Opéra. By mid-February 1910 he had liquidated his debt to Astruc and also repurchased at least some of the costumes and scenery sold to Gunsbourg the previous summer.[10] An accommodation was reached with Astruc whereby Diaghilev agreed to alternate Ballets Russes performances with those of the Metropolitan so as not to divide the spoils. He also agreed to let the Société Musicale handle advertising and publicity for the forthcoming season. Although the schemes to destroy Diaghilev's monopoly over what had suddenly become a desirable commodity ultimately failed, they attest to what degree the competitive market had intruded by late 1909 into the enterprise of Russian ballet.

The 1910 season at the Paris Opéra established Diaghilev's bargaining position among his fellow impresarios. With a repertory of seven ballets, including Firebird, Stravinsky's first work for the theatre, and

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[9]Boris Schidlowsky, Letters to Gabriel Astruc, 1 Nov. 1909, GA23-12, 24 Nov. 1909, GA23-12, 28 Dec. 1909, GA23-14, 11 Feb. 1910, GA38-8, Astruc Papers.

[10]Nicholas Wilenkin-Minsky, Letter to Gabriel Astruc, 14 Dec. 1909, GA21-4, Astruc Papers; Messrs. Messager and Broussan, Letter to Baron de Gunzburg, 2 June 1910, AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales; Liquidation document signed by Gabriel Astruc, 14 Feb. 1910, AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales; Serge de Diaghilev, Telegram to Gabriel Astruc, 7 Feb. 1910, GA35-3, Astruc Papers.

Schéhérazade, the seraglio tale that had fired the Parisian imagination, Diaghilev proved his mettle as an organizer. Not only did he repeat the artistic success of the previous season, but he demonstrated that he could do so without running afoul of creditors. As Astruc had predicted, receipts fell off from the previous season -- from Frs. 522,000 to Frs. 398,887.[11] Yet despite the drop in income, Diaghilev managed to cover the Frs. 1,210,000 which, by his own estimate, represented the cost of the entire 1910 enterprise.[12]

Part of the deficit was made up by seasons in Berlin and Brussels before and toward the end of the Paris engagement. Other sums came from backers in Russia. These included Savva Morozov, M.A. Kalashnikova, Konstantin Korovin, Baron Dmitri Gunzburg, and Nikolai Bezobrazov. Bezobrazov, "a friend of the Minister of Trade", and Victor Dandré, moreover, guaranteed loans from the Russian Bank and Société Mutual Crédit, respectively.[13] On the French end, the names of the Comtesse de Chévigné, Comtesse de Béarn, and above all, the Marquise de Ganay were touted in

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[11]Confidential Statement of Expenditures, GA28-1, Astruc Papers. Receipts for the 1910 season are in AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales.

[12]"The Black Notebook of Serge Diaghilev," pp. 65-66, Dance Collection, NYPL.

[13]Ibid., p. 14. The description of Bezobrazov comes from Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 259.

St. Petersburg as Diaghilev's "grand appui financier".[14]

Yet no matter how many patrons Diaghilev could muster, the sheer economic demands of ballet on the scale of the Imperial Theatres necessitated the organization of company finances on a more systematic basis. Paris alone could not support the company. The era when a single Maecenas could offset the difference between income and expenditure had passed. With State support no longer forthcoming from Russia, Diaghilev concluded that an independent troupe could survive only as a supra-national touring organization servicing the opera network. With a year-round box office culling receipts from the rapidly-expanding international ballet audience, such a company served to recoup not only operating expenses but production costs as well, the investment life blood of any creative organization.

Diaghilev's negotiations with major opera house directors and impresarios during the period April-December 1910 marked a crucial step in the transit from an ad hoc to permanent company. Heralding Diaghilev's entree into the marketplace of opera's golden age, they ended in a series of draft contracts that offered the foundation upon which a permanent troupe could be formed. In late July and early August, tentative agreements were reached with Giulio

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[14]Jules Martin, Letter to Gabriel Astruc, 8 Dec. 1909; Telegram, n.d., GA36-32, Astruc Papers.

Gatti-Casazza, Managing Director of New York's Metroplitan Opera, and Thomas Quinlan, Manager of the Thomas Beecham Opera Company of London. Five months later, a similar contract was drafted with Messrs. Paradossi and Cansegli of the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires.[15] Together, these three documents, for which Astruc acted as Diaghilev's intermediary (a role he played throughout much of the pre-War period), provided for long-term engagements for the 1911-1912 and 1912-1913 seasons. These agreements represented more than bookings at a particular "house". Organizations like the Metrpolitan wielded influence over a broad sphere of musical enterprise. As producers, they molded public taste, while as theatrical agents they held the key to the touring circuits that brought new audiences and easy profits to the tyro attraction. If Beecham controlled the most prestigious theatres of London's musical world, the Teatro Colón set the standard for Brazil and the River Plate region of South America. Most awesome of all was the power of the Metropolitan, which opened opera houses and legitimate theatres not only across the vast expanse of the U.S. but Canada, Cuba, and Mexico as well. The launching of Diaghilev's independent company

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[15]Draft contracts with the Thomas Beecham Opera Company, 3 Aug. 1910, GA40-1, the Metropolitan Opera, 28 July 1910, GA40-7, and Teatro Coon, Dec. 1910, GA40-13, Astruc Papers. See folders GA34-GA36 for correspondence and other material relating to these negotiations.

rested on his alliance with the powerbrokers of the operatic marketplace.

Although all of these contracts were subsequently renegotiated, they offered the requisite base for a permanent company. In the autumn of 1910, Diaghilev signed up the first dancers for his troupe.[16] During these same months, he received permission from Claude Debussy for a "choreographic adaptation" of "Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune" and commissioned the score of Le Dieu bleu from Reynaldo Hahn.[17] In December, just as Diaghilev advised the Metropolitan via Astruc, "troupe excellente est formée", Nijinsky began the earliest sketches of L'Après-midi d'un faune, the work that marked the debut of ballet's first modern choreographer.[18]

In the years preceding World War I, Diaghilev enjoyed cordial relations with the managements of Europe's established opera houses. His company made regular appearances on the subsidized stages of Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and Vienna, while establishing unofficial

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[16]Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 319.

[17]Claude Debussy, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 26 Oct. 1910, Jean Cocteau Papers, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University; Draft contract between Serge Diaghilev and Reynaldo Hahn, 9 Dec. 1910, GA39-4, Astruc Papers. The contract with Hahn was signed on December 24, 1910.

[18]Serge Diaghilev, Telegram to Gabriel Astruc, 30 Dec. 1910, GA36-7, Astruc Papers; Nijinska, Early Memoirs, pp. 315-316.

headquarters at the Opéra in Monte Carlo during its winter rehearsal period. Reversing Italy's half-century long tradition of exporting balletmasters and dancers, in early 1911 La Scala mounted both Schéhérazade and Cléopâtre with Fokine and Ida Rubinstein being specially engaged for the premieres, one of many signs of the rapid internationalization of the Diaghilev repertoire.[19] Despite these connections, however, established houses did not so much shape company direction as provide a venue for performances. Catering to traditional tastes and audiences, they were unlikely to identify with and promote Diaghilev's brand of artistic innovation. These houses, moreover, all possessed resident ballet troupes which, though artistically inferior, precluded long-term association with a visiting rival.

To a large degree, Diaghilev's success in integrating his company into the era's operatic marketplace relied upon impresarios who operated outside the subsidized mainstream. Newcomers to a world ruled by tradition, men like Gabriel Astruc and Sir Thomas Beecham, the one a rabbi's son and the other the grandson of a manufacturer of patent medicine, or Oscar Hammerstein and Max Rabinoff in

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[19]Direzione Generale, La Scala, Letter to Gabriel Astruc, 14 July 1910, GA37-2, Astruc Papers.

the United States,[20] made their mark by creating alternative organizations that catered to the desire for novelty and innovation among a growing segment of the musical public. Cosmopolitan in taste and outlook, they were entrepreneurs imbued with the religion of high culture who found in the upstart tribe from Russia's steppes the perfect complement of their innovation-minded artistic ideals, a reflection of their status as outsiders, and a means of gaining social and professional legitimacy. With its unusual combination of opulence and artistry, innovation (except for Nijinsky's works) within the acceptable bounds of Art Nouveau, and traditional standards of professionalism, the pre-War Ballets Russes held enormous appeal for their knowledgeable audience of followers.

Diaghilev's connection with these independent

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[20]A Russian-born Jew, Max Rabinoff turned to producing after making his first million in the music business in Chicago. Although he did not bring Pavlova to the United States, he sponsored her most critically acclaimed pre-War tours. In 1915-1916 he organized a joint effort involving the Boston Grand Opera and Pavlowa Ballet Russe which won high praise throughout the country. In the late thirties, he was among the founders of New York's City Center. Max Rabinoff Papers, Manuscript Division, Columbia University.

Oscar Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera House, reputed to be more beautiful than the Metropolitan, also presented high art attractions. The Pavlova company danced there on numerous occasions, and in 1910, there was talk that Hammerstein would bring over the Diaghilev company in a coup aimed at upstaging the Metropolitan. Serge Diaghilev, Telegram to Gabriel Astruc, 24 Jan. 1911, GA36-8, Astruc Papers.

mavericks of the musical world was a marriage of convenience serving both parties. For impresarios like Astruc and Beecham, who produced most of Diaghilev's pre-War seasons in the French and English capitals, a touring company that replicated the producing function of the West's class opera houses had become a financial necessity. As Beecham discovered at the end of 1910 when his first twelve-month venture in opera production at Covent Garden had ended, such efforts were "courting disaster", even with considerable financial backing (in his case that of Beecham senior).[21] "It began to be all too clear to me what I had suspected for some time," he wrote with the hindsight of nearly a decade of production experience, "namely, that without assistance from the state or municipality, a first-rate operatic organization could never be maintained on a permanent basis."

> Individual seasons might now and then be run at a trifling loss . . . But an institution that employs the services of the best available singers, musicians, dancers, mechanicians, producers, and scene painters, is a commercial impossibility and beyond the means of one man, unless he be a multi-millionaire. Modern history, alas, has not yet furnished the refreshing phenomenon of a multi-millionaire who has taken a really serious interest in music.[22]

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[21]Sir Thomas Beecham, A Mingled Chime: An Autobiography (New York: Putnam, 1943), p. 174.

[22]Ibid., p. 295.

The prospects for the survival of a permanent theatre were equally grim, a lesson Astruc learned the hard way when he built and quickly lost the magnificent Art Nouveau Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. The splendid inaugural season, which included Russian opera, ballet, and the premiere of Nijinsky's Sacre du printemps, ended in bankruptcy. In an age when seventy or eighty piece orchestras were de rigueur, when ballet, like opera, filled the grand stage with huge companies and richly-costumed armies of extras, costs precluded production on a regular basis outside subsidized institutions.

Hence the appeal of Diaghilev's prepackaged repertoire and company for hire. For a stipulated fee, one reaped the fruits of someone else's investment while counting on a vastly expanded public to cover operating and overhead costs. The uniqueness of the Diaghilev enterprise, however, cost these impresarios dear, reportedly £1,000 per night during the 1911 Coronation season, when the company made its London debut with a cast of 100 dancers and 200 supernumeraries.[23] Diaghilev drove a hard bargain, and in this pre-War period, when he could write his own ticket, he did not have to answer to the box office. Unlike his postwar contracts, where payment was

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[23]"The Russian Imperial Ballet Which Enraptured Our Royalties Last Week," Diaghilev Scrapbook, Vol. 1, p. 95, Theatre Museum (London).

often calculated as a percentage of box office receipts with a guaranteed performance minimum, Diaghilev's pre-War agreements generally stipulated a flat performance fee -- £400 in the case of Beecham's initial contract and Frs. 24,000 for the Champs-Elysées season in 1913.[24] Like the international divas who by 1900 had displaced home grown talent on the opera circuits, the Diaghilev company traveled from theatre to theatre, the star ballet attraction and touring arm of the era's leading operatic brokers.

Touring was the price Diaghilev paid for independence. An imperative of the marketplace, it set the twentieth-century pattern for ballet companies that did not enjoy government support. It was a course, moreover, that had aesthetic consequences, both favorable and unfavorable, for the company's overall development. In his June 25, 1911 "Art Letter" for Rech', Benois spelled them out for the St. Petersburg audience;

> But can one expect further systematic . . . development under the conditions in which the Diaghilev enterprise exists, the conditions of a touring company? Theaters of the greatest genius, it is true, arose amidst wandering actors and, in fact, in many respects the special psychology of the itinerant theater is even conducive to the special effervescence of creation; such companies are forced to learn simplicity and consequently strength of means.

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[24]List of income and liabilities - 1913, GA96-1, Astruc Papers.

> This is a miraculous gymnastic. But all the same . . . only a settled way of life can now move the Diaghilev enterprise further along the path to perfection, having released it from accidental conditions with which it must now be reconciled. In a settled routine, with an abundance of time, the possibilities of rechecking, the creations can be freed of compromise -- especially the creation itself on stage, the realization of the theater action. In an itinerant theater you risk something fundamental each minute, and thus somehow never get to the point of polishing your work.[25]

In an interview published in the Montevideo newspaper El Día, Nijinsky spoke at length about the emotional toll of life on the road: the faceless impersonality of hotels, the sadness of a new theatre glimpsed for the first time in shadowy work lights. "Always in a hurry, we live the life of a 'wandering Jew' . . . a wandering Jew who travels in a sleeping car."[26]

Neither Astruc nor Beecham limited their participation in the Diaghilev enterprise to bookings. In 1912, Diaghilev engaged the Beecham orchestra, which after two seasons at Covent Garden had the company's repertoire at its fingertips, to play a two-month engagement at Berlin's Kroll Theatre. For Beecham's fledgling English orchestra, a debut in the German music capital under such

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[25]"Benois' Commentaries," Part VI, trans. Roland John Wiley, Dancing Times, March 1981, p. 390.

[26]"Nijinski," El Día, 13 Sept. 1913, p. 8, col. 5. I am grateful to Claire de Robillant for bringing this article to my attention.

auspicious circumstances was most advantageous.[27] That same year, Beecham advanced Diaghilev £950; in lieu of his usual performance fee, Diaghilev agreed to accept twenty-five percent of the gross receipts after orchestra, lighting, publicity, and other expenses had been deducted.[28] In 1913-1914, moreover, both impresarios underwrote several company productions. Significantly, their investment was concentrated almost totally in the area of opera. "I was convinced," wrote Beecham in his memoirs, "that what was vital to the operatic situation in London was some new visitation of striking originality."

> It was impossible to overlook the undiminished popularity of the Ballet, and it was at least imaginable that another one hundred per cent Russian institution might be the solution of the problem. I accordingly resigned my position at Covent Garden, requested Diaghileff to negotiate the visit of a company from the Imperial Opera of St. Petersburg to include singers, chorus, new scenery and costumes, indeed everything except the orchestra, and took a lease of Drury Lane Theatre. Thus I found myself for the summer of 1913 in the same position of rivalry to the house across the street that I should have occupied two years earlier had I carried out my old program as first intended.[29]

Although Diaghilev's fame rests on the Ballets Russes, the overall make-up of his pre-War programming

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[27]Beecham, p. 185.

[28]"Extrait du Contrat Diaghilew-Beecham," GA82-9, Astruc Papers.

[29]Beecham, p. 193.

reflected the era's preference for opera -- a taste, it should be noted, that Diaghilev shared, judging from the lists of repertory, singers, and budgets that fill the pages of his 1910-1911 notebook and the attention he gave to this branch of musical art in the autobiographical notes penned toward the end of his life. Nevertheless, the prominence that opera attained in the Diaghilev repertoire during the years 1913-1914 cannot be ascribed to taste alone. Rather, it reflected Diaghilev's increasing reliance on musical impresarios to solve the problem of capital investment, the key to his company's survival as a creative enterprise. For the 1913 revival of Boris Godunov and production of Khovantchina, Astruc spent "700,000 francs in the land of the Tsars" on decor and accessories. "The Court mantles of the boyars alone," he later wrote, "cost 150,000 francs!"[30] In a measure conceived, no doubt, to offset the magnitude of his investment, he then loaned the material to Diaghilev for Beecham's Drury Lane season later that summer.[31] When Astruc declared bankruptcy, Beecham acquired both productions for Frs. 40,000, subsequently selling Boris to the Paris Opéra.[32]

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[30]Astruc, Le Pavillon des fantômes, p. 258.

[31]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Gabriel Astruc, 19 June 1913, GA94-1, Astruc Papers.

[32]Astruc, Le Pavillon des fantômes, p. 258.

In tracing the impact of financing on company activity, the March 1914 contract between Diaghilev and the Beecham organization is of particular interest. Under the terms of this agreement, Diaghilev borrowed Frs. 100,000, the amount of the advance he had agreed to pay the agents of Richard Strauss and his librettist Hugo von Hofmannstahl, in exchange for the sole performance rights to The Legend of Joseph.[33] The magnitude of the sum, repayable in installments within forty-eight hours of each performance of the ballet, suggests to what extent the Ballets Russes had become big business since 1908, when Diaghilev had bartered the scenery and costumes of Boris Godunov for a rent-free engagement at the Opéra.[34] (Whether the debt was actually repaid is open to question. The fact that The Legend of Joseph was never subsequently performed suggests that it was not, and that the production became the property of the Beecham organization.) The financial character of the transaction was underscored by other terms, among them the provision for a five percent interest charge. Diaghilev also promised to deliver by May

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[33]Contract between Serge Diaghilev/Baron Dmitri de Gunzburg and Sir Joseph Beecham, 13 March 1914, Fonds Kochno, Pièce 129.

[34]"Notes autobiographiques de Serge de Diaghilev," trans. Boris Kochno, Fonds Kochno, Pièce 122. The arrangement included free orchestra services as well. The production never entered the Opera repertory, and Diaghilev's scenery and costumes were subsequently sold to the Metropolitan Opera.

28, 1914 "free of all charge" and guaranteeing "that they [Diaghilev and his associate Baron Dmitri Gunzburg] are the absolute owners", the "whole of the scenery . . . necessary for the performance of the Opera known as 'Ivan the Terrible'".

For this 1914 Drury Lane season, which opened with Beecham's productions of Rosenkavalier and The Magic Flute and included English premieres of Antar and Dylan,[35] Diaghilev "had promised to show" four new operas in London.[36] This arrangement, noted Grigoriev, had been worked out the previous year with Sir Joseph Beecham, the conductor's father and underwriter of his musical ventures.[37] By the winter of 1913, preparations for the operatic side of the program, which in addition to Ivan the Terrible included Prince Igor, Une Nuit de Mai, Le Rossignol, and Boris Godunov, were well advanced, suggesting the infusion of large sums into Diaghilev's coffers. By contrast, the ballet repertoire presented serious problems. Even with the expensive and prestigious Legend of Joseph, the programming was weak, Fokine's Papillons and Midas being little more than pièces

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[35]For the full program of this two-month season, see Eugene Goossens, Overture and Beginners: A Musical Autobiography (London:en, 1951), pp. 104-105.

[36]Grigoriev, p. 104.

[37]Ibid., p. 110.

d'occasion in the tried and true Biedermeyer and *genre nouveau* mold, and for the first time since 1909, several performances reverted to a mixed opera/ballet format. Only *Coq d'Or*, a work by Rimsky-Korsakov staged as an *opéra dansé*, quickened the creative impulse of its collaborators while pointing the way out of the "predicament over the subject for a new ballet".[38] This creative impasse, suggesting a shift of imaginative resources from ballet to opera, indicates a crisis in the overall direction of the Diaghilev organization. Where did the future of the Ballets Russes lie -- in opera, dance or a combination of the two? If the focus were to be ballet, how was the company to pay for new works? Of the new productions mounted for the 1914 season, the vast majority were never again performed by Diaghilev. This was due not only to the aesthetic shift that took place during the war years, but to the fact that several of these productions became the outright property of the Beecham organization. We have already noted the acquisition of *Boris Godunov* and *Khovantchina* from Astruc and the contract stipulation vis-à-vis *Ivan the Terrible*. Indeed, the war and immediate postwar years saw Beecham revivals of all three works,

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[38] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

along with Prince Igor for his own company.[39] That the Benois costumes and scenery for Le Rossignol passed to Beecham can also be documented.[40] It is not unlikely that Coq d'Or, staged by dancer Serafina Astafieva for the Beecham organization in 1918, Une Nuit de mai, Midas, and Legend of Joseph did so as well. Under the terms of the Legend of Joseph loan agreement, Beecham reserved the right of "combining with the Borrowers . . . in productions" of Russian opera or ballet throughout the English-speaking world. The nature of the 1914 season, combined with the record of Diaghilev's indebtedness, suggests that had the war not intervened, the Diaghilev enterprise might well have become a joint venture with "Sir Thomas Beecham Opera Seasons".

By no means did impresarios provide all of Diaghilev's financing. Pre-War funding came from other sources as well: private patronage, which traditionally subsidized work outside the public sector, and banks, which provided short-term capital for production. The juxtaposition of these two sources underscores yet again the dramatic contradiction between public image and

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[39]Beecham, pp. 249,268,285-286, 292; Goossens, Chapters XXII, XXV, and XXVI. Goossens, a future Diaghilev conductor, was at this time employed by the Beecham Opera Company.

[40]Donald Bayliss, Letter to Jacques Rouché, 23 June 1917, AJ13/1205, Archives Nationales.

practice in the Diaghilev enterprise. As company mythmakers exploited titled patrons to resurrect a by now tenuous connection with the Imperial Theatres and Tsarist court, its finances rested in the rather more prosaic hands of the powerbrokers of the financial marketplace.

To what extent private patrons lent Diaghilev material support can probably never be precisely ascertained. Cageyness about money is a trademark of the very rich, and when it came to their checkbooks, Diaghilev's patrons were models of discretion. According to her biographer, Princesse Edmond de Polignac was "one of his main patrons and she remained his most dependable supporter until his death in 1929," although the extent of her largesse is impossible to determine. "In the first decade she was content to make large donations to his funds and leave all the artistic direction in his hands. Later on she began to finance the production of specific works in addition to continuing her general subsidies. So involved financially, she made sure that she never missed a work presented by him."[41] Misia Sert, another friend of long standing, came up with the odd thousand-franc note when irate costumers and other creditors demanded payment at the

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[41]Michael de Cossart, The Food of Love: Princesse Edmond de Polignac (1865-1943) and Her Salon (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p. 102.

eleventh hour just as the curtain was about to rise.[42] Like Mme. Sert, the Marchioness of Ripon, Comtesse Greffuhle, and the Aga Khan served Diaghilev primarily in the social realm, giving parties after important premieres or arranging spectacular fetes such as the Aga Khan's extravaganza at the Ritz where Nijinsky, Karsavina, and Carlotta Zambelli danced for a hand-picked audience of socialites.[43] They also organized prestigious charity galas at which the company donated its services.[44] Activities of this sort played an important role in creating a socially influential audience for Diaghilev and generating publicity in the press.

Lady Ripon, and to a lesser degree, Comtesse Greffuhle, rendered Diaghilev an even greater service as influence brokers at the uppermost reaches of the musical world. The company's "most devoted English support", Lady Ripon worked behind the scenes, raising the backing for company seasons and lobbying theatrical directors in

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[42]Misia Sert, Two or Three Muses, trans. Moura Budberg (London: Museum Press, 1953), pp. 128-129.

[43]Unidentified clipping, Diaghilev Scrapbook, Vol. 1, p. 85, Theatre Museum (London).

[44]Calvo Calvocoressi, Letter to the Administration of the Théâtre National de l'Opera, 25 May 1910, AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales.

Diaghilev's behalf.[45] A power at Covent Garden, where she had been "instrumental in bringing about the re-establishment of international opera" in the 1890's,[46] she transferred her waning passion for Italian opera to Diaghilev's masterworks of the Russian ballet and lyrical repertoire. Comtesse Greffuhle also pressured behind the scenes. During her 1910 sojourn in the United States, she brought her considerable social influence to bear on Otto Kahn, Chairman of the Metropolitan Opera board, when negotiations between Diaghilev and Gatti-Cassazza had reached a standstill.[47] Her efforts came to naught. They point, however, to a dramatic shift in the role of patronage in the years prior to the war. With private contributions no longer sufficient to sustain entire enterprises, patronage became a means of facilitating access to powerful artistic institutions and moneybrokers. This function increased in the postwar period, when the introduction of personal income tax significantly decreased

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[45]Richard Buckle, "Lady Juliet Duff," obit., Sept. 1965, Diaghilev Scrapbook, Vol. 3, p. 115, Theatre Museum (London); Astruc, Le Pavillon des fantômes, p. 257.

[46]Unidentified clipping, Diaghilev Scrapbook, Vol. 3, p. 115, Theatre Museum (London).

[47]Serge Diaghilev, Telegram to Gabriel Astruc, 24 Jan. 1911, GA36-8, Astruc Papers.

the cash reserves of the upper classes.[48]

The trend toward financial brokerage as the leading function of patronage was underscored by Diaghilev's appointment of Baron Dmitri Gunzburg in 1910 as the company's co-administrator. A prominent collector and sometime costume designer,[49] Gunzburg was heir to the largest Jewish banking fortune of the Russian empire. With a branch in Paris and connections to the great Jewish bankers of Hamburg, Berlin, and Frankfurt, by 1860, the House of Gunzburg had become "one of the major banks of St. Petersburg and of Europe".[50] Subsequent generations resided in Paris, marrying into French high society and the continent's Jewish banking aristocracy. Gunzburg himself had invested at least 2,000 rubles in Diaghilev's maiden ballet season,[51] and throughout the years of his tenure as company administrator wrote checks for out-of-pocket and

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[48]Income tax was introduced in France in 1916. Gordon Wright, France in Modern Times: From the Enlightenment to the Present, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 1981), p. 323.

[49]Gunzburg designed the costumes for the "Danses de la Fee Dragee", a duet from The Nutcracker that was one of seven divertissements presented on the London Coliseum program in 1910 when Karsavina danced a short version of Giselle. Program reproduced in Nesta MacDonald, Diaghilev Observed by Critics in England and the United States 1911-1929 (New York: Dance Horizons, 1975), p. 21. In 1913, his Swan Queen costume was used in the company's South American production of Swan Lake.

[50]Blackwell, The Beginning of Russian Industrialization, 1800-1860, p. 235.

[51]"The Black Notebook of Serge Diaghilev", p. 14.

other expenses. In 1913, he appears as one of the troupe's major creditors, with some Frs. 12,500 outstanding as of May 25th.[52] His chief value at Diaghilev's side, however, lay in the financial standing and reputation of his family. With Baron Gunzburg co-signing contracts, Diaghilev's creditors believed their investment in company loans and advances, if not safe from profligate spending, at least guaranteed of eventual repayment.[53]

Patrons and impresarios notwithstanding, 1912-1914 were years of acute financial difficulty for the Ballets Russes. Successful seasons sent cash flowing into Diaghilev's coffers, but production capital for new ballets, as opposed to operas, largely failed to materialize. Within a year of the independent company's debut, the cash flow situation became acute, and Diaghilev, hard-pressed for money to produce the 1912 season, had recourse once again to short-term bank loans. These, it will be recalled, saved the day in 1909. In 1912, they

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[52]See Astruc's handwritten list of company liabilities, GA96-19, Astruc Papers.

[53]The draft contract with the Beecham organization dated August 3, 1910 provided for payment of a Frs. 30,000 cash advance on or before August 12, 1910 to be reimbursed or deducted at the rate of Frs. 2,000 per performance from receipts until the full Frs. 30,000 was recovered. "It is understood that Baron Dimitri de Gunzbourg promises with respect to the management to guarantee reimbursement of the full amount of this advance in the event of non-compliance with this contract on the part of M. Serge de Diaghilew." GA40-1, Astruc Papers.

provided the capital for the season that marked Nijinsky's debut as a choreographer.

Precisely how much Diaghilev borrowed from Brandeis et Cie. in early 1912 remains unclear. The sum, however, was considerable -- in the neighborhood of Frs. 300,000 at the very least or three times the French guarantee capital raised in 1909. Negotiated through a firm with offices a few doors from Astruc's headquarters in the rue de Hanovre, the "advance" was earmarked for expenses incurred in connection with the Paris and Berlin seasons. The debt fell due on August 3, 1912, and from the start Diaghilev failed to meet the scheduled repayments.[54] The loan was still outstanding when the company returned to Paris in 1913. During that spectacularly successful season at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, nearly twenty percent of the company's gross income went to repay the previous year's "advance". According to documents in the Astruc papers, Diaghilev was paid Frs. 528,000 for the engagement (22 performances at Frs. 24,000 each), of which Brandeis received a total of Frs. 104,0000 (Frs. 8,000 for each of

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[54]"Procès verbal de saisie conservatoire," 5 June 1914, AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales; Dmitri Gunzburg and Serge Diaghilev, Letter to G. Astruc et Cie., 20 July 1912, GA73-1, and G. Astruc et Cie., Letter to Gabriel Astruc, 16 Aug. 1912, GA70-19, Astruc Papers.

thirteen performances).[55] The debt was far from being liquidated, however. In June 1914, Frs. 176,595 remained outstanding, and on June 4th, several items, including costume trunks and the Venetian Palace decor for Legend of Joseph, were seized in the corridors of the Paris Opéra just prior to their removal to England for the company's London season.[56] Other creditors took similar action: the art printers Messrs. Balincourt et Dupont, Monsieur Jallot of the Maison Belloir-Jumeau that had supplied ivy garlands and flats back in 1910, and the Léon Jue et Cie. theatrical agency. The debts were for Frs. 777, 332.50 and 12,901.75 respectively.[57] Presumably, accounts were settled to the satisfaction of the plaintiffs, as there is no evidence that London saw truncated versions of the season's productions. How Diaghilev raised Frs. 188,606.25 at the eleventh hour remains a mystery, and one is tempted to see Beecham's hand in the affaire. If Beecham did indeed bail Diaghilev out, the productions of Le Rossignol, Coq d'Or, and Legend of Joseph could well have been the price of his generosity.

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[55]List of income and liabilities, GA96-1, and Statement of daily expenditures - 1913, GA96-6, Astruc Papers.

[56]"Procès verbal de saisie conservatoire," 5 June 1914, AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales.

[57]See attachment authorizations of 2 June 1914, 3 June 1914, and 5 June 1914 and supporting documentation, AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales.

Whatever the exact amount of Diaghilev's indebtedness, the magnitude of the sum threw open the question of the company's ability to survive. To his confidantes, Lady Ripon and Addie Kahn, Diaghilev expressed the fear that the troupe was close to collapse. "Have had several interviews Lady Ripon Diaghileff about Ballet for New York," Addie Kahn wired her husband, Otto, from London on July 18, 1914. "Are most insistent troupe should go America this winter for urgent reasons too complicated to cable upon which largely depend continuance of organization. Diaghileff willing to go even for 10 New York Brooklyn performances of which several matinees and some in Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago simply to keep company together."[58] A month later, as war rumbled in Central Europe, Gunzburg offered to sail to New York to arrange the details of a tour of both Russian grand opera and ballet, an indication of how desperate Diaghilev was at that point for a quick transfusion of American dollars.[59]

Diaghilev did not make it to America until the winter of 1916. When he did, he arrived with a brand new troupe and intimations of the modernist repertory that would wrench the company from its aesthetic moorings in the Belle Epoque. The story of that artistic transformation

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[58]Addie Kahn, Cable to Otto Kahn, 18 July 1914, Otto Kahn Papers, Box 34, Princeton University.

[59]Addie Kahn, Cable to Otto Kahn, 19 Aug. 1914, Otto Kahn Papers, Box 34.

and the crucial role of the Metropolitan in bringing it about belongs to another chapter of Ballets Russes history.

Between 1909 and 1914, Diaghilev transformed ballet from a disparaged art to one prized for its beauty and expressiveness. Did even his admirers in 1909 suspect the indomitable will that lay behind Diaghilev's dandified facade, the genius that in the short space of four years would produce Firebird, Faune, Petrushka, and Sacre? Against nearly insuperable odds, Diaghilev resurrected his Russian band from the financial disaster of its maiden season, creating a company unique in the annals of European dance history, a massive undertaking of finance and organization, carried out under a standard of beauty, imagination, and taste. Many sought to usurp his place at the forefront of the Russian movement. They failed, however, because Diaghilev alone harbored in his complex personality both the artist's drive to create and the impresario's sense of the marketplace. In his teaming of art and enterprise and his intuitive understanding of how the marketplace might be exploited to serve the traditional ends of high art lay the extraordinary genius of Serge Diaghilev.

Nonetheless, even Diaghilev could not escape the changes wrought by the marketplace. Within the company itself the market revamped hierarchies of status and attitudes toward artistic work, transforming both the artist and his creation into prized commodities. It

brought a new division of labor to the ranks of company dancers, one that rested, like the newly consolidated operatic star system, on money rather than rank. And by "fetishizing" relationships among artists, it destroyed the studio atmosphere on which the company's early collaborative approach had rested.

The spectacular success of the Ballets Russes whetted appetites throughout the West for the new art of Russian ballet. Overnight, a market for dance sprang into existence in which demand vastly outstripped supply. Suddenly, artists of no great repute at the Mariinsky found their talents at a premium and their persons beseiged by the moguls of popular entertainment.

Except for the privileged few who attained ballerina status (in 1909 only Mathilde Kschessinska, Olga Preobrajenska, Anna Pavlova, and Vera Trefilova occupied that exalted rank), salaries at the Mariinsky were low. If Pavlova's salary rose to 3,000 rubles a year with her promotion to ballerina in 1906,[60] those of the vast majority of her colleagues stood at a fraction of that amount. Nor did dancers, again with the exception of ballerinas and <u>premiers danseurs</u>, have much choice in determining what, where, and how often they danced. Transfers between Moscow and St. Petersburg came at the

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[60]Money, p. 63.

whim of an Imperial bureaucrat, and casting could be just as arbitrary. Opportunities to dance, moreover, were few. In her journal for 1911, Nijinska compared this aspect of Mariinsky life with the challenges of the Diaghilev company: "In the Imperial Theatres I seldom performed more than ten times in a season, but now in Monte-Carlo I am to dance in all the ballets, four times a week. In the Imperial Theatres I was able to dance everything I was given, but in the ballets of Fokine there is still much that is new for me . . ."[61]

Although the aftermath of the Revolution of 1905 saw the first wave of defections to the West, dancers by and large remained loyal to the Imperial Theatres. Even if many had to teach social dancing to the wealthy to supplement an income that often supported an entire family, the perquisites of being an Artist of the Imperial Theatres more than compensated for its drawbacks. Once accepted as a boarder at the Imperial Ballet School, even the child of modest gifts could look forward to a respected position in life, guaranteed by a steady income and a pension. Graduation brought automatic admission to the Imperial Ballet and a year-round salary until the age of thirty-five, when the artist drew a pension for life. There were other advantages as well, including the preference given to

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[61]Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 334.

children or other relations who applied for entry to the school. Indeed, by 1900, Imperial artists had become a distinct, if unofficial, caste in the Tsarist scheme of things. With marriages among dancers and other theatrical personnel a commonplace, numerous Diaghilev dancers came from families bred within the tightly-knit world of the Bolshoi and Mariinsky.

The very existence of the Diaghilev company was itself a form of competition that affected the dancer's economic, social, and artistic status. But with the spectacular triumph of 1909, repeated the following year, the Diaghilev troupe became the hunting ground of theatre managers anxious to exploit the newfound revelation of Russian ballet and willing to pay dearly for the privilege of presenting it. "Stupendous offers are being made to these people," wrote C. Ercole, the Paris theatre agent, to Alfred Moul, General Manager of London's Alhambra Theatre, on July 23, 1910. "They are therefore tempted by these different offers and their terms are naturally very much bigger than they would have been even a year ago."[62] Eric Wollheim and Oswald Stoll, Ercole wrote five days later, "ought to be put for some time in strait jackets and have ice put on their heads -- they are rendering the market impossible. It is very evident that as everything in life

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[62]Guest, "The Alhambra Ballet," p. 51.

like the Stock Exchange is based on offer and demand these people who are kneeling down to the Russian dancers and offering them engagements on golden trays are causing them to ask unheard of salaries . . ."[63] Unable to secure either the Diaghilev Ballet or a company headed by Fokine, the Alhambra engaged a Moscow troupe. Diaghilev's second-season alumna Yekaterina Geltzer headed the ensemble at a salary of £90 a week, more than twice the £40 offered Lydia Kyasht as prima ballerina of the Empire Theatre in 1908.[64]

London's music-halls were not the only commercial stages to dangle pots of gold before Diaghilev's artists. The end of the 1910 season saw a thinning of the ranks with the departure of several dancers for the untried vaudeville circuits of America. Among these was eighteen-year-old Lydia Lopokova, the company's "baby ballerina", whose successes in Paris and Berlin had brought several tempting offers from across the Atlantic. Her letter of July 22,

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[63] Ibid., p. 52.

[64] Ibid., p. 52; Lydia Kyasht, Romantic Recollections (London: Brentano, 1929), p. 150. Alexandra Balashova, who replaced Geltzer after eight weeks, received £40 a week as did the leading man Vassili Tikhomirov; Vera Mossolova, who followed Balashova as the ensemble's ballerina, earned £50 a week. Guest, "The Alhambra Ballet," p. 52. Calculated at an exchange rate of Frs. 25.2 to the pound, their salaries were equivalent to Frs. 2,268, Frs. 1,008, and Frs. 1,260 respectively. James Robertson, Dictionary for International Commercial Quotations (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1918). In Russian currency, this came to 855, 380, and 475 rubles a week. Until 1914, £1 equaled 9.5 rubles.

1910 to Aleksandr Dmitrievich Krupensky, head of the St. Petersburg office of the Imperial Theatres, requesting a two-month leave of absence, evokes the atmosphere of theatrical seige:

> Much respected Aleksandr Dmitrievich!
> Your benevolence toward me provides the reason to narrate what has happened to me: thanks to my success in Berlin and Paris, different agents began to approach me, inviting me to various cities and various countries; the propositions were very tempting, but I refused all of them, remembering that after all I have attained, I should be thankful to the School and to you, whom I still have not thanked for promoting me to coryphée . . . And now, imagine what has been done to me. Surrounded and prevailed upon on all sides, I signed a contract for New York. The next day I changed my mind; I cried; God knows what I would give for this not to have happened; grief gnaws at me; I do not want to go anywhere, but the agents are like Cerberuses to my soul and the consequences of not fulfilling the contract would be horrible to me . . . I beg of you to give me a leave of absence.[65]

Krupensky granted the young coryphée her leave and a raise in salary as well.[66] Neither sufficed to keep her at the Mariinsky. That fall, in the company of her brother Fyodor Lopoukhov (later an eminent Soviet choreographer) and Anna

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[65]Lydia Lopokova, Letter to A.D. Kurpensky, 9/22 July 1910, Fond 497, Opis' 5, Conservation No. 1866, Central State Historical Archive (Leningrad). I am grateful to Elizabeta Suritz for providing me with copies of this and other documents pertaining to Lopokova's career and to Irene Huntoon for translations.

[66]Fond 497, Opis' 5, Conservation No. 1866, Central State Historical Archive (Leningrad).

Pavlova's future partner Alexandre Volinine, she set out on the first of several cross-country tours that kept her in America for six years. For the dancer whom the Petersburg Gazette described as "entirely unknown" four thousand rubles a month was an offer she could hardly afford to refuse.[67]

Like Lopokova, many Russian dancers eschewed Diaghilev and Europe. Impresarios plundered the seemingly endless talent of the Imperial Theatres during the annual march of Diaghilev's front-line organization from Petersburg to Paris. By 1911-1912 no less than three competing ensembles toured America alone. These loosely-knit groups, which coalesced around Anna Pavlova, her one-time partner Mikhail Mordkin, and Broadway's first woman dance producer Gertrude Hoffmann, consisted overwhelmingly of Imperial dancers who had passed through Diaghilev's ranks as a turnstile to the burgeoning world market for ballet. Like their counterparts in Europe, they exploited Diaghilev-inspired titles as "Saison russe" and "Imperial Ballet Russe" while dancers wore as badges of honor their identity as "Artists of the Imperial Ballet", even when

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[67]"Theatrical Echo," Petersburg Gazette, 18 Aug. 1910, p. 4.

this was no longer the case.[68]

With the partial exception of Pavlova, who made her American debut at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, these Russians adapted their art to the commercial stage. Rather than opening new channels for the presentation of ballet, they became "class acts" among the acrobatic, singing, and magic attractions that formed staple vaudeville and music-hall fare. Taking Diaghilev's one-act and divertissement ballets as their model, they extracted discrete dances from the classical and modern repertory and recast them as concentrated distillations of a dramatic situation. Popular success, as Pavlova's career amply demonstrated, reflected the skill of the dancer in establishing instant rapport with the audience regardless of the aesthetic framing of the performance.

By 1911, the year his company made its debut as an independent entity, Diaghilev faced an acute shortage of manpower. The loss of dancers to the commercial stage threatened to undermine the company's strength, as did the return each autumn of seasoned performers to the

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[68]For details of these companies and tours, see Barbara Naomi Cohen, "The Borrowed Art of Gertrude Hoffmann," and Oliver M. Sayler and Marjorie Barkentin, "On Your Toes - America! The Story of the First Ballet Russe," Dance Data, 2 (n.d.); Money, pp. 96-140. For clippings and other material about the "Saison russe" presented at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt in Paris in April 1911 with Julie Sedova and Ivan Clustine as featured dancers, see GA121-122, Astruc Papers.

Mariinsky.[69] For the first time, Diaghilev had to recruit large numbers of dancers from outside the Imperial Theatres. Warsaw's Wielki Theatre, the private Moscow studio of Lydia Nelidova, Yevgenia Sokolova's studio in St. Petersburg, and London's theatrical schools all helped fill the company's depleted ranks. To maintain technical standards and assure stylistic consistency, Diaghilev engaged the respected St. Petersburg teacher Enrico Cecchetti. Despite these measures, however, the labor shortage remained a problem, and in 1911 Diaghilev took the extreme step of literally renting an itinerant group of Russian dancers. To lease the services of the Molotzoff troupe, an ensemble comprising ten men and two women, at least half of whom were related and several of whom were Jewish, Diaghilev agreed to pay the yearly sum of Frs. 88,000 to the troupe's impresario. Renewed through 1914, the contract represented a hefty and continuing drain on Diaghilev's cash reserves. During the 1913 Paris season, the Frs. 60,000 payable to Molotzoff came to no less than 8.8% of the company's projected gross income. During the same season, it will be recalled, Diaghilev repaid Frs.

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[69]Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 387.

104,000 on the long-overdue loan to Brandeis et Cie.[70]

Like Mamontov, Diaghilev paid his pre-War artists well. He did this initially to woo their loyalty from the Imperial Theatres and compensate for loss of job security, and subsequently, to compete with the upward spiral of salaries in the commercial realm. With few exceptions, the documentary record of Diaghilev's pre-War pay scales is sketchy. Many contracts, especially those of principals, remain hidden from the perusal of researchers in private hands, a result of the mounting speculation in Ballets Russes memorabilia since the 1960's.[71] Nevertheless, from the entries in Diaghilev's notebook for 1910 and the odd contract that has strayed into public view, a rough idea of company salaries may be sketched and comparisons drawn with both the Mariinsky and commercial stage.

In the spring of 1909, Nijinska recalled,

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[70]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Dmitri Molotzoff, n.d., GA64-11; "Nom et Prénom de la troupe Molotzoff," GA66-3; André Aron, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 13 Oct. 1913, GA84-2; Receipts dated 29 and 30 Oct. 1913, GA95-11; List of Income and Liabilities - 1913, GA96-1; List of liabilities as of 25 May 1913, GA96-19; Astruc Papers. The original contract covered the period 1 April 1911 - 1 April 1912. As for the Frs. 60,000 payable during the 1913 season, Diaghilev's failure to abide by the terms of the contract resulted in legal suit being brought by Molotzoff and partial settlement of the debt in October 1913.

[71]The one and only contract Diaghilev signed with Nijinsky, dated October 10, 1908, is a case in point. Sold at Sotheby's (London) on October 15, 1963, it provided for a season salary of Frs. 2,500. Buckle, Diaghilev, pp. 136 and 551, n. 87.

Imperial dancers could talk of "nothing else but [Diaghilev's] remarkable project . . . The recompense for the corps de ballet was to start at one thousand francs (three hundred seventy-five rubles, more than many earned in half a year at the Imperial Theatres.) Several Artists came to . . . ask that I mention them to Vaslav and ask him to recommend them to Diaghilev."[72] In 1910, salaries mounted substantially. For an engagement that began with rehearsals in April and ended with the last of the company's Paris performances in mid-July, dancers received more than their total yearly salary at the Mariinsky. Below are sample comparisons:[73]

Yearly Salary at Imperial Theatres (in rubles and equivalent in francs)

Lydia Lopokova	720 rubles	(Frs. 1,872)
George Rosai	960 "	(Frs. 2,496)
Alexander Orlov	960 "	(Frs. 2,496)
Bronislava Nijinska	900 "	(Frs. 2,340)
Vera Fokina	900 "	(Frs. 2,340)

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[72]Nijinska, Early Memoirs, p. 259.

[73]Sources: For the 1910 Diaghilev season, "The Black Notebook of Serge Diaghilev," p. 1. In Nijinska's category, both the Frs. 2,200 and Frs. 2,500 figures appear. Lopokova received 600 rubles a year when she entered the Mariinsky corps de ballet in 1909. On April 28, 1910, she was promoted to coryphée, and in early August her salary was raised to 720 rubles. Fond 497, Opis' 5, Conservation No. 1866, Central State Historical Archive (Leningrad). I am indebted to Elizabeta Suritz for this information as well as for the salary figures of the other Imperial Ballet artists. The exchange rate in 1910 was 2.6 francs to the ruble. William Tate, Tate's Modern Cambist, 25th ed. (London: Effingham Wilson, 1912), p. 108.

Season Salary Indicated
in Diaghilev's Notebook
(in francs)

Lydia Lopokova	Frs. 2,000
George Rosai	Frs. 3,000
Alexander Orlov	Frs. 2,800
Bronislava Nijinska	Frs. 2,200/2,500
Vera Fokina	Frs. 2,800

Diaghilev's move from seasonal to permanent activity, and increased dependence on money to command the loyalty of his troupe, accelerated the trend toward higher salaries. A contract signed on February 10, 1911 with the inexperienced dancer M.V. Guliuk stipulated a yearly salary of Frs. 8,000 for the period 1911-1912 and Frs. 10,000 for 1912-1913.[74] On December 15, 1912 Hilda Bewicke, the first of Diaghilev's English dancers, was hired for a two-and-a-half month trial period at Frs. 750 a month, with the company management reserving the right to prolong her engagement for a year.[75] In early 1913 Hilda Munnings, whom Diaghilev subsequently renamed Lydia Sokolova, joined

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[74]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and M.V. Guliuk, 10 Feb. 1911, Max Rabinoff Papers, Manuscript Division, Columbia University.

[75]Direction du Ballet Russe, Letter to Hilda Bewicke, 15 Dec. 1912, GA76-3, Astruc Papers.

the company upon similar terms.[76] These base salaries, which amounted to Frs. 9,000 over the course of a year, represented more than twice the stipend of a corps de ballet dancer at the Paris Opéra.[77]

In casting their lot with Diaghilev, artists forfeited the job security, pension rights, and other privileges of the Imperial Theatres. Yet the full precariousness of their position did not become apparent until the war years. If anything, Diaghilev's pre-War dancers enjoyed the best of the subsidized and commercial ballet worlds. Diaghilev could not compete with salaries in the music-halls, at least for top performers. He nevertheless offered his dancers a modicum of short-term security: a year-round contract with full pay for summer holidays and rehearsal periods, and the assurance that unlike the Mordkin troupe that folded on tour in the American South,[78] his artists would not be left stranded in the middle of a season. Nor in this pre-War era did Diaghilev periodically weed dancers from his payroll, as occurred in the Twenties, when performers bore the heaviest

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[76]Lydia Sokolova, Dancing for Diaghilev, ed. Richard Buckle (London: John Murray, 1960), p. 31. Sokolova gives her salary as thirty pounds a month, equivalent to Frs. 756.

[77]"Our Paris Letter," Dancing Times, Feb. 1920, p. 369; "Opera Strike Threat; Dancers' Miserable Wages," Times (London), 1 Jan. 1920, p. 12, col. 2; "Menaces de grève à l'Opéra", Le Temps (Paris), 1 Jan. 1920, p. 3, col. 4.

[78]Sokolova, p. 20.

brunt of pressures to streamline the company and economize.

The pre-War years brought more than high salaries to Imperial dancers in the West. Overnight, the market leveled distinctions in rank elaborated over the course of two centuries. Balletomanes, friends in high places, and precedent-minded bureaucrats suddenly counted for nothing. In the range of choices it opened, the market thus spelled freedom -- the freedom to travel and perform at will, the freedom to make dances after the promptings of an inner vision, the freedom to enjoy the enhanced social prestige of an artist outside a caste-ridden institution. If Russia's first ballet troupes were serf companies, it was in the twentieth-century marketplace that the Russian dancer gained his freedom as an artist and individual.[79]

In the studio atmosphere of the company's earliest seasons, Diaghilev largely disavowed the Mariinsky hierarchy of rank. He passed over Mathilde Kschessinska,

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[79]"In Indiana during the long [1911] tour," writes Pavlova's biographer, Keith Money, the ballerina "had been interviewed by a cub reporter . . . After referring to her mother and grandmother as a reason for her to return to Russia, Pavlova added: 'But I have seen freedom in the outside world. I shall not spend so much time there [in Russia] as before. How would you feel toward a country where it is possible for a Grand Duke to come backstage and order the maitre de ballet to line up the ballet corps for his inspection? Then, as he strolls down the line, he points with his cane. "There. That one! Put her in my carriage. I will take that one for tonight."' Pavlova mde it quite clear that she had equivocal feelings toward her homeland and its class system wherein she had had to struggle to be accepted and promoted." Money, p. 140n.

the reigning prima ballerina assoluta, in favor of Pavlova when assembling his 1909 troupe, and heavily weighted the company with followers of Fokine rather than strict adherents to Mariinsky tradition. He brought talented artists to the fore and gave solo roles to dancers in the corps de ballet. Again and again, he preferred talent to rank, hard work to political favoritism.

Talent, however, does not exist in a social vacuum. In the marketplace, it was increasingly equated with cash value. The box office became the yardstick of success, the dancer's trump card in dealings with theatrical managements, but also the way managements evaluated the dancer. The market created its own hierarchy of success; abolishing titles, it created classes of dancers with divisions expressed purely in monetary terms. By 1910, a new division of labor had begun to crystallize within the troupe, an alternative ranking to the Imperial system that victimized as many dancers as it exalted. Diaghilev's company lists for 1910 make no allusion to coryphées, demi-solistes or premières danseuses. Names of dancers appear in tandem with their price, a figure most often in the Frs. 2,000 - 2,500 range with a sprinkling of salaries between Frs. 3,000 - 5,500. Nijinsky, Pavlova, Karsavina, and Fokine, however, stand apart. With payment ranging from Frs. 10,000 - 25,000, they formed the nucleus of Diaghilev's new star system while suggesting the growing disparity between highest and lowest paid classes of

dancers.[80]

This new star system was more than a response to laws of supply and demand. It was an imperative of Diaghilev's integration into the operatic marketplace where divas of both sexes commanded huge single performance fees as international guest artists. As early as 1906, Chaliapin had received Frs. 6,000 for each performance of Mephistopheles at the Paris Opera.[81] Three years later, Diaghilev paid him Frs. 55,000 for his participation in the 1909 saison russe, 15,000 francs more than the combined salaries of all the season's ballet soloists, and only 5,000 francs less than the entire corps de ballet.[82] By 1913, his fee for six performances of Boris Godunov had risen to Frs. 50,000, which Diaghilev had to deposit in full to his account six months prior to the Champs-Elysées season.[83]

Like Chaliapin, Nijinsky and Karsavina became international drawing cards, their presence a condition of the troupe's engagement stipulated by contract. They

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[80]"The Black Notebook of Serge Diaghilev," pp. 1, 9, 61.

[81]Fyodor Chaliapin, Telegram to Gabriel Astruc, 22 March 1906, GA1-2, Astruc Papers.

[82]Confidential Statement of Expenditures, GA28-1, Astruc Papers.

[83]"Extrait du Contrat Diaghilew-Beecham," GA82-9, Astruc Papers; Truman C. Bullard, "The First Performance of Igor Stravinsky's Sacre du Printemps," Diss. Eastman School of Music 1971, I, Appendix A, pp. 228-230.

danced on nearly every program, often in as many as three ballets a performance, and Diaghilev had works created around their particular gifts. Their names, like their photographs, became commonplaces of the fashion and theatrical press. As the Chaliapin and Nellie Melba of the dance, they socialized in the highest circles and received astronomical sums when they performed outside the aegis of the company. For a private appearance in July 1912 of Nijinsky and Karsavina in Spectre de la Rose and a pas de trois with Nijinsky's sister, Bronislava, Diaghilev asked no less than Frs. 12,000, or one-half the average fee for a performance by his full company.[84] In May 1914, only months after his relationship with Diaghilev had ended, Nijinsky negotiated a three-year contract with Jacques Rouché, newly-appointed director of the Paris Opéra. For a four-month season during which he would dance no more than thirty times, Nijinsky was to receive Frs. 90,000 or Frs. 3,000 per performance. He was also given a "consultative vote" in the choice of the new ballet to be produced each

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[84]Serge Diaghilev, Telegram to Gabriel Astruc, 15 June 1912, GA74-26, Astruc Papers.

year.[85]

If none of Diaghilev's stars, including Nijinsky, ever approached Chaliapin's earning power, the star system nevertheless contributed appreciably to the upward spiral of production costs. Not only did Diaghlev pay in-house stars handsomely (in Nijinsky's case, remuneration took the form of a luxurious lifestyle), but he frequently engaged guest artists such as Pavlova, Kschessinska, and Carlotta Zambelli, _étoile_ of the Paris Opéra, at fees that rivaled those of top-notch singers. For the projected 1912 St. Petersburg season (canceled because of a fire at the Narodny Dom Theatre), Diaghilev agreed to pay Zambelli Frs. 20,000 for seven performances in a repertory including _Giselle_, _Spectre de la Rose_, _Firebird_, and an unspecified fourth ballet.[86] This compared favorably with his engagement the following year of Maria Kousnetzoff, the noted Russian lyric artist, to sing a minimum of seven performances of _Boris Godunov_ and _Ivan the Terrible_ at Frs.

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[85]This contract, negotiated through H.B. Marinelli, Ltd. theatrical agents, obviously became void with the outbreak of World War I. Draft contract between Jacques Rouché and Vaslav Nijinsky, 31 May 1914. I am indebted to Dr. Mikaly Cenner of Budapest for a copy of this and other documents relating to the efforts of Oscar Pardany of Budapest to negotiate various engagements for Nijinsky in June 1914. The originals are in Dr. Cenner's possession.

[86]Serge Diaghilev, Telegram to Carlotta Zambelli, 21 Sept. 1911, GA54-21; Draft contract between Serge Diaghilev and Carlotta Zambelli, n.d., GA82-10, Astruc Papers.

1,500 and Frs. 2,000 per performance respectively.[87]

The reliance on stars, moreover, increased with the cementing of relations with the Beecham organization in 1911. For the autumn follow-up to the Coronation season at Covent Garden, Diaghilev added Kschessinska and Pavlova to his roster of ballerinas. The following year, which coincided with the huge Brandeis loan, found the company's repertory weighted heavily toward star French composers: Debussy, Ravel, and Reynaldo Hahn, a salon favorite if not a creative giant. With Diaghilev's return to opera production in 1913-1914 and the engagement of Chaliapin and other high-priced talent, company finances signally worsened.

If the person of the dancer assumed cash value in the marketplace, the art of presenting him did so as well. For the first time, the dances themselves became a unique and valued property which theatre directors vied for the privilege of acquiring. With the transformation of choreographic originality into a marketable commodity, the dancemaker found his own position dramatically altered.

Traditionally, the balletmaster had woven his talents into the institutional fabric of the opera house, where he not only staged ballets and the danced interludes

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[87]Draft contract between Serge Diaghilev and Maria Kousnetzoff, 8 Oct. 1912, GA82-3, Astruc Papers. The engagement was for June 8 - July 7, 1913.

of operas but performed a host of other functions as well -- dancing, teaching, coaching, rehearsing, and administration. Now with the whole world opening as a potential market for his skills as a dancemaker, he could sell his creative talents under conditions of his own choice, independently of his other skills. From the trial by cash of the marketplace emerged the modern-day choreographer, a "free" artist on a par with the independent painter, poet, singer or composer.

Fokine's meteoric rise from obscurity to fame between 1909 and 1914 marked the transition from balletmaster to choreographer. A leader of the "radical" wing that crystallized within the Imperial Ballet during the Revolution of 1905, Fokine moved within the space of two years from being an eager collaborator in Diaghilev's "studio" to a celebrity fully cognizant of his financial and artistic worth. For Diaghilev, the triumph of the 1910 season demonstrated the viability of a permanent company. For Fokine, success that year spelled the opening of a brilliant and many-faceted career. From 1910-1914, the dancer who only a few years before had staged graduation exercises with costumes rummaged from the Mariinsky's storage bins, donned the many guises of a successful dancemaker. Thanks in large measure to his Western triumphs, the Mariinsky promoted him to the position of staff balletmaster. As <u>maître de ballet</u>, <u>premier danseur</u>, and Choreographic Director, he served Diaghilev up to the

war save for the brief interlude of Nijinsky's ascendancy in 1912-1913. At the same time he branched out into other fields. In the summer of 1910, there was talk of his upstaging Diaghilev by bringing a company of thirty-three with his wife Vera Fokina as ballerina, to London for a month-long season.[88] In early 1911, he staged Schéhérazade and Cléopâtre for La Scala, and in July of the following year, Otto Kahn and Max Rabinoff were exchanging letters about bringing him to New York for a joint season with Max Reinhardt.[89] His career as a freelance choreographer blossomed in 1912 and 1913, when Pavlova and Ida Rubinstein commissioned him to create new works for their companies.[90]

For all these efforts Fokine demanded and usually received "top dollar". His asking price for the month-long London season was £5,000 (Frs. 126,000).[91] The engagement

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[88]Guest, "The Alhambra Ballet," p. 51.

[89]Otto Kahn, Letter to Max Rabinoff, 30 July 1912, Max Rabinoff Papers, Manuscript Division, Columbia University.

[90]For the Pavlova company he choreographed The Seven Daughters of the Ghost King and Les Préludes. Money, pp. 172-174. For Rubinste choreographed the dances in her Paris production of Gabriele d'Annunzio's Pisanella. His collaborators were Bakst and Meyerhold. Rudnitsky, p. 196.

[91]Guest, "The Alhambra Ballet," p. 51.

at La Scala paid Frs. 18,000 plus travel expenses.[92] Fokine's monetary demands in no way lessened when they came to the man who had "made" him in the West. In Diaghilev's notes, Fokine heads the list of company principals at Frs. 25,000, a salary designed in part to compensate for the ban on on-stage performance in 1911, when Diaghilev limited Fokine's activities to choreographing.[93]

The overnight change in fortune clearly went to his head. Complaints of Fokine's "exaggerated pretensions", as Gatti-Casazza called his demand in 1910 for $30,000 as balletmaster of Diaghilev's projected

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[92]Direzione Generale, Teatro alla Scala, Letter to Gabriel Astruc, 14 July 1910, GA37-2, Astruc Papers. Bakst was offered Frs. 5,000 for costume and set designs for both ballets, and Rubinstein Frs. 3,000 to repeat the roles she had performed in Paris. Direzione Generale, Teatro alla Scala, Letter to Gabriel Astruc, 23 July 1910, GA37-3, Astruc Papers.

[93]"The Black Notebook of Serge Diaghilev," p. 61; Grigoriev, p. 55.

American tour,[94] extended to non-economic demands such as his insistence that his wife, a mediocre classicist, be given ballerina roles.[95] By 1911, too, he had acquired the uncharitable habit of claiming as his own inventions works that were the fruit of collaboration. In the case of the Mariinsky's 1911 production of Orpheus, he publicly disparaged Meyerhold's role in the staging, precipitating a conflict with the director that surfaced in the press.[96] "It is generally difficult to speak with Fokin these days," noted Teliakovskii in his diary. "He has become so conceited that he fails to recognize that if there is anything new or developing in ballet, it is thanks only to Golovin and Korovin."[97] Given the history of

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[94]Giulio Gatti-Casazza, Telegram to Serge Diaghilev, 26 Nov. 1910, GA36-11; Gabriel Astruc, Telegram to Metropolitan Opera, 14 Dec. 1910, GA36-6, Astruc Papers. Until Fokine lowered his demand to $20,000, Gatti-Casazza was prepared to dispense with him altogether, and at one very sticky point in the negotiations, Diaghilev indicated his willingness to oblige. Serge Diaghilev, Telegram to Metropolitan Opera, 26 Nov. 1910, GA36-10, Astruc Papers. Fokine's "money-mindedness" continued in emigration. "When Fokine came to America in 1919 at the invitation of the American impresario Morris Gest, rumor had it that his salary for choreographing the Broadway musical Aphrodite was higher than that paid to any other balletmaster in the world." Dawn Lille Horwitz, "Michel Fokine in America, 1919-1942," Diss. New York University 1982, p. 8. The following year Gest paid Fokine $1,000 a day for his work on the exotic extravaganza Mecca. Ibid., p. 17.

[95]Direzione Generale, Teatro alla Scala, Letter to Gabriel Astruc, 23 July 1910, GA37-3, Astruc Papers.

[96]Rudnitsky, pp. 165-166.

[97]Ibid., p. 166.

Teliakovskii's relations with Diaghilev, it is hardly surprising that the director of the Imperial Theatres omits all mention of the rival enterprise. Nevertheless, his observation points to the streak of arrogance that henceforth marked Fokine's character and colored remarks about competitors.

Fokine's monetary demands, like his jockeying for title and the perquisites of power, reveal a dramatic change in attitude toward his work. In the brief space of two years, pride in creation had yielded to pride of ownership: Fokine now regarded his work with the possessive eye of the man of property. His proprietary attitude, however, did not square with reality. For unlike Diaghilev's composers, Fokine did not own his compositions. No choreographer did until passage of the new copyright law in 1978 gave title to the choreographer rather than the producer of a dance work. Carnaval, Spectre de la Rose, Firebird, Schéhérazade, and Fokine's other creations for the Ballets Russes were the personal property of Diaghilev alone,[98] and no matter how often they were performed, the choreographer, unlike the composer, had no legal claim to

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[98]Astruc et Cie., Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 4 Nov. 1912, GA71-25, Astruc Papers.

royalties.[99] Fokine's bitterness at being cheated of what he regarded as rightfully his is a refrain sounded time and again in his memoirs. In equating copyright protection with monetary return, it testifies to what degree choreographic originality had assumed in his mind the value of a marketable commodity.

Although Diaghilev held personal title to Fokine's ballets with the implicit right to alter the choreography as he changed costumes and decor, he consistently respected their integrity. If dancers inadvertently changed a movement here and there, Diaghilev took pains to keep style and steps intact. In reviving productions, moreover, he rejected the traditional solution to the problem of failing memory and lack of choreographic notation. However strained the relations between the two men, Diaghilev never remounted ballets "after Fokine". In December 1923, he wrote the following to Jacques Rouché, Director of the Paris Opéra, about a proposed revival of

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[99] In a 1972 lawsuit filed against Stravinsky's publishers Bossey and Hawkes, Romola Nijinsky claimed that a contract signed in mid-1913 stipulated that one-third of the royalties for Sacre du printemps were to be divided between Nijinsky and the ballet's designer, Nicholas Roerich. According to the choreographer's widow, Stravinsky failed to mention this contract when he registered the copyright of Sacre with the Society of Music Publishers in Paris, thus depriving his collaborators from ever receiving British or American royalties. Jack Kindred, "Charge Nijinsky Left Out of 'Rites'," Variety, 6 Dec. 1972, p. 2 et seq. How much truth lies in Madame Nijinsky's claim is a matter of conjecture; on other occasions her testimony has proven to be less than totally reliable.

the choreographer's Daphnis and Chloe:

> I hereby confirm and guarantee that I hold absolute title, which has never, moreover, been disputed, to perform all the Ballets which Monsieur Fokine has mounted for me; and in the present instance, it is not a question of remounting "Daphnis", but of recalling certain passages which certain artists of my troupe no longer remember.
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> As Monsieur Aveline was the last to work on this Ballet with Monsieur Fokine, I thought it appropriate to address myself to you and to him in order to present the choreography in a perfect state so as to safeguard the interests of Monsieur Fokine himself, for it is his name that will appear on the program as the author of the aforesaid choreography.[100]

If Diaghilev no longer subscribed to Fokine's choreographic methods, he recognized in authenticity and faithfulness to the original a selling point unique to the art market in the twentieth century. This concern for exactness in reproduction, analogous to the value of "original" prints pulled from the negative of a master photographer, suggests not simply Diaghilev's artistic integrity, but also the extent to which authenticity had become an issue in an era of mechanical reproduction. Fokine, in the tradition of balletmasters of previous centuries, restaged variants of his works throughout his career; it was Diaghilev who prefigured the obsession with authenticity so characteristic of the modern artistic

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[100]Serge Diaghilev, Letter to Jacques Rouché, 5 Dec. 1923, AJ13/1207, Archives Nationales.

marketplace.

In its naked equation of money and art, Fokine's property-mindedness signified a necessary condition in the making of ballet's modern choreographer. But an additional ingredient was necessary. The dancemaking art itself had to be assimilated to the new ballet star system. Beginning with Nijinsky, and in a pattern repeated again and again, Diaghilev molded choreographic material from among his roster of company-created stars. In so doing, he appropriated to both the talent and person of the dancemaker the commodity value of the performer. Thanks to Diaghilev, the balletmaster became the choreographic diva of the marketplace, whose specialized, expert skills enabled him to transcend allegiance to a specific institution.

The liberation of choreographer from balletmaster lies at the root of another equally important development of the Diaghilev era -- a radical shift in the concept of style. Traditionally, style in ballet suggested the distinctive manner bred by a school or system of training. It represented, above all, the triumph of institution at the expense of the individual: expressiveness framed within the parameters of an "objective", pre-ordained system of discourse. Faune and Sacre, however, radically altered this relationship. Nijinsky's declaration of war against the received manner of the Mariinsky asserted the primacy of the individual in the creation of dance meaning

and form. From his imagination came the total vision of a ballet, a vision that determined not only theme, structure, step, and floor pattern, but elements such as technique, body posture, and presentation traditionally belonging to a "school". This vision, at once subjective in origin and universal in application, is the pivot on which the modern concept of style turns, whether in poetry or painting, fiction or music. The fact that Nijinsky's earliest sketches for L'Après-midi d'un faune in the autumn of 1910 occurred simultaneously with Diaghilev's negotiations to launch an independent company cannot, therefore, be dismissed as mere coincidence. The quality of his imagination could not take form within the bureaucratic structure of the Imperial Theatres. It needed the luxury of time, faith, and finance that only Diaghilev could provide. The rise of the modern choreographer took place within the context of capitalism.

The marketplace cast a long shadow over all Diaghilev's artists, not only dancers and choreographers. Competition drove a wedge between collaborators, alienating friends of longstanding as they now jockeyed for title, power, and position within the company's inner circle. Differences in outlook and sensibility had often divided the former miriskusstniki. But where in the past the bond of friendship had sufficed to calm a ruffled ego, now with so much money at stake, the habits of friendship weakened. Opportunities and rewards no longer derived from the

informal support system of Russia's amateur networks. Success and failure were proclaimed at the box office with public acclaim promising lucrative commissions for the future. The collaborative Eden of Diaghilev's first and second ballet seasons did not collapse because of the impresario's sudden penchant for manipulation or sadistic delight in promoting one artist at the expense of a colleague. It was shattered by the inner logic of a marketplace that had created a new set of conditions of artistic validation. Bakst's promotion to company Artistic Director over Benois in 1910 suggests the beginnings of a new division of labor within the collaborative group, as squabbles over crediting ideas arrived at in the course of collaboration indicate a new proprietary attitude toward artistic work. The transformation of Stravinsky's relationship with Diaghilev over the years from friendship to financial bickering brings full circle the dramatic change in collaboration instigated by the newly charged economic climate. From a relationship based on shared attitudes and ideas, cemented by ties of kinship and friendship, collaboration had become a contractual arrangement.

To view the pre-War history of the Ballets Russes in terms of the marketplace is in no way to denigrate the splendid artistic achievements of those years. If anything, it enhances them by enabling us to appreciate the background of enterprise against which they flourished.

Competition, like the "commodization" of the dancer and the creation of a new star system, crystallized within the Ballets Russes as imperatives of the socio-economic climate of the West. Diaghilev did not invent or will them into existence. Like his financial arrangements with musical impresarios and banks, they entered the company in response to needs of the moment rather than by premeditated design. In both financing and labor relations, however, Diaghilev established precedents that influenced the course of ballet's subsequent development.

By all reasonable expectations, the Diaghilev company should have foundered in transplanting its ideal vision of the Imperial Theatres to the very different soil of the West. Luck or fate do not suffice to explain why it did not. The success of the Ballets Russes rested on Diaghilev's intuitive sense of the marketplace, his feeling for its liberating possibilities, and, above all, his grasp of how it might be manipulated to serve traditional ends of high art.

CHAPTER V

UNDERWRITING MODERNISM

The tanks that rolled across Belgium and northern France in the summer of 1914 severed Europe from the habits of its immediate cultural past. Overnight, the cosmopolitan edifice of Belle Epoque society, amusement, manners, and art collapsed. Princes of finance plowed their capital into munitions; grandes dames organized charities for the orphaned and wounded. War rang down the curtain of the Opéra and a score of Paris theatres, sending performers to trenches, cemeteries, and prisoner-of-war camps. For Diaghilev and his Ballets Russes, London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Vienna, and Monte Carlo became memories of tours that had ceased to exist.

In the years 1915-1917 Futurism and Cubism radically altered the aesthetic foundations of the Ballets Russes. Like symbolism and Art Nouveau during the Fokine period, these movements offered a set of formal models and procedures that framed Diaghilev's revamping of the vocabulary, structure, and style of postwar ballet. The assimilation of Cubo-Futurist ideas coincided with Diaghilev's gypsy years, an era of wandering that began with the temporary exile of war and ended with permanent

statelessness after Russia's October Revolution. This cultural displacement added other defining elements to Diaghilev's modernism: folk forms and eighteenth-century theatrical material of Spanish and Italian origin, and a balletic analogue to the "modern style" of design. From the crossing and recrossing of these threads -- invested at once with the anxiety of exile and its exorcism -- came the essential fabric of Ballets Russes modernism.

Although the choreographic and musical breakthroughs of Sacre du Printemps had threatened to rupture the "collaborative or accommodative relationship between music and design",[1] the aesthetic principles of Mir iskusstva remained ascendant up to the war. The dismissal of Nijinsky from the company in 1913, Fokine's reappointment as balletmaster, and heavy commitments to opera production precluded any immediate follow-up to the radical innovation of Sacre. Yet Diaghilev clearly was restive. The disparity between visual design and the musical and choreographic advances of Sacre had struck discerning members of his audience. As Roger Fry wrote, "It was evident here that both dance and music had outstripped the scenic artists, had arrived at something much more logically conceived than the casual decorative

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[1]Melissa McQuillan, "Painters and the Ballet, 1917-1926: An Aspect of the Relationship Between Art and Theatre," Diss. New York University 1979, I, 85.

pictorial formula of the scenery."[2] Only weeks after banishing Nijinsky from the company, Diaghilev awarded his first commission to an artist who stood outside the Mir iskusstva tradition. The appointment of Natalia Goncharova to design Coq d'Or was the first intimation that a visual shift as dramatic as the choreographic and musical developments of the previous season was in the offing.

Only thirty-three at the time she received her first Diaghilev commission, Goncharova was a leading figure of the Moscow avantgarde, a founder of Rayonism, and a close associate of the Russian Futurists. Her painting in 1913-1914 displayed the broad eclecticism of the pre-Revolutionary avantgarde at its creative zenith: semi-abstract Rayonist compositions that used the intersection in space of rays emanating from objects to create new forms; Cubo-Futurist works that blended the Futurist obsession with mechanization, speed, and light with a Cubist treatment of solids; and a type of neo-primitivism that drew on native Russian folk art, the icon and mediaeval manuscript tradition, and Russian naive painting. In August 1913, Goncharova staggered Moscow with a mammoth exhibition of 768 works, her entire output of the previous decade. No doubt it was the impression created by that show that led Diaghilev to her studio in the autumn when he

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[2]Roger Fry, "M. Larionow and the Russian Ballet," Burlington Magazine, 34, No. 192 (1919), 112.

enlisted her collaboration in Coq d'Or.[3]

Despite Fokine's initial misgivings at Diaghilev's selection of an artist from the Futurist "fringe", Coq d'Or was the high point of the 1914 season. The color scheme of red (synonymous with beauty in Russian), yellow, orange, and blue, dazzled audiences with its splendor, gaiety, and primitive fantasy. "A production such as none had dreamed of," wrote Osbert Sitwell. "In its stilted, dreamlike rhythms displayed against a background of huge flowers and brightly hued buildings, was to be felt a mockery of the great, a kind of joy in the doom of lordship."[4]

Goncharova stressed the authenticity of her sources, beginning with a childhood spent in the Russian countryside where she had observed first-hand the customs and folk traditions still surviving among the peasantry.[5] In a 1959 interview, she described other research for the Paris production: visits to archaeological museums where she discovered the rich heritage of peasant costume and "such treasures as the magnificent rings of our Tsars and

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[3]Mary Chamot, Goncharova: Stage Designs and Paintings (London: Oresko Books, 1979), pp. 9-15, 48.

[4]Osbert Sitwell, Great Morning (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947), p. 269.

[5]Nathalie Goncharova, "The Creation of 'Les Noces'," Ballet and Opera, 8, No. 3 (September 1949), 23.

boyars," and discussions with artisans.[6] Nevertheless, neither Goncharova nor her life-companion Mikhail Larionov, who renewed his acquaintance with Diaghilev at this time, viewed mimesis as the goal of design. "The ballet decor," they wrote in a joint article, "does not have as its sole purpose the establishment, according to the indications of a libretto, of the time and place of an action; the scrupulously historical reconstruction of this or that style is not the end assigned to it. Decor is above all an independent creation, supporting the spirit of the work to be performed; it is an autonomous art form with its own problems and subject to its own laws . . . If [theatrical] form . . . is not established on an experimental basis, if it does not obey these unformulable but strict artistic laws, served by a sure talent, it is not viable and cannot stand the test of time."[7]

Goncharova and Larionov returned to Russia after the outbreak of hostilities in the summer of 1914 -- a harrowing journey across Italy, Turkey, and southern Russia, the German border having been closed to Tsarist nationals. Larionov was sent to the front and not long

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[6] L'Ilustre, 24 Sept. 1959, p. 59. Quoted in Chamot, p. 15.

[7] Nathalie Goncharova and Michel Larionov, "Serge de Diaghilev et l'évolution du décor et du costume de ballet," in Nathalie Goncharova, Michel Larionov, and Pierre Vorms, Les Ballets russes: Serge Diaghilew et la décoration théâtrale, rev. ed. (Belves Dordogne: Pierre Vorms, 1955), pp. 27-28.

after wounded. Goncharova, meanwhile, overwhelmed with commissions as a result of her Parisian success, designed scenery and costumes for Alexander Tairov's production of Goldoni's The Fan and began work on Rimsky-Korsakov's opera Grad Kitezh. In the summer of 1915, at Diaghilev's invitation, the two artists joined the nucleus of the new troupe he was forming at the Villa Belle Rive in Ouchy, the company's Swiss headquarters from May to December 1915.

Goncharova and Larionov had introduced Diaghilev to a Russian variant of Futurism. The impresario's encounter with the Italian movement took place in the winter of 1914-1915.[8] Over the next two years Diaghilev had frequent contact with the Futurists, incorporated a number of their ideas into proposals for company productions, and enlisted two Futurist artists, Giacomo Balla and Fortunato Depero, to design Fireworks and Le Chant du rossignol.

The first intimation of Diaghilev's interest in a Futurist collaboration dates from October 1914, when he and Stravinsky attended a demonstration of Luigi Russolo's intuonarumori. According to Futurist poet Francesco

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[8]The following discussion is drawn from McQuillan, II, 381-398. I have also referred to Stephen Jay Weinstock, "Independence vs. Interdependence in Stravinsky's Theatrical Collaborations: The Evolution of the Original Production of The Wedding," Diss. Univ. of California, Berkeley 1981, 173-182.

Cangiullo, Stravinsky was fascinated by the new instruments and considered utilizing them in a ballet score. Diaghilev's enthusiasm was so great that he wanted to present the intuonarumori in concert form in Paris. The following February Stravinsky joined Diaghilev in Rome where, in addition to concertizing, he met Marinetti and other Futurists. On this occasion, the composer sought out the painter Umberto Boccioni. "I was invited today to a tea," wrote Boccioni on February 13th, "in honor of the Russian musician Stravinsky. He wants to meet me and do something with Futurist . . . color, dance, and costume."[9] At this time, it appears, Diaghilev hoped for a collaboration between Stravinsky and the Futurists on Liturgie. No more came of this project than the concert of intuonarumori.

In September 1916, the main body of the Ballets Russes sailed for the United States. Diaghilev remained in Europe, spending the better part of the autumn and winter months in Rome. In the course of this period, plans for Fireworks matured. "One evening," recalled Italian architect Virgilio Marchi, "we all went to Diaghileff and Semenoff's salon to make the decision whether to choose Feux d'artifice [sic] or the 'Printing Machine Ballet', a

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[9]Quoted in McQuillan, II, 383.

mechanical invention of Balla's."[10] Marchi also recalled a private performance of Balla's 1914 work given for Diaghilev.

> The author arranged us in geometric patterns [wrote Marchi] and, with the inevitable grey stick, conducted the mechanical movements and gestures we all had to make to represent the soul of the individual pieces of a rotary printing-press. I was told to repeat with violence the syllable 'STA', with one arm raised in gymnastic fashion, so that I felt that I was on the square of a training barracks. Balla, needless to say, had reserved for himself the more delicate syllables, onomatopoetic sounds and verbalizations, which issued from his lips with his unforgettable Piedmontese "neh", while the shameless, bearded Semenoff kept popping the corks of bottles of Frascati, turning the whole performance into a highly intelligent and most amusing grotesque.[11]

In December 1916, as plans for his April season at the Teatro Costanza took shape, Diaghilev formalized agreements for commissions with both Balla and Depero. Thanks to Diaghilev's patronage, they received a unique opportunity to transform the ideas elaborated in their theoretical writings of 1915-1916 into a theatrical reality.

The Fireworks setting consisted of a black backdrop surrounding, on three sides, a cluster of solids

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[10]Quoted in McQuillan, II, 385. Mikhail Semenov was a former St. Petersburg music critic. Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 318.

[11]Quoted in McQuillan, II, 390.

that filled the stage. These "geometrical solids," writes Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco in his Omaggio a Balla, "were made of wood covered with brightly colored satin; the large monochrome forms were clustered together while the multi-colored forms at the top were lit from behind."[12] The complicated lighting scheme, which Diaghilev devised and worked himself, transformed Balla's giant impracticables into substitute stage actors in a Futurist reworking of the symbolist keyboard of light.

Fireworks had a single performance at Rome's Teatro Costanzi in April 1917. Depero's Le Chant du rossignol was not so fortunate. Although costume sketches, a photograph of the set constructions, and contemporary press notices anticipating the production survive, the project was abandoned before going into production. Its legacy, however, endured. Many of its key ideas -- the multi-level stage, the use of masks and "constructed" costumes, and the objectification of the performer as an element of the setting -- found a place in Diaghilev's overall approach to modernist stagecraft. In large measure, this was due to Larionov and Goncharova, who hovered at Diaghilev's side during the crucial years of artistic transition and remained within the company orbit throughout much of the twenties. Under their influence,

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[12]Quoted ibid.

Futurist theory was grafted onto the content and sources of Russian neo-primitivism.

Between 1914 and 1917, plans were laid for several ballets that exploited Russia's non-European cultural legacy within a broadly-defined Futurist context. Although Liturgie did not get beyond the planning stages, Contes Russes, Chout, Renard, and significant portions of Les Noces had their creative genesis in the wartime meeting ground of neo-primitivism and Futurism. In all of these works, the living "Oriental" traditions from which Fokine's genre nouveau sprang were displaced by pre-literate Russian sources: Orthodox ritual in Liturgie, performances by folk entertainers known as skomorok'hi in Chout and Renard, dramatized wedding customs in Les Noces, and folk tales in Contes Russes.[13] In all these works, moveover, Diaghilev insisted upon a "modern" elaboration of the material. When Prokofiev brought the draft of his score for Chout to Rome in March 1915, Diaghilev sat down with the composer, and together they evolved a "modern treatment" of two tales about a buffoon from Alexander Afanasyev's Legends of the Russian People.[14]

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[13]Lecture by Professor Simon Karlinsky, "Stravinsky and Russian Pre-literate Theatre," International Stravinsky Symposium, University of California at San Diego, 11 Sept. 1982.

[14]Grigoriev, p. 171.

Primitivism catalyzed a similar transition in choreographic style. Working under Larionov's tutelage, Diaghilev's nineteen-year-old protégé Leonide Massine learned the rudiments of his craft by attempting to simulate in movement the angular arm and stylized hand positions of Goncharova's Byzantine-inspired designs.[15] To emphasize the ballet's hieratic quality, moreover, the dancers were to wear masks. Massine worked closely with Larionov on other ballets as well. "Working on Soleil de nuit," he wrote about the earliest episode of Contes russes to be choreographed, "Larionov and I seemed to inspire each other as we discussed and tried out each scene. He felt strongly that the ballet must be done in authentic peasant style, and his costumes, in vivid shades of red, purple and green, were based closely on Russian folk-art. For the chorus I drew heavily on my childhood memories of the chorovod and of 'Gori, gori, jasno', which he helped me to embellish with suitably primitive, earthly gestures. I think it was through Larionov that I first came to understand the true nature of these old ritual peasant dances."[16] At Larionov's instigation, the angular and mechanistic elements of neo-primitivism and Futurist theatrical practice became part of Massine's early

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[15]Leonide Massine, My Life in Ballet, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll and Robert Rubens (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 73-74.

[16]Ibid., p. 75.

choreographic language.

Although Futurist influence can be discerned in Diaghilev productions through the early twenties, the movement's narrowly-conceived theoretical context precluded experiments in other directions. Cubism, on the other hand, opened the ballet to a range of new possibilities in the choice of subject matter and style; it hinted at new forms of theatrical synthesis and genre; incorporating elements of Futurist theory, it rendered them accessible to a grand public. Parade, which had its first performance at the Théâtre du Châtelet on May 18, 1917, was the first of Picasso's many contributions to the Ballets Russes over the following decade. It anticipated numerous postwar collaborations with the theatrical avantgarde and painters of the School of Paris. Of more lasting significance, Parade brought Picasso and the Cubists to the attention of Diaghilev's large and influential public. As Gertrude Stein later wrote:

> So Cubism was to be put on stage. That was really the beginning of the general recognition of Picasso's work, when a work is put on the stage of course everyone has to look at it and in a sense if it is put on the stage everyone is forced to look and since they are forced to look at it, of course, they must accept it, there is nothing else to do.[17]

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[17]Gertrude Stein, Picasso (Paris, 1938; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 29.

Parade introduced into Diaghilev's evolving modernism themes of contemporary life and popular entertainment. It did so in the setting, characters, and costuming of the ballet as well as in the referential subtexts of the music and choreography. Cocteau's original intention in the libretto of his "ballet réaliste" was to incorporate mechanical sounds or "ear-deceivers" as he called them, into Satie's score.[18] Although sirens, typewriters, revolver shots, and other mechanical sounds were cut from the production, "facts" of this kind permeated the choreographic texture. "For the first time," wrote Cocteau, "real life gesture was amplified and magnified to become dance."[19] The solo for the American girl, a rapid synthesis of mimed actions lifted from the cinema, illustrated Cocteau's point. But like the other "turns" in this music-hall "parade", it indicated the successful application to choreography of cubist methods, particularly collage: "Don't be afraid," Picasso told Massine, "to glue a piece of newspaper to the canvas -- i.e., to use a movement whose meaning cannot be misunderstood, and which, remaining untransposed, gives

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[18]Jean Cocteau, A Call to Order, trans. Rollo H. Myers (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1926), p. 54.

[19]Jean Cocteau, Nouveau Théâtre de Poche (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1960), p. 12.

full value to the other movements."[20]

The most shocking invention of the ballet was Picasso's French and American Managers, large three-dimensional structures that represented "a kind of Cubist sculpture belonging to a genre developed by Picasso in his 1912 assemblages".[21] Less radical, but more suggestive of future lines of development, were the drop curtain and painted decor that framed the ballet. In the first, Picasso blended pre-Cubist imagery of his "Family of Saltimbiques" with references to the art of the past to create a backstage scene in the tradition of the Italian commedia dell'arte.[22] The decor, on the other hand, which had its origins in townscapes Picasso had been drawing since 1915, transposed the scene to a cubistically-conceived urban setting. The juxtaposition of cubist and naturalistic approaches, Picasso's "double play" as Douglas Cooper has called it,[23] within a readily comprehensible referential framework undercut the radical innovation of Parade. In tracing a visual continuum between old and new, Parade invented a modernist formula with obvious commercial

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[20]Quoted in Francis Steegmuller, Cocteau: A Biography (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), p. 180.

[21]McQuillan, II, 419.

[22]See McQuillan, II, 408-415.

[23]Douglas Cooper, Picasso Theatre (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1968), p. 30.

potential. Indeed, by 1921 cubist style had become a theatrical commonplace.

> The curtain rises on a delightful decor [wrote a French critic in 1921]. We stand before the entrance to a circus. This entrance, of course, is crooked with a lyre set askew. There lies the charm of the design. To left and right is the city -- high sections of walls riddled with black rectangles for windows. Everywhere is that delicacy that is Monsieur Picasso's own: a very subtle gamut of colors dominated by the white and black. Gaping and illuminated, the entrance to the circus creates a sort of white furnace.[24]

But other elements as well contributed to cubism's general acceptance. "I like Parade because it is unpretentious, gay, and distinctly comic," wrote Juan Gris a few days after the premiere,[25] anticipating qualities that came to typify ballet modernism as exemplified by the Diaghilev company and its competitors. With the cessation of hostilities, audiences flocked to the theatres. Avid for entertainment, they wanted to laugh. Above all, they wanted to forget. Parade "represented on the stage the particular quality of French culture in the twenties -- influenced by cubism but still breathing that far off essence of Parnassus and its paradoxes. It was lively and

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[24]"Parade," L'Opinion, 1 Jan. 1921. Quoted in McQuillan, II, 415.

[25]Juan Gris, Letter 23 May 1917, Letter, LXI, p. 49. Quoted in McQuillan, II, 425.

ironic, and supremely elegant."[26] With Parade, the School of Paris along with its promoters, protégés, and collectors entered the orbit of the Ballets Russes.

Diaghilev's sojourn in Italy aligned the company with Europe's Futurist vanguard. Yet simultaneous with his discovery of Italy's artistic present came a revaluation of its pre-Romantic past. Neo-primitivism had shifted emphasis from Russia's recent past to an era which lay beyond the ken of history in popular tradition, ritual, and myth. Diaghilev's interest in the classical legacy of his wartime country of adoption during the period 1915-1917 represented a similar redefining of the cultural past. Leaping in one bound over the nineteenth century, he discerned in the lost music of Domenico Cimarosa and Giovanni Pergolesi, the forgotten choreographies of Raoul Feuillet and Pierre Rameau, and the popular art of the commedia dell'arte, expressions of Latinity's authentic tradition.

The idea for a ballet based on pre-Romantic sources evolved in the autumn of 1916, during the months, paradoxically, when relations with the Futurists were at their closest. Sometime previously, Diaghilev had purchased at a Paris auction old choreographic texts, including first editions of Carlo Blasis, Louis Pecour,

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[26]Giulia Veronesi, Style and Design 1909-1929 (New York: George Braziller, 1968), pp. 142-143.

Feuillet, Malpied, and Rameau.[27] The study of these seventeenth and eighteenth-century authors "came at a most opportune moment"[28] in the career of Leonide Massine, the young Moscow dancer whom Diaghilev had plucked from the Bolshoi's corps de ballet in the autumn of 1913. Divining in Massine's unripe artistry the promise of genius, Diaghilev contrived over the next four years to make him both a worthy successor of Nijinsky and an artist who might give form to Diaghilev's own creative ideas. There were daily clases with Enrico Cecchetti during the months of phony war, a sojourn in Florence to study the masters of Renaissance painting, introductions to the avantgarde, and a choreographic apprenticeship under Larionov. By the autumn of 1916, when Massine emerged from his study of pre-Romantic choreography, he felt "an urgent desire" to apply the "technical knowledge" thus gained to "the service of a completely new movement in the design and creation of ballet".[29] At Diaghilev's suggestion, he studied the eighteenth-century painters Francesco Guardi, Pietro Longhi, and Antoine Watteau so as to better "visualize the stylized manners" of Carlo Goldoni's classic comedy Le Donne di Buon'humore, chosen by Diaghilev as the libretto

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[27]Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 318.

[28]Massine, p. 94.

[29]Ibid.

for what became a signature ballet of the post-Armistice period.[30] It was Diaghilev, too, who chose from among some five hundred sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti the twenty pieces he felt "would . . . enhance the comic situations in the play".[31] Anticipating a compositional method that became standard practice in the company's "time-travelling" ballets, Diaghilev asked a contemporary composer, in this case Vicenzo Tommasini, to orchestrate the selections he had made.

The premiere of The Good-Humoured Ladies in April 1917 was a milestone in the evolution of Massine's early choreographic style. "It was while doing the choreography" for this ballet, he later wrote, that he "learned the value of concentrating on detail, and giving full significance to even the most minute gesture."

> I also discovered that the body includes various more or less independent structural systems each answerable only to itself, which must be coordinated according to choreographic harmony. This led me to invent broken, angular movements in the upper part of the body while the lower limbs continued to move in the usual harmonic academic style. Such an opposition of styles, is, in my opinion, possible, and creates an interesting contrast. I used the eighteenth century notations as a point of departure for my own variations. In this way, I created entirely new body movements in my imagination, profiting largely by the effect of rhythmic forces, and varying, according to the nature

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[30] Ibid., p. 96.

[31] Ibid.

> of the movement, its rhythmic value as well as its tempo in order to attain, in the composition of choreographic phrases, the strongest possible effect.[32]

Pre-Romantic music and choreography inspired a mini-genre of comic works whose juxtaposition of older forms with the stylist settings of contemporary artists charmed a war-weary public. Among the most popular of these ballets was La Boutique fantasque, an updated version of Die Puppenfee, which combined the bright, decorative palette of André Derain with little-known compositions by Gioacchino Rossini discovered by Diaghilev in Rome, Naples, and Bologna.[33] Less successful was Le Astuzie Femminili, an eighteenth-century opera-ballet by Cimarosa for which Ottorino Respighi, an Italian composer who as a young man had played in the Mariinsky and Bolshoi orchestras,[34] was commissioned to "create all the recitatives in conformity with the themes of the composer and totally change the orchestration, adding the dances agreed upon with

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[32]Ibid, pp. 95-96.

[33]Antoine Banès, "Théâtre National de l'Opéra: Ballets russes. Petrouchka, Prince Igor, la Boutique fantasque," Figaro, 29 Dec. 1919, p. 3, col. 3.

[34]The Diaghilev Ballet in England, catalogue for an exhibition organized by David Chadd and John Gage, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Univ. of East Anglia, 11 Oct. - 20 Nov. 1979, and the Fine Art Society, London, 3 Dec. 1979 - 11 Jan. 1980, p. 25.

Diaghilev."[35] Respighi, who had previously discovered the collection of Rossini's piano pieces, Les Riens, which he subsequently orchestrated as La Boutique fantasque,[36] was also commissioned to "arrange" Giovanni Paisiello's Serva e padrona. The most influential of the "post-war pastiches", as Constant Lambert christened these ballets,[37] was Pulcinella. Based on an early eighteenth-century commedia dell'arte scenario, Pulcinella internalized temporal dislocation within each of the ballet's contributing texts. Transposing the visual setting progressively backward, Picasso created a Neapolitan street scene that blended Cubist perspective with traditional eighteenth-century imagery. In his orchestration, Stravinsky arrived at a similar solution. Taking as his raw material unpublished music previously selected by Diaghilev, he transformed Pergolesi's themes into the referential framework for a neo-classical composition.

Although these works (with the exception of Serva e padrona, which was never staged) premiered in 1919 and 1920, the germ and characteristic method of their creation date to the war years. Like the neo-primitivist

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[35]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Ottorino Respighi, 5 Sept. 1919, Fonds Kochno, Pièce 78.

[36]The Diaghilev Ballet in England, p. 25.

[37]Constant Lambert, Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline, introd. Arthur Hutchings (New York: October House, 1967), pp. 66-106.

experiments that immediately preceded them, they indicated a way in which period material might be updated, streamlined, and, most importantly, transposed from a key of neo-romantic sentimentality, as exemplified by Fokine's Biedermeyer works, to one of ironic detachment.
The obsessive play of past and present, however, betrays more than a quickening of formal imagination. In Diaghilev's willful plumbing of the Latin past may be discerned an attempt to exorcise the loss of Russia by founding his enterprise on a substitute but no less vital tradition, one, moreover, that was framed within the highly structured parameters of classicism. In a journal entry for October 1917, Charles Ricketts linked Russia with Diaghilev's interest in lost Italian music. "Diaghilev," he wrote, "has been delving in Italian libraries for scores of eighteenth-century Italians now forgotten . . . He wants an Italian revival and a Russian propaganda. We quarrelled over German music which he wants to persecute and suppress; he means to scrap Carnaval, Papillons and the Spectre of the Rose."[38]

Diaghilev's notebook for the period 1918-1920 contains lengthy excerpts from his readings, laboriously copied in his own hand, that relate Cimarosa's appeal as a composer to the discipline of classical form. These notes

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[38]Quoted in The Diaghilev Ballet in England, p. 24.

suggest the train of Diaghilev's ruminations on larger questions of postwar style.

> Cimarosa acted on the imagination through long musical phrases which united extreme richness with extreme regularity . . . [Paisello] does not evoke in the soul of the spectator images which give enjoyment to profound passions; his emotions hardly rise above grace . . . Nothing in the world is more contrary to Cimarosa's style, glittering with comic verve, passion, force, and gaiety.[39]

> It is by manner that one pleases a blasé public eager for novelty; it is manner, too, that rapidly causes to age the works of these inspired artists [Beethoven and Rossini], themselves dupes of that false novelty they had sought to introduce into art. Then it often happens that the public returns to forgotten masterpieces and looks anew upon the imperishable charm of beauty.[40]

> No one, save Cimarosa, has that proportion, that decorum, that expression, that gaiety, that tenderness, and above all, the element that throws all his qualities into relief, that incomparable elegance, elegance in the expression of tender feelings, elegance in the comic, elegance in the pathetic.[41]

Clearly, what appealed to Diaghilev in the work of Cimarosa and other eighteenth-century composers was the

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[39]Quoted from La Vie de Rossini, "Cahier de travail de Serge de Diaghilev avec indications de répertoire, 1915-1916," Fonds Kochno, Pièce 124, n.p. As all the monetary references are in pounds and francs, it seems highly unlikely that the date indicated on the document is correct.

[40]Quoted from Journal d'Eugène Delacroix, ibid., n.p.

[41]Quoted from Journal d'Eugène Delacroix, ibid., n.p.

supremacy of style. History exists at the intersection of time and place. Only style, with its ability to remake the transitory and circumstantial into the imperishable stuff of art, stands impervious to change. As the touchstones of European life collapsed around him, something akin to classicism joined the constellation of influences reshaping Diaghilev's aesthetic. Crystallizing initially as a compensatory response to the need for an instant, alternative past, "classicism", with its insistence on the primacy of style, offered a formal counterpoint to the nostalgia and sentimentality implicit in retrospective visions of the past. Style thus became the means whereby past and present were formally united but coded as belonging to distinct epistemological realms. As in poetry, music, and painting, modernist style in ballet channeled perception through an intellectual process of ironic distancing.

"Period modernism" was a response to the radical displacement of war. So, too, were the Spanish themes that entered Diaghilev's repertory in 1916. Lying at the westernmost end of the European periphery, Spain was a country evocative of Russia not only in its monarchist traditions but in the vitality of its folk culture. From Diaghilev's encounters with the Spanish world in 1916 and 1917 came the last cycle of post-Armistice works that had their genesis in the war years -- Las Meninas, Le Tricorne, and Cuadro Flamenco.

Diaghilev "was in ecstasy at the beauty of Spain," Grigoriev wrote, as were the other members of Diaghilev's creative circle.[42] Spain was "unlike any other" country of the European West, "reminding us if anything of Russia. We were thrilled by Spanish dancing and bullfights, and found that the Spaniards shared our Russian love of spectacle. Our affection was returned. We [became] truly popular in Madrid."[43] King Alfonso rarely missed a performance, and it was to this self-styled "Godfather of the Ballet" as much as to the Velazquez masterpiece hanging in the Prado that Las Meninas, Diaghilev's first Spanish ballet, paid tribute. A chamber work danced by two pairs of courtiers to Gabriel Fauré's Pavane, Las Meninas, which premiered at the fashionable resort of San Sebastian in August 1916, evoked the Imperial traditions of Spain's Golden Age.

Of greater inspiration, however, was the country's folk culture which, as in Russia, derived from a blending of European and Asian sources and had survived the passage to the modern era nearly intact. In a 1921 article, Stravinsky referred to the "affinities and resemblances . . . between Spanish music . . . and the music of Russia." "Certain Andalusian songs remind me of Russian ones," he

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[42]Grigoriev, p. 123.

[43]Ibid., p. 132.

wrote, "and I enjoy these atavistic memories."[44] Dance stirred similar atavistic responses. Russians haunted Madrid's flamenco cafes, and in Goncharova's paintings, Slavic themes quickly yielded to pictures of Spanish dancers. No one was more intrigued by Spanish dancing then Massine, and under the tutelage of Félix Fernández, a brilliant performer from the gypsy quarter of Granada, the choreographer mastered flamenco technique to a degree rivaling the skill of native practitioners. In the transformation of this authentic source to the modernist idiom of Le Tricorne, Massine retraced the path laid out by Larionov and Goncharova in the treatment of Russian material.

Just when Manuel de Falla entered Diaghilev's circle is unknown. It seems likely, however, that plans for a Spanish ballet were underway by the early autumn of 1916. October of that year found the two together in Seville, where the composer helped Diaghilev draw up his first contracts employing Spanish dancers in the company.[45] Certainly, Falla's synthesis of classical and folkloric sources would have appealed to Diaghilev at that time. No less appealing must have been the composer's previous

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[44] Comoedia, 15 May 1921. Quoted in Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents, p. 143.

[45] Contracts dated 1 Oct. and 2 Oct. 1916 between Serge Diaghilev and Angeles Morillo López and José Rodríguez Martínez, respectively, Fonds Kochno, Pièce 32.

theatrical collaborations with Gregorio Martínez Sierra, a noted poet and dramatist, who in 1916 assumed the management of the Teatro Eslava.[46] Among these was the production in April 1915 of El amor brujo, which not only brought together the collaborators of Le Tricorne but presaged the manner of its creation. Both Falla's score and Martínez Sierra's libretto for El amor brujo wove together the musical forms, stories, and legends they had learned first hand from the matriarch of the Andalusian gypsy clan that danced in the original production. What must have impressed Diaghilev was the centrality of dance to the evolution and shaping of the work, as well as the quality of the performers. Indeed, representing the third generation of this dancing family was a great-niece of the matriarch, who as María Dalbaicín joined the Diaghilev company in 1921.[47]

Like Martínez Sierra, Diaghilev had toyed with the idea of presenting Nights in the Gardens of Spain as a ballet. The project was abandoned in favor of Le Tricorne, and a contract was drawn up between Diaghilev, Falla, and

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[46]Gregorio Martínez Sierra, The Cradle Song and Other Plays, trans. with introd. John Garrrett Underhill (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1929), p. XI.

[47]Angel Sangardia, Manuel de Falla (Madrid: Unión musical española, 1946), pp. 28-29; Jaime Pahissa, Manuel de Falla: His Life and Works, trans. Jean Wagstaff (London: Museum Press, 1954), pp. 83-84.

Martinez Sierra as librettist. Diaghilev, apparently, was unable to produce the work as quckly as he had originally intended, and in 1917 the pantomime in two scenes which he and Massine saw on tour in Barcelona was staged with Diaghilev's permission at the Teatro Eslava.[48]

Martínez Sierra adapted his libretto from Pedro Antonio de Alarcón's nineteenth-century novella El sombrero de tres picos, itself a reworking of the popular folk-tale in verse "El corregidor y la molinera". Both in its use of dance rhythms and direct musical quotations, Falla's pantomime version stayed close to this folkloric base. Recalling his impressions of the initial score, Massine wrote:

> Falla's score, with its pulsating rhythms, played by eleven brass instruments, seemed to us very exciting, and in its blend of violence and passion was similar to much of the music of the local folk-dances . . . When we talked to Falla about it, he seemed . . . ready to collaborate with us, to the extent of omitting some of the pastiche writing in the music for the Corregidor's dance, and expanding the ending into a fuller, more powerful finale in accordance with Diaghilev's suggestions. He said, however, that he would have to spend some time studying native dances and music before he could successfully translate the jota or the farruca into a modern idiom.[49]

Over the summer of 1917, as Diaghilev, Massine, Falla, and the dancer Félix traveled in slow stages across

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[48]Pahissa, pp. 96-97; Massine, p. 115.

[49]Massine, p. 115.

Castile, Aragon, and Andalusia, the dialectic of neo-primitivism was re-enacted. Tunes recorded by a Granada wayside, dances glimpsed on a moonlit Seville rooftop added to both the composer's and choreographer's stock of living material. At the same time, a process of stylization was at work. Blending discrete regional dances into a "super-national" idiom, Massine imposed classical movements on the forms and rhythms he had learned together with "many twisted and broken gestures of [his] own".[50] Falla's intention of fusing the music from every part of Spain reflected a similar process of abstraction. The "few and deliberate" quotations that remained in the score remained there "for humorous purpose";[51] they emphasized the farcical character of the action rather than the quality of the reference as folklore. This use of popular material as a prerequisite for its absorption into the very structure of the final score parallels Stravinsky's compositional breakthrough in Sacre du printemps.[52] If Falla did not suppress all reference to folklore, under Diaghilev's tutelage he replicated in the evolution of Le Tricorne the

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[50]Massine, p. 41.

[51]J.B. Trend, Manuel de Falla and Spanish Music (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1935), p. 123.

[52]Richard Taruskin, "From Firebird to The Rite: Folk Elements in Stravinsky's Scores," Ballet Review, 10, No. 2 (Summer 1982), 79-84.

general move of neo-primitivism toward increasingly abstract forms.

In the years 1914-1917 lie the origins of Diaghilev's modernist aesthetic. From the interaction of cubism, futurism, neo-primitivism, and the rediscovery of Latinity's pre-Romantic artistic heritage emerged the constellation of styles that would distinguish the postwar Ballets Russes and inspire its numerous imitators. No less dramatic than the influence of the avantgarde on dance, however, was Diaghilev's impact on the avantgarde itself. By successfully appropriating the characteristic methods of the era's artistic vanguard and fusing them with ballet's traditional period and ethnic content, Diaghilev significantly broadened the reach of modernist experiment. He did this by demonstrating the ability of these new formal approaches to transcend the limitations imposed by the original medium and referential contexts and by making the avantgarde aesthetic accessible and acceptable to a considerably broadened public.

Diaghilev's extraordinary achievement in these years rested only in part on his willingness to assimilate new formal procedures. Equally, it reflected his ability to remake the company in the image of the avantgarde itself. Throughout this period, Diaghilev worked in the intimacy of a small collaborative group united in pursuit of radical theatrical change. At the center of this experimental nucleus were Larionov, Goncharova, Stravinsky,

and Massine. More than collaborators, they lived and traveled with Diaghilev on terms of intimacy and in their letters addressed him familiarly. (For the overwhelming majority of artists who received commissions in the twenties, the impresario remained, by contrast, a distant "cher ami".) Traveling brought new intimates who modified the aesthetic interests of the group but not its general character. Diaghilev's wartime "studio" exhibited the informal collective structure and shared aesthetic purposes of contemporary avantgarde movements.

Habits of intimacy had united the collaborators of Diaghilev's earliest ballet seasons. However, by contrast with Diaghilev's Mir iskusstva collaborators, the aim of this wartime nucleus was not solely production. A higher premium was placed on experimentation than at any other time in the company's history, with projects abandoned or laid aside once their innovative elements had been conceptualized. Only after the war, when production again became a commercial necessity, did the most viable of these abandoned ballets move from studio to stage.

Diaghilev's modernist breakthroughs took place outside the constraints of the marketplace. "Of all the years we travelled with Diaghilev," recalled dancer Lydia

Sokolova, "those six months in Switzerland were the happiest."[53] Classes and rehearsals were underway, and with the company "so much smaller than before," the dancers "lived on rather more intimate terms."[54] Intimacy denoted more than a social style; it implied an economic relationship as well. Reorganizing the company along collectivist lines, Diaghilev leveled distinctions in salary. Irrespective or rank, the dancers in his small but growing troupe received four hundred Swiss francs a month.[55] Within his creative circle, too, financial relationships suggested a throwback to the pre-contractual days of Abramtsevo, Mir iskusstva, and his earliest seasons in the West. To help Stravinsky support his large and growing family, Diaghilev secured engagements for the composer wherever the traveling studio happened to alight. In the case of Larionov and Goncharova, payments seems to have taken the form of a stipend rather than remuneration for work performed under a contractual arrangement. Indeed, in early autumn 1918, Goncharova wrote Diaghilev on two occasions asking apologetically for "the money you promised to send."[56] With the laws of the market in

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[53]Lydia Sokolova, Dancing for Diaghilev, ed. Richard Buckle (London: John Murray, 1960), p. 69.

[54]Ibid., p. 68.

[55]Ibid., p. 67.

[56]Natalia Goncharova, Letters to Serge Diaghilev, 20 Sept. 1918 and undated, Fonds Kochno, Pièce 37.

temporary abeyance, modernism bloomed under a sign of relative social and economic equality.

For Diaghilev, the studio atmosphere of the war years was congenial and immensely productive, and at various times in the future he would strive to recreate it. Yet always there remained the problem of financing. Although he presumably expended personal resources until the 1917 revolution cut off sinecures and other monies from Russia,[57] still the cost of experiment without promise of gain demanded considerable subsidy. Paradoxically, the lion's share of capital that enabled Diaghilev to rebuild his company and underwrite the new repertory came from New York's Metropolitan Opera.

Plans for the first American tour, a fifteen-week engagement that began in January and ended in April 1916, were laid at the time of Diaghilev's initial encounter with the Futurists in Milan. Here, on October 10th, he signed the contract with Giulio Gatti-Casazza that underwrote the experimental colony in Ouchy.[58] By Article 24 of that document, Diaghilev received a $30,000 advance, payable in

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[57]Henry Russell, Cable to Otto Kahn, 26 Dec. 1915, Diaghilev Correspondence 1915-1916, Metropolitan Opera Archives. The cable reads in part: "Diaghilev begs me to explain to you that owing to the suspension of all communication from Russia, not even with the aid of the Embassy, can he obtain money for himself and company."

[58]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and the Metropolitan Opera Company, 10 Oct. 1914, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

seven monthly installments, the first of which fell due around the time of Diaghilev's arrival in Switzerland on May 1st. Augmented by an additional $15,000 to cover the months of November, December, and January when the company went into rehearsal,[59] these cash payments allowed Diaghilev several months of creative freedom unhampered by the necessity of performing. For the duration of the tour, moreover, the Metropolitan agreed to pay Diaghilev $13,500 a week (from which he had to meet all payroll expenses and pay back the full amount of the advance) as well as travel and transportation costs for the company of fifty dancers and its trunkloads of costumes, scenery, and effects.

In the ensuing months, the Metropolitan's obligations grew: the weekly payment increased to $15,750 a week, and an additional clause was inserted into the contract assigning Diaghilev "one-half of the net profits of the engagement".[60] As departure neared, anxious cables from Henry Russell, the Metropolitan's agent charged with handling the company's European send-off, begged for new advances: "Cable Diaghilev's January payment instantly," he wired on December 15th, "or authorize me advance him money. Cash payments due tomorrow. Otherwise Diaghilev

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[59]Otto Kahn, Cable to Serge Diaghilev, 14 May 1915, "Diaghilev Correspondence, 1915-1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[60]Giulio Gatti-Casazza, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 28 Aug. 1915, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

collapse."[61] On Christmas day, he appealed for an additional Frs. 40,000, needed in part to cover the Frs. 15,000 Diaghilev owed his Paris dressmaker for delivery of the new Schéhérazade and Firebird costumes ordered specially for the American tour.[62] As it was, a balance of Frs. 40,000 remained in the form of eight promissory notes, the payment of which Russell apparently guaranteed, and in September 1916, "at the request of [his creditor] Mademoiselle Muelle" and on her own stationery, Diaghilev wrote to the Metropolitan's cashier, demanding that the opera house pay the Frs. 12,673 still outstanding.[63]

The Metropolitan performed a further service for Diaghilev. Calling on its immense prestige, and with Comtesse Greffuhle, Lady Ripon, the Duke of Alba, and even

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[61]Henry Russell, Cable to John Brown, 15 Dec. 1915, "Diaghilev Correspondence, 1915-1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[62]Henry Russel, Cable to Metropolitan Opera, 25 Dec. 1915; Cable to Otto Kahn, 28 Dec. 1915; and Cable to John Brown, 21 Feb. 1916, "Diaghilev Correspondence, 1915-1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives. According to the program notes for the Century Theatre season that began in mid-January, Prince Igor and La Princesse Enchantée had new costumes and decors as well.

[63]Henry Russell, Cable to John Brown, 21 Feb. 1916, Diaghilev Correspondence, 1915-1916"; Serge Diaghilev, Letter to "Monsieur le Caissier," 6 Sept. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe, 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

the King of Spain pulling strings behind the scenes,[64] the Metropolitan negotiated the release of Nijinsky and his family from house detention in Budapest. Otto Kahn, the Chairman of the Metropolitan's Board of Directors and a major underwriter of the Allied war effort, played a crucial role in this endeavor, thanks to his influence at the highest levels of government. "From Vienna," began the telegram he received from Robert Lansing, the American Secretary of State, on February 7, 1916, "Quote. Have succeeded getting promise government permit Nijinsky and wife start immmdiately New York provided you cable personal guarantee that they will return this monarchy immediately conclusion engagement Metropolitan Opera. Nijinskys can start soon as I transmit your agreement to government. Penfield. End quote."[65] By February 28th Nijinsky was free at Berne.[66]

But rather than ending the Metropolitan's troubles, the dancer's release began a new round of

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[64]Henry Russell, Cable to Otto Kahn, 27 Nov. 1915, "Diaghilev Correspondence, 1915-1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[65]Robert Lansing, Telegram to Otto Kahn, 7 Feb. 1916, "Diaghilev Correspondence, 1915-1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives. For an account of Kahn's remarkable career as a financier and Maecenas, see Mary Jane Matz, The Many Lives of Otto Kahn (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

[66]John Brown, Cable to Henry Russell, 28 Feb. 1916, "Diaghilev Correspondence, 1915-1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

parleys, with Nijinsky demanding large sums of money which the opera house duly relayed through Henry Russell.[67] Upon landing, moreover, Nijinsky placed the Metropolitan in the awkward position of mediating between himself and his former lover, with John Brown, the Metropolitan's business manager, guaranteeing a letter contract whereby Diaghilev agreed to pay Nijinsky the balance of Frs. 75,000 (or $13,000) owing under the terms of a "compromise" made in London in May 1914 through Sir George Lewis. Diaghilev also agreed to pay $1,000 for each of the eleven performances Nijinsky was to dance in New York, a sum far exceeding the Frs. 3,000 he would have received at the Paris Opéra had the war not intervened.[68]

Securing Nijinsky's release was hardly an act of altruism on the part of the Metropolitan nor a good deed to curry favor with Diaghilev. For Otto Kahn, the presence of the superstar was essential not only to strengthen the company artistically, but to justify the expectations aroused by the remarkable publicity campaign launched in the months preceding the tour. In yet another of those

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[67]Henry Russell, Cable to John Brown, 3 March 1916; John Brown, Cable to Henry Russell, 4 March 1916; Henry Russell, Cable to John Brown, 5 March 1916; John Brown, Cable to Henry Russell, 6 March 1916; Otto Kahn, Cable to Henry Russell, 15 March 1916; Henry Russell, Cable to Otto Kahn, 16 March 1916, "Diaghilev Correspondence, 1915-1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[68]Letter contract between Serge Diaghilev and Vaslav Nijinsky, 11 April 1916, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

amazing coincidences that stud the history of the Ballets Russes, the young man responsible for this campaign was none other than Edward Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud and the father of modern public relations. For the tyro press agent this was truly an eye-opening experience. As he later wrote:

> I learned a lot working with the Metropolitan Musical Bureau; but never more than when I handled Diaghileff's Russian Ballet in 1915, 1916 and 1917. These three years taught me more about life than I have learned from politics, books, romance, marriage and fatherhood in the years since. I had never imagined that the interpersonal relations of the members of a group could be so involved and complex, full of medieval intrigue, illicit love, misdirected passion and aggression. But while it happened, I took it all for granted as part of a stimulating job. Nevertheless, my experience had a life-long effect on me, for it prepared me to understand and cope with the vagaries of men and women who lived in special worlds of their own.[69]

Unable to promote a large-scale operation like the Ballets Russes, the Metropolitan turned the task over to its Musical Bureau, which, in a stroke of intuitive genius, appointed Bernays general press representative. "No project was ever better prepared for in the matter of publicity and promotion," wrote Adella Prentiss Hughes

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[69]Edward Bernays, Biography of an Idea: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel Edward L. Bernays (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), p. 102.

thirty years later.[70] Relying on what he called "hunch and intuition", Bernays mounted a sophisticated campaign that publicized the ballet, first "as a novelty in art forms, a unifying of several arts; second, in terms of its appeal to special groups of the public; third, in terms of its direct impact on American life, on design and color in American products; and fourth, through its personalities."[71] Bombarding magazines, Sunday supplements, the music and women's page departments of daily newspapers with "reams of stories and photographs angled to their various reader groups",[72] persuading "manufacturers to make products inspired by the color and design of Bakst decors and costumes and [arranging] for their advertising and display in department and other retail stores through the country,"[73] Bernays stimulated public interest in the initial tour beyond all expectation.

Much of this "ballyhoo", as he called the months of intense, nation-wide publicity, centered on the company's principals: Nijinsky, Karsavina, and Diaghilev. Of these, only Diaghilev steamed into New York harbor on January 12, 1916. Undaunted by news of Karsavina's

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[70]Adella Prentiss Hughes, Music is My Life (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1947), p. 203.

[71]Bernays, pp. 105-106.

[72]Ibid, p. 106.

[73]Ibid., p. 108.

pregnancy and Nijinsky's continued internment, Bernays set about preparing the ground for their replacements, on the theory that "glowing descriptions of one Russian-named dancer . . . could be applied to any other."[74] He draped a snake from the Bronx zoo around Flora Revalles in her Schéhérazade costume, a stunt that catapulted this unknown dancer to America's breakfast tables; he planted interviews and glowing accounts of "stars" who had never performed with the Ballets Russes in Europe. Diaghilev must have been struck by the contrast between the genteel character of promotion in Europe and the way the modern mass market in America made commerce of artists, images, and ideas. Diaghilev never returned to America, but the presence of a burgeoning market for dance, particularly in England, would form a backdrop to the post-Armistice history of his company.

Although this first Metropolitan tour enabled Diaghilev to reconstruct his company, certain aspects of the contract presaged the more sharply competitive atmosphere of the post-Armistice period. With Russian ballet somewhat shorn of its novelty, Diaghilev in 1914 agreed to provide a company over twice the size of the troupe specified under the terms of the Metropolitan's 1910 draft agreement in exchange for a weekly performance fee of

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[74] Ibid.

only $270.00 more. Diaghilev's weakened bargaining position was reflected in other ways as well. The 1910 contract had stipulated fifty performances spread out over a two-and-a-half month period, with no more than six performances a week; by contrast, the 1914 agreement, as modified in August 1915, required the troupe to give seven performances a week throughout the fifteen-week engagement, and at least once a week, to dance both a matinee and evening performance. If during the pre-War years, the status of the Ballets Russes had enabled Diaghilev to appropriate the terms of the opera world as the basis for his agreements, now, the emphasis lay on a quantitative increase in the sheer volume of production.

Pressures continued to mount during the second American tour, when for the first time in its history, the function of the troupe was reconceived in purely monetary terms: as an income-producing asset that would provide the wherewithal for Diaghilev and his circle of collaborators to create. The 1914 contract had stipulated Diaghilev's presence in the United States; the document negotiated in the spring of 1916 did not.[75] Eventually, Otto Kahn, intent at all costs on pacifying the company's superstar, banned Diaghilev altogether. In response, Diaghilev

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[75]Draft contract between Serge Diaghilev and the Metropolitan Opera Company, n.d., Metropolitan Opera Archives.

divided the troupe into a skeleton group that remained with him in Europe and a large ensemble that returned to America under the auspices of the Metropolitan Ballet Company, Inc., a subsidiary of the parent opera house set up to handle the financing, management, and travel arrangements of the tour.[76] A similar division took place in the summer of 1917, when Diaghilev entrusted the company to Grigoriev and Randolfo Barocchi, Henry Russell's former assistant now married to Lydia Lopokova, for a four-month tour of Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. As a solution to the problem of funding experimentation, this strategy held strong appeal for Diaghilev. Indeed, an illusion he harbored about the 1921 Sleeping Princess was that it would prove a long-running moneymaker that would keep the greater part of his troupe employed while affording an intimate circle the means to experiment.

"Diaghilev was not really sorry at the prospect of being thus quit of the company for a time," wrote Grigoriev of the second Metropolitan tour. "He realized that the perpetual travelling entailed by an American tour would . . . have prevented him from working during the next winter on any new productions. On the other hand, by remaining in

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[76]"Minutes of a Meeting of the Incorporators and Subscribers to the Capital Stock of Metropolitan Ballet Company, Inc., 6 April 1915; Metropolitan Opera, Letter to F.D. Edsal, 11 Sept. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

Europe with Massine and a few other dancers, he would be able to plan a whole new repertoire in peace. When telling me of this arrangement, . . . he . . . felt quite happy."[77]

Diaghilev had reason for optimism, as the contract ensured him, in addition to the $20,000 advance he received prior to the company's departure for America on September 8th, $9,000 each week of the twenty-week engagement and half the net profits of the tour. The Metropolitan assumed responsibility for all administrative, travel, and orchestral costs, along with Nijinsky's $60,000 salary and the cost of any new productions mounted by the artist during the tour. Diaghilev's financial commitment was limited to salaries of the dancers, conductor, chief machinist, and company managers Stanislaw Drubecki and Barocchi.[78]

Unfortunately for Diaghilev, the tour was an utter fiasco. Despite generally good notices,[79] the Metropolitan lost a quarter of a million dollars, no mean sum in those

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[77]Grigoriev, p. 121.

[78]Draft contract between Serge Diaghilev and Metropolitan Opera Company, n.d.; Contract between Vaslav Nijinsky and Metropolitan Opera Company, 2 Aug. 1916; Metropolitan Opera, Cable to Serge Diaghilev, 4 Aug. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916", Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[79]For a partial selection of reviews see Nesta Macdonald's chapter on "The Nijinsky Tour" in Diaghilev Observed By Critics in England and the United States 1911-1929 (New York: Dance Horizons, 1975), pp. 198-213.

days.[80] Its goal of taking "between $6,000 and $7,000 a performance"[81] proved illusory. In Fort Worth, receipts fell as low as $767.00; during the first week of December alone losses amounted to nearly $15,000.[82] Much of the responsibility for this disaster lay with the Metropolitan's management: the high ticket schedule it had insisted on, incompetent advance men who alienated local newspaper editors, and a failure generally to assess what the market would bear in Omaha and Topeka.[83] But part of the blame rested with Nijinsky, who dithered over programs until press deadlines were missed and whose failure to dance as scheduled entitled ticketholders on a number of occasions to refunds.[84] To the chagrin of local managements, he often refused to appear more than once on a program, no more than ten minutes if the scheduled ballet

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[80]Ernest Henkel, Letter to Alwynn Briggs, 22 May 1917, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[81]Metropolitan Opera, Letter to J.S. Morissey, 14 Sept. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[82]Ernest Henkel, Letter to Otto Kahn, 11 Dec. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[83]Ben Franklin, Letter to Ernest Henkel, 30 Jan. 1917, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916;" Ben Stern, Memorandum [to Ernest Henkel], 16 Dec. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[84]Ernest Henkel, Letter to L.A. Steinhardt, Esq., 27 Feb. 1917, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

happened to be Spectre de la Rose. "Just think," complained Will Greenbaum, a San Francisco theatre manager, to the Metropolitan Musical Bureau, "of asking $5.00 for a show such as you are giving us certain nights and think what Pavlowa gave us for $2.50 and how that wonderful little woman used to work. Nine times a week and on the stage all the time."[85] And, of course, Nijinsky's Mephisto Waltz, which as late as November was scheduled to enter the repertory in San Francisco, failed to materialize.[86]

Nijinsky was not the only "prima donna" to cause difficulty. True to its policy of promoting European "stars" at the expense of native talent,[87] the Metropolitan went to great lengths in the months of July, August, and

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[85]Will Greenbaum, Letter to Maximillian Elser Jr., 28 Dec. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[86]R.G. Hendon, Telegram to Ernest Henkel, 22 Nov. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[87]The following letter exemplifies this attitude: "I do not know whether you have suggested the engagement of Lopokowa, but I do know that the public will not accept her with this company as a five dollar artist and if we must have someone to replace Karsavina it must absolutely be someone from abroad. I can feature a new name and get the public to accept it, but please, I beg of you, do not attempt it with Lopokowa who has appeared not only at Keith's Palace and other theatres charging dollar and a half prices, but at...theatres far below the standard set for the Ballet. Even taking her as one of the ensemble would be most inadvisable. We have advertised a complete organization from Abroad -- and the public will accept nothing less." Unsigned letter to Otto Kahn, 26 Dec. 1915, "Diaghilev Correspondence 1915-1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

September 1916 to engage a ballerina from Russia. Acting through Captain Philip Lydig, an Allied munitions agent who headed the American Ambulance in Petrograd and served as a Special Assistant at the Embassy, it engaged Margarita Frohman and Olga Spessivtzeva for a ten-week season at a total salary each of Frs. 30,000 (equivalent to more than $500 a week) plus transportation.[88] Although the Metropolitan apparently conceded Spessivtzeva the privilege of dancing only four performances a week, neither Russian was prepared for the rigors of a cross-country tour. (Typical of the grueling schedule was the company's proposed dates for a week in January 1917: January 14-15, Chicago; January 16, St. Louis; January 17, Memphis; January 18, Birmingham; January 19, Chattanooga; January

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[88]"Lydig Sues on War Orders; Demands Share of Profits on an $8,100,000 Shell Contract," New York Times, 23 June 1916, Sec. 1, p. 17, col. 2; "Col. P.M. Lydig Dies in Nice at 61," New York Times, 17 Feb. 1929, Sec. 1, p. 28, col. 4; Metropolitan Opera, Cables to Artemieff, 25 July 1916 and 7 Aug. 1916, and to American Embassy, Petrograd, 7 Aug. 1916 and 13 Sept. 1916; Capt. Philip Lydig, Cable to Metropolitan Opera, 13 Sept. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives; Dept. of State, Cable to American Embassy, Petrograd, 31 May 1916, 124.613/52a; Philip Lydig, Telegram to Robert Lansing, 2 May 1917, 763.72/4387-1/2, Diplomatic Section, National Archives. The Metropolitan categorically turned down Diaghilev's suggestion that Nijinsky's sister Bronislava be engaged for the tour. Metropolitan Opera, Cables to Serge Diaghilev, 8 Aug. and 12 Aug. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

20-21, Nashville.)[89] Frohman began missing performances, and by the time the company reached Wichita on December 8th, Ernest Henkel, the New York-based business manager of the tour, thought there was "very little use in carrying these two girls around the country" and that the two should "leave at the end of the week of December 16 in Omaha."[90] Frohman and Spessivtzeva left the company in San Francisco; their dismissal, however, was only one sign of a general belt-tightening by which the Metropolitan hoped to stave off the worst of what was obviously a disaster. In late November, Henkel proposed eliminating one of the company's railway cars; a few weeks later, he spoke of dropping two musicians and charging to Drobecki the fares of two Russian women traveling with the company as chaperones.[91]

In addition to trimming production expenses, the Metropolitan also cut back its remittances to Diaghilev. By early January, he claimed that the Metropolitan owed him

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[89]Metropolitan Opera, Letter to Olin Downes, 15 Dec. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[90]Ernest Henkel, Letter to R.G. Hendon, 8 Dec. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[91]R.G. Hendon, Cable to Ernest Henkel, 22 Nov. 1916; Ernest Henkel, Letter to R.G. Hendon, 8 Dec. 1916, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

$37,500 of the $108,000 due to date.[92] On February 11th, he wired both Henkel and Rawlins Cottenet, a Metropolitan Board member then in Paris, to cable $47,000 immediately to his bank. "Delay in payment inexcusable. Have urgent bank drafts."[93] Later that month, he brought consular pressure to bear on the Metropolitan through the Russian Embassy in Rome; by this time, he claimed, the outstanding balance had mounted to $75.000.[94]

The records show that between December 28, 1916 and January 25, 1917, the Metropolitan ordered the Foreign Trade Department of the Wall Street branch of the National City Bank to wire Diaghilev directly or through Drobecki $35,000. Obviously, some of this went to pay the troupe, and doubtless, a fair amount ended up in the pockets of Diaghilev's creditors. But surely there was another reason behind the January-February panic: the commitments he had just made to produce the avantgarde works during the company's spring seasons in Rome and Paris. In early December, it will be recalled, he had formalized his

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[92]Stanislaw Drobecki and Randolfo Barocchi, Telegram to Ernest Henkel, 7 Jan. 1917, "Diaghilev Ballet Russes 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[93]Serge Diaghilev, Cables to Rawlins Cottenet and Ernest Henkel, 11 Feb. 1917, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916," Metropolitan Opera Archives.

[94]M. Oustinoff, Letter to Metropolitan Opera House, 24 Feb. 1917, "Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

agreements with both Balla and Dapero. On January 11th and 12th he signed letter contracts for Parade: Satie was to receive Frs. 3,000 (half upon delivery of the piano score on February 1st and the rest on April 1st upon delivery of the orchestra material); Picasso Frs. 5,000 (Frs. 2,500 upon delivery of the designs and models on March 15th and an equal amount on the day of the first performance). Diaghilev also promised to pay one thousand francs extra if the painter came to Rome, as he did on February 17th, accompanied by Cocteau.[95] Other works went into production at the same time: The Good-Humoured Ladies, for which Bakst prepared the designs; Larionov's mini-ballet Baba Yaga, which Diaghilev wove into the plot of Midnight Sun and Kikimora and produced under the title of Contes Russes, and Balla's Fireworks. Adding to the pressure was yet another project: a ballet by Maurice Ravel to a libretto by Italian poet Francesco Cangiullo for which the composer was to receive ten thousand francs.[96] Obviously, a factor in dropping the Dapero and Ravel projects was the

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[95]The two contracts are reproduced in full, although in English translation only, in Richard Buckle's In Search of Diaghilev (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1956), pp. 93-94. See also Steegmuller, Cocteau, p. 174. According to Bakst, Frs. 6,000 became Picasso's standard fee for a one-act ballet. Leon Bakst, Letter to Jacques Rouché, 6 Jan. 1922, AJ13/1207 Archives Nationales.

[96]Maurice Ravel, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 12 Jan. 1917, Catalogue of Ballet Material and Manuscripts from the Serge Lifar Collection, Sotheby's (London), 9 May 1984, Lot 203.

unanticipated loss of revenue from the American tour.

Diaghilev underwrote these ventures thanks to the Metropolitan's periodic remittances. Theoretically, these sums sufficed to cover both the salaries of the touring ensemble and the maintenance of the skeleton company abroad. In practice, however, things did not always turn out quite this way. Indeed, as Diaghilev commissioned Futurist artists in Rome, his company virtually starved in America. On December 4th, R.G. Hendon, the Metropolitan touring manager, reported from Houston:

> Well, the Diaghileff faction is not leaving a stone unturned to keep going until Diaghileff has instructed the bank to pay over the money . . . The corps de Ballet have had barely enough to keep alive, most of them haven't a cent to eat with. I have been giving those few small amounts out of my own pocket. Drobecki and Barocchi have sent Diaghileff some stinging cables, as they explained to me they asked him if it is his desire to see his company starve and stranded if not to wire immediately to the bank and release the cash . . . I don't know what they will do tonight, I learned they called up Gest to wire them [a] thousand dollars or it would mean end of tour.[97]

By the time the company reached Tulsa on December 11th, the situation had worsened.

> The company are on their last dollars [wrote Hendon] as Lopokova, Monteux, Revalles, Bolm have given up all the money they have at their command, and unless money is forthcoming at Kansas City, I

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[97]R.G. Hendon, Letter to Ernest Henkel, 4 Dec. 1916,"Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

don't think they can go further.[98]

The tide turned, and the company limped to the end of the tour. The episode, however, underscored how the encounter with America prefigured trends that would dominate the company's social history in the 1920's. In America, which fascinated contemporary European thinkers as the birthplace of "Fordism" and scientific management, "proletarianization" and its implications for artists and company alike, first became evident. Not only did the ensemble approximate during the course of the tour both the levels of productivity and the general precariousness of troupers in the popular theatre, but the very labor of the dancers -- their surplus labor, to be precise -- for the first time became a source of Diaghilev's production capital. This was not a matter of isolated payless paydays. Subsistence wages allowed Diaghilev to syphon off funds to finance the development of new productions in Europe. The salaries he paid his corps de ballet barely sufficed to cover living expenses in costly America. In November Doris Faithfull, a dancer in the corps de ballet, penned the following letter to Otto Kahn on behalf of herself and six other dancers. At the time they were earning $33 and $34 a week.

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[98]R.G. Hendon, Letter to Ernest Henkel, 11 Dec. 1916,"Diaghilev Ballet Russe 1916-1917," Box 2, Metropolitan Opera Archives.

> I am writing this on some of the girls' behalf, also my own. It is concerning our salaries -- we wondered if you could intercede with Mr. Diaghilev on the matter. It is absolutely impossible for us to live on the salary we receive --let alone some who have parents to support. When we arrive in a town we have to go hunting about for cheap rooms (carrying heavy suitcases) because we can't afford to stay at the better hotels. We are very sorry to have to trouble you with our private affairs but we are not in communication with Diaghileff. It seems so futile to think that every penny we earn and work hard for has to go in expenses -- so cannot save anything in case of illness etc. A list of the salaries are beneath.[99]

Whether it was the democratic air of the United States that gave them courage to appeal to the man whose investment house had just loaned fifty million dollars to the French government will never be known. Perhaps it was simply that with every stop along the company's New England tour the suitcases of practice clothes and pointe shoes had grown heavier. In any event, the downward slide of wages alongside the upward spiral of the cost of living anticipated a situation Diaghilev's dancers would encounter with distressing frequency after the war.

If the losses of this second tour dashed hopes that the Metropolitan would prove an ongoing source of capital (needless to say, the opera house chose not to

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[99]Doris Faithfull, Letter to Otto Kahn, 11 Nov. 1916, OttoKahn Papers, Box 57, Princeton University. She was writing on behalf of Anna and Lubov Samarokoff, Mechkovska, Galina Chabelska, Stas Paerska, and Lila Kachouba.

exercise its option of a 1917-1918 tour), Diaghilev's intentions are clear: to finance avantgarde experiment from his company's traditional audiences and supporting institutions, now expanded beyond the geographical borders of the pre-War marketplace. The distinction between "elite" and "popular" in defining both the character of productions and the quality of audiences was a new one for Diaghilev. Prior to the war, coteries had played little role in shaping company ideology. They defined neither the content or style of a work nor the core audience toward which it was addressed. These parameters, instead, were provided by the opera house that linked Diaghilev's western product to the social and cultural aspirations of the haute bourgeoisie.

The transition to modernism and the progressive modification of collaborative methods and aesthetic values through contact with the avantgarde transformed this pre-War alignment. Henceforth, the ideological center of company activity would lie at the crossroads of Parisian modernism and its fashionable art world enthusiasts. From these groups came the greater part of Diaghilev's postwar collaborators and his core audience. Beyond them lay his grand public -- the philistines who bought tickets, applauded, and criticized, but whose opinions counted for naught. The split between this appointed elite and the ballet's larger audience was quickly noted, particularly in

England, where as early as 1919, Leigh Henry spoke of the "ooze of cult-pretension which . . . has welled up about the Diaghileff company".[100] This redefining of Diaghilev's elite as one of taste rather than material substance (even if the two were frequently allied by the snobbery of fashion), like the division between "elite" and "popular" in company practice, had its origins in Diaghilev's recasting of the purposes, structure, and financing of his wartime Ballets Russes.

In appropriating the formal approaches of avantgarde experiment in Russia, Italy, Spain, and France, Diaghilev brought a supra-national character to company modernism, something by no means limited to ballet. This internationalist flavor, which marked collaborations throughout the postwar years, was reflected in the wartime troupe itself. By June 1918, Russians comprised only a minority of the dancers who traveled with Diaghilev from Spain to London, and those with roots in the Imperial Theatres were even fewer. Of the thirty-nine dancers, eighteen were Russian (of whom only ten had been trained at the Mariinsky or Bolshoi), twelve were Polish; there were four Italians, two Spaniards, two Englishwomen, and even a Belgian. The company manager Randolfo Barocchi, who was

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[100]Leigh Henry, unidentified review, Diaghilev Scrapbook, Vol. IV, p. 158, Theatre Museum (London).

married to Lydia Lopokova, was Italian in origin.[101] This ethnic mix suggests to what degree the company had ceased to be a Russian enterprise. Henceforth, its roots lay squarely in the West, embedded in the cultural reality of a deracinated, stateless present.

Modernism and internationalism emerged from the crucible of war as quintessential elements of the company's identity. The trademark of this modernism, as we have said, lay in the fashioning of a style culled from various avantgarde sources and applied to an extended range of balletic contexts. This style, witty, ironic, farcical, and detached, became the point of unity in a work; it harmonized incongruities among the competing texts and tuned disparities of place and era to a single frequency. Above all, it vested the whole of a work with an aura of modernity. Analogous to its role in new theories of design, style became the means of creating a total, aestheticized environment.

Throughout Europe, the years 1910-1930 witnessed the rise of a new architectural aesthetic. Eventually termed the "International Style", it envisioned a new rationality that would transform not only the architectural

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[101]The company also traveled with a hairdresser, prop man, wardrobe master, and chief machinist, all Russians, and the mother of Lubov Tchernicheva. "Liste des Artistes des Ballets Russes," 14 June 1918, Fonds Kochno, Pièce 130.

forms of the past but man's total physical environment.[102] The aim of reconciling art and industrial production achieved its finest expression at the Bauhaus, where functional design was applied to familiar adjuncts of contemporary life and even the fine arts, theatre, and dance.[103] By 1925, however, when the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs (for which our old friend Gabriel Astruc served on the "Commission des Fêtes")[104] was held in Paris, the external forms of design, divorced from their original revolutionary underpinnings, had become an identifiable commodity. What remained of modernism was its artifices, wed to an arsenal of luxurious materials and decorative richness. It was no accident that "many of the exhibitors were commercial firms seeking a type of design that would be modern yet appeal to the senses."[105]

The aesthetic that emerged from Diaghilev's responses to the avantgarde, the experience of forced exile, the imperatives of financing, and the total rethinking of

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[102]Norma Evenson, Paris: A Century of Change, 1878-1978 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 160-165; Ada Louise Huxtable, "Is Modern Architecture Dead?," New York Review, 16 July 1981, p. 18.

[103]Alexander Dorner, "The Background of the Bauhaus," Bauhaus, 1919-1928, ed. Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius, and Ise Gropius (1938; rpt. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1979), p. 13.

[104]Gabriel Astruc, Letter to Jacques Rouché, 8 June 1925, AJ13/1205(I), Archives Nationales.

[105]Evenson, pp. 164-165.

company organization and artistic purpose comprised what may be called the impresario's era of "authentic modernism". But as had occurred in the field of design, where the very nature of the artefact rendered it particularly susceptible to marketing pressures, modernist style in ballet became rapidly commercialized. Shorn of its wartime rigor in the course of its postwar dissemination, it became a series of immediately discernible and easily imitated signs, a commodity that lent character to a performance as steel tubing attested to the modernity of a chair. Easily copied, reproduced, and marketed, the elements of modernist style became various parts on an assembly line of international ballet fashion.

By early 1918, as the war dragged into its fourth year, not even Diaghilev's fabled inventiveness could find work for the company. "We were in Lisbon just over three months and for the last part of this time we had no money coming in at all: Diaghilev had none to give us," wrote Lydia Sokolova of those desperate days. "What money there was in the company circulated, but in the end we were all living on credit."[106] For the first time in its history, the company was stranded, a predicament from which only an opportunely scheduled tour of Spain's cities and provincial towns rescued it. But all tours come to an end, and spring

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[106]Sokolova, p. 116.

1918 found Diaghilev at low ebb. In Madrid, Sokolova, desperate that her sick baby daughter might die, ran to Diaghilev's hotel room; taking a little leather bag from his wardrobe trunk, he emptied on the bed a heap of copper and silver coins from various countries, "all the money he had left".[107] He gave her the silver coins; she found a doctor; the baby lived. Not long afterwards a cable arrived, permitting the company to ship its scenery and effects through France to England where an engagement at the London Coliseum awaited.

The summer of 1918 brought to an end the most experimental chapter of the company's history. By then, the various threads of its modernist identity had been woven into the fabric of an aesthetic whose general outlines would dominate the repertory of the coming decade. Neo-primitivism, futurism, cubism, and design had entered the ballet and enriched it. Conceived outside the pale of commerce, in the ethereal realms of pure invention, ballet modernism, in one of the grander ironies of history, owed its creation to the traditional operatic marketplace. Yet in its American avatar, this marketplace was no less a harbinger of the future than the made-over Diaghilev ballet. Like a weathervane announcing the gathering storm, it presaged changes in the character of balletic art and

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[107] Ibid., p. 124.

enterprise that would sweep the landscape of Europe's _années folles_ and the consciousness of its postwar artmakers.

CHAPTER VI

COMPETING WITH THE DANCE BOOM

On September 5, 1918, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes opened on a variety bill at London's Coliseum. With this appearance at one of England's legendary popular theatres, the company re-entered the mainstream of European theatrical life. From 1918-1922 Diaghilev fashioned anew a niche for his enterprise. War, however, had wrought dramatic changes on the once hospitable climate of Europe's capital cities. Enthusiasts welcomed the returning prodigal, but so too did a wave of dance activity that challenged his lordship over the domain of Terpsichore. Now, competition revealed the darker side of the marketplace, dealing cards that undermined the company's once impregnable bargaining position, and in 1922 nearly destroying it. For Diaghilev's dancers, the newfound popularity of their art proved a phenomenon equally paradoxical in its impact. Expanding the horizons of performance to once taboo venues and locales, it also created a flood of new talent that sought a place in the public limelight. Few of these tyros had the schooling or experience to step into the shoes of Diaghilev's veterans, but even on the rarefied plane of this "high art"

enterprise, the pool of well-trained dancers competing for a finite number of jobs significantly increased. Between 1918 and 1922, both Diaghilev and his dancers found themselves increasingly at the mercy of a competitive marketplace they could neither control nor rely upon for their economic and artistic well-being.

"London has saved me," Diaghilev told the conductor, Ernest Ansermet, in 1919.[1] Diaghilev hardly exaggerated; indeed, for much of the postwar era, the company "performed in London over double the period they did in Paris, and very much more than anywhere else."[2] Between 1918 and 1922, London's music-halls became its unofficial home, a base that guaranteed several months of work each year, a popular paying audience, and investment money for new productions.

"All London became balletomane" after the war, Raymond Mortimer told readers of The Dial in 1922,[3] and it is not difficult to understand why. From September 5, 1918 until December 20, 1919, the Diaghilev company performed exclusively in London at the Coliseum (September 5, 1918 to

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[1]Robert Craft, "Stravinsky, Diaghilev, and Misia Sert," Ballet Review, 6, No. 4 (1977-1978), 76. This article appears as Appendix B in Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents (London: Hutchinson, 1979), pp. 514-522.

[2]Arnold Haskell, "Balletomane's Logbook; VII. London and Ballet," Dancing Times, July 1935, p. 361.

[3]Raymond Mortimer, "London Letter," The Dial, March 1922, p. 295.

March 29, 1919) and Alhambra (April 30, 1919 to July 30, 1919) Theatres, under the management of Sir Oswald Stoll (whose daughter Eveline danced for Diaghilev under the Russified name Evina), and at Sir Alfred Butt's Empire Theatre (September 29, 1919 to December 20, 1919). The following year found the company in London for a seven-week season at Covent Garden (June 10 to July 31, 1920), and on a tour of English provincial theatres in the autumn. On May 26, 1921, the troupe began another extended sojourn in the British capital with a nine-week season at London's Princes Theatre under the management of Sir Charles Cochran. In the autumn, it returned to the Alhambra, where The Sleeping Princess opened on November 2, 1921. After a run of 105 consecutive performances, the ballet closed on February 4, 1922, and, leaving a trail of debts in his wake, Diaghilev retreated across the Channel. His company would not perform again in England until November 1924.

Thanks to London's popular stage, Diaghilev re-established the Ballets Russes as an artistic force of first magnitude. The economic climate in which he accomplished this, however, contrasted sharply with the free-spending atmosphere of pre-War days when a variety of buffers had shielded the company from the extremes of market caprice and unpredictability. World War I had bled Europe's financial resources as well as its manhood. It "forced sudden and direct economic changes which not only altered individual lives . . . but also determined the

whole post-war standard of living."[4] Britain was not the only victor to emerge from the conflict "a rather less rich country". France, too, showed signs of relative impoverishment, which the inflation, recession, new tax demands, and social unrest that accompanied peace only exacerbated. These economic changes, touching Europeans of all social classes, eroded to a considerable degree the income and savings of the older banking and financial clans from which Diaghilev's traditional patrons had come. In France, for instance, "the inheritances that were passed on in 1925 had only twice the nominal value of those in 1913, despite the franc's three- to fivefold loss of value between those years."[5] Economic pressures also imposed new constraints on State-subsidized institutions like the Paris Opéra, forcing them to streamline operations, cut costs, and find new ways of increasing revenues. In Russia, moreover, the Bolshevist victory eliminated at a single stroke the sources of income, employment, and patronage that had indirectly subsidized Diaghilev and his collaborators since the inception of the company. "My fortune is gone," Diaghilev told Ansermet by way of

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[4]Paul Thompson, The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society (St. Albans, Herts.: Paladin, 1977), p. 277.

[5]Charles S. Maier, Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade After World War I (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), p. 43.

protesting Stravinsky's claims for royalties. "Before the war, I could lose 120,000 francs in London in a season, knowing that I would be able to find new sources in Russia . . . Now there are no more excellencies, no more Grand Dukes. In one year I find myself with a million in debts. London has saved me, but I am not rich and I have all I can do to meet my obligations."[6]

Nor could Diaghilev in making his postwar comeback rely on the musical impresarios who had promoted and subsidized his earlier undertakings. Astruc's empire, as we have said, had collapsed on the eve of World War I; by 1921 Gabriel Astruc et Compagnie, which owned the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, was in liquidation, and the erstwhile theatrical maverick had become Director of Administrative Services of the daily financial and economic bulletin "Radio". (He continued to dabble in the arts, however, as a freelance producer of gala events and occasional film promoter.)[7] Beecham, for his part, abandoned both Diaghilev and his former interest in Russian opera. His efforts, directed now almost exclusively to presenting British music and artists, signified a departure plainly

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[6]Craft, "Stravinsky, Diaghilev, and Misia Sert," p. 76.

[7]Gabriel Astruc, Letters to Otto Kahn, 10 May 1921, 17 May 1921, 7 Dec. 1921, and 31 Dec. 1921, Otto Kahn Papers, Box 146, Princeton University; Gabriel Astruc, Letters to Jacques Rouché, 1 July 1921 and 17 Sept. 1921, AJ13/1207, Archives Nationales.

inimical to the internationalist spirit of Diaghilev's postwar undertaking.

These changes, eliminating forms of support that had periodically intervened between the demands of the marketplace and company survival, exposed Diaghilev as never before to the risks and perils of commercial life. To an unprecedented degree survival in the new economic climate rested on Diaghilev's ability to make the company self-sufficient -- to maintain a balance between income and expenditure, ferret out new sources of production money, and tailor repertory to audience tastes. At no other time in the history of the Ballets Russes were the pressures to succeed so great or the consequences of failure so disastrous as in the years 1918-1922.

Still another phenomenon heightened the company's vulnerability in this period: the dramatic increase in dance activity that undercut Diaghilev's pre-War edge in the competition for audiences and artistic influence. This explosion in the sheer number of troupes, attractions, venues, styles, and performers -- which took place within the context of a veritable "craze" for social dancing precipitated by the mass commercialization of jazz -- vastly expanded the market for dance, particularly in London and Paris, the era's twin dance capitals. For the Diaghilev company, however, the "boom" turned out to be a mixed blessing. Certainly, it enhanced public awareness of ballet as audiences nibbled at a catholic range of wares

now offered for their delectation. But in other ways, its effect proved calamitous. As the catalyst of that remarkable change in the twilight years of the Belle Epoque, when choreographic art moved for the first time in nearly a century to the forefront of European theatrical life, the Ballets Russes now found its artists, aesthetic practices, and institutions appropriated by a score of competing enterprises.

Challenging Diaghilev's pre-eminence as the leading theatrical patron of the avantgarde were two wealthy "amateurs" whose enterprises in the years 1920-1924 imitated with varying degrees of success the modernist approach and collaborative framework of the Ballets Russes. The most important of these undertakings was Rolf de Maré's Ballets Suédois, which from its first performances at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in October 1920 until disbanding four years later, aspired to, and to a degree succeeded in, displacing the Ballets Russes from the vanguard of the Paris artistic world. The "Spectacles-Concerts" presented by Comte Etienne de Beaumont in 1920 (the first included Cocteau's Le Boeuf sur le Toit) and his short-lived 1924 "Soirées de Paris" similarly aimed at duplicating Diaghilev's modernist "recipe" while adding a strongly Gallic flavor to its eclectic offerings of dance and theatre pieces. Like the Ballets Russes, these enterprises were "collaborative" undertakings. Their stars, as in Parade, were the composers and painters of the Parisian

avantgarde, and in the relationship of Maecenas and choreographer, they recapitulated the Diaghilev company's homosexual archetype. If in repertory, collaborators, and style of operation these enterprises bore a "Russian" stamp, so too did their audiences. Both the Ballets Suédois and the Soirées de Paris appropriated the advanced, coterie public first brought into the orbit of ballet by Diaghilev's production of Parade in 1917.[8]

If these Paris-based undertakings challenged Diaghilev's commanding role as a purveyor of ballet modernism, various émigré troupes exploited features of his company's pre-War formula to secure a niche for themselves on the theatrical landscape. No less a survivor than Diaghilev, Pavlova returned to Europe in late 1919 with a troupe of over forty dancers, seasoned from years of touring in the Americas. Pavlova's company, which rivaled the Ballets Russes as the era's longest-running dance enterprise, continued to reflect the inheritance of the Mariinsky and the influence of its "romantic succession". Its artistic profile blended a traditional classicism, humanized and shaped for popular consumption, with the ethnic styles inspired by Fokine's genre nouveau. Although

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[8]For a discussion of the Ballets Suédois, see Sally Banes, "An Introduction to the Ballets Suédois," Ballet Review, Vol. 7, Nos. 2-3 (1978-1979), pp. 28-59; for the Soirées de Paris, see Lynn Garafola, "Les Soirées de Paris," Lydia Lopokova, ed. Milo Keynes (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), pp. 97-105; for Cocteau's Le Boeuf sur le Toit, see Steegmuller, Cocteau, pp. 238-245.

the troupe, by now composed largely of English, Polish, and American dancers, fell short of its competitor in technical expertise, Pavlova's charisma worked magic on sophisticate and low brow alike. If many of her productions seemed hackneyed and old-fashioned, partisans of the avantgarde, including no less a spokesman for the new than Ezra Pound, continued to praise the "mastery of her technique" and the emotional suggestiveness of her impersonations.[9]

The October Revolution and ensuing civil war led many Russian artists to seek permanent haven in the West. The result was a proliferation throughout the following decade of theatrical enterprises that mined with varying degrees of success the Russian and neo-primitivist vein of the Diaghilev repertory. As early as 1920 a Swiss-based impresario with the unlikely name of Naoum Mitnik had approached Jacques Rouché, Director of the Paris Opéra, for the 1.5 million francs needed to underwrite an opera and ballet company of Russian émigré talent.[10] Mitnik's proposal never went beyond the letter-writing stage, but it anticipated such émigré undertakings as Boris Romanoff's

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[9]Ezra Pound, "Pavlova," The Athenaeum, 23 April 1920, p. 553; reproduced in full in Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism, ed. R. Murray Schafer (New York: New Directions, 1977), pp. 55-56. For C.K. Scott Moncrief's views, see Lynn Garafola, "Moncrieff at the Ballet," Dancing Times, August 1981, pp. 764-765.

[10]Naoum Mitnik, Letters to Jacques Rouché, spring/summer 1920, AJ13/1208, Archives Nationales.

Russian Romantic Ballet which toured Middle and Western Europe in the early and mid-twenties, Maria Kuznetzova's "Russian Seasons" at the Théâtre Femina, and the Chauve-Souris, the transplanted Moscow artists' cabaret, that became "the largest competitor to Diaghilev's company" in employing émigré talent.[11] Another troupe that appeared on the horizon in the second half of the decade was organized by Ida Rubinstein, Diaghilev's original Cleopatra and Scheherazade who, beginning in 1918, mounted an impressive series of works at the Paris Opéra.[12] Her Ballets Ida Rubinstein, which made its first appearance in 1928, numbered several Diaghilev "graduates" including choreographer Bronislava Nijinska, who had tried unsuccessfully to form a company after leaving the Ballets Russes in 1925.[13]

Organized ensembles, however, represented only a fraction of émigré dance activity. As the pages of the Dancing Times, that indispensible barometer of the climate

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[11]N.D. Lobanov,"Russian Painters and the Stage," Transactions, 2 (1968), p. 137. See also André Levinson, "Les Ballets romantiques russes," La Danse, April 1924, n.p.

[12]These included Salomé (1918), Antoine et Cléopatre (1919), Artemis Troublée (1920), Phèdre (1922), Istar (1924), and Orphée (1926).

[13]Gabriel Astruc, Letter to Romola Nijinsky, 13 May 1925, GA106-5, Astruc Papers.

of the twenties, so clearly show,[14] Russian dancers had become a staple of popular entertainment, with the London Coliseum taking the lead in securing their talent. At this "cathedral of the Stoll diocese", where acts drawn from the legitimate and concert stage had raised the standard of music-hall entertainment even before World War I,[15] Lydia Kyasht danced a one-act version of La Fille Mal Gardée in 1917 and Karsavina the leading mime role in Sir James Barrie's The Truth About the Russian Dancers three years later. Over the years Karsavina made frequent apearances on the Coliseum boards, as did Massine, Lopokova, Nicolai Legat, Stanislas Idzikowski, and a score of Diaghilev alumni when they parted ways with "Big Serge" (an occurrence of increasing frequency as the decade progressed).

Other music-halls followed suit in presenting foreign and native ballet talent to the London public, as did revues, particularly those that bore the "high class" trademark of Charles B. Cochran. These lavish productions,

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[14]For a brief summary of activity on the English side of the channel, see "A Chronology of the Ballet in England 1910-1935," Dancing Times, Oct. 1935, pp. 3-11. This is substantially reproduced in Philip J.S. Richardson, "A Chronology of the Ballet in England 1910-1945," The Ballet Annual: A Record and Yearbook of the Ballet, ed. Arnold Haskell (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1947), pp. 117-124. Richardson edited the Dancing Times from 1910-1951.

[15]Felix Barker, The House That Stoll Built: The Story of the Coliseum Theatre (London: Frederick Muller, 1957), p. 70.

compendia of dancing in all its many contemporary forms, often wove mini-ballets by such choreographic stars as Massine and Fokine into the loosely-conceived structure of their plots. On both sides of the Channel, revues featured dancers of the first order who exploited the vogue for Russian, Spanish, and modernist styles introduced by Diaghilev. By July 1922, the anonymous author of the Dancing Times "Paris Notes" column could write: "Laura de Santelmo is the latest, and not least, of a long list of Spanish dancers imported by [the] Olympia. And Russian dancers are as common as blackberries in a good season."[16]

The European dance "boom" of the twenties did not so much aim at creating new institutions as converting existing ones to new purpose. In England this phenomenon occurred primarily in the commercial arena, where the upscaling of music-hall attractions and proliferation of revues vastly expanded opportunities for classically-trained dancers. Here, ballet even became a feature of cabaret, with Cochran offering supper club patrons at the Trocadero a miniature Coppélia in late 1924.[17]

Across the Channel, a rather different situation prevailed. Under the leadership of Jacques Rouché, the State-subsidized Opéra ballet embarked on a period of long-

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[16]"Paris Notes," Dancing Times, July 1922, p. 857.

[17]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Jan. 1925, p. 400.

overdue reform.[18] Technical standards improved; new works, several of which bore a Russian stamp, entered the repertory, and Russian *étoiles* were engaged. In an era of government austerity, this "Russification" policy represented one of a number of efforts on the part of the Opéra management to enhance revenues and restore the theatre's tarnished reputation. If ballet largely remained within the traditional province of subsidized institutions, other forms of dance proliferated on the concert and commercial stage. Indeed, throughout the twenties, Paris became a mecca for exotic and interpretative performers of every conceivable kind, who flocked to the triple-theatre complex on the avenue Matignon where *Sacre du printemps* had

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[18]For a discussion of Rouché's reforms, see Ivor Guest, *Le Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris: Trois siècles d'histoire et de tradition*, trans. Paul Alexandre (Paris: Théâtre National de l'Opéra, n.d.), pp. 157-169.

premiered in 1913.[19] Like the Coliseum, the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées became a major dance center. In contrast to its London counterpart, however, the theatre offered programs in a concert setting. For newcomers to the Paris stage, a concert at the Comédie des Champs-Elysées, the smaller of the two recital halls in the complex, served the purpose once fulfilled by private engagements in the homes of influential salonnieres. In providing a showcase for a performer's "act", the theatre's "vendredi de la danse" and similar "séances de danses" at the Théâtre de la Gaité[20] became a familiar stepping-stone on the road to success in the posh music-halls of the French capital. The Comédie des Champs-Elysées was also the setting for another kind of event: beginning in November 1923, the doyen of Russo-French dance critics, André Levinson, gave public lecture-

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[19]Notices and reviews of these concerts regularly appeared in the French monthly La Danse as well as in the "Paris Notes" column of the Dancing Times. Some typical programs were: Mlle. Djemil Amik, a Malaysian artist (7 Dec. 1923); Habib Benglia in ten African dances (28 Dec. 1923); Toshi Komori and Sakae Ashida, Japanese dancers (22 Feb. 1924). On 21 December 1923, the largest of the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées' three halls was the setting for "Démonstrations de l'institut du développement harmonique de l'homme de G. Gurdjeff". Not all of these exotic dancers were authentic; several were Americans performing under such assumed names as Nadja (nom de danse of San Francisco-born Beatrice Wanger) and Hasoutra, née Ryllis Barnes, another California import. Arthur Moss, "Americans Under the Paint; In Spite of Oriental Costumes and Exotic Names, the Girls who Please Paris Come from These United States," The Dance, December 1926, p. 29.

[20]"Paris Notes," Dancing Times, April 1924, p. 701.

demonstrations on various aspects of dancing.[21] Levinson's La Danse d'aujourdhui, a reflection of his wide-ranging interests and catholic taste, chronicles the rich dance culture that emerged in Paris during les années folles.[22]

Like the quantitative expansion in dance activity, the conflating of artistic categories within a wide range of theatrical institutions proved a mixed blessing for the Ballets Russes. Up to 1918, the troupe's characteristic performance venues were those that legitimated the company's high status while shielding it from competition with enterprises of "lesser" artistic value. Post-Armistice conditions directly challenged this selective segregation. Modifying standards of artistic decorum, the era witnessed a marked trend toward homogeneity in overall programming that sharpened competition at both the elite and popular ends of the theatrical spectrum. If before the war, only the Pavlova company had shuttled between opera house and music-hall, the post-Armistice years saw many ensembles follow this trajectory, beginning with the Ballets Russes itself. From 1918-1922, the Diaghilev company performed at a broad range of theatres on both

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[21]Notices of these lectures regularly appeared in the "Paris Notes" column of the Dancing Times as well as in La Danse.

[22]André Levinson, La Danse d'aujourd'hui. Etudes, Notes, Portraits (Paris: Editions Duchâtre et Van Buggenhoudt, 1929).

sides of the Channel, from such popular houses as the Coliseum and Gaité Lyrique to such elite stages as Covent Garden, the Paris Opera, and the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Loie Fuller's company, the Ballets Suédois, and a score of other attractions followed suit, including Cocteau's Le Boeuf sur le Toit, which Stoll imported from the Champs-Elysées for a Coliseum engagement in 1920. All of these institutions, moreover, underwent a radical change in image over the course of the twenties. The Opéra, increasingly strapped for funds,[23] enlarged the scope of its activities so as to cater to what was regarded as "popular taste": among these efforts were productions by Ida Rubinstein and Loie Fuller, by now fixtures of the Paris social and artistic scene, film premieres (including Abel Gance's Napoleon), and charity events along the lines of the 1922 "cabaret russe" that netted the Opera Frs. 1,678.80.[24] An even greater accommodation with prevailing taste took place at London's Royal Opera House. Leased in 1922 by Walter Wanger, Hollywood head of United Artists, it became a "super-cinema", presenting such film classics as The Three Musketeers and L'Atlantide to the accompaniment of the London Symphony Orchestra. Conductor Eugene

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[23]"Paris Notes," Dancing Times, April 1921, p. 567.

[24]Messrs. Chauveau and Cournuche, Letter to Jacques Rouché, 17 Feb. 1922; S. Swetchine, Letter to Jacques Rouché, 1 March 1922, AJ13/1205(IX), Archives Nationales.

Goossens was not the only Diaghilev alumnus recruited by Wanger. To "bolster up the drawing power of the show", Wanger engaged Massine, Lopokova, and other out-of-work Diaghilev stars for a curtain raiser that anticipated the subsequent switch in house policy to revue.[25] The Théâtre des Champs-Elysées underwent a similar metamorphosis: "the home of grand ballet and of the highest artistic productions generally"[26] in the early twenties, by mid-decade it had become a stylish music-hall under the management of Rolf de Maré. Here, ironically, the erstwhile director of the Ballets Suédois presented the 1925 Revue Nègre that made Josephine Baker the toast of Paris.[27]

As music-halls upgraded their programming to encompass high art attractions, elite institutions approximated the programming of music-halls. This conflating of genres and media, which paralleled changes in the very substance of theatrical form, challenged distinctions of caste associated with individual artistic styles. In 1914, Diaghilev had stood at the apex of the commercial pyramid. Now, his company took its place along

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[25]Goossens, pp. 182-186.

[26]"Paris Notes. Troubles of the Opera," Dancing Times, April 1921, pp. 567-569.

[27]Josephine Baker and Jo Bouillon, Josephine, trans. Mariana Fitzgerald (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 48-53.

with numerous other competing enterprises on a theatrical continuum broadened and reshaped by the post-Armistice marketplace.

The extent to which the new economic climate straitened company finances may be judged by the provisions of Diaghilev's contracts with the Paris Opéra between 1919 and 1921. These documents, which specified a per performance fee of Frs. 12,000 for engagements in 1919 and 1920 and Frs. 14,000 for the summer 1922 season,[28] suggest that since 1913 the company's earning power had declined by approximately one-half. With the sharp fall of the franc in 1919-1920 and the quadrupling of price levels between 1913 and 1919, the drop in real income was even more dramatic.[29] The adoption of a piecework system of payment represented a significant departure from pre-War Opéra policy. Under the terms of his previous agreements, Diaghilev had simply rented the house and its facilities for a fee -- Frs. 100,000 for the ten performances of the spring 1914 season.[30] With box office receipts destined _in toto_ to the producer (after deduction of taxes), the

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[28]Contracts between Jacques Rouché and Serge Diaghilev, 10 April 1919, 5 July 1919, and 8 October 1921, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.

[29]T.E. Gregory, _Foreign Exchange Before, During, and After the War_ (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1922), pp. 110-113.

[30]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Messrs. Messager and Broussan, 22 Oct. 1913, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.

arrangement obviously favored Diaghilev. Under the new system, all takings over and above the performance fee remained in the hands of the Opéra. Although the company never performed as frequently in Paris (where a performance every other day remained the norm) as in the United States or even England, Rouché's goal of increasing Opéra productivity was reflected in a number of ways. Not only did the draft April 1919 contract specify two thousand francs less per performance than the final version (necessity had taught Diaghilev the fine art of bargaining), but in the course of negotiations the number of orchestra rehearsals dropped from twenty-two to fifteen and the chorus was eliminated entirely. The October 1921 contract, which called for the Sleeping Princess and Stravinsky's Mavra and Les Noces to premiere the following spring, laid an even heavier financial burden on Diaghilev. Although he received an additional two thousand francs per performance, he had to provide all the singers for the engagement as well as the considerably augmented troupe needed to dance the Tchaikovsky masterpiece.

To what extent Diaghilev's position had declined relative to competing ventures may be appreciated by comparing these terms with Loie Fuller's July 1922 Opéra contract. Where Diaghilev was to receive Frs. 14,000 for a full evening of grand ballet, including singers, stars, premieres, and an entire professional organization, Fuller was paid Frs. 4,000 for a troupe of twenty amateur dancers,

lighting personnel, and a forty-five minute "ballet fantastique".[31] As it turned out, neither Sleeping Princess nor Les Noces was presented in 1922, much to Rouché's annoyance. "In place of Sleeping Princess," he wrote to Diaghilev in April 1922, "a grand, evening-long ballet, you propose to give a fragment of this work, Aurora's Wedding."

> You understand what difference the substitution of a one-act work . . . [for] an entirely new work can make at the box office. I had counted on a profitable success, The Sleeping Princess being already known from . . . its numerous performances in London, the magnificence of its staging, its numerous decors and costumes signed by Bakst, and the calibre of its interpreters . . . The solution you propose has nothing but disadvantages: no stars, no decors, no mise-en-scène . . . Apart from Petrouchka, we have no grand ballet: neither Schéhérazade nor Firebird, only very short works demanding numerous rehearsals and appealing solely to an audience of artists . . . The enormous expense of these performances demands the certainty of very considerable receipts at very high ticket prices. Hence, you will understand my concern at a program change that involves on the commercial side a change whose implications I seek to appreciate.[32]

Other signs of declining income are suggested by the sharp reducation in actual receipts for those few independent seasons in this period for which information survives. At the Gaité Lyrique in May 1921, takings at the

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[31]Letter-contract between Loie Fuller and the Paris Opéra, 8 July 1922, AJ13/1208, Archives Nationales.

[32]Jacques Rouché, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 26 April 1922, Fonds Kochno, Pièce 86.

gate averaged Frs. 26,921 per performance. On opening night, when Prokofiev's Chout and Cuadro flamenco premiered, receipts amounted to a respectable Frs. 36,462. A few days later, they fell to a low of Frs. 14,258, no doubt reflecting competition from the Ballets Suédois, then performing at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées.[33] In real terms, these figures meant a substantial decline from the Frs. 40,670 average recorded for the 1914 Opéra season.[34] Offsetting this loss, however, was a sharp increase in company productivity. Following the practice of the commercial stage (in the music-halls the company gave twelve performances a week), Diaghilev compressed the brief eight-performance season into seven days, thereby raising the troupe's gross weekly earnings to over Frs. 215,000.

From the Gaité, the company moved to London's Princes Theatre, where it spent the next two months. For this season, which took place under the management of Charles Cochran, house receipts have survived for the period July 21-29.[35] These show a surprising drop in gross

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[33]"Recettes des Ballets Russes. Théâtre de la Gaité-Mai 1921," Bibliothèque de l'Opéra. Ironically, the season atthe Gaité Lyrique was booked through the good offices of Gabriel Astruc. Haskell, Diaghilev, p. 290.

[34]Compiled from the "Recette de ce jour", AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales.

[35]"Serge Diaghileff's Russian Ballet, Princes Theatre, House Receipts," Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

earnings (£284 or Frs. 17,324 per performance)[36] as compared to the Paris figures, while indicating how little of this money found its way to Diaghilev's pocket. Of the £1,752 collected for the first seven performances, no less than £1,250 represented Cochran's "share". For the last two, the producer's share was fifty percent. After deducting the sums advanced as cash on account, Diaghilev received a grand total of £514 or £57 a performance, too little even to cover his payroll. In light of these admittedly partial figures, Cochran's statement that he lost £5,007 on the nine-week season appears somewhat exaggerated.[37] If anyone was a loser, it was Diaghilev.

The summer of 1921 was a bad one for London's theatres. The entertainment boom of the immediate post-Armistice years had ended, and a coal strike depressed theatre attendance to an all- time low.[38] Heavy taxation and the departure of free-spending G.I.'s and other strangers from the British capital also took their toll. But as a New York Times correspondent noted the following

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[36]By 1921, the exchange rate was Frs. 61 to the pound. William F. Spalding, Tate's Modern Cambist, 28th ed.(London: Effingham Wilson, 1929), p. 117.

[37]C.B. Cochran, Secrets of a Showman (London: Heinemann, 1925), p. 372.

[38]"London Theatres Hard Hit by Slump," New York Times, 2 Feb. 1922, p. 5, col. 4; Brock Pemberton, "Overseas Impressions," New York Times, 9 April 1922, Sec. 8, p. 8, col. 7.

winter, another cause for the slump was the "commercial speculation in theatres". With rents "sometimes ten times as high as before the war," "contracts usually call nowadays for the earning of certain sums each week and as soon as the receipts fall below the fixed amount the managers can give two weeks' notice."[39]

What the figures demonstrate, above all, is the precarious thread on which survival of the post-Armistice Ballets Russes hung. Throughout these years Diaghilev walked a fine line between bankruptcy and self-sufficiency, a feat of acrobatic balance that left little margin for experiment and no cushion for failure. Of the ballets that left their mark on the post-Armistice imagination, none laid claim to new aesthetic ground. From Parade to Chout, virtually all of Diaghilev's new productions coasted on the breakthroughs of the war years. In part, this phenomenon pays tribute to the immense creativity of that era. On the other hand, it suggests the paucity of means that kept Diaghilev from venturing once again into the artistic unknown.

Diaghilev's financial bind can be appreciated from the underwriting of what were undoubtedly the biggest and most ambitious of his post-Armistice productions -- the revival of Sacre du Printemps in 1920 and the Sleeping

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[39]"London Theatres Hard Hit By Slump."

Princess a year later. Although Massine's new version of the 1913 masterpiece used Roerich's original sets and costumes, production costs were high. Not only did the large cast and difficult choreography demand a hefty investment in rehearsal time, but the ninety-seven piece orchestra (more than double the size of the ensemble that had accompanied the troupe in America) entailed an outlay well beyond Diaghilev's now straitened means. The revival was made possible by Gabrielle Chanel, whose timely gift of Frs. 300,000[40] not only saved the day, but signaled the emergence of a new kind of patron.

Ironically, both the idea of mounting the Sleeping Princess and the financing of the ballet came from the popular stage. Diaghilev was "amazed", wrote Grigoriev, at the long-running success of Chu Chin Chow, a musical extravaganza billed as "The Most Wonderful Entertainment London Has Ever Seen", which exploited the taste for Orientalia catalyzed by the company's early triumphs. "Half jokingly," he mentioned to the regisseur, "how much he wished he could discover a ballet that would run for ever . . . I replied that not only was such a thing quite impossible, but that it would bore him to death. 'Not at all,' he retorted. 'You'd run it and I'd do something

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[40]Kochno, p. 89; Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 368. Buckle gives as his source Paul Morand, L'Allure de Chanel (Paris: Hermann, 1976).

else!"[41] Rejecting Grigoriev's suggestion of Coppélia, the comic ballet in which Adeline Genée had scored her greatest London success and which was revived in abbreviated form on at least two occasions in the Twenties,[42] Diaghilev chose instead the work that marked "the acme of nineteenth-century symphonic ballet".[43] Behind the decision to stage this masterpiece of Imperial classicism lay yet another attempt to fund artistic experiment. Where in 1916-1917 the Metropolitan had unwittingly financed his modernist ventures, now Diaghilev proposed to underwrite a creative laboratory from the profits of a West End "hit".

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[41]Grigoriev, p. 176. Although the Diaghilev literature makes no mention of it, in April 1920 Pavlova had actuallypresented a condensed version of the ballet in London. Four years earlier she had staged a similar production at the New York Hippodrome with sets and costumes by Bakst. Among the hundreds of items in Diaghilev's music library, now at the Library of Congress, is sheet music for Chu-Chin-Chow.

[42]Ivor Guest, The Empire Ballet (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1962), pp. 66-67. In addition to the Cochran version staged at the Trocadero Grill Room in late 1924, an excerpt was presented by Nicolai Legat and his wife Nadejda Nicolaeva in January of the following year at the Coliseum. "Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Jan. 1925, p. 400; "Another 'Coppelia'," Dancing Times, Feb. 1925, p. 512. Some months earlier, Pavlova had presented a two-act version of the ballet with Hilda Butzova in the title role. "Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Oct. 1924, pp. 3-4. In June 1926, the French dancer Camille Bos gave "a short series of dances" from Coppélia during a one-week engagement at the Victoria Palace. "Sitter Out," Dancing Times, July 1926, p. 344.

[43]Vera Krasovskaya, "Marius Petipa and 'The Sleeping Princess'," trans. Cynthia Read, Dance Perspectives, No. 49 (Spring 1972), 20.

If musical comedy had suggested the idea of a revival, a music-hall enterprise footed the bill. For scenery and costumes, the Alhambra Company advanced Diaghilev £10,000, repayable against box office receipts, and twice acceded to his request for additional sums of £5,000.[44] Diaghilev spent lavishly on this first Western production of what has since become the signature work of England's Royal Ballet. Making peace with Bakst, who like the rest of Diaghilev's early collaborators was estranged from his erstwhile mentor, Diaghilev entrusted the design of the ballet to the former mirisкusstnik who had thrilled with the impresario over the original 1890 production. His services alone cost Diaghilev Frs. 28,000 -- Frs. 5,000 for each of the ballet's five acts plus expenses.[45] "The dresses," rhapsodized Cyril Beaumont, the ballet writer and bookseller who enjoyed entree to the company, "were made of the finest materials and in some instances cost from forty to fifty pounds apiece, a large sum at this period."[46] Costuming was not the only aspect of the production to recall yesteryear's Imperial splendor. To dance the role of Aurora Diaghilev scoured Europe for Mariinsky

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[44]Cyril Beaumont, Bookseller at the Ballet, Memoirs 1891 to 1929, Incorporating the Diaghilev Ballet in London (London: C.W. Beaumont, 1975), p. 275n.

[45]Leon Bakst, Letter to Jacques Rouché, 29 Dec. 1921, AJ13/1207, Archives Nationales.

[46]Beaumont, Bookseller at the Ballet, p. 273.

ballerinas, and in the months following the premiere on November 2, 1921, London audiences had the pleasure of observing Vera Trefilova, Olga Spessivtzeva, and Lubov Egorova, three brilliant exponents of Russian classicism. Carlotta Brianza, the Italian who had created the title role in 1890, was engaged to play the Wicked Fairy and take over the company's daily classes from Cecchetti, who on his birthday appeared in his original part of Carabosse. Another émigré, Nicolas Sergeyev, a former Mariinsky regisseur who had left the Soviet Union with notated scores of Petipa's ballets, was engaged to reconstruct the choreography.

> I can still see that magnificent first scene of the Christening [wrote Beaumont], the rich stonework and marble walls and columns lined with gorgeous negro guards in white and gold, and black and silver, the Marshal of the Court greeting the guests -- lords and ladies, and fairies with their pages bearing charming gifts for the baby Princess. The aristocracy bore themselves with distinction, while the fairies invested their movements with an austere nobility which set them apart from the most honoured mortals. So life moved at a stately pace until suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the Wicked Fairy, who arrived in her coach drawn by rats. But she, too, had dignity. She was majestic even in her wrath.[47]

Diaghilev's "gorgeous calamity", as one reviewer

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[47]Beaumont, Bookseller at the Ballet, pp. 276-277.

called the production,[48] closed on February 4, 1922 in the midst of "a slump of extraordinary severity".[49] Although 105 consecutive performances of the ballet had been given, the run fell short of the six months Diaghilev had calculated necessary to repay Stoll the sum of his advance.[50] The work was withdrawn; Stoll sequestered the scenery and costumes against the remaining debt of £11,000, and Diaghilev, penniless, left England, company, and creditors, with five hundred pounds borrowed from the mother of dancer Hilda Bewicke in his pocket.[51]

The immediate consequences of this episode were disastrous. At a single stroke, Diaghilev saw his short-term plans thrown into jeopardy, his troupe weakened by defections, and his London base of operations destroyed. For the second time in less than a decade, the company collapsed: the force majeure of the marketplace proved as

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[48]Unidentified review, Diaghilev Scrapbook, Vol. VI, p. 13, Theatre Museum (London).

[49]"London Theatres Hard Hit by Slump," New York Times, 2 Feb. 1922, p. 5, col. 4.

[50]Grigoriev, pp. 181-182.

[51]Richard Buckle, citing conversations with Marie Rambert as his source, gives the amount as £300. Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 397. This is contradicted by a letter from Mrs. Bewicke's solicitors in May 1925 demanding repayment of the £500 loan plus interest. Messrs. Le Brasseur and Oakley, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 19 May 1925, C-20-12.1, Serge Diaghilev Papers, NYPL. See also Messrs. Le Brasseur and Oakley, Letter to Eric Wolheim, 21 Nov. 1925, 10-1.3, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence, NYPL.

implacable as that of war. The threat of legal action, moreover, barred Diaghilev from performing in England until late 1924. When he returned, he faced still another consequence of the fiasco -- the fragmentation of the broad-based audience that had grown up around the "Russian Ballet" between 1918 and 1922. A later chapter will analyze in detail the nature of this public and the implications of its dispersal.

Most significantly, the economic failure of the Sleeping Princess made very plain the inadequacy of "free enterprise" as a system of artistic production. In the summer of 1922, Diaghilev explored various ways to stabilize the company on a new financial basis. One such plan called for its legal incorporation as the "Société des Ballets Russes". With permanent headquarters in Paris, the new entity was to be organized as a public company with stockholders, who stood to gain a share in the troupe's "continuing accomplishments and unique publicity", and a board of directors to oversee its financial management.[52] Had the scheme materialized, no doubt the same faithful patrons who now came to Diaghilev's aid would have lent their support to the fledgling enterprise. As it turned out, Princesse Edmond de Polignac placed a "sum at Diaghilev's disposal that enabled him to save the company

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[52]"La Société des Ballets Russes," Fonds Kochno, Pièce 138.

and proceed with the strictest economy,"[53] while through her good offices, the Ballets Russes became a resident dance troupe of the Monte Carlo Opéra. In light of subsequent company history, however, the drafting of such a prospectus is significant. Not only does it suggest Diaghilev's implicit recognition that high art enterprises could no longer survive in the private sector without large and regular infusions of cash, but that with costs and risks so high, no single individual could be expected to assume the role of a permanent Maecenas.

Between 1918 and 1922 competition toppled the Ballets Russes from its place at the apex of the pre-War dance pyramid. Diaghilev's artists suffered a similar fate. The war wrought major changes in public attitudes toward dancing, accelerating trends catalyzed by the advent of "the Russians" while destroying the social and moral taboos that had previously kept women from entering the job market. In England, where the "boom" touched every aspect of dance activity, the results were dramatic. For the first time, vast numbers of middle-class girls took up dancing as a career, thanks to a plethora of new training

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[53]Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 299. Eugene Goossens, who had been Diaghilev's principal conductor throughout TheSleeping Princess engagement, took a different view of her generosity. The Princesse's "good sized cheque", he wrote, arrived "just in time to give him [Diaghilev] enough pocket money to enable him to eat at his favourite restaurant instead of a cheap bistro, but too late to save his favourite black pearl studs . . ." Goossens, p. 180.

and employment opportunities. These newcomers, along with émigrés from the Russian revolution and a "lost generation" of American dance talent that streamed across the Atlantic, challenged the commanding position of Diaghilev's "free artists" before the war. It is against this background of supply outstripping demand that the "proletarianizing" phenomenon first discernible during the American tours quickened in tempo. For the dancer "aristocracy" of the Ballets Russes, the post-Armistic years brought lower wages and poorer conditions while intensifying the precariousness of lives spent outside the security of a State system.

The postwar dance "boom" vastly expanded opportunities for dancers. Even before 1914, Pavlova and the Ballets Russes had sent numerous enthusiasts to the barre. "It is astonishing," a London teacher told the Dancing Times in 1912, "what a lot of ladies and children have taken up fancy and operatic dancing since the advent of the Russian Ballet."[54] Rather than diminishing the numbers of pupils, the war swelled their ranks. Ruby Ginner, a popular teacher in the Isadora Duncan mold, noted "an increased demand for good dancing." "Personally," she wrote in a 1917 letter to the Dancing Times, "my own school

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[54]"A Successful Teacher," Dancing Times, Feb. 1912, p. 123.

has more than doubled its numbers and its work."[55] The growth of an aspiring corps of professionals between 1912 and 1918 is reflected in the pages of the Dancing Times. School advertising grew by leaps and bounds; pictures traced budding careers from the classroom to the professional stage; coverage of theatrical dance spilled well beyond the bounds of concert performance. By early 1918, Ruby Ginner's prediction that all signs "point to time when the dance shall come into her own again,"[56] seemed about to bear fruit. "At first glance," wrote P.J.S. Richardson under his editorial pseudonym "The Sitter Out", "it would appear that dancing has not increased in popularity during the past twelve months. He who jumps to this conclusion is making a very big mistake. One has only to glance through the programmes of the various musical comedies, revues and music-halls to find that there never was such a demand for dancers as there is at the present moment."[57]

As the magazine's expanding pages of features, advertisements, and personal columns vividly attest, this phenomenon increased dramatically over the coming decade, and not only at home. The twenties saw England become a

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[55]Ruby Ginner, Letter, Dancing Times, Oct. 1917, p. 25.

[56]Ibid.

[57]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Jan. 1918, p. 125.

major exporter of dance talent to the cabarets and music-halls of the Continent. The rise of social dancing as a mass pastime, moreover, created an array of opportunities for paid employment in the supper clubs, dance halls, and enormous palais de danse that sprang up throughout England. Even the cinema took to hiring dancers. By 1920 a noted dance writer could rhapsodize that "in the whole history of the dance there has never been any period so rich in various forms of dancing as to-day,"[58] a diversity reflected in the scores of exhibition, operatic, interpretative, acrobatic, grotesque, step, precision, and exotic dancers (to say nothing of paid partners) whose art lent an eclectic flavor to the theatrical and ballroom climate of the twenties.

Reflecting these new professional opportunities was the proliferation of studios that offered training for stage and ballroom dancing as well as teaching. Within the context of British ballet history, the most important of these was the school opened in 1914 by Serafina Astafieva, a Mariinsky-trained graduate of the Ballets Russes, where most of the younger generation of Diaghilev's British dancers, including Anton Dolin and Alicia Markova, received their early training. Other Russians migrated to London in

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[58]Mark E. Perugini, "The Four Schools. Have We the Material for a British Royal Academy of Dance and Ballet?", Dancing Times, Sept. 1920, p. 906.

the wake of the post-Armistice Ballets Russes, and like Astafieva, Nicolai Legat, Laurent Novikoff, and Enrico Cecchetti set up studios that became meccas for advanced students and ambitious young professionals. At the same time, the recognition that "operatic" dancing (as ballet was then called) had become a necessity to meet the higher technical standards of theatrical dancing generally, led to the widespread introduction of ballet into the curriculum of schools and academies, including those that catered largely to social dancing. This alliance of ballet, stage, and ballroom dancing, a phenomenon that had no parallel in France, where the categories of amateur and professional remained strictly separate,[59] created a large, new pool of enthusiasts with the minimum skills to turn professional in an era of high demand.[60]

This eclecticism, which many observers feared as "a tendency to formlessness"[61] in standards of taste and technique, differed markedly from the prewar situation.

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[59]A number of Russian emigre ballerinas opened studios in Paris as did Alexander Volinine and Legat in the mid-twenties. These studios, however, like the five-year dance course added to the curriculum of the Paris Conservatoire in 1926, were geared exclusively to professional training. "Paris Notes," Dancing Times, Feb. 1926, p. 585.

[60]Many articles in the Dancing Times sought to remedy this professional inexperience. In "The Novice and the Theatre", a series that began in April 1919, Rachel Verney dispensed advice on make-up and other practical matters.

[61]Perugini, "The Four Schools," p. 906.

Before 1914, dance education took place largely within the confines of theatrical schools. Here, the pupil studied elocution, acting, and singing as well as dancing in preparation for a stage career. The professional character of these institutions was reflected in the dual role of their principal teachers, who were often attached to London theatres as ballet mistresses or "dance composers", and their function of providing youngsters for musical shows and pantomimes, both in London and on the road. Although they survived into the twenties, the power of these academies now declined. Not only had the requirements of theatrical training changed, but by the early twenties, a new and competitive teaching market had come into existence, where literally anyone with a notion to do so could declare himself or more frequently herself a teacher. "Just think of it!!!" read an advertisement for the Park Lane Dancing School and Galleries in 1922. "One Year's Training, and you are ready to take your place as prominent people in the Dancing World. With a Diploma bearing the signatures of the universally famous Mme. Lydia Kyasht and Mr. Henry Cooper, you should get a post anywhere in the world, or set up as a Teacher for yourself. No one-sided restrictions. You are free to open your own School wherever you like. There's no career like a Dancing career for anybody, girl or man, who has the <u>enthusiasm</u> and the

determination to succeed. The work is interesting, lucrative, pleasant and healthy."[62] Appropriating the claims of health and career training, such schools came as a response to the steep rise in "amateur" demand that the older, professional institutions could not meet.

A striking phenomenon of the post-Armistice years in England was the change in social status of the dancer. Suddenly, the "ballet girl" had become respectable, a remarkable change from the mid-nineteenth century when ballet was "a very favourite amusement with the people who go to cheap penny theatres", and the chief distinction of its "young ladies" was thought to be their "short petticoats".[63] With the establishment in the 1880's of permanent companies at the Empire and Alhambra Theatres, the quality of ballet entertainments improved. Nevertheless, the stigmas of low social class and sexual impropriety remained associated with both the practitioners of choreographic art and its music-hall venues up to World War I.[64]

The advent of Pavlova and Diaghilev's "Russian Ballet" gave a jolt to both prejudices. By contrast to the

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[62] Dancing Times, October 1922, p. 20.

[63] Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor, III (London, 1861; rpt. New York: Dover, 1968), p. 144.

[64] For a mid-nineteenth century view of music-halls as a "social evil", see "Social Characteristics of London Life. No. I. The 'Music-halls'," The Beehive, 25 Oct. 1862, p. 1, col. 1.

usual run of London's "ballet girls", the children whom Pavlova accepted for training in 1911 came from "good families".[65] They were daughters of shopkeepers and businessmen, recruited from London dancing classes where they had been sent to acquire grace and deportment for the ballroom and salon.[66] "Hilda Boot," wrote The Dance Magazine somewhat tongue-in-cheek in 1926, "like all nice English girls, went to dancing school. She played "The Spirit of the Oyster" in an underseas ballet, and became Butsova, second to Pavlowa in the famous Russian troupe."[67] Similarly, the men who joined Pavlova's company (aside from her classical partners who hailed from the Mariinsky or, more typically, from the Bolshoi) stood several cuts above their predecessors. Serge Oukrainsky donned the stage name by which he is remembered to save his aristocratic Russian family embarrassment, while Hubert Stowitts, an American who joined the troupe in 1915, was a graduate in economics from the University of California. Pavlova took pains to "protect" her girls, shepherding them like a duenna across oceans and continents, exhorting them to be hard-working, diligent, and lady-like. And no matter what off-color

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[65]Personal interview with Madge Abercrombie, April 1981.

[66]Money, p. 137-138.

[67]Audrey MacMahon, "Oh, What a Past: Revealing a Number of Dark Secrets As to the Cause of Certain Famous Careers," The Dance Magazine, Dec. 1926, p. 18.

associations had touched her name in Russia, once in the West, no hint of scandal was allowed to tarnish her reputation.

In program notes, essays, and interviews, Diaghilev's dancers and publicists emphasized a similar theme of "respectability". Pages were given over to descriptions of the Imperial school, and stress was laid on the "long and arduous training", as Ellen Terry wrote, that "has reformed the ballet on such refined and spiritual lines".[68] In a slim volume produced in tandem with the 1912 Covent Garden season, Sunday Times editor and music critic Leonard Rees likewise extolled the "vigorous curriculum of the present day Imperial School" whose "pupils tread no primrose path to artistic distinction, but have all through their career to submit themselves to a stern discipline of body and mind."[69] Rees compared Russian ballet training to an enlightened system of military advancement. "Having passed through the school stage successfully the pupils are placed 'on the strength' of the corps de ballet, and like the conscripts of Napoleon's army have the possiblities of the highest

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[68]Ellen Terry, The Russian Ballet (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1913), pp. 9-10.

[69]Leonard Rees, Russian Ballet, Containing the Story of the Russian Dancing and Dances and the Plots of the Ballets. Royal Opera = Covent Garden Season = 1912 (London: John Long, 1912), pp. 14-15.

distinction before them. Talent and discipline alone will decide whether they will remain in the rank and file, or climb through the various grades to the eminence of premier place as danseur, mime, or artiste classique. In dancing as in all the arts, the price of high accomplishment is continual striving . . ."[70]

In a series of interviews with Serafina Astafieva, the Dancing Times offered a more intimate view of Imperial dance education. Here, the accent lay (as it would in Karsavina's memoir Theatre Street published in 1930) on the school's convent-like atmosphere, the rigid separation of boys and girls not only from each other but also from the world at large, and the high standards of physical and moral hygiene enforced by a staff of stiff-lipped governesses.[71]

Another stock refrain of these early commentaries concerned the high social standing of Russian ballet on its native grounds. By contrast with its degenerate counterpart in the West, noted Rees, ballet in Russia provided "an admirable example of the true aristocratic institution, that which is placed above the necessity of justifying itself to every wind of popular favor, and is free to cultivate a lofty idealism and to care for the long

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[70] Ibid., p. 17.

[71] "Sitter Out," Dancing Times, June 1915, pp. 298-300; July 1915, pp. 331-332; August 1915, pp. 356-358.

results of time rather than immediate and ephemeral success."[72] Astafieva, again anticipating memoirs and statements by her Imperial confreres, emphasized the students' physical proximity to the person of the Tsar. "The pupils are allowed to go home for three days at Christmas and Easter and after the yearly visit of the Emperor, who gives a few days' holidays. In the summer the school is removed to Tsarkoe Selo, to a building in the Palace, where the children spend their holidays playing in the beautiful park of the Imperial Palace."[73] "Sometimes . . . rehearsals take place in the theatre, to which the children are taken in government carriages under the protection of class mistresses, and porters in red liveries. This is always a great treat for the pupils . . . Should the Emperor be present at any performance in which the children take part, he invariably invited them to his box, where the Empress personally distributes sweets."[74] The reiteration of aristocracy and personal morality in these early writings helped wean the image of ballet away from its traditional associations. At the same time, it created a new social standard toward which the promoters of a native British ballet self-consciously aspired. Besides

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[72]Rees, p. 12.

[73]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, June 1915, p. 300.

[74]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Aug. 1915, pp. 356-357.

offering pupils at leading schools the opportunity to dance for an appreciative audience, the annual "Sunshine Matinees", inaugurated by the Dancing Times in 1919, were organized with a view to lending a genteel aura to early all-British concert efforts. Arranged as charity events with distinguished patronage, these matinees anticipated a current that would figure significantly in the future development of British ballet.

Although public estimation of the dancer had begun to rise by 1914, the war made dancing respectable as a career. In part, this reflected new attitudes toward female employment; for the first time, many upper and middle-class women -- like Edith Sitwell -- took jobs in war work that liberated them from a life of tea cups and domestic idleness while enabling them to earn a living. Still another reason lay in the "apparently widespread collapse of sexual caution"[75] that altered moral parameters and expectations. Lastly, the middle-class trend away from private entertaining (owing in part to smaller houses and the postwar scarcity of domestic help) enhanced the respectability of dancing as a public activity.[76] Indeed, in 1919 dancing found a paladin in no less a churchman than

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[75]Thompson, p. 267.

[76]Mark E. Perugini, "Where Are We Going?", Part I, Dancing Times, Aug. 1925, pp. 1173-1175.

the Dean of Manchester, who defended it in the pages of the Daily Mail as "a natural outlet from the drabness of surroundings and the monotony of modern industrial processes".[77] Although newspapers continued to titillate readers with headlines like "Is Jazz an Orgy of Immorality?",[78] by 1920 the social and moral stigma that had barred middle-class girls from the profession had largely disappeared. Coupled with the vast expansion of opportunities for novices, dancing became a respectable way for young women to earn their livelihood.

By 1923, the Dancing Times had added to its pages a regular feature by "Button Box," the nom de plume of a "ballet mother". Under the title "Chats With Young Dancers", the series counseled youngsters and their generally anxious mothers about careers in teaching and on the stage. Amid answers to queries about "practice" skirts ("I never remember seeing any of our great dancers showing 'ribbons and laces'") and leg warmers ("cut the feet off a pair of long woolen stockings and wear the legs over your thin tights"),[79] "Button Box" extolled time and again the advantages of dancing as a career. "The life of a dancer

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[77]Quoted in "Sitter Out", Dancing Times, March 1919, p. 190.

[78]Ibid.

[79]"Button Box", "Chats With Young Dancers," Dancing Times, March 1923, p. 685.

alone is a great education," she replied to a mother in a quandary about whether her daughter, an aspiring professional, should attend secondary school. "A dancer has the tremendous advantgage of meeting well-educated and much-travelled people, in far greater numbers than the stay-at-home girl. I know one girl who had the good fortune to have as 'dresser' a French gentle-woman who could, and for months did, nightly, in my presence, carry on conversation with English, French and German girls, interpreting . . . so rapidly and perfectly that all four were practically talking together. The girl of whom I speak picked up quite good French, and later on, from working with the Russians, sufficient of that language also, for all practical purposes.[80]

Apart from training in languages and the opportunity of meeting "nice" people, traditional aims of middle-class schooling, "Button Box" stressed the economic advantages of a career in teaching, an equally traditional end of female education. "To your question, 'What is an articled pupil?' It means, simply, a pupil who has an agreement drawn up, signed and stamped (to make it legal and binding) between a teacher and herself. The details of the agreement may vary considerably. For instance, a parent may deposit a hundred guineas with a teacher on the

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[80]"Button Box", "Chats With Young Dancers," Dancing Times, June 1923, p. 967.

understanding that the pupil receives a lesson a day for one or two years, at the end of which, if proficient, the pupil commences to receive a small salary and to assist in teaching. One girl I know is under this arrangement, and is receiving £35 a year. Her sister . . . had a similar agreement and turned out so well that she was released from the agreement after her first year at £35 to go up North and take up a position in a large school of dancing at the very useful salary of £200 a year and all expenses (pension) paid. Not bad for a girl of nineteen?"[81] Another typical arrangement in that pre-scholarship age provided free training to talented but impecunious girls with repayment taking the form of a percentage of the pupil's earnings when she began to dance professionally.[82] Many schools, it should be noted, advertised vacancies for "articled" pupils, and one may be sure that despite "Button Box's" praise of the arrangement, it was regarded by the unscrupulous as a source of cheap labor.

Economic self-sufficiency was also the theme of the dance writer Mark Perugini in a 1925 article that assessed among other things the "remarkable change in one generation" of the "practical possiblities" of the

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[81]"Button Box", "Chats With Young Dancers," Dancing Times, March 1923, p. 685.

[82]Ibid.

profession.[83] Noting that before the war "a young dancer was glad enough to appear in ballet, or in one of the annual pantomimes, as unpaid, or practically unpaid, apprentice of a teacher who farmed out the talents of her school," and "when out of her apprenticeship, she was glad to earn one portion of her income in business during the day, and another by appearing some production at night for a salary of a pound a week," Perugini suggested to what extent the situation had changed.

> To-day things are different. Then theatres were fewer, the form of entertainment less varied, the opportunities less, and tuition . . . 'sketchy' . . . Now, though a girl may have to pay from thirty to seventy guineas a year for tuition for, say, a couple of years, she is certain of adequate and standardised tuition; and, owing to the dearth of well-trained dancers, she is sure of a salary of three pounds or more a week, with opportunities for advancement such as were seldom enjoyed by her forerunners.[84]

Recognizing that a hundred and fifty guineas represented a hefty sum for most family budgets, Perugini adopted a line calculated to appeal to middle-class parents concerned for their daughters' future. Assuming the cost of study to be recoverable within the first year of a dancer's career, tuition should not be regarded as "mere outlay", but as an

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[83]Mark E. Perugini, "Where are We Going?", Part III, Dancing Times, Oct. 1925, p. 39.

[84]Ibid.

"investment, yielding, with fair luck, considerable future returns on expenditure."[85] Clearly, the newfound respectability and status of the post-Armistice dancer rested on her ability to earn a "decent" living.

Two popular novels by Compton MacKenzie registered the metamorphosis of the ballet girl on the contemporary imagination. The first, Carnival, appeared on the eve of the Russian invasion.[86] The story of Jenny Pearl, a second-line ballet girl at the Orient Palace of Varieties, it recorded with the fatalism of an earlier generation of naturalists the tragedy of circumstance that made low birth, loose morals, and lost ambition the inevitable accompaniments of the dancer's profession. A sequel, Coral, followed in 1925.[87] In the fifteen-year span between the publication of the two novels, the Orient, now a "theatre", has upgraded more than its name. Ballet has given way to revue, while peers and well-heeled families have replaced the Bohemians and provincials of yesteryear in the stalls. Class differences remain, of course, but no longer do they pose insuperable barriers to work and romance. Jenny's son marries the daughter of Maurice, the

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Compton MacKenzie, Carnival (London: M. Secker, 1912). This was the eighth edition of the novel.

[87] Compton MacKenzie, Coral: A Sequel to Carnival (London: Cassell, 1925).

"wealthy gentleman at large", who years before as a stage-door Johnnie had wooed and abandoned the pretty ballet girl, a decision he naturally regrets. And, typically, when Coral, a "jazz baby" who before her elopement went dancing five nights a week, thinks of getting a job, her first idea is to open a dance studio. Contrived and sentimental as these novels are, they indicate to what degree the English dancer's rise in status had permeated the consciousness of the popular reading public.

In England and to a lesser degree on the Continent, waves of new professionals had totally restructured the labor market. For the novice, riding the crest of rising demand, the era held promise of opportunity. For the old-timer, however, the bright young things that crowded casting offices and studios meant competition, and it is against the struggle for jobs and a shot at the public limelight that the social drama of Diaghilev's postwar dancers must be set.

Ironically, at the very time that the status of dancers, generally, was so markedly improving, members of the Ballets Russes found their conditions of work rapidly deteriorating. Before 1914, Diaghilev's dancers had been the "aristocrats" of the profession. In a market that placed a premium on their talent, they had enjoyed the luxury of choosing among a range of lucrative opportunities, and to win their services Diaghilev had had to pay them well. Beginning in 1915, the enviable position

of the Diaghilev dancer began to decline. By 1918, the downward trend had accelerated. Now, in a pattern that became the postwar norm, salaries plummeted and conditions deteriorated. The era of plenitude was over.

In Switzerland, we have already noted, all dancers had received equal pay. This egalitarian strategy, which enabled Diaghilev to rebuild the company, ended with the ballet's reappearance on the American marketplace. The return to a conventional wage structure, however, did not mean a return to previous levels of pay. In 1916-1917, salaries for the corps de ballet fell substantially, with the dancers in America being the first to feel the pinch.

Nor did salaries rise once the company found a safe berth in London. A contract dated October 20, 1918 engaged one Mlle. Yvonne André at Frs. 750 a month, with the company's two- month rehearsal period and four-week annual holiday being calculated at half-pay.[88] A year later Vera Clark, subsequently rebaptized by Diaghilev as Vera Savina, joined the troupe at a monthly salary of Frs. 800 in France and £4 a week in London, far less than the guinea a day assigned a musical accompanist.[89] These entry level salaries, which over the course of a year ranged from

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[88]Contract between Yvonne André and Serge Diaghilev, 20 Oct. 1918, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[89]Contract between Vera Clark and Serge Diaghilev, 3 Dec. 1919; C.L. Lucas, Receipt, 17 Aug. [n.y.], Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

Frs. 7800 to Frs. 8400, suggest to what extent wages had declined from the early years of Diaghilev's independent enterprise when a novice could expect an annual salary of Frs. 8,000 - 10,000. Even veterans like Anatole Bourman, Nijinsky's classmate at the Imperial Ballet School who rejoined the company in London, suffered in the postwar climate of dancer "givebacks". Under the terms of the twelve-month contract signed in August 1921, he received the remarkably low base monthly salary of Frs. 1275 and even less than the usual half-pay arrangement for rehearsal time and vacations.[90]

Absolute comparisons, however, do not give a true picture of the decline in real income. Camouflaged beneath the statistics is the era's spiralling inflation, when price levels in France more than quadrupled between 1913 and 1919,[91] and the franc dropped in relation to the pound from 25 in 1914 to 61 in 1921.[92] (With the rapid and unpredictable fluctuations in exchange rates, Diaghilev's post-Armistice contracts frequently spelled out wages in the currencies of the countries where the troupe was scheduled to perform.) In early 1924, the Paris daily Le Gaulois compared the cost of foodstuffs with prices in 1914

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[90]Contract between Anatole Bourman and Serge Diaghilev, 3 Aug. 1921, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[91]Gregory, p. 113.

[92]Spalding, Tate's Modern Cambist, 28th ed., p. 117.

and pronounced the result "frightening". In 1914, 5 fr. 25 had bought seven kilos of sugar, in 1924, only one. Butter had jumped from 3 fr. 20 to 20 francs, sausage from one franc to 7 francs.[93] England did not lag far behind, even if the pound remained strong on the foreign exchange markets. In 1916 alone, prices rose by an average of eighty percent.

Other signs of declining economic position accompanied this fall in real income. (An earlier section of this study alluded to the increase in productivity that enabled Diaghilev to make up in part for the decrease in post-Armistice revenues.) For the dancers, the tougher schedule represented more than a reduction in "piece rates". Built into the grueling round of classes, rehearsals, performances, and touring was a life of overwork, which the management did nothing to lessen.[94] Notwithstanding the "stamina" of the Russians, as Ninette de Valois put it, "for the hardship of the life,"[95] the physical instrument suffered, with the constant strain heightening the danger of injury to the dancer's most precious yet ephemeral asset. Lydia Lopokova, one of the

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[93]"La Vie trop chère," Le Gaulois, 10 March 1924.

[94]Ninette de Valois, Come Dance With Me: A Memoir 1898-1956 (London: Dance Books, 1973), p. 69.

[95]Ibid., p. 62.

most outspoken of Diaghilev's ballerinas and an old company trouper, spoke of this in an interview with a London journalist in 1933. "In Russia dancers used to have to dance once a week, and sometimes now (as Russia is a 'sweated country') they have to dance twice a week! But in the Diaghilev days he sometimes made us dance six times a week -- and hence our knees trouble us when we are middle-aged . . . !" (At the time, Lopokova was laid up at home with a sprained knee.)[96]

With no company provisions for medical attention, illness and injury reduced dancers literally to charity. Lord Rothermere, the London newspaper magnate, paid for Lydia Sokolova's operation in 1926, and a variety of wealthy friends came to her aid in 1928 when ill health plagued her again.[97] (As one of the oldest and ablest company stalwarts, she received some help from Diaghilev, but this was a matter of personal kindness, not company policy.) Other factors contributed to the growing precariousness of the dancer's life. Salaries were often delayed, and not always paid in full. Sometimes, they were not paid at all, as at the close of the Sleeping Princess engagement when, according to his associate Walter Nouvel,

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[96]H.G., "Lopokova's Ambition. To Be a 'Comedy Actress.' The Ballet To-day in Russia," Observer, 26 March 1933, Lopokova Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

[97]Sokolova, pp. 250, 264-265.

Diaghilev's total resources amounted to "£1,000, borrowed from an eccentric millionaire, who was clamouring for repayment".[98] With the impresario off in Paris, "some of the artists who had not been given their full pay threatened to ruin the last performance by a general strike," Nouvel recalled.[99] A strike was averted, but the willingness of the dancers to contemplate so extreme an action indicates how close to the edge payless paydays had brought them. (Leon Woizikovsky and his wife, Lydia Sokolova, who had a child by a previous marriage to support, actually sued Diaghilev for back pay. They won their case, as did Messrs. Slavinsky and Jalmuzynski.)[100]

Threats of industrial action had become a theatrical reality by the time the curtain fell on the last performance of the Sleeping Princess. The year 1920 had witnessed strikes in several Paris theatres, and on two separate occasions, dancers along with musicians and backstage personnel had walked off the job at the Opéra, demanding higher salaries, better working conditions, and a greater voice in management decision-making. In early 1922, unrest spread to London, and in the face of massive

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[98]Haskell, Diaghileff, pp. 298-299.

[99]Ibid., p. 299.

[100]Gabriel Joubier, Judgments on behalf of Leon Woizikovsky and Lydia Sokolova, 10 March 1922, and Messrs. F. Slavinsky and Jalmuzynski, 26 May 1922, C-20-21.1, C-20-21.2, and C-20-21.3, Serge Diaghilev Papers, NYPL.

unemployment, the Actors Association successfully negotiated the so-called "Valentine Contract", guaranteeing a minimum of three pounds per week to every artist.[101] A few months later, the Association debated instituting a "closed shop" to protect its membership from "unfair competition". "The stage suffers," said one of its spokesmen, "more than any other profession, from the influx of incompetents and dilettanti. The livelihood of thousands and the standard of dramatic art are thus very seriously threatened."[102] Another proposal to deal with the crisis called for a German-style system of entrance examinations.[103]

Diaghilev's dancers were hardly in a position to organize. Even as they threatened to strike, the company itself fell apart, with dancers seeking whatever employment they could find. Needless to say, provisions for job security did not exist, nor did the itinerant artists qualify for unemployment benefits or the dole. What suggests an analogy with London's thespians, beyond the general economic climate, is the background of competition

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[101]"Actors' Minimum Salary; Valentine Contract Upheld," Times, 12 Jan. 1922, p. 8, col. 2.

[102]"Actors' 'Closed Shop.' A Meeting to Discuss Boycott Proposal," Times, 10 March 1922, p. 10, col. 3.

[103]"Moneyed Amateurs and the Stage. Entrance Examinations Suggested," Times, 21 March 1922, p. 10, col. 3.

against which the drama of impoverishment was enacted. Ironically, the very factors that had enhanced the status of the British dancer and increased demand for her services, undercut the position of Diaghilev's dancer "aristocrats". Whereas in 1910 or 1911, Russian dancers could write their own tickets, now seasoned hands like Sokolova found themselves knocking on doors for a job. Emigration from Russia, which stepped up in the period of Lenin's New Economic Policy, offered another source of competition, particularly as many of the newcomers were veterans of Diaghilev's pre-War seasons. Later in the twenties, émigré children, often from families that prior to the Revolution would never have countenanced a stage career for their offspring, joined the scramble for jobs.

Top company stars could and did hold their own against the onslaught of competition. Lydia Lopokova, who earned £100 a week with Diaghilev in 1921, commanded similar fees on the music-hall stage.[104] Karsavina, too, weathered the twenties in style, thanks to guest appearances with the Ballets Russes, independent touring, and music-hall engagements. "For Tamara, money was then easy to come by," mused her husband H.J. Bruce in a memoir published after the second world war, "and never for a

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[104]Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 387; Lydia Lopokova, Letter to Comte Etienne de Beaumont, 8 Feb. 1924, Keynes Papers, Kings' College, Cambridge.

moment did it enter either of our heads that, in the comparatively ephemeral career of a dancer, salary should be treated not as income but as capital. So we proceeded first to hire an enormous car and then to take a large furnished house at a rent which I know now to have been for those days fabulous, but which appeared to be a drop in the flood-tide of Tamara's earnings."[105]

For most dancers, life was not so prodigal. Lopokova, who reduced her fee by more than one-half in 1924 for the chance to appear with the Soirées de Paris, alluded to the hand-to-mouth existence of the majority in letters to her future husband, the economist John Maynard Keynes. "Legat . . . accepts 10 pounds from me . . . with a pride of the Old Regime," she wrote in 1924.[106] "For tea I had Mordkin, his wife, his child, her dancing partner and his classical dancing partner. Oh, Life is difficult . . . I understand they go to America without positive engagement. Of course they have good material . . . and Mordkin is a name . . . but all is tinged with melancholy."[107] Everywhere Lopokova saw the same "awful lack of work and

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[105]H.J. Bruce, Thirty Dozen Moons (London: Constable, 1949), p. 36.

[106]Lydia Lopokova, Letter to John Maynard Keynes, 1 March 1924, Keynes Papers, Kings College, Cambridge.

[107]Lydia Lopokova, Letter to John Maynard Keynes, 25 Oct. 1924, Keynes Papers.

hunger"[108] -- and competition. Recording her impressions of a young Russian dancer, she wrote: "The Russian girl danced full of temperament, nice body and head, but did not know how to dance. Fourteen [years old], accompanied by a 'mother'. I spoke with her, she [had] danced in Paris at Clemenceau and Rothschilds! She was asked to dance [at] Ciro's club, but was it not degrading. I said the competition is so great that it did not matter whether she danced at [the] Alhambra or Ciro's or [the] Coliseum or any other dancing place, to study was the most important thing of all!"[109]

Economic hardship, coupled with the dearth of job security and the stateless condition of so many of Diaghilev's postwar artists, created inordinate dependence on an organism that became for the Russians and other displaced talents an instant, surrogate family, a haven in the cruel world of emigration. "To understand fully the Russian ballet theatre life," Ninette de Valois has written, "one has to remember that the artists had lived cloistered lives in the Russian State Schools; now they were further bound together by the emigre spirit, cut off as they were from the land of their birth, and served with

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[108]Lydia Lopokova, Letter to John Maynard Keynes, 29 April 1923, Keynes Papers.

[109]Lydia Lopokova, Letter to John Maynard Keynes, 2 Nov. 1923, Keynes Papers.

passports issued from Geneva . . . They seemed to carry their lives on their backs, a mental and emotional knapsack, stuffed with memories of the past, anxiety about the present, and hopes for the future."[110] Over this ersatz family hovered the beneficent yet distant figure of Diaghilev, a sovereign who ruled through the janissaries of his court, an "uncle" to whom one could appeal in times of trouble.[111] "Please arrange my departure from Vienna immediately," wired Bronislava Nijinska on her arrival in the West with a hungry family to feed. "I want to work with you."[112] On numerous occasions, Diaghilev went out of his way to help and encourage individuals in his troupe, as Sokolova's memoirs movingly attest. Kindness, however, was of a piece with Diaghilev's postwar image of an imperious "barin" ruling all and sundry with the paternalism of another era. If in 1909-1910 and again in 1915 the troupe revealed the stamp of a collective enterprise, by the early twenties it suggested a throwback to Tsarist social styles. This atavism shocked Serge Lifar, a youngster "from Soviet lands", on his arrival in the "free city . . . of the

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[110]de Valois, p. 66.

[111]Serge Lifar, Ma Vie: From Kiev to Kiev, trans. James Holman Mason (New York: World Publishing, 1970), p. 28; Stanislas Idzikowski, Interviewed by John Gruen, 2 Aug. 1974, Oral History Archive, Dance Collection, NYPL.

[112]Bronislava Nijinska, Telegram to Serge Diaghilev, 25 July 1921, Fonds Kochno, Pièce 65.

Ballets Russes". "Customs borrowed from the days of serfdom still prevailed," he recalled. "The leading dancers made the boys of the corps de ballet run their errands for them!"[113] Diaghilev's paternalism toward his dancers, an attitude that viewed them as children and chattels, may be appreciated from a letter written to Charles B. Cochran in 1926 following Vera Nemchinova's "defection" to the revue stage.

> You knew, of course, that Mme. Nemchinova was my pupil and that it was with me that she learned to dance in the past ten years . . . Allow me to add in a friendly spirit that I very much regret . . . the way you exploit the Russian artists whom I have discovered and trained. Dukelsky writing bad fox-trots for musicals is not doing what he is destined to do; Massine dancing in supper clubs and composing choreographies in the style of "Pompei a la Massine" dangerously compromises himself; likewise, Nemchinova is not made for revues . . . I take the liberty of telling you this in view of our long-standing friendship. One must create works and artists and not exploit those created by others for purposes very different from yours and in an atmosphere having nothing in common with what you do, and what you often do very well.[114]

Diaghilev's avuncular posture, sustained by the internal configuration of his troupe and the skewed nature of the dance market, masked a larger economic agenda. Beginning in the war years, Diaghilev's stock-in-trade came increasingly to rest on the shoulders of his dancers. From

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[113] Ma Vie, p. 28.

[114] Serge Diaghilev, Letter to Charles B. Cochran, 30 March 1926, Fonds Kochno, Pièce 22.

their payless or partial paydays, their tireless efforts, and precarious lives came the means that enabled his company to survive. Before 1914, Diaghilev had been lucky to command the loyalty of his dancers. Now, in the postwar world where supply vastly outstripped demand, his dancers poured the surplus value of their labor into the bottomless coffers of his enterprise.

Thus, from 1918 to 1922, the logic of the marketplace completed the process, set in motion in 1909, of transforming the company into a modern business enterprise. Now, to an ever greater degree, fluctuations in the business cycle, competition, and the forces of supply and demand held the Ballets Russes as surety in the scramble for profits. The transformation of the dancer from "free artist" to wage worker betrays yet another sign of this "modernization", as the dance boom, through its reserve army of competitors, toppled Diaghilev's dancers from their erstwhile position of privilege. From 1918 to 1922 Diaghilev revealed ballet modernism to Europe's war weary audiences. But he also revealed the limits of the commercial marketplace as a haven for artistic enterprise. The crisis precipitated by the failure of the Sleeping Princess drove home a lesson Diaghilev never forgot. Henceforth, government largesse would underwrite at least some portion of his Ballets Russes.

CHAPTER VII

PROTEAN IDENTITIES

In the chronicle of the Ballets Russes, no era displays such striking inconsistencies or apparent artistic aimlessness as the years 1922-1929. During these years, a frenzy of creation seemed to grip the company, as work after work lit briefly for Diaghilev's audiences the many facets of Twenties' modernism. For a number of contemporaries, this succession of "isms" was a sign, not of artistic health, but decadence: the absence of a unifying aesthetic spoke of the multiple personalities warring in the ballet's now fragile identity. But still another explanation for the era's protean character is possible, one that reflects the distinctive features of the company's newest backers. Between 1922-1929 an unlikely troika presided over Diaghilev's fortunes, a triple cast of paymasters who exacted from the Ballets Russes works tailored to diverse tastes and often rival purposes. From the prevailing instability of these years emerged one certainty: no creative enterprise of the magnitude of the Ballets Russes could sustain itself indefinitely and with complete artistic independence, free of public subsidy.

Diaghilev's arrangement with the Théâtre de Monte-

Carlo in the autumn of 1922 was nothing short of providential. Contrived by the Princesse Edmond de Polignac, a relation through marriage of the principality's ruling family, and by the Société des Bains de Mer, which ran the famous Casino, it launched the Ballets Russes on the last and longest phase of its history. For the first time since the inception of Diaghilev's independent enterprise, the company enjoyed the luxury of working at least part of the year in a subsidized environment.

Russian ballet was no stranger to the diminutive principality. Its court theatre, a replica in miniature of the Palais Garnier built in the 1890's, had welcomed the Ballets Russes as early as 1911. Here, the company danced the Giselle that marked its debut as a permanent organization, or, as Diaghilev later inscribed a program for that performance, the first appearance "of my troupe".[1] With the regularity of homing pigeons, the dancers returned to the Mediterranean resort each winter, and in the months preceding the Paris and London seasons, as the troupe rehearsed new works and refurbished old ones, the theatre's exclusive clientele witnessed such gala rarities as the first two-act version of Swan Lake ever produced in France, with Kschessinska and Nijinsky in the principal roles.[2] World War I and Diaghilev's sojourn in London's music-halls

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[1]Pièce 128, Fonds Kochno.

[2]Cyril W. Beaumont, The Ballet Called Swan Lake (London, 1952; rpt. New York: Dance Horizons, 1982), p. 151.

interrupted this arrangement: Monte Carlo became a brief stop in the round of more important seasons. In 1922, however, as the company reeled from its latest brush with disaster, the theatre that lay just steps from the adjoining Casino became the hub of Diaghilev's operations. For the next seven years, the jewel of the Azure Coast served as ballet's winter capital and workshop.

Diaghilev's contracts with René Léon, the Managing Director of the Société des Bains de Mer et du Cercle des Etrangers de Monaco, to give the entity that controlled Monte Carlo's theatre and Casino its full name, subsidized the company in various ways. They offered engagements at the height of the fashionable season in January and in the months preceding the company's yearly return to Paris in May; provided subventions for appearing in the danced interludes of the theatre's opera repertory; and advanced production money to underwrite new works. With residency came other perquisites of the opera house: storage space, rehearsal rooms, orchestra, and chorus. Well might Grigoriev, the company's <u>régisseur</u> throughout the whole of its peripatetic existence, heave a sigh of relief: "And so the Ballet at last acquired a permanent base."[3]

Although the arrangement fell short of its initial promise, Diaghilev's Monte Carlo honeymoon began auspiciously. Giving rein to ambitions curbed by years of

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[3]Grigoriev, p. 188.

austerity, Diaghilev embarked on a campaign to make the Ballets Russes a year-round fixture of Monaco's social and artistic life. In 1923-1924, he surpassed even his own earlier record of accomplishment, reviving no fewer than five ballets for repertory seasons in December and April and staging seven new works for a "Festival Français" in January alone. Not since the Beecham era had Diaghilev enjoyed means on so vast a scale as he did in the winter of 1923-1924. He would never do so again.

Just how much of the Casino's profits found their way to Diaghilev's pockets in that banner season remains uncertain. Yet judging from the sums that passed from the Society's account to the impresario in 1924-1925, when funding actually declined, the amount may well have reached 1.5 million francs. In April 1924, Diaghilev signed a series of contracts outlining his company's relationship with the Société des Bains de Mer for the next three years. Under the terms of "Contract No. 1",[4] Diaghilev received an outright cash grant of Frs. 885,000, payable in installments from July of that year to the following April. He also received half the gross receipts for company performances (a fairly negligible amount given the

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[4]"Contract No. 1" between Serge Diaghilev and René Léon, April 1924, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.

theatre's limited seating capacity)[5] and another Frs. 30,000 for travel and transportation expenses. For his part, Diaghilev agreed to present a Festival of French Music and Dance in January 1925 (a considerably more modest version of the previous year's event) and a Russian Festival in April along with the company's "usual repertory". A second contract[6] spelled out in part what was to comprise this program. As in the era of Diaghilev's alliance with the producing mavericks of the opera world, interest centered on heightening the musical cachet of productions. Thus, Diaghilev agreed to stage Les Noces, Pulcinella, and Les Biches with their full complement of singers, Glinka's opera Rousslan and Ludmilla in a "special de luxe setting comparable to that of . . . Coq d'Or as presented by him at the Paris Opéra in 1914", and a brand new Stravinsky ballet for which Diaghilev agreed to pay the composer an advance of Frs. 60,000. For the costs entailed by these productions, Diaghilev received Frs. 300,000 over and above the sum of the initial grant. The final contract

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[5]The seating capacity of the theatre was 600. Peter Williams, "Mediterranean Cradle of Ballet," Dance and Dancers, Feb. 1956, p. 16. Receipts for company performances on April 8, 11, and 14, 1926 were Frs. 8,420, 12,240, and 10,400, respectively. Diaghilev's share amounted to a total of Frs. 15,530. Serge Diaghilev, Letter to [illegible], 16 April 1925, C-20-3.4, Serge Diaghilev Papers. By contract, at least two-thirds of the seats had to be placed on public sale.

[6]"Contract No. 3" between Serge Diaghilev and René Léon, April 1924, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.

with the Société des Bains de Mer that year[7] dealt with the third facet of Diaghilev's subsidy: the lease of his corps de ballet and balletmaster's choreographic services to the Monte Carlo Opéra for its winter season. This arrangement, which like the others was paid in monthly installments, netted the company another Frs. 200,000. Taken together, these agreements contributed over 1.4 million francs to Diaghilev's 1924-1925 budget. With the sweep of Casino chips into Diaghilev's purse, his company's luck had certainly changed.

Just what happened between April 1924 and April 1925 to end Diaghilev's winning streak remains yet another question mark in the chronicle of the Ballets Russes. But something of import surely occurred to end the three-year guarantee of subsidy for overhead and new production at the level written into two of the April 1924 contracts. In discussing the winter of 1925, Grigoriev remarks that Diaghilev's "Concert-Performances" staged at the Casino's Nouvelle Salle de Musique, were not at all to the liking of Raoul Gunsbourg, the Opéra's long-entrenched Director, who prevailed on the Société des Bains de Mer to do away with these chamber events the following year.[8] It is very possible that Gunsbourg, who had purchased through Gabriel Astruc all of Diaghilev's production material in 1909, now

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[7]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and René Léon, 18 April 1924, C-20-22.1, Serge Diaghilev Papers.

[8]Grigoriev, p. 210.

set out to alienate his formidable rival from the affections of his Monegasque patrons. "I understand that the Administration of the Société des Bains de Mer," Diaghilev wrote to René Léon on February 11, 1925, "has ordered that the name of Her Serene Highness the Hereditary Princess be removed from posters for the Russian Ballet's forthcoming season. Kindly inform me if the Administration has received this order from Her Highness."[9]

Princess Charlotte's name continued to grace the masthead of company programs, but neither she nor her husband, however much they enjoyed Diaghilev's performances, were anxious to cross swords with the underwriters of their diminutive domain. In any event, by April of the following year, Diaghilev's hand had considerably weakened. His company was engaged for a mere four performances in January 1926 and a season of twenty performances in spring. No provisions were made for the Société des Bains de Mer to underwrite new productions, and there was even a nasty aside to the effect that storage space was limited to "materiel employed for and during the season".[10] Diaghilev's fees were reduced accordingly. The basic subsidy amounted to Frs. 420,000 or less than half that of the previous year. He also received Frs. 25,000

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[9]Serge Diaghilev, Letter to René Léon, 11 Feb. 1925, C-20-3.2, Serge Diaghilev Papers.

[10]Draft contract between Serge Diaghilev and René Léon, 30 April 1925, Pièce 136, Fonds Kochno.

for travel and transportation fees and as a bone tossed to a man down on his luck, all rather than half the gross receipts of company performances. As before, the Opéra rented the troupe during the winter months for a sum of Frs. 200,000.[11] The years 1926-1927 and 1927-1928 followed much the same pattern.

By the spring of 1925, Diaghilev stood yet again at a financial crossroads. His arrangement with Monte Carlo continued to subsidize a portion of the company's overhead and operating expenses. The creative lifeblood of his organization was another matter. Diaghilev faced the dilemma that time and again had challenged his ingenuity in the past. Where was to be found the money to stage new productions, commission new artists, fund new experiment?

Box office receipts could hardly solve the problem. Engagements were often brief -- two weeks at most in Turin and Barcelona, fewer than a handful of performances at La Scala[12] -- and the takings disappointingly meager, as during the 1925 Christmas season in Berlin when "hardly a soul", as Grigoriev wrote, "came to see us" after opening night.[13] Nor was Paris enamoured

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[11]Contracts (2) between Serge Diaghilev and René Léon, 17 July 1926, Pièce 136, Fonds Kochno. These contracts included provisions for 1927-1928 as well.

[12]Serge Diaghilev, Contracts with Juan Mestres, 9 March 1925, Guido Gatti, 16 July 1926, and Angelo Scandiani, 15 Nov. 1926, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[13]Grigoriev, p. 219.

of Diaghilev in mid-decade. Seasons had grown progressively shorter, and rather as in New York today, engagements there "under almost any circumstance [meant] certain loss".[14] At the Paris Opéra, where Diaghilev returned in 1927 and 1928, a complicated formula benefiting the house replaced the flat-fee system: Diaghilev retained a percentage of the receipts only after deduction of taxes and payment of a sizable sum to the theatre.[15] For the performance given on December 27 1927, gross receipts amounted to Frs. 90,445, of which Diaghilev retained just under Frs. 41,000.[16] In December of the following year, the fixed deduction doubled to Frs. 50,000 for each of three performances.[17] Even London, where the company returned in November 1924 for its first season since the

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[14]Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 308. "Berlin is the one capital he has been unable to conquer," noted Count Harry Kessler in 1928. "He has enjoyed triumphs in all other great cities of the world, but 'devant Berlin, je suis comme un collégien qui est amoureux d'une grande dame et qui ne trouve pas le mot pour la conquérir.' His Berlin efforts had always proved a material disaster, involving deficits of a hundred to a hundred and fifty thousand francs." In the Twenties: The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler, trans. Charles Kessler, introd. Otto Friedrich (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 357.

[15]In 1927, the house skimmed Frs. 25,000 "off the top" for each of the company's two Christmas season performances and ten percent of the remainder. Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Jacques Rouché, 5 Nov. 1927, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.

[16]Receipt, 28 Dec. 1927, AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales.

[17]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Jacques Rouché, 9 Nov. 1928, Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.

Sleeping Princess debacle, could not generate the requisite cash. Although the Ballets Russes remained popular, its earnings, only £1,200 a week in 1925 for two performances a day on a variety bill, were further reduced by payments to the Stoll organization until the company's debt was liquidated.[18] Repaying Stoll, however, made little dent in Diaghilev's overall indebtedness. His habit of borrowing from Peter to pay Paul returned to haunt him, and his correspondence with solicitors in 1925-1926 tells a sorry tale of unpaid debts and lawsuits -- Diaghilev vs. Bewicke, Gulbenkian, Polignac, even Nijinsky, on whose behalf his wife Romola resurrected documents from the 1918 South

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[18]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Sir Oswald Stoll, 9 Jan. 1925, Theatre Museum (London); Grigoriev, p. 217.

American tour to sue the impresario.[19] And as always, Diaghilev put off royalty payments to composers and music publishers until the latter threatened to bring legal action.

In 1918, London had "saved" Diaghilev. Eight years later, England came once more to Diaghilev's rescue, in the person of a tycoon of big business. With Lord Rothermere, an unsavory whiff of power politics entered the studios and inner portals of the Ballets Russes.

"One day," recounted Grigoriev, "Diaghilev came to a rehearsal accompanied by a tall, burly man with quite a pleasant English-looking face."

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[19]For Bewicke, see Le Brasseur and Oakley, Solicitors, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 19 May 1925, C-20-12.1, Serge Diaghilev Papers, and Le Braseur and Oakley, Solicitors, Letter to Eric Wollheim, 21 Nov. 1925, 10-1.3, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence; for Gulbenkian, see R. Pioche, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 10 July 1925, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation, L. Durand-Villette and R. Pioche, Solicitors, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 16 July 1925, C-20-12.5 and Letters to Walter Nouvel, 30 Oct. 1925, C-20-13.3, and 11 Dec. 1925, C-20-13.8, Serge Diaghilev Papers. The correspondence does not indicate the total amount of Diaghilev's debt to the millionaire oilman, but it must have been a considerable sum. The July letter reads in part: "The Comptoir d'Escompte [Diaghilev's bank] has remitted to me the sum of Frs. 2,000, which I have made over to Mr. Gulbenkian's counsel. You are therefore out of immediate danger, but on the condition that you regularly send me Frs. 2,000 on the 10th of each month." It seems likely that the loan dated from the Sleeping Princess era. For Polignac, see L. Durand-Villette and R. Pioche, Letters to Walter Nouvel, 30 Nov. 1925, C-20-13.5, 13 March 1926, C-20-14.1, and 15 March 1926, C-20-14.2, Serge Diaghilev Papers. In the Polignac suit, it appears that Diaghilev was the creditor. However, the circumstances surrounding the action, which was settled in Diaghilev's favor by March 1926, remain obscure. For Nijinsky, see L. Durand-Villette and R. Pioche, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 15 July 1925, C-20-12.4, Serge Diaghilev Papers.

> It was the custom on such occasions for the rehearsal to stop . . . Diaghilev would bow to the company and then shake hands with the regisseur, the choreographer, and the leading dancers . . . This ritual was performed . . . except that Diaghilev also introduced us to the visitor, saying that Lord Rothermere was an ardent admirer of our Ballet and was always, when possible, present at our performances; he had been following our progress for years and would be much interested in seeing a ballet in the process of creation. Diaghilev and Lord Rothermere then sat down, and the latter, we observed, watched the rehearsal with the closest attention.[20]

Lord Rothermere's visit to the Monte Carlo studio took place early in 1926. By March, he had become the company's "angel".

Unlike the financial elite that formed Diaghilev's early circle of supporters, Harold Sidney Harmsworth, Viscount Rothermere, was a newcomer to the genteel world of art. Chief proprietor of the Daily Mail and a string of other London newspapers, he commanded vast wealth and influence through an empire consolidated as recently as the war years. Diaghilev's wooing of the distaff side of the ménage suggests that design as much as chance lay behind the magnate's visit. "My best wishes for 1925," wrote Rothermere's wife Lilian to the impresario in late 1924. "I very much regret not being able to see in the New Year with you on the 31st as I shall still be in the country, but I hope to see you again before leaving London on the

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[20]Grigoriev, p. 223.

3rd."[21] Well might Diaghilev court Lady Rothermere. For the previous two years she had been T.S. Eliot's benefactress, financing expenses and salaries for The Criterion.[22] The following June Diaghilev's thoughts turned again to the wealthy couple, who by then had settled on a semi-permanent basis in France.[23]

In late 1925, Lady Rothermere withdrew her patronage from The Criterion. "The ideal which was present to the mind of Lady Rothermere at the beginning," commented Eliot, "was that of a more chic and brilliant Art and Letters, which might have a fashionable vogue among a wealthy few."[24] Now that Lady Rothermere had made France her home, what could be more chic, brilliant, fashionable,

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[21]Lilian Rothermere, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 10-16.7, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

[22]Loretta Lucido Johnson, "T.S. Eliot's Criterion: 1922-1939," Diss. Columbia 1980, pp. 44-46, 61, 121-123. As early as July 1921, Eliot and Dial editor Scofield Thayer had tried to interest Lady Rothermere in helping The Dial, possibly by establishing a new international review, with The Dial as the American edition and with Eliot as editor of a London edition. Lady Rothermere, however, preferred to start a "little English review", claiming that "she could not possibly afford to spend £1,200 a year on a paper", even if she had wanted to do so. Nicholas Joost, Scofield Thayer and "The Dial": An Illustrated History (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1964), p. 158. According to Lydia Lopokova, the Ballets Russes was not Rothermere's first theatrical venture: previously, he had subsidized The Beggar's Opera and Anna Pavlova's company. Lydia Lopokova, Letter to John Maynard Keynes, 18 Nov. 1926, Keynes Papers.

[23]Eric Wollheim, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 11 June 1925, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[24]Quoted in Johnson, p. 121.

and exclusive than the Ballets Russes?

Rothermere's visits to the ballet continued. On February 26th, he wrote from his villa La Dragonnière in Cap Martin:

> I am very glad to know that you intend to take a theatre in London for a full season of Russian Ballet . . .
> Personally I have the highest regard for the valuable contribution you and your Russian Ballet have made during many years towards upholding the best standards of the stage and the artistic education of the people of England.
> It will give me great pleasure to render you what help I can in your coming London season by giving you the fullest possible support of my newspapers.[25]

Rothermere was not the only Englishman wintering on the Azure Coast courted by Diaghilev in these months. Lord Beaverbrook, another lately-ennobled newspaper proprietor (London's Daily Express was among his holdings) brushed off his approach.[26] On the other hand, Diaghilev's invitation to the Duke of Connaught, a cousin of Russia's last Empress, to attend an afternoon rehearsal of Les Matelots was graciously accepted.[27] By the first of March, this grandson of Queen Victoria had also joined forces with Diaghilev, lending his patronage to the forthcoming London

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[25]Lord Rothermere, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 26 Feb. 1926, Pièce 84, Fonds Kochno.

[26]Lord Beaverbrook, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 1 March 1926, 10-20.4, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

[27]Major Berkeley Levett, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 31 Jan. 1926, 10-21.8, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

season and many subsequent ones.[28] Less than three weeks later, Diaghilev was thanking Lord Rothermere for his commitment of financial support. "Your promise of the two thousand pounds guarantee," he wrote in English, "is a great assistance to me. I await the letter you said you would write to me on this matter which will help me in forming my committee of backers."[29] Thanks to these commitments, the June-July season at His Majesty's Theatre was a social and financial success.

Despite his millions, Lord Rothermere was a businessman, and his backing, predictably, took the form of loans rather than outright grants to the company, whose expenses at this period ran from £1,300 to £1,500 a week.[30] In a pattern that continued up to 1929, "guarantee capital" was advanced in spring and repaid from receipts at the conclusion of the London season. This arrangement rescued Diaghilev from single-slot appearances and twelve performances a week on the music-hall stage. It enabled him to bypass theatrical middlemen and managements, which skimmed off sizeable amounts of the gross, and to lease a good-sized theatre where he could charge what he would and recoup the sum of the advance while covering company

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[28]Major Berkeley Levett, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 1 March 1926, Pièce 84, Fonds Kochno.

[29]Serge Diaghilev, Letter to Lord Rothermere, 18 March [1926], Pièce 84, Fonds Kochno.

[30]Walter Nouvel, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 6 Feb. 1926, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

expenses. Even more importantly, guarantee money provided capital for productions. From the funds advanced in April and May, Diaghilev paid the designers, singers, composers, costumers, and music publishers whose services were indispensable no less for London than Paris, where almost all Diaghilev's works continued to premiere. In both 1927 and 1928, the sum of this advance amounted to £1,000.[31] As Diaghilev's London agent Eric Wollheim told the press after the impresario's death, the company "could never do without guarantees".[32]

By the late twenties, Diaghilev was a past master of the fine art of manipulation. In Lord Rothermere, however, he met not merely his match, but a hand more practised than his own. Dangling the promise of money, the newspaper magnate demanded his pound of flesh; abjuring interest, he played a game of power and sexual politics that deepened the era's prevailing uncertainty and influenced certain artistic decisions.

Only a month after promising "the fullest possible support of my newspapers", Rothermere airily left Diaghilev to fend for himself.

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[31]Eric Wollheim, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 11 April 1927, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation; Serge Diaghilev, Letter to Lady Juliet Duff, 4 May 1928, C-20-6.5, Serge Diaghilev Papers.

[32]"Russian Ballet Disbanded. Company's Financial Need. Leader's Influence Missed," Daily Telegraph, 20 Sept. 1929.

> Lord Rothermere [wrote his secretary Ernest Outhwaite] does not concern himself with details of the newspapers and it is a matter of complete indifference to him who is responsible for your publicity.
>
> I fear I cannot personally give you any advice on the subject of your publicity agent: the only thing of importance is that he should be absolutely au fait with everything concerning your repertoire and that he should be well known to the newspaper editors and critics.[33]

This was not the only slap Rothermere delivered to the recipient of his largesse. "I want you to make it clear to Diaghilev," he told dancer Lydia Sokolova, whom he was then plying with tulips and chocolates, "that I am doing this for you personally," referring to his decision to support the company.[34] In London, Rothermere continued to court her; instead of tulips, he offered His Majesty's Theatre. "I'm sure Diaghilev would be so pleased to have it," this most loyal of company dancers replied.[35]

Despite Sokolova's rejection of his advances, Rothermere underwrote all three of Diaghilev's London seasons in 1926 and 1927. In March 1928 he suddenly withdrew his support. "I am afraid you must expect nothing more from Rothermere," his wife wrote Diaghilev curtly.[36] According to Diaghilev, a certain "somebody . . . had

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[33]Ernest Outhwaite, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 23 March 1926, 10-16.2, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

[34]Sokolova, p. 246.

[35]Ibid., p. 249.

[36]Lilian Rothermere, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 1 March [1928], 10-16.9, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

worked on Lord Rothermere and turned him against us".[37] That somebody was Alice Nikitina, a dancer trained in Moscow's private studios during the Revolution and in the émigré troupes that marked her journey south and westward out of Russia before joining Diaghilev in 1923. A dancer in whom beauty and artistry outweighed a haphazardly acquired technique, by 1925 the slender twenty-two-year-old had become, as Diaghilev told a London newspaper, "the rising star of the ballet".[38] By late 1926, she had captured the affections of Lord Rothermere who, by her own account, generously offered to "adopt" her.[39]

Rothermere's interest in Nikitina extended beyond the bedroom. He dressed her in Chanels, loaned her one of his five Rolls Royces, and insisted that Diaghilev cast her in roles consonant with her place in his affections. Throughout his career as a ballet producer, Diaghilev had stood firm against such pressures. That he succumbed to them now indicates the extreme precariousness of his situation and the explicit recognition that generosity of purse was a virtue too few of his admirers shared.

Rothermere's promotion of Nikitina became the occasion for what George Balanchine's biographer called the

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[37]Grigoriev, p. 248.

[38]The Observer, 28 June 1925; quoted in Macdonald, Diaghilev Observed, p. 309.

[39]Alice Nikitina, Nikitina By Herself, trans. Baroness Budberg (London: Allan Wingate, 1959), p. 67.

choreographer's "one serious disagreement" with Diaghilev.

> At the next performance after the première [of Apollon Musagète], Diaghilev peremptorily ordered Terpsichore's variation cut out. He said it was boring. Balanchine protested . . . that it was not the variation that was boring but the dancer whom Diaghilev had insisted on casting for the part, Nikitina.
>
> Balanchine had . . . wanted the part to go to [Alexandra] Danilova, but Lord Rothermere . . . had urged Diaghilev to give the role to Nikitina . . . Just before the season opened, Lord Rothermere had withdrawn his patronage. Diaghilev . . . now could no longer stand the sight of Nikitina and addressed rude and cutting remarks to her in front of the company.
>
> Balanchine felt that Diaghilev, not wishing to admit that he had been venally motivated, . . . was now taking his revenge on the role . . . Angry words were exchanged . . .[40]

Rothermere's "blackmail" had begun long before the June 1928 premiere. In February, Walter Nouvel, who handled Diaghilev's business affairs in Paris, warned his old friend of the newspaperman's recent change of heart.

> Eric [Wollheim] traveled with patron and Alice. Patron did not want arrival on Riviera known . . . Forbids her from taking any but leading roles . . . Will do absolutely nothing without her. She complains of sharing "Chatte" and receiving only one of three [new] roles, Apollo not interesting enough. Eric knows for a fact that a word from Alice would arrange London season and all financial terms.[41]

In the ensuing weeks, the fate of the Ballets

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[40]Bernard Taper, Balanchine: A Biography, rev. ed. (New York: Collier, 1974), pp. 105-110.

[41]Walter Nouvel, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 21 Feb. 1928, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

Russes seemingly hung on Nikitina whose hold over the company's patron -- or "boss" to use a more colloquial translation -- remained "as powerful as ever".[42] But Diaghilev, who had refused even Nijinsky "special treatment", turned a deaf ear to the claims of ersatz stardom. As always, the company stood first in his mind, and over the next several weeks he sought a way to clear the shoals of sexual politics. The tide ran against him, and when Wollheim, fearing disaster, urged him late in April to speak to Nikitina, the impresario complied.[43] The favorite rejoined the company.

Casting her as Terpsichore was the price Diaghilev paid for Rothermere's support. Nikitina danced the role at the Paris opening as well as in London. Here, in asking Danilova to give up the premiere, Diaghilev explained straightforwardly, "Otherwise, it will cost me Lord Rothermere's £3,000."[44] Diaghilev probably exaggerated the magnitude of Rothermere's contribution to impress upon the young Mariinsky graduate the necessity of yielding to a less qualified rival. But the episode indicates to what extent the scales of power in their relationship were

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[42]Walter Nouvel, Tel. To Serge Diaghilev., 21 Feb. 1928, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[43]Eric Wollheim, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 26 April 1928, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[44]Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 502. Buckle cites as his source for this conversations with Madame Danilova.

tipped in favor of the moneyman.

Patrons like Rothermere did not materialize upon request, even in Diaghilev's privileged world. The Maecenas belonged to a vanishing breed; World War I had made him even rarer. Thus, when Rothermere suddenly withdrew his support, Diaghilev faced another period of acute uncertainty. In an effort to raise cash, Diaghilev chopped up Picasso's curtain for Tricorne and sold it together with portions of his backdrop for Cuadro flamenco through the artist's dealer Paul Rosenberg.[45] It was at this time as well that arrangements for an American tour in the late autumn of 1928 came close to materializing -- a sure measure of Diaghilev's desperation, given the odium in which he held both sea travel and the United States. Like the American tours contemplated in 1925-1926, another

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[45]Paul Rosenberg, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 4 May 1928; Dr. Reber, Tels. to Serge Diaghilev, 7 May and 10 May 1928, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

period of financial anxiety, this one never took place.[46]

A colorful, extroverted Broadway figure who had his hand in many theatrical pies as producer, playwright, and tunesmith,[47] E. Ray Goetz first broached the idea of an American engagement in August 1927.[48] Meeting Diaghilev at his favorite summering place on the Lido (where,

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[46]Diaghilev was far more serious about a mid-decade American tour than has been previously thought. Among the Kochno papers at the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra is a document on the letterhead of the Excelsior Palace Hotel where Diaghilev stayed during his annual Venetian holiday in 1924, listing ballets for an American tour. Included among the works "never performed in America" is the untitled ballet by John Alden Carpenter commissioned in the summer of 1924, at the behest, so Kochno claims, of Otto Kahn, who "stipulated that Diaghilev stage an American ballet". Carpenter was the composer of Krazy Kat, a "jazz pantomime" that had been recently staged in New York with Adolph Bolm as principal artist. Diaghilev did not completely jettison the production until the winter of 1925. In February 1926, the Metropolitan Opera produced the ballet as Skyscrapers: A Ballet of Modern American Life. "Répertoire des Ballet Russes, Activités de Diaghilev," Pièce 125, Fonds Kochno; John Alden Carpenter, Letters to Serge Diaghilev, 5 Sept. 1924 and 15 Nov. 1924, Pièces 17 and 109, Fonds Kochno; John Alden Carpenter, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 1. Jan. 1925, and Gerald Murphy, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 6 March 1925, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation; Kochno, p. 222. For background material on the composer, see Verna Arvey, Choreographic Music: Music For the Dance (New York: Dutton, 1941), pp. 286-294. In 1925 Diaghilev granted an option to Harry Block and Max Endicoff for a fifteen-week American tour beginning the following October. Although he failed to exercise the option, rumors of a forthcoming tour were bruited through the American community. Agreement between Harry Block/Max Endicoff and Serge Diaghilev, 10 Oct. 1925; Serge Diaghilev, Letter to Harry Block, 27 Oct. 1925, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation; Gilbert Seldes, "The Theatre Abroad," The Dial, Sept. 1926, p. 325.

[47]Charles Schwartz, Cole Porter: A Biography (New York: Dial, 1977), p. 94.

[48]E. Ray Goetz, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 16 Aug. 1927, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

ironically, Goetz enjoyed the hospitality of Cole Porter, whose "jazz and Negroes" Diaghilev professed to despise), he laid the groundwork for an eleven-week tour beginning in November 1927.[49] By the time the company reached Germany on its autumn pilgrimage through Central Europe, a preliminary agreement had been reached.[50]

Just how serious Diaghilev was at this stage of the negotiations remains a matter of conjecture. Certainly, in the past, draft accords offered no sure guarantee that a formal agreement would be signed. By April 1928, however, there can be little doubt as to his intentions. With the withdrawal of Rothermere's backing and ensuing crisis in the company's finances, Diaghilev pressed for a rapid end to negotiations, demonstrating an unwonted willingness to compromise on issues of personnel, venues, and film rights. "I could still engage Massine," he cabled the New York attorney who acted for Goetz in the later stages of negotiations, "if American contract is signed within two weeks."[51] By the last week of May, the

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[49]Schwartz, p. 95; Serge Diaghilev, Letter to Boris Kochno, 7 Aug. 1926, quoted in Kochno, Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, p. 222; E. Ray Goetz, Tels. to Serge Diaghilev, 20 Aug. and 3 Sept. 1927, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[50]Draft contract between Serge Diaghilev and E. Ray Goetz, [Nov.-Dec. 1927], Serge Diaghilev Papers.

[51]Serge Diaghilev, Tel. to Seligsberg, 25 April 1928, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

two parties were close to agreement.[52] In yet another of those remarkable coincidences that checker the history of the Ballets Russes, Goetz wired Diaghilev on May 23rd about mounting a work by the producer's former collaborator, George Gershwin. In Paris for the French premiere of his "Piano Concerto In F", Gershwin was then completing the "orchestral ballet" that became "An American in Paris", and Goetz must have thought that the theme like the style would score high with American audiences.[53] Two weeks later, discussions began with Oliver Saylor about publicity, including an exhibition of "Lifar's collections of paintings by designers for the ballet".[54]

Between the opening of the season at His Majesty's

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[52]Seligsberg, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [May 1928], 10-17.3, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence; Walter Nouvel, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 2 May 1928, Seligsberg, Tel. to Walter Nouvel, 20 May 1928, Serge Diaghilev, Tel. to Seligsberg, 23 May 1928, and Seligsberg, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 27 May 1928, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[53]E. Ray Goetz, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 23 May 1928, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation. Gershwin used the term "orchestral ballet" to describe his work in progress in an "exclusive interview" published before his departure in March for Europe. Hyman Sandow, "Gershwin to Write New Rhapsody," Musical America, 18 Feb. 1928, p. 5. For the premiere of "Piano Concerto In F" at the Paris Opéra , see "Gershwin Scores a Triumph", New York Times, 31 May 1928, p. 21, col. 4; David Ewen, A Journey to Greatness: The Life and Music of George Gershwin (New York: Holt, 1956), pp. 160-161; Charles Schwartz, Gershwin: His Life and Music (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), pp. 157-158. According to Ewen, Diaghilev, who attended the concert at the Opéra, quipped that the Concerto was "good jazz but bad Liszt".

[54]Oliver Saylor, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 8 June 1928, 10-17.1, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

Theatre on June 25th and the July 28th deadline specified in the letter contract,[55] the project fell through. In a letter to Otto Kahn, one of Goetz's U.S. backers, the producer described a sequence of events that must have had a familiar ring to the sponsor of Diaghilev's Metropolitan tours.

> I want you to know that my reason for abandoning the plan was simply due to the fact that Diaghileff became . . . quite unreasonable during the final negotiations I carried on with him in London over a period of about ten days. Contrary to a preliminary agreement . . . he did not guarantee the artists whom I demanded to be included in his troupe and in addition, did not consent to my selection of the repertoire of ballets to be given nor would he allow me to select the numbers to be given for the opening performance.[56]

Goetz's objection to the repertoire was a longstanding bone of contention. "He does not want too many ultra-modern ballets," the attorney handling the American side of the negotiations had warned Diaghilev. "I must say, for your own sake as well as for his, who takes the financial risk, I agree with him. Give some of your modern things but sprinkle the programs with old favorites."[57] The decision to break off negotiations, however, involved more than principles. Only days before

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[55]E. Ray Goetz, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [June-July 1928], Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[56]E. Ray Goetz, Letter to Otto Kahn, 25 Oct. 1928, Box 347, Otto Kahn Papers, Princeton University.

[57]Seligsberg, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [1928], 10-17.3, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

the contract deadline, Lord Rothermere again opened his checkbook to the impresario. Moreover, in the interim between April and the end of July, Diaghilev had struck a mother lode in Paris where true-blue English friends of the ballet raised the money to underwrite the London season. With this discovery, Lady Juliet Duff, the daughter of Diaghilev's pre-War patron Lady Ripon, re-entered the off-stage chronicle of the Ballets Russes. Now, this "chère et bonne amie" whose "hereditary energy," as Diaghilev wrote, "was destined once again . . . to save the Ballets Russes"[58] raised money for the impresario and tried unsuccessfully to facilitate his return to Covent Garden, where the company had made its London debut in 1911.

Carpenters refurbishing the house rather than dancers claimed Covent Garden that summer, but the season at His Majesty's Theatre did not lack for pre-War echoes. In Apollon Musagète London witnessed the last of the company's premieres by the composer of Firebird and Petrushka. At Diaghilev's request, Sir Thomas Beecham orchestrated the Handel compositions that became the score of The Gods Go A-Begging, the second of the company's "English ballets", conceived like The Triumph of Neptune two years before, as a tribute to the patrons who had rallied to the troupe in its hour of need. An intimate of

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[58]Serge Diaghilev, Letter to Lady Juliet Duff, 7 May 1928, C-20-6.6, Serge Diaghilev Papers.

Lady Cunard, London's most influential hostess and a backer of these last seasons, Beecham also conducted several performances of the ballet in London and on the autumn tour of Scotland and the provinces where his fame in championing the cause of English opera, added appreciably to the company's success.[59] (Indeed, at the last performance of the London season, Beecham pleaded with the audience to support his newly formed Imperial League of Opera, explaining that "when his dream was realized, the Diaghileff ballet, for whose first visit to England he was largely responsible, would find a permanent home in his opera house, whenever they chose to visit London.")

The system of multiple guarantors continued in 1929 with the thankless task of soliciting contributions between late March and early May falling to Lady Juliet. Little by little, donations trickled in from the ballet partisans of her acquaintance -- Lady Cunard, Lady Courtauld, and others. But even with the ladies of London's mercantile elite fishing the odd couple of hundred guineas from their reticules, amounts that seem meager

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[59]Grigoriev, p. 253. For Lady Cunard's relationship with Beecham, see Anne Chisholm, Nancy Cunard: A Biography (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1981), pp. 44-45. The contracts for this tour, it should be noted, were signed within weeks of the deadline with Goetz. Contract between Eric Wollheim and John Hart, 16 Aug. 1928, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation. Hart negotiated on behalf of the Manchester Opera House.

given the vast fortunes of their donors,[60] she failed to muster the £2,000 Diaghilev needed for that last Covent Garden season. Lord Rothermere's support was essential. Throughout the winter and spring of 1929, however, Rothermore played a game of cat and mouse with his Russian quarry. As before, Nikitina was the bait; on her re-engagement hinged Rothermere's uncertain generosity.[61] "I have received your wire about Rothermere and Nikitina," Lady Juliet wrote to Diaghilev on April 30th. "Do all you can to be agreeable to him, for he can do enormous harm to you in the press by ignoring the Ballet or maligning it."[62] Despite her urging, Diaghilev did not immediately rehire Nikitina. But with the expenses of a London season running to £4,000 a week,[63] he could hardly risk having Rothermere as an adversary. On May 15th, less than a week before the Paris season opened, Diaghilev's request for free

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[60]The Courtaulds, for instance, gave £300. Lady Juliet Duff, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 5 May 1929, 10-14.12, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence. That very year both Lady Courtauld and Lady Cunard acted with far greater generosity toward other artistic causes, the former underwriting the Courtauld-Sargent Concerts, and the latter donating £5,000 to Beecham's Imperial League of Opera. Peter Heyworth, Otto Klemperer: His Life and Times, Vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), p. 319; "The Donor of £5000 A Year for Imperial Opera," Sketch, 10 July 1929, p. 61.

[61]Eric Wollheim, Tel to Serge Diaghilev, 9 April 1929, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[62]Lady Juliet Duff, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 30 April 1929, 10-14.11, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

[63]"Russian Ballet Disbanded. Company's Financial Need. Leader's Influence Missed," Daily Telegraph, 20 Sept. 1929.

advertising in the Continental edition of the Daily Mail was peremptorily turned down; he was to be treated without favoritism "as any other advertiser".[64] Two days later, he reached an accord with Rothermere's secretary. The newspaper magnate agreed to put up £500 and give free publicity to the company in Paris and London. "This of course is dependent upon Miss Nikitina joining the Ballet on June 5th and continuing with it through the London season, receiving a salary equal to that of the Premiere Ballerina and being given every possible opportunity in the principal parts."[65]

From 1923-1929 Diaghilev relaid the economic foundation of the Ballets Russes on the twin supports of the Société des Bains de Mer and the company's British guarantors. The new financial arrangements, as fortuitous as they were providential, shifted the center of company gravity. Discarding the "populist" guise of its music-hall days, the Ballets Russes assumed the ideological coloring of its newest patrons. Artmaking and its financing has been the theme of these pages; time and again, this relationship, complex and fluid, shaped the parameters of company activity and altered the content, fashioning, and reception of its work. Up to World War I, the demands of

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[64]W. Warden, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 15 May 1929; quoted Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 521.

[65]Ernest Outhwaite, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 18 May 1929, 10-16.4, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

art, audience, and finance had coexisted in relative harmony. Modernism, however, profoundly altered this equation. Its aesthetic challenged the conventional artistic taste of both elite and popular audiences, even as its financing and diffusion depended on the resources of the operatic and music-hall stage. Yet despite these fundamental incongruities, modernism flourished because of Diaghilev's remarkable ability to "package" its aesthetic in works and programs accessible to a broad theatrical public. Between 1918 and 1921, Diaghilev's conflicting loyalties remained, nonetheless, clear. The man of art pledged fealty to the avantgarde while the man of business allied his enterprise with le tout Paris and London's popular stage.

Beginning in 1923, however, clarity vanished from the pattern. No single tendency rallied the company to its banner, no single current provided the lodestone around which its identity might coalesce. On the contrary, in this last and most problematic era of its history, the Ballets Russes seemed to founder in a pursuit of artistic novelty as desultory as Diaghilev's search for artistic capital.

In previous periods, aesthetic coherence was linked to consistency in the social and economic structure of production. Between 1923 and 1929, however, the stabilizing presences that had guided Diaghilev in negotiating first the musical world and subsequently the

popular stage gave way to a plurality of interests. Now, instead of a network of like-minded enterprises, a troika of forces vied for ascendancy in directing his company's passage through the remaining years of the Twenties. From the juxtaposition of Monte Carlo's aristocratic traditions, the artistic conservatism of London's big business powerbrokers, and the market ethos of the Paris art world emerged the aesthetic contradictions of the Ballets Russes in this, its most protean era.

Diaghilev's agreements with the Société des Bains de Mer offered the Ballets Russes a modicum of security that lasted throughout the Twenties. But during the honeymoon of his sojourn in the jewel-like principality, it promised something more than a fresh financial start. On the coast where yachts lazed under villas that climbed upward from the azure sea, time seemed to stand still. Mimosa brought back the fragrance of the Belle Epoque, and hotels with names like the Hermitage resurrected dreams of Imperial grandeur. In the diminutive domain grown rich from roulette, Diaghilev made his last play for the portfolio of fine arts denied him in Russia.

His notes for 1922-1923, preserved at the Opéra library in Paris,[66] record the ambitious sweep of his vision: the plans for festivals and exhibitions, operas and ballets he saw as transforming the staid landscape of

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[66]"Carnet de Serge de Diaghilev, 1922-1923," Pièce 133, Fonds Kochno.

the resort into one of artistic ferment and discovery. At various moments of his life, Diaghilev yielded to the passion for listmaking. But unlike the Black Notebook of 1910 or the "workbook" he kept in 1918-1919,[67] his Monte Carlo jottings make no reference to casting, cost, or repertory. Rather they trace the amblings of Diaghilev's mind down the forgotten byways of the musical past.

During the years of wartime experiment, the present no less than the past had exercised its power over Diaghilev's imagination. Now, the past claimed the foreground of his thought. But the past, like the present, has many faces: the one Diaghilev chose to reveal was that of the opera house's courtly origins. Donning the guise of the courtier, the self-described charlatan who had revealed Russian art to the West and modern art to the philistines, now fashioned a paean to an aristocratic ideal embodied, albeit on an absurdly diminutive scale, by the Grimaldis.

Reality, in the form of a "provincial public" that, in Cocteau's words, "couldn't care less if two and two made four, five or twenty-two",[68] kept Diaghilev from realizing more than a fraction of his dreams. Aristocrats

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[67]"Cahier de travail de Serge de Diaghilev avec indications de répertoire 1915-16," Pièce 124, Fonds Kochno. As all the references to casting, currency, and repertoire belong to the immediate postwar period, the dating of this workbook is obviously incorrect.

[68]Jean Cocteau, "Les Biches. Les Fâcheux. Notes de Monte-Carlo," Nouvelle Revue Française, Vol. 21, No. 126 (1 March 1924), p. 275.

did, indeed, flock to Monte Carlo, but they came for reasons other than art: the blissful January sun, golf, tennis, sailing, car racing, pigeon shooting, dog shows de luxe, and in the case of English dowagers and dukes, because of the pound's high rate of exchange.[69] This privileged company preferred its art in less taxing doses than Diaghilev was prepared to mete out: light classics and Italian opera were the staples of its unimaginative palate. Despite the impressive record of Diaghilev's productions in 1923-1924 and appeal of the concert-style performances he organized at the Casino's Nouvelle Salle de Musique, jealousy and indifference soon clipped the courtier's wings. In the end, he contented himself with serving Monte Carlo audiences "the old-fashioned ballets that particularly appealed to them, but that he himself now held in indulgent contempt".[70]

Diaghilev failed in his ambition of transforming Monte Carlo into an advanced art center. Yet, after so many years in the marketplace, the resurrection of the Ballets Russes within an arena gilded by the traditions of opera house and court had repercussions discernible throughout the rest of the decade. These echoes of the

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[69]Throughout the period, the official program of the Monte Carlo "season" appeared in English as well as French while Rive d'Azur, an illustrated Monaco semi-monthly, published articles in English as well as the principality's languages French and Italian.

[70]Grigoriev, p. 201.

past, often in concert with the most blatant modernism, strike a major chord in the aesthetic dissonance of the period. They account for the prominence of eighteenth-century themes in such new ballets as Les Tentations de la Bergère, Les Fâcheux, and Zéphyre et Flore and in the comic operas that formed the lynchpin of the 1923-1924 French music festival. Classical mythology, a favorite subject of court ballet of the grand siècle, reappeared in several works of these years: Zéphyre et Flore, Philémon et Baucis, La Chatte, and Apollon Musagète among the company's new productions, Daphnis and Chloe, Narcisse, and L'Après-midi d'un faune among its revivals. Other ballets paid homage to court traditions as well: Las Meninas, resurrected from the storage bins in 1924, Swan Lake, staged in a two-act version for the great Mariinsky classicist Vera Trefilova, Aurora's Wedding, the one-act reduction of Sleeping Princess that became a company money-maker, and Ode, a cantata celebrating Catherine the Great. At one point, Diaghilev even considered reviving Le Pavillon d'Armide. And in the era's calendar of galas, the magnificent spectacle presented in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles -- Aurora's Wedding "anachronized" by the addition of processionals and vocal interludes -- recalled the grandes fêtes witnessed in that same gallery by le roi soleil himself.

Diaghilev's first and greatest love was opera. Now, as music-hall days receded, new permutations of older

forms combining voice and dance appeared in the repertory. Beginning in 1923, singers assumed a prominent role in company productions, transforming ballets like Les Noces, Les Biches, Ode, and Barabau into hybrid theatrical forms akin to many pre-War efforts although textured with the popular material and feeling for incongruity typical of modernism. After 1924, Diaghilev ceased to stage operas in Monte Carlo, but from 1926 onward "symphonic interludes" became a feature of his London seasons, as they had been in the post-Armistice period.[71] These interludes of new or unfamiliar music, played in the entr'actes of a triple bill, revealed Diaghilev's catholic taste, while affirming, in the altered structure of performance, ballet's historic kinship with opera. At the "Grande Saison de l'Art" organized by Gabriel Astruc at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in tandem with the 1924 Olympics, Ballets Russes performances (featuring no fewer than three ballets with vocal accompaniment and Emmanuel Chabrier's opera Une Education manquée) alternated with evenings of opera and symphonic music, yet another sign of Diaghilev's partial return to traditional styles. Indeed, the 1929 season at Covent Garden found the company appearing, as it had eighteen years before, on a mixed bill: the opera, in this

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[71]Ironically, the practice may well have come from the popular stage. On the eve of World War I, the high-minded Stoll had presented works by unknown composers during intervals at the Coliseum. Barker, p. 182.

case, was conductor Eugene Goossens' Judith.

Still another element heightened this aura of aristocracy: the wave of Russian refugees that poured into France after 1920 and gravitated to Diaghilev's Slavic beachhead. Biarritz became a rendezvous for Romanovs who had escaped the massacres of Petrograd and Ekaterinberg, as did the Côte d'Azur and Chanel's atelier in Paris, where high-born mannequins and vendeuses spoke Russian to one another and the directrice of the embroidery workshop was Grand Duchess Marie.[72] In the middle and late twenties, the Ballets Russes became a high spot of the Franco-Russian charity events that peppered the Riviera's social calendar. It performed for the Cannes-based "Comité d'Assistance aux Réfugiés Français et Russes", which conducted an orphanage for refugee children, and Grand Duke André's annual gala for the Alexandrino Russian School in Nice.[73]

During this period, too, émigrés found a haven within the company itself. Beginning in 1920, numerous Russian dancers passed through Diaghilev's ranks on the

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[72]Edmonde Charles-Roux, Chanel and Her World (London: Vendome Press, 1981), pp. 124-131.

[73]Comité d'Assistance aux Réfugiés Français et Russes, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 30 March 1926, 10-23.3, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence; Mouravieff-Apostal, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 26 Jan. 1925, and Davidoff, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 20 March 1925, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation; Evelyn James, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 27 Feb. 1929, 10-21.6, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence; Grand Duke André, Tels. to Serge Diaghilev, 12 March 1928 and 5 March 1929, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation; Kschessinska, p. 214.

first stage of a hegira that ended for many in the United States. This postwar diaspora figured in the administrative side of the troupe as well. In Paris, Diaghilev's old friend Walter Nouvel, who emigrated in 1920, handled business and legal affairs while Pavel Koribut-Kubitovich, a first cousin close to Diaghilev since infancy, became a general factotum and confidant. Ranged at Diaghilev's side throughout the twenties was the young man who by mid-decade had become the impresario's second-in-command. Moscow-born and an aspiring poet, seventeen-year-old Boris Kochno joined Diaghilev's entourage in 1921. Taken on as a secretary, he came to serve as Diaghilev's "advance man" in dealings with painters, in-house librettist, and deputy producer. Among the scores of collaborators who passed through Diaghilev's enterprise in these years, moreover, was to be found the young generation of émigré artists -- painter Pavel Tchelitchew, composers Vladimir Dukelsky and Nicholas Nabokov, who stood on the threshold of careers the impresario helped launch in the West.

By blood and social ties, Diaghilev belonged to this émigré world. He shared its joy at welcoming friends

and family to safety in the West and its anxiety about the fate of relations left behind.[74] Remarkably, in view of his close association with this milieu, Diaghilev never turned against the Soviet Union. His feelings about its regime, however, like his political sentiments, are masked in ambiguity. Diaghilev left no diaries, and few letters revealing his personal sentiments have come to light. It seems clear, however, that beginning in 1922, Diaghilev's interest in Soviet artistic life quickened. While on holiday that August in Venice, he dined with Isadora Duncan, fresh from a ten-month visit to the Soviet Union, and her husband, poet Sergei Esenin.[75] November found Diaghilev in Berlin, the largest Russian publishing and cultural center outside the Soviet Union, where he met another poet allied with the Soviet avantgarde. As he would do again two years later, Vladimir Mayakovsky urged

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[74]In late 1927, the French foreign affairs ministry approached Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, for information about the whereabouts of Diaghilev's half-brother Valentin and sister-in-law, both of whom had disappeared. An enquiry was made, but the results were doubtless what the impresario feared. The secret police "found no trace of an arrest". The fate of Diaghilev's half-brother, like that of other close friends and relations, remains a question mark in the work of his Western biographers. Jean Herbette, Letters to Philippe Berthelot, 15 Jan., 24 Jan. 1928, C-20-16.2, Serge Diaghilev Papers.

[75]Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 441. Buckle erroneously dates this encounter as taking place in 1924. For the couple's month-long stay at the Italian resort, see Gordon McVay Esenin: A Life (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976), p. 190.

Diaghilev to visit Russia.[76]

Other events fanned Diaghilev's interest in his homeland: the visit of Alexander Tairov's Kamerny Theatre to the French capital in March 1923 and the growing number of exhibitions that gained Soviet artists a following among the Parisian avantgarde. These exchanges, in which Larionov played an important role, hinted at an extraordinary outburst of creative energy, something that could not fail to excite Diaghilev, and that suggested the high esteem he continued to enjoy in Soviet artistic circles.[77]

In the interim between his meeting with Mayakovsky in 1922 and his encounter with the poet-playwright in 1924, Diaghilev's situation had altered. Disillusioned with the artistic conservatism of his Monte Carlo paymasters, he now harkened to Mayakovsky's urgings to visit Russia. Thanks

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[76]Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 408; Robert C. Williams, Culture in Exile: Russian Emigres in Germany, 1881-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 111, 133-134.

[77] N.A. Iavorskaia, "Les relations artistiques entre Paris et Moscou dans les années 1917-1930," in Paris-Moscou, 1900-1930, Catalogue of the exhibition held at the Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris, 21 May - 5 Nov. 1979, pp. 49-51. With Tristan Tzara, Larionov was host of a banquet given in honor of the Kamerny Theatre, which Diaghilev was invited to attend. D. O. Widhopff, Tristan Tzara, and Michel Larionov, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [March 1923], Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation. During the season, Tairov wrote to Diaghilev asking that he "express in the form of a letter or an article" his "views on the Kamerny Theatre's performances, both for the information of the troupe and its numerous friends and admirers in Moscow, for whom your opinion will be of the greatest interest." Alexander Tairov, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 14 March 1923, Pièce 98, Fonds Kochno.

to Mayakovsky's intervention with Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Soviet Commissar of Education and Culture (an old friend who had reviewed Diaghilev's Paris seasons in 1912-1914 and whose last article on the company, published in June 1927, included an account of a conversation with the impresario), Diaghilev received a two-way exit visa to the Soviet Union. Because the authorities refused a similar visa to Kochno, who was of military age, Diaghilev abandoned his plans.[78]

Within months, however, preparations were underway to produce an all-Soviet ballet. In June 1925, as the architectural modernism of the Russian Pavilion at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs stirred excitement among the avantgarde, Diaghilev approached Prokofiev, his "second son" and a sympathizer with the Revolution, for a ballet depicting life in Soviet Russia. George Yakulov, a Soviet scenic designer whose collaborations with Tairov had stirred controversy in 1923 and whose paintings were now on exhibit in Paris, was

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[78]Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 444. Lunacharsky's interview was republished in 1958 in a collection of his writings on music. A.V. Lunacharsky, "Diaghilev's New Season", V mire muzyki, ed. G. B. Bernandt and I.A. Sats (Moscow: Sovetski'i Kompozitor, 1958), pp. 347-350. Published in Evening Moscow, Lunacharsky's article may well have been the exile's last appearance in the popular Soviet press, until the publication of Prof. Ilya Samoilovich Zilburstein's two-part series on Diaghilev and the early Ballets Russes in Pravda's color supplement on January 5 and February 6, 1970.

invited to write the libretto.[79] During the summer of 1925, the two thrashed out their ideas, agreeing that

> the most important thing was to go beyond mere entertainment and try to give an impression of the new life in the Soviet Union, a life symbolized by the nationwide effort to build factories. It has to be a ballet showing Russians at work, with hammers flourishing, fly-wheels and transmission belts revolving, all leading to a general sense of creativeness, the groups of dancers at once working the machines and depicting the work choreographically.[80]

Between the completion of the piano score in the autumn of 1925 and the premiere of Le Pas d'Acier in June 1927, Prokofiev paid a three-month visit to the U.S.S.R. He renewed contacts with musical colleagues, acquainted himself with the works of young Leningrad composers, and saw Meyerhold's "brilliant production" of his opera Love for Three Oranges.[81] In spring 1927, he went to Monte Carlo for rehearsals of his ballet. Here, wrote Grigoriev, Diaghilev pressed the composer for "news . . . of artistic and cultural developments in Russia, [which] Le Pas d'Acier brought him closer to understanding. Once again a terrible

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[79]Israel V. Nestyev, Sergei Prokofiev: His Musical Life, trans. Rose Prokofieva, introd. Sergei Eisenstein (New York: Knopf, 1946), p. 101. The Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg, who, like Prokofiev, spent much of the twenties in Europe, was also considered as a librettist. Victor Serov, Sergei Prokofiev (London: Leslie Frewin, 1969), pp. 154-156.

[80]Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson, Prokofiev: A Biography in Three Movements (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 196-197.

[81]Nestyev, p. 104; Hanson, p. 198.

nostalgia for Russia overcame him, and he pined to go back. He even sounded the authorities through Prokofiev."[82] Prokofiev wrote to friends in Moscow and, like Mayakovsky in 1924, to Lunacharsky. He was assured that Diaghilev would be cordially received.[83]

Diaghilev made efforts to engage Tairov and Meyerhold to direct the production.[84] He had hopes as well of bringing Kasian Goleizovsky from Moscow to choreograph,[85] but these faded, depriving Europe of the chance to see the innovative choreographer whose enrichment of the balletic vocabulary through the addition of acrobatic and gymnastic movement influenced Balanchine's earliest compositions.[86] Eventually, Diaghilev entrusted the ambitious project to Massine, who rejoined the company in 1925 and up to 1928 shared choreographic assignments with the younger artist.

In late 1928, Diaghilev contemplated a last Soviet project, a joint Paris season with Meyerhold's renowned dramatic troupe. Like his earlier "flirtations" with Soviet art and artists, this one scandalized the company's

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[82]Grigoriev, p. 241.

[83]Hanson, p. 214.

[84]Kochno, p. 264.

[85]Grigoriev, p. 237.

[86]Yuri Slonimsky, "Balanchine: The Early Years," trans. John Andrews, Ballet Review, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1975-1976), pp. 37-38.

inner circle of émigrés. Nouvel was "against it body and soul," Diaghilev wrote. "That can't be helped, however! People such as he and Pavka [Pavel Koribut-Kubitovich] are very pleasant, but if one took their advice one might as well go straight to the cemetery."[87]

Le Pas d'Acier stands out as one of the few ballets of the middle and late Twenties that commanded Diaghilev's interest from the gestation to final mounting of the work. Yet where Apollon Musagète and Le Fils prodigue, ballets that likewise drew the tired maestro to the studio, garnered praise from their earliest performances, reactions to Le Pas d'Acier dramatized the conflicting interests that shaped the identity of the Ballets Russes in its final days as well as the political considerations that now intruded on all things "Soviet".

"England wants no more of Russians," wrote Diaghilev to Lady Juliet Duff about French reaction to the Syndics' decision to close Covent Garden for repairs in 1928 rather than allow his company to perform there. "Some are even saying it is because 'Pas d'Acier' 'over' pleased the Duke of Connaught."[88] Presumably, this was intended to goad Lady Juliet to action, as Queen Victoria's descendant had already bestowed his patronage on the anticipated

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[87]Quoted in Lifar, Diaghilev, p. 338.

[88]Serge Diaghilev, Letter to Lady Juliet Duff, 7 May 1928, C-20-6.6, Serge Diaghilev Papers.

Covent Garden season.[89] Yet despite the apparently "tumultous reception" that greeted the ballet on opening night,[90] reviews had been decidedly mixed. "Many will dislike it," warned the Daily Express while the Observer spoke of the dancers attired "as for a grim but impromptu charade".[91] Most reviewers found the pistons, apaches, and hammering machine rhythms of the ballet disturbing. But there may well have been other reasons for their discomfiture. In 1927, England was very "anti-Bolshie", and with the previous year's General Strike fresh in the minds of its ruling class, one is tempted to see politics in Lady Courtauld's categoric refusal to "join" Diaghilev in "any plan" for the coming year.[92]

In these years, modernism tried the patience of even the most faithful company devotees.

> I hear the King is going to the ballet next Friday [wrote Lady Cunard in 1926]. I am so glad but I hope you will change the performance and [do] the Boutique, Sylphides and the Carnaval. Otherwise I fear His Majesty will not really love the ballet as we all feel he would if he first saw the classical ballets of some years ago . . .
> Thomas Beecham did not like Pastorale and thought it unworthy of your genius as a whole. There is much that is fine and interesting in it and very new too, but as a whole it lacks beauty

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[89]Serge Diaghilev, Tel. to Eric Wollheim, 15 April 1928, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[90]Daily Express, 5 July 1927; quoted in Macdonald, p. 348.

[91]Quoted ibid., pp. 348-349.

[92]Elizabeth T.F. Courtauld, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 29 Oct. 1927, 10-20.8, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

and interest I feel. But I know your mind is different.[93]

Diaghilev's mind was certainly different, but the views of Lady Cunard carried weight. A woman of charm, wit, and intelligence, this remarkable San Franciscan ruled London society. At her parties, politics mixed with the arts, and from the time she fell in love with Thomas Beecham in 1911, she became an avid supporter of ballet no less than opera. "Emerald is all for us," Lady Juliet wrote Diaghilev triumphantly in 1928.[94] And so she was, taking a box for the season and acting as the younger woman's second-in-command. She did so again the following year.[95]

Other influential Londoners shared her prejudices. In 1928, Diaghilev invited Lady Diana Cooper, one of the brightest of the era's "Young Things" to play the mime role

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[93]Lady Cunard, Letter to Serge Diaghilev [1926], 10-20.12, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence. The underscoring is Lady Cunard's. A few months after this letter was written, Lady Cunard "decided on a sudden whim to discard Maud as her Christian name and call herself Emerald instead". Chisholm, p. 215n.

[94]Lady Juliet Duff, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [1928], 10-14.2, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

[95]Lady Juliet Duff, Letters to Serge Diaghilev, 7 June 1928, 10-14.5, and 22 March 1929, 10-14.8, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence. Lady Cunard's taste in painting was not so sure: according to Virginia Woolf, Duncan Grant thought she didn't "know one picture from another" and had "a drawing room filled with the riff raff of London". Virginia Woolf, Letter to Logan Pearsall Smith, 28 Jan. 1925, Letters, Vol. 3, p. 158.

of Nature in Ode.[96] But the socialite-turned-actress, the exquisite Madonna of Max Reinhardt's The Miracle, rejected his proposal. "Dear, dear M. Diaghilew," she wrote:

> All my advisors say that the first time I appear in London must be in the Miracle, which they hope to do this autumn. It is quite true, as they tell me -- that I might have been very bad in Ode -- and that it is better to appear for the first time in London in something you can do, rather than in something experimental.[97]

Lady Diana's unwillingness to risk a professional debut in an "experimental" work suggests how little esteem modernism enjoyed even in quarters sympathetic to the company. Diaghilev's chief backer of the period, Lord Rothermere, was equally put off by "advanced" productions, and in March 1927 went so far as to express the hope that there would be no "eccentric" ones in the program for the coming season.[98] Dancing Times editor P.J.S. Richardson voiced similar prejudices in his monthly ruminations as the "Sitter Out". "Now that we have seen 'Barabau,' 'Les Matelots,' 'The House Party,' and 'Les Facheux,'" he wrote in January 1926, "I think that we have had enough of this sort of thing, and that it is time that M. Diaghileff set out once more in search of the beautiful instead of the

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[96]Philip Ziegler, Diana Cooper: A Biography (New York: Knopf, 1982), p. 146.

[97]Lady Diana Cooper, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [1928], 10-4.1, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

[98]Eric Wollheim, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 4 March 1927, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

grotesque."[99]

Richardson's mid-decade screeds reveal a distinctly British taste in the making and the gradual refining of an aesthetic favoring genteel rather than experimental values. His musings, voiced in the middlebrow guise of the "layman", branded dance with the immutable stamp of neo-romanticism.

> It is a little difficult for the ordinary mortal who has been brought up in the fond belief that dancing is the poetry of motion, to appreciate some of the modern Diaghileff choreography, which seems to go out of its way to search for the grotesque and to avoid the beautiful . . . As a mere layman I cannot conceive how it could be humanly possible to evolve anything approaching the "poetry of motion," to the cross rhythms of Stravinsky's "Les Noces," to name but one of the ultra-modern works now being presented to the public.[100]

Richardson went on to compare Diaghilev's Romeo et Juliet with a "charming number" by English dancers Anton Dolin and Phyllis Bedells that was presented at the Coliseum during the Ballets Russes season at His Majesty's. Set to Percy Grainger's "Shepherd's Hey", Dolin's ballet Exercises, he wrote, "was invested with a charm of beauty not in evidence in the 'barre' scene in . . . 'Romeo and Juliet.'" It marked a welcome return to "more healthy methods -- to a choreography that is modern without being

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[99]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Jan. 1926, p. 449. In England Les Biches was retitled The House Party.

[100]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, July 1926, p. 339.

eccentric and ugly". Reiterating a favorite theme, Richardson praised the "sincerity" of the dancers, adding his belief that "it is impossible to be sincere in one's dancing if it is merely the interpretation of 'trick choreography'."[101]

"Sincerity", "charm", "beauty", and "expressiveness", peppered with a dash of native subject matter, were Richardson's ingredients for ballet in Britain. Distasteful as they might have been to the experimentalist in Diaghilev, they added up to a recipe that became a staple of his English programming. Much to Richardson's delight, Fokine's ballets assumed a prominent place in the mid-decade repertory. In 1926 alone, Diaghilev presented Carnaval, Les Sylphides, Thamar, Firebird (in a new production by Natalia Goncharova), Petrushka, and the Polovtsian Dances. Tamara Karsavina and Lydia Lopokova, dancers identified with Fokine-era ballets and Massine's most popular post-Armistice works, returned from time to time to perform their earlier roles. The year 1926, moreover, saw the staging of Diaghilev's first "British" works: Romeo et Juliet, which had music by Constant Lambert,[102] and The Triumph of Neptune, an all-

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[101] Ibid., p. 340.

[102] In keeping with the British theme, Diaghilev asked Christopher Wood, a young English expatriate with influential connections in Paris to do the designs. In April 1926, however, he dismissed Wood and reassigned the ballet to the newly fashionable surrealists Max Ernst and Joán Miró. The Diaghilev Ballet in England, pp. 52-54.

British production with a libretto by Sacheverell Sitwell, music by Lord Berners, and a setting inspired by Victorian prints. Two years later, The Gods Go A-Begging united Handel (regarded for all intents and purposes as a British artist) and the doyen of British conductors, Sir Thomas Beecham, to score an unexpected success.

Diaghilev harkened to the "knell of romanticism", music critic Edwin Evans noted after the impresario's death, "before most people were ready to speed its parting".[103] In England, "most people" embraced the circle closest to Diaghilev and those like Richardson, who served the cause of ballet as propagandists. For them, Terpsichore gamboled to other strains than the raucous throb of jazz. In her pastoral kingdom, iambs stilled the driving pulse of the machine; sex vanished in mists of romance; nostalgia masked the reality of tanks and industrial warfare with memories of English springtimes.

Ballet was not the only art where England gazed willfully backward. Retreating from Vorticist abstractions of speed and factory, British painters of the Twenties returned to traditional styles of representation -- landscapes, portraits, and still lifes -- to evoke a world of rustic peace and domestic tranquility. Literature, too, shied from images of modernity, with the "children of the

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[103]Edwin Evans, "Serge Diaghilev," Musical Times, 1 Oct. 1929, p. 894.

sun", as Martin Green has called the generation that came of age in the mid-twenties, cultivating a latter-day pose of Wildean aestheticism. In ballet, the reaction to modernism coincided with mounting efforts to contain the terpsichorean "free for all" of the early twenties. With Richardson at the helm, the Dancing Times embarked on a campaign aimed at raising standards within the profession. Examinations formed the lynchpin of "standardisation", the beginnings of a system that remains a characteristic feature of British dance training. Under their impact, teaching and technique certainly improved -- but at the cost of vitality. With ballet technique now canonized as the theatrical and concert standard, experiment along the lines of German or American modern dance grew increasingly difficult. Indeed, by 1929 Richardson felt constrained to answer complaints that English dancing had "drifted into a backwater" and that England "as a creative force in the world of dance" had become "a negligible quantity". "I am a firm believer," he wrote, "that if the ballet and the spectacular dance are to live and to be in harmony with the times they must be modernised, but I am also a firm believer that only chaos will result if modernisation is attempted at the expense of technique."[104]

If the "standardisation" campaign of the 1920's laid the technical foundation for English ballet, its

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[104]"Sitter Out," "Modernism in the Dance," Dancing Times, July 1929, p. 320.

aesthetic foundation rested on the harnessing of Fokine-style retrospectivism to British popular and middlebrow taste. Fokine's Columbines and sylphs, debutantes and dolls appealed far beyond the circle of socialites and propagandists like Richardson. They spoke directly to an audience reared on the old music-hall ballets and the genteel art of Adeline Genée, who reigned from 1897 to 1909 over the Empire stage. They defined a middle ground between highbrow "artiness" and popular kitsch. But this process of definition did not take place in a social vacuum. It is no coincidence that Lord Rothermere, that Hearst-style molder of popular opinion, urged on Diaghilev the low-priced season he gave in December 1926 at the Lyceum Theatre[105] and a repertory calculated to appeal to "the great mob [that] associates the ballet with beauty and are correspondingly disappointed when they see something which is at variance with their impression of what the ballet should be."[106] Like Richardson, Rothermere aspired to seize hold of the "anarchy" of a culture in the critical moment of its transition to mass consumption. Together with Diaghilev's other supporters, they sought to exercise traditional prerogatives of class leadership over a potentially uncontainable movement at the grassroots.

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[105]Eric Wollheim, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 1 Oct. 1926, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[106]Lord Rothermere, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [1926], Pièce 84, Fonds Kochno.

Along with the mantle of Diaghilev, British ballet has inherited the taste and claim to hegemony of the company's last British patrons.

Monégasque and English patronage edged the Ballets Russes toward a conservative stance, the one gilding the repertory with an aura of aristocracy, the other suffusing it with the fragrance of neo-romanticism. Circumstances forced Diaghilev to accede, but neither aesthetic truly claimed his loyalty. In this last era of the company's history, Paris and its burgeoning trade in modern art dictated the tone and tempo of artistic experiment.

Even in the company's music-hall days, Diaghilev looked upon Paris as his artistic home. From its ateliers Picasso, Matisse, and Derain crossed the Channel to add final touches to their work before a London opening, and in the City of Lights lived friends like Stravinsky, Cocteau, and Misia Sert, whose artistic judgments Diaghilev solicited and esteemed. Although no farther from Paris than London, Monte Carlo transformed relations with the French capital. No longer on the periphery of its art world, the Ballets Russes became its southern outpost, only a night's ride from the Gare de Lyon on the legendary Blue Train.[107] Splendid, grand, and luxurious, it sped to Diaghilev's side the panoply of youthful talent that fueled

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[107]For a description of the Blue Train, see Paul Fussell, Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 132-133.

the company in this last era of its creative life.

Between 1923 and 1926, the years of their closest collaboration with Diaghilev, composers of the Les Six group traveled the Blue Train often. Protégés of Rolf de Maré and the Ballets Suédois, they brought their art, if not their loyalty, to the Russians, and the studied inconsequence of an aesthetic derived from jazz palace and music-hall rather than the grand tradition of symphonic music. In 1924, the banner year of their attendance on Diaghilev, they contributed scores to no fewer than three ballets: Les Biches (Francis Poulenc), Les Fâcheux (Georges Auric), and Le Train bleu (Darius Milhaud), which had a special fanfare by Auric for Picasso's front curtain.[108] In addition, Diaghilev invited all three composers along with Erik Satie, the self-described "mascot" of the group, to create music for the recitatives of the operas mounted earlier in the season,[109] a practice recalling the wartime method of "period modernism". The years 1925 and 1926 added two other Auric ballets to the repertory -- Les Matelots and La Pastorale. The latter year also saw the production of Satie's Jack-in-the-Box as part of a festival honoring the recently deceased composer.

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[108]Frank W.D. Ries, "Jean Cocteau and the Ballet," Diss. Indiana 1980, p. 167.

[109]Nigel Wilkins, The Writings of Erik Satie (London: Eulenberg, 1981), p. 91; Darius Milhaud, Notes Without Music: An Autobiography (New York: Knopf, 1953), pp. 153-156.

In 1927, in an abrupt departure from his standard practice, Diaghilev revived Satie's Mercure, a work created not for the Ballets Russes but Comte Etienne de Beaumont's Soirées de Paris in 1924.

As early as 1917, Picasso had joined forces with Diaghilev, contributing in the space of four years designs for Parade, Le Tricorne, Pulcinella, and Cuadro Flamenco. During this same period, André Derain and Henri Matisse, senior painters of the School of Paris, designed for the Ballets Russes as well. After 1923, Picasso and Derain performed only the odd commission for Diaghilev. Apart from Mercure, undertaken at Beaumont's behest rather than Diaghilev's, the front curtain for Le Train bleu represented Picasso's sole contribution to the later repertory even if the numerous sketches reproduced in company programs proclaimed his allegiance to its aesthetic. Although La Boutique fantasque retained its place as an audience favorite, Jack-in-the-Box was the only work of the twenties that bore the signature of Derain. Whether the decision to collaborate at such sparse intervals rested with Diaghilev or these artists will probably never be known. No cajolery, however, could induce Matisse to work again for the impresario.[110] "What Diaghilev wants is my name," he told Michel-Georges Michel

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[110]Henri Matisse, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 30 Jan. 1929, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

in early 1929. "Diaghilev is very nice when he needs us."[111]

Need painters Diaghilev certainly did between 1923 and 1929, when he conjured to theatrical life four new works a year and sometimes more. His wand cast a wide arc across the horizon of contemporary painting and brought a dizzying array of talents and tendencies to his Mediterranean workshop. If history consigned most of their productions to the balletic dustbin, Diaghilev's painters sounded the roll call of international modernism's rising luminaries -- Juan Gris, Georges Braque, Pedro Pruna, Joán Mirô, Giorgio di Chirico, Georges Roualt, Max Ernst, Henri Laurens, Naum Gabo, Anton Pevsner, and Marie Laurencin. Easel painters, in the main, with little or no experience in theatrical design, they brought, like Les Six and the newest generation of Diaghilev-bred ballet stars, the unmistakable whiff of youth, malleable and on the make.

In the wake of Montmartre and Montparnasse came, to borrow a phrase from Wyndham Lewis, "the 'revolutionary' High Bohemia of the Ritzes and Rivieras" and the writers and journalists who extended its pale to "the majority of educated people".[112] At the head of this band stood those arbiters of Parisian taste, Misia Sert and "Coco" Chanel,

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[111]Michel-Georges Michel, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [1929], Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[112]Wyndham Lewis, "The Russian Ballet the Most Perfect Expression of the High Bohemia," in Time and Western Man (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928), p. 32.

priestesses who tended the Parisian flame of the Ballets Russes. At their homes gathered company intimates, and it was Misia, "the Ballets Russes incarnate" in the words of her biographers,[113] who stood at Diaghilev's side in 1923, welcoming cabinet ministers and le tout Paris to the gala in the Hall of Mirrors.[114] Artistically, the mid-twenties saw the height of her influence. In 1924 alone, the season included revivals of two ballets designed by her husband José-Luis Sert, and the first works by three of her young proteges from Les Six. That year, too, Diaghilev commissioned Marie Laurencin, "one of Misia's great enthusiasms," to design Les Biches[115] and asked her great friend Chanel to do the costumes for Le Train bleu. The couturière also seems to have invested in this ballet out of friendship for Cocteau and persuaded the Princesse de Polignac to do likewise.[116] Throughout the period, moreover, the route to public launching of Diaghilev's youthful "discoveries" lay through the drawing rooms of Misia and Chanel.[117]

Diaghilev's invitation brought other intimates to

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[113]Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, Misia: The Life of Misia Sert (New York: Knopf, 1980), p. 238.

[114]Ibid., p. 244.

[115]Ibid., p. 245.

[116]Ries, "Jean Cocteau and the Ballet," p. 167.

[117]Nicolas Nabokov, Old Friends and New Music (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1951), p. 75.

Monte Carlo -- Picasso and his wife Olga,[118] and Jean Cocteau. Cocteau was a good deal more than a friend at this time. Reconciled with Diaghilev after their break over Parade, he hovered behind the scenes, giving a powerful impetus to the aesthetic direction that gained ascendancy during the initial period in Monte Carlo. Along with Misia Sert, Cocteau promoted Les Six from an informal group meshing art with friendship to the drawing rooms of Parisian fashion and Diaghilev's charmed circle.[119] In June 1921 his Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel revealed to audiences of the Ballets Suédois the talents of five of the group's composers. Diaghilev was in London when the curtain rose on this collective effort, but he did see the Spectacle Bouffe featuring many of the same artists that Cocteau had presented a few weeks earlier.[120] As the tide of company fortunes turned toward France, plans for the first of Diaghilev's "Parisian" works crystallized around the poet's "family" of artists. By October 1922, Cocteau had completed a draft of the scenario for Les Biches and was proposing Poulenc and Marie Laurencin as

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[118]Walter Nouvel, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 9 April 1925, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[119]For a reminiscence of the group's Saturday night dinners just after the war, see Jean Hugo, Avant d'oublier 1918-1931 (Paris: Fayard, 1976), Chapter 3.

[120]Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 382.

collaborators.[121] His scenario for Les Fâcheux presumably dates from this time as well. Cocteau collaborated on yet a third ballet presented in 1924, his last dance venture until Plein Chant in 1943, and of his Diaghilev works the one that came closest to realizing his theatrical ideas. This was Le Train bleu, for which he not only wrote a detailed libretto and chose Milhaud as his collaborator, but as the ballet's unacknowledged director, determined to a large degree the overall character of the movement.[122]

Cocteau served Diaghilev in yet another capacity. A master publicist, he wrote articles and essays hailing the new turn in Diaghilev's repertoire, as earlier he had done for Dada and Les Six. On March 1, 1924, the Nouvelle Revue Française, France's leading intellectual journal, carried his praise of Les Biches and Les Fâcheux well in advance of the Paris premiere. Similar "appreciations" appeared in the inaugural volumes of a series on Diaghilev's "theatre" to which Braque, Auric, Milhaud,

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[121]Jean Cocteau, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 24 Oct. 1922, Pièce 23, Fonds Kochno. The original manuscript of this scenario and the libretto for Les Fâcheux are in the Francis Poulenc Collection, Paris. According to Ries, these sketches, although "still very rough drafts", bore a striking similarity to the final ballets. Ries, "Jean Cocteau and the Ballet," p. 149n.

[122]Cocteau's scenario, published with the piano score of the ballet in 1924, is reproduced in English translation in ibid., Appendix D1, pp. 323-330.

Poulenc, and Marie Laurencin also contributed.[123] (That choreographer Bronislava Nijinska did not was more than a casual slip. For the French, ballet was largely a pretext for the play of the designing and composing imagination.) Satie, too, doubled as a collaborator and journalist that winter, contributing articles to Paris-Journal, Création, and the Transatlantic Review.[124] Louis Laloy, the influential music critic of Comoedia who was also Secretary-General of the Paris Opéra, spent the early weeks of the year in Monte Carlo, and like the others readied audiences on the Parisian home front.[125] Grist for Diaghilev's publicity mill, their stories ranged far beyond the Right Bank, even crossing the Atlantic. "A new ballet, Les Biches, . . . was given with brilliant success at Monte Carlo," Paul Morand told readers of The Dial in July 1924. "Everyone returning from the Midi pronounces [it] a delight." The novelist added a "plug" for Les Fâcheux. "After years of shameful farce, and opera of incredible

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[123]Marie Laurencin, Jean Cocteau, Darius Milhaud, and Francis Poulenc, Théâtre Serge de Diaghilew: Les Biches (Paris: Editions des Quatre Chemins, 1924); Jean Cocteau, Georges Auric, Georges Braque, and Louis Laloy, Théâtre Serge de Diaghilew: Les Fâcheux (Paris: Editions des Quatre Chemins, 1924).

[124]The articles in Paris-Journal and Création are reproduced in English translation in Wilkins, pp. 73-74 and 111. Erik Satie, "Cahiers d'un mammifère," Transatlantic Review, 2, No. 2, p. 218.

[125]Steegmuller, Cocteau, pp. 321-323. Obviously, conflict of interest was not an issue for French critics of that era. The previous year, Laloy wrote the "French Festival" piece in the Monte Carlo season brochure.

ugliness and vulgarity, at last the stage of Monte Carlo returns to authentic art with Les Fâcheux by Auric."[126] In the many roles of collaborator, critic, publicist, and denizen of High Bohemia, Cocteau epitomized, more than any other figure around Diaghilev, the relationship in these years between the production and merchandizing of ballet art.

In his 1935 biography, which erected the interpretative scaffolding of this period, Arnold Haskell called the chapter devoted to the last seven years of Diaghilev's life "In Search of Lost Youth". The impresario, he wrote, "felt only too keenly that the distance that separated him from the younger generations was growing with the years. This did not merely worry him, it terrified him . . ."[127] Diaghilev did indeed assume the guise of an aging Charlus in these years. With false teeth and dyed hair, he sought to counter the ravages of time, and in the twenty-year-olds who surrounded him, he drank as much at a fountain of youth as a spring of creation. But there is another way of viewing the often handsome ephebes who briefly entered his circle, one that has little to do with sublimated instinct and surrogate paternity. Boys, whether beautiful or not, cost far less than their elders.

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[126]Paul Morand, "Paris Letter. June 1924," The Dial, July 1924, p. 67.

[127]Haskell, Diaghileff, p. 312.

The correspondence and memoir literature paint an unflattering portrait of Diaghilev in these years. No longer the open-handed Maecenas of yore, he drove a hard and high-handed bargain with his tribe of "fledglings". Like Nabokov, most of Diaghilev's "discoveries" spun dreams of glory in the squeeze of a second-class compartment,[128] and when the rapide discharged them on the Azure Coast, some, like Dukelsky, had to beg Diaghilev for pocket money. And in the months following a premiere, almost all had to badger him for long overdue royalties.[129]

Tyro talent came cheap, far cheaper than experience. In 1917, Diaghilev had paid Picasso five thousand francs to design Parade.[130] Two years later, he had offered Matisse ten thousand francs to design Le Chant

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[128]Nabokov, p. 73.

[129]Typical is a letter from Milhaud's music publisher Heugel. "For the thirteenth time we confirm our claim and ask you, in conformity with your agreement of May 21, 1924, contract No. 13,786, to send us the sum of royalties payable for the performances of Darius Milhaud's "Train Bleu" given in London and Monte Carlo." Heugel, Editeurs de Musique, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 17 March 1925, C-20-11.3, Serge Diaghilev Papers. In April 1928, the Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers threatened legal action to force Diaghilev to pay Constant Lambert royalties for Romeo et Juliet. Herbert Thring, Letters to Walter Nouvel, 11 April and 20 April 1928, 10-10.3a and 10-10.3, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

[130]Buckle, In Search of Diaghilev, p. 94. According to Bakst, Picasso's "going rate" by 1921 was Frs. 6,000 an act even "when there were at most ten or twelve costume designs". Léon Bakst, Letter to Jacques Rouché, 29 Dec. 1921, AJ13/1207, Archives Nationales.

du Rossignol.[131] This was also the amount he agreed to pay Larionov in 1921 for Chout and Derain five years later for Jack-in-the-Box.[132] Benois, too, enjoyed the largesse Diaghilev reserved for senior collaborators, receiving Frs. 25,000 for Le Médecin malgré lui, the Gounod opera produced in Monte Carlo in 1923-1924.[133] By contrast, the mid-twenties' "fledgling" commanded a fee averaging no more than six thousand francs, a rate that applied to composers no less than painters.[134]

Youthful collaborators rarely protested such terms. A Diaghilev commission enhanced both the value and demand for their services, even within the Ballets Russes itself. For Les Matelots, his second project for Diaghilev, Auric proposed a fee of Frs. 6,000. "I feel sure," he wrote to the impresario, "that I am not asking

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[131]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Henri Matisse, 13 Sept. 1919, Pièce 59, Fonds Kochno. Apparently, Diaghilev had approached Matisse to freshen up Schéhérazade in 1918. Henri Matisse, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 23 Sept. 1918, Catalogue of Ballet Material and Manuscripts from the Serge Lifar Collection, Lot 178.

[132]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Michel Larionov, 15 March 1921, Pièce 51, Fonds Kochno; Serge Diaghilev, Letter to Comte Etienne de Beaumont, 2 June 1926, in Au Temps du Boeuf sur le Toit 1918-1928, introd. Georges Bernier (Paris: Artcurial, 1981), p. 75.

[133]Serge Diaghilev, Letter to René Léon, 3 April 1924, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[134]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Pedro Pruna, 18 Nov. 1924, Pièce 76; Maurice Utrillo, Letters to Serge Diaghilev, 18 March and 13 April 1926, Pièce 102; Georges Auric, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 7 April 1924, Pièce 3; Henri Sauguet, Receipt, 2 May 1927, Pièce 88, Fonds Kochno.

too much of you. With prices being what they are . . . , I think I'm being very reasonable . . . And I feel sure you will agree!"[135] The breezy tone of his letter, penned even before the Paris premiere of Les Fâcheux, suggests the confidence of a young man whose fortunes -- and fees -- are on the rise. By the time he negotiated his third Diaghilev commission in 1925, Auric's fee had jumped fifty percent to Frs. 9,000.[136]

Did Diaghilev feel that he had been used? There is reason to suspect that he did, as it is hard to believe that Kochno would have demanded a "kickback" amounting to one-third of Auric's royalties (in addition to the one-third share he received as librettist) without the impresario's tacit approval.[137] Only three weeks after commissioning La Pastorale, Diaghilev received an outraged letter from the composer:

> Boris is a charming lad . . . but he needs to be taught a lesson or two. He is concerned, so he writes, to advise me that "the royalty for ballets of which he is the author is fifty-five francs", and that in fixing these terms, he "sacrifices a large share of what he should be getting . . . (SIC!!!!)." Now, the royalties for Les Matelots are split three ways . . . In all fairness, the two people who should be involved in this division are Massine and myself, our work and

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[135]Georges Auric, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 7 April 1924, Pièce 3, Fonds Kochno.

[136]Georges Auric, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 10 July 1925, Pièce 3, Fonds Kochno.

[137]Boris Kochno, Letter to Georges Auric, 9 July 1925, Pièce 3, Fonds Kochno.

> effort being, in all sincerity totally different from Boris' . . . It is without precedent for a music publisher to pay for a ballet scenario. Ask Edition Russe, Durand, Heugel . . . or someone like Jean Cocteau who has never received and, moreover, would never dream of receiving anything from the publisher of Parade or Train bleu . . . I might add that [Boris] is lucky to be dealing with someone like me. Prokofiev or Stravinsky would take this a lot worse.
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> I had asked nine thousand francs to write this new ballet. If you decide I have to pay a thousand francs for the right to collaborate with Boris on Les Matelots and this third ballet, I . . . for my part will only work for ten thousand francs. Otherwise, I will pay Boris the sum of 500 francs for Les Matelots. I will, however, be compelled to give up the idea of ever working for the Ballet again -- to my great regret . . . There is a question of principle here on which I cannot compromise, especially as all your musical collaborators, I know, share my view.[138]

By 1925, Auric had priced himself beyond Diaghilev's slender means. After La Pastorale, he never worked again for the company. Nor, for that matter, did the vast majority of collaborators who emerged from the baptism of even a single Diaghilev assignment as highly visible, marketable commodities. Given Diaghilev's financial plight and the spiraling cost of talent, the era's pace of aesthetic change rested as much on imperatives of an economic order as on psycho-sexual or artistic considerations.

Exploitation, however, was not a one-way street. If kickbacks, low piece rates, and tardy royalties denied collaborators the just fruits of their labor, most artists

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[138]Georges Auric, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 10 July 1925, Pièce 3, Fonds Kochno.

who passed through Diaghilev's ballet assembly line proved all too willing to accept his conditions. "Although the terms proposed by Mr. Diaghilev are hardly favorable to us," wrote Vittorio Rieti's music publisher to the young composer of Barabau with unusual explicitness, "I accept them, because I am convinced that it will be of the greatest importance for you as a young composer to have your name appear on Mr. Diaghilev's programs."[139] For composers setting out on a professional career, the promise of long-term gain offset the inconvenience of short-term loss. A similar trade-off occurred with visual artists, for whom a Diaghilev commission brought the art market to the doorstep of the atelier.

Diaghilev's role in the creation of the market for modern art is a neglected aspect of his multi-faceted career. Yet there is evidence suggesting that his intervention at this time was crucial, not so much as the catalyst of a phenomenon that was well under way, but in expanding the market and accelerating the commercialization of work by younger artists.

The case of Picasso is particularly instructive. Between 1917 and 1921, Picasso acquired a new public for his work. His collaboration on Parade, followed in short order by Le Tricorne (1919), Pulcinella (1920), and Cuadro

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[139]Universal-Edition A.G., Letter to Vittorio Rieti, 24 Sept. 1925, C-20-13.2, Serge Diaghilev Papers.

flamenco (1921), opened what Max Jacob called the painter's "époque des duchesses".[140] By the year 1920, when Paris saw Tricorne, Pulcinella, and Parade in Diaghilev's first seasons in the French capital since the war, Picasso became "one of the most talked-about and sought-after men in Paris". The artist who before 1917 had rarely ventured beyond Montmartre, was "to be seen looking elegant at every cocktail-party and first night, and he dined out continually, accompanied by Olga in dresses from Chanel".[141] Like Cocteau and Les Six, Picasso had joined the circle of Diaghilev intimates in the drawing rooms of Misia and Chanel.

Between 1921 and 1923, hundreds of Cubist paintings, sequestrated during the war as alien property from the dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, came up for sale by the French government. No market could withstand such an "avalanche", and after the first sale prices dropped steadily.[142] Among Kahnweiler's pre-War stable of painters, Picasso alone did not suffer. By 1920, the dealer recalled, the artist's "classical period [had] developed, that is, a kind of painting that addressed

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[140]Quoted in Cooper, p. 35.

[141]Patrick O'Brian, Picasso: A Biography (New York: Putnam, 1976), p. 56.

[142]Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler and Francis Crémieux, My Galleries and Painters, trans. Helen Weaver, introd. John Russell (New York: Viking Press, 1971), p. 68.

itself to a different audience."[143] But surely the fact that, through his association with Diaghilev, Picasso had acquired a new, fashionable public for his work, also enabled him to withstand the temporary collapse of the Cubist market.

Up-and-coming artists vied to imitate this exemplary progress. Arriving in Paris in 1921, Christopher Wood trod the Byzantine path of introductions that lead the unknown painter to the outer ring of Diaghilev's acquaintance. By 1925, his circle came to include Picasso and Cocteau, and through them he met Diaghilev. In March 1926, the "whole of Paris", as he wrote to his mother, was "talking about" his commission for Romeo et Juliet.[144] Picasso brought other unknowns within the social pale of the Ballets Russes. "As I am now speaking of painting," Paul Morand told Dial readers in September 1924, "I want to say a word about a new painter who has been much discussed in Paris for some weeks. At the Boeuf sur le Toit or at the Jockey the first words one hears are always: 'You know Picasso has just discovered a new painter. He is twenty years old; he comes from Barcelona; his name is Pruna.'"[145] The following June, Pedro Pruna made his Diaghilev debut in

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[143] Ibid., p. 71.

[144] Quoted in The Diaghilev Ballet in England, p. 52.

[145] Paul Morand, "Paris Letter. July 1924," Dial, Sept. 1924, p. 241. The Boeuf sur le Toit and the Jockey were popular watering spots among the denizens of High Bohemia.

Les Matelots. No wonder Roger Fry found the crassness of the Paris artscape so disturbing. "Mon dieu," he wrote to Helen Anrep in 1925, "the arrivism, the mercantilism, of the art world here! It has fallen very low and it seems to me all the young are given over to the determination to arrive and attract attention."[146]

Competition for Diaghilev's favor on the part of young easel painters indicates to what degree his commissions had become a means of establishing commercial value. But the grand stage of the Ballets Russes offered by no means the only link between Diaghilev's artist and buyer. Undertakings outside the arena of performance enhanced the value of an artist's work by presenting it under the guise of a "collectible" and using it to create new types of artefacts.

Throughout his years as an impresario, Diaghilev promoted company artists and artefacts through exhibitions organized in tandem with his seasons. In some instances, these displays took place within the corridors of the theatre itself. At other times, galleries scheduled exhibitions to coincide with Ballets Russes performances, including one-man shows of designers contributing new productions to the season's repertory. In 1912 and 1913, major Bakst exhibitions took place at London's Fine Art Society; Goncharova's exhibition at the Galérie Paul-

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[146]Quoted in Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), p. 237.

Guillaume opened just after Diaghilev unveiled Coq d'Or at the Paris Opéra in 1914; Pruna's show at Claridge's in 1925 matched the London premiere of Les Matelots, while Goncharova's exhibition there the following year coincided with the first English performance of Les Noces and her new production of Firebird.[147] Ballets Russes artists and artefacts figured prominently in many other events over the years -- the Russian Arts and Crafts Show (London, 1921), International Theatre Exhibition (London, 1922), shows at the Omega Workshop (London, 1919), and Redfern Gallery (London, 1925), to mention only a few. In 1928, London's Literary Book Club presented an exhibition devoted exclusively to the Ballets Russes.[148]

Beginning with the war years, Diaghilev collected as he commissioned. In Italy, he acquired a small but choice selection of futurist art, which was shown along with recent works by Larionov, Goncharova, Picasso, Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, and other Paris-based vanguardists in

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[147]For a partial listing of London exhibitions of Diaghilev's designers, see Frances Baldwin, "Critical Response in England to the Work of Designers for Diaghilev's Russian Ballet, 1911-1929," M.A. Thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art (London) 1980, Appendix 3; Chamot, Goncharova, p. 131.

[148]Baldwin, Appendix 3; Chamot, Goncharova, p. 132; G.E. Fussell, "The International Theatre Exhibition," Dancing Times, Aug. 1922, pp. 937-939; G.E.F., "Russian and Other Pictures at the Redfern Gallery," Dancing Times, Dec. 1925, p. 339.

tandem with the 1917 season in Rome.[149] Over the years, collaborators added to this "Massine collection", as they did later in the twenties, when Serge Lifar and Boris Kochno became the objects of Diaghilev's affections and the beneficiaries of his collecting mania. Like his predecessor's collection, Lifar's miscellany of ballet designs and paintings by company designers was exhibited in short order upon acquisition.[150]

In the late teens, moreover, Diaghilev began treating scenery and front curtains as works of art whose value rested not solely on their theatrical function, but on the fact of their creation by a particular artist. Thus, his 1919 contract with Matisse stipulated that the artist himself paint the drop curtain, as opposed to the usual practice of having scene painters translate the original design into theatrical form.[151] Diaghilev wrote a similar provision into his contract with Larionov for the

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[149]I am grateful to Mary Ann de Vlieg for showing me the catalogue for this exhibition. The dates suggest that Diaghilev began collecting cubist and contemporary French work around in 1916.

[150]During the 1926 summer season in London, Chelsea's New Chenil Galleries organized an exhibition of Lifar's collection. Macdonald, p. 337. A show was also planned for the 1928 American tour. Oliver Saylor, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 8 June 1928, 10-17.1, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

[151]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Henri Matisse, 13 Sept. 1919, Pièce 59, Fonds Kochno.

scenery of Chout[152] and into agreements with at least some of the artists commissioned later in the decade.[153] In effect, Diaghilev was creating a new kind of signed artefact, exemplified by the curtain identified in the 1924 Paris program as being "by PICASSO". Harnessing to the anonymous and reproducible curtain or backdrop the value of the unique, hand-fabricated painting, he transformed it into a marketable commodity. Even with the franc's declining value between 1919 and 1928, Diaghilev profited many times over when he sold portions of Picasso's hand-brushed curtain for Tricorne to a German collector for Frs. 175,000.[154]

Diaghilev negotiated this sale through Paul Rosenberg. This was by no means Diaghilev's first contact with one of the period's leading dealers in modern art. A sketch by Michel Georges-Michel, entitled "The Opening of 'La Parade'," shows Rosenberg in the company of the critic, Diaghilev, Marie Laurencin, Misia Sert, Satie, Picasso, and Cocteau at the premiere of that epoch-making 1917

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[152]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Michel Larionov, 15 March 1921, Pièce 51, Fonds Kochno.

[153]Pruna, for example, had to paint both the front curtain and die. Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Pedro Pruna, 18 Nov. 1924, Pièce 76, Fonds Kochno.

[154]Paul Rosenberg, Tel. to Serge Diaghilev, 4 May 1928, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

ballet.[155] Three years later, Rosenberg, who had become Picasso's dealer in 1918, brought out a limited edition of the artist's designs for Le Tricorne.[156] One can also document connections with another influential dealer. In 1921, when Diaghilev considered publishing lithographs by Juan Gris in the company's programs, he also proposed to bring out a "de luxe" issue for Kahnweiler's Galêrie Simon.[157] Two years later, at the height of his collaboration with the Ballets Russes, the painter suggested that Diaghilev ask Kahnweiler to lend material for the Monte Carlo souvenir program.[158] Presumably, arrangements of this kind represented a common practice in the 1920's, when unpublished art work vied with photographs of featured dancers for page space in company programs. With Diaghilev, the ephemera of an artist's passage through the dance world, the portraits, figures, and caricatures sketched in the intimacy of collaboration, acquired social and commercial standing by the very act of reproduction.

Diaghilev's programs, produced since 1909 by de

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[155]Nikita D. Lobanov, Nina Lobanov, and Aimée Troyen, Russian Theatre and Costume Designs From the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, January 19 - March 9, 1980, introd. John Bowlt, p. 45.

[156]Le Tricorne: Ballet d'après les dessins en couleurs de Picasso (Paris: Editions Paul Rosenberg, 1920).

[157]Juan Gris, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 29 April 1921, Pièce 39, Fonds Kochno.

[158]Juan Gris, Letter to Boris Kochno, 9 Dec. 1923, Pièce 39, Fonds Kochno.

Brunoff, a leading art and fine book house and until 1922, publisher of Comoedia Illustré, illustrate yet another aspect of the impresario's "packaging" of modern art. The postwar period saw a brisk trade in fine editions about Ballets Russes artists and artefacts, further evidence of the tie, cemented in these years, between the company and the art market. This was particularly true in France, where from the beginning programs and special inserts in Comoedia Illustré, were aimed at both a collecting and a dance public.[159] La Danse, a monthly that began publication in late 1919, similarly appealed to a public of "dance lovers, artists, and bibliophiles".[160] Even before World War I, the Ballets Russes had inspired a dozen or so rare volumes on the era's superstars and most popular ballets. In the postwar period, ballet publishing came

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[159]The following full-page announcement appeared in the program for the 1921 Gaité-Lyrique season: "Ballets Russes programs, published by Comoedia Illustré . . . , are sought by all lovers of this admirable company, by all those interested in theatrical decoration, and by all lovers of fine books. Composed always of unpublished material, they form, together with the collection of Comoedia Illustré the most complete documentation of the work of Serge de Diaghilev. Today, many programs are no longer to be found. Copies of others may be acquired from Comoedia Illustré, 32, rue Louis-le-Grand, Paris." The Gaité-Lyrique program had a Picasso pastel on the cover, and featured several of the artist's drawings, including a portrait of Stravinsky. Other unpublished art work included Larionov's sketches for Chout, his portrait by Juan Gris, and a portrait of Prokofiev, the ballet's composer, by Matisse. The program for the December 1919 - February 1920 season at the Paris Opéra featured Derain's designs for La Boutique fantasque, Picasso's designs for Le Tricorne along with reproductions of his drawings "Danseuses" and "Groupe de Danseuses".

[160]La Danse, April 1921, n.p.

into its own, although high prices, as The Dancing Times regretted in the case of Valerian Svetlov's book on Karsavina, placed most volumes beyond the means of dance professionals.[161] Two presses led the way: de Brunoff, which published major works by Svetlov, one of the leading émigré dance writers, an important collection of Diaghilev programs, and Bakst's designs for The Sleeping Princess,[162] and C. W. Beaumont, the London bookseller, ballet critic, and publisher who brought out over a score of books on Diaghilev's dancers and repertory between 1919 and 1929. Virtually all these volumes were numbered; many were printed on rare vellum; most featured specially commissioned artwork. Like the volumes of Symbolist poetry that comprised his other specialty line as a publisher, in tone, format, and content, Beaumont's dance books appealed as much to the collector as the balletomane.[163] As these

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[161]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, April 1922, p. 586.

[162]Collection des plus beaux programmes des Ballets russes de Serge de Diaghilew de 1909 à 1921 (Paris: M. de Brunoff, 1921); L'Oeuvre de Léon Bakst pour la Belle au Bois Dormant, introd. André Levinson (Paris, M. de Brunoff, 1922); Valerian Svetlov, Anna Pavlova, trans. W. Petroff (Paris: M. de Brunoff, 1922).

[163]Between 1917 and 1931, the Beaumont Press brought out no fewer than twenty-six volumes of poems and letters. A Bibliography of the Dance Collection of Doris Niles and Serge Leslie, IV, annotated Serge Leslie, introd. Sir Sacheverall Sitwell (London: Dance Books, 1981), p. 13. For Beaumont's dance publishing activities, see his autobiographical Bookseller at the Ballet, Memoirs Incorporating The Diaghilev Ballet in London, A Record of Bookselling, Ballet Going, Publishing, and Writing (London: C.W. Beaumont, 1975).

and other fine art presses added Terpsichore to their lists, ballet books as a genre took form within the tradition of the "beau livre".[164]

Diaghilev's association with modern art prompted to a large degree the reputation of the Ballets Russes as standing at the cutting edge of avantgarde experiment. This debt was not one-sided. The rapid dissemination of the School of Paris beyond professional and collecting milieux after 1917 owed much to its "advertising" by the Ballets Russes. "There has been established," wrote Paul Morand in 1927, "an arbitration of exchange whereby an economic 'good' becomes immediately negotiable everywhere. Painters or writers have a value which I shall call a gold value which subjects them to universal quotation . . ."[165] Morand neither mentions the Ballets Russes nor poses the question of agency. He cites as examples, however, several painters from the Diaghilev fold, artists like Picasso and Derain, whose work became a medium of exchange at least in

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[164]The volumes on Le Tricorne, Les Biches, and Les Fâcheux have already been noted. Other examples are Natalia Gontcharova and Michel Larionov, L'Art décoratif théâtral moderne (Paris: Edition La Cible, 1919); W.A. Propert, The Russian Ballet in Western Europe,1909-1920 (London: John Lane, 1921); Michel Georges-Michel, Ballets russes, histoire anecdotique (Paris: Editions du Monde nouveau, 1923); André Levinson, Histoire de Léon Bakst (Paris: Société d'Editions et de Librairie, 1924) and La Danse d'aujourd'hui; Arnold Haskell, Some Studies in Ballet (London: Lanley, 1928).

[165]Paul Morand, "Paris Letter. February 1927," Dial, March 1927, p. 234.

part because of their success as designers. To the remarkable list of Diaghilev's postwar achievements, perhaps another should be added: his assistance at the birth of the market for twentieth-century art.

Some artists profited from their connection with Diaghilev. Others suffered as economics impinged on the balletic labor process. These last years of Ballets Russes history saw a gradual ebb in the status and earning power of its dancers, a hardening of paternalist styles of management, and the arbitrary pitting of artist against artist whereby Diaghilev divided and conquered. From this era comes the legacy of labor relations and attitudes that still colors management policies within the private sphere of ballet enterprise.

Even in 1923-1924, when subsidies materialized at regular intervals and in relatively ample amounts, dancers were the "fat" Diaghilev periodically trimmed from his budget. The first such "trimming" occurred in the autumn of 1922, when Diaghilev slashed the troupe to barely half its size of only a year before. In reducing the company to thirty, claimed Grigoriev, Diaghilev's "chief aim" was to eliminate "some of the weaker dancers".[166] One may question whether quality was indeed the concern uppermost in the impresario's mind. Surely, a company of thirty cost less to maintain than one of fifty-five, and in late 1922

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[166]Grigoriev, p. 188.

Diaghilev was cutting corners wherever he could.

As in 1926, when Diaghilev's hatchet fell once again, the company did not remain a skeleton ensemble for long. Within months of his 1922 pruning, its payroll had climbed to fifty, while in 1926, newcomers immediately took the places of those who had been dismissed.[167] More than any other policy, these "purges", to borrow a term from Grigoriev, brought home to the company the economic reality of dancing for Diaghilev in the twenties. Diaghilev could hire and fire at will, and at the snap of his fingers scores of applicants would materialize. In this buyer's market, "purges" became a strategy for reducing wages and enhancing management's control of its "workers".

Terms like cost-effectiveness and productivity rarely enter discussions of ballet history. Yet they formed the cornerstone of Diaghilev's labor policy in the Twenties, the framework within which the decline in wages and conditions, arbitrary changes in personnel, and new-style star system must be understood. They suggest the reasons underlying periodic outbreaks of "militancy" in the ranks and help explain the development of a management style that harnessed autocracy to the service of business.

When Nikitina joined the Ballets Russes in 1923, the "usual salary" for dancers in the corps de ballet ranged from eight hundred to one thousand francs a

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[167] Ibid., p. 231.

month.[168] Like Ninette de Valois, who entered the company in the autumn of the same year, Nikitina herself earned Frs. 1,500, the going rate for a soloist of reasonable experience and competence.[169] By contrast with their counterparts at the Paris Opéra, where as late as 1926 étoiles and premières danseuses received no more than Frs. 1,500 a month,[170] Diaghilev's dancers fared well. But even if salaries compared favorably with those of dancers in the employ of the French government or working on the Paris music-hall stage,[171] the fact remains that pay scales continued the downward spiral that began in the war years. In absolute terms, starting salaries in 1923 were little better than what they had been ten years earlier. In real terms, they were considerably worse. By 1926, a soloist's pay barely sufficed "to keep body and soul together".[172]

The depreciation of the franc between 1923 and 1926 caused havoc well beyond the financial markets. Within France, the cost of living rose in proportion to the

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[168] Nikitina, p. 33.

[169] de Valois, Invitation to the Ballet, p. 46.

[170] "Paris Notes," Dancing Times, Sept. 1926, p. 557.

[171] Salaries in the music-halls, wrote René Bizet, "are inverse to the amount of clothing worn." "The grand nu who earns twenty-five francs a day has her physical charms to thank for such generosity . . . On the average, these women are paid between five and six hundred francs a month." René Bizet, L'Epoque du Music-Hall (Paris: Editions du Capitole, 1927), pp. 45-46.

[172] "Paris Notes," Dancing Times, Sept. 1926, p. 557.

fall in value of its currency. By January 1926, the decline had become so precipitous that the Paris correspondent of the Dancing Times felt it necessary to warn dancers signing "long term engagements for France . . . [to] be on their guard", as "the money they stipulate . . . may be worth considerably less six months hence." Among "certain troupes of English dancers in Paris," he noted, dissatisfaction was rampant. "Their expenses are increasing in all directions, and what seemed a satisfactory salary when the contract was signed is no longer so."[173] For Diaghilev's troupe of six-month gypsies, crossing national borders compounded these difficulties. During the autumn 1924 German tour, exchange rates precipitated a crisis when, as Ninette de Valois recalled, the dancers "found to our extreme agitation that a cup of coffee had to be drunk to the tune of seven francs, only a little less than a meal cost, at that time, in Paris. A meeting was held after we had been there a couple of days, presided over by Grigorieff; he informed us that the matter would be adjusted in forty-eight hours, but very naturally he could do nothing until that time had expired. I had eighteen marks in my possession, and Dorothy Coxon, another English girl, two."[174]

The 1923-1924 season marked a hiatus in the era's

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[173]"Paris Notes," Dancing Times, Jan. 1926, p. 465.

[174]de Valois, Invitation to the Ballet, p. 54.

prevailing economic insecurity. Nearly a million francs flowed into Diaghilev's coffers from the Casino alone, in addition to earnings on tour. The Monte Carlo portion of the season, moreover, took place under a sign of aristocracy wedded to the artistic and social brilliance of High Bohemia. Privilege, however, resided only at the uppermost reaches of the company hierarchy, and it was the contrast, perhaps, between the aura of wealth and a reality of growing impoverishment that induced the dancers to raise once again the spectre of a strike. The particulars of this action remain obscure, but included the demand for a twenty-five percent increase in salaries. "In the end," wrote Diaghilev to René Léon, "I had to raise the entire corps de ballet nearly twenty percent."[175]

A twenty percent raise eased but did not solve the problem of making ends meet. In the winter months when they participated in the operas presented at the Théâtre de Monte Carlo, dancers found ingenious ways of supplementing their income, as Ninette de Valois described in Invitation to the Ballet.

> The other excitement . . . was the question of compensation offered for various discomforts endured in certain operas. In Damnation of Faust there was a scene laid in hell where five of the ballet were hurled into a fire and burnt. We had to stand on a long grating, to which were tied hundreds of flame-coloured ribbons, a terrific blast of air was turned on, whirling the ribbons up and around us;

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[175]Serge Diaghilev, Letter to René Léon, 3 April 1924, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

> but the thoughtful Monaco management regarded the ensuing draught as a form of discomfort to the ladies of the ballet, and deemed it right to compensate them to the tune of 50 francs for each performance. The scramble among the Russian corps de ballet to get burnt was terrific. Stage flying was even more popular, although compensation for this rather suspiciously soared to 150 francs for each performance.[176]

High-wire supplements notwithstanding, economic conditions worsened signally by 1925. That January, the dancers again threatened to strike. A meeting was held, presided over by soloists Ludmilla Schollar and her husband Anatole Vilzak, and the dancers resolved that if Diaghilev refused to give them "a definite promise to raise their salaries", they would not perform the following night.[177] At Grigoriev's urging, Diaghilev spoke to the dancers before the performance. The régisseur's summary of his remarks suggests how businessman and barin joined forces in Diaghilev's management style:

> "I'm very much astonished at your behaviour," he began. "You've already been told that I intend considering my budget and seeing what I can do for you. What more can you expect? You each of you have a separate contract with me. Very well -- if you refuse to perform this evening I shall regard your non-attendance as a breach of contract and shall sue you for damages -- which I should in fact have suffered, by having been forced to cancel the performance." On which, turning his back on them, he left the room.[178]

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[176]de Valois, Invitation to the Ballet, p. 40.

[177]Grigoriev, p. 208.

[178]Ibid., p. 209.

Diaghilev's peroration had the anticipated effect. The dancers turned up for the performance although accounts differ as to whether Schollar and Vilzak did so as well.[179] In any event, Diaghilev took a hard line with the "ringleaders". Advised that they had broken their contracts, both Schollar and Vilzak were dismissed. "As for the malcontents who had launched the protest," wrote Grigoriev, "their grievances were duly redressed, as soon as Diaghilev found he could afford it."[180] In her account of these events, Ninette de Valois suggests the powerlessness of the dancers in their dealings with management.

> That we lost goes without saying, perhaps not so much through lack of a certain justification of fundamental grievance, but through stupidity and knowing so very much less about Diaghileff than Diaghileff knew about us. That he and Grigorieff dealt firmly and forcefully with the matter, and that neither of them showed any attempt or inclination to humiliate any of the more prominent offenders once the matter ended, impressed me in spite of my indignation and disappointment at the "Government win". But the years have shown there was no absolute right or wrong on either side, only a stupid misunderstanding perhaps handled at the beginning too hastily by the dancers and in an unnecessarily autocratic manner by the direction.[181]

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[179]Grigoriev says they didn't while in recent interviews Vilzak insists that they did. Carol H. Denny, "Viva Vilzak: On His Toes at Eighty-Six," San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle, 31 Jan. 1982, p. 13; George Heymont, "A Real Charmer," Ballet News, Feb. 1983, p. 16.

[180]Grigoriev, p. 209.

[181]de Valois, Invitation to the Ballet, p. 68.

The measured pragmatism of these reflections discloses a liberal view of management based on compromise. Compromise, however, was a term that did not exist in Diaghilev's vocabulary. Generous he might be, even to a fault, and as a realist he bowed before a fait accompli. But on the issue of authority, his right to exercise undisputed power over the lives of his dancers, he brooked no challenge. His authority touched every aspect of company existence.

Although de Valois has contended that "the company . . . was on the whole treated very fairly",[182] Diaghilev betrayed an often arbitrary hand in his dealings with individuals. This was not capriciousness on Diaghilev's part, but a style of management that exploited personal weakness as a means of upholding his authority. Salary negotiations offer a good example of this tactic. Because Diaghilev signed individual agreements with dancers, requests for increases placed the artist in the humiliating position of a petitioner. A letter written by Dorothy Coxon in 1925 illustrates:

> I am so sorry to worry you when you are on your holiday but I am writing to ask you if you will raise my salary from 1400 francs to 1500 francs per month. The reason for this is that since my interview with Monsieur Grigorieff I have learned that you have raised Melle Ninette de Valois' salary from 1500 francs to 1800 francs and I am

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[182] Ibid., p. 58.

> sure you understand that had I known this I would never have agreed to return to the company on the same terms. Although . . . Melle de Valois deserves a rise I do not feel that the difference between her dancing and mine is equal to the difference in our salaries. I feel that it is absolutely just to ask you for 100 francs more as it will just make the difference of 300 francs between our salaries, as it was before, when you engaged her at 1500 francs, and I received 1200 francs. After four years in your Company, I do feel and hope that you will do this for me, especially as Monsieur Grigorieff has promised that I will have much better places next year. I hate to go back on what I said to him, but I am sure you understand that what I have since heard has made a tremendous difference; for I do not feel that it is quite fair that I should receive so much less than other artistes and you cannot think what a big difference the extra 100 francs will make to me. I do hope you will give it to me, -- and that you are having a very good holiday.
>
> P.S. I am having Russian lessons![183]

Salaries were not the only area where Diaghilev exploited competition as a means of maintaining his hold over the work force. In billing, too, he might favor one dancer at the expense of another, thereby sparking emotional flare-ups that he could turn to his own benefit. Whether Coxon received her one-hundred franc "rise" is unknown. But the following year, she was enraged to find her name removed from company bills in London and Russian "artistes" promoted instead. With typical British forthrightness, she insisted on justice. She found herself without a job, yet another victim that year of Diaghilev's

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[183]Dorothy Coxon, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 29 July [1925], 10-4.2, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

"purge".[184]

In other ways, too, Diaghilev fostered competition among dancers to reduce costs and enhance his authority. Throughout this period, no single star shone with the brilliance of a Nijinsky or Karsavina. Nor did any choreographer, including George Balanchine, Diaghilev's in-house balletmaster after 1924, enjoy the impresario's total confidence and the luxury of a troupe readied for his command. Like the youthful diadem that crowned the era in painting and music, Diaghilev plucked his newest stars from a corps of novices, sacrificing established personalities on the altar of untried youth.

By her own account, Karsavina "broke" with Diaghilev in 1920 for artistic reasons.[185] Among the newer ballets, few roles offered scope for dramatic exression or demanded the strong classical technique of a ballerina who had reigned over the Mariinsky no less than the pre-War Ballets Russes. Karsavina, moreover, did not need Diaghilev. As a star on whom offers rained from managements all over Europe, she enjoyed both the luxury of independence and a level of monetary reward Diaghilev could afford only at intervals. In 1926, he paid her five thousand francs to dance two performances of Romeo et

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[184]Dorothy Coxon, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [1926], 10-4.3, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

[185]"Conversation with Karsavina," Dancing Times, June 1965, p. 460.

Juliet in Monte Carlo, and £120 per week to do the same in London.[186] By contrast, Nikitina, who danced the role of Juliet in Paris, earned Frs. 1,700 a month, while Balanchine, the choreographer who created the ballet, received a monthly salary of Frs. 2,500 for his dual role as soloist and company balletmaster.[187]

Thus, for reasons of economy as much as art, Diaghilev turned to youth for his newest stars. Unlike Alexandra Danilova, who had completed the full course of training at the Mariinsky before joining Diaghilev in emigration, Anton Dolin, Nikitina, Serge Lifar, and Constantin Tcherkass lacked the technique of accomplished dancers. They came to Diaghilev almost straight from the classroom. He gave them lessons, roles that displayed their strengths and masked their weaknesses, and publicity build-ups that made them instant stars.

In this last era of the Ballets Russes, stardom became a product that rolled off Diaghilev's assembly line with the regularity of a Model T. After 1923, new stars flared in quick succession across the company's firmament: Dolin, Lifar, and Tcherkass among the men, Nemchinova, Nikitina, Danilova, and Doubrovska among the women. Like Massine, they were stars bearing Diaghilev's exclusive

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[186]Tamara Karsavina, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 30 April 1926, Pièce 43, Fonds Kochno.

[187]Payroll Sheet, 1 April - 1 June 1926, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

label of manufacture. None, however, savored the unchallenged ascendancy of their predecessor. Once they had tasted fame, Diaghilev contrived to keep an upper hand, playing off one dancer against another in an elaborate contest for roles, ballets, billings, and sexual favors.

This undercutting of stardom's intrinsic value applied no less to Balanchine, the era's official choreographer, than to its principal dancers. In a radical departure from earlier practice, not a single season between 1925 to 1929 passed without Diaghilev commissioning at least one major ballet from another choreographer. The year 1926 saw Nijinska's staging of Romeo et Juliet while Massine choreographed no fewer than four works in this period: Zéphyre et Flore and Les Matelots in 1925, Le Pas d'Acier in 1927, and Ode in 1928. The following year, Lifar made his choreographic debut with the revival of Le Renard. In the history of the Ballets Russes, no choreographer worked in so competitive an atmosphere or one so little conducive to artistic collaboration as Balanchine in the years 1925-1929.

Along with purges, competition, and lower salaries, overwork had become a permanent feature of company life. "You should see how the ballet works here," Ruth Page wrote to her mother in 1925. "They are practically there from 9 in the morning till 12 at night.

I think it is terrible, and almost no pay."[188] In both Come Dance With Me and Invitation to the Ballet, Ninette de Valois also commented on the heavy work load and management's indifference to its effects.

> Viewed in perspective our greatest setback was overwork; at times it was quite inhuman and should not have been permitted. Such a strain on artists is unjust from any angle, and a good deal could have been avoided with a little more carefully planned organisation. It is well to draw attention to this fault, prevalent in all Russian organisations, for they one and and all suffer from the same drawback; so much of this has been alluded to in enthusiastic terms, as if a dancer was a lively species of mosquito with no human feelings or reactions. A great deal of the falling off of the technical standard of the company in the last few years . . . was due to the state of the artists' health and nerves. The collapse of both Lifar's ankles during the dress rehearsal of a new ballet (duration about twenty minutes) and the breakdown of Nikitina's foot after the first performance of the same work and her subsequent enforced rest for four weeks, all point to one thing, over-tired and over-strained youth.[189]

Dancers worked "all day and every day"[190] in that pre-union era except for a one-month summer holiday. Nor did the day necessarily end when the curtain fell on an evening's program. Dancers might be summoned to dance after midnight for Paris en grand gala. At such receptions, recalled de Valois, dancers "were never given

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[188]Quoted in John Martin, Ruth Page: An Intimate Biography, foreword Margot Fonteyn (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1977), p. 60.

[189]de Valois, Invitation to the Ballet, pp. 59-60.

[190]Ibid., p. 46.

anything to eat or drink", and there were times when, unable to afford taxi night rates, she had to walk half way across Paris at 3 a.m.[191]

Such conditions aroused the young dancer's "English spirit of justice" although by her own admission, she was "the only one to express irritation".[192] Her Slavic companions viewed practices like these as part of a natural order, a commonplace of the artist's life on the Continent. As a composer with no social connections and little prestige beyond the avantgarde, Satie, too, suffered at the hands of snobbish hostesses. Serving a drink to a guest at a soiree where music of his was being performed, he was told by a condescending Princesse, "Monsieur Satie, the musicians' buffet is in the other drawing room."[193] Stars like Lifar, Dolin, and Nikitina might circulate among Diaghilev's peers in society. The average dancer, however, remained on the backstairs.

Before 1914, Diaghilev's Russian dancers had assumed a position of equality with Russia's other "free" artists. Beginning in the war years, constraints of economy gnawed little by little at the privileges of such freedom. Low salaries succeeded the company's initial premium rates, and conditions markedly deteriorated.

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[191] de Valois, Come Dance With Me, p. 69.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Hugo, p. 63.

Between 1924 and 1928, however, the status of the dancer declined precipitously. Not only did the collapse of the franc erode the dancer's financial position, but the demise of both the Ballets Suédois and Soirées de Paris in 1924 threw numerous performers back on the job market. Not until the formation of Ida Rubinstein's company in 1928, with Bronislava Nijinska as resident choreographer, did an alternative to the Ballets Russes appear on the Parisian horizon. In this buyer's market, where supply far outstripped demand, Diaghilev could hire and fire the human materiel of his enterprise as if it were no more than a collection of interchangeable parts. The status of the "free" artist had rested on the dancer's wresting control of his own labor. With the loss of that autonomy, the dancer became a wage-earning proletarian, a second-class citizen of the artistic polity. If this phenomenon did not become the rule in England as it did in France and the United States, one has not only the remarkable talents of Ninette de Valois and British ballet's other founding mothers to thank, but also the "gentrification" of ballet as an art form brought about by the postwar dance boom. Elsewhere, the disenfranchisement of dancers within the larger artistic community formed as much a legacy of this last era as the tradition of creative experiment.

If the years 1923-1929 lack the aesthetic coherence of earlier eras, they cannot be dismissed out of hand, an attitude fashionable among the generation of

English ballet writers that rose to prominence in the 1930's. In Apollon Musagète, Prodigal Son, Les Biches, and Les Noces, Diaghilev gave to the world masterpieces of the twentieth-century canon, whose luster neither changing tastes nor changing casts have dimmed. In painting and music, to say nothing of dance, he launched scores of artists on the journey to fame. And against overwhelming odds, he steered the art of ballet closer to the cutting edge of new artistic trends than anyone since.

The difficulty in assessing this period lies in the complex web of relationships between Diaghilev's art and his enterprise. Enmeshed in overlapping chronicles of personalities, artistic interests, and financial concerns, such relationships make sense of the era's protean and paradoxical character, lifting it above the mere play of chance and genius to an object lesson in twentieth-century cultural economy. For the brutal truth is that by the 1920's, no European enterprise of the magnitude and experimental nature of the Ballets Russes could survive solely within the parameters of the marketplace. Some form of public subsidy had become essential.

Beginning in 1909, nearly every year had seen Diaghilev make an August pilgrimage to Venice. As favorites romped on the beach, he would sketch out plans for ballets and dine with impresarios anxious to secure his company's services. Artists would be close at hand, and patrons might descend from off-shore yachts to visit. In

1929, with the strains of Tristan and Die Meistersinger fresh in his mind, Diaghilev made his last journey to the Adriatic's queen city. On the morning of August 20th a gondola draped in black crossed the yawning lagoon, bringing his body to rest in San Michele, the island cemetery of Venice. Here, in the city where Wagner had died and Doges had created a monument to beauty from the profits of far-flung trade, Diaghilev's extraordinary chapter in the history of art and enterprise came to an end.

ART AND ENTERPRISE IN DIAGHILEV'S BALLETS RUSSES

by

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CHAPTER VIII

PARIS: THE CULTIVATED AUDIENCE

In his twenty years at the helm of the Ballets Russes, Diaghilev transformed the aesthetics and economics of ballet, willing to future dancemakers a major corpus of works and a range of organizational prototypes. To this legacy must be added another, equally remarkable bequest: the following that enabled the Tsarist hybrid to take root, flower, and renew itself in the West. Between 1909 and 1929, Diaghilev conjured into being a vast new public for ballet, a succession of audiences that filled his theatres, altered the countenance of his art, and laid the foundation for the modern ballet public. The character of these audiences helps to explain the changing aesthetic postures of the Ballets Russes and the ideologies that surrounded the enterprise at particular moments of its history. Above all, the public Diaghilev created for his Ballets Russes explains the lightning speed with which the disparaged art of ballet careened from the periphery to the center of European cultural life, a position it retained for the better part of twenty years.

Our story begins in Paris, with the dazzling assemblage that has passed into legend. Here, in 1909,

Diaghilev mesmerized le tout Paris, while crowning ballet, for the first time since the Romantic era of the 1830's, with the aura and prestige of a cultured, sophisticated following.

Ballet, of course, was no stranger to the French capital. Even in the years of its decline under the Third Republic, it retained a place of subsidized prominence at the Opéra. Artistically, however, it was at low ebb. Few works of distinction graced the Opéra's repertory or self-respecting musicians its podium; the dancer herself invited pity and ridicule, when anyone bothered to consider her an artist. For the abonnés, that corps of wealthy subscribers with entree to the Foyer de la Danse and access to the administration, the Opéra existed as a kind of fiefdom, an all-female preserve for the sexual huntsman. "The Opéra," wrote Arnold Bennett in 1910, "is the splendid prey of the high officers of State. If such a one wants an evening's entertainment, or a mistress, the Opéra is there, at his disposition. The foyer de la danse is the most wonderful seraglio in the western world, and it is reserved to the Government and to subscribers."[1] In the early twentieth century, ballet in France was socially and artistically déclassé, isolated from the cultural mainstream and patronized by the most philistine stratum of the male upper

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[1]Arnold Bennett, "Russian Imperial Ballet at the Opera," Paris Nights and Other Impressions of Places and People (New York: George H. Doran, 1913), p. 67.

class. That this was no longer the case in 1914 is a measure of Diaghilev's genius and the extraordinary changes wrought in the audience for his chosen art.

Opera, on the other hand, was the prestige art of the Belle Epoque. Its divas occupied pedestals once graced by ballerinas, while its themes echoed the obsession with marriage, family, and property of its bourgeois, monied public. The gods of the day were Puccini and Verdi. As the century drew to a close, another powerful draft gusting from Mitteleuropa added to opera's prestige. Wagnerism descended upon Paris in the 1880's, penetrating literature, art, and even spheres of religious and intellectual thought in a city where anti-German feeling still ran high in the aftermath of the war of 1870. Under the banner of the Revue wagnérienne, published between 1885 and 1888, a brilliant constellation of Symbolist talents gathered: Edouard Dujardin, J.K. Huysmans, A.C. Swinburne, Paul Verlaine, and Stéphane Mallarmé. And in La Revue Blanche, founded by the husband of Diaghilev's most loyal and longstanding partisan, Wagnerism sounded a leitmotif among the journal's broader themes of Symbolism and Post-Impressionism.

Wagner's lucubrations and innovative productions elevated opera from mere social pleasure to an intellectually compelling art. At the same time, his theatre at Bayreuth became the center of a cult, a shrine to which the wealthy, cultured tastemakers of the Belle

Epoque made pilgrimage annually until World War I. Diaghilev himself first visited Bayreuth in the 1890's at the very height of the Master's grip on the fashionable imagination, and in subsequent years the Princesse de Polignac, Comtesse Greffuhle, and Virginia Woolf trod the same wellworn path.[2] Here, among the throngs who crowded the Teutonic rituals of Bayreuth in the 1890's and early 1900's was the cultured, cosmopolitan, and knowledgeable audience to which Diaghilev laid claim in his early years in the West. The overnight triumph of the Ballets Russes reflected Diaghilev's success in attracting the sophisticated following of opera to his balletic enterprise.

In appropriating this operatic audience for ballet, no one proved more crucial to Diaghilev than Gabriel Astruc. Publisher, editor, sometime playwright, and impresario of vision, Astruc moved through the many Paris worlds that came together in Diaghilev's public. Sephardic in origin, the son of a rabbi whose flock numbered some of the wealthiest and most cultured Jewish families of the French capital, Astruc began his remarkable career in the music publishing firm of his cousin Wilhem

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[2]"Memoirs of the Late Princesse Edmond de Polignac," Horizon, Aug. 1945, p. 121; Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), I, 148-149; Virginia Cowles, 1913: The Defiant Swan Song (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), p. 187.

Enoch. From 1882 to 1904 journalism claimed his attention: reviewing, feature writing, social and diplomatic reportage. In 1890, he co-founded the art journal L'Amateur, and subsequently, a musical supplement to the fashion weekly Femina, the first French magazine of its kind to boast a circulation of 100,000. All these activities helped to create the master publicist who so ably served Diaghilev in the years before World War I.

The new century broadened the scope of Astruc's undertakings. In 1904, with the backing of Comte Isaac de Camondo, a distinguished collector and Turkish banking heir instructed by Astruc père in the precepts of their shared faith, Astruc fils founded the Société Musicale. Under the aegis of this talent-cum-promotion agency, graced by the social patronage of the Comtesse Greffuhle, he embarked on a brilliant career as an impresario, producing in the short span of nine years a series of events that transformed the musical and theatrical landscape of Paris. From the four corners of Europe and far away America came his cosmopolitan extravanganzas: a Beethoven Festival and season of Italian opera in 1905; a Mozart Festival and the London Symphony in 1906; Richard Strauss' Salomé with its original German cast in 1907; the Berlin Philharmonic in 1908; New York's Metropolitan Opera in 1910; Ida Rubinstein's Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien in 1911 -- along with virtually all of Diaghilev's "Russian seasons". Astruc also interested himself in promising young talent.

Arthur Rubinstein, for instance, received a five-year contract and a stipend of five hundred francs per month.[3]

Notwithstanding the success of his exhibition of Russian art at the Salon d'Automne in 1906 and his concert series the following year, Diaghilev was a newcomer to Paris. His meeting with Astruc was therefore all the more providential. Guided by this colorful, driving, thoroughly knowledgeable Parisian, the _barin_ from Russia gained entree into the prestigious circles of the _haute bourgeoisie_ that provided both financial support for his enterprise and the core of his French audience.

In 1909 Diaghilev secured the backing for his first dance season from intimates of the Greffuhles in banking and diplomatic circles. More precisely, Astruc secured this backing for Diaghilev, approaching not only Arthur Raffalovich and André Bénac, key figures, it will be recalled, in the controversial French loan of 1906, but also Nicolas de Bénardaky, Boris Zaharoff, and Michael I. Tereshchenko, who occupied positions of prominence in

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[3]_Grosse Judische National-Biographie_ (Nendel/Liechstenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1979); _Encyclopaedia Judaica_ (Berlin: Verlag Eschkol, 1929); _Gabriel Astruc: A Register of His Papers in the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library -- Biographical Note_; Gabriel Astruc, _Le Pavillon des fantômes_ (Paris: Grasset, 1929); Arthur Rubinstein, _My Young Years_ (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), chap. 22.

France's Russian community.[4]

More crucial to the survival of Diaghilev's enterprise, however, was a second group of investors approached by Astruc in the spring of 1909. French by birth and nationality, this group was mostly Jewish in origin and connections. It included the most distinguished names in Jewish banking circles and many of the era's outstanding patrons, collectors, and artistic dilettantes; by marriage it embraced "regilded" aristocrats who had bartered their threadbare titles for a fortune. Thanks to Astruc, Diaghilev found within this group both the money and public he needed. There is more than a touch of irony in the outpouring of Jewish wealth and Jewish support for an enterprise aimed at restoring the prestige of a regime so notoriously anti-Semitic as the Russia of Nicholas II.

Astruc's notes listing possible sources for raising the Fr. 100,000 guarantee capital for Diaghilev's

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[4]Nicolas de Bénardaky was an ennobled Polish Jew who was "said to have gained his wealth as a tea-merchant. He had once been master of ceremonies at the court of the Tsar, and was still entitled to be called 'Your Excellency'." His daughter Marie was Proust's first schoolboy love. George D. Painter, Marcel Proust: A Biography (Harmondsmith, Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), I, 42. Bénardaky's 1909 visiting card, preserved in the Astruc Papers, identified him as "Conseiller d'Etat Actuel de Russie". Tereshchenko was a leading member of the Cadet Party, who served as Kerensky's Finance Minister after the February Revolution. Olga Crisp, "The Russian Liberals and the 1906 Anglo-French Loan to Russia," Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 39 (1960-61), pp. 497-511; Lionel Kochan, Russia in Revolution, 1890-1918 (London: Granada, 1970), pp. 118-119.

1909 season amply document these overlapping interests. High on his list are bankers and financiers with a concern for the arts: Baron Henri de Rothschild, who wrote plays under the nom de plume of André Pascal; Camondo, who composed as well as collected; Addie Wolff Kahn, whose husband, Otto, was a partner of Goldschmidt, Kahn, and Teutsch and Chairman of the Board of the Metropolitan Opera; Henri Deutsch de la Meurthe, an international oil magnate and arts patron who, like Camondo, had received religious instruction from Astruc's father. Other names are equally revealing. Bardac, Heine, Ganay, Clermont-

Tonnerre, and Lyon were all prominent names in the arts with links to leading Jewish families and fortunes.[5]

In compiling his list of would-be guarantors of Diaghilev's first ballet season, Astruc called on financial "angels" of longstanding. His friendship with both Camondo and Deutsch de la Meurthe dated to childhood. Their names, along with those of Max Lyon and Arthur Raffalovich, appear time and again among subscribers to Astruc's various

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[5]In 1906, Astruc produced Camondo's opera Le Clown, which, ironically, entered the repertoire of the Opéra-Comique on the same evening as the premiere of Boris Godunov. Debussy's second wife, Emma Bardac, née Moyse, had been the wife of a prominent Jewish financier, Sigismund Bardac, before marrying the composer. The Lyon family was in the piano business (Pleyel Lyon et Cie.), and Max Lyon's stepfather had been a Rothschild. A Gramont-Rothschild alliance gave Elisabeth Gramont, Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre, the writer and friend of Proust, a Rothschild stepfather as well. The family of the Marquise de Ganay, née Haber, was also prominent in the financial community. Alice Heine, a distant cousin of the poet, married the Duc de Richelieu and subsequently the Prince of Monaco. Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy, rev. ed. (London: J.M. Dent, 1963), p. 37; Philippe Jullian, Robert de Montesquiou: A Fin-de-Siècle Prince, trans. John Haylock and Francis King (London: Seeker and Warburg, 1965), pp. 73, 174, 186; Mina Curtiss, Other People's Letters: A Memoir (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), p. 44; "Henri Deutsch de la Meurthe," El Sol (Madrid), 26 Nov. 1919, p. 10; Astruc, Le Pavillon des fantômes, p. 5; The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (1942); Encyclopaedia Judaica (New York: Macmillan, 1971); Grosse Jüdische National-Biographie; Dictionnaire de Biographie Française (Paris: Librairie Letouzey, 1951). Astruc's notes of possible contributors are in GA26-1/2/3, Astruc Papers.

enterprises.[6] Surely, it was as partisans of Astruc and his cosmopolitan arts programming that they subscribed to Diaghilev's 1909 saison russe.

Like Diaghilev's initial backers, the core of his ballet public lay in the haute bourgeoisie that supported Astruc's musical undertakings and Diaghilev's maiden operatic venture. Thanks to the booking lists (feuilles de location) surviving in the Archives Nationales for all seven performances of Diaghilev's 1908 production of Boris Godunov at the Paris Opéra, the configuration of this basic audience can now be established.[7] These documents, which indicate the occupants of boxes, loges, and orchestra stalls, confirm Diaghilev's overwhelming success in appropriating the serious French musical audience for the Ballets Russes. They also reveal that his public was not primarily an aristocratic one, despite the Proustian-sounding titles reported in the society columns of Figaro, that "newspaper par excellence of le tout Paris".[8] Rather, Diaghilev's audience was an amalgam of financial, banking,

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[6]See, for example, the list of boxholders for the bals masqués he organized on behalf of the Association des Directeurs de Théâtres de Paris at the Opéra in April 1914. AJ13/1286, Archives Nationales. In his memoirs, Astruc singles out Camondo, that "most generous of Maecenas", for his unstinting generosity and support of all Astruc's many projects, including the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Astruc, Le Pavillon des fantômes, pp. 5, 264, 266.

[7]"Feuilles de location," AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales.

[8]Astruc, Le Pavillon des fantômes, p. 83.

and diplomatic interests, laced with representatives of the foreign and Franco-Jewish communities and personalities drawn from the world of Parisian fashion, music, entertainment, and the press.

Prominent among the boxholders was Misia Sert, Diaghilev's future partisan and confidante, who as Madame Edwards attended all seven performances of Boris. Russian-born and Paris-raised, this warm, witty, and well-connected Pole epitomized the social, artistic, and financial interests that merged in Diaghilev's audience. A concert pianist manqué, music was her greatest love: as a child she played for Liszt and as a teenager studied with Fauré. For painters, she was a Muse, her face, piano, garden, and voluptuousness enshrined in magnificent canvases by Bonnard, Vuillard, Renoir, and Toulouse-Lautrec. As the wife of Thadée Natanson, son of a Polish-Jewish banker and founder of La Revue Blanche, she moved in the artistic and intellectual circles of fin-de-siècle Paris. Through her second husband, Turkish-born railroad magnate Alfred Edwards, who counted the Paris daily Le Matin and the Casino de Paris among his holdings, she rubbed shoulders with actresses and demi-mondaines and the city's racier celebrities. Her brother Cipa Godebski was equally remarkable: over the years the intimates of his salon included Ravel, Gide, Conrad, Bennett, Stravinsky, Poulenc, and Valéry. Boris, Misia wrote in her memoirs, stirred her "to the point of realizing that something had changed in

her life".[9] In the next twenty-one years, she stood by Diaghilev's side, a sister, confidante, and advisor, bringing to ballet the passionate commitment and web of connections she had previously reserved for other arts.

Another loyal Diaghilev partisan who attended nearly every performance of Boris was the Princesse Edmond de Polignac. Born Winnaretta Singer, this daughter of the American sewing machine inventor had used her fortune, like so many foreign heiresses, to marry into the cash-poor French aristocracy. Even more than Misia, "Tante Winnie", as the Princesse was familiarly styled, devoted her life to art. Her musical salon was the most distinguished and sophisticated of Paris: in her drawing-room rarely-performed antiquities and new compositions, including a number of Diaghilev ballet scores, received a hearing before a socially and artistically influential public. But she was more than a hostess. The commissions she awarded to Falla and Stravinsky showed her to be a patron of generosity and understanding, the very qualities she brought to her patronage of the Ballets Russes. Indeed, it was at the home of this loyal enthusiast, who rarely missed a company performance, that Astruc broached the question of a ballet season to Diaghilev's Imperial patron, Grand Duke

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[9]Misia Sert, Two or Three Muses (London: Museum Press, 1953), p. 111. In addition to her memoirs, this account is drawn from Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, Misia: The Life of Misia Sert (New York: Knopf, 1980).

Vladimir.[10]

The feuilles de location document other links in the chain of financial and cultural interests that meshed in Diaghilev's audience. Like Deutsch de la Meurthe, Camondo, Bardac, and Rothschild, Ephrussi is another name that figures repeatedly among the list of Boris boxholders, and it, too, traced that exemplary progress through the social and cultural history of the Belle Epoque that led so many to the Ballets Russes. The son of a Jewish banker with connections in St. Petersburg and Odessa, Charles Ephrussi came to Paris in 1871, making a name for himself as an art collector and editor of the Gazette des Beaux Arts. He belonged to the Proustian world of the fin-de-siècle: a friend of Comte Robert de Montesquiou and an intimate of the latter's cousin Comtesse Greffuhle, he figured in A la Recherche du temps perdu as one of the originals for Swann. Both his son Maurice and the latter's wife, a woman of Sapphic inclinations who admired Karsavina extravagantly, were fervent devotees of the ballet, inviting company stars to dance at their parties. As was the case with Misia Sert, the Princesse de Polignac, and

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[10]Gabriel Astruc, "Rapport Confidentiel sur la Saison Russe", 19 Nov. 1909, GA25-17, Astruc Papers; "Memoirs of the Late Princesse Edmond de Polignac," Horizon, Aug. 1945, pp. 110-141; Michael de Cossart, The Food of Love: Princesse Edmond de Polignac (1865-1953) and Her Salon (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978).

most of the stalwarts of Diaghilev's audience, they made the transition to ballet from an initial devotion to opera.[11]

Music, however, was not the only point of contact between Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and Europe's great Jewish clans. In the person of Ida Rubinstein, kinship cemented ties of art: through the Varshavskys, a Russian-Jewish family of railroad builders, the wealthy, cultured androgyne of Cléopâtre and Schéhérazade was related to the era's "Jewesses of Art". Rubinstein had two aunts in Paris, Marie Kann and Julia Cahen d'Anvers, and both had glittering artistic salons famous for their wits, socialites, and literati with a passion for novelty in music and art. Julia's husband, an ennobled financier who had made his fortune in the early years of the Third Republic, gloried in Boris, to judge from the frequency with which his name appears on the Opéra booking lists. In the following years, his clan gave its patronage to the Ballets Russes, as did the city's other Jewish

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[11] Dictionnaire de Biographie Française; Encyclopaedia Judaica; Jullian, Robert de Montesquiou, p. 37; Painter, Proust, I, pp. 118-119; Tamara Karsavina, Theatre Street: The Reminiscences of Tamara Karsavina, foreword J.M. Barrie (London: Heinemann, 1930), p. 245; Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 152; Serge Diaghilev, Tel. to Gabriel Astruc, 15 June 1912, GA74-26, Astruc Papers.

salonnières.[12]

These families are only a few of the names belonging to the international banking aristocracy that patronized the first of Diaghilev's theatrical rituals at the Opéra in 1908. Mostly German-Jewish in origin, families like Bischoffsheim, Oppenheim, Natanson, Lippmann, Schiff, Fould, Lazard, Reinach, Erlanger, Hirsch, Stern, Gugenheim, Pelletier, Haas, Ulmann, Bernheim, and Pourtalès, had risen to social and financial prominence in the tolerant religious climate of the Second Empire and early years of the Third Republic. They had intermarried, formed business and family alliances with the Rothschilds and other financial clans, and by the closing decades of the century had begun to marry into le gratin, the upper crust of French society. From the 1880's onward, this group played a key role in French cultural life as patrons, collectors, salonnières, artistic dilettantes, and supporters of innovative artistic trends. Here, in a nutshell was le tout Paris mined by Astruc for Diaghilev's audience.[13]

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[12]The Memoirs of Count Witte, trans. Abraham Yarmolinsky (London: Heinemann, 1921), p. 381; Jullian, Robert de Montesquiou, pp. 41, 223; The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1942).

[13]In addition to the sources indicated above, see Paul H. Emden, Money Powers of Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1937), pp. 259-261.

For artists, le tout Paris represented a liberal source of patronage, an alternative to the institutions of France's official, subsidized culture. Its salons were not merely brilliant, but in contrast to the conservatism of general public taste, broadminded and receptive to new ideas. "They . . . helped to create a new society of talents in which the painter, the scientist, the philosopher, the politician, the novelist and the musician could meet on equal terms in a sympathetic atmosphere and into which newcomers might make their way."[14] The salonnières of the Belle Epoque generously supported artists, taking them into their homes for long periods, encouraging their work, and introducing them to potential buyers or patrons. In the performing arts, especially, salons held the key to success, acting as waystations on the road to a professional career. Isadora Duncan's rise to stardom illustrates the trajectory. Arriving in Paris in 1900, she made friends with Jacques Baugnies, whose mother, Madame de Saint-Marceaux, invited her to perform at a soiree, with no less an accompanist than Ravel. The audience was "appreciative", and as a result Comtesse Greffuhle and Madeleine Lemaire invited her to dance at their homes. Although these performances established Duncan's reputation among a select society public, wide

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[14]Raymond Rudorff, The Belle Epoque (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972), p. 245.

acclaim eluded her. At this point the Princesse de Polignac stepped into the breach, opening the doors of her home to influential theatregoers, critics, and producers. The hugely successful concert was followed by a subscription series, organized with the Princesse's assistance, at the Duncan studio. Professional engagements soon followed.[15]

Duncan's story was not unique. Mata Hari, too, danced at the salons of the rich and well-connected before making her public debut at the Musée Guimet in 1905, as did Marie Rambert.[16] In 1908, Madame de Bénardaky was pressed into service: her fête musicale acquainted the cream of diplomatic society with four of the opera's leading singers even before Boris' premiere.[17] Performances such as these created more than the flurry of publicity represented by a notice in the Figaro society columns. They conjured into being a miniature public even before the debut of a new performer or the premiere of a new work, oiling the rumor mills of society that far more than reviews brought the cultured sophisticates of tout Paris to the theatre.

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[15]de Cossart, The Food of Love, pp. 65-67.

[16]Erika Ostrovsky, Eyes of Dawn: The Rise and Fall of Mata Hari (New York: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 68-79; Marie Rambert, Quicksilver: An Autobiography (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 41-42.

[17]"Le Monde et la Ville," Figaro, 18 May 1908, p. 2, col. 2.

If the art encouraged by these salons was "new", it was rarely avantgarde. Rather, it stood at a social and artistic midpoint between the academic culture of France's subsidized institutions and undertakings of purely commercial intent. Progressive by contrast with the subsidized product, this "new" art represented something akin to an "alternative mainstream", where technical innovation and an ethos of cosmopolitan individualism might be integrated into the traditional purposes of high art.

By profession, inclination, and religion, Astruc stood at the business hub of this "alternative mainstream", which, through his numerous ventures, he actively promoted. Thus, it comes as no surprise to find among the bankers and financiers in the Boris audience a generous sprinkling of individuals and institutions associated with modern trends in music. The composers alone form an impressive list: Maurice Ravel, Paul Dukas, Albert Roussel, Edouard Kann, Georges Hüe, to cite only a few. Dukas also lent his name to the list of patrons in the Boris program, as did Claude Debussy, Gabriel Fauré, and Vincent d'Indy. At every performance, moreover, multiple bookings appear for "Durand", the music publishing firm that handled Saint-Saëns, Debussy, Fauré, Ravel, and numerous other French composers; "Gaveau", the French pianoforte makers who opened the prestigious concert hall that bears their name in 1907; and "Lyon", director of Pleyel, Gaveau's rival in piano manufacture. Completing this cross-section of the

musical world were singers like the legendary Jean de Reszke; distinguished writers and musicologists like Jacques Rivière[18] and Romain Rolland; and powerful impresarios like Otto Kahn and Raoul Gunsbourg. From the ranks of this audience, a veritable who's who of the Paris musical world, came the critics, collaborators, and publicists of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.

In its fin-de-siècle avatar, le tout Paris was a meeting ground for bankers and aristocrats sharing a common interest in the arts. It numbered, too, many first and second generation Jews who found in its relatively tolerant atmosphere an outlet for their cultural aspirations and a means of assimilating into French high society. Wealthy foreigners added another hue to this cosmopolitan milieu. As was the case of the European Jews, by the late nineteenth century Americans like the Princesse de Polignac and her sister the Duchesse Decazes (née Isabelle Singer), Comtesse Boni de Castellane (née Anna Gould, the railroad heiress), and Princesse Joseph de Caraman-Chimay (née Clara Ward) had penetrated the barriers of the French aristocracy, restoring with their millions the threadbare facade of privilege. Other English-speaking millionaires like Mrs. Bertha Potter Palmer, the Chicago biscuit

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[18]For Jacques Rivière, see the entry for 3 June 1908 in The Journals of Arnold Bennett, 1896-1910, ed. Newman Flower (London: Cassell, 1932), p. 117.

manufacturer's wife, and James Hennessy of champagne and cognac fame, took to spending long periods in Paris, where they frequented such glamorous events as Boris, the high points of the city's grande saison. This Anglo-Saxon presence, which came at a time of intense Anglophilia among the Parisian upper classes, was not the only national strain embellishing le tout Paris. In the decades immediately preceding World War I, the French capital became an international pleasure ground, the haunt of Argentine playboys and Indian rajahs, and a mecca for nobilities from Europe's southern and eastern periphery. All these cosmopolitans entered the lore of their adopted city, just as they left a mark on Diaghilev's early audiences.

As a Russian spectacle, Boris attracted the cream of the city's Russian colony. From the Embassy came some of Diaghilev's most assiduous devotees: Ambassador A.J. Nelidow, his second-in-command, A. Nekloudov, and attachés Prince Troubetskoy and Arthur Raffalovich, all of whom attended several performances. Their presence was not the only public sign of Diaghilev's connection with official Russian policy. A host of others attested to this as well. At the Opéra in 1908 one found Grand Dukes galore -- Paul (who saw nearly every performance), Michael, and the Tsar's senior uncle Vladimir -- and a host of Embassy-connected personalities, including Prince Galitzine, Princess Bariatinsky, Madame Goloubeff, and Baron Dmitri de

Gunzburg, the Tsar's advisor on Jewish matters. Like Diaghilev's 1909 saison russe, Boris Godunov was a "politico-artistic manifestation" of the highest order, a sign of the "new tightening" of Russo-French relations.[19] As such, it drew no fewer than three French cabinet ministers and even the President of the Republic. (Indeed, on May 21st, Grand Duke Michael paid a formal call on President Fallières.)[20] Ballet did not break the tie between politics and art. In the glittering audience for the répétition générale that opened the 1909 season sat "tout le monde officiel", with the Russian and Turkish ambassadors nestling close to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs.[21]

For a work so intensely Russian, the ardent support of the city's Polish colony seems at odds with patriotic fervor. Little love was lost between the Godebskis, Potockis, and Czartoryskis, Polish nationalist families long resident in France, and the Russian colossus occupying their homeland.[22] (Count Nicholas Potocki, doyen of the Polish aristocratic community, came to Paris via his parents' Siberian exile, punishment for their role in

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[19]"Un Monsieur de l'Orchestre," "La Soirée: La saison russe au Châtelet," Figaro, 20 May 1909, p. 6, col. 1.

[20]"A Travers Paris," Figaro, 21 May 1908, p. 1, col. 4.

[21]Jules Claretie, "La Vie à Paris," Le Temps, 21 May 1909, p. 2, col. 5.

[22]Gold and Fizdale, Misia, p. 23.

Poland's uprising of 1863.)[23] For the Poles, however, Moussorgsky transcended politics: his work sprang from the Slavic East, that cauldron of festering nationalism and tottering empires. This "Eastern" note struck a familiar chord among others than the Poles and Jews of Diaghilev's audience. Rumanians, too, found their way to Boris. In the stateless cosmopolitans who figured so prominently in Diaghilev's public, one finds an analogue to the supra-nationalist sensibility of his exotic fare.

These slightly déclassé aristocrats turned out in force for Boris, as they would in subsequent years. For them, as for the other wealthy foreigners in the audience, the exoticism and social cachet of Diaghilev's productions mirrored the ambiguities of their own position, the assimilationist aspirations and distinctive tastes that set them apart from the upper-class French mainstream. At the same time, Boris, like the greater part of Diaghilev's early ballet repertoire, presented a "racial" and even political counterpoint to Wagnerism. As Bayreuth became increasingly identified with the extremist ideology of propagandists like Houston Stewart Chamberlain,[24]

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[23]Rubinstein, My Young Years, pp. 214, 230. Potocki was a member of Diaghilev's 1910 patronage committee. "Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 2 June 1910.

[24]Geoffrey G. Field, Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1981), Ch. 7.

Diaghilev's annual Festspiele celebrated within the context of Latin "cosmopolitanism" the Slavic and "Oriental" legacy of the non-Teutonic East.

In noting Bakst's death for the Dial in June 1925, novelist Paul Morand suggested that in the designer's Jewishness lay the key to the "great Israelite audiences that established the success of the Russian Ballet".[25] Jews did, indeed, champion the Ballets Russes, but they supported with equal fervor the production of Boris Godunov that anticipated by nearly a year Bakst's triumphant acclaim with Cléopâtre. They came to Diaghilev's seasons, not as Jews, but as patrons, music lovers, and an integral part of the era's tout Paris. Nor were they alone: other groups shared the social and aesthetic values that guided the Jews of Paris to Diaghilev's audience. As a means of social mobility, an affirmation of cosmopolitan identity, and gesture of support for artistic innovation, identification with the Russian "movement" in art expressed the bourgeois aspirations that had crystallized in the

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[25]Paul Morand, "Paris Letter. May 1925," Dial, June 1925, p. 499.

formation of le tout Paris.[26]

The ethnic, national, and cultural interests of Astruc's brilliantly fabricated audience made it particularly responsive to both the exoticism and musical sophistication of Diaghilev's earliest ballet productions. Not only did the move from opera to ballet demand relatively minor aesthetic shuffling, but exoticism -- or more properly speaking, Orientalism -- was a thread woven into the high and popular art of the fin-de-siècle even if

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[26]Gold and Fizdale, Misia, pp. 231-232; Rubinstein, My Young Years, pp. 231-232. Proust found a logical connection in Madame Verdurin's evolution from a Dreyfusard hostess to a champion of the Russian dancers. "And now that the public taste had begun . . . to go in . . . for exotic forms of music, Mme. Verdurin, a sort of official representative in Paris of all foreign artists, was not long in making her appearance, by the side of the exquisite Princesse Yourbeletief, an aged Fairy Godmother . . . to the Russian dancers. This charming invasion, against whose seductions only the stupidest of critics protested, infested Paris . . . with a fever of curiosity . . . quite as intense perhaps as that aroused by the Dreyfus case. There again Mme Verdurin . . . was to take her place in the front row. Just as she had been seen by the side of Mme. Zola . . . during the trial in the Assize Court, so when the new generation of humanity, in their enthusiasm for the Russian ballet, thronged to the Opera, crowned with the latest novelety in aigrettes, they invariably saw in a stage box Mme. Verdurin by the side of Princess Yourbeletief. And just as, after the emotions of the law courts, people used to go in the evening to Mme. Verdurin . . . so now, little inclined for sleep after the enthusiasm aroused by the Scheherazade or Prince Igor, they repaired to Mme. Verdurin's, where . . . an exquisite supper brought together every night the dancers . . . their director, their designers, the great composers Igor Stravinski and Richard Strauss, a permanent little nucleus, around which . . . the greatest ladies in Paris and foreign royalties were not too proud to gather." Marcel Proust, The Captive, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff (New York: Vintage, 1970), pp. 164-165.

theatrical fashion and design awaited the inspiration of Bakst, Golovin, and Roerich to discover it. The late nineteenth century witnessed a resurgence of interest in Far Eastern art with such entrepreneurs as Camondo, Henri Cernuschi, and Emile Guimet amassing great collections of Chinese, Japanese, and Indian antiquities.[27] Notwithstanding the influence of japonisme on painters and decorative designers, the substance of French Orientalism derived from the ancient Biblical and Islamic lands that stretched from north Africa to Iran, following the course of French imperialist expansion. Beginning in mid-century, writers, painters, and interior designers found in these new spheres of European influence a rich vein of exotica that provided both motifs and thematic material for their work. With the dawn of the new century, Orientalism made its appearance in dance, thanks in large part to Occidental foreigners on the French stage who extended the familiar pale of exotica eastward to India. The most famous, or infamous, of these performers was Mata Hari (alias Margaretha Zelle MacLeod) who made her Paris debut at the Musée Guimet of Asiatic Arts in 1905 and subsequently appeared as Salomé and Cleopatra on the international opera

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[27]Albert Boime, "Entrepreneurial Patronage in Nineteenth-Century France," Enterprise and Entrepreneurs in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century France, ed. Edward C. Carter II, Robert Forster, and Joseph N. Moody (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 151-152.

house circuit.[28] Her spectacular success (her horseback performance au naturel before a Sapphist gathering attended by Colette is legendary) induced other "Hindu" dancers to try their luck in the French capital. Among these was Ruth St. Denis, whose engagement at the Théâtre Marigny in the autumn of 1906 led one critic to compare her "sinister" Cobra dance to Baudelaire's "poison". Meanwhile, at the Olympia Theatre, a rival "danseuse hindique" entertained audiences with an imitation of Miss Ruth's Radha ballet.[29]

Despite the widespread interest in Orientalia, the fashionable "craze" for "Oriental" color and costume on the eve of World War I dated from Diaghilev's first ballet performances. Almost overnight, the highly coloristic and sensual vein of Orientalism identified with the Ballets Russes became decorative and fashion commodities. "The taste for Oriental art came to Paris as a Russian import, through ballet, music, and decoration," commented Figaro in 1913. "Russian artists have acted as intermediaries between the East and us, and they have given us a rather greater taste for oriental color than a taste for their own art."[30]

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[28]Ostrovsky, Eyes of Dawn, Ch. 10.

[29]Suzanne Sheldon, Divine Dancer: A Biography of Ruth St. Denis (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 73-75.

[30]Delhi, "La Vie de Paris. Le Goût Oriental," Figaro, 4 June 1913, p. 1, col. 2.

In subtle ways, the audience that followed Diaghilev through the byways of Ballets Russes Orientalia shifted the aesthetic emphasis of the company's early repertoire, narrowing, by virtue of its taste, the field of artistic possibilities. Exoticism wove a vivid thread in Fokine's early work, but it was only one of the hues stippling his imagination. Hellenism and neo-romanticism were equally vivid, and in the ballets conceived outside Diaghilev's purview, these other themes and styles held their ground. Paris, however, remained cool to them. What fired the passion of Diaghilev's audience was the exoticism of Cléopâtre, Schéhérazade, and Firebird, whose visual opulence, luxurious costuming, and flamboyant effects, replicated theatrically, as Paul Morand later observed, "the boldness of the audience's dress, its immodesties, extravagant coiffures, depilated bodies, cosmetics".[31] Such opulence, mirroring the "increase and spread of wealth" as Stefan Zweig categorized the last years before the war,[32] had been second only to music in the impression created by Boris, and it remained a major production value up to the war. The proliferation of Orientalia on Diaghilev's stage between 1909 and 1914 is more than a sign

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[31]Paul Morand, "Paris Letter. May 1925," Dial, June 1925, p. 154.

[32]Stefan Zweig, The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography (London: Cassell, 1943), p. 151.

of Fokine's spent imagination. Rather, it betrayed a willingness on Diaghilev's part to cater to the tastes of his public and transform a genre of limited possibilities into a commercially exploitable formula. As early as 1910, the charge of commercialism, or pandering to the demands of a sensation-seeking Parisian audience, was raised in the St. Petersburg press by Vladimir Teliakovskii, Director of the Imperial Theatres.[33] Although scarcely an unbiased source, given the history of his relations with Diaghilev and the inevitable competition between the latter's seasons and the Imperial Ballet, Teliakovskii's barbed remarks underscore a central paradox of artistic endeavor in the marketplace. For if removal of institutional constraints opens the field of artistic choices, the loss of financial security imposes its own set of imperatives.

Commercialization of key repertory trends was not the only area where le tout Paris made its presence felt. Diaghilev's earliest collaborative choices equally reflected its influence, dramatizing the role of salons in setting artistic fashion. As early as the summer of 1909, Diaghilev approached Debussy, Fauré, and Ravel in the hope

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[33]V. Serov, Letter to the Editor, Rech, 22 Sept. 1910. Serov's letter is an attack on the position articulated by Teliiakovski in an interview published in Birzhvye vedomosti (Stock Exchange Bulletin) a short time before. I am grateful to Professor Ilya Zilberstein for providing me with a copy of Serov's text.

of securing their collaboration.[34] Although Fauré declined, pleading other commitments, and Debussy's ballet Masques et Bergamasques never materialized, both the timing of Diaghilev's pourparlers and list of proposed collaborators reveal how quickly he had taken the pulse of Parisian life. Fauré, Ravel, and Debussy certainly figured among the era's leading musical lights. But unlike, Satie, shuttling from suburban Autueil to the studios and cafes of Montmartre, all three were reigning favorites of salons. Debussy's wife Emma Bardac, who had divorced a Jewish financier to marry the composer, was a prominent musical hostess. Ravel was the "lion" of Cipa Godebski's salon, while Fauré, who had once taught socialites like Misia Sert, counted sundry princesses among his patrons.

No work revealed salon influence quite so transparently as Le Dieu bleu, which teamed composer Reynaldo Hahn with librettists Federigo de Madrazo and Jean Cocteau, the reigning "prince frivole" of fashionable life. "Diaghilev needed [Hahn]," Stravinsky later wrote, "and therefore staged his Dieu Bleu; he was the salon idol of Paris, and salon support was very useful to Diaghilev at that time. After the war, however, Diaghilev dropped him for the very reason that he had once found him important --

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[34]Buckle, Diaghilev, p. 154.

his salon reputation."[35] Indeed, Hahn traveled in very high circles. Grand Duke Paul and Princess Paley took him up, and at their home, where Diaghilev and the Princesse de Polignac regularly dined, he often entertained.[36] Jewish like his intimate Proust, Hahn was a musical conservative, a "Mozartian classicist" who showed in the "delicate, traditional refinement" of his compositions his "indifference to innovators such as Fauré and Debussy, and his antipathy to Wagner".[37] Known as "Coco" to his friends, Madrazo was another salon favorite, a dilettante who "composed a little and sang a little, both very badly, and painted, rather better a good deal".[38] Like Hahn, to whom he was related, Madrazo was a wealthy South American and a friend of Proust, who used him as one of the originals for the sculptor Ski, his novel's dabbler in all the arts. At a time when cubists and fauves were redrawing the landscape of modern art, Diaghilev continued to pluck his collaborators from the Proustian world of the 1890's.

Diaghilev's imaginative reworking of Art Nouveau and especially the designs of Bakst drew many artists to performances. But like the Ballets Russes itself, the

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[35]Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, Memories and Commentaries (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), p. 77.

[36]"Memoirs of the Late Princesse de Polignac," pp. 132-133.

[37]Painter, Proust, I, 162-163.

[38]Ibid, p. 101.

painters, photographers, and illustrators who brought an artistic coloring to the audience belonged to the aesthetic and social world of the 1890's. If Rodin's bearded figure cast a spell of national genius over the theatre, minor players in the era's artistic chronicle set the prevailing tone: Baron de Meyer, the photographer *par excellence* of high society; cartoonist Georges Coursat, who as Sem caricatured events and personalities of *le tout Paris* for *Figaro*; fashion illustrators George Barbier, Paul Iribe, and Georges Lepape; Cocteau, the salon darling who so wickedly chronicled Diaghilev's inner court, and his friend Valentine (Gross) Hugo, an up-and-coming illustrator; Jacques-Emile Blanche, the "smartest artist of his day, who painted in and dined out only at the most fashionable houses", as Janet Flanner so marvelously described the Belle Epoque's favorite portraitist.[39] These were the artists Diaghilev esteemed, and it is through their eyes that we glean our images of the performers, personalities, and artefacts of his pre-War enterprise. Their presence in the theatre, like the visual record of their impressions, linked the Ballets Russes with a retrograde aesthetic nestling in the ample bosom of high society.

This image suggests the reasons for one of the

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[39]Janet Flanner, *Paris Was Yesterday, 1925-1939*, ed. Irving Drutman (New York: Popular Library, n.d.), p. 54.

most puzzling phenomena of these years: the almost total absence of the avantgarde at Diaghilev's repasts. Only Matisse seems to have made an appearance at the theatre, and one suspects that his visits had rather more to do with Sergei I. Shchukin, the great Moscow patron for whom the artist was completing his murals of "Music" and "The Dance", than his fascination with Diaghilev's art.[40] Indeed, between 1909 and 1914, none of the host of talents employed by Diaghilev in the twenties seems to have ventured from their cold-water studios in Montmartre to the fashionable halls of the Ballets Russes. Only in 1914 does Apollinaire even allude to the Ballets Russes, and tellingly, he does so in anticipation of Coq d'Or, the first of Diaghilev's ballets to employ a designer from the avantgarde. "Far from aping the ways of the public and people in high places toward young French painters, the Russians, unstinting in their commissions, have made Mme. Goncharova a real success. It is from her that they have commissioned the scenery for Rimsky-Korsakov's Coq d'Or, which will be given during the Russian ballet season. And so it is that Russian futurism will display all its pomp at the Opéra, while the new French painting . . . still meets

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[40]Serov, Rech, 22 Sept. 1910; Alfred H. Barr, Matisse: His Art and His Public (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1951), pp. 132-135.

only mockery here."[41] One also suspects that to artists who shunned society the opulence of Diaghilev's audience proved as disturbing as its philistinism. "There was the evening we went to see Nijinsky in the Russian Ballet," recalled American writer John Cournos who visited Paris with his fiancée in 1912. "After the marvelous performance that left me intoxicated and exultant, I became suddenly aware, without a word being said, of Dorothy's thoughts as she scrutinized the well-dressed, well-to-do, self-assured men and handsome modishly attired women issuing from the ground-floor tiers and boxes . . . and a pall settled on my exuberantly happy mood as I escorted her to her flat in La Grande Chaumière."[42]

Fashion was indeed a keynote of Diaghilev's public, as it would remain throughout his company's life. Always in his audience sat key purveyors of the glamorous lifestyle of his successive elites. Like the Belle Epoque tastemakers they gowned, the grands couturiers who went to Boris belonged to an era drawing rapidly to a close. Clustered along and just off the Rue de la Paix, the "Sacred Street" of fashion, running from the Opéra to the

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[41]Guillaume Apollinaire, "Futurisme et Ballets russes," Chroniques d'art 1902-1918, ed. L.-C. Breunig (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 479.

[42]John Cournos, Autobiography (New York: Putnam's, 1935), p. 212.

Comédie Française,[43] establishments like Doucet, Caron, and Worth were slowly yielding power to the less staid houses moving westward toward the Champs-Elysées.

Typical of this newer element among Diaghilev's audience was couturier Paul Poiret, whose name, with Bakst's, invokes the "oriental" invasion in women's dress before the war, and whose meteoric rise to fashion stardom paralleled that of the Ballets Russes. Like Diaghilev, Poiret was a master of packaging, a marketing wizard who combined artistic flair with business acumen. He was the first couturier to develop subsidiary product lines and market them internationally, and he was the first to advertise his styles in limited edition publications.[44] At his lavish costume balls, celebrities of the demi-monde mingled with personalities drawn from the financial and artistic elite. Like his business techniques, Poiret's "audiences" foreshadowed important changes in the Ballets Russes.

The first modern couturier to become a social celebrity, Poiret was also the first to design regularly for the stage. Other houses, including Doucet where Poiret received his start, had previously "dressed" theatre

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[43]Paul Poiret, My First Fifty Years (London: Gollancz, 1931), p. 112.

[44]Charles Spencer, Erté (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1970), p. 23.

personalities, thus lending costume a touch of high-fashion elegance and the creations of less well-known designers the cachet of theatrical exposure. Poiret, however, extended the couturier's traditional role to include not only full-scale productions but, in a major break with the past, the supervision of decor and overall visual effect.[45] Almost always, his designs for revues mirrored the exotic opulence of the ballet stage: Nabuchodonozor was Assyrian in inspiration, Aphrodite Egyptian, Eightpence a Mile Persian.[46] Commercial undertakings of this kind not only popularized Poiret's own fashion signature. Equally, they marketed the decorative aesthetic of the Ballets Russes.

Poiret's shuttling between theatre and couture suggests the blurring of traditional distinctions between style and stage. Advertisements for a "Parfum Prince Igor" in the official Ballets Russes program for the 1911 season and the tendency of illustrators George Barbier and Paul Iribe to transform Diaghilev's pre-War dancers into the eroticized mannequins of exotic fashion plates point to a similar phenomenon. Bakst's secondary career as a dress designer offers still another example of the conflation of categories that ended by fetishizing onstage costume as an

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[45]Poiret, pp. 90-91.

[46]Ibid., pp. 102-103, 176; Martin Battersby, "Diaghilev's Influence on Fashion and Decoration," in Charles Spencer and Philip Dyer, The World of Serge Diaghilev (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1974), pp. 150-151.

object of consumption for the Ballets Russes audience. Between 1910 and 1915, when color reproductions of his designs dominated company programs and special inserts in Comoedia Illustré, Diaghilev's star artist signed his name to a whole range of fashion plates that evoked the bold colors and patterns, Grecian draperies, and exotic headdresses of his stage creations. During this period as well, he acquired a following among Europe's new-style international celebrities whose taste in clothing was outré rather than refined and who used dress to create a theatrically-conceived persona. Tall, green-eyed Marchesa Luisa Casati was the most fascinating and extravagant of these clients. The daughter of a Milanese industrialist, she had married into the Venetian nobility, and, between stays in Paris, lived off the Grand Canal at the Palazzo Non Infinito, later the home and museum of Peggy Guggenheim. She gave immense parties, orgies of conspicuous consumption, where ocelots, panthers, and serpents lent a bizarre touch to her toilette. For Casati, Bakst created numerous costumes for fancy dress and private wear that rivaled in effect the designs for bayadères and odalisques of his exotic ballets.[47] Like Poiret's theatrical and product sidelines, commissions of this kind

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[47]Charles Spencer, Leon Bakst (London: Academy Editions, 1973), pp. 170-183; Virginia Cowles, 1913: The Defiant Swan Song (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), pp. 165-167.

revealed both the impact of Diaghilev's pre-War art on fashion and that of fashion on artistic packaging and promotion. At the same time, they illustrated the intersection of ballet with a celebrity-seeking consumerist public.

The Boris audience remained the foundation of Diaghilev's Parisian public. But as years went on, the Ballets Russes began to attract other elements as well. Reviewing the 1912 season, critic Louis Laloy described these newcomers to Diaghilev's audience.

> Finally, four consecutive seasons of ballets have brought out the noisy mob of the fashionable public who arrive late, whose chatter serves to drown out the orchestra the moment the curtain has fallen, who know neither the titles of the works nor the names of their creators, but who glory in stuffing with their diamonds and their pearls the hall of the Châtelet which becomes even more sparkling than the Opéra for a few evenings, in spite of its ineffaceable dust and its moldy smell of the stable.[48]

A master publicist, Diaghilev used every means possible to create an artistic and social "splash", pressing salons, newspapers, and embassy contacts into service for Boris and his early dance seasons. With each succeeding year, however, the need to surpass previous

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[48]Louis Laloy, "La Musique: Les Ballets Russes. Igor Stravinski," quoted in Truman C. Bullard, "The First Performance of Igor Stravinsky's Sacre du Printemps," Diss. Rochester 1971, I, p. 26.

successes became more urgent. With the formation of a permanent company, it became an economic imperative. Diaghilev now set out to entice the merely fashionable to grand "celebrity" events.

Charity galas and other special performances were among the ways Diaghilev created that aura of social-cum-artistic uniqueness that became his company's trademark. The first _répétition générale_ of the 1910 season marked the occasion of an extremely fashionable charity event, although due to a mishap in the arrival of scenery from Berlin, it had to be canceled.[49] Two weeks later, however, the company gave the _Polovtsian Dances_ and _Le Festin_ on a gala Opéra program that also included Richard Strauss' _Salomé_ (with Mary Garden singing the title role) and a _Coppélia_ in which the Opéra's Mlle. Piron _en travestie_ partnered Carlotta Zambelli as Swanilda. On July 1st, Russians and French again pooled their talents: for this unique event, _Cléopâtre_ shared a bill with _Rigoletto_ and the ballet divertissement from _Thaïs_.[50] Events of this kind, duly reported in the society columns of _Figaro_, added immeasurably to the cachet of Diaghilev's enterprise.

The celebrity rehearsal was another device calculated to bring fashionable Paris to the theatre. By

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[49]"Courrier des Théâtres," _Figaro_, 2 June 1910.

[50]"Courrier des Théâtres," _Figaro_, 1 July 1910.

contrast to the Mariinsky's closed rehearsals, in France celebrities, socialites, and journalists thronged Diaghilev's "sneak previews". In June 1910, Figaro published three notices of Firebird rehearsals, reporting the ballet's "most considerable effect" upon the audience and anticipating the work's future success.[51] Rehearsals served many purposes. Diaghilev's practice of inviting friendly critics like Robert Brussel and Raoul Brevanne of Figaro, Ricciardo Canudo of Montjoie!, and Jean-Louis Vaudoyer to observe new works in the final stage of preparation ensured favorably-disposed articles even before the actual premiere. (Another way of accomplishing this was to "plant" commissioned texts like Cocteau's 1911 panegyric "Le Ballet russe" in influential newspapers and magazines. Here, Astruc's connections proved invaluable.)[52] In addition to creating advance press, rehearsals stimulated informal publicity. Diaghilev

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[51]"Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 19, 23, and 25 June 1910.

[52]Steegmuller, Cocteau, pp. 74-75. The article in question was commissioned as a publicity text by Astruc and subsequently published in Comoedia Illustré. For his services, Cocteau billed Astruc's Société Musicale for 100 francs. Diaghilev exploited Cocteau's writing skills on other occasions. His front-page letter to the editor of Figaro protesting the newspaper's scurrilous attack on L'Après-midi d'un faune was actually drafted by Cocteau. Gaston Calmette, "A propos d'un faune," Figaro, 31 May 1912, p. 1, cols. 5-6; Cocteau's handwritten draft is in the Jean Cocteau Collection, George Arendts Research Library, Syracuse University.

distributed vast numbers of free tickets to the hand-picked audience of "actors, painters, musicians, writers, and the most cultured representatives of society"[53] which attended his *répétitions générales*: in the case of *Giselle* only 203 of the 1967 spectators who attended the *répétition générale* actually paid for tickets.[54] With their access to salons, these unofficial publicists sent gossip about forthcoming events rippling among Diaghilev's target audience.[55] At the same time, they prepared the ground for the *réclame* necessary to make "difficult" ballets like *Sacre* both celebrity events and financial successes.

Under Diaghilev's aegis, the rehearsal itself became an event where the offstage antics of a celebrity public rivaled those of the dancers on stage. In his journal entry for July 1, 1910, André Gide described one

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[53]Igor Stravinsky, *Stravinsky: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936), p. 47.

[54]The Opéra records for this event, which took place on 17 June 1910, are in AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales.

[55]Astruc exploited this technique for non-Diaghilev events as well. On 9 June 1913, *Figaro* reported a "most interesting private recital of a new opera" by the Italian composer Ildebrando da Parma, one of whose works was scheduled to be performed the following day at the Théâtre du Châtelet. The concert version was sung by Madame Golouboff, a well-known figure in the Paris Russian colony, and the guests included Misia Edwards (Sert), Princesse de Polignac, Claude Debussy and his wife, Chaliapin, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Count Harry Kessler, Jean Cocteau, José-María Sert, and the Russian Ambassador. "Le Monde et la Ville," *Figaro*, 9 June 1913, p. 3, col. 6.

such occasion:

> . . . a month ago, upon the insistent urging of Mme de Noailles and Mme Mühlfeld, I . . . [joined] them in their box at a rehearsal of the Russian Ballet at the Opéra. In my whole life I [have] never felt more numb, more out of place, more mute. Mme de Regnier and her sister-in-law, Henri de Regnier, who was being witty, and Vaudoyer, with a dark and fatal look, were also there . . .
>
> "M. Gide," exclaimed Mme de Regnier, "come and help us calm Mme de Noailles." (The latter was talking so loud and so animatedly that she was attracting the attention of half the audience on the floor.)[56]

Another microcosm presents itself here: a world peopled by the minor makers of literary history, poetasters and romancers who, unlike Proust, transcended neither their era nor their milieu, and whose passion for the Ballets Russes only enhanced the latter's image of retrograde art and privilege. Let us identify the personalities of whom Gide speaks: Franco-Rumanian Comtesse-Anna de Noailles, famed for her languors even more than her verse; journalist Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, who penned poetic garlands to Karsavina and the libretto of Spectre de la Rose; Marie de Regnier, daughter of Parnassian poet José María de Heredia, who wrote lackluster novels under the pseudonym Gérard d'Houville; Madame Mühlfeld, a powerful society hostess in whose drawing room congregated everybody who was anybody

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[56]The Journals of Andre Gide, ed. and trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Knopf, 1947), I, p. 265-266.

among critics.[57] This was not the first time society had intruded on Gide's pleasure in ballet. Reviewing Diaghilev's 1909 season for the Nouvelle Revue Française, the novelist prefaced his remarks with criticism of the propagandist on whose enthusiasm, social cachet -- and pen -- Diaghilev relied well into the 1920's.

> In Figaro at the end of the month of May, Jacques-Emile Blanche expressed his admiration for the mise-en-scène and decors of the Russian performances offered us at the Châtelet. Doubtless, a little less wonderment would have been revealed in the course of his eloquent article had Monsieur Blanche been acquainted with the efforts in this area by Reinhardt, Martersteig, and Valentin in Berlin, Cologne, Vienna, etc. and their often felicitous results. The Prince Igor backdrop would not have appeared any less admirable, but assuredly the decor for Pavillon d'Armide would have.[58]

The conduct of Diaghilev's society following may have disgruntled Gide and enraged Fokine.[59] Diaghilev, however, both condoned and encouraged it, establishing a precedent for audience decorum that foreshadowed the tumultuous reception of Nijinsky's works in 1912 and 1913. The memorable premiere of Sacre again found Madame Mühlfeld

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[57]Edmonde Charles-Roux, Chanel = Her Life, Her World and the Woman Behind the Legend She Herself Created, trans. Nancy Amphoux (New York: Knopf, 1975), p. 125; Gold and Fizdale, Misia, pp. 42-51; Painter, Proust, I, 132.

[58]A[ndré] G[ide], "Les représentations russes au Châtelet," NRF, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 546.

[59]Grigoriev, pp. 28-29.

in the audience, and when composer Florent Schmitt bellowed, "Down with the sluts of the sixteenth!", unmoved by the insult, she set the tone for high society by uttering loud peals of laughter.[60] Not surprisingly, the aesthetic and social values of Diaghilev's key Paris supporters condemned all but the most innocuous forms of innovation.

With the advent of ballet, another new element was added to the audience, one that sent a whiff of notoriety across the theatre. Beginning in 1909 and accelerating as the war approached, the demi-monde, that glamorous half-world of courtesans, actresses, rakes, and tabloid journalists whose amorous intrigues and tragic suicides so fascinated the Belle Epoque, found a place alongside the connoisseurs and collectors of high society. Like actresses, dancers gravitated almost automatically to the demi-monde: no amount of artistry could wipe the stigma of lower class origins and sexual impropriety from the branded followers of Terpsichore. With the exception of Rosita Mauri, a former étoile teaching at the Opéra school, and Mathilde Kschessinska, Petersburg's prima ballerina assoluta, dancers had shied from the Boris audience. In 1909, however, ballet and concert stars alike

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[60]Doris J. Monteux, It's All in the Music (New York: Farrar, Straus and Firoux, 1965), p. 90; Bullard, I, 152; Charles-Roux, Chanel = Her Life, p. 125.

held a place of honor: in addition to Mauri, there was Carlotta Zambelli, the Opéra's reigning étoile, Mariquita, ballet mistress of the Opéra-Comique, Isadora Duncan, and Natalia Trouhanova. Astruc's efforts to introduce a specifically dance element into the Diaghilev audience did not stop with prestige personalities. From the Opéra and Comédie Française, he commandeered a "frieze" of "bediamonded" beauties, a corbeille of alternating blondes and brunettes, whom he sat in the front of the dress circle. "Never," wrote a susceptible critic, "has a gala hall been more agreeable to contemplate."[61] Nor was this the only means by which Astruc reiterated ballet's traditional association with sexual impropriety. Among the other notables in the audience were such actresses as Louise de Mornand and Madeleine Carlier, who doubled between performances as demi-mondaines.

The popularity of the Ballets Russes among Paris pleasure-seekers also reflected the renaissance of dance as a public social pastime. In 1911 and 1912 the tango invaded fashionable tearooms, "revolutionizing the manners and mores of the salons and the habits of society,"[62] while at chic supper clubs exhibition dancers like Vernon and

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[61]Jules Claretie, "La Vie à Paris," Le Temps, 21 May 1909, p. 2, col. 5.

[62]Miguel Zamacoïs, "Lettre à mon neveu sur la Danse," Figaro, 12 June 1913, p. 1, col. 1.

Irene Castle entertained a cosmopolitan mélange of Argentine millionaires, Russian Grand Dukes, French aristocrats, and New York's "Four Hundred". Among the pleasure-minded habitués of the Café de Paris, the audience for ballet and social dancing overlapped, as it did at the races and across the footlights. But there were other connections as well. At one of Anthony Drexel's parties in London, the Castles shared the limelight with Nijinsky, while at Deauville, the Casino engaged both the star couple and the Ballets Russes to headline the resort's inaugural season. Leaving no stone unturned in their quest for elegance and cachet, the Casino had Gabriel Astruc prepare the guest list for Deauville's official opening.[63]

In private entertaining, too, ballet overlapped with fashions in recreation. In June 1913, the cream of Paris society turned out for the "leçon de danse" organized by Princesse Amédée de Broglie. That same month, the Marquise de Ganay, a longtime Diaghilev supporter, gave a brilliant fête that featured lords and titled ladies in a program of "dances of yesteryear". With settings that ranged from Byzantine to Empire (Josephine's rose garden at Malmaison was the setting for a tableau to the music of

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[63]Irene Castle, Castles in the Air, as told to Bob and Wanda Duncan (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 56-58, 79-80; E. Cornuche, Letters to Gabriel Astruc, 22 June 1912 and 1 July 1912, GA115-7, GA115-8, Astruc Papers. The Casino selected and contracted entertainment for the resort.

Spectre de la Rose), the event was styled a répétition générale. Still another entertainment that June drew inspiration from ballet: at Comte Aynard de Chabrillan's, guests in romantic era tarlatans evoking Les Sylphides performed a "Fantaisie sur des valses de Schubert" staged by Opéra balletmaster Leo Staats.[64] All these events coincided with Diaghilev's most brilliant pre-War season.

Isadora Duncan's success, moreover, spawned a host of "interpretative" imitators, who, like the fashionable converts to eurhythmics, added to the heterogenity of Diaghilev's audience. The dancer Caryathis was among the growing number of Paris teachers who catered to this new clientele of amateurs and the figure-conscious. A former dressmaking apprentice who had a studio in the heart of Montmartre, she taught an unorthodox blend of eurythmics-cum-ballet and gave recitals of dances choreographed to Ravel and Satie. In a poster for one such event, Bakst drew a tunic-clad figure weaving Duncanesque movements among serpentine lengths of exotic fabric.[65]

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[64]"Le Monde et la Ville," Figaro, 9 June 1913, p. 3, col. 6; Ververt, "La Vie de Paris. Danses d'autrefois. Une Fête chez la comtesse de Béarn," Figaro, 8 June 1913, p. 1, cols. 3-4; Régina, "La Nuit Blanche," Figaro, 2 June 1913, p. 3, cols. 4-5.

[65]Charles-Roux, Chanel - Her Life, pp. 118-120. The Bakst poster is reproduced in illustration 60.

Unlike the painters who were her neighbors, Caryathis did not confine her activities to Montmartre. A part-time demi-mondaine, she ventured into the limelight of fashionable Paris, and with another "kept" woman, her pupil Gabrielle Chanel, and two of her lovers, attended the premiere of Sacre. Her appearance that night added still another sensation to that sensation-filled occasion: the fringe across her forehead, all that was left of tresses clipped off in a fit of romantic pique, gave Paris its first sight of bobbed hair.[66]

By 1913, Diaghilev had certainly put ballet on the artistic map of fashionable Paris. His mixed dance and opera season that spring at Astruc's recently inaugurated Théâtre des Champs-Elysées was a "stupendous success", with the public, even before the opening gala, "literally [taking] the box office . . . by assault to carry off the last seats".[67] Receipts for the first two ballet nights totaled Frs. 62,000, while takings for the third performance alone exceeded Frs. 100,000, Frs. 35,000 more than the highest figure of Astruc's record-breaking Metropolitan Opera season at the Châtelet in 1910.[68] On

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[66] Ibid., pp. 122-126.

[67] "The New Lawn Tennis Ballet," Dancing Times, June 1913, p. 579; "Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 14 May 1913, p. 5, col. 2.

[68] "Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 19 May 1913, p. 7, col. 2; "Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 1 July 1910.

the morning of the fourth performance, not a seat was to be had, and on June 11th, Astruc announced that an extra seven performances had been added in view of the season's "enormous success".[69]

Despite the glowing record of triumphs, dance itself remained the least appreciated ingredient of the Diaghilev recipe. Russian-style balletomania did not take root in Paris, and among the outpouring of press reports and articles, Jacques Rivière's attempts to analyze choreographic form, particularly in his impassioned articles about Sacre, stand out as unique. Critics lavished attention on composers and designers who awoke on the morrow of a premiere to find themselves instant celebrities, while stars like Nijinsky and Karsavina inspired the passion of company devotees. Under the pressure of financial necessity, Diaghilev eschewed the task of educating his Parisian public. Instead, he sought to dazzle and tantalize it, counting on the allure of fashion and scandal to establish a niche for his enterprise on the Parisian firmament.

Diaghilev's early seasons held a special appeal for Slavic, Jewish, and other notables of foreign descent living in the French capital. By 1913, however, this

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[69]"Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 23 May 1913, p. 6, col. 1; "Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 11 June 1913, p. 5, col. 4.

relatively assimilated group was overshadowed as fresh arrivals from abroad crowded Diaghilev's seasons. Not all of these foreigners were as aesthetically sophisticated as Carl Van Vechten, who shared a loge with Gertrude Stein at a performance of Sacre.[70] Many critics decried the enormous influx of tourists ("knot-headed foreigners," Roland-Manuel called them[71]), who flocked to the Ballets Russes and other "cosmopolitan spectacles" during the Grande Saison de Paris. To this status and pleasure-seeking public, which descended, as Astruc wrote, "upon our caravansaries, our restaurants, our theatres, and our racetracks" and willingly paid "three times the normal price for the same hotel room, the same mutton chop, the same orchestra stalls which are offered at a saving -- but to no avail during the rest of the year,"[72] reviewers sought to lay the blame for the outrageous behavior of the Sacre audience.

"A good half of the so-called Parisian audience," wrote Léon Vallas in La Revue française de musique,

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[70]Carl Van Vechten, Fragments From an Unwritten Autobiography (New Haven: Yale Univ. Library, 1955), II, p. 20.

[71]Roland-Manuel, "Le Sacre du Printemps," quoted in Bullard, I, 107.

[72]Gabriel Astruc, "A Propos d'un temple enseveli," quoted in Bullard, I, 105.

> is made up of people who are as foreign to France as they are to art, and that more than a quarter of the remainder are socialites who are incapable of being moved by an daring artistic venture. We are constrained to believe that the audience which ordinarily frequented the théâtres lyriques and concerts was not heavily represented in the shocking racket that has been heard throughout all the performances of Le Sacre du Printemps.[73]

Like Gustave de Pawlowski, editor-in-chief of Comoedia, and Florent Schmitt, Vallas doubtless exaggerated the impact of foreigners out of wounded Gallic pride. Even if his remarks are taken with the requisite grain of salt, they do document a remarkable change in the values and composition of Diaghilev's audience since the premiere of Boris five years before.

By 1913, the Diaghilev enterprise inevitably prompted thoughts of fashion and scandal, along with artistic daring. A web of similar associations also figured in the public mind about Astruc's Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, which stirred controversy even prior to opening in early 1913. Located on one of the most fashionable triangles of the city's most luxurious quarter, the theatre epitomized cosmopolitan opulence. A striking example of the Modern Style in architecture and the first public building to use reinforced concrete, it drew charges of "industrial rigidity" and foreign, specifically German

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[73]Léon Vallas, "Le Sacre du Printemps," quoted in Bullard, I, 108.

influence, in its design.[74] To finance his triple theatre complex, Astruc set up international patronage committees.[75] He approached the city's international community, flattering wealthy expatriates like Count Nicholas Potocki (who eventually donated Frs. 100,000) with the assurance that contributing to the project would validate their status as Parisians.[76] Astruc's programming also came under fire on nationalist grounds, and he was accused again and again of promoting German, Italian, and Russian art at the expense of the home-grown product.[77] Similar charges had been raised in April 1911, when various theatrical unions threatened to strike in protest of Astruc's engagement of Italian musicians for a "saison russe" at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt that featured Julie Sedova, a Mariinsky ballerina, and Ivan Clustine, a one-time Bolshoi balletmaster.[78] The prevailing xenophobia carried racial overtones as well. A caricature of the era depicted Astruc as a long-nosed pasha complete with turban

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[74]Bullard, I, 72.

[75]Astruc, Le Pavillon des fantômes, pp. 274-275.

[76]Rubinstein, My Young Years, pp. 231-232.

[77]Bullard, I, 75.

[78]Paul Bochin, "Le Conflit des Musiciens," Le Journal, 28 April 1911, GA122-2, Astruc Papers.

and oversized rings.[79]

By 1913, the noisy, untutored mob of fashionable and demi-monde Paris had partly displaced the musically-educated community of amateurs who had brought knowledge, appreciation, and understanding to Diaghilev's early seasons. That generation had been one of connoisseurs bred in the habits of aristocracy, even if they were not bluebloods themselves. The Rothschilds, Camondos, Doucets, Singers, and Reinach's, names enshrined as the "grands donateurs" of the Louvre and Jeu de Paume, allied the collector's instinct with the spirit of the connoisseur. Their superb collections of eighteenth-century and impressionist art found their way not into the marketplace but to the halls of museums.

Diaghilev's newly crystallizing public, by contrast, was one of consumers. The keynote of the connoisseur is disinterested appreciation and taste; that of the consumer "good value". The first seeks beauty; the second judges quality by rarity and price. Indeed,

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[79]The caricature, by Jean Gast, was reproduced in the London Bystander. Gabriel Astruc, Clipping File, Dance Collection. A caricature by Sem published in Figaro on 28 June 1910 had similar anti-Semitic overtones. Picturing six top-hatted millionaires watching the Grand Prix, the cartoon draws attention to the "hooked" protruberances of Baron Maurice de Rothschild, Mssrs. Maurice Ephrussi, Gaston-Dreyfus, and Edmond Blanc -- in sharp contrast to the "ski-jump" noses of Mssrs. Prat and W.K. Vanderbilt. Sem, "La Tribune des Propriétaires," Figaro, 28 June 1910, p. 3.

provisions for artistic and social rarité were written in 1911 into Diaghilev's contract with the Société des Casinos de Deauville. Here he agreed to stage "a ballet not yet performed in Paris" for the opening season of the fashionable resort in August 1912 and also promised not to accept engagements at any other resort on the Norman coast that summer.[80] Where repetition might offer the connoisseur further occasion for contemplation, for the consumer it merely lessens the value of the original. By 1913, the company's de luxe programs had become collector's items, and as bibliographic raritês, these beautifully illustrated publications were sold independently of performances.[81] With the emergence of the ballet consumer, the artefacts of the Ballets Russes, its programs, props, costumes, dancers, and even performances were transformed from objets d'art to articles whose value was determined by their scarcity in the marketplace.

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[80]Contract between M. Cornuche and Serge Diaghilev, 30 Dec. 1911, GA64-16, Astruc Papers.

[81]"Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 4 June 1910.

CHAPTER IX

LONDON: LORDS, LADIES, AND LITERATI

It is with a certain trepidation that one approaches the subject of Diaghilev in England. For here, in the country Diaghilev regarded with mingled condescension and distrust, his company left a mark whose traces are perceptible even today. Nowhere else has the Ballets Russes become a part of the cultural inheritance of so many educated people or inspired so many knowledgeable tomes; in no other country has the company been so transmogrified and mythologized.

Like the art of translation, memory betrays as often as it reveals, reconstructing the past through a prism of later perceptions and experiences. For British memoirists of the early Ballets Russes, this is especially true. Diaghilev's lengthy sojourns in postwar London, together with the revival of interest in the Ballets Russes spurred by Richard Buckle's 1954 Diaghilev Exhibition, inevitably colored memories of the troupe's initial seasons -- even those of participants. Consider Marie Rambert's rhapsodic recollection of Diaghilev's Georgian public. "It was not at all the fashionable Covent Garden audience of the Ring, or even the fashionable Drury Lane audience of

the autumn melodrama of those days," she wrote after seeing the Diaghilev Exhibition, "but . . . an intelligentsia of the theatre, such as assembled in the same years for the Sumurun of Max Reinhardt and the best productions of Granville-Barker of the Savoy."[1]

Here, as with so many recollections of the Diaghilev era, contemporary evidence tells a different story. Intellectuals did indeed give their allegiance to the Ballets Russes, but only after the war. Between 1911 and 1914 Diaghilev's public resembled nothing so much as an exclusive club where the British ruling class displayed its brilliant plumage.

Even more than in Paris, the core of Diaghilev's ballet audience in London came from the city's opera-going public. Of his six pre-War seasons, no fewer than four took place at Covent Garden, then as now England's premier musical showplace. Venue, however, only partly explains the distinctive cast of his public. Ironically, the city over which the Ballets Russes exerted its greatest long-term influence failed, in the pre-War era, to offer a single independent season of this immensely popular attraction. From 1911-1914, Russian ballet appeared on the London stage exclusively within the context of regular opera seasons and even, occasionally, on the same bill with

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[1]Dame Marie Rambert, "What the Diaghileff Ballet Meant to Us," in Ballet Decade, ed. Arnold Haskell (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1956), p. 203.

its sister art.[2] With evenings of Russian ballet alternating with programs of German, French, Italian, and Russian opera, and subscription plans that covered both lyrical and choreographic events, Diaghilev raised before London's admiring audiences the standard of music drama in yet another of its many contemporary guises.

London's opera-going audience was far from uniform. It encompassed Society, serious music-lovers, and people of modest means, all of whom patronized at least some of Diaghilev's ventures between 1911 and 1914. In launching the Ballets Russes, however, Diaghilev ignored the last two categories of patrons. He swept into the English capital on the crest of an imperial wave that brought royalties, dignitaries, high government officials, and the flower of the nation's peerage to the coronation of George V. At the dazzling gala that formed part of the festivities, his troupe danced its most courtly work, Le Pavillon d'Armide, and culled from the assemblage of privilege and power its majority pre-War public.

In 1911-1912 the secessionist stood silently by as the barin in Diaghilev enlisted the most conservative institution in London to ensure his company's triumph. "I

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[2]During the company's 1911 and 1912 summer seasons, for instance, Diaghilev's works were frequently paired with the one-act operas Pagliacci and Il Segreto di Susanna. In winter 1913, Carnaval and Richard Strauss' Salome made up an unlikely bill. Diaghilev's last pre-War season teamed Le Rossignol, in its original operatic version with Midas and Schéhérazade, Le Coq d'Or with Schéhérazade or Narcisse, and A Night in May with Petrushka.

have purposely omitted any mention of the Covent Garden Grand Opera Season," wrote Francis Toye in a 1911 survey of "Opera in England," "because that stands and will always stand apart."

> It is frankly exotic, a flower carefully nurtured to capture the fancy of a few rich people. Without wishing to echo the conventional . . . sneer at the subscribers who regard it mainly as a parade-ground for their best clothes and their most expensive jewels -- which is and always has been one of the functions of an Opera House in a metropolis -- it were idle to pretend that Covent Garden is primarily concerned with opera as an art. The audience demands first-rate singers, and cares very little what they sing; the Syndicate expects a profit, and cares must as little how it is earned . . . There the matter ends.[3]

For this Covent Garden audience Puccini was god.[4] Verdi stood high among the angels, Rossini, Leoncavallo, and Wolf-Ferrari in the lesser orders. Their works

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[3]Francis Toye, "Opera in England," The English Review, Dec. 1911, p. 159. Saturday Review critic John Runciman echoed this view. "What has Covent Garden to do with opera?" he asked in 1913. "Nominally, of course, a very great deal: in practice next to nothing. The centre of interest is the auditorium, not the stage. The success of the season is not Melba, Caruso or another, but the lady who appears in the boxes with the smallest amount of clothing above the waist and whose headgear and the rest represent the vastest sum of money." John F. Runciman, "Opera of To-day and Yesterday," The Saturday Review, 26 July 1913, p. 107.

[4]"The only modern composer who can be said to rival the ancients in the estimation of our opera-goers." Review of Il Segreto di Susanna, in Play Pictorial [1911], n.p.

dominated the repertory in 1911 and 1912,[5] prompting outbursts far less temperate than Toye's measured critique. Henry Hardinge urged Oscar Hammerstein, proprietor of the short-lived, popularly-priced London Opera House, "to sweep away the old operas and conventions, above all the horrible old scenery which is one of Covent Garden's most cherished traditions, and . . . lift [your] eyes towards the dawn of that new era for opera which rose with the coming of [Gordon] Craig."[6] It is indeed ironic that the Ballets Russes found its earliest supporters, not among partisans of the "new art" or even Wagner's ardent enthusiasts,[7] but among the tiara-ed admirers of "second-rate Italians".[8]

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[5]In the summer of 1912, Puccini's Madama Butterfly, La Bohème, La Fanciulla del West, and Tosca claimed fully a quarter of the "Grand Season's" offerings. Verdi was represented by Aida, Rigoletto, and La Traviata, Rossini by The Barber of Seville, Leoncavalo by Pagliacci, and Wolf-Ferrari by Il Segreto di Susanna and I Giogelli della Madonna. The other works produced that season were Charpentier's Louise, Meyerbeer's Les Huguenots (italianized as Gli Ugonotti), Massenet's Manon, and Zandonai's Conchita.

[6]Henry Hardinge, "A Word on the Hammerstein Opera," The English Review, March 1912, p. 724.

[7]"It is overwhelmingly a sign of the times, is it not," began a Bystander article in the autumn of 1911, when Diaghilev shared the stage at the Royal Opera House with Wagner's Ring, "this rage for Russian Ballet, this craze for dancing at Covent Garden, which has put mere opera into quite suburban shade (compare clothes, also jewels on 'Ring' nights with clothes, also jewels, when the Russian Ballet dances) . . ." O.M.D., "Society's Love of the Wordless Play," The Bystander, 15 Nov. 1911, p. 332.

[8]Rev. of The Russian Opera by Rosa Newmarch and History of Russian Music by H. Montague Nathan, The English Review, June 1914, p. 568.

If critics railed and highbrows caviled at this state of affairs, Society was content with things as they were. "We are often reproached," wrote "The Woman About Town," a Sketch society column that regularly noted doings at Covent Garden, "for not being musical, and the Opera people are accused of not giving us new works."

> The Truth is that our Opera is characteristic of ourselves; we do not care to take our musical pleasures too seriously . . . we have works we know which we can enjoy, usually as a respite between social engagements. Occasionally, we have a novelty to discuss and decide upon, by way of a little sensation . . . The Russian ballet came, was seen, conquered, comes again . . . The Opera Syndicate . . . have tried us with new works with great reputations many a time, to their great cost -- only a very limited number were approved."[9]

A greater contrast with Diaghilev's novelty-hungry Paris audience can scarcely be imagined.

"Opera and Society function combined," to quote the same columnist,[10] sums up the Diaghilev ballet in its earliest London avatar. Hence, the silence of the era's intellectual journals, scarcely broken until Diaghilev's magnificent productions of Russian opera in 1913-1914, and the equally telling clamor of the society weeklies, which brimmed with details of costume, headdress, and jewelry of ballet boxholders during their sojourns in town for the

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[9]"The Woman About Town," The Sketch, 17 April 1912, p. 63.

[10]Ibid.

Season.[11] The aura of privileged frivolity that surrounded the troupe is evoked by other artifacts: the advertisements for Paquin gowns, J. Duvelleroy fans, Madame Rubinstein's Maison de Beauté Valaze, and Austin "Pullman Limousines" in the Coronation season souvenir program;[12] and more prosaically, by the schedule of ticket prices -- the highest in London -- that kept Diaghilev's rich repasts

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[11]The intellectual periodicals include the Fortnightly Review, The Edinburgh Review, and The English Review as well as such weeklies as The New Age, The Athenaeum, The Nation, The Saturday Review, The Outlook, and The New Statesman. The Athenaeum "noted" Diaghilev premieres, usually in two sentence items in its "Musical Gossip" column. The Outlook gave more extended attention to Ballets Russes productions, but as its reviews were usually written by Edwin Evans, they focused almost exclusively on the music. Only the New Statesman, which began publication in the spring of 1913, gave regular coverage to Diaghilev's ballet works. By contrast, the society-oriented Sketch and Bystander referred repeatedly to Diaghilev events while also publishing photographs and reviews of productions.

[12]H. Saxe Wyndham, Royal Opera and Imperial Russian Ballet. Coronation Season Covent Garden 1911. Containing the Plots of the Operas and Ballets and Biographical Sketches with Portraits of the Singers and Dancers (London: John Long, 1911).

from all but the very few.[13]

Fashion, too, reflected the company's welcome by Society. "All nights have been Arabian nights since 'Sumurun' and 'Kismet' came to town," quipped a Sketch columnist in 1911, referring to the exotic spectacles that invaded the West End at the time of Diaghilev's first appearances at Covent Garden. From Bakst, however, came the riotous colors daubing fashionable drawing rooms[14] and the turbans that swathed the heads of stylish tastemakers.[15] His Schéhérazade inspired the "Arabian Nights Ball" that crowned with "Oriental splendor" the end of Diaghilev's autumn 1911 season and enjoyed the blessing

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[13]In 1914 a West End theatergoer could expect to pay half a guinea for a seat in the stalls, nearly £13 at 1981 prices. (Tom Sutcliffe, "Has the Arts Council Outlived its Usefulness?" The Guardian, 27 Jan. 1981, p. 9, col. 4.) At Diaghilev's performances, by contrast, a guinea was the prevailing rate, and there were even programs for which orchestra tickets rose to twenty-five and thirty shillings. A shilling bought a gallery bench in the West End, but at Drury Lane in 1913, places in the amphitheatre cost four and even five times as much. Orchestra stalls were by no means the most expensive seats in the house. In autumn 1911 the price for a single ticket in a pit or grand tier box cost four guineas, while at Drury Lane in 1913 and 1914, an individual place in the most expensive boxes sold for twice that sum. For the first time in many decades, ballet in London commanded the prices of opera.

[14]W. Somerset Maugham, The Moon and Sixpence (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), pp. 190-191.

[15]"Covent Garden audiences have not wanted for the excuses of a fancy-dress gathering to seize upon the garments that most snugly fit the aesthetics of the moment. Mrs. Brown Potter's turban, when, not many nights ago, she entered a box in the picturesque company of Baroness de Meyer, twisted all eyes from the stage." "Crowns, Coronets, Courtiers," The Sketch, 15 Nov. 1911, p. 172.

of four of the troupe's most prominent supporters -- Mrs. Margot Asquith (the Prime Minister's wife), the Duchess of Sutherland, Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton, and Lady Horner.[16] In its wake, a "craze" for fancy-dress extravanganzas swept London, spawning a minor industry in houri garb and fur-trimmed peasant wear and a rash of tableaux vivants evoking ballet themes and opulence. At the 1912 Pantomime Ball, Mrs. Asquith shone in a "Russian Fairy Tale"; for the "Russian Court" pageant at the 1913 "Fête de Versailles", the wife of the British Ambassador sent dresses over from St. Petersburg; society girls like Lady Diana Manners -- better known as Diana Cooper -- donned ballet shoes and learned to glide like Russian peasants, and found their wide-eyed devotion to Diaghilev spoofed in the intellectual pages of the English Review.[17] Yes, fashion guided Diaghilev's star to the center of the theatrical and social firmament.

Privilege, however, has many faces, and in the anonymous throng of turbans and stiff shirt fronts, the

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[16]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Sept. 1913, p. 730; "Crowns, Coronets, Courtiers," The Sketch, 15 Nov. 1911, p. 172.

[17]"The Fancy Dress Ball Craze," Dancing Times, Feb. 1913, p. 412; "My Lady Fair. Debenham and Freebody," ibid., p. 405; "My Lady Fair. At the Pantomime Ball," Dancing Times, Jan. 1913, p. 267; "My Lady Fair. The Versailles Ball," Dancing Times, June 1913, p. 595; Diana Cooper, The Rainbow Comes and Goes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), p. 83; "Lady Diana Goes to the Ballet," The English Review, Aug. 1911, pp. 167-169. This piece is attributed to Gordon Craig and reprinted in Gordon Craig on Movement and Dance, ed. and introd. Arnold Rood (New York: Dance Horizons, 1977), pp. 77-79.

analytic eye discerns subtle differences of feature. From society columns, tacked-on paragraphs of reviews noting who attended such-and-such a premiere, published subscription lists, and memoirs emerges a composite portrait of the Diaghilev audience. "'I've thought of three subjects to talk about,'" chit chats Martin to a society girl in Virginia Woolf's The Years, "'Racing; the Russian ballet; and . . . Ireland.'"[18] With disarming brevity, the novelist evokes the preoccupations of Court, Society, and Parliament, those pillars of Britain's Establishment and Diaghilev's Georgian public.

Diaghilev's Paris audience did not lack for titles, but Covent Garden brought royalty to the ballet. Over the years Victoria's far-flung clan of descendants made numerous appearances in the Royal Box, lending a touch of Mariinsky glamor to Diaghilev performances. The visitors, duly noted in the "Court Circular" column of the Times, were many: King George, various members of his immediate family, and sundry German, Greek, and Russian cousins. In Queen Alexandra, Princess Henry of Battenberg, Princess Louise Duchess of Argyle, and King Manoel of Portugal, the "Imperial Russian Ballet", as Diaghilev initially styled his company in England, had a following of royal devotees. All, remarked the Dancing Times, "are

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[18]Virginia Woolf, The Years (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), p. 254.

constant visitors at Covent Garden just now", now being winter 1913 when "scarcely a vacant place" was to be had on ballet nights.[19] The recently-deposed King Manoel, a familiar figure of the social scene, headed the list of subscribers to Beecham's three seasons of Grand Opera and Russian Ballet in 1913-1914. Other royal subscribers in summer 1913 were the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz and Prince Paul of Serbia, and the following year, Princess Arthur of Connaught and Grand Duke Michael of Russia.[20]

In England's constitutional monarchy, royalty reigned but did not rule. But the elite that actually governed the country was also heavily represented among Diaghilev's public, constituting a political world that was itself an adjunct of Society. Abroad, as a Bystander columnist opined in 1911, "politics is bourgeois, middle-class . . . Here politics cannot exist without Society, Society without politics."[21] Over one hundred names turn up on the subscription lists and press reports of Diaghilev

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[19]"Russian Ballet at Covent Garden," Dancing Times, Feb. 1913, p. 379.

[20]"The Beecham Opera Season. List of Subscribers," The Times, 20 Jan. 1913, p. 9, col. 3; "Russian Opera at Drury Lane. Subscribers to Sir J. Beecham's Season," The Times, 20 June 1913, p. 10, col. 6; "Opera at Drury Lane. Subscribers for Beecham Season," The Times, 8 May 1914, p. 11, col. 4.

[21]O.M.D., "Parliament as the Stepping Stone to Society," The Bystander, 27 Dec. 1911, p. 686.

events.[22] Many are familiar. Others stir to life only in the telegraphic entries of Who's Who. Together, they form a roll call of the elite that over the previous thirty-five years had governed the British polity at home and abroad.

Rarely, in modern times, has the audience for any cultural phenomenon assumed so completely the air of a government club. Even in the heyday of the Kennedy administration, when "eggheads" smiled benevolently on the arts, how many Cabinet members or Congressmen, high-level policymakers or former military heroes spent evening after evening in the company of the Muses? Between 1911 and 1914, by contrast, consider the ministers alone who figured at Diaghilev events: H. H. Asquith, Prime Minister; the Marquess of Ripon, Lord Privy Seal; D. Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty; Walter Runciman, President of the Board

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[22]Except where otherwise noted, my sources are the Sketch (especially, the columns "The Woman About Town," "Crowns, Coronets, Courtiers," "Small Talk," and Ella Hepworth Dixon's "Woman's Ways"), and the Bystander ("At Court and in Society"), the "Court Circular" column of the Times, reviews of Diaghilev events in that newspaper from 1913-1914, and the published subscription lists cited in note 20 above.

of Agriculture; Sir Rufus Isaacs, Attorney-General.[23] (The Earl of Plymouth, Marquess of Londonderry, and A.J. Balfour, meanwhile, represented previous Tory Cabinets.) Ambassadors of the Great Powers and other diplomatic staff lent an equally official air to the assemblage, as did the presence of many other high-ranking officials: the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, a Senior Foreign Office Clerk; Sir Charles Mathews, Director of Public Prosecutions; Lord Mersey, Commissioner of the Titanic inquiry; Lord Murray, Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury, Comptroller of His Majesty's Household, and Scottish Liberal Whip. And in such names as Lord Beresford, Major John Brinton, Sir John French, the Earl of Minto, and Sir George Warrender, veterans of Khartoum, India, Turkey, and South Africa, one finds the warriors and

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[23]Affairs of state rarely kept Asquith from a night out at the ballet. A bit of verse penned to his petite amie Venetia Stanley in July 1913 records his devotion: "A hasty rubber: off I hie/Where Beecham rules the scene:/And sample for the 20th time/Nijinsky, Chaliapine." H. H. Asquith, Letters to Venetia Stanley, ed. Michael and Eleanor Brock (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p. 32. Other references to Diaghilev productions appear in his letters of 24 June and 22 July 1914. Asquith's granddaughters Helena and Perdita, along with the children of several other Cabinet ministers, had a private dance class in 1914 with Marie Rambert. Rambert, Quicksilver, p. 85.

administrators of Victoria's Raj.[24]

To be sure, not all Diaghilev's subscribers belonged to such high political circles. A number came from the great banking and manufacturing clans on which late nineteenth-century British financial and industrial might rested. These dynasties -- Rothschilds, Barings, Behrens, Coats, Cunards, Speyers, Monds, Neumanns, Petos, Nobles, Sassoons, Schusters, and Sterns -- joined by Northcliffe and Astor press barons and entitled American millionairesses, brought an air of trade, a whiff of the City and particularly its small Jewish contingent, to first nights. But it was an aroma already sanitized by the public schools, country seats, and outdoor pursuits that were the essential accoutrements of an upper-class lifestyle. And the baronies, titles, and initials appended to the names of descendants of the original empire builders chronicle the passage of these clans from moneymaking to the genteel professions of politics, law, and the army.

Diaghilev by no means lacked a following among the Unionists, as members of the Conservative Party styled themselves because of their opposition to Irish

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[24]R. C. K. Ensor, England 1870-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 610-614; Who's Who (1914); Almanach de Gotha (1914), pp. 855-860. Other high officials and empire-builders in Diaghilev's audience were Lord Lucas, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Agriculture; Earl Howe, Lord Chamberlain to Queen Alexandra; Baron Sandhurst, Lord Chamberlain; Harold Tennant (brother-in-law of Prime Minister Asquith), Under-Secretary to the War Office; Sir Frank Swettenham; the Hon. Charles Fortescue and his brother Sir Seymour Fortescue.

independence. But, with the move to Drury Lane in the summer of 1913, the roll call of his first night audiences displayed an increasingly Liberal cast. The rival Covent Garden "Grand Season", by contrast, was a bastion of Conservatism. "In all the three or four hundred names of the first [Covent Garden] list of subscribers," noted the Sketch in April 1914, "Lord Crewe and Mr. Walter Runciman are the sole representatives of official Liberalism."[25] As Liberals affirmed their allegiance to the Beecham-Diaghilev enterprise, King and Queen pledged fealty to Covent Garden.[26] By 1914, the royal component of the Diaghilev audience had markedly diminished with only the Princess Royal and Princess Maud, among the sovereign's closest family, venturing to the theatre in Drury Lane.[27] As Diaghilev's enterprise, thanks to the publicity surrounding its association with Beecham, assumed more and more the air of a commercial venture, it became, so to speak, a cultural extension of the party of Town, Gown, and Industry.

The guest list for a Downing Street "At Home"

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[25]"Small Talk," The Sketch, 15 April 1914, p. 60.

[26]"The King and Queen," announced the Times in March 1913, "have granted their patronage to the Royal Opera, Covent Garden for the forthcoming season." "The Court Circular," The Times, 4 March 1913, p. 11, col. 1. Their Majesties' presence at Covent Garden was frequently noted that season as well as the following summer. In July 1913, they paid a solitary visit to the rival house in Drury Lane for a performance of Boris Godunov. "Court Circular," The Times, 22 July 1913, p. 11, col. 1.

[27]"Court Circular," The Times, 27 May 1914, p. 11, col. 1.

given by Mrs. Asquith in 1914,[28] reveals the core of this Liberal audience with startling clarity; it was nothing less than a descendant of the social set of the 1880's known as the "Souls". In this grouping of Asquiths, Balfours, Tennants, Churchills, Horners, Trees, Manners, Charteris's, Lytteltons, Ripons, Grenfells, Rothschilds, and Custs, one discerns the same tangled pattern of friendship, family, and political alliances, the same combination of moral uplift, fashion, and art revealed in Diaghilev's audience. The group had its poet (George Wyndham), and its ladies of culture: Lady de Grey (Marchioness of Ripon), who was devoted to opera; Lady Horner, at whose feet sat Ruskin and Burne-Jones; Lady Granby (Duchess of Rutland), who painted and sculpted; and Lady Tree, who gave after-theatre supper parties with an elegant Bohemian touch.[29]

All four ladies subscribed to Beecham's seasons, and at least two of them entertained Diaghilev and his dancers at their homes. Along with Lady Cunard, who indefatigably promoted Beecham and his enterprises ("There appeared to be no limit to the number of boxes she could

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[28]"Mrs. Asquith's 'At Home'," The Times, 16 July 191, p. 11, col. 1.

[29]Margot Asquith, The Autobiography of Margot Asquith (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1920), pp. 173-200; Daphne Fielding, The Rainbow Picnic: A Portrait of Iris Tree (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. 28-32.

fill," wrote Osbert Sitwell)[30] from the Cavendish Square home she had leased from Mrs. Asquith, they wove Liberal politics, fashion, aristocracy, and art into the distinctive pattern of Diaghilev's audience. "Soulful" children followed in their mothers' footsteps, and society columns often noted Lady Juliet Duff (daughter of the Marchioness of Ripon), Lady Diana Manners, Lady Marjorie Manners, and Lady Violet Charteris (daughters of the Duchess of Rutland), Miss Iris Tree and Mrs. Alan Parsons (daughters of Lady Tree), and Master Anthony Asquith (Mrs. Asquith's son) at Diaghilev events. The youngsters, known as the "Corrupt Coterie", incorporated into their circle still other Diaghilev familiars -- Nancy Cunard and Prince Felix Youssoupoff, then a student at Oxford. From this group came the brightest of the twenties' "Bright Young Things". But like so many who pleasured in the Georgian twilight, these young tastemakers showed little interest in the new art coming to life in Kensington or Montmartre. Their taste was geared resolutely to the past. "There was among us," Diana Cooper (née Lady Diana Manners) subsequently wrote, "a reverberation of the Yellow Book and Aubrey Beardsley, Ernest Dowson, Baudelaire and Max Beerbohm. Swinburne often got recited. Our pride was to be unafraid of words, unshocked by drink and unashamed of

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[30]Osbert Sitwell, Great Morning: An Autobiography (London: Reprint Society, 1948), p. 250.

'decadence'."[31]

The "Souls" were not Diaghilev's only audience link with the fin-de-siècle. Mrs. Charles Hunter, a favorite Sargent subject and subscriber to all three Beecham seasons, "represented," wrote Osbert Sitwell, "the Edwardian generation, the Edwardian hostess, in excelsis." "She belonged," he added, "to the world that . . . 'dined out for art'."[32] Sir Ernest Cassel, Sir Philip Sassoon, and Mrs. George Keppel, all former intimates of Edward VII and Beecham subscribers, evoked the racier side of the 1890's. Diaghilev, Nijinsky, and Karsavina often dined at Mrs. Keppel's home in Grosvenor Street, and on one occasion her vast drawing-room did service as a ballet rehearsal hall. Upstairs, in a studio draped with Bakst-inspired cushions, her daughter Violet (Vita Sackville-West's future inamorata) entertained Lady Juliet Duff and the Alington younger set, Lady Alington being yet another Diaghilev hostess and subscriber.[33]

Diaghilev's London audience did not lack for collectors. But in the Duke of Manchester, Duke of Rutland, Earl of Kilmorey, Earl Craven, and Viscount Masserene and Ferrard, who inherited along with their

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[31]Cooper, p. 77.

[32]Sitwell, Great Morning, pp. 252-253.

[33]Philippe Julian and John Phillips, Violet Trefusis: Life and Letters (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), pp. 32-33.

ancestral seats priceless galleries of Old Masters,[34] one finds no connoisseurs of the modern. The same applies to Margot Asquith's brother, Lord Glenconner, whose "charming . . . picture gallery" in Queen Anne's Gate housed masterpieces by Reynolds, Romney, Fragonard, and Watteau.[35] If Mrs. Bradley Martin, whose daughter acquired the Coombe Collection on her marriage to the Earl of Craven, offered dinner guests a recital by the divine Karsavina in 1911, the Marchioness of Ripon commissioned portraits of Diaghilev stars by John Singer Sargent, and Saxton Noble, who haunted Karsavina's dressing room, ordered a set of murals from José-Maria Sert, these very acts of patronage revealed the innate conservatism of their taste.[36] By summer 1914, Futurism had seemingly arrived in London, with conferences, duly reported in the Times, and "A Grand Futurist Concert of Noises" at the Coliseum.[37] Chez Beecham, however, the arts establishment held sway:

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[34]Who's Who entries for 1914 indicated the existence and location of major collections as well as the artists represented.

[35]"Lorgnette," The Bystander, 15 Nov. 1911, pp. 328-330. The Tennant wealth derived from great chemical works in Glasgow. Both Lord Glenconner and his brother Harold John Tennant entered politics under the Liberal banner.

[36]"Small Talk," The Sketch, 12 July 1911, p. 8; Karsavina, Theatre Street, p. 279; Gold and Fizdale, p. 218.

[37]"Aims of Futurist Art. Exposition by Signor Marinetti," The Times, 6 May 1914, p. 10, col. 4; "Noise-makers for the Futurist Concert of Noises," The Sketch, 17 June 1914, p. 324. Marinetti's self-portrait graced the cover of The Sketch on 13 May 1914, with a caption beginning, "Futurism Running Amuck!".

curators and trustees of Britain's leading museums,[38] long-established art publishers and writers,[39] and artists whose work in no way violated canons of good taste.[40]

The very presence of these artists (with the exception of Sargent) on the 1914 subscription list does

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[38]Among these were the Marquess of Ripon, a Trustee of the Wallace Collection; Baron Weardale, a Trustee of the National Portrait Gallery; Sir Claude Phillips, Keeper of the Wallace Collection, 1897-1911; Sir Sidney Colvin, Keeper of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, 1884-1912. Colvin was a former Slade Professor and the author ofnumerous articles on the Fine Arts. Lady Colvin and Sir Claude Phillips, remarked Osbert Sitwell in discussing the first London performance of Scriabin's Prometheus just before the war, had attended "all the chief musical events of the previous quarter of a century or more, and by no means held any brief for modern music . . ." Sitwell, Great Morning, p. 237. The Marquess of Ripon was a longstanding member of the Board of Covent Garden. "Opera in London. The Competition of the Old and the New. Sir Joseph Beecham's Plans," The Times, 13 May 1914, p. 6, col. 1.

[39]Including stage designer Charles Ricketts, joint editor of the Dial, 1889-1897, publisher of Vale Books and publications, 1896-1904, and author of books on Titian and the Prado. "I have no time to answer your letter," he wrote to Gordon Bottomley on 21 July 1914. "The Russians leave by the end of the week, by which time I shall have been to see them twenty times this season." Charles Ricketts, Self-Portrait, ed. T. Sturge Moore and Cecil Lewis (London: Peter Davies, 1939), p. 204. Robert Cust wrote extensively on Italian Renaissance art.

[40]Including John Singer Sargent, Sir George Frampton, Sir William Goscombe John, James Shepherd, Edmund Dulac, and Glyn Philpot. "Sargent, by the way," gossiped a Sketch columnist in 1914, "is pleased with some of the new fashions adopted by the women he has ceased to paint. 'How amusing, how amusing!' he was heard to murmur in the foyer [of Drury Lane] the other night. At that rate, he may yet be tempted to resume portraits." "Small Talk," The Sketch, 10 June 1914, p. 316. Sargent drew Nijinsky (at the request of Lady Ripon) and made several drawings of Karsavina, thus adding the two dancers to his gallery of fashionable portraits.

suggest, however, a change in the coloring of Diaghilev's audience. For the first time, one discerns an artistic spark in the general Society blaze, the presence of a community of professionals: playwrights Clifford Bax and Alfred Sutro; novelist Somerset Maugham; Lord Howard de Walden, composer of the operas The Children of Don and Dylan; M. Montague Nathan, who had just published the first of several works on Russian music. Reviews, society columns, and memoirs add detail to the tapestry: the photographer Baron de Meyer; opera superstars Nelie Melba, Enrico Caruso, and Tetrazzini; the Sitwell trio; Muriel Draper, who, with her husband Paul, was the "friend and guardian of all visiting foreign musicians"; George Bernard Shaw, who penned a spirited defense of Legend of Joseph in the Nation.[41]

To be sure, Diaghilev's Russians had long since seduced the Sitwell siblings, and earlier seasons had found Duncan-style dancer Lady Constance Stewart-Richardson and actresses Ellen Terry and Mrs. Patrick Campbell among the

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[41]For Baron and Baroness de Meyer, "Chaliapin's Farewell. End of the Drury Lane Opera Season," The Times, 25 July 1914, p. 6, col. 6; for Melba, "'Die Zauberflöte'. Mozart's Opera at Drury Lane. Mr. T. Beecham's Conducting," The Times, 22 May 1914, p. 10, col. 3; for Caruso and Tetrazzini, "Notes From the Opera Houses," The Sketch, 10 June 1914, p. "1"; for the Sitwells, Osbert Sitwell, Great Morning, pp. 236, 243 et seq.; for the Drapers, Muriel Draper, Music at Midnight (New York: Harper, 1929), pp. 135 et seq.; for George Bernard Shaw, Letter to the Editor, The Nation, 18 July 1914; rpt. Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism, ed. Dan H. Laurence (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1981), II, 661.

impresario's following. But it could be argued that Society as much as Art propelled them to Covent Garden: by reason of birth in the case of the fledgling poets and Lady Constance or by marrying, as had Mrs. Campbell, into the aristocracy.[42] In 1914, by contrast, one reads for the first time of "serious music lovers" flocking "by the score, by the hundred, perhaps by the thousand" to Drury Lane.[43] Significantly, it was opera rather than ballet that drew this more "serious" audience to Diaghilev's Russian enterprise.

Diaghilev's career as an opera producer is an unwritten page in the London history of his company. Ballet writers occasionally allude to it, but they do not discuss it, and they certainly do not regard it as molding the distinctive shape of particular seasons or influencing public expectations. Yet from the time Beecham embarked on independent programming in winter 1913, opera gradually usurped the role of dance as the centerpiece of Diaghilev's repasts. By 1914, when rumor had it that Sir Joseph

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[42]For Osbert Sitwell, Great Morning, pp. 136-140; for Lady Constance Stewart-Richardson, "Court Circular," The Times, 15 Nov. 1911, p. 11, col. 1. Mrs. Patrick Campell subscribed to the winter 1913 season under her married name, Mrs. George Cornwallis West. Ellen Terry's book The Russian Ballet, discussed in a previous chapter, was published in 1913. Osbert, a member of the elite Grenadier Guards from 1913-1919, hobnobbed with both the elder and younger generations of "Souls". Lady Constance's defiance of convention by taking to the professional stage invited no little ridicule in the press.

[43]"Notes From the Opera Houses," The Sketch, 10 June 1914, p. "1".

Beecham had "acquired something in the nature of a permanent interest in Mr. de Diaghilew's company,"[44] Terpsichore basked in the reflected glory of opera.

"The chief object of the spring season which Mr. Thomas Beecham has undertaken at Covent Garden," wrote the Times on January 30, 1913, "was achieved last night at the opening performance, when Strauss's opera Der Rosenkavalier was given in England for the first time."[45] The opera, Strauss's third to premiere under the conductor's proselytizing baton in as many years, was sung no fewer than eight times in succeeding weeks, and with the addition of three performances of Elektra and four of Salome, marked this "Season of Grand Opera and Russian Ballet" as a homage to the Viennese composer.[46]

Of the season's thirty-six performances, fewer than half were devoted exclusively to ballet, and of these, only Nijinsky's L'Après-midi d'un faune ventured into unfamiliar terrain. Petrushka, noted the Times was "very favourably received" by the first night audience: its "riotous colour and tingling vitality", so "refreshingly

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[44]"Notes From the Opera-Houses," The Sketch, 8 July 1914, p. XII.

[45]"Der Rosenkavalier. First Production in England. Opening of Mr. Beecham's Spring Season," The Times, 30 Jan. 1913, p. 6, col. 4.

[46]Also in the repertory were Wagner's Tristan (two performances) and Die Meistersinger (four performances).

new and refreshingly Russian"[47] marked the ballet as yet another of Diaghilev's brilliantly exotic tapestries. Faune, however, was a different matter. Here, Bakst's exquisite Grecian setting evoked a contemplative mood, Nijinsky's choreography a private world of awakening desire and solitary pleasure, where neither charm nor virtuosity intruded. In dispensing with exoticism, the convention that made the portrayal of lust in Schéhérazade, Thamar or Cléopâtre at once exciting and morally innocuous, Nijinsky stripped the veil of ritualized fantasy from the representation of sexuality. In France, the work had inspired one of Diaghilev's great succès de scandale. Across the Channel, audiences clapped politely, clucked disparagingly, and went the next night to Salome or Rosenkavalier, where distant locale and grandiloquence of gesture safely consigned the erotic to the realm of theatrical fantasy.

More than any other work presented that season, Rosenkavalier caught the spirit of the Beecham-Diaghilev audience, so cosmopolitan in its pleasures, so bourgeois in its tastes. The famous waltz "formed the background to every dance," wrote Osbert Sitwell, "so that if I . . . ever catch the rhythm of it today, the world is again for the moment peopled with a legion of the young, enjoying

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[47]"The Russian Ballet. Triple Bill at Covent garden," The Times, 5 Feb. 1913, p. 8, col. 5.

themselves, who have long ceased to exist . . ."[48] His statement echoes a "curious feature" noted by music critic Ernest Newman when Elektra premiered in 1910: "that while many advanced musicians . . . have been chilled by the work, the general public has been enthusiastic", a phenomenon he ascribed in part to the number of "friendly and . . . commonplace" tunes in the supposedly "advanced and recondite" idiom of the composer.[49] In 1914, Rosenkavalier opened Beecham's most ambitious season yet -- his "Grand Season of German Opera, Russian Opera, English Opera, and Russian Ballet" at Drury Lane. In another of those ironies that mesh so curiously the history of art with that of enterprise, the opera that denounced bourgeois social-climbing and materialism became the talisman of an enterprise founded on both.

Strauss was present in other ways during that 1914 season. His Legend of Joseph was the lynchpin of Diaghilev's new choreographic offerings: it linked the balletic side of the program, not only with Rosenkavalier, but with The Magic Flute, Strauss' eighteenth-century model that was a major event of the season, being then virtually

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[48]Sitwell, Great Morning, p. 256.

[49]Ernest Newman, Letter to the Editor, The Nation, 26 March 1910; rpt. in Shaw's Music, 3, 612.

unknown in London.[50]

Strauss and the other Germans who figured in Beecham's repertory, however, do not explain the perceptible change in the 1914 audience remarked again and again by contemporary critics. The force that conjured the semblance of a national audience into being was neither Strauss nor the triumvirate of monstres sacrés -- Pavlova, Nijinsky, Karsavina -- that presides over memories of Diaghilev's initial conquest. Rather, it was the majestic figure of Chaliapin, who, as Boris Godunov, Ivan the Terrible, and the other epic heroes of Russian opera, revealed an art and a repertory completely unknown to London. "Who can forget the face of Chaliapine as the Mogul King in Prince Igor?" rhapsodized W.B. Yeats in

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[50]"There is no need of a missioner in the cause of the moderns now, for are we not all panting to hear The Legend of Joseph? But Mozart -- yes, there is certainly room for a Mozart mission when one hears people in the stalls informing their neighbours that probably Die Zauberflöte has been heard some time between the eighteenth century and this, but that this is practically its first performance." "'Die Zauberflöte'. Mozart's Opera at Drury Lane. Mr. T. Beecham Conducting," The Times, 22 May 1914, p. 10, col. 3. In fact, the opera had been produced at Cambridge in 1911 and not long before the Drury Lane production, in Leeds. W. Denis Browne, "Die Zauberflöte," The New Statesman, 30 May 1914, p. 245. The drop curtain for the work was painted by Vladimir Polunin, identified in the Times review as a "disciple" of Bakst. After the war, Polunin became Diaghilev's chief scene painter.

1916.[51] Few could or would. "In the history of grand opera in England," wrote the Sketch reviewer by way of summing up his impressions of Beecham's "Season of Russian Opera and Ballet", "the summer of 1913 will be set down as annus mirabilis."[52]

The overwhelming success of Boris Godunov, Khovantchina, and Prince Igor in 1913 did more than whet a taste for Russian opera. It perceptibly altered the course of the Diaghilev enterprise, steering it away from choreographic experiment toward the infinitely calmer straits of operatic production. Ballet writers have generally attributed the relative coolness of London audiences toward Nijinsky's Jeux and Sacre du Printemps to British stodginess and conservatism. Such accounts ignore the unbounded enthusiasm for Diaghilev's operatic works, and how the contrast between the twin faces of the repertory influenced the reception of Nijinsky's new choreography. "Of the ballets," wrote one reviewer, "there is little to be said. They remain attractive and are presented with all the old skill and enthusiasm. If they suffer . . . it is by reason of the fact that they cannot

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[51]William Butler Yeats, "Introduction to Certain Noble Plays of Japan by Pound and Feneollosa," in Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa, The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan (New York: New Directions, 1959), p. 155. This appears to be the poet's sole allusion to Diaghilev's pre-War enterprise.

[52]S.L.B., "Notes From the Opera Houses," The Sketch, 30 July 1913, p. 128.

make an impression to compare with that of the operas. Moussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov interpreted by Mr. Chaliapine and his . . . compatriots have created such a profound impression that everything else, however good, seems to stand upon a lower plane."[53]

This critic had yet to see Sacre. But not even Nijinsky's "bewildering", "disgusting" ballet,[54] so crude in its dismissal of "grace", so oblivious of "beauty" and "charm",[55] could efface the overwhelming impression of Boris. By popular demand, an extra performance of the opera was scheduled, while reviewers waxed eloquent in praise of Chaliapin's vocal and dramatic gifts, the conviction of the chorus, whose acting surpassed anything on the contemporary stage, the realism that in

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[53]S.L.B., "Notes From the Opera Houses," The Sketch, 16 July 1913, p. XII.

[54]S.L.B., "Notes From the Opera Houses," The Sketch, 30 July 1913, p. 128.

[55]"We Take Off Our Hats To . . . M. Nijinsky -- for so amply proving how he hates the word 'grace' by his production of 'Sacre du Printemps' . . . Discussing his production of the Cubist dance 'Le Sacre du Printemps,' M. Nijinsky said, 'I am accused of a crime against "grace." . . . Really, I begin to have a horror of the very word; "grace" and "charm" make me feel seasick.'" The Sketch, 23 July 1913, p. 68. As its cover that week, The Sketch had a drawing by W. Heath Robinson of a tutu-ed ballerina flanked by cherubim with a caption reading: "Exiled by Order of Nijinsky: The Spirit of the Old Regime". Another caption linked Sacre to one of the most controversial pre-War art events -- Roger Fry's first Post-Impressionst Exhibition. "Nijinsky's Revolution in Choreography: The Post-Impressionist and Prehistoric Dance 'Sacre du Printemps'." "The Twitching, Bobbing Turn-Your-Toes-In Cubist Dance," The Sketch [Supplement], 23 July 1913, p. 5.

Moussorgsky's work broke with opera's romantic conventions. Above all, critics sounded the theme of a new dawn in the history of the musical stage. "We live in changing times; one after another the old conventions disappear . . . The revolution has been a long time in coming, and it may be that the short season of Russian Opera at Drury Lane will take a well-defined place in this country's operatic annals."[56] Ironically, the revolution that so shook London's theatrical world in 1913 had Moussorgsky rather than Stravinsky at the helm.

Diaghilev did not find this recipe unappealing. In 1914, he willingly sacrificed the Nijinsky repertoire, and with Sir Joseph Beecham's millions as backing, showered London with an embarrassment of operatic riches -- Prince Igor, Nuit de Mai, Le Rossignol, Coq d'Or, Boris Godunov, Khovantchina, and Ivan the Terrible. "For the next week, as well as at the time of writing," a reviewer noted on June 17th, "Drury Lane monopolises the public attention; not because Covent Garden is failing to present good operas to large houses, but because Drury Lane is pouring out one novelty after another. Opera-goers have never known such largess, and, in addition to opera, there is the ballet."[57]

With Midas, Papillons, Daphnis and Chloe, and Legend of Joseph as the season's novelties, no wonder

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[56]S.L.B., "Notes From the Opera Houses," The Sketch, 23 July 1913, p. XII.

[57]"At the Opera Houses," The Sketch, 17 June 1914, p. "h".

ballet seemed an afterthought. The Times pronounced Midas a failure.

> There is a tawdriness about the whole ballet, the music, the scenery, the grouping, poses and dances of fauns, nymphs, and satyrs, the excessive costumes of Apollo and the judges . . . , the deficient, or at least slender, costumes of the mountain deities and nymphs, all aimed at effects of a very obvious kind. For once the corps de ballet, even including Mme. Karsavina and M. Bolm, seemed baffled by their material. They could not disguise the fact that the thing was devoid of all emotional impulse.[58]

Papillons, a Biedermeyer remake along the lines of Carnaval, had a certain charm. But like Daphnis and Chloe and the eagerly awaited Legend of Joseph, it relied on music (a sparkling score by Schumann) and visual effects (Bakst's Victorian setting) to fill a creative void. Set against the sonorities of Ravel's score, the dramatic and choreographic action of Daphnis seemed almost inconsequential. "The beauty of the scenes," wrote the Times, "the poses of the groups of Grecian figures, the dances alike of the individuals, the masses of youths and maidens, and of the pirates, seem to take their places in the scheme primarily as illustrations of the symphonic poem played by the orchestra."[59] Another critic noted the paucity of invention that reduced the choreography "almost

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[58]"'The Nightingale.' New Opera and Ballet at Drury Lane," The Times, 19 June 1914, p. 10, col. 5.

[59]"Return of the Russian Ballet. Ravel's 'Daphnis and Chloé'," The Times, 10 June 1914, p. 11, col. 5.

to a monochrome".[60]

Of the season's new works, none revealed so spectacularly the malaise gnawing at the aesthetic core of the Ballets Russes as Strauss' Legend of Joseph. Here, Diaghilev gathered to his fold the era's greatest purveyors of theatrical fashion -- Strauss, his librettists Hugo von Hoffmannsthal and Count Kessler, Bakst and José-María Sert, who designed the costumes and sets, respectively, and Fokine. The result, wrote the Times, was "an extraordinarily skilful piece of artifice" that sacrified dramatic development and metaphysical contrast to the achievement of spectacular effects. Strauss conducted the premiere to an "auditorium crowded to its utmost capacity",[61] and in the fashionable throng whose ballrooms waltzed to the strains of Rosenkavalier, in whose closets hung Bakst's "fantasies" in modern dress executed by the

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[60] S.O., "The Russians at Drury Lane," The English Review, June 1914, p. 562.

[61] "A Medieval Joseph. Strauss's New Ballet and Its Music. Spectacular Splendours," The Times, 24 June 1914, p. 11, col. 3.

Paris couturier Paquin,[62] and on whose walls were to be seen outsized murals by Sert, one finds the ideal consumer of Diaghilev's spurious product. For how else can this marketing man's dream be described? With its celebrity names and proven formulas, Legend of Joseph came to life not from any genuine artistic impulse, but as a "concept". Collaboration was now a matter of business, and the business of ballet, it seemed, was the making and marketing of spectacular, saleable commodities.

At what point box office considerations tip the scales of art in the direction of enterprise is always difficult to ascertain. But it seems that by 1914 a combination of indebtedness and Beecham largesse had pushed Diaghilev in the direction of opera, while at the same time pressuring him to produce the kind of works for which a market already existed. The former accounts for the overall content of the repertory; the latter for the "shock and colour" effects that assumed an all-important place in the new works. The theatre critic of the English Review

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[62]Bakst's line of offstage gowns, inspired, so he claimed, by the contemporary setting of Jeux, was very much in the news in 1913, as was his Fine Arts Society Exhibition and Arsène Alexandre's The Decorative Art of Léon Bakst, the publication of which coincided, as did these other activities, with Diaghilev's summer season. Thanks to the barrage of publicity linking Jeux to these other commodities of fashion, Nijinsky's spare and personal work about the ambiguity of relationships could not fail to disappoint. In fact, its tennis setting and movement style gave rise to no end of jibes in the society press, including the series of cartoons "Jeux d'Esprit: Suggestions For the Russian Ballet," published in the Sketch on 2 July 1913 (pp. 408-409).

hinted at this when he decried the "Parisian preciosity" and "Semitic glitter" of recent productions, "the attempt . . . to astonish" that yielded a work like Le Rossignol, "clotted and sicklied-o'er with extraordinariness". In none of the new ballets was to be felt the "awe of Cleopatra, the ferocity of . . . Scheherazade", only a "Byzantinism, an art groping from no standards," in danger of "self-destruction".

> The spectacle tends to dethrone the dance; the music to defeat human gesture. One would very seriously like to know what the Ballet Master said when the new scores came in; what the composers thought when they saw the Ballet, so discordant do they sometimes seem, like the cacophonies and rugosities which inspire them.[63]

As market values sapped the imaginative impulse from ballet, London feasted on the aesthetic vitality of Diaghilev's first love. "Drury Lane under the Beecham régime has made operatic history," wrote the Sketch,[64] and even today the reviews of Prince Igor, Khovantchina, Boris Godunov, Coq d'Or, Ivan the Terrible, Nuit de Mai, and Le Rossignol vibrate with excitement. In opera, now, was to be found what had once animated the Ballets Russes -- Slavic intensity, collective feeling, and a profound belief in the meaning of art. "The Russian opera," concluded the English Review, "has not come under the influence of

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[63] S.O., "The Russians at Drury Lane," pp. 562-564.

[64] "London's Opera Seasons," The Sketch, 5 Aug. 1914, p. 162.

Reinhardt or Münich. Nothing finer than the Choral March in Ivan, the acting and singing of the crowd in Boris, has been seen. This, and Chaliapine, are unalloyed Russian, pure as the steppes, blasts out of the soul of Russia. So Drury Lane has become the Mecca of London."[65]

The man who climbed from Russia's lower depths, bankrolled Gorky and Social Revolutionaries with the notes, redeemable in gold, his appearances commanded,[66] nestled, paradoxically, in the bosom of Society. Lady Diana Manners flung herself at Chaliapin, as did other hopelessly enamoured ladies, and no one grumbled at the high prices that went into effect when he trod the boards.[67] By 1914, defaulting guests, tempted by last-minute invitations to a "Chaliapine night", were the bane of many a fashionable hostess.[68]

The "Lane" had indeed become grand chic. Night after night, its hall was crowded with pleasure-seekers,

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[65] Ibid., p. 564.

[66] In 1914, Chaliapin received £100 a performance. "Opera in London. The Competition of the Old and New," p. 6, col. 1.

[67] Cooper, p. 84; S.L.B., "Notes From the Opera Houses," The Sketch, 30 July 1913, p. 128. In 1914 "Special Chaliapine and Strauss Nights" added four and five shillings to the cost of a ticket in the orchestra or grand circle.

[68] "Defaulting Guests. The Hostess's Permanent Dilemma," The Times, 30 June 1914, p. 11, col. 5.

who did not "as a rule patronize musical entertainments".[69] Their misbehavior -- late arrivals, early departures, loud conversation, continual twittering -- angered listeners in the audience, who gave vent to their indignation in the letter columns of the Times.[70] "Another Sufferer" complained about "the great nuisance of conversation at the Russian Opera."

> I was in the stalls at the performance of Le Coq d'Or and Narcisse last night, and the talk round me was incessant. The quaint humour of the former . . . excited as much laughter and comment as if it had been a harlequinade in a pantomime . . . and much of the beautiful music of Narcisse was inaudible. When will people who go to the Opera to talk have some consideration for those who wish to to listen to music?[71]

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[69]"Last Night at Drury Lane. Sir Joseph Beecham and Another Season," The Times, 27 July 1914, p. 11, col. 4.

[70]Edward Speyer, Letter to the Editor, The Times, 18 July 1914, p. 6, col. 2; William de Morgan, Letter to the Editor, The Times, 20 July 1914, p. 10, col. 2; G. N. Sutton, Letter to the Editor, The Times, 21 July 1914, p. 11, col. 2; Edith Lyttelton and "Sufferer", Letters to the Editor, The Times, 22 July 1914, p. 10, col. 5.

[71]"Another Sufferer," Letter to the Editor, The Times, 25 July 1914, p. 6, col. 6. Arnold Bennett also deplored the musical bad manners of Diaghilev's audience. "The mere social behaviour of the moneyed seatholders," he wrote in April 1913, "was as atrocious as it is during the regular season. Wishing to see and hear well some of the Russian ballets, I committed the imprudence of taking a box on the grand tier. I saw the ballet. What I heard was the boisterous antics of a party of picnickers in the box on my left, and the boisterous antics of another party of picnickers in the box on my right. Similar phenomena, I willingly admit, are to be observed at the Paris Opera, and worse at the Scala at Milan. But the Brussels Monnaie is better, and the New York Opera House is much better." Arnold Bennett, "Music and Art at Covent Garden," The New Statesman, 19 April 1913, pp. 51-52.

Celebrity seekers added appreciably to Beecham's public, so that despite the rivalry with Covent Garden, where Caruso and Melba held the stage, empty seats at Drury Lane were few. But the stalls were not the only part of the house where new faces could be discerned. For the first time, the gallery seems to have emerged from anonymity, and it revealed a spectacle "as wonderful" as Diaghilev's stage. "People mount the stairs to see them," wrote the English Review, "the Henry Arthur Jones villain sombreros, the Egyptian coiffures of the ladies, the waistcoats of poets, the side-whiskers à la Café Royal, the shawls and kissing curls, the nightly kaleidoscopic assembly of 'creators' from Vorticists upwards, such as only Ta-ra-ra-bom-de-ay ever succeeded in attracting in a British auditorium."[72]

Just who made up this colorful throng is hard to say, but it was in these upper reaches that Sir Joseph's alliance of business and art was applauded loudest and longest. On July 24th, when Chaliapin sang his last, magnificent Boris, nearly a thousand people crowded the gallery, many of whom, noted the Times, "had waited for places since early morning".[73] Ovation followed ovation. Even when the stalls and dress circle had emptied, flowers

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[72]S.O., "The Russians at Drury Lane," p. 561.

[73]"Chaliapin's Farewell. End of the Drury Lane Opera Season," The Times, 25 July 1914, p. 6, col. 6.

and applause continued to bombard Chaliapin and Sir Joseph from the gallery. The following evening, when Legend of Joseph, Carnaval, and Papillons rang down the curtain on Diaghilev's pre-War enterprise, Sir Joseph again stepped forward, this time to accept a gilded laurel wreath from the dancers and to thank the gallery for the wreath sent to him the night before. He also promised another season.[74] How self-effacing Diaghilev appears, his hand everywhere, his face nowhere, with the name of the Maecenas writ large on his achievement. Did the ego that drove him from Perm to Petersburg to Paris chafe at this anonymity? Did it feel the odd twinge of jealousy, the fear that it might have lost the upper hand? Here, as on so many occasions when one would like to probe Diaghilev's motives, the man behind the public figure remains inscrutable.

The Beecham-Diaghilev enterprise of 1914 sensibly broadened the public for opera. In so doing, it laid the foundation for the relatively democratized audience that today supports two resident companies in the British capital. Beecham's undertakings in these immediate pre-War years proposed to do more than simply upgrade the style and quality of offerings at Covent Garden. They sought to transform the character of the public, to weld music-lovers, socialites, theatergoers, and artistic enthusiasts

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[74]"Last Night of Drury Lane. Sir Joseph Beecham and Another Season," The Times, 27 July 1914, p. 11, col. 4.

of more modest means into an audience more closely attuned to Britain's middle-class social order. Neither the provincial troupes, which played at most a brief and occasional London season, nor Covent Garden, which pandered almost exclusively to the haut monde, managed to make the necessary social and artistic adjustments. Beecham was able to do so, only in part because of his family's pharmaceutical empire. Thanks to Diaghilev and the revelation of Chaliapin and Russia's lyric theatre, Beecham found an artist and a repertory whose appeal transcended divisions of class and differences in taste. In the sophistication of his programming and perceptible broadening of his audience, Beecham laid the cornerstone for British national opera. In the 1920's, Diaghilev would perform a similar service for British ballet.

Between 1911 and 1914, Diaghilev's audience revealed the many faces of Establishment privilege. It marked ballet as a pastime, at once fashionable and frivolous, and more than anything else, enforced the ban against choreographic art as a subject of intellectual discourse. Yet writers, artists, and intellectuals did not shun the Ballets Russes. Many went regularly, even frequently, to Diaghilev events, although few wrote at length about them, and fewer still revealed how they touched the imagination. In no way, however, did their presence alter the character of the audience. Indeed, in the case of that circle of critics, writers, and painters,

collectively known as Bloomsbury, habits of class and social background linked the most assiduous of Diaghilev's intellectual followers with the world of his fashionable devotees.

In his memoir Beginning Again, Leonard Woolf recalled his excitement at returning to London in 1911, after nearly seven years as a civil servant in the colonial backwaters of Ceylon.

> Profound changes were taking place . . . Freud and Rutherford and Einstein were at work beginning to revolutionize our knowledge of our own minds and of the universe . . . In literature one seemed to feel the ominous lull bfore the storm which was to produce in a few years A la Recherche du Temps Perdu, Ulysses, Prufrock and The Waste Land, Jacob's Room and Mrs. Dalloway. In painting we were in the middle of the profound revolution of Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso . . . And to crown all, night after night we flocked to Covent Garden, entranced by a new art, a revelation to us benighted British, the Russian Ballet in the greatest days of Diaghilev and Nijinsky.[75]

Time and again, Diaghilev's Russians weave through the "kaleidoscopic dream"[76] of Woolf's first six months in London. At Covent Garden, "the pleasures of London life and old friendships met";[77] here, Bloomsbury gathered and romance flowered to the strains of Schumann and Rimsky-Korsakov.

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[75]Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911 to 1918 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963), p. 37.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid., p. 20.

> The Russian Ballet became for a time a curious centre for both fashionable and intellectual London . . . night after night one could go to to Covent Garden and find . . . the people whom one liked best in the world, moved and excited as one was oneself. In all my long life in London this is the only instance in which I can remember the intellectuals going night after night to a theatre, opera, concert, or other performance as, I suppose, they have and do in . . . Bayreuth or Paris.[78]

In the autumn of 1911, Schéhérazade, Carnaval, and Lac des Cygnes were not the only seductions to be found at Covent Garden. That season Russian ballet alternated with Wagner's Ring, and Woolf took a box in October for Das Rheingold, Siegfried, Götterdämmerung, and Die Walküre. At his side sat Rupert Brook, Adrian and Virginia Stephen, and Saxton Sydney-Turner, Bloomsbury's resident Wagnerian.[79] As occurred in the fashionable reaches of Diaghilev's

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[78] Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[79] Ibid., p. 50.

audience and among his following of established writers,[80] opera led Bloomsbury to the ballet.

Although her biographer Quentin Bell minimizes the writer's passion for the Bayreuth master, Virginia Woolf shared the vogue for Wagner that Leonard found so disconcerting among the "frequenters of the Russian Ballet".[81] In May 1908, she was "so miserably involved in opera and the German language," that she had barely a free

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[80]Shaw, of course, was a music critic of longstanding, a fervent admirer of both Wagner and Strauss. During his sojourn in Paris, Bennett became good friends with M.D. Calvocoressi, the musicologist who assisted Diaghilev in 1907-1908, and through him, a habitué of Cipa Godebski's distinguished musical salon. In January 1911, the English Review published Bennett's backstage impressions of the Ballets Russes in Paris, which later appeared in Paris Nights and Other Impressions of Places and People. Bennett's screed against Diaghilev's ill-mannered audience, written for the banner issue of the New Statesman, opened with a similar complaint about the first night audience for Rosenkavalier. There are also passing mentions of Diaghilev artists and productions in Bennett's diaries and letters. Margaret Drabble, Arnold Bennett (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p. 150; Arnold Bennett, "Paris Nights," The English Review, Jan. 1911, pp. 243-257; Paris Nights and Other Impressions of Places and People (New York: George H. Doran, 1913); "Music and Art at Covent Garden," The New Statesman, 19 April 1913, pp. 51-52; Arnold Bennett, Letter to Cedric Sharpe, 13 Sept. 1913, Letters of Arnold Bennett, ed. James Hepburn (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), II, 335; The Journals of Arnold Bennett, 1911-1921, ed. Newman Flower (London: Cassell, 1932), pp. 12, 177. Only Comptom MacKenzie, a popular novelist from a distinguished theatrical family, seems to have enthused over Diaghilev from a grounding in music-hall ballet rather than opera. Compton MacKenzie, My Life and Times, Octave 4 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), pp. 130-132.

[81]Ibid., p. 49; Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), I, 149.

afternoon for tea with Lytton Strachey.[82] The following February a Mr. Ilchester sent her a ticket for the "Wagner opera", and a few days later she returned "half dazed" from "six solid hours" of another performance.[83] In August 1909 she traveled with her brother Adrian to the Master's shrine in Bayreuth.[84] Only in 1913 was the spell broken. "We came up here 10 days ago to attend the Ring," she wrote to Katherine Cox on May 16, 1913, "and I hereby state that I will never go again . . . My eyes are bruised, my ears dulled, my brain a mere pudding of pulp -- O the noise and the heat, and the bawling sentimentality, which used once to carry me away, and now leaves me sitting perfectly still. Everyone seems to have come to this opinion, though some pretend to believe still."[85]

Maestros other than Wagner drew the young writer to Covent Garden. In 1909 her brother Adrian recorded that in a space of six weeks she went twice to Don Giovanni, twice to Louise, to the first performance of The Wreckers, to Aida, Orpheus and Eurydice, Madame Butterfly, and

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[82]Virginia Woolf, Letter to Lytton Strachey, 18 May 1908, Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey Letters, ed. Leonard Woolf and James Strachey (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1956), p. 11.

[83]Virginia Woolf, Letters to Lytton Strachey, 1 and 9 Feb. 1909, ibid., pp. 34-35.

[84]Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf, I, 149.

[85]Virginia Woolf, Letter to Katherine Cox, 16 May 1913, The Letters of Virginia Woolf, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), II, 26.

Faust.[86] That summer, too, she paid a visit to the troupe of Russian dancers headed by Karsavina performing at the Coliseum, a foretaste of the rich fare Diaghilev brought to Covent Garden two years later. In 1911, 1912, and 1913, ballet added a new texture to the pleasures of "spectacle" and "social event" she associated with opera-going.[87] Striking a Russian chord after her immersion in Wagner, on November 6, 1911, she invited Lytton Strachey to "the dancers", a performance of Le Pavillon d'Armide, Les Sylphides, and Carnaval, all with Pavlova. The tickets were "only amphitheatre this time," she wrote, "but when they do the other thing we will go to the stalls."[88] Another invitation followed for the twenty-first: the program again was Le Pavillon d'Armide and Carnaval, this time with Kschessinska, and Schéhérazade, doubtless the reason Woolf "hoped to get stalls."[89] The years 1912 and 1913 were crowded with event, but wedding plans, social engagements, and illness notwithstanding, Woolf still found time for performances at Covent Garden and Drury Lane.[90]

Bloomsbury did indeed "assist" at some great

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[86]Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf, I, 149n.

[87]Ibid., I, 149.

[88]Virginia Woolf, Letter to Lytton Strachey, 6 Nov. 1911, Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey Letters, p. 45.

[89]Virginia Woolf, Letter to Lytton Strachey, 20 Nov. 1911, ibid., p. 46.

[90]Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf, II, 4, 12.

ballet moments: "Nijinsky's leap in Le Spectre de la Rose, the first London performance of Le Sacre du Printemps, the drop-curtain of Schéhérazade and the scene revealed when it rose" were the ones E. M. Forster, a fellow traveler of the circle, remembered forty years later.[91] In 1911 alone, Rupert Brooke saw no fewer than fifteen performances.[92] "All the summer," he wrote in September, "I alternated between seeing the Russian Ballet at Covent Garden and writing sonnets on the lawn" at Cambridge.[93] The ballet reappears on his social calendar in February and March 1913, and the following year he attended the premieres of Le Rossignol and Legend of Joseph and the performance of Coq d'Or, where the final rupture of his friendship with

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[91]E. M. Forster, "A Shrine for Diaghilev," The Observer, 25 Dec. 1955, p. 4, col. 3. The recent edition of Forster's letters contains three references to the pre-War Ballets Russes. On July 28, 1911 the novelist attended a matinee of Le Pavillon d'Armide, Les Sylphides, and Schéhérazade. The following summer, he was "lucky to get a seat" for a performance of Les Sylphides, Firebird, and Carnaval on June 20th. Writing of a Mystery Play he saw in India, Forster described the music-cum-dance performance as "[working] up to a real crisis, like the Russian Ballet". "To Malcolm Darling," 29 July 1911, Letter 94; "To Forrest Reid," 19 June 1912, Letter 104; "To Alice Clara Forster, 1 Dec. 1912, Letter 113, Selected Letters of E. M. Forster, ed. Mary Lago and P. N. Furbank (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), I, 122, 136, 165.

[92]Christopher Hassall, Rupert Brooke: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), p. 265.

[93]Rupert Brooke, Letter to Erica Cotterill, 18 Sept. 1911, The Letters of Rupert Brooke, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 314.

Lytton Strachey took place.[94] That last pre-War season remained in Clive Bell's mind for other reasons. "We all remembered how Madame Karsavina danced in 1914," he wrote five years later, "she had seemed to us miraculous almost. And if we remembered her better in one ballet than another that ballet was Petroushka."[95] John Maynard Keynes was another early devotee of the Russians. He spent the summer of 1911 writing his Treatise on Probability, but when statistics palled, the economist slipped down from Cambridge to "view Mr Nijinsky's legs".[96] Two years later, Keynes saw Boris Godunov as well as Sacre du Printemps.[97] Among Bloomsbury, Diaghilev acquired a small, but loyal, following of intellectuals.

Only Lytton Strachey seems to have recorded firsthand impressions of Nijinsky's ballet. Sacre, he wrote, was "one of the most painful experiences of my life. I couldn't have imagined that boredom and sheer anguish

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[94]Hassall, pp. 380, 449; Rupert Brooke, Letter to Jacques Raverat, July 1914, Letters, p. 595; Michael Holroyd, Lytton Strachey: A Critical Biography (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), II, 28n. Also present on that dramatic occasion in the Drury Lane foyer was Lytton's brother James, the future pyschoanalyst who numbered among his minor works a bibliography of dancing. James Strachey, "Bibliography of the Ballet," Drama, 1, No. 3 (Dec. 1919), 71-73.

[95]Clive Bell, "The New Ballet," The New Republic, 30 July 1919, p. 414.

[96]John Maynard Keynes, Letter to Lytton Strachey, 17 July 1911, quoted in Robert Skidelsky, John Maynard Keynes: A Biography (London: Macmillan, 1983), I, 259.

[97]Ibid., p. 279.

could have been combined together at such a pitch."[98] How accurately his confession of pain and confusion mirrored the feeling of Bloomsbury is impossible to judge. Yet there is evidence that Nijinsky's ballet occupied a rung apart from Diaghilev's other works; that it conveyed something akin to "significant form" in choreography. In the howl of derision provoked by Sacre, only the Nation and New Statesman voiced minority opinions, and these, tellingly, were journals with more than a casual relationship to Bloomsbury. Roger Fry wrote regularly on art for the Nation, while the New Statesman, a Fabian weekly launched in April 1913, published Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Lytton Strachey, Roger Fry, Rupert Brooke, and Desmond MacCarthy in the first fifteen months of its existence. More pragmatic than its rival in politics, more openminded in its coverage of the arts, the New Statesman wove together the leftward leaning politics, feminism, and aesthetic concerns that formed Bloomsbury's loosely-defined

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[98]Holroyd, II, 94-95.

> restlessness, weaves his poem of pattern . . . In Le Sacre du Printemps you may see the barbaric Russian gestures and dances not, as in Schéhérazade and Prince Igor, used for their own natural oddness and barbarity . . . but used to build up a synthesis in movement of a barbaric idea, the sacrifice of a young girl to Spring. The literalness of plot has gone; we do not rely on an unforeseen dénôument to excite us; we look for the unfolding of an idea . . . Here there was much more nearly a synthesis of [music and choreography], neither in service to the other, but both expressing one idea.[101]

Who was this anonymous critic, who eyed Nijinsky's work with such understanding? Surely, he must have been close to Bloomsbury. The concern for pattern, structure, organic union, draws on Roger Fry's ideas about the coherence and expressive function of design; implies, with Clive Bell, that art is significant form. The history of the journal's first fifty years skips over this choreographic episode.[102] But even if all trace of the

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[101]"The Russian Ballet. II," p. 470. Edward Marsh, a friend of Rupert Brooke's who described Jeux as a "Post-Impressionist picture put in motion", reversed his initial opinion of Sacre, thanks to W. Denis Browne, another close friend of Brooke's, who wrote music reviews for the New Statesman in 1914. "I told you in my last letter," Marsh reported to Brooke in July 1913, "how he loved it and I hated it the first time. He gave me a lecture, and said my mistake had been to listen too much to the music -- and that just as oxygen and hydrogen, tho' disgusting separately, made a delicious compound . . . so the cacophonous music and the ungracious gestures melted into a perfectly harmonious whole . . . I went again, followed his instructions, and succeed in being ravished with delight." Edward Marsh, Letter to Rupert Brooke, [July 1913], quoted in Christopher Hassall, Edward March: Patron of the Arts, A Biography (London: Longmans, 1959), pp. 238-239.

[102]Edward Hyams, The New Statesman: The History of the First Fifty Years, introd. John Freeman (London: Longmans, 1963), Ch. 2-3.

"ideology".[99]

In July 1913, the New Statesman published no fewer than three articles about the Russian Ballet, and two of these spoke directly to the issue of Nijinsky's choreography.[100] Here, at last, Nijinsky found a London critic who appreciated both the artistic intent of his work and the central place of choreography in the compositional text of ballet.

> In the three "revolutionary" ballets we find a a passionate endeavour towards the ballet as a unity . . . In Jeux and L'Après-midi Nijinsky's work . . . has been at pains to put choreography itself on a true artistic level; he has put his own vigour into pattern; we have seen him working to express an idea through moving forms . . . In Jeux Nijinsky uses the toe-dancing of marionettes, the gestures of French dolls dressed in white, a magnified tennis ball, conventionalised flower-beds and grass-plots . . . and with the motives of quarrel, reconciliation, childish impulsiveness and

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[99]Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, pp. 127-131; Desmond MacCarthy, Experience (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1935), pp. x-xv. Desmond MacCarthy joined the staff of the New Statesman as drama critic in 1913 and became Literary Editor in 1920. In 1913-1914, Woolf attended the journal's weekly lunches and contributed unsigned as well as signed articles. In a letter written in early 1914, Rupert Brooke says that while the Nation is better written, the New Statesman "represents my views more". Rupert Brooke, Letter to Mrs. Brooke, 7 Jan. 1914, Letters, p. 560. The minority opinion voiced by the Nation was written by Francis Toye ("The Newer Russian Ballets," 2 Aug. 1913, pp. 675-676).

[100]I., "The Russian Ballet. I," The New Statesman, 5 July 1913, pp. 406-407; I., "The Russian Ballet. II," The New Statesman, 19 July 1913, pp. 469-470; I., "The Russian Ballet: A Postscript," The New Statesman, 26 July 1913, p. 501. An article on Moussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov by the same critic appeared in the July 12th issue (p. 438). Most unusually, the journal took no notice of the rival season at Covent Garden.

critic has been lost, is it idle to suggest that Strachey's remarks, penned within hours of hearing Stravinsky's troubling cacophonies, may have been less fully considered than those of this reviewer? In the circles around the New Statesman (for which Rambert's future husband, playwright Ashley Dukes, also wrote), one discerns the palimpsest of that enlightened intelligentsia Rambert claimed for the Ballets Russes.[103]

Sacre, however, was only one ballet, and with Jeux and Faune made up but a fraction of the repertory. In the larger context of the pre-War Ballets Russes, sensory thrill, not structure, was the pivot on which the company's aesthetic turned, and Diaghilev's refined stimulants provoked complaints of cheap and flashy spectacle even as they drew Bloomsbury again and again to the theatre. In an address to the Cambridge Heretics' Society in early 1913,

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[103]The music critic Edwin Evans (who addressed "a few preliminary remarks to the audience" before the curtain went up on Sacre) may well have been referring to the Nation and New Statesman milieux when he wrote in his own review of the ballet: "M. Nijinsky's new principles of choreography have found acceptance in some influential quarters, and rejection in some others, but there is an increasing tendency to treat them with the respect they deserve, as representing a courageous effort to free the ballet from its perennial taint of mere conventional prettiness." E[dwin] E[vans], "Saison Russe," The Outlook, 26 July 1913, p. 128. In May and June 1913, the Outlook serialized "Stage, Music, and Movement" by Prince Serge Wolkonsky, Diaghilev's one-time nemesis at the Imperial Theatres, and earlier in the year, it had reviewed Loie Fuller's Fifteen Years of a Dancer's Life and Ellen Terry's The Russian Ballet. Throughout this period, Ford Madox Ford contributed "historical vignettes" and "literary portraits" to the weekly.

Rupert Brooke paid a resounding tribute to Gordon Craig, then went on to damn in a single breath the "tawdry and inharmonious" designs "of a Russian Jew called Bakst" and "that energetic fraud Max Reinhardt". A year earlier, Clive Bell had also coupled the names of Bakst and Reinhardt, "wizards of 'the new art' [who] claim to express the most profound and subtle emotions," but, in reality, produce "imitation art", "physical reactions . . . subtle enough to do duty for aesthetic emotions". Like the best music-hall pageants and ballets, their work made for a "good show", but it was a "faux bon", not a work of art.[104] In the references to Gordon Craig and Max Reinhardt, harbingers in very different ways of the new stagecraft, one glimpses the intellectual scaffolding of Bloomsbury's critique of Diaghilev.

Just weeks after the close of the Coronation season, Roger Fry's long and laudatory article on an exhibition of Craig's designs appeared in the Nation. Diaghilev is not mentioned nor is his enterprise, but Fry's praise of the spare and abstract models on display implied

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[104]Hassall, p. 377; Clive Bell, "'Oedipus Rex' at Covent Garden," The Athenaeum, No. 4395, 20 Jan. 1912, pp. 75-76. This was not the only time Brooke tacked a Semitic label to the visual style of Diaghilev productions. Inviting a friend to Legend of Joseph, he noted that as Strauss "isn't a Jew," he "may be patronized." "The Bally is going in more and more for decorations by Bennois (Benois?) and other decent people, and less and less for Bakst the Jew; so it's improving in that way." Rupert Brooke, Letter to Jacques Raverat, July 1914, Letters, p. 595. I am grateful to Joan Ross Acocella for drawing the Bell reference to my attention.

a criticism of both. In contrast to the opulent materiality of the Ballets Russes, Craig's was

> an art concerned with the imaginative approach to things of higher import, not with their final consummation. It is like the narthex of a cathedral, the frame of a picture, the avenue to a great palace, and, as in all these things, something must be left out, its perfection depends upon its incompleteness.[105]

Again and again, Fry made the point that Craig had rid his designs of the "imitative" and "picturesque".

In its appreciation of contemporary painting, Bloomsbury stood far ahead of Diaghilev. Only a year before this review, Fry's first Post-Impressionist Exhibition had introduced Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin, then virtually unknown in England, to a public that heaped scorn, ridicule, and abuse on both their works and their sponsors.[106] In 1912, long before Diaghilev awarded either artist a commission, paintings by Larionov and Goncharova hung in the Russian section of Fry's Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. Ranged against the moderns, the Mir iskusstva aesthetic, of which no one more than Bakst was the apotheosis, seemed stale and second-rate. "For a long time," wrote Fry in 1919, "the Russian Ballet was content with a décor which, though it could not be called

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[105]Roger Fry, "Gordon Craig's Stage Designs," The Nation, 16 Sept. 1911, p. 871.

[106]Frances Spaulding, Roger Fry: Art and Life (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980), p. 133.

old-fashioned or reactionary, was by no means on a level with the conceptions of the great original designers of Europe."

> M. Bakst was a most effective and ingenious designer, sufficiently alert to pick up ideas from all sides, but he did not himself stand in the front rank of creative designers. Probably the exact note of compromise on which M. Bakst fixed . . . was nearly exactly suited to M. Fokine's habitual methods of choreography. But when M. Fokine, . . . created Petrushka, it became apparent that the choreographic conception was far ahead of the décor, and the same dissidence was even more apparent between the extremely original and formal design of the dance in 'Le Sacre du Printemps' and the rather fusty romanticism of M. Ruhrich's [sic] scenery.[107]

In early twentieth-century England, Puritanism was still a force to be reckoned with. Temperance leagues fought the evils of drink; "purity" drives the immorality of sex; to many the theatre remained the apogee of sin. As late as 1907 the Spectator printed no dramatic reviews for fear of putting off the clerics in its audience.[108] Ballet before Diaghilev meant pretty girls and glittering accompaniments: the difference between a guardsman and a ballet girl, it was said, was that the first sins on two legs, the other on one.[109] Even in Bloomsbury, ascetism

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[107]Roger Fry, "M. Larionow and the Russian Ballet," Burlington Magazine, March 1919, p. 112.

[108]Holroyd, I, 381. Lytton Strachey was the Spectator's first drama critic.

[109]I., "The Russian Ballet. I," p. 406.

ran deep, deeper at times than the impulse toward hedonism. It bred a mistrust of the stage to the extent that theatre was spectacle: the Word was sacred, the Flesh that dressed it profane. In an essay on stage setting, Roger Fry alluded to this dichotomy, ascribing it to an upbringing where theatre was forbidden: now he cared only for drama. "My attitude to the stage, then, is mainly negative. I ask of it not to interfere unduly with the drama, not to destroy the imaginative conviction which spoken words and gestures can create."[110]

Like Bell, who drew on many of his ideas, Fry linked spectacle to the music-hall. "There I like the plaster Caryatids, the rollicking Cupids, and all the gingerbread magnificence, just as there I can appreciate the sham oriental scenery before which the serio-comic lady declaims. Nor do I mind in that atmosphere how many sensations I receive, since I know that I may neglect any number without missing the point."[111] Diaghilev, too, hated gingerbread kitsch. But Fry's allusion to sham oriental scenery and magnificent settings strikes a critical note echoed by other partisans of new art. "BLAST . . . Naively seductive Houri salon-picture Cocottes,"

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[110]Roger Fry, "Stage Setting," The New Statesman [Dramatic Supplement], 27 June 1914, p. 2.

[111]Ibid., p. 3.

declared a Vorticist manifesto in 1914.[112] In The Caliph's Dream published in 1919, Blast editor Wyndham Lewis contrasted the primitivism of the avantgarde moderns with the pseudo-savagery of ballets like Prince Igor -- clashing cymbals, howling clansmen, voluptuous belly-dances, Caucasian vendettas. "That is about as far as a respectable Public-school fancy takes you. It is like a scene from the more boring of the Russian ballets or a Victory Ball."[113] Fry ends his article with what sounds like an admonition to Diaghilev: "striking or brilliant oppositions of colour, even if they are beautiful, should be avoided as making too distracting an appeal to the eye."[114]

One of the more curious aspects of Diaghilev's reception in England is the way perceptions among intellectuals were colored by the popular stage. Reinhardt's "new art", in particular, offered a compendium of theatrical effects -- "opulent sensuousness", "unity of effect", "dumb show", "idea of ensemble", and "Eastern

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[112]"Great Preliminary Vortex. Manifesto II," Blast, No. 1 (20 June 1914; rpt. New York: Krauss Publishing, 1967), p. 13.

[113]Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings 1913-1956, ed. Walter Michel and C. J. Fox (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969), p. 155. I am grateful to Joan Acocella for drawing this reference to my attention.

[114]Fry, "Stage Setting," p. 3.

romance"[115] -- which approximated Diaghilev's contribution to the operatic stage. Although the Nation published nothing about the Ballets Russes in 1911 and 1912, its coverage of Reinhardt's "wordless plays" sketches the intellectual context of those years, the feeling among London highbrows at the time of Diaghilev's second and third seasons that little of what was seemingly innovative was really new. "There is . . . a curiously sporadic activity about our theatres now," began an essay on Reinhardt's "new art" in October 1911.

> It is an activity that seems to excite everybody and satisfy nobody -- new wine in old bottles, concentrations upon side-issues, large efforts loudly heralded to small ends . . . ideas flying ths way and that, like meteors on a November night . . . Written in large and flaming letters across the full arc of heaven, one perceives the legend -- Reinhardt![116]

The Nation found much to praise in the man who brought scholar and mechanic to the theatre. In The Miracle, wrote editor H. W. Massingham, Reinhardt's orchestration of color and crowd, movement and mass, was "a brilliant feat of management"; the production marked a "real epoch in the development of spectacular art in this

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[115]"Reinhardt and His 'New Art'," The Nation, 14 Oct. 1911, pp. 90-91; H. W. M[assingham], "Signs of Change," The Nation, 30 Dec. 1911, p. 549. Massingham was the Nation's editor.

[116]"Reinhardt and His 'New Art'," p. 90.

country".[117] But, he added, it was not "poetic drama". Nor was it new: the sentimental religious appeal, the setting of medieval romance were as familiar as the "old store-house of Eastern fantasy" of Reinhardt's Sumurun.[118] Or, one might add, of Schéhérazade or Cléopâtre, then drawing crowds at Covent Garden. Spurious novelty aside, the very notion of a spectacle that dispensed with speech troubled the Nation; in Reinhardt's "wordless play" drama vanished into the appurtenances of stagecraft; the result was a human and intellectual void. In another review, Massingham linked the appeal to eye and ear in these productions to the influence of film. "The great London theatre," he wrote in September 1912, "becomes more and more of a 'cinema,' with vocal accompaniments. Large numbers of actors and actresses are made to go through much expressive and rapidly changing pantomime, culminating in clashing moments and vivid scenic groups . . . This is the

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[117] In his review of Reinhardt's Oedipus, published a few weks later Clive Bell closely followed Massingham's argument. "In Prof. Reinhardt's productions there are dramatic pauses and suspensions, effects of light and sound, combinations of movement and mass, line and colour, which . . . provoke, in the right kind of spectator, precisely those trains of thought and feeling that are provoked by real works of art . . . It is hard to believe that these refined stimulants are precisely the same in kind as the collisions and avalanches of melodrama; but they are." Clive Bell, "Sophocles in London," p. 130.

[118] H. W. M[assingham], "The Wordless Play. Sumurun -- The Honeymoon," the Nation, 21 Oct. 1911, p. 128.

essential stuff of the spectacular play."[119] It was the stuff, too, of Fokine's exotic ballets, of which no fewer than four -- Firebird, Thamar, the Polovtsian Dances, and Schéhérazade -- were presented that summer at Covent Garden. To the intellectual mind, it seems, Diaghilev stood close to Reinhardt on the "new art" continuum, offering via the opera house the refined stimulants and thrills of the "Professor's" wordless spectacles in the West End.

No wonder Bakst was so disparaged in Bloomsbury's Georgian squares; his style tagged as vulgar; his effects demoted to the level of the music-hall. But sensuousness, like the theatre generally, works in strange ways upon the repressed sensibility: as much as it repels, so it fascinates; it opens an arena for the free play of fantasy, a space where the unconscious can take pleasure in the ritualized representation of the forbidden. In Bloomsbury's response to the Ballets Russes, rational and liberatory impulses warred.

In Beginning Again, Leonard Woolf insisted that it was the classicism of Diaghilev's earliest ballets that Bloomsbury found so appealing, a statement that raises as many questions as it claims to answer. "I have never seen anything more perfect nor more exciting, on any stage, than Scheherazade, Carnaval, Lac des Cygnes, and the other

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[119] H. W. M[assingham], "'Kinemacolor' at His Majesty's," The Nation, 14 Sept. 1912, p. 863.

famous classics. There develops in nearly all the arts . . . a classical style which combines great power and freedom and beauty with a kind of self-imposed austerity and restraint. In the hands of a great master, like Sophocles, Thucydides, Virgil, Swift, La Fontaine, La Bruyère, this combination of originality and freedom with formal purity and restraint is tremendously moving and exciting, and it was this element of classicism in the ballets of 1911 which made them so entrancing."[120]

But can one really speak of "classicism" in the context of Diaghilev's early seasons, if we take this term to mean the gradual unfolding of a tradition, until, like the Balanchine repertoire for the audience of the City Ballet, the individual work becomes both a familiar pleasure and a form resonating between aesthetics past and present? Imagine that Jeux and Sacre had played more than a handful of performances, that Giselle had stayed in the repertory for more than a season, that London had seen over the years a program more coherent than the hodge-podge of secessionist novelties -- Russian, Persian, Greek, Venetian or whatever -- on offer from season to season. Then, I think, one could have spoken of classicism and tradition. As it was, between 1911 and 1914, Diaghilev did not help his British viewers to understand the art he was revealing to them.

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[120]Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, pp 48-49.

This is what E.M. Forster alluded to in recalling the ballet high points of his life: that ballet, as presented by Diaghilev, engaged only on the level of sensation, opening no doors to the inheritance of the past. "The moments," he wrote, "never joined together and built up a tradition for me as opera has: a tradition resident in the mind to be evoked with gratitude. Never, that is to say, until last winter. Last winter I went to the Diaghilev Exhibition. There, the isolated moments coalesced, the scattered impressions of the past fifty years fell into place, and I realised that I had assisted at an attempt of the twentieth century to create civilised pleasure."[121]

Woolf's emphasis on classicism finds no echo in the pre-War voices of his contemporaries, and it seems likely that Richard Buckle's Diaghilev Exhibition of 1954, a splendid tribute to the Ballets Russes that coincided with a groundswell of enthusiasm in England for ballet, influenced his thinking, as it did Forster's. The connection that Forster made with "civilised pleasure" does reverberate in earlier writings, as though the totality of the Diaghilev enterprise, rather than any particular work, promised the dawn of a new age. "They, if anything can,

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[121]Forster, "A Shrine for Diaghilev," p. 4, col. 3.

redeem our civilisation," rhapsodized Rupert Brooke,[122] echoing a feeling in many quarters that the cultural regeneration of the West would come from the purer spiritual climes of the East. Although he does not explicitly mention the Ballets Russes, Lytton Strachey's ecstatic vision of the "literature of the future" could well be a paean to Schéhérazade. "Quelle joie!" he wrote to Virginia Woolf in 1912. "To live in those days, when books will pour out from the press reeking with all the filth of Petronius, all the frenzy of Dostoievsky, all the romance of the Arabian Nights, and all the exquisiteness of Voltaire!"[123]

Literature never quite lived up to these exhilarating vistas, but Bloomsbury parties tried to, and in the style of fancy dress and the themes of after-dinner charades, one perceives both the inspiration and liberatory impact of the ballet stage. At one 1913 party, the young painter Mark Gertler met "a very graceful girl, who made me dance a ballet with her. I took the part of Nijinsky; I had on a jersey and a belt."[124] Oliver Strachey and Karin Costelloe went as Karsavina and Nijinsky to another party that year. Strachey wore "a red ballet costume", his

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[122]Rupert Brooke, Letter to Edward Marsh, quoted in Skidelsky, I, 284.

[123]Lytton Strachey, Letter to Virginia Woolf, 8 Nov. 1912, Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey Letters, p. 55.

[124]Mark Gertler, Letter to Dora Carrington, quoted in Acocella, pp. 12-13.

partner "a piece of purple satin", and they "enacted Spectre de la Rose with much success."[125] In 1914, Lady Ottoline Morrell opened her wardrobes of Oriental clothing to Bloomsbury friends and art students from the Slade who danced pianola versions of Prince Igor and Schéhérazade at her Thursday evening parties.[126]

On the level of play, Diaghilev touched the Bloomsbury imagination; animating its fantasies with movement, dressing them in the hedonist imagery of his stage. "'Schéhérazade,'" wrote artist Anne Estelle Rice in Rhythm, a journal identified with the modern movement in painting and literature, "obviously expresses the sensuous note."

> In this Arabian Nights' orgy of voluptuous fullness, where designs, drapery, arms, legs, bodies, groups have a circular movement, the luxurant overhanging emerald green curtain, the undulating movement of the dancers, the immense trousers of the supple almées, the rich flowing music of Rimsky-Korsakow -- harem and spectator are caught up in a maddening whirl of sound, colour and curve to the point of

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[125]Karin Costelloe, Letter to Mary Berenson, [June 1913], quoted in Barbara Strachey, Remarkable Relations: The Story of the Pearsall Smith Women (New York: Universe Books, 1982), p. 269.

[126]Baldwin, pp. 22-23.

exhaustion."[127]

As a painter, Rice was allied with the Fauves. Her gods were Gauguin and Van Gogh, and in the many drawings of ballet scenes and dancers published in Rhythm, one detects the bold line and sensuous primitivism of her mentors. Bloomsbury, however, preferred the conceptual architecture and impersonality of Cézanne; it valued composition over the kaleidoscope of vibrating color Rice found teeming with life in Bakst. Yet in the dancers, acrobats, and bright colors that figured in products of the Omega Workshop (with which many Bloomsbury artists were associated), one again discerns a ballet presence. Vanessa Bell's panels for the Omega room at the Ideal Home Exhibition in 1913 "were based on the Russian ballet, largely inspired by Matisse's first version of The Dance (which had been included in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition)."[128] Duncan Grant's Queen of Sheba, painted in 1912, is another instance of the ballet acting as a catalyst on the Bloomsbury imagination, although, as in

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[127]Anne Estelle Rice, "Les Ballets Russes," Rhythm, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Aug. 1912), p. 108. Rhythm was edited by J. Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield. Rice was one of the short-lived journal's two Paris-based theatre editors, the other being Georges Banks. In addition to Rice's article, Rhythm also published articles by Banks on "Petrouchka" (Vol. 2, No. 2 [July 1912], pp. 57-63), and Ida Rubinstein's production of "Salome" (Vol. 2, No. 4 [Sept. 1912], pp. 169-172).

[128]Frances Spalding, Vanessa Bell (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), p. 123.

Bell's work, one finds "no attitudes or characters that are direct quotations -- the figures are in natural rather than classical ballet poses".[129]

With age, the bonhomie and good times added up to something more. In her biography of Roger Fry, published in 1940 when German armies occupied Europe for the second time in living memory, Virginia Woolf evoked the optimism and feeling of possibility that so many felt during that Indian summer before World War I, and that Diaghilev with hindsight seemed to represent. Fry's "excitement," she wrote, "was not confined to the Omega . . . There were parties; there were plays; there were operas and exhibitions. London was full of new enterprises. He went to see the Russian dancers, and they, of course, suggested all kind of fresh possibilities, and new combinations of music, dancing, and decoration. He went to the Opera with Arthur Balfour. It was Ariadne, by Strauss, and he was

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[129]Baldwin, p. 23.

enthusiastic."[130] Woolf continues her sketch of that last summer of peace. Like Balfour, the friends who gathered around Fry were Diaghilev familiars -- Princess Lichnowsky, the literary wife of the German Ambassador, a regular subscriber; Lady Ottoline Morrell, at whose home in Bedford Square Duncan Grant, Lytton Strachey, and other Bloomsbury figures had met Nijinsky. "Many of the things that he had worked for seemed to be coming within reach. Civilisation, a desire for the things of the spirit, seemed to be taking hold not merely of a small group, but to be breaking through among the poor, among the rich . . . 'We are at last', he summed it up, 'becoming a little civilised.' And then of course the war came."[131] Surely, Woolf was also talking about herself.

If Diaghilev's art seemed to bode a civilized future, Nijinsky's persona augured a new age of sexual freedom. His physique alone provoked the desire of Bloomsbury's homosexual fraternity: Keynes came down from Cambridge for a look at his "legs", Lytton Strachey daydreamed about him and sent "magnissime flowers" to Drury Lane.[132] (George Bernard Shaw, by contrast, "consoled

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[130]Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry: A Biography (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), pp. 198-199.

[131]Ibid., p. 199. Clive Bell said much the same thing in "Before the War," an essay published in May 1917 in the Cambridge Magazine and reprinted the following year in his collection Pot-Boilers, pp. 247-256.

[132]Holroyd, II, 95.

himself with Karsavina," as he wrote to Mrs. Patrick Campbell.)[133] But Nijinsky was more than a siren; his range of parts -- the Golden Slave in Schéhérazade, the rose-petaled spirit of Spectre, Harlequin in Carnaval, the title role of Petrushka, the Faun in L'Après-midi -- traced a spectrum of male role possibilities that transcended conventions of gender. The attraction of the Ballets Russes for Bloomsbury rested, in part, on the image of sexual heterodoxy projected by Nijinsky, a subject, however, that memories of Oscar Wilde confined to the hush of private discourse.[134]

Interest in Russian literature, and Dostoievsky, particularly, coincided with the arrival of the Ballets

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[133]George Bernard Shaw, Letter to Mrs. Patrick Campbell, 18 July 1913, Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell: Their Correspondence, ed. Alan Dent (New York: Knopf, 1952), p. 148.

[134]Although Forster's Maurice, written in 1913-1914, was circulated in manuscript form among the author's friends, the explicitly homosexual novel was published only in 1971.

Russes.[135] Indeed, one senses that both novelist and dancer inhabited similar compartments of the mind; that Bloomsbury dressed Nijinsky in the guise of a spiritual, sexual, and emotional primitive. For E. M. Forster, Nijinsky's faun was "a humorous and alarming animal, free from the sentimentality of my stories".[136] Rupert Brooke recalled the dancer in letters from Samoa describing a "thrilling and tropical and savage" siva-siva performance.[137] Virginia Woolf never wrote about Nijinsky, but in the twenties, when Lydia Lopokova took up lodgings in Bloomsbury, she observed her closely, fascinated by her differentness, imagining her as a "parrokeet" on one

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[135]Lytton Strachey read Dostoievsky in late 1909, at a time when only a few other intellectuals had heard of him. T. S. Eliot was introduced to the Russian novelist by Alain Fournier in Paris in 1910. The first Dostoievsky work to appear in English was The Brothers Karamazov, published in 1912 in a translation by Constance Garnett (mother of David Garnett, a younger Bloomsbury figure). The Woolfs collaborated with S. S. Koteliansky on a translation of Stavrogin's Confession, unpublished chapters of The Possessed, which was brought out in 1922 by the Hogarth Press. Other Russian authors published by the Woolfs in 1920-1923 included Gorky, Bunin, and Tolstoy. Holroyd, II, 12n; John C. Pope, "Prufrock and Raskolnikov Again: A Letter From T.S. Eliot," American Literature, 18, No. 4 (Jan. 1947), 319; Leonard Woolf, Downhill All the Way, pp. 65-67, 74. For Dostoievsky's emotional appeal and influence on Strachey, see Holroyd, II, 113-114. In 1911, Chekhov received his first performance in London, when the Stage Society produced The Cherry Orchard. Ashley Dukes, The Scene is Changed (London: Macmillan, 1942), p. 35.

[136]P. N. Furbank, E. M. Forster (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 255.

[137]Rupert Brooke, Letter to Cathleen Nesbitt, 28 Oct. 1913, Letters, p. 521; also his letter to W. Denis Browne, 20 Nov. 1913, p. 532.

occasion, on another, as a "poor sparrow turning into a discreet, silent, serious, motherly, respectable fowl, with eggs, feathers, cluck cluck clucking all complete".[138] The mere mention of Lydia sent Woolf rummaging the animal kingdom for images. "A rare bird would really suit Maynard better," she complained to her sister Vanessa Bell. "However she [Lydia] caught a frog and was very charming about the crows she rhymes to Cows, and her armpits, which are called mouseholes in Russia; and I see I should rather like her as a mistress myself."[139] In human guise, Lydia was a tempestuous exotic or naif. Her scenes "shook the rafters -- rage, tears, despair, outrage, horror, retribution, reconciliation"; her "contribution" to tea consisted of "one shriek, two dances; then silence, like a submissive child, with her hands crossed."[140] She was deliciously and exasperatingly primitive -- emotional, infantile, and irrational.

The future Lady Keynes obviously charmed the novelist. Her flashes of temperament, quick changes of feeling, and apparent spontaneity spoke to Woolf's intuitive sense; they touched an emotional chord while

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[138]Virginia Woolf, Letters to Vanessa Bell and Jacques Raverat, 24 May 1923 and 26 Dec. 1924, The Letters of Virginia Woolf, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), III, 43, 149.

[139]Virginia Woolf, Letter to Vanessa Bell, 25 April 1924, Letters, III, 101.

[140]Virginia Woolf, Letters to Jacques Raverat, 4 Nov. 1923 and 4 Sept. 1924, Letters, III, 76, 129.

leaving her intellect cold. One suspects that Nijinsky exerted a similar power and awoke a similar ambivalence in Bloomsbury: instinct counted for only so much in that haven of intellect. Telling in this regard is Lytton Strachey's courting of the "gorgeous" dancer: the purple suit he bought anticipating an introduction, and his eventual disenchantment with "that cretinous lackey".[141] Nijinsky "was very nice," he wrote, after meeting his idol in 1913, "and much more attractive then I'd expected -- in fact very much so . . . Otherwise he did not seem particularly interesting -- as the poor fellow cannot speak more than 2 words of any human language it's difficult to get very far with him. As it was, there was another Russian who acted as interpreter and the conservation was mainly conducted by Granville Barker."[142] Strachey's linguistic chauvinism speaks for itself, as does his reduction of the artist to a physical synecdoche.

Of all the "Bloomsburies", only Lady Ottoline Morrell discerned the "soul" in the beast. Alone among the sophisticates of her circle, she offered "understanding and appreciation of his serious work". He gave her a photograph of himself as Petrushka -- "the mythical outcast," he told her, "in whom is concentrated the pathos

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[141]Holroyd, II, 94-95, 109.

[142]Lytton Strachey, Letter to Henry Lamb, 24 July 1913, quoted Holroyd, II, 94.

and suffering of life, one who beats his hands against the walls, but always is cheated and despised and left outside alone" -- a figure she likened to Dostoievsky's Idiot.[143] She admired his unworldliness, dislike of possessions, and singleminded devotion to art, and saw his reaction to the lavish trappings of Ballets Russes exotica as a sign of his conversion to Tolstoyism. At her home in Bedford Square he stepped out briefly from under Diaghilev's shadow; here, he met Boris Anrep, with whom he spent hours talking about Russian myths and religion; Duncan Grant, Strachey, Simon Bussy, and Granville Barker.[144] Her garden was immortalized: an afternoon tennis match inspired the setting of Jeux. To Strachey's amusement, Nijinsky continued to enthrall her, and even after his marriage she plied him with sentimental attentions. "One one occasion," writes Strachey's biographer, "the two of them were sitting together in a tiny inner room when Lytton entered the house. As he advanced down the drawing-room he overheard Ottoline's husky voice . . . utter the words: 'Quand vous dansez, vous n'êtes pas un homme -- vous êtes une idée. C'est ça, n'est-ce pas, qui est l'Art? . . . Vous avez lu

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[143]Lady Ottoline Morrell, Memoirs of Lady Ottoline Morrell: A Study in Friendship, 1873-1915, ed. Robert Gathorne-Hardy (New York: Knopf, 1964), p. 215.

[144]Ibid., p. 231.

Platon, sans doute?' -- The reply was a grunt."[145] Was Lytton jealous perhaps that "Lady Ott" had penetrated the dancer's reserve, discovering an intelligence that did not solely reside in the ability to articulate and reason abstractly? Or was this, like so many of Strachey's letters, merely another flirtatious performance?

London's avantgarde took far less heed of Diaghilev than Bloomsbury. The ban was never absolute as among the artists of Montmartre, but it was strong, nonetheless, and for essentially the same reason: the social character of the Ballets Russes, as much as its aesthetic, clashed with those of the avantgarde. In a 1913 poem "Les Millwin," Ezra Pound expressed his contempt for both: at the time the Slade was a haven for "arty" types, girls like Dora Carrington and Iris Tree who traveled in Bloomsbury circles and even Society.

> The little Millwins attend the Russian Ballet.
> The Mauve and greenish souls of the little Millwins

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[145]Holroyd, II, 109. Throughout this period, Lady Ottoline took parties of friends to the ballet, and notwithstanding Nijinsky's break with Diaghilev, subscribed, like so many Liberal ladies, to Beecham's 1914 season. Sir Paul Vinogradoff, the Russian born Corpus Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford, who counted Virginia's Woolf's brother Adrian Stephen among his medieval law students, was another 1914 subscriber with a link to Bloomsbury. In the 1920's Lady Ottoline's daughter Julian became enamoured of Vinogradoff's son Igor, a brilliant Oxford undergraduate. She married him in 1942. Who's Who, 1914; Leonard Woolf, Downhill All the Way: A Autobiography of the Years, 1919 to 1939 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967), p. 164; Sandra Jobson Darroch, Ottoline: The Life of Lady Ottoline Morrell (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1975), p. 238.

Were seen lying along the upper seats
Like so many unused boas.

The turbulent and undisciplined host of art students --
The rigorous deputation from "Slade" --
Was before them.

With arms exalted, with fore-arms
Crossed in great futuristic X's, the art students
Exulted, they beheld the splendours of Cleopatra.

And the little Millwins beheld these things;
With their large and anaemic eyes they looked out upon
this configuration.[146]

Few personalities of the time were so full of paradox as the transplanted Pennsylvanian, and here, as elsewhere in his writings, Pound reveals more about his bêtes noires of the moment than his response to a particular phenomenon. According to John Gould Fletcher, a close associate of Pound's in 1913-1914, the guru of the avantgarde passed up the French premiere of Sacre (Fletcher thought this was because of the "poverty bordering on indigence" in which the poet was then living[147]). Pound did see the work when it came to London,[148] and after the war even reviewed ballet pseudonymously during his tenure as music critic for the New Age. (Consistency not being one of his stronger suits, Pound now sang the praises of

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[146]The Selected Poems of Ezra Pound (New York: New Directions, 1957), p. 30. I am grateful to Joan Acocella for bringing this poem to my attention.

[147]John Gould Fletcher, Life Is My Song (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1937), p. 71.

[148]Ezra Pound, "Tibor Serly, Composer," The New English Review, 28 March 1935, p. 495.

Prince Igor -- to the detriment, ironically, of Le Tricorne.)[149] The image of Serafina Astafieva stayed with him long after she appeared with Diaghilev: the dancer, who became an important London teacher, is mentioned twice in the Pisan Cantos.[150]

Just how the avantgarde took initially to Diaghilev is hard to say. The only statement we have comes from a friend of T. E. Hulme, the critic and philosopher, whose Tuesday evening gatherings in 1912 attracted many writers and artists, including Pound, Fletcher, Ford Madox Ford, Richard Aldington, John Cournos, Wyndham Lewis, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Rupert Brooke, John Middleton Murry, Edward Marsh, Jacob Epstein, Edwin Evans, and Ashley Dukes.[151] "I count my acquaintance with Hulme," D. L. Murray told his biographer, "as really beginning in the autumn of 1911 where we met in the gallery at Covent Garden during a performance of the Diaghilev Ballet."

> I think we each expressed surprise at seeing each other there, for in those days ballet was still generally reckoned . . . a "low-brow" form of art associated with music halls. We soon discovered . . . that our enthusiasm for the Diaghilev enterprise concealed a deep difference of appreciation. I admired in it the classical elements it still

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[149]"William Atheling", "At the Ballet," The New Age, 16 Oct. 1919, p. 412; rpt. Ezra Pound and Music, pp. 188-191.

[150]Canto LXXIX, The Cantos of Ezra Pound (New York: New Directions, 1948), pp. 62, 67.

[151]Alun R. Jones, The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme (London: Gollancz, 1960), pp. 94-95; Hassall, Edward Marsh, pp. 186-187.

> retained from the traditional Franco-Italian . . . school, while Hulme was only impressed by the endeavors being made by Nijinsky and others . . . to bring the plastique of ballet into line with the non-humanistic ideals that inspired Egyptian, archaic Greek and Polynesian art."[152]

Apart from professionals like Evans, who as a music critic and occasional Diaghilev employee, penned frequent notices of the company, and Ashley Dukes, a young drama reviewer and playwright, who called Diaghilev's first season "the event of the century",[153] the constellation of talents in Hulme's salon wrote maddeningly little about the ballet. Aldington, it has been said, counted London's first Schéhérazade among the highlights of his youth, but neither he nor Imagist poet Hilda Doolittle, whom he married in 1913, seems to have recorded impressions of performances.[154] Nor did John Middleton Murry or Katherine Mansfield comment publicly about the ballet, although the literary couple spent evenings chez Diaghilev in 1912 and 1913 and published articles about the Ballets Russes in

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[152] Ibid., p. 92.

[153] Dukes, p. 36.

[154] Thomas McGreevy, Richard Aldington: An Englishman (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931), p. 11. After the war, Cyril Beaumont published a limited edition of Aldington's translation of The Good-Humoured Ladies, the Goldoni play on which Diaghilev had based his very popular ballet. Carlo Goldoni, The Good-Humoured Ladies, trans. Richard Aldington, pref. Arthur Symons (London: C. W. Beaumont, 1922).

Rhythm.[155] (Only in 1921 did Murry break this silence. Reviewing W.A. Propert's The Russian Ballet in Western Europe 1909-1920, he ranked the contributions of Goncharova, Benois, Roerich, and "even Bakst" far above the designs of Picasso, Matisse, and Derain.[156]) Only Fletcher, an Imagist with an essentially pictorial imagination, responded wholeheartedly to the ballet. In 1911, he "sat spellbound through the barbaric splendor of Scheherazade and the Polovtsian dances from Prince Igor,"[157] an encounter that provoked such early experiments as "The Vowels", a poem synthesizing sound with the exotically colored imagery of Bakst -- to whom it was dedicated.[158]

Sacre, however, was to be remembered by Fletcher long after the Paris premiere, which he attended with the painters Anne Estelle Rice and John Duncan Fergusson, the former art editor of Rhythm. For it was this performance, "more than anything else" that confirmed him in his dedication "to risk everything in order to become a modern artist": "a determination to make and accept every kind of

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[155]F.A. Lea, The Life of John Middleton Murry (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), p. 33.

[156]J. Middleton Murry, "The Art of the Russian Ballet," Nation and Athenaeum, 10 Sept. 1921, p. 834.

[157]Fletcher, p. 65.

[158]Ibid. The poem was first published in John Gould Fletcher, Fire and Wine (London: Grant Richards, 1913), pp. 42-43. I am grateful to Joan Acocella for drawing the poem to my attention.

experiment, and not flinch from any novelty, however strange and uncouth it might seem, or however deeply it aroused the hatred of the mob."[159] During her sojourn in London that summer, Amy Lowell went regularly to Drury Lane, as she would do the following year. Like Fletcher, she accepted Sacre "instantly as a masterpiece and eventually came to consider Stravinsky as the greatest living composer. For years afterward," wrote S. Foster Damon, "she used to describe with gusto the effect of her first hearing" of the ballet.[160]

Balletomanes aside, Nijinsky's work did, it seems, bring the London avantgarde en masse to the theatre. John Cournos, a Pound protégé who later translated many Russian literary works, recalled the controversy that raged in Harold Monro's attic -- a gathering place for Imagist and Georgian poets -- on the night of the first London performance. To Jacob Epstein's strange new vision had been added Stravinsky's, and a copy of Epstein's Christ in Monro's living room downstairs "had to be rescued hastily and indiscriminately from his opponents and exponents alike, and I from the sister of an eminent British novelist . . . , who was threatening Stravinsky in my unworthy

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[159] Ibid, p. 68.

[160] S. Foster Damon, Amy Lowell: A Chronicle With Extracts From Her Correspondence (New York, 1935; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1966), p. 229.

person with her umbrella".[161] In an essay on the composer in The Egoist, a journal that published many Imagists and articles about the new art, Leigh Henry summed up what we may assume to be the avantgarde position,

> The latest and greatest of Stravinsky's dance-creations, the tremendous dance tragedy, "Le Sacre du Printemps" . . . surpasses even his own earlier work and gives us the first perfect and unified conception of synthetic choreography. Here we have the veritable essence of Dionysian ecstasy, the sensitivism and nervous power present in the new consciousness of the world expressed with a perfect mastery which transcends almost everything which we have hitherto understood by the term "dramatic".[162]

In the work of Wyndham Lewis, Gaudier Brzeska, and David Bomberg, dance images appear with increasing frequency in the years 1912-1914. One must not overstate Diaghilev's influence: dance was both an integral part of the futurist agenda and a concern of many artists interested in primitivism. Yet in certain items dating from the years of Nijinsky's ascendancy as a choreographer, Diaghilev's hand is undeniable: Lewis' 1914 drawings of Nijinsky, his depiction of a dancer in arabesque en pointe in a 1912 mural painted for Madame Strindberg's Cabaret Theatre Club and his design of dancers in a classical lift

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[161]Stanley Weintraub, The London Yankees: Portraits of American Writers and Artists in England 1894-1914 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), p. 290.

[162]Leigh Henry, "Liberations: Studies of Individuality in Contemporary Music. IV.--Igor Stravinsky and the Dionysian Spirit," The Egoist, 1 June 1914, p. 214. The journal was heavily influenced by Pound at this time.

for one of its brochures; Gaudier-Brzeska's 1912 bronzes of Karsavina and Bolm in L'Oiseau de feu, a lost statuette of Nijinsky, and drawings of dancers; David Bomberg's 1913-1914 watercolors of the "Dancer" series and the artist's commemorative volume of abstract lithographs published under the title Russian Ballet. But one is tempted to venture further afield, and draw analogies between Nijinsky's rugged musculature, displayed in revealing maillots in Spectre and Faune in 1911 and early 1912, and Lewis' dancing figures of 1912, two of which the painter entitled "Faunesque" and "Seraglio". In a similar spirit, one cannot help but think that the "Red Stone Dancer" sculpted by Gaudier-Brzeska in 1914, bore some connection in the artist's mind with the primitivist idiom of Sacre.[163]

Sacre quickened the imagination of London's avantgarde. Like Chaliapin, the only Diaghilev figure "blessed" rather than "blasted" by the Vorticists in 1914, Sacre breathed that "extraordinary acuity of feeling and

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[163]Walter Michel, Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, introd. Hugh Kenner (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), Plates 5-16; H. S. Ede, Savage Messiah: Gaudier-Brzeska (New York: Literary Guild, 1931), pp. 175, 180; Hassall, Edward Marsh, p. 286; David Bomberg 1890-1957: Paintings and Drawings (London: Arts Council, 1967), pp. 8, 24-25; John Rodker, "Russian Ballet," The Little Review, 6, No. 6 (Oct. 1919), pp. 35-36; Baldwin, pp. 23, 86-87; Acocella, pp. 18-22.

intelligence" Lewis so admired in the Slav.[164] But this response was an isolated phenomenon, a tribute to the uniqueness of Nijinsky's primitivist vision, rather than a response to the art and enterprise of ballet at large. For between these modernist pioneers, who "despised politics and the civil service and the middle classes",[165] and the pre-War Ballets Russes yawned a nearly insurmountable divide, one founded as much on social claims as on differences in aesthetic program. Among the Imagists and Vorticists circulated few Establishment insiders, few graduates of the public schools and Oxbridge, few descendents of the Victorian intelligentsia, few who enjoyed the comforts of a private income. Many were foreigners; several were poor; nearly all were excluded from the drawing-rooms of Diaghilev's followers in Society. When Blast rhetorically asked in a manifesto signed by Aldington, Pound, Lewis, Gaudier-Brzyeska, and others, "MAY WE HOPE FOR ART FROM LADY MOND?" or declared its "violent boredom with that feeble Europeanism, abasement of the miserable 'intellectual' before anything coming from Paris, cosmopolitan sentimentality, which prevails in so many

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[164]"Great Preliminary Vortex. Manifesto II," Blast, No. 1 (20 June 1914), pp. 28, 33. "Beecham (pills, opera, Thomas)," on the other hand, was soundly blasted. Ibid., p. 21.

[165]McGreevy, p. 10.

quarters,"[166] can one doubt the alliance of social and aesthetic factors in the modernist critique of the Ballets Russes?

Like the Kensington avantgarde, Bloomsbury parted ways with Society in its assessment of Diaghilev's aesthetic. But it differed from the scruffy Bohemia across the city, in that Covent Garden was familiar terrain. By schooling, class, breeding, and profession, Bloomsbury belonged to the larger social world of Diaghilev's audience; it fringed the haut monde of Asquiths and Cunards, at whose weekend homes and dinner tables Keynes, Lytton Strachey, and even, on occasion, Virginia Woolf held forth. That Bloomsbury elected to distance itself from this milieu testifies to the strength of its convictions and non-conformity. But it did so as dissenters standing on the radical wing-tip of pre-War Liberalism, not as outsiders marginalized by Society.

Ultimately, not even Bloomsbury counted for much in the overall picture of Diaghilev's audience. After the

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[166]"Long Live the Vortex!" and "Great Preliminary Vortex. Manifesto II," Blast, No.1 (20 June 1914), n.p., p. 34. Lady Mond was married to the head of one of England's biggest chemical empires, who had bought the English Review in late 1909 and promptly ejected Ford Madox Ford from the editor's chair, because Mond was a Liberal and Ford was not. Sir Alfred Mond's father Ludwig had gathered a priceless collection of Italian paintings, which were subsequently given to the National Gallery. Lady Mond was a Beecham subscriber in 1913. Ford Madox Ford, Letter to R. A. Scott-James, [January 1910], Letters of Ford Madox Ford, ed. Richard M. Ludwig (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 39-40; "Mond, Ludwig," Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (1942).

war, things would be different; the pundits and makers of art would step to the fore of ballet's democratized public. Between 1911 and 1914, however, the company wore a badge of social and economic privilege. Like the tiaras that dazzled so many first-night observers, Diaghilev's six pre-War seasons emblazoned themselves on the English imagination. To later generations they spun a tale of glamor, elegance, and aristocracy; evoked a society untrammeled by the usages of democracy and the greyness of the welfare state; wove a saga of Imperial succession that led from the Mariinsky to Britain's Royal Ballet. Diaghilev, of course, built his empire on the shifting sands of credit and the box office. But that is not the only irony in the myth. As Diaghilev's audience nightly preened itself during the Coronation Season in 1911, the foundations of its privilege were being shaken. Two years earlier, Mr. Lloyd George's "People's Budget" had raised the spectre of jacquerie, or, at least, the prospect of higher taxes. Now, in August 1911, the Lords at Parliament Square surrendered the vestiges of their feudal power to the Commons: they had "decided to die in the dark".[167] From 1911 until 1914, aristocratic prerogative, ironically, took a last, public stand in the theatrial ritual of Diaghilev's audience.

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[167]George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), p. 65.

CHAPTER X

THE MAKING OF THE POSTWAR AUDIENCE

In 1919, an astonished Cecil Beaton discovered in the gallery of the Alhambra Theatre the "new disciples" of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Scanning the topmost reaches of the house, his society eye registered "gaunt, angular women with lank, untidy bobbed hair and shapeless clothes, and red-bearded ballet-maniacs who would think nothing of waiting ten to fifteen hours in the rain for a seat in the 'gods'."[1] Beaton was not the only spectator to note the remarkable change that had come over Diaghilev's London audience. "I am so glad," Charles Ricketts wrote the impresario in 1918, "that the big common public adores the Ballet like the old elite of Covent Garden before these tragic days."[2]

No less protean than the aesthetic face of the Ballets Russes was the changing configuration of its audience between 1918 and 1929. Before World War I the chronicle of that public is a relatively easy task; le tout

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[1]Cecil Beaton, Ballet (Garden City: Doubleday, 1951), p. 19.

[2]Charles Ricketts, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [1918], 10-22.8, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

Londres and le tout Paris, different as they were, rested on the familiar touchstones of class and plutocratic privilege. The war impoverished Diaghilev even as it opened new aesthetic vistas, a combination of circumstances that prompted far-reaching changes within his audience. The brief appearance of a truly popular following in London and the gradual narrowing of his public on both sides of the Channel to the power circles of High Bohemia were phenomena that engraved themselves on the complex identity of the postwar Ballets Russes.

At no time in the history of his enterprise did Diaghilev actively solicit a popular following. By taste and inclination, he viewed the masses as alien, and one finds no parallel in his twenty-year round of touring to Pavlova's popular-priced marathons in bullrings. His ideal remained constant: a select public dressed in the aristocratic state of the Mariinsky and the aesthetic sophistication of le tout Paris. In the years 1918-1922, however, by dint of circumstance and force majeure, he won a British following that swept across broad reaches of the social spectrum. By promoting modernism through the music-halls, he added to the old elite an audience of impassioned intellectuals and modest pleasure-seekers. Never again would Diaghilev be so thoroughly lionized by the British public or exert so great an influence on public taste as during these years when he laid the foundation for Britain's modern ballet audience.

For the chronicler of the past, nothing is so difficult as tracing the features of an anonymous public. Only the illustrious keep journals for publication, pen memoirs of their lives, will scrapbooks, letters, and miscellanea to libraries and family archives. The rest -- the world's ordinary folk -- fade from sight; their keepsakes gather dust in corners, until one day a zealous hand sweeps them into the rubbish bin. But even if the faces of Diaghilev's new audience are blurred, their presence in the theatre is a matter of history. The "tolerant good tempered public" that appeared so "incongruous" to Virginia Woolf,[3] so "common" to Ricketts, and so gauche to Beaton, was precisely the audience that "saved" the Ballets Russes.

Just how far down the social scale Diaghilev's new public reached is difficult to ascertain. The Coliseum, Alhambra, and Empire were certainly music-halls, but they were the elect of their kind, flagships of the national combines of variety entertainment. In the West End ticket prices were higher than elsewhere in the country (outside London they typically ranged from fourpence in the gallery to two shillings in the stalls[4]), but not prohibitively so. With orchestra stalls at 2s. 6d. (plus 6d. tax) and balcony seats at eightpence (including tax) -- the schedule when

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[3]The Diary of Virginia Woolf, I, 222.

[4]London School of Economics, The New Survey of London Life and Labour (London: P.S. King, 1935), IX, 48.

the "Russian Ballet" opened as the Coliseum's headliner in September 1918 -- a night out at Stoll's variety palace was an amusement many Londoners could afford. With a ticket in the Coliseum balcony worth a penny less than a quart of milk and four times less than a pound of butter, for the first time Diaghilev's art came within reach of a popular audience.[5]

Ballet, of course, was only one of eight or nine items on the typical variety program. Doubtless many of the Coliseum's faithful preferred ventriloquists and elephant comedians, lady jugglers and gymnasts to the "posing and springing" of Diaghilev's dancers. This, at any rate, was Virginia Woolf's impression of the "tolerant good-tempered public who had been bellowing like bulls over the efforts of a man to nail a carpet down" -- Will Evans in "Laying the Carpet" -- but seemed "a little bit contemptuous" of Carnaval.[6] But impressions can deceive, especially in construing behavior alien to the observing

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[5]"Food Prices at Home and Abroad. Comparisons with 1914," Times, 5 March 1920, p. 13, col. 5. The change in prices from Covent Garden and Drury Lane was nothing short of dramatic. The guinea stall that now cost 2s. 6d. slashed the price of admission by almost ninefold, and there was a similar downward tumble in other reaches of the house. But absolute figures tell only part of the story. Between July 1914 and July 1919 the staples of the English diet -- bacon, sugar, eggs, milk -- had tripled in price, and one need not be an economist to appreciate how much more extraordinary the fall in ballet prices appears in the context of this sharp rise in living costs.

[6]The Diary of Virginia Woolf, I, 222.

eye, and Woolf, as Clive Bell reminds us, was "one of the best bred women of her age".[7] (Bell himself thought the Coliseum public "seemed to like [the ballet] rather better than the performing dogs and distinctly less than the ventriloquist.")[8]

Despite appearances, ballet did strike a chord in the bellowing vulgarians, and a responsive one. Diaghilev's record-breaking run at the Coliseum whetted a taste that altered the character of programing at the theatre long after his troupe had departed. "Since Sir Oswald Stoll revived the glories of the Russian ballet at the Coliseum," noted the Times in August 1919, "the weekly programme has rarely been without a dancing entertainment."[9] Over the next several years, dance artists from the concert stage found a warm welcome at the house, justifying Sir Oswald's faith in the willingness of the British public to "go and see ballet if they are given the real thing."[10] Many were newcomers to London: Jenny Hasselquist, a principal at Stockholm's Royal Opera House; Bolshoi dancers Tamara Gamsakourdia and Alexandre Demidoff; Julie Sedova, a former Mariinsky ballerina; the Danes Elena

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[7]Clive Bell, Old Friends: Personal Recollections (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956), p. 99.

[8]Clive Bell, "Standards", New Republic, 14 June 1919, p. 208.

[9]"New Dancers at the Coliseum. Mr. Graves in 'After the Ball'," Times, 6 Aug. 1919, p. 8, col. 4.

[10]"The Russian Ballet," Dancing Times, May 1919, p. 229.

Jorgen-Jenssen and John Andersen, who performed excerpts from Bournonville's La Sylphide and Flower Festival at Genzano. Others like Tamara Karsavina (a frequent headliner), Alexandre Gavrilov, Lubov Egorova, Ludmilla Schollar, Anatole Wiltzak, Maria Dalbaicin, Lydia Lopokova, Lydia Sokolova, Leon Woizkovski, and Vera Savina were Diaghilev familiars. Still other attractions evoked themes and styles popularized by the Ballets Russes: Jean Cocteau's Le Boeuf sur le toit (Englished as The Nothing-Doing Bar), Nikita Balieff's "Chauve-Souris", the "Cuadro Flamenco" troupe of Spanish dancers, even the "dancing sylphs" of Loie Fuller's "ballet fantastique". By no means is this a complete listing of all the dance artists and attractions that followed in Diaghilev's wake at the Coliseum. Nor does it include the many ballet dancers who performed at other theatres or participated in matinées and special events that featured dancing prominently. And it does not take into account Anna Pavlova's lengthy seasons, which in both 1920 and 1921 partially overlapped Diaghilev's summer appearances in the British capital.

Ballet had indeed taken root in London's urban community, winning a popular following that stood by Diaghilev when older aesthetes like Charles Ricketts cold-shouldered the troupe's new modernist repertory. It became a familiar pleasure, an art to be savored again and again in the congenial surroundings of the music-hall, on a stage shared with England's most cherished variety artists. In

the years when, as one columnist put it, "London took to [Russian ballet] like a duck to water,"[11] this new audience also grew increasingly sophisticated; it acquired knowledge along with favorites, turning the gallery queue for Diaghilev performances into a gathering of student dancers and balletomanes.[12]

Here, one suspects, was the public tapped by the Dancing Times as it entered its most glorious decade. Shedding its Edwardian guise, the magazine became a chunky treasure trove of contemporary dance, an invaluable guide to performers and performances of all kinds. Month after month, it published cast lists, photographs, and reviews of Diaghilev productions, musings about his artists, ruminations on ballet style, choreography, and technique. With its pedestrian writing and unattractive layout, the Dancing Times was neither a collectible aimed at an audience of connoisseurs, nor a journal laying claim to a readership of intellectuals. It aspired, rather, to instill an intelligent appreciation of Terpsichore among the self-educated newcomers to ballet. At sixpence a copy, the Dancing Times found its ideal public among the growing

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[11]"The Russians at the Alhambra," Dancing Times, July 1919, p. 431.

[12]Anton Dolin, Autobiography: A Volume of Autobiography and Reminiscence (London: Oldbourne, 1960), pp. 21-22.

ranks of music-hall balletomanes.[13]

Diaghilev's sojourn in the West End did more than create a popular following for his band of Russians. The venues in which his troupe appeared, like the company it kept on stage, gradually dulled ballet's exotic, Society patina. Little by little, the art was "Englished", acquiring an identity that mirrored the features of its indigenous public. Before the war, ballet had been a hothouse bloom, a rare and cosseted species. Now it took root among the pinks and primroses, naturalizing itself as a perennial of the English landscape. No less remarkable than Diaghilev's other post-Armistice achievements was his "anglicizing" of Russian ballet for the era's public.

In this task Diaghilev was aided immeasurably by Sir Oswald Stoll, that self-effacing captain of popular entertainment who backed the company's seasons at the Coliseum and Alhambra. In summer 1921, Diaghilev enlisted the self-made producer in yet another venture, one that ultimately challenged the viability of Stoll's populist credo. In financing the Sleeping Princess, Stoll acted out of the conviction that properly presented, good art was good business, even at popular prices. His ticket schedule, ranging from fifteen shillings in the stalls to a mere 1/6 in the gallery, reflected this, and doubtless

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[13]It is no coincidence that Philip J.S. Richardson, the magazine's editor, served as Diaghilev's assistant press representative in 1918-1919. British Ballet, ed. Peter Noble (London: Skelton Robinson, 1949), p. 338.

there were many in the upper reaches of the Alhambra who -- like the future dancer Anna Northcote -- went without jam for two weeks to afford even a modest seat.[14] But the success of Stoll's mission depended upon sound management and an ability to take the popular pulse. Diaghilev had neither talent for the first nor interest in the second. He spent lavishly, and stood on principle when asked to alternate the Petipa ballet with evenings of repertory. For reasons best known to himself, he invited the inevitable catastrophe. Tragically, the catastrophe was not his alone. After the Sleeping Princess, Stoll abandoned ballet production. Henceforth, the dancers and works that appeared on his stage were imports proven elsewhere.

The public Diaghilev created for his post-Armistice enterprise laid the foundation for Britain's modern ballet audience. For Diaghilev, however, democracy at the theatre was simply an accident of fate, the fortuitous consequence of an accommodation with economic necessity. Indeed, throughout the years survival of the Ballets Russes hung on the thread of popular approval, Diaghilev labored to very different purpose: to regain his company's lost cachet and its erstwhile society public. Advertising ballet curtain times, a practice that began only weeks after the troupe settled at the Coliseum, was

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[14]Interview with Anna Northcote, London, 15 March 1981.

the first sign of a two-tier audience in the making. Another came the following January at a charity gala when boxholders paid as much as five guineas a ticket for a Diaghilev triple bill.[15] This performance, organized in aid of the Russian Relief Fund and other Slavic charities, rallied to the troupe the prestige of London's highborn emigré community -- Obolenskys, Bariatinskys, even Romanovs -- who traveled in the highest social circles. In the past, Diaghilev had viewed Russia's aristocrats with the contempt born of rejection. Now he publicly identified himself with their cause. Declining an invitation to attend a public banquet honoring the Russian ballet, he wrote:

> While our country is in its present tragic condition, we Russians naturally feel . . . unable to accept the offer of a public festivity, even on artistic grounds. Especially now, when the Dowager Empress has arrived in England a fugitive, and when we hear daily that people are dying of hunger in Petrograd, we feel it behooves us to abstain from public functions of this kind . . .[16]

One cannot doubt the anguish that lies behind this statement, the pain of recent exile. But in the mention of Queen Alexandra's sister and the organizing committee's request that subscriptions be donated to Russian charities,

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[15]"The Russian Ballet Gala," Times, 24 Jan. 1919, p. 11, col. 4.

[16]"The Russian Ballet. No Public Festivity," Times, 14 May 1919, p. 14, col. 4.

one suspects that Diaghilev was also pandering to the emigré brokers of society influence.

The three-month season that opened at the Alhambra on April 30, 1919 had many gala touches. With the return of Tamara Karsavina, safe now from the Bolsheviks and married to a British diplomat, something of the old glamor returned to the company. Her Mariinsky classmate, Lydia Kyasht, a London favorite since 1908, added still another glamorous note. But stars shone less than other novelties that season. For the first time, London had the privilege of witnessing two Diaghilev creations, and at the first, La Boutique fantasque, "it went off its head with delight".[17] Le Tricorne, too, "received a tremendous reception from a house packed from stalls to galleries",[18] with admirers showering choreographer Leonide Massine with flowers, wreaths, and even a large cake.[19] Still another novelty added cachet to the season: the symphonic interludes of Russian and French musical excerpts, advertised along with Diaghilev's balletic offerings. If "bellowing bulls" had offended Woolf's sensibilities at the Coliseum, "shrill cackles of laughter" disturbed the sensitive soul at the Alhambra. "Nothing on earth," complained the Times in its

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[17]"New Alhambra Ballet. 'La Boutique Fantasque'," Times, 16 June 1919, p. 14, col. 4.

[18]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Aug. 1919, p. 484.

[19]"'The Three-Cornered Hat.' Russian Ballet at the Alhambra," Times, 23 July 1919, p. 10, col. 6.

review of opening night, "can persuade a London audience, however well-dressed and 'artistic', that music in a theatre is meant to be listened to."[20]

In the two-year hiatus between the 1919 Alhambra season and the Sleeping Princess, Diaghilev sped full tilt to a prestigious niche in Society. At the Empire, that venerable home of Edwardian ballet, prices scaled the West End's upper limits. In 1921 an irate Times correspondent could protest that "a year or two ago guinea stalls would have been an impossibility."[21] In the autumn of 1919, they were a fact of life at the Empire, higher even than comparable seats at Covent Garden where Sir Thomas Beecham's season of "Grand Opera in English" was in full swing, with a repertory that included three works originally mounted by Diaghilev -- Prince Igor, Coq d'Or, and Boris Godunov. As at the Alhambra earlier in the year, Diaghilev laid claim to an audience of sophisticates. Symphonic interludes remained a program feature, while the season's artistic high point came with the London premiere of Parade. There was social glamor as well, and one imagines with what delight Diaghilev must have read the announcement in the Times that George V and the Shah of Persia had "graciously signified their intention of

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[20]"Russian Ballet at the Alhambra. A Three Months' Season," Times, 1 May 1919, p. 14, col. 6.

[21]Letter to the Editor, Times, 30 Sept. 1921, p. 8, col. 5.

attending the performance" on November 1st.[22]

But richer pickings still awaited him. The following summer, Diaghilev returned to Covent Garden, his first engagement at the Royal Opera House since 1913 and his last until 1929. Sir Thomas Beecham's "grand season of international opera and Russian ballet" echoes familiarly: a prestigious list of subscribers headed by the King and Queen,[23] high ticket prices (at the upper and lower ends of the scale twice what they had been in pre-War days); bills teaming ballet with such operas as Pagliacci, L'Heure Espagnole, Gianni Schicchi, and Il Tabarro; several ballets with vocalists (Pulcinella, Le Astuzie Femminili, and Le Tricorne); an exhibition of "decorative panels" by José-María Sert, designer of Le Astuzie Femminili, with notice taken of the show's distinguished visitors in the "Court Circular".[24] At Covent Garden that year Diaghilev came nearer than at any other time to recouping the glamor and cachet of his pre-War enterprise. But even at the Royal Opera House, things had changed. Not only had death claimed such company familiars as the Marchioness of Ripon, but as Nellie Melba noted ruefully in her memoirs, the audience itself had little of its "old brilliance":

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[22]Theatre Directory, Times, 31 Oct. 1919, p. 10, col. 5.

[23]"Covent Garden Opera Season. List of Subscribers," Times, 3 May 1920, p. 12, col. 2.

[24]"Court Circular," Times, 10 July 1920, p. 15, col. 1.

> Can you imagine in the old days, men walking into Covent Garden on a Melba night, and sitting in the stalls in shabby tweed coats? Yes, that is what I saw . . . and though I have no objection to brown tweed coasts, or to shabbiness, I could not help feeling a sensation almost of resentment that men who could afford to pay for stalls, could not also afford to wear the proper clothes.[25]

In 1913, the Ballets Russes had been the rock on which the theatrical empire of Gabriel Astruc foundered. In 1920, the "heavy losses sustained during the . . . grand season of foreign opera and Russian ballet" drove the Sir Thomas Beecham Opera Company, Limited out of business.[26] Diaghilev had stood at Beecham's side during the conductor's grandest moments; in 1913 he had given him Moussorgsky and Chaliapin, those towering figures of London's annus mirabilis. After 1914, the two had gone their separate ways, but no matter how deep the rancor he bore his erstwhile "angel", surely Diaghilev must have realized the implications of Beecham's failure. The old system of private operatic enterprise was dead, making it all the more necessary for Diaghilev to identify an influential audience that would be receptive to his modernist repertory. But in limiting his public to its most monied elements, he was forced to limit his seasons as well. There was only so much the market would bear, and in

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[25]Nellie Melba, Melodies and Memories (London: Butterworth, 1925), p. 303.

[26]"Co-operative Opera. Future of the Beecham Company," Times, 2 July 1921, p. 10, col. 3.

the months following his engagements at the Empire and Royal Opera House, the troupe returned to old haunts in Paris and Monte Carlo. In creating the audience for any venture, a choice must be made: whether to build a public horizontally -- that is, within a targeted class -- or vertically -- across class lines. Arriving in England a pauper, Diaghilev had no other option than to take the second course. But as soon as he had recovered a modicum of stability, he reverted to elitist ways, a decision that made touring imperative and demanded a new approach to attracting an audience.

When Diaghilev returned to England in May 1921 after a nine-month sojourn on the Continent, a producer very different from the self-effacing Stoll was at his side. In Charles B. Cochran, that flamboyant self-styled "showman", the Ballets Russes found a mentor who combined a brilliant sense of the market with a genius for promotion. Unlike Diaghilev, Cochran did not stand on ceremony with social notables, nor did he appeal to snobbery to garner an audience. His tack was that of the populist and the publicist: he kept ticket prices reasonable (seventeen shillings in the stalls, 1/3 in the gallery), while marketing ballet as a trendy event. For the first time, one discerns in the company's advertising the pen of the modern copywriter. Gone are the sober notices of repertory and casts. From the five-inch column of press clips that

followed the premiere of Cuadro Flamenco,[27] to blurbs announcing Sacre du Printemps as the "highest achievement of the Russian Ballet",[28] "hype" made its debut in the company's London advertising. Under Cochran's management, every other performance, it seemed, became an event: advertisements announced the presence of composers on the podium (and Stravinsky in the audience); Lydia Lopokova's "reappearance" (she had "vanished" from the company two years before); the London debut of the "famous Russian tenor" Smirnoff, who sang in the intervals; and the season's first performances of familiar ballets and even pieces of music played during the symphonic interludes. "Hype" paid off -- socially if not financially. For the first time since 1914, items about Diaghilev performances appeared in the "Court Circular" of London's newspaper of record,[29] a sure sign of the company's trendsetting cachet.

Before the war, high society had formed the backbone of Diaghilev's audience. It had filled the theatres his company played and lionized his artists, while dressing his offerings in the ideology of the Establishment. As we have seen, this society audience did not abandon the postwar enterprise. The old Liberal network stood firm, even if the party itself had

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[27]Theatre Directory, Times, 1 June 1921, p. 8, col. 6.

[28]Theatre Directory, Times, 29 June 1921, p. 8, col. 7.

[29]"Court Circular," Times, 6 June 1921, p. 13, col. 3; 15 June 1921, p. 13, col. 2; 29 June 1921, p. 13, col. 2.

disintegrated. In 1919, the cream of society crowded Lady Cunard's box at the Alhambra, while for her daughter Nancy a "perfect" evening that summer wedged a visit to the ballet between dinner and late-night champagne.[30] Mrs. Asquith was also very much in evidence, courting Diaghilev and his stars with luncheons and tea parties. Artur Rubinstein recalled an evening when he found "the entire Diaghilev Ballet . . . leaping about [her] drawing-room", and the irrepressible Margot as well.[31] Her son Anthony, then a teenager at Winchester College, sometimes joined her for matinées.[32] "Puffin" Asquith would become a distinguished film director whose Dance Pretty Lady, based on Compton Mackenzie's novel Carnival, brought Frederick Ashton and Marie Rambert's fledgling troupe to the silver screen only two years after Diaghilev's death.[33] Here, as in The Young Lovers, where a Russian girl and American boy fall in love during a performance of Swan Lake at Covent Garden, and his splendid Romeo and Juliet, starring Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev, he paid tribute to those distant Diaghilev matinées.

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[30]Chisholm, Nancy Cunard, pp. 74, 79.

[31]R.J. Minney, "Puffin" Asquith: A Biography of the Hon. Anthony Asquith, Aesthete, Aristocrat, Prime Minister's Son, and Film Maker (London: Leslie Frewin, 1973), p. 69.

[32]Margot Asquith, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [Nov. 1919], 10-20.3, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence.

[33]Minney, pp. 74-75.

Mrs. Asquith was not above speaking her mind to Diaghilev, even on the subject of ballet. And, it turns out, despite the idiosyncrasies of her prose style, she was no mean critic. Consider the following letter, dashed off the morning after the premiere of Tricorne:

> A great succès last night: Just one note of criticism. When they all kneel down -- Carsavina [sic] and Massine move down the centre -- all sd be down -- last night one or two stood up which looked ragged -- also when the men cry out it is very nice and enthusiastic but the cries were feeble and not at all spontaneous, they should be sharp and all together. The castagnettes [sic] were not quite in time: I think the finale when the curtain falls finds the hero a little too far back -- not quite near all of us -- When Carsavina [sic] came in with her tiny little head all close close -- and no tail to her hair, it was more chic -- but why not have her hair . . . all close, and in the next dance . . . have the little tail? . . . Dear Mr. Diaghileff must you give Carnaval tomorrow night as well as in the afternoon?? . . . I am going tomorrow both in afternoon after Cleopatra (wh. bores me very much) and at night. Thank you very much for keeping me a place tomorrow night. Do I see you after? Why not go to a Restaurant you and any of your ballet Ansermet Karsavina, I wd. bring the artist Augustus John and Mr. Keynes -- no food wanted -- little grilled lamb cutlets and beer wd be nice!![34]

Pianist Vladimir Cernikoff recalled a more elaborate post-

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[34]Margot Asquith, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 23 [July] 1919, 10-20.1, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence. This was not the only time this remarkable -- and energetic -- woman offered Diaghilev unsolicited advice. At a luncheon arranged by Florence Grenfell in December 1924, wrote Lydia Lopokova, she announced that "there was too much movement in his ballet and posed herself as it should be done. Serge laughed and asked about Puffin and that way changed conversation." Lydia Lopokova, Letter to John Maynard Keynes, 5 Dec. 1924, John Maynard Keynes Papers, King's College, Cambridge.

performance gathering where Mrs. Asquith, Lady Juliet Duff, Lady Ottoline Morrell, and Mrs. Robert Matthias, another "enthusiastic Ballet worshipper", celebrated the end of a season with "all the stars of the Ballet . . . and countless diplomats."[35]

However chummy the relationship between Diaghilev and his elite devotees, Society itself contributed little more in these years than an occasional aura of first-night glamor. The bedrock of the audience had passed upward from the boxes to those modest reaches of the house where the new enthusiasts clambered. But society was more than simply outnumbered. Its role in tastemaking was also largely usurped. Between 1918 and 1922 intellectuals rallied to the Ballets Russes, adopting it for the first time as their own. "Two years ago," wrote T.S. Eliot in 1921, "M. Diaghileff's ballet arrived, the first Russian dancers since the war: we greeted the Good-Humoured Ladies, and the Boutique Fantasque, and the Three-Cornered Hat, as the dawn of an art of the theatre."[36]

In these post-Armistice years, plenty rather than scarcity rewards the balletic detective. At every turn, clues abound, and they point to the same conclusion: between 1918 and 1922 intellectuals of every stripe entered

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[35]Quoted in Diaghilev Scrapbook, Vol. 4, p. 69, Theatre Museum (London).

[36]T.S. Eliot, "London Letter, July 1921," Dial, Aug. 1921, p. 214.

the lists of Diaghilev paladins. Before the war, only an occasional line in a column of music notes, a cryptic aside in a lecture, a reference here and there in diaries, letters or reviews disclosed the company's standing among the intelligentsia. Now, the theatre became a jumping off point into Diaghilev's charmed circle, a gathering spot where highbrow, aesthete, and dandy made common cause. As peace returned and journals grew larger, weeklies such as the Nation, Athenaeum, New Statesman, and New Age carried regular notices of company premieres, while articles and commentaries about Diaghilev efforts appeared in many other intellectual journals -- the Fortnightly Review, Burlington Magazine, Drama, London Mercury, English Review, and even the American-based Dial and New Republic. In these years, Diaghilev marshaled to his cause an imposing corps of literary and critical talents -- Roger Fry, Clive Bell, T.S. Eliot, Richard Aldington, Ezra Pound, Arthur Symons, Rebecca West, Aldous Huxley, the Sitwells, Raymond Mortimer, to name only a few. Their presence among the brotherhood of professional reviewers helped secure the triumph of ballet modernism. But it did much more than that. The post-Armistice Ballets Russes "realized," as Clive Bell wrote, "that dream which Mr. Gordon Craig half dreamt, fumbled, dreamt again differently, and never came near to realizing. [M. Massine] has given us 'an art of

the theatre'."[37] Thanks to Diaghilev's intellectual following, ballet stood for the first time on an equal footing with the other arts and at the cutting edge of theatrical innovation. Risen like the phoenix from the moral and physical debris of war, it assumed the emblematic quality of civilization itself, holding aloft a standard imperiled in the eyes of many intellectuals by democracy and mass culture.

Bloomsbury, of course, was no stranger to the Ballets Russes. From 1911-1914, it had formed a Bohemian covey among Diaghilev's society flock, and through Lady Ottoline Morrell had even crossed paths with Bakst and Nijinsky. By and large, however, it had kept the impresario and his works at arm's length, a distance reflecting its critical view of Diaghilev's retrograde aesthetic.

Beginning in 1918, a new era opened in Bloomsbury's relationship with the company. Only days after the troupe's maiden turn at the Coliseum, Keynes paid the first of many visits to the ballet, and in the ensuing months other Bloomsburies followed suit.[38] Lady Ottoline,

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[37]Clive Bell, "The New Ballet," New Republic, 30 July 1919, p. 415.

[38]Skidelsky, John Maynard Keynes, I, 352; Roger Fry, "M. Larionow and the Russian Ballet," pp. 112-113; Virginia Woolf, Letter to Lytton Strachey, 12 Oct. 1918, Letters, I, 201, 222; Clive Bell, "Standards", p. 208, and "The New Ballet", p. 414; Spalding, Vanessa Bell, p. 176; Nina Hammett, Laughing Torso (London: Constable, 1932), p. 176.

meanwhile, had risen in Diaghilev's esteem to the position of confidante. They took tea together in the afternoons; ballerinas cluttered her sitting-room between shows; painter and writer friends ventured in her company backstage.[39] But this remarkable woman, a "Spanish Armada in full sail", as Virginia Woolf described her appearance at this time,[40] was not the circle's only connection with Diaghilev. Among the new faces that swam into its life in autumn 1918 was Osbert Sitwell, whose parties became the ground where the "Junta" -- one of his many disparaging terms for Bloomsbury -- and its "sub-rout of high-mathematicians and low-psychologists" crossed paths with the ballet's new stars.[41] (At one such event, Keynes met the effervescent Lydia Lopokova whose dressing room he took to visiting.)[42] But it was Armistice night 1918 that sealed the bond between intellectual London and the Ballets Russes. As crowds surged through Piccadilly and Leicester Square, singing snatches of popular songs, cheering into the wee hours soldiers, sailors, and King, the city's

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[39]Osbert Sitwell, Laughter in the Next Room (London: Reprint Society, 1950, p. 16; Spalding, Vanessa Bell, p. 184; Aldous Huxley, Letter to Juliette Baillot, 14 Sept. 1918, in Letters of Aldous Huxley, ed. Grover Smith (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), p. 163.

[40]Virginia Woolf, Letter to Lytton Strachey, 12 Oct. 1918, Letters, II, 282.

[41]Sitwell, Laughter in the Next Room, pp. 17-18; R.F. Harrod, The Life of John Maynard Keynes (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972), p. 266.

[42]Skidelsky, John Maynard Keynes, I, 352-353.

intelligentsia danced in the peace under Diaghilev's watchful eye -- Augustus John, Roger Fry, Clive Bell, Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Lady Ottoline, Duncan Grant, Mark Gertler, Dora Carrington, David Garnett, St. John and Mary Hutchinson, Francis Birrell, Nina Hammett, D.H. Lawrence, Osbert and Sacheverall Sitwell. Lopokova and Leonide Massine, one imagines, added a touch of professional grace to the rejoicing.[43]

A newcomer to the Bloomsbury circle, Aldous Huxley waxed eloquent in praise of Diaghilev's Coliseum entertainment. "The only thing which brightens the general darkness," he wrote in September 1918, "is the Russian Ballet, which is pure beauty, like a glimpse into another world."[44] Old Bloomsbury was less sanguine. Although it welcomed the troupe, it did so "without wild excitement," Clive Bell told readers of the New Republic.[45] Virginia Woolf noted in her diary after a first view of Schéhérazade that she "remembered it better done at Covent Garden".[46]

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[43]"The Lights of London. Scenes of Rejoicing at Night," Times, 12 Nov. 1918, p. 10, col. 4; Spalding, Roger Fry, p. 222; Hammett, p. 114; Sitwell, Laughter in the Next Room, pp. 16-23; Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, II, 343. The party was given by Montague Shearman, a barrister and collector of modern painting, who was one of Mark Gertler's most loyal friends and patrons. Holroyd, II, 225n.

[44]Aldous Huxley, Letter to Juliette Baillot, 14 Sept. 1918, Letters, p. 163.

[45]Clive Bell, "The New Ballet," p. 414.

[46]The Diary of Virginia Woolf, I, 201.

In these early months only Roger Fry seems to have detected the modernist elements of Diaghilev's newer repertory.[47]

With the company's move to the Alhambra in spring 1919, reticence yielded to passion. This was the season when Virginia Woolf scribbled a breathless "must now rush up to the Alhambra," at the end of a letter to Saxon Sydney-Turner and wrote of having "an afternoon's gaiety at the Ballet" in her diary; when Vanessa Bell delighted in Stravinsky's music for Firebird and lent André Derain her flat in Regent Square; when Clive Bell took to dining in Picasso's shadow at the Savoy and attending smart ballet suppers; when Roger Fry entertained the designers of Boutique fantasque and Tricorne at his home; when John Maynard Keynes gave a "grand party" where Picasso, Ansermet, Lopokova, and Derain mingled with dozens of painters, writers, and students of the host's Bohemian acquaintance.[48]

The year was remarkable on still another count. For the first time in the annals of the company in England, intellectuals hastened to the writing desk, recording their enthusiasm for Diaghilev's new repertory and style. Clive Bell, Rogert Fry, and James Strachey wrote major articles

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[47]Roger Fry, "M. Larionow and the Russian Ballet," p. 112.

[48]Virginia Woolf, Letter to Saxon Sydney-Turner, 11 June 1919, Letters, II, 367; The Diary of Virginia Woolf, I, 287, 290; Spalding, Vanessa Bell, p. 184; Clive Bell, Old Friends: Personal Recollections (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956), pp. 171-172; Spalding, Roger Fry, p. 225; Skidelsky, John Maynard Keynes, I, 380.

that year about the company; Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington, and Rebecca West penned reviews; Arthur Symons published the first of a spate of essays on Diaghilev and related dance subjects. In 1919, too, Harold Monro devoted an entire issue of his poetry journal The Monthly Chapbook to Albert Rutherston's "Decoration in the Art of the Theatre," which examined at some length Diaghilev's pre-War artists and included reproductions of costume designs by the author for Pavlova. Drama, the reform-minded publication of the British Drama League, organized a ballet "symposium" in its December issue, with contributions by Massine, Karsavina, Diaghilev's English conductor Adrian Boult, and James Strachey, who compiled what must be the first bibliography of dance books in the collection of the British Museum. If 1913 was Diaghilev's annus mirabilis in the history of British opera, surely 1919 holds a similar place in that of British ballet.[49]

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[49]Clive Bell, "The New Ballet"; Roger Fry, "M. Larionow and the Russian Ballet"; "The Scenery of 'La Boutique Fantasque'," Athenaeum, 13 June 1919, p. 466; James Strachey, "The Russian Ballet," Athenaeum, 30 May 1919, pp. 406-407; Ezra Pound, "At the Ballet," New Age, 16 Oct. 1919, and "Music," New Age, 18 Dec. 1919, reprinted in Ezra Pound and Music, pp. 188-191 and 200-203; Richard Aldington, "The Russian Ballet," Sphere, 16 Aug. 1919, p. 160; Rebecca West, "The Russian Ballet", Outlook, 7 June 1919, pp. 568-568; Arthur Symons, "The Russian Ballets," Fortnightly Review, Jan. 1919, pp. 89-99; "Notes on the Sensations of a Lady of the Ballet," English Review, Feb. 1920, pp. 104-120; "Dancing as Soul Expression," Forum, Oct. 1921, pp. 308-317; Albert Rutherston, "Decoration in the Art of the Theatre," Monthly Chapbook, Aug. 1919; "Some Aspects of the Ballet," Drama, Dec. 1919, pp. 68-73.

What delighted Bloomsbury, above all, was the visual modernism of the troupe's newest productions. For the first time, Diaghilev used his proscenium to frame genuine works of art; he turned the stage into a magnificent gallery serving the artists Bloomsbury had championed for a decade. Analyzing Larionov's designs for Children's Tales (as Contes Russes was styled at the Coliseum), Roger Fry spoke at length of the vivid illustrational value of the artist's abstract method and the uniform quality of form such a method imposed on every part of the design.

> M. Larionow . . . gives us only slight suggestions of the actual appearance of a peacock, but out of certain geometrical forms, the suggestions for which are given by nature, he builds us a figure which has almost ridiculously the character Renard describes. It is, indeed, curious, how convincing an idea of mood and character these abstract forms convey, how exactly the movements suggested might stand either for the peacock or the Indian prince . . . the colour is also at once non-natural and intensely suggestive of the character. It is in tones of intense ultramarine, vermilion, deep maroon, intense green, and as the intensest accent of all, white in spots and half-circles. It is largely by the intensity of the accents that the whole movement is given.[50]

What pleasure irradiates these lines, what delight in the revelation of form. One imagines that Fry was not alone in experiencing the epiphany of design on the stage of the Coliseum, that the friends who accompanied him to the theatre shared it too, that at this turning point in her

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[50]Roger Fry, "M. Larionow and the Russian Ballet," p. 118.

development as an artist, Virginia Woolf may have sensed in ballet the design, rhythm, and texture Bloomsbury sought in literature no less than painting.

Larionov was only an hors d'oeuvre. Derain was the meat on which Bloomsbury feasted: he stood, as Clive Bell wrote, "for what [was] . . . vital and valid in France -- a passionate love of the great tradition, a longing for order and the will to win it, and that mysterious thing which . . . schoolmasters call 'high seriousness'."[51]

> . . . no one who saw La Boutique Fantasque will have forgotten how it made one think. No one will have forgotten the grave beauty of those sober grays, greens, browns and blues. It made one think of Poussin and of Racine too . . . And yet the ballet was intensely modern; always you were aware that Derain had been right through the movement -- through fauvism, negroism, cubism. Here was an artist who had refused nothing and feared nothing. Could anyone be less of a reactionary and at the same time less of an anarchist? And, I will add, could anyone be less gavroche? La Boutique Fantasque, which is not only the most amusing but the most beautiful of Russian ballets, balances on a discord . . . Derain is neither flippant nor exasperated; he is humorous, and tragic sometimes.[52]

In his review of La Boutique fantasque, Fry, too, spoke of Derain's "purest French classicism", his "precise accent of high civilisation", his "profound appreciation of all the artistic expressions of the past": here was an

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[51]Clive Bell, "The Authority of M. Derain," New Republic, 16 March 1921, p. 66.

[52]Ibid., pp. 65-66.

artist "who [gathered] up all the radiations of past art and [focussed] them exactly on the present".[53] But Fry devoted nearly a full Athenaeum column to another issue entirely: Diaghilev's role as a publicist of modernism, his "genius for putting genuine works of art upon the British public".

> In the case of "Children's Tales," for instance, a large British public was coaxed into rapturous delight, while at the same moment cultured people were being infuriated at the "ridiculous" and "preposterous monstrosities" of M. Larionov's drawings. This was done . . . by the atmosphere of exotic fantasy set up by the story and its perfect expression in the dance. And here again in "La Boutique Fantasque" the uproarious fun of the whole thing, its entire subversion of all standards of verisimilitude and probability, actually prevent people from even for a moment noticing the outrage on their dignity and commonsense which is implied in the exhibition of a work of art.[54]

From his proverbial top hat, Diaghilev had pulled something more than the genie of success. He had proven that modernism could prosper, even in phlegmatic, philistine Britain, so long as it were properly marketed and displayed. As early as winter 1918, Fry had approached Diaghilev hoping to interest him in commissioning designs

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[53]Roger Fry, "The Scenery of 'La Boutique Fantasque'," p. 466.

[54]Ibid.

from Omega artists.[55] The project came to nought, and in 1919 the workshop itself disbanded. But beginning in the 1920's, Bloomsbury painters ventured from the studio to the theatre -- a move that surely took inspiration from Diaghilev's successful "packaging" of modernism. As early as April 1922, Massine had wanted Duncan Grant to do some costumes for a golf ballet that never materialized.[56] Three years later, Grant designed Lopokova's popular Coliseum number, The Postman. His setting, thought the Dancing Times, revealed a "very marked" Russian influence.[57] In the 1930's, both Grant and Vanessa Bell received commissions from the Camargo Society, which did so much to promote British ballet after Diaghilev's death and of which Keynes served as treasurer. In 1931, other Bloomsbury figures made their balletic debuts: Ninette de Valois' Job had a libretto by Geoffrey Keynes, the economist's brother, and settings by Geoffrey's sister-in-

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[55]Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 210. Up to now it has been thought that Diaghilev paid a sole wartime visit to London in October 1917. That he paid a second visit is suggested not only by the letter quoted in Woolf's biography of Fry, but by a letter to Henry Russell dated 12 January 1918 written by Diaghilev on note paper of the Savoy Hotel, his usual stopping place in London. Sotheby Catalogue of Ballet Material and Manuscripts from the Serge Lifar Collection, London, 9 May 1984, Lot 160.

[56]Lydia Lopokova, Letter to John Maynard Keynes, 25 April 1922, John Maynard Keynes Papers, King's College, Cambridge.

[57]G.E. Fussell, "Notes on Decor," Dancing Times, May 1925, p. 937.

law Gwen Raverat.[58]

"The genius of the Russian Ballet," wrote Rebecca West in 1919, "lies in the honor it pays to the eye. In this country people have forgotten how to use their eyes for anything except reading . . . with no glimmering at all of the fact that the art of painting continues to be practised in our day."[59] Diaghilev had indeed helped England to see. Thanks to Larionov, Picasso, and Derain he had initiated his public into the practices of modernism -- pure color, intellectual form, expression stripped of sentimentality. But the works of this period trained the eye in still another way. "Dancing [is] a more significant speech than words," Arthur Symons has written,[60] and in these years British audiences learned to appreciate the choreographic element in ballet, its role in articulating and unifying the larger scheme. In variants reflecting the term's French origins, "choreography" now entered common parlance. Massine's billing at the Coliseum in 1918 identified him simultaneously as "choregraphe" and "premier danseur"; programs attributed to him the "choregraphy" of a work. By June 1919, no less a bastion of linguistic conservatism than the Times was employing the neologism

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[58]Spalding, Vanessa Bell, p. 198; M. Montague-Nathan, "Keynes and the Ballet," Ballet, April 1951, p. 14; Harrod, pp. 472-473.

[59]West, "The Russian Ballet," p. 568.

[60]Arthur Symons, "The Russian Ballets," Dramatis Personae, p. 303.

between inverted commas.[61] Five months later, the commas disappeared, and Massine's title was further anglicized as "choregrapher".[62] Usage, in this case, was more than a linguistic fashion. It implied a new way of looking at dance, an awareness of movement as design.

Even at the Coliseum, the choreographic modernism of The Good-Humoured Ladies and Children's Tales had claimed Fry's attention. He noted with approval that "the formal relations of movement in all the different parts of the ballet have become more and more distinct and evident -- the whole pattern is keyed up to an intenser unity and the intellectual quality of the design is further intensified."[63] Bell echoed his mentor. Massine's "idea of a ballet," he wrote some months later, "is an organized whole, detached from circumstance, and significant in itself."[64] Few could articulate how choreography worked as lucidly as Bloomsbury's aestheticians. But thanks to lengthy seasons and the chance to view again and again the offerings of the repertory, all sensed that it did work and that it brought both substance and significance to a ballet. When Massine left the troupe in 1921, the loss of

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[61]"New Alhambra Ballet," Times, 6 June 1919, p. 14, col. 4.

[62]"New Russian Ballet. 'Parade' at the Empire," Times, 15 Nov. 1919, p. 10, col. 2.

[63]Roger Fry, "M. Larionow and the Russian Ballet," p. 117.

[64]Clive Bell, "The New Ballet," p. 415.

his dancemaking talent brought home the value of his choreography. As Raymond Mortimer told readers of the Dial, "We soon realized that it was not so much the dancer as the choreographer who was irreplaceable. For when Chout was produced, with music by Prokofieff, the choreography [by Larionov and Thadée Slavinsky] was neither dramatically nor plastically interesting."[65]

In these years, London sighted more than the dance. For the first time, it glimpsed a style of performance -- objective, impersonal, abstract -- that was to become the modern standard. When Karsavina rejoined the Ballets Russes in 1919 after a five-year absence, Clive Bell noted that "she was playing a different game and a poorer one" compared with Diaghilev's younger stars; he drew a distinction "between an actress and a pure artist", between the expression of personality and the transmuting of it into art.

> Madame Karsavina communicates her gracious and attractive personality direct to the audience . . . she is apt to express herself, not through the work of art she is interpreting, but immediately, as in conversation . . . Madame Lopokova is different . . . [She] has been called "the greatest comedienne of the age"; what is more, her deliciously gay temperament is reckoned one of her main instruments. So it is; and the same might be said of Mozart or Fra Angelico. The point is that neither Mozart, nor Fra Angelico, nor Lopokova express themselves directly to the public. They transmute personality into something more precious. The public gets no raw material

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[65]Raymond Mortimer, "London Letter," Dial, March 1922, p. 295.

> from them. They pour themselves into works of art from which the public may deduce what it can . . .
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> It is because she sometimes crosses to [our side of the curtain] that Madame Karsavina is not perfectly in key with the new ballet: whereas little Lopokova, bouncing in her box, making vivid contacts with every line and color on the stage, impressing her personality on each gesture of her own, and so helping to build up an organic whole, is the choreographer's first violin.[66]

Between late 1920 and early 1923, another major writer at least partially connected with Bloomsbury came under the spell of the Ballets Russes. Allusions to the Ballets Russes pepper many of T.S. Eliot's writings; as revealed in his London letters for the Dial, the troupe occupied a key place in his meditations on theatre. "Two years ago," he wrote in 1921,

> M. Diaghileff's ballet arrived . . . we greeted the Good-humoured Ladies, and the Boutique Fantasque, and the Three-Cornered Hat, as the dawn of an art of the theatre. And although there has been nothing since that could be called a further development, the ballet will probably be one of the influences forming a new drama, if a new drama ever comes. I mean of course the later ballet which has just been mentioned; for the earlier ballet, if it had greater dancers -- Nijinsky and Pavlowa -- had far less significance or substantiality. The later ballet is more sophisticated, but also more simplified, and simplifies more; and what is needed of art is a simplification of current life into something rich and strange.[67]

Like Bell, Eliot admired the aloofness and detachment of performers who played for themselves rather

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[66]Clive Bell, "The New Ballet," pp. 414-415.

[67]T.S. Eliot, "London Letter, July 1921," p. 214.

than for the audience. In "Dramatis Personae", a short essay of theatrical criticism published in his recently-founded Criterion, Eliot expostulated on the virtues of Massine, "the greatest actor . . . in London . . . the most completely unhuman, impersonal, abstract." Taking Bell's distinction between the expression and transmuting of personality one step further, Eliot contrasted the "conventional gesture of the ordinary stage, which is supposed to express emotion, and the abstract gesture of Massine, which symbolises emotion." The former belongs to the theatre of realism, and having lost its evocative power, is plainly inadequate. Instead, he urged, "let us adopt a literal untruth, a thorough-going convention, a ritual" -- to wit, the ordered language of gesture and music of ballet. "For the stage -- not only in its remote origins, but always -- is a ritual, and the failure of the contemporary stage to satisfy the craving for ritual is one of the reasons why it is not a living art."[68] Most astonishing, perhaps, was the occasion prompting these remarks: George Robey's You'd Be Surprised, a revue that by all accounts displayed neither Massine's performing nor choreographic talents to great advantage.

In recent decades, common wisdom has typically

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[68]T.S. Eliot, "Dramatis Personae," Criterion, April 1923, pp. 305-306. Eliot also addressed the issues of performance and impersonality in "The Possibility of Poetic Drama," Dial, Nov. 1920, pp. 446-447; and "London Letter, May 1921," Dial, June 1921, p. 688.

associated impersonality as a performing style in ballet with George Balanchine: indeed, many would credit him with its invention. But as one gathers from Eliot and Bell, and the reason their observations have been quoted at length, an abstract impersonal style had crystallized within the Ballets Russes long before Balanchine set foot in the West. To claim priority for Massine diminishes in no way the accomplishment of his successor. It merely suggests the historicity of form, the dialectic of tradition and individual talent. Among the other rewards of Balanchine's apprenticeship with the Ballets Russes was the opportunity to build on the artistic breakthroughs of his modernist predecessors.

As Bloomsbury aged, it grew more conservative; it joined the swim of society and proclaimed rather loudly the virtues of civilization. In Clive Bell's writings for the New Republic between 1918 and 1922, ballet appears as a marker lining this rightward path: in the theatre Diaghilev alone upheld standards of taste and critical intelligence, order and excellence. At the end of his essay "The Creed of an Aesthete", Bell imagines a perfect day: lunch, sunshine, Proust, ballet, a gay supper in a house full of beautiful objects with Arthur Rubinstein at the piano[69] -- allusions in which the pleasures of art are

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[69]Clive Bell, "The Creed of an Aesthete," New Republic, 25 Jan. 1922, p. 242.

nearly identical to those of Society. Bell was not alone in linking the demise of high culture with the demise of Edwardian privilege. "Opera," wrote Eliot in July 1921, referring to the collapse of the Beecham organization, "was one of the last reminders of a former excellence of life, a sustaining symbol even for those who seldom went."[70] For both Eliot and Bell, the disease wasting the critical spirit was the "emporium malady". "Our tastes," wrote Bell, "are imposed on us by our tradesmen, under which respectable title I include newspaper owners, book-sellers' touts, book-stall keepers, music-hall kings, opera syndicates, picture dealers and honest bagmen."[71]

Where Bell the Englishman was apt to blame the collapse of standards on a leisured class that had abjured its role as cultural leaders, Eliot the transplanted American took umbrage with democracy: the "decent middle-class mob" and its works, particularly the "cheap and rapid breeding cinema", threatened culture both high and low.[72] In the depressing scene of post-Armistice London, the Ballets Russes appeared a lone bastion of civilization, the miraculous survival of another era. But as The Sleeping Princess revealed, not even Diaghilev was immune to the

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[70]T.S. Eliot, "London Letter, July 1921," p. 213.

[71]Clive Bell, "Standards," p. 208.

[72]T.S. Eliot, "London Letter, April 1922," Dial, May 1922, p. 511; "In Memoriam: Marie Lloyd," Criterion, Jan. 1923, p. 194.

demands of trade. To salvage for an elite some semblance of cultural control was an idea that took root in post-Armistice Bloomsbury, and one that yielded strange fruit. "Much as I disliked the idea of a Ministry of Fine Arts," Bell confessed in his memoirs, "the creation of such a ministry would be when private patronage had been destroyed by economic egalitarianism, the only means of saving the arts from extinction."[73] Ironically, the preservation of high theatrical art in Britain -- opera, drama, and ballet -- became possible only when the populist groundswell of World War II voted Labour into office in 1945.

Important as Bloomsbury was in championing the Ballets Russes, it made up only a fraction of the "artistic" public remarked upon in the press with increasing frequency and pique as the war decade drew to a close. From these post-Armistice years dated the cult following that remained an attribute of the troupe to the end: the "highly sensitized beings" and "small-talk aesthetes" who gushed over Diaghilev's "newest Parisian modes" as a matter of snobbery.[74] Reviewing a new play in the London Mercury, W.J. Turner decried these self-appointed arbiters of theatrical taste and the power they exercised by 1920:

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[73]Clive Bell, Old Friends: Personal Reminiscences, p. 57.

[74]"The Russian Ballet. 'Le Sacre du Printemps'," Times, 29 June 1921, p. 8, col. 4; Simon Pure, "The Londoner," Bookman, Aug. 1921, p. 539; Edward J. Dent, "Music," London Mercury, Aug. 1920, p. 491.

> If The Young Visitors had been produced by the Russian Society called Zahda, or by the Russian Miniature Theatre, it would have been hailed as a wonderful masterpiece of bizarre and original art, and all the young freaks of London who frequent the Russian Ballet and sneer at Gilbert and Sullivan would have flocked to see it and talked of nothing else for months. As it is a product, however, of the despised English . . . and as . . . it has had the misfortune to have been in its book form enormously popular, there is little likelihood of its being adequately appreciated.[75]

Sentiments of this kind were by no means rare. Nor were they restricted to the theatrical columns. As taste in both music and painting listed toward the Continent, observers lamented again and again the "too ready assimilation of foreign ideas" put into circulation by Diaghilev.[76]

Leigh Henry ascribed the "antagonism" to Diaghilev in "certain 'cultured' and journalistic circles" to the "ooze of cult pretention" and the "indiscriminate vogue [that had] welled up about the . . . company" and its artists.[77] There was more to it, however. Diaghilev's tactic of using journalists to publicize his artistic line did not sit well with London's critical brotherhood: it

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[75]W.J. Turner, "Drama," London Mercury, April 1920, p. 756.

[76]Julius M. Price, "The Transition in Modern British Art," Fortnightly Review, July 1921, p. 107.

[77]Leigh Henry, unidentified review of Parade; quoted in Diaghilev Scrapbook, Vol. 4, p. 158, Theatre Museum (London).

reeked of compromise and venality, while implying that Englishmen needed experts to tell them what to think. (The "Diaghilevite" of the music columns, Edwin Evans, just happened to be on the company payroll.)[78] Matters came to a head in 1921 when Stravinsky, in London for the revival of Sacre, delivered a barrage of musical-cum-theoretical pronouncements that stirred a furor in the press. The British lion was roused, and much to his chagrin, the composer found himself its victim.[79]

Diaghilev overplayed his hand in 1921 not only because he had miscalculated the psychology of the players, but because the cards themselves had partly changed. No art form exists in a social vacuum, and when Turner noted the "curious affinity between Stravinsky's music and the smart hats and frocks of society",[80] he was taking to task not the aesthetics of modernism but its cult among a segment of Diaghilev's public. For what critics in these years were attending was the birth of High Bohemia -- that alliance of modern art and fashion that framed Diaghilev's

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[78]Statements of account submitted by Edwin Evans to Serge Diaghilev, 8 and 24 Nov. 1919, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[79]See, for instance, W.J. Turner, "The Rite of Spring," New Statesman, 2 July 1921, p. 358; Edward J. Dent, "Le Sacre du Printemps," Nation and Athenaeum, 18 June 1921, pp. 445-446; Charles Henry Meltzer, "Stravinsky -- The Enigma," Forum, Sept. 1921, pp. 241-248; Leigh Henry, "Stravinsky and the Pragmatic Criterion in Modern Music," English Review, July 1921, pp. 67-73.

[80]W.J. Turner, "Stravinsky in London and Paris," New Statesman, 31 July 1920, p. 475.

efforts in the 1920's. Like Turner, Edward J. Dent, music critic of the Athenaeum, looked askance at this phenomenon. He also sketched its countenance:

> The Diaghilev audience (I must call it by his name, for it is his creation) consisted of or was at any rate dominated by the "intellectual-smart" -- musicians who know all about painting, painters who know all about music, poets who like to be men about town, men about town who like to be poets, up-to-date scholars, antiquarian modernists -- all those in fact who, whatever class they may belong to, like to flatter themselves that they at any rate stand outside it. They may not understand themselves, but M. Diaghilev understands them as if he were himself the maestro whose immortal hand had framed their sawdust and tinsel anatomies.[81]

By 1920, this "intellectual-smart" audience had become the ideological center of Diaghilev's public, the salon, so to speak, where rumors flew and gossips buzzed. But this small world, a London outpost of le tout Paris in its taste and social structure, could never rule English cultural life with quite the iron hand of similar coteries across the Channel. Again and again, the pecking order of class notwithstanding, one encounters in Britain a phenomenon largely absent in France -- an impulse to democratize high culture, to bring opera, music, Shakespeare, and the classics to ordinary people at popular prices. Compared to such efforts, a Stravinsky first night at Covent Garden, no matter how gala the occasion or

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[81]Edward J. Dent, "Covent Garden: 'Pulcinella'," Athenaeum, 18 June 1920, p. 807.

rhapsodic the small talk, was apt to lose something of its importance. Here is Turner speaking to readers of the New Statesman in 1920:

> It strikes one very strongly when coming from abroad how much less such idols of the intelligentsia as Stravinsky count in England than on the Continent. Here the chief musical interest of the past season has not been the first performance of Stravinsky's Nightingale in its ballet form, or the concert of his chamber music, nor, in fact, anything that has happened at Covent Garden or in the London concert halls. It has been the performance of Blow and Mozart at the "Old Vic," the Purcell Dido and Aeneas at Hyde Park, where thousands of people stood listening for hours, and almost tore the officials to pieces in their eagerness to learn more about it, the Cambridge undergraduates' production of The Fairy Queen and the coming Glastonbury Festival . . . These are examples of the true musical life of the country.[82]

The ballets Diaghilev staged in 1920-1921 may have polarized the critical brotherhood, but they continued to draw intellectuals to the theatre. With the production of The Sleeping Princess, however, a rift appeared within the audience itself: the ballet drove a wedge between aesthetes, who applauded the work, and modernists, who cold-shouldered it. Between the critical intellectuals of Bloomsbury and the style-minded dandies of the Sitwell circle differences in outlook had long simmered, even if both shared a taste for ballet and an interest in contemporary painting. (The 1919 exhibition of French moderns that launched the Sitwell brothers as fine art

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[82]W.J. Turner, "Stravinsky in London and Paris," p. 475.

impresarios prominently featured Bloomsbury's idols -- Picasso, Derain, and Matisse.) The Sleeping Princess brought these differences to the surface. "After Boutique Fantasque and Le Tricorne," reminisced Sacheverell Sitwell, "the old masterpiece of Tchaikowsky and Petipa was looked forward to with mixed feelings by the 'advance guard' . . . the prospect of five scenes and three hundred dresses by Léon Bakst was in thrilling anticipation for myself."

> During the first interval, many conflicting points of view were expressed. Lytton Strachey, poor thing, told me that it made him feel sick, it was so degraded, especially the music. A person, now eminent on the "Nation and New Statesman" concurred with this . . . But, to someone like myself, who had loved the music of Casse-noisette since childhood, the matter was not even in dispute. And I only repeat those hostile animadversions because it is curious that often the "intelligentsia" can be utterly and entirely wrong . . .[83]

But was the intellectual press so utterly wrong in condemning the ballet, the antithesis of everything Diaghilev had reared it to esteem? The modernist felt betrayed and sharpened his scalpel accordingly. "What was M Diaghileff to do?" asked Raymond Mortimer in the Dial with ill-concealed ire.

> "What do the English like?" he asked. "Clothes! Clothes! Clothes!" came the reverberating answer to the tune of Chu Chin Chow. "What music?" A thousand provincial orchestras answered with the

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[83]Sacheverell Sitwell, "The Sleeping Beauty at the London Alhambra, 1921," Ballet - To Poland, ed. Arnold Haskell (New York: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 17-18.

> strains of Casse Noisette . . . Tchaikovsky was dead, but his music was obtainable . . . M. Bakst was alive, just. And so he set about designing hundreds of dresses, the dancers set about learning a thirty-year-old ballet, The Sleeping Princess, and the press set about informing us that the dresses were to cost two million francs and that Tchaikovsky's music was all that music should be. Stravinsky himself proclaimed this in every news-sheet . . .
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> The result is what you can imagine -- a ballet of the early Nineties, a ballet in which even such artists as Madame Lopokova and Monsieur Idzikovsky can make no effect, a ballet all clothes and three hours long, a ballet that delighted those who hated the Sacre.[84]

Few reviewers expressed themselves with Mortimer's gusto. But the objections raised against the ballet -- Tchaikovsky's suburban tunefulness, Bakst's vulgar dress parade (Turner compared the costumes to "Bank Holiday dresses on Hampstead Heath"[85]), and Petipa's old-fashioned choreography -- reverberated throughout the intellectual press. For the advance guard of the intelligentsia, the Sleeping Princess was a sort of superior Pantomime.

Such cavils reflected more than a sense of betrayal. They stemmed from a critical attitude toward the past. The modernist looked at history with a contemporary eye; he analyzed it through a prism of new forms and ideas: Rossini recast by Massine and Derain was the balletic analogue of those eminent Victorians reinterpreted by

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[84]Raymond Mortimer, "London Letter, February 1922," pp. 295-296.

[85]W.J. Turner, "The Sleeping Princess," New Statesman, 12 Nov. 1921, p. 169.

Strachey. The dandy-aesthete, on the other hand, exulted in the resurrection of the past; he took pleasure in the evocation of its rituals and conceits, icons that opened the corridors of the imagination. For Sacheverell Sitwell, the Sleeping Princess marked the start of a journey through the byways of theatrical history -- Victorian pantomime, commedia dell'arte, Juvenile drama, as well as romantic ballet -- a journey informed by "a sense of nostalgia bordering on despair for the vanished past, particularly for the arts that blossomed in a lost, golden age and are dead in the present time."[86] We are far from Bloomsbury revisionism and experiment.

Preciousness was never entirely absent from the Ballets Russes. But in the period following Diaghilev's return to London in late 1924, the dandy element would come to the fore among his cultivated public: the schoolboy Sonnenkinder of post-Armistice years, treading in the Sitwells' footsteps, would displace Bloomsbury's critical intellectuals from the ideological center of the audience. In part, this change reflected a natural passing of the generations. But the company that returned to London in 1924 itself differed from its predecessor: the whiff of artistic fashion and aristocratic pretense that hung about its repertoire appealed to a different clientele than the

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[86]Edward Ricco, "The Sitwells at the Ballet," Ballet Review, 1977-1978, p. 101.

catholic works of high modernism. With the failure of the Sleeping Princess, Diaghilev cast his lot with High Bohemia.

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For the man of St. Petersburg, Paris remained a spiritual and artistic homing-ground. He cursed its fickleness at times and derided its costliness, but it was to its studios and salons that Diaghilev returned again and again for new ideas and critical validation, and where, finally, he made a home for his priceless collection of musical scores, books, and art works.

From 1917 to 1929, however, Paris was rarely home to the Ballets Russes. Premieres might continue to take place there, but with first London and then Monte Carlo established as the company's headquarters, it became only a brief stopover in the troupe's annual migrations. But time alone does not determine quality of feeling. In 1909, Paris capitulated to the art of Diaghilev's Russians in a matter of weeks, and it did so every spring up to the war. After 1917, however, the city stinted its affections: le tout Paris social et artistique, so courted by Diaghilev, found other enterprises, including many that owed inspiration and personnel to the Ballets Russes, on which to lavish time, money, and interest. Never again would Diaghilev recover his pre-War standing in the French capital.

Although Paris was one of Europe's twin dance capitals of the twenties, one looks in vain for evidence of the popular following Terpsichore had won in London. Ballet had, indeed, found a place in Paris life, but outside the circles of impoverished émigrés it sank few roots in the city's humbler quarters, spawned no popular-priced magazines, and rarely appeared on any but the most elite theatrical stages.

World War I may have redrawn the map of Europe, but it had relatively little effect on Diaghilev's Parisian audience. Crossing the Channel from England, where populism eddied throughout the post-Armistice years against the current of chic, one touches familiar ground. The artefacts themselves speak of continuity with the past: there are the same charity galas and patronage committees, society page columns and souvenir programs, elegant magazine spreads and top-of-the-scale ticket prices at top-of-the-line theatres, the same combination, in short, of elegance and art. New faces were to be seen, of course, and lean postwar silhouettes, but the names, like the haute couture fashions that lent them distinction, bore a striking resemblance to those of audiences past. Nor does one find much evidence of the artists Diaghilev claimed to have cultivated so assiduously or the kind of intellectual support he garnered in England. Indeed, compared to London, the changes in the company's Paris audience were neither profound nor far-reaching.

Throughout these years, Diaghilev's public remained what it had always been -- le tout Paris. But this motley collection of cosmopolitan tastemakers had itself subtly changed: it had acquired a democratized facade along with a style of deluxe modernity, and it now cultivated the avantgarde as once it had taken up the exotic and the Slav. In its latest avatar, le tout Paris was no less heterogeneous a group than before; now, however, instead of banking family scions and Proustian figures, high society jostled with the denizens of High Bohemia, Café Society celebrities, fashion moguls, titled émigrés, and the artists -- dilettante and serious -- who trundled in their wake. In the years 1917-1929 Diaghilev's Paris audience, like the Ballets Russes itself, did more than dictate taste from a Right Bank Olympus. It acted, now, as a broker of contemporary art, promoting the wares of a market that extended as far as America. Diaghilev's public may have included some of the makers of modernism, but it contained far more of their promoters, proselytizers, and collectors. In that quarter of le tout Paris, where art was the coin defining a modern style of luxury and a new aristocracy of taste, Diaghilev found the ideal audience for ballet's commerce in the avantgarde.

In December 1919, Diaghilev made his "triumphal

return"[87] to the Paris Opéra, a six-week season marred only by a strike of the theatre's backstage and performing personnel. For a time, it seems, Diaghilev harbored the idea of making this theatre, the apogee of the French subsidized system, his Paris base. As early as January 1919, he was writing to Misia Sert, an intermediary in the negotiations, that the season would be a "very brilliant" one and "not too objectionable"[88], a reference to the scandale occasioned by Parade two years before. Jacques Rouché, director of the Opéra since 1914, need not have worried: the takings at certain performances, noted the Mercure de France, exceeded Frs. 100,000.[89] But the season was more than a financial coup for the under-subsidized Opéra. With a repertoire of Fokine favorites, peppered with three of Massine's newer ballets, Diaghilev established his supremacy as a purveyor of balletic entertainment among the grand public of theatre-going Paris, including, one assumes, the Opéra's notoriously conservative abonnés. (As late as 1928, typical answers to an in-house survey of subscriber preferences included: "I

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[87]Antoine Banès, "Théâtre National de l'Opéra. Ballets Russes. Petrouchka, Prince Igor, la Boutique fantasque," Figaro, 29 Dec. 1919, p. 3, col. 3.

[88]Serge Diaghilev, Letter to Misia Sert, 23 Jan. 1919, quoted in Sotheby's Catalogue of Ballet Material and Manuscripts from the Serge Lifar Collection, 9 May 1984, Lot 161.

[89]Jean Marnold, "Musique," Mercure de France, 1 April 1920, p. 223.

despise modern music" and "I prefer Faust a hundred times over to hearing some work of the modern repertory twice.")[90] But in La Boutique Fantasque, Le Rossignol, and Le Tricorne, the company also delineated modernist terrain, not that the designs of Picasso, Matisse, and Derain were apt to shock a city that had long since made peace with Fauves and Cubists. In the contrast with Anna Pavlova's troupe, performing concurrently with the Ballets Russes at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, audiences easily discerned the advances in choreographic, musical, and visual design of Diaghilev's new aesthetic. Pavlova's intermissions, noted Howard Greer, a young American fashion designer and correspondent for New York's Theatre Magazine, "were of more interest to some than the program itself, which but for the artistry of Pavlowa, would have been no great success. The numbers were but a repetition of the tiresome ballets that have gone to make up the dancer's repertoire since her earliest triumphs."[91] Art belonged to the Ballets Russes, classical dancing to Pavlova.

Competition, however, took many forms in postwar Paris. The artists and aesthetics of Diaghilev's past now became the coin of mainstream theatrical ventures, each of which chipped a piece from the base of his audience. The

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[90]Jacques Rouché, Circular letter, [1928], AJ1206(I), Archives Nationales.

[91]Howard Greer, "Causons de la Mode!" Theatre Magazine, Feb. 1920, p. 126.

seasons organized by Maria Kousnezoff, Ida Rubinstein, and Nikita Balieff, director of the Chauve-Souris, not to mention revues at such tourist meccas as the Folies-Bergère, appropriated the Russian and Orientalist themes of the company's pre-War repertory. At the same time, Paris was awash in a new cult of primitivism, one that had roots in Africa rather than the Middle East. Jazz, Josephine Baker, and the Revue Nègre cast the sensual spell once worked by Rimsky-Korsakov and Diaghilev's dancers in Schéhérazade. In 1921, at Rouché's invitation, Fokine mounted Ravel's Daphnis and Chloë as part of the Opéra's first all-dance evening in decades. This was not the only occasion where Rouché whittled away at Diaghilev's traditional bailiwick. Beginning in 1918, Ida Rubinstein appeared in the first of the sumptuous spectacles that became a nearly annual feature of Opéra programming and drew on the talents of such pre-War luminaries as Bakst, d'Annunzio, Vincent d'Indy, and Florent Schmitt.

As Rouché recast the Opéra in an earlier image of the Ballets Russes, Diaghilev was expurgating the fin-de-siècle from his repertory. In spring 1920, no fewer than nine of the season's fourteen works at the Opéra had choreography by Massine, and of the remaining Fokine ballets, two had music by Stravinsky. The composer figured prominently the following December at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, where an all-Stravinsky program was given on Christmas night, and in May 1921, when the brief season

at the Gaité-Lyrique ended with a "Stravinsky Festival" at which prices of the most expensive seats doubled.

Only in October 1921 did Rouché open his theatre again to the Ballets Russes.[92] With its stars, magnificent settings, and spectacular costumes, the Sleeping Princess promised the kind of brilliance that translated into box office success. Diaghilev's proposal in April 1922 to stage the one-act Aurora's Wedding, along with revivals of Afternoon of a Faun and Spectre de la Rose, and two new Stravinsky productions, Mavra and Le Renard, infuriated Rouché. "Who, pray tell, will be doing the scenery and costumes for 'Aurora's Wedding'? You propose reviving Afternoon of a Faun and Spectre de la Rose. With the same scenery and costumes or in versions by new painters? If the latter, by whom? Apart from Petrushka, we have no grand ballet: neither Schéhérazade nor Firebird, only very short works demanding numerous rehearsals and appealing solely to an audience of artists."[93]

From Rouché's incensed remarks, one gathers that a dramatic change had come over Diaghilev's audience. Between 1920 and 1922, the promotion of modernism, and Stravinsky's newest works in particular, had alienated the more conservative elements of the fashionable public. At

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[92]Contract between Serge Diaghilev and Jacques Rouché, 8 Oct. 1921, AJ13/1292, Archives Nationales.

[93]Jacques Rouché, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 26 April 1922, Pièce 86, Fonds Kochno.

the same time, a cult had grown up around the troupe; it had acquired a following of artistic sophisticates. (One hesitates to take Rouché's "artists" at face value; only a minority of working artists could have afforded the ticket prices he himself described as "very high".)

Cult audiences serve many purposes. At their best, they bring a loyalty and recognition to unpopular art or the unknown artist. At their worst, and this was the case of Diaghilev's Paris audience in the 1920's, they set themselves up as arbiters, self-serving proselytizers of an exclusive code. Cult followings are always select, because by definition they are self-selected. But Diaghilev wanted his public to be select in a worldly sense as well -- a central paradox of his behavior in the twenties. He wanted a cult following with all the powers of le tout Paris. Thus, he never abjured the stages of le grand public for the venues of the avantgarde: always he deemed Covent Garden or the Opéra, those Western analogues of the Mariinsky, the settings appropriate to his company. But if he wanted their aura of history, along with the distinction and glamor of their clientele, he wanted no part of the boxholders themselves. Diaghilev's willingness to slight this influential majority of the fashionable audience explains in part the brevity of his seasons in the French capital. No matter how loyal or diligent in promoting his cause, friends alone could not fill a theatre. Indeed, by June 1923, rumors of the company's imminent disbandment had

surfaced in the press.[94]

Diaghilev never completely abjured the broad fashionable audience: he still mined its cachet and publicity value. For the _répétition générale_ of _Les Noces_ -- ironically, the most sober of Diaghilev's twenties' ballets -- a dazzling house assembled in the cause of Russian charities in France: the old pre-War public echoes momentarily in the society palaver of _Le Gaulois_ and _Figaro_, where Jacques-Emile Blanche, that portraitist _par excellence_ of the Belle Epoque, even penned an encomium of the impresario.[95] But time is inexorable, even in Paris. However ringing, the Imperial titles carried only memories of power and vast estates, and one notes with surprise subscriptions taken out in the names of banks -- perhaps the first instance of corporate patronage of ballet.[96]

A more general aura of aristocracy adhered to the Ballets Russes in Diaghilev's other major Continental venue, Monte Carlo, for if the Blue Train sped artists to Diaghilev's side, it also discharged in Cannes and Mentone,

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[94]Arthur Moss, "The Passing of the Ballet Russe," _Freeman_, 27 June 1923, pp. 375-376. Arthur Moss was an American expatriate writer, co-publisher of the little magazine _Gargoyle_, and occasional contributor to _The Dance Magazine_.

[95]Jacques-Emile Blanche, "L'oeuvre d'un Russe," _Figaro_, 7 June 1923, p. 1, cols. 3-4. See, also, Louis Laloy, "Le Gala des Ballets Russes," _Figaro_, 5 June 1923; "Le Grand Gala des Ballets Russes," _Le Gaulois_, 8 June 1923; "Le Gala de la Gaité," _Le Gaulois_, 14 June 1923; in Theatre Pressbook, _Les Noces_, Bibliothèque de la Opéra.

[96]"Carnet de la charité," 10 June 1923, Theatre Pressbook.

Nice, Cap d'Antibes, and Monte Carlo, Europe's wintering royalties and titled cosmopolitans, and the "special correspondents" who relayed their doings home. In these years, Riviera sunshine captured the imagination of the grey-clouded north. On the new photograph page of the Times, Londoners might vicariously warm themselves with a sight of outdoor idlers sipping apéritifs, strollers and pets on the Promenade, a ladies doubles match with Suzanne Lenglen in Cannes.[97] From November onwards, they might scan the column of "Riviera Notes" that related at least twice and sometimes as often as four times a week news of arrivals, dinner parties, and concerts. And throughout the winter, they would find regular features on such edifying subjects as Riviera flowers, golf, weather, prices, fashions, its calendar of social and sporting events, and, of course, its increasing vulgarization.[98]

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[97] Times, 4 Feb. 1925, p. 18; 29 Jan. 1924, p. 16; 30 Jan. 1924, p. 14.

[98] See, for instance, "Riviera Flowers. Antibes and Its Gardens," Times, 4 Feb. 1922, p. 13, col. 6; "Gaiety at Monte Carlo. Golf and Society. The Value of Money," Times, 13 Jan. 1921, p. 8, col. 1; "Riviera Weather. Effects of the Early Frosts," Times, 24 Jan. 1921, p. 13, col 5; "Cheap Francs. Gambling in the Exchange," Times, 1 Dec. 1919, p. 17, col. 5; "Riviera Prices. The Season's Prospects," Times, 23 Dec. 1921, p. 11, col. 4; "Riviera Finance. Francs and the Cost of Living," Times, 3 March 1924, p. 15, col. 5; "London Fashions. Varieties for the Riviera," Times, 9 Jan. 1924, p. 15, col. 6; "Riviera Season. Calendar of Social and Sporting Events," Times, 11 Dec. 1922, p. 15, col. 4; "Riviera Notes. The British Invasion," Times, 2 March 1920, p. 19, col. 5; "The Woman's View. Winter on the Riviera," Times, 6 Jan. 1922, p. 13, col. 6; "Riviera Crowds. Beaulieu Villas and Gardens," Times, 21 Jan. 1924, p. 13, col. 4.

Figaro was as prodigal as the Times in covering the Riviera, even if it eschewed photography. Nearly every day during the winter season, "Le Figaro aux pays du soleil", as the newspaper's half-page feature was styled, published calendars of events, lists of arrivals, and even tennis scores from the southern resortland. Diaghilev's name is seldom mentioned -- as always he shied from personal publicity -- but his dancers frequently are: notices of ballets, including the names of their principal interpreters, appeared in Figaro's columns the day before a Monte Carlo performance. Unlike the Times, Figaro ignored the crowds of pleasure-seekers despoiling once select locales; rather, it stressed the distinction of Riviera society. "The Christmas and New Year festivities that traditionally mark the opening of the Riviera's grand social season have been particularly brilliant this year," noted the front page "Echos" column on January 9, 1923. "Every day, Europe's high aristocracy meets at concerts . . . or at ballet and operetta performances, or at the social gatherings of the Hôtel de Paris. A real whirl of elegance anytime and everywhere."[99] Here was the "elegant public" that acclaimed Diaghilev's stars on the opening

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[99]"Le Masque de Fer," "Echos," Figaro, 9 Jan. 1923, p. 1, col. 3.

night of his April season.[100]

Proximity to the royal family -- and with the dethroning of Austria's Hapsburgs the Grimaldis were Europe's oldest ruling house -- enhanced the aura of privilege surrounding the Ballets Russes. The company danced at birthday galas for the reigning Prince and other national fêtes, entertained at palace dinners, while its seasons enjoyed the patronage of Princess Charlotte, an ardent balletomane who had lessons with Lubov Tchernicheva, attended company class, and instigated the Concert-Performances organized by Diaghilev in 1925.[101] Monte Carlo may have been a stone's throw from France, but in these years it resembled a winter outpost of Mayfair. ("The Tower of London has replaced the Tower of Babel," jested a Riviera correspondent in Figaro.)[102] At dinner parties and galas sat many of Diaghilev's pre-War subscribers -- King Manoel, the Duke of Westminster, the Princess of Pless, Lady Michelham, to name only a few -- as well as the patrons who would smooth his company's return to England. Indeed, Monte Carlo cemented relationships

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[100]Untitled clipping, Figaro, 23 April 1923; Dance Clipping File (Stanislas Idzikowski), Dance Collection, New York Public Library.

[101]"The Riviera," Times, 17 Jan. 1924, p. 15, col. 2; Untitled clipping, Figaro, 23 April 1923, Dance Clipping File (Stanislas Idzikowski), Dance Collection; Anton Dolin, Autobiography, p. 34; Grigoriev, pp. 200, 208-210.

[102]Carlo Monte, "Petit bleu de la Côte d'Azur," Figaro, 26 Dec. 1919, p. 3, col. 4.

between Diaghilev and that triumvirate of Britishers -- the Duke of Connaught, Viscount Rothermere, and Lady Cunard -- who stood behind his London seasons in the middle and late twenties.

Amid the chatter of English, another tongue could be heard: the courtly Russian of émigrés who had settled along the Azure Coast and on whose behalf the cream of Riviera society assembled for one glamorous benefit after another. "The Franco-Russian ball at the [Cannes] Municipal Casino last night attracted society en masse," reported the Times in March 1923. "More than six hundred people attended, and the profit for the Russian refugees on the Riviera amounted to about 75,000f."[103] The Times went on to list the most distinguished personalities of this "brilliant assemblage" -- Grand Duke and Grand Duchess Cyril, Grand Duke Michael, Countess Torby, Prince and Princess Dolgorouky, Prince and Princess Christian of Hesse, Princess Karageorgevitch, the Princess of Pless, and several dozen titled British guests. Less than three weeks later, charity again convened the resortland's elite -- this time for a brilliant affair in Monte Carlo where Diaghilev's stars danced for Russian refugees in France,[104] and again at the Monte Carlo Opéra where Tchernicheva, Nemchinova, and Idzikowski appeared in the world premiere

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[103]"Riviera Notes," Times, 6 March 1923, p. 17, col. 5.

[104]"Figaro aux pays du soleil," Figaro, 23 March 1923, p. 6, col. 6.

of Moussorgsky's La Foire de Sorotchintzi, a "splendid" event that took place under the auspices of Princess Charlotte.[105] And society turned out en masse again in 1925 for the "magnificent performance" by the Ballets Russes in Cannes on behalf of the Franco-Russian Children's Home, another of the many émigré benefits to which the Princesse Héritière gave her blessing.[106]

Even as Diaghilev each winter made over his repertory for Paris, the Théâtre de Monte-Carlo added a jarring note to the image of artistic experimentation he cultivated in its studios. Little is known of the day-to-day performing life of the troupe outside Diaghilev's own seasons: a list of the operas and ballets in which his dancers appeared has yet to be compiled. But, surely, the Coppélias and ballets d'occasion of the Monte Carlo repertory, like the variety matinées at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in 1923, which teamed Diaghilev's dancers with

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[105]"Riviera Notes," Times, 12 March 1923, p. 15, col. 2; J. Darthenay, "Opéra de Monte-Carlo," Figaro, 26 March 1923, p. 4, cols. 2-3. Given Diaghilev's great love for Moussorgsky and the existence of a score of the opera in his music library, one suspects he may well have had a hand in the production. I am grateful to Dr. Steven Roe of Sotheby's, London, for confirming the existence of the score in Diaghilev's library. The latter was purchased by the Library of Congress in May 1984.

[106]"Le Monde et la ville," Figaro, 2 April 1925, p. 2, col. 4.

singers, contortionists, and "burlesque" comedians,[107] altered perceptions of the troupe, adding to its image the tastes and habits of its Riviera public. For what was the real Ballets Russes in these years? The company that performed Les Noces in Paris during a season that made a clean "sweep . . . of the repertory associated with its early years",[108] or the troupe that danced Coppélia, Au temps jadis and Fleurs et Papillons in Monte Carlo?[109] Throughout the 1920's, Diaghilev's alliance with fashion weakened his credibility as an experimentalist. The repasts he served in Monte Carlo, like the audience -- "subtle, suburban, and subconscious" in Satie's caustic phrase[110] -- that feasted on them, eroded still further his claim to the vanguard. In the gilded world of royalty and idle pleasure, Diaghilev entwined the mystique of the

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[107]See, for instance, "Le Figaro aux pays du soleil," Figaro, 5 Feb. 1923, p. 5, col 5; 20 March 1923, p. 7, cols. 5-6; 26 March 1923, p. 5, col. 5.

[108]Florence Gilliam, "The Russian Ballet of 1923," Theatre Arts Monthly, March 1924, p. 191.

[109]Coppélia and Spectre de la Rose were given at the Théâtre de Monte-Carlo on January 10th. On January 22nd, at the same theatre, Spectre was performed on a triple bill with Hagoromo, danced by Sonia Pavloff of the Opéra Comique, and Au temps jadis, with Lubov Tchernicheva, Vera Nemchinova, Serge Grigoriev, and Anatole Wiltzak. On February 6th, Nemchinova and Wiltzak performed Belloni's Fleurs et Papillons at the Palais des Beaux-Arts. "Le Figaro aux pays du soleil," Figaro, 9 Jan. 1923, p. 6, col. 6; 21 Jan. 1923, P. 7, col. 6; 5 Feb. 1923, p. 5, col. 5.

[110]"The 'Ballets Russes' at Monte-Carlo: Souvenirs (1923)," Paris-Journal, 15 Feb. 1924; reprinted in Nigel Wilkins, The Writings of Erik Satie (London: Eulenberg, 1981), p. 111.

Ballets Russes with the last idyll of the nineteenth century's aristocracy.

Throughout his career, Diaghilev insisted that artists were his true following. Yet in these years, when Paris was a mecca for creative spirits from the four corners of the globe, the Ballets Russes rarely impassioned Montparnasse or became the hub of a community of artists, as did the Ballets Suédois or the short-lived Soirées de Paris. From the galleries and ateliers of the city came the ideas that remade the Ballets Russes in the image of modernity, but the audience itself only occasionally reflected this. In Paris, circles and cénacles dotted the cultural horizon; they spanned a social territory that reached from the Hotel Meurice, where Misia Sert held court, to unheated rooms on the Left Bank. As before the war, Diaghilev's artists stood at the upper end of the scale; the others visited his theatre more rarely. Never in these postwar years would Diaghilev excite the imagination of Paris as he had quickened the artistic and intellectual pulse of post-Armistice London or intoxicate the City of Lights with the thrill of creative discovery.

Paris in the twenties is a subject of enduring interest to American audiences, and recent years have added to its romance with a spate of biographies, reissued memoirs, and gossipy books about that charmed decade of the Lost Generation. The Anglo-American colony embraced talents as diverse as the home towns left behind; it

comprised sons and daughters of millionaires and writers on the edge of poverty; it included those who traveled in high society, others who lived among the surrealists, and a few who penetrated the outer reaches of Diaghilev's circle. America's expatriate community gazed on Paris with very different eyes than its European counterparts, and it interpreted what it saw by the light of quite different assumptions. For this reason, the picture it drew of Diaghilev's artists and personalities, like its presence or absence from the theatre itself, offers a judicious corrective to mythologies about his "artistic" audience.

In those days, reminisced poet/publisher Robert McAlmon in his memoir Being Geniuses Together, "people moved en masse from performance to performance",[111] and, indeed, a book remains to be written about the impact of the Paris theatrical scene on the expatriate community. In 1926, Paul Morand commented in his October 1926 "Paris Letter" for the Dial on the "colonization" of Paris by Greenwich Village and Hollywood, noting that "one of the rare points of contact" between the "travellers and the country in which they are travelling" was the Russian Ballet.[112] But if the company became an obligatory stop on

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[111]Robert McAlmon, Being Geniuses Together 1920-1930, rev. with supplementary chapters by Kay Boyle (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), p. 218.

[112]Paul Morand, "Paris Letter. October 1926," Dial, Nov. 1926, p. 428.

the American grand summer tour, the magic of earlier days had dimmed.[113] For artists and writers of the avantgarde, Diaghilev's stock was highest in the late teens and early twenties, when Stravinsky and Prokofiev sounded the call to experiment and the star of high modernism shone brightly in the repertoire.

Of all the writers who passed through Paris in those years, none succumbed to the spell of the Ballets Russes so completely as E.E. Cummings and John Dos Passos. Both had seen the company on the Boston leg of its 1916 tour; discovered it again on visits to Paris; both would testify in their work to its passage across the imagination.

A "genuine balletomane" -- this is Cummings' biographer speaking -- ever since "his youthful rapture at seeing Pavlova and Nijinsky in Boston and Petrouchka and Parade in Paris,"[114] Cummings waited nearly twenty years to write the ballet scenario based on Uncle Tom's Cabin intended to pay homage to Diaghilev.[115] But long before, in an essay written shortly after his discovery of free verse in the late teens, this poet who also painted revealed the impact of the company on his speculations

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[113]Gilbert Seldes, "The Theatre Abroad," Dial, Sept. 1926, p. 324.

[114]Richard S. Kennedy, Dreams in the Mirror: A Biography of E.E. Cummings (New York: Liveright, 1980), p. 374.

[115]Ibid., pp. 373-374. Tom, which had music by David Diamond, was never produced.

about modern art. Not only did Cummings identify Parade, Tyl Eulenspiegel, L'Après-midi d'un faune, and Petrushka with the modernist renaissance; he also borrowed from Diaghilev's stage such concepts as gesture and synesthesia to define the vital new art that so thrilled him.[116]

For Dos Passos, too, the Ballets Russes belonged to modernism's heroic moment -- "the creative tidal wave that spread over the world from the Paris of before the last European war," as he wrote in a foreword to Blaise Cendrars' volume of poems Le Panama et mes sept oncles.

> Under various tags: futurism, cubism, vorticism, modernism, most of the best work in the arts in our time has been the direct product of this explosion . . . Cendrars and Apollinaire, poets, were on the first cubist barricades with the group that included Picasso, Modigliani, Marinetti, Chagall; that profoundly influenced Maiakovsky, Meyerhold, Eisenstein, whose ideas carom through Joyce, Gertrude Stein, T.S. Eliot . . . The music of Stravinski and Prokofieff and Diageleff's Ballet hail from this same Paris . . . as do the windows of Saks Fifth Avenue, skyscraper furniture . . . and the newritz styles of advertizing in American magazines.[117]

In 1923, Dos Passos met Gerald and Sara Murphy, a wealthy expatriate couple, whose friendship would have important consequences for the young painter/novelist. Of all the Americans in Paris the Murphys alone enjoyed entree

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[116] Ibid., p. 179. The essay has been lost.

[117] Quoted in The Fourteenth Chronicle: Letters and Diaries of John Dos Passos, ed. Townsend Luddington (Boston: Gambit, 1973), p. 378.

to the Ballets Russes.[118] They had studied painting with Natalia Goncharova; helped refurbish damaged Diaghilev sets; come to know Picasso, Braque, Derain, and Bakst. "In addition to being the focal center of the whole modern movement in the arts," Gerald told Calvin Tomkins, "the Diaghilev ballet was a kind of movement in itself. Anybody who was interested in the company became a member automatically. You knew everybody, you knew all the dancers, and everybody asked your opinion on things."[119] Renegades from the stuffy oppressiveness of American privilege -- Sara was the daughter of an ink manufacturer, Gerald the son of the president of Mark Cross -- they lived at the crossroads of High Franco-American Bohemia.

> Every day was different [recalled Gerald]. There was a tension and an excitement in the air that was almost physical. Always a new exhibition, or a recital of the music of Les Six, or a Dadaist manifestation, or a costume ball in Montparnasse, or a première of a new play or ballet, or one of Etienne de Beaumont's fantastic "Soirées de Paris" in Montmartre -- and you'd go to each one and find

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[118]During the war years, an American circle including Alice Garrett (a Baltimorean patron of Bakst married to a diplomat in the American legation in Paris), Bernard Berenson, Walter Berry, and Edith Wharton had crystallized around Diaghilev. As might be expected in view of the age and standing of this expatriate elite, its ties with Diaghilev were largely social. Mrs. Garrett's name appears on the list of "Dames Patronesses" for the 1917 Paris season when Parade received its first tumultuous performance, an early sign of the hiatus between Diaghilev's postwar repertoire and his Paris audience of the twenties. Susan B. Tripp, "Bakst," John Hopkins Magazine, June 1984, p. 21.

[119]Calvin Tomkins, Living Well is the Best Revenge (New York: Dutton, 1982), pp. 8-9.

everybody else there, too.[120]

In 1923, when Dos Passos saw them almost daily,[121] the Murphys took an active part in the life of their adopted family. They attended rehearsals for Les Noces and even helped paint Goncharova's sets, and on some of these visits Dos Passos and Cummings joined them.[122] "The excitement over Les Noces rose to such a pitch that the Murphys felt moved to celebrate its opening,"[123] and on the Sunday following the premiere they hired a barge tied up in the Seine for a champagne supper that lasted till dawn. Diaghilev, who stilled his fear of water on this occasion, was among the forty-odd guests, as were a handful of his principal dancers, and his artistic cabinet -- Picasso, Cocteau, Larionov, Goncharova, Stravinsky, Ansermet, Kochno -- and others who had taken a hand in the production. Only the choreographer and corps de ballet were missing.

By and large, the American colony did not take to the Ballets Russes. The little magazines devoted few pages to its novelties, while the notices penned by Janet Flanner for the New Yorker amounted at most to three or four

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[120] Ibid., p. 30.

[121] Townsend Luddington, John Dos Passos: A Twentieth Century Odyssey (New York: Dutton, 1980), pp. 226-227.

[122] Ibid, pp. 225-227; Tomkins, pp. 30-31.

[123] Ibid, p. 31.

paragraphs.[124] In March 1924, Theatre Arts Monthly published the only important article about the company written by an American expatriate. (Subsequently, André Levinson became the journal's major dance contributor.) The author, Florence Gilliam, was a theatre critic for the Paris Tribune, contributor to American theatre magazines, and with her husband Arthur Moss, co-publisher of Gargoyle, the first English-language review of arts and letters on the Continent.[125] Unlike Levinson, that unreconstructed paladin of ballet's ancien régime, Gilliam marveled at Diaghilev's uncompromising modernism. "Never," she wrote of the 1923 season, were "the aesthetic ideals of the Ballet less hampered by tradition."[126] While Levinson railed at the "Marxist choreography" of Les Noces, Gilliam spoke with admiration of its "aesthetic qualities of form and balance".[127] And in a city where Russian cabarets and

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[124]See, for instance, "Diaghilev's Russian Ballet" and "Diaghilev's Ballet," in Janet Flanner, Paris Was Yesterday, 1925-1939, ed. Irving Drutman (New York: Popular Library, n.d.), pp. 25-26, 55-56.

[125]The Left Bank Revisited: Selections From the Paris "Tribune" 1917-1934, ed. Hugh Ford, introd. Matthew Josephson (Univ. Park: Penn. State Univ. Press, 1972), p. 319. Brief items about the company appeared in Gilliam's column "Parade", a regular Gargoyle feature. Moss was an occasional contributor to The Dance Magazine.

[126]Gilliam, "The Russian Ballet of 1923," p. 194.

[127]Ibid., p. 192; André Levinson, "Où en sont les 'Ballets Russes'," Comoedia, 18 June 1923, Theatre Pressbook (Les Noces), Bibliothèque de l'Opéra. Se also Levinson's "Stravinsky and the Dance, Theatre Arts Monthly, Nov. 1924, pp. 753-754.

music-hall acts were commonplace, she welcomed Goncharova's sobriety, "the most complete reaction of the modern artist from the violent and ubiquitous color which has been exploited, particularly by the Russians, to the point of . . . losing its artistic verity."[128] Doubtless many Americans shared her view that "the biggest thing . . . the Ballet has ever given in any season or on any program is Stravinsky's brutally magnificent Sacre du Printemps and that with Les Noces, "it brought [the] year's program up to a standard not previously surpassed."[129]

To speak of that season as an annus mirabilis is possibly an exaggeration. Yet at no time in the course of the Twenties did the repertory tread so uncompromising a path; never again would it shed its veneer of frivolity. The contrast between the worldliness of the Ballets Russes and the cloistered existence of the dancer is one of the themes of Zelda Fitzgerald's Save Me the Waltz.[130] In this thinly-veiled autobiographical fiction, the studio ruled by "Madame" -- retired Mariinsky ballerina Lubov Egorova in real life -- offered a disciplined escape from the aimless hedonism of sophisticated high life. That Zelda found her way to Egorova's studio, where over the decades Anton Dolin, Alexandra Danilova, George Skibine, Roland Petit,

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[128]Gilliam, p. 191.

[129]Ibid., p. 192.

[130]Zelda Fitzgerald, Save Me the Waltz, introd. Harry T. Moore (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968).

Marjorie Tallchief hastened whenever they were in Paris, is a tribute to her dedication as much as sign of the social milieu in which she moved: her entree there was smoothed by Gerald Murphy.

Zelda was not the only troubled woman of the expatriate literati to take up dance. Between 1926 and 1929, Lucia Joyce also flung herself into the studio, but although she, too, studied briefly with Egorova, her training reflected the more eclectic interests of the avantgarde: Dalcroze eurhythmics, Swedish gymnastics, and Duncan-style "interpretative" dancing.[131] (Among the more eccentric of her teachers was Isadora's brother, Raymond Duncan, who wandered around Paris in long robes, had a "colony" at Neuilly, and ran profitable tunic-cum-sandal emporia on the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré and Boulevard St. Germain.)[132] As a doting parent, Joyce was in the audience for Lucia's recitals[133] -- the kind that brought an eclectic flavor to the Paris dance scene. Family ties only partly account for the writer's presence in the recital hall. Like many expatriates, Joyce warmed to dance that

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[131]Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959), p. 625.

[132]McAlmon, pp. 295, 330-332. Kay Boyle joined the Duncan colony at Neuilly in the late twenties.

[133]Ellmann, p. 625; Noel Riley Fitch, Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties (New York: Norton, 1983), pp. 290-291.

assumed other guises than ballet: indeed, the only evidence that he actually saw the Ballets Russes appears in a letter praising Uday Shankar. "I send you the programme of the Indian dancer Uday Shankar," he wrote Lucia in 1934. "If he ever performs at Geneva don't miss going there. He leaves the best of the Russians far behind. I have never seen anything like it."[134] In the mid-thirties, Joyce did offer to collaborate with Virgil Thomson on a ballet based on the children's games chapter of Finnegan's Wake. His proposal, which included designs by Picasso, choreography by Massine, and a production at the Paris Opéra,[135] harked back to Diaghilev's earliest postwar seasons -- the probable era of Joyce's first encounter with the troupe and the one that obviously touched his imagination most deeply.

Joyce stood at the avantgarde hub of expatriate Paris -- a world bounded by the cafés of Montparnasse, the bookstores of the Rue de l'Odéon, and the little magazines that catered to the "Quarter's" Bohemians. In this heartland of Anglo-American experiment, the Ballets Russes made few inroads during the years when Diaghilev cultivated the pose of an experimentalist. If Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier, proprietors of Shakespeare and Company

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[134]Quoted in Ellmann, p. 686. Whether Joyce actually attended the performance of Le Renard that was the occasion for his meeting with Proust has never been clarified. Ibid., pp. 523-524; George D. Painter, Proust: The Later Years (Boston: Little Brown, 1965), pp. 340-342.

[135]Virgil Thomson, Virgil Thomson (New York: Knopf, 1966), pp. 77-78.

and La Maison des Amis des Livres, attended "several" performances in December 1920,[136] balletgoing never stuck, nor was it a habit acquired by their friends: it remained on the periphery of bar life and book life in Montparnasse. Unlike Ezra Pound's opera Le Testament, George Antheil's Ballet mécanique, and Cocteau's Romeo et Juliette, no Diaghilev event joined the pantheon of expatriate myth.[137]

Nor do the little magazines contradict the evidence of memoir. In vain, one leafs through issues of transition for even a mention of the troupe, while only a backhand swipe reveals its presence in the Transatlantic Review. "My crime?" queried Satie in a letter protesting Georges Auric's attack on him in Nouvelles Littéraires. "I didn't like his 'touched up' and 'faked' Fâcheux."[138] In these years the expatriate community gave its heart to George Antheil, the Trenton-born "bad boy" of American composers in Paris. The little magazines sang his praises: transition published no fewer than five articles by or

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[136]Fitch, p. 74.

[137]See, for instance, McAlmon, pp. 218-220; Bravig Imbs, Confessions of Another Young Man (New York: Henkle-Yewdale, 1936), pp. 42-58, 96-109; George Antheil, Bad Boy of Music (London: Hurst and Blackett, [1947]), pp. 148-149.

[138]Erik Satie, "Cahiers d'un mammifère," Transatlantic Review, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 218.

about him in 1927-1928,[139] while the musical supplements of the Transatlantic Review existed solely as a platform to advance his opinions. And he had many opinions, particularly on the subject of Stravinsky, against whom he railed continually:

> Do we necessarily need to link all new rhythmic experimentation with Stravinsky's "Sacre", or Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Scherezade"? At the least sign of a break from the four Gods of music; 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, or 4/4, do we need to run to Stravinsky like little cry-babies, and call Father? . . .
>
> Aha! Igor Stravinsky, you Rimsky-Korsakoffist! Aha Rimsky-Korsakoff, you Moussorgskyist! Aha Moussorgsky, you swiper from the Russian peasants. What about the music from the campfires of a thousand, no! a million years! What about the tom-toms. What about the neggers down in Africa. What about the Mongols sweeping over Europe in the middle ages. Do we have to track everything back to the courts of Louis and Napoleon? Do you forever have to stilt about in court dress to 4/4 time, or waltz in the evenings to 3/4? Is there nothing else to your measely little European culture of the last few centuries, a drop in the bucket.[140]

Like his mentor Ezra Pound ("the world's foremost discoverer of geniuses" as Antheil called the poet in his

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[139]Elliot Paul, "Zukunstmusik," transition, April 1927, pp. 147-150; George Antheil, "Jacques Benoist-Méchin," transition, July 1927, pp. 166-168; George Antheil, "Music Tomorrow," transition, Jan. 1928, pp. 123-126; Syd S. Salt, "Antheil and America," transition, March 1928, pp. 176-177; William Carlos Williams, "George Antheil and the Cantilene Critics: A Note on the First Performance of Antheil's Music in New York City; April 10, 1927," transition, Summer 1928, pp. 237-240.

[140]George Antheil, "Mother of the Earth," Transatlantic Review [Musical Supplement], Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 227.

autobiography[141]), the composer was longer on self-promotion than analysis: the cult of Stravinsky naturally detracted from his own genius. But one suspects other grounds for Antheil's disgruntlement: a feeling that something was fundamentally amiss in Diaghilev's latest turn, that neither his revivals or musical pastiches nor the commissions he had awarded Les Six boded well for the continued vitality of modernism. One also suspects that many expatriates shared his scorn for this return to the past. In the Little Review's special theatre issue published in 1926, the Ballets Russes did not even warrant a mention.[142]

Although many Americans kept to the expatriate world, others ventured beyond its ghetto. In his memoir Life Among the Surrealists, Matthew Josephson describes with warmth friendships with Philippe Soupault, Louis Aragon, André Breton, and Tristan Tzara and their "Dadaist excursions": at one, the future biographer of Zola, Rousseau, and Sidney Hillman, mounted a table and read a German tract on socialism to a restaurant full of Russian

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[141]Antheil, Bad Boy of Music, p. 96. Among Pound's writings on Antheil are "George Antheil (Retrospective)," Criterion, 7 March 1924, pp. 321-331; "Antheil 1924-1926," New Criterion, Oct. 1926, pp. 695-699; Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony (Chicago: Pascal Covici, 1927).

[142]Both Rolf de Maré and Comte Etienne de Beaumont, however, contributed articles about their respective enterprises. See "The Swedish Ballet and the Modern Aesthetic" and "The Soirées de Paris," Little Review, winter 1926, pp. 24-28 and 55-57.

émigrés, who pelted him with bread.[143] Here, among the habitués of Dada-Surrealist Paris was the nesting ground of the expatriate avantgarde: the younger painters reproduced in transition and the Little Review and the writers who formed the majority of their French contributors. Here, too, were to be found some of the younger collaborators of Rolf de Maré and Comte Etienne de Beaumont -- Francis Picabia, who designed the scenery of Relâche, produced by the Ballets Suédois in 1924; Tristan Tzara, whose "tragedy in fifteen acts" Mouchoir de Nuages was mounted by the Soirées de Paris the same year; Man Ray, the Philadelphia-born painter and photographer whose avantgarde films enjoyed the collaboration and backing of Beaumont; George Antheil, whose Paris debut at a Ballets Suédois gala in October 1923 provoked a legendary, if not wholly spontaneous, scandale. (A riot was needed for Georgette Le Blanc's film L'Inhumaine, and with the connivance of Margaret Anderson, co-editor of the Little Review, who invited Antheil to perform, one was engineered.)[144] And among the adopted fathers of Dada-Surrealist Paris were artists like Picasso, Léger, and Derain, whose work figured

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[143]Matthew Josephson, Life Among the Surrealists: A Memoir (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 132.

[144]Antheil, pp. 107-111. Antheil ingenuously pleaded ignorance at the purpose of this "premiere", which took place three weeks before the opening of Maré's three-performance season and the aim of which was announced in the paid and very public columns of Figaro. "Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 2 Oct. 1923, p. 6, col. 5.

prominently in both the little magazines and the repertoire of Diaghilev's balletic rivals.

Only rarely did this confraternity of Montparnasse stray across Diaghilev's path, even if the impresario attended its stellar events.[145] A short note from Blaise Cendrars in May 1922 asking for tickets to a performance of Renard at the Paris Opéra[146] is one of the few documented instances of contact between the impresario and an avantgarde artist who was neither an employee nor habitué of Diaghilev's social circle. (Oddly, Cendrars, who composed the scenario for the Swedish Ballet's La Création du monde seemed especially fond of Diaghilev's older works. Nina Hammett, an English painter and Montparnasse familiar, recalled a dinner with Cendrars and Fernand Léger, who designed this "Negro-jazz ballet", at which the Frenchmen sang snatches of Petrushka and Schéhérazade.[147]) In March 1923 the Kamerny Theatre, performing at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, brought Diaghilev briefly in touch with Left Bank Paris. Coming up from Monte Carlo, he attended performances by the troupe -- very likely his first glimpse of Soviet stagecraft -- and possibly a banquet honoring its

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[145]Antheil, Bad Boy of Music, p. 12; Lydia Lopokova, Letter to John Maynard Keynes, 21 May 1924, John Maynard Keynes Papers, King's College, Cambridge.

[146]Blaise Cendrars, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 16 May 1922, Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation.

[147]Nina Hammett, Laughing Torso (London: Constable, 1932), p. 135.

director Alexandre Tairov.[148] In subsequent years, the Little Review and Theatre Arts Monthly published a number of articles about the Soviet theatre, a sign of the avantgarde's fascination with Soviet constructivism and experimental stagecraft. The émigré theatre cast no such spell over the artistic imagination.[149]

A rather noisier encounter between Left and Right Bank Paris took place in 1926, when surrealists staged a demonstration at the Paris premiere of Diaghilev's Romeo et Juliet: two errant artists of their band, Max Ernst and Joan Miró, had contributed designs for the ballet. When the curtain rose to reveal Miró's decor, an "indescribable hubbub" broke out, and from the upper balconies a shower of leaflets printed in red ink fell on the audience in the stalls.[150] The manifesto was signed by Louis Aragon and André Breton.

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[148]D.O. Widhopff, Tristan Tzara, M. Larionov, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, [March 1923], Stravinsky-Diaghilev Foundation. The designs for the production of Giroflé-Girofla, which premiered on March 10th, were by Georges Yakoulov, who designed the 1927 production of Le Pas d'Acier. As indicated in Chapter 7, Tairov approached Diaghilev for a letter or article containing his views of the season.

[149]See, for instance, S. Margoline, "The Russian Theatre of Today" and S. Ignatoff, "The Kamerny Theatre-Moscow," Little Review, winter 1926, pp. 9-20 and 84-88; Babette Deutsch, "The Russian Theatre Today," Theatre Arts Monthly, Aug. 1925, pp. 537-547; Sheldon Cheney, "Constructivism," and Alexander Bakshy, "Ten Years of a Revolutionary Theatre," Theatre Arts Monthly, Nov. 1927, pp. 857-864 and 867-875.

[150]Kochno, p. 237.

> PROTEST! It is inadmissable that thought should be at the beck and call of money . . . Those . . . who capitulate to the point of disregarding social conditions are of no importance, for the ideal to which they paid allegiance before their abdication survives without them. In this sense, the participation of Max Ernst and Joan Mirô in the next performance of the Ballets Russes can never involve the Surrealist ideal in their debasement. That ideal is essentially subversive; it cannot compromise with such enterprises, whose aim has always been to tame the dreams and rebellions engendered by physical and intellectual starvation for the benefit of an international aristocracy.
>
> It may have seemed to Ernst and Mirô that their collaboration with M. de Diaghilev, legitimized by the example of Picasso, would not have such serious consequences. However, it forces us whose main concern is to keep the outposts of the intellect beyond the grasp of slave traders of every kind . . . to denounce an attitude that supplies weapons to the worst partisans of moral equivocation.[151]

Many avantgarde artists accepted the surrealist critique, even if they shied from the tactics of scandal. Although Cummings and Dos Passos loved the ballet, they studiously avoided its milieu. When the novelist tried to introduce his poet friend to the Murphys at the theatre where the sets for Les Noces were being readied, Cummings would have nothing to do with these "glamorous socialites" and hid in the back row of the auditorium.[152] Dos Passos himself refused to attend the party given by the Murphy's for Les Noces. "I was shy, and I hated small talk," he wrote. "I cultivated the pose of sidewalk proletarian to

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[151]Quoted ibid.

[152]Luddington, p. 227.

whom riches were vanity."[153] Matthew Josephson, who seems never to have attended a Diaghilev performance during his lengthy sojourns in Paris, regarded the troupe as the apogee of fashion,[154] an attitude undoubtedly shared by Adrienne Monnier, who called Antheil's debut with the Swedish Ballet an "evening performance-bazaar with several functions", one of which was "Poiret . . . parading his dresses".[155]

Although intellectual journals like the Mercure de France and Nouvelle Revue Française covered Diaghilev's seasons throughout the twenties, the troupe stirred few ripples of excitement. At times, the reviews were disconcertingly brief (the Mercure de France devoted a single paragraph to the company in 1921),[156] at other times, unabashedly negative. Music critic Jean Marnold, for instance, found little to praise in Massine's

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[153]Quoted ibid., p. 226.

[154]Josephson, p. 330.

[155]Adrienne Monnier, "The Ballet Mécanique," The Very Rich Hours of Adrienne Monnier, trans. and introd. Richard McDougall (New York: Scribner's, 1976), p. 247. In March 1919 Monnier had sponsored a recital of Satie's symphonic drama Socrate at her bookshop La Maison des Amis des Livres. (Ibid., p. 39.) Yet her writings make no mention of productions of the composer's works by Diaghilev and Beaumont, yet another indication of her distaste for ballet's fashionable milieu.

[156]Jean Marnold, "Musique," Mercure de France, 1 Sept. 1921, pp. 520-521.

"neurotic, fidgety" choreography[157] or Stravinsky's newest works: indeed, when Mavra and Renard were produced at the Paris Opéra in 1922, he told readers of the Mercure de France that the composer "no longer had anything much to say."[158] In these years Marnold and his theatre colleague, Henri Béraud, reserved their harshest criticism for Cocteau's musical proselytizing in Le Coq et l'Harlequin and the poet's maiden theatrical ventures with Les Six in Le Boeuf sur le toit and Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel.[159] Two things, in particular, enraged them: the pretentiousness of Cocteau's aesthetic claims and the considerable sums expended on his "jokes". (Boeuf was backed by Comte Etienne de Beaumont, who reserved, at a high price, the boxes and front rows of the orchestra at the Comédie des Champs-Elysées: the Shah of Persia paid ten thousand francs for a ticket.)[160] Béraud's attack on Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, underwritten by Rolf de Maré, reveals the privileged position of Diaghilev's inner circle of French artists.

M. Cocbin [was] served by choice collaborators:

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[157]Jean Marnold, "Musique," Mercure de France, 1 April 1920, p. 225.

[158]Jean Marnold, "Musique," Mercure de France, 1 Oct. 1922, p. 234.

[159]Jean Marnold, "Musique," Mercure de France, 15 April 1920, pp. 495-502 and 1 May 1920, pp. 782-791; Henri Béraud, "Théâtre," Mercure de France, 15 July 1921, pp. 449-454.

[160]Milhaud, Notes Without Music: An Autobiography, p. 102.

> eighty instrumentalists, a well-known conductor, dancers from the court of Sweden, the stage of the Champs-Elysées. There was also a decor, costumes, some amusing masks, and le Tout Paris in black tie . . . Certainly, fortune, like poverty, is not a vice. What is contemptible is the poor use a rich man makes of his money. If one thinks of the painful condition to which hundreds of honest, hardworking, and courageous writers, painters, and musicians are now reduced, . . . one cannot refrain from saying that this septet of little millionaires have chosen a poor time for their stupid jokes.[161]

Cocteau and Les Six fared better in the pages of the Nouvelle Revue Française, in part because the "Mutual Admiration Society", as Paul Morand baptized this tight-knit band of friends,[162] often "reviewed" each other's efforts. (Criticism in France was rarely disinterested. As George Antheil noted: "Music critics operated on a price-list basis; . . . you could be a 'genius' . . . for only three thousand francs, a 'great talent' for two thousand; a 'white hope' for a mere thousand."[163]) Thus, in 1921, Georges Auric transformed a column ostensibly devoted to the Ballets Russes into a spirited defense of Parade, a favor Cocteau returned three years later in some flattering notes penned from Monte Carlo about Les

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[161]Béraud, pp. 450-451.

[162]Steegmuller, Cocteau, p. 247.

[163]Antheil, Bad Boy of Music, p. 97.

Fâcheux.[164] Paul Morand, the novelist-cum-diplomat who mixed the cocktails for the clan's Saturday night gatherings, was also pressed into service: his witty line about the auditorium of the Comédie des Champs-Elysées -- "as carefully composed as a table"[165] -- speaks worlds about the elegant public that turned out for Boeuf sur le toit. This was only the first of many good turns Morand would do for his friends: beginning in 1924 his "Paris Letters" for the Dial circulated news of the group's activities, including its collaborations with Diaghilev, among an influential Anglo-American public.

Even apart from the intimates of the clan who reviewed Diaghilev performances, the NRF looked on his enterprise more kindly than the Mercure de France. But neither editor Jacques Rivière, who had written so passionately about Sacre du Printemps in 1913, nor music critic Boris de Schloezer, who later published a study of Stravinsky, gave it their unqualified praise. Curiosity now brought Rivière to the theatre in 1919-1920, and in Massine's performing style and choreography he found much to criticize.

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[164]Georges Auric, "Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Les ballets russes: à propros de Parade," Nouvelle Revue Française, Vol. 16, No. 89, pp. 224-227; Jean Cocteau, "Les Biches. Les Fâcheux," NRF, 1 March 1924, pp. 275-278.

[165]Paul Morand, "Spectacle-Concert organisé par Jean Cocteau, à la Comédie des Champs-Elysées: Adieu New-York. Le Boeuf sur le toit," NRF, 1 April 1920, p. 610.

> When Miassine dances, his silhouette can be charming, but nothing emanates from it: it never detaches itself . . . or propagates itself; it remains precise, skillful, and slight. With Karsavina, he has never formed that ecstatic couple Nijinsky brought forth so well . . . Nor is there anything spontaneous in Miassine's choreographic invention . . . Everything that Miassine imagines by way of step and gesture (apart from what he borrows textually from popular dance) has its obvious source in Sacre du Printemps: the stampings and broken attitudes, the way of indicating the sky with an arm above the head . . . But the closer the imitation, the deeper is the abyss separating the copy from the original . . . the former lacks all the necessity of which the latter was full. In the awkward and spasmodic choreography of Nijinsky's ballet there was a logic that was its very subject . . . In the ballets arranged by Miassine, one looks in vain for something to justify the constricted look of the choreography, its perpetual cramp. For all the suffocating, contracted quality of Stravinsky's music, Le Chant du Rossignol has none of the horror to justify so many contortions, such complicated gymnastic, and so great a dearth of grace and élan.[166]

His colleague Boris de Schloezer found less and less to praise as the twenties advanced. Already in 1922, he felt the troupe had weakened as a performing entity while wavering in aesthetic direction.

> We all know what we owe Serge Diaghilev . . . but our gratitude . . . does not exclude the right to state our present criticisms and fears. His troupe has grown poorer: no replacement has been found for Miassine, either as a balletmaster or dancer, while the departure of Sokolova is also felt, especially, in Sacre du Printemps . . . More serious is the absence of homogeneity, the absence of discipline in the corps de ballet, and above all, the weakening of that "authoritarian" . . . mind that once directed the entire enterprise and

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[166]Jacques Rivière, "Les Ballets russes à l'Opéra: la Boutique fantasque, le Tricorne, le Chant du Rossignol," NRF, 1 March 1920, p. 463.

> imparted such powerful life to it. It pains me to see the admirable choreography of Sacre disintegrate before my eyes through forgetfulness, inattention, and carelessness . . . and I am apprehensive about the future of Diaghilev's great enterprise because I remark today in his actions a kind of timidity and eclecticism: the man who . . . once imposed his ideas on us seems concerned today with . . . divining our nascent tastes.[167]

By 1925, Schloezer confessed himself out of sympathy with the "new spirit" reigning in the troupe, although, unlike many detractors, who recalled the "great era" of 1910-1913 only to announce the "decadence" of the present, he refused to succumb to nostalgia. Nevertheless, Zéphyre et Flore profoundly disturbed him. Citing André Gide's dictum that "classicism is romanticism held in check", he viewed the absence of "emotion, sensibility and sensuousness" from Massine's choreography as a sign of its sterility.

> In both Les Matelots and Zéphyre et Flore, man is reduced to the state of a nervous marionette, who mimes all the exaggerated gestures of passion. But these exaggerated and grotesquely deformed gestures awaken no echo in us . . . In Zéphyre et Flore, the dancers execute, at times even brutally emphasizing them, certain gestures of love, but these extraordinarily nimble mechanics, even as they skirt the obscene, remain completely asexual, alien to all erotic emotion.
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> I remember Sacre and that admirable dance for the chosen virgin: there Massine transposed emotional states which persisted menacingly in the background; today, he is completely detached, and his meticu-

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[167]Boris de Schloezer, "Les Ballets russes: Trois créations," NRF, 1 July 1922, pp. 191-120.

lous and skillful art seems dead.[168]

Something else disturbed Schloezer. Like his counterparts in England, he was put off by the rumor mills of society, the gossip networks pressed into service to acclaim a work -- in this case, Vladimir Dukelsky's score for Zéphyre et Flore -- as a "masterpiece" even before its actual premiere.[169] One suspects that many readers of this prestigious journal shared Schloezer's unease with the social and aesthetic atmosphere of Diaghilev's enterprise at mid-decade.

Who then were the artists who trailed in Diaghilev's wake, stippling with the hue of intellect his "unique" public, those "admirers" and "enthusiasts" who came again and again to the theatre and "belonged to the best society of Paris"?[170] An item published in Le Gaulois during the 1924 Olympics season offers a clue:

> These performances, which breed cordiality and even a kind of intimacy, unite again and again the friends of the Ballets Russes, who do not part once the show is over. Not far from the [Théâtre des] Champs-Elysées is a little cafe that has been done over and modernized. Here, people meet after the theatre . . . On Sunday, Mlle. Cécile Sorel, very beautiful and still excited by the performance, could be seen, along with Mlle. Marthe Davelli, M. Madrazzo [sic] and others . . . And when M. Serge Diaghilev entered

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[168]Boris de Schloezer, "Les Ballets russes. Erik Satie," NRF, 1 Aug. 1925, p. 251.

[169]Ibid., p. 248.

[170]J.B.-O., "Les Théâtres," Le Gaulois, 21 June 1924.

> the room with Picasso, there was a little demonstration of sympathy, accompanied by discrete bravos.[171]

Actress Cécile Sorel was a reigning idol of the Comédie Française; Marthe Davelli an opera singer at the peak of her career; Frédéric de Madrazo, a nephew of the dress designer Fortuny and the original for Proust's artistic dabbler Ski.[172] All three belonged to the Right Bank Establishment of high art, the milieu of Diaghilev's pre-War tout Paris. "Sorel," wrote designer Howard Greer for the American Theatre Magazine, "is the most famous, the most fascinating, and the most triumphant courtesan of Paris. Eternally youthful, quite like a Grande Dame from the court of Louis Seize, she holds an enviable position in society."[173] The guest list for a tea-dance at Sorel's "museum" on the Quai Voltaire evokes this cultured Establishment world: amidst the chinoiserie crowded an ex-President of the Republic, a Bourbon duchess, British admirals, French generals, Russian princesses, the couturière Lucille (Lady Duff Gordon in private life), Hubert Stowitts, the American-born partner of Anna Pavlova, and Harry Pilcer, a popular exhibition dancer who owned one

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[171] Ibid.

[172] Painter, Proust: The Early Years, pp. 133, 303. Among his accomplishments was the libretto of Diaghilev's ballet Le Dieu bleu, which he co-authored in 1912 with Cocteau.

[173] Howard Greer, "In the Salon of a Great Parisian Coquette," Theatre Magazine, Sept. 1920, p. 128.

of the most exclusive dance clubs in Paris.[174] And when Sorel attended a gala first night, le tout Paris in miniature seemed to accompany her: André de Fouquières, the Beau Brummel of contemporary fashion, Francis Picabia, the millionaire Cuban dadaist, and George Barbier, the Beardsley-esque fashion illustrator and author of pre-War albums about Nijinsky and Karsavina.[175]

In 1924, the "ghosts of the 'Tout-Proust'", in Edmonde Charles-Roux's picturesque phrase[176] -- flickered among the icons of Establishment culture in the audience of the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. But neither of these groups stood at the center of Diaghilev's thoughts, even if they represented an important segment of his public. Rather it was the salons of the new that Diaghilev now regarded as his ideal audience, those power circles of the modernist Establishment that crystallized around the Princesse de Polignac, Misia Sert, and Comte Etienne de Beaumont. Both Virgil Thomson and George Antheil have stressed the importance of salons in Paris artistic life of the twenties. For Diaghilev and other entrepreneurs of modernism, these crossroads of Right Bank fashion and contemporary art defined the narrow world of their ventures: here, reputations were launched, commissions

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[174] Ibid., p. 128 et seq.

[175] Howard Greer, "Causons de la Mode!" Theatre Magazine, Feb. 1920, p. 128.

[176] Charles-Roux, Chanel, p. 235.

awarded, and audiences gleaned for a theatrical debut. Throughout the decade, Diaghilev relied on salons to promote the Ballets Russes, to create that disturbing aura of an enterprise at once chic and "advanced". Thus, even before their official premieres, Mavra, Renard, and Les Noces were heard by a select public in the music-room of Stravinsky's patron Madame de Polignac, while from Misia Sert's apartment in the Hotel Meurice, word of Diaghilev's annual "finds" whipped through fashionable Paris with the speed of a petit bleu.

The artists who set the tone in this milieu -- Cocteau, Les Six, and the other painters, musicians, and writers of the poet's "Mutual Admiration Society" -- formed the backbone of Diaghilev's artistic following. They and their friends provided the majority of his French collaborators, and included several personal, even intimate, friends of the impresario. For Diaghilev, the social "packaging" of his artists was always important. He dressed his "favorites" in the tailoring of Saville Row, and of the many painters and composers who worked for him over the years, remarkably few came to his attention without society backing. In Cocteau and his band, art and social standing neatly fused. "Well-to-do and upper-class," these youthful aesthetes circulated among the salons, promoting, as Virgil Thomson wrote, "a conversation about the arts among people well-off enough to be making

them or rich enough to buy."[177] "Conversation," however, is too mild a word to describe the group's activities, even if it captures the informal flavor of salon relationships. For a great deal more than discourse was taking place in the drawing rooms of this alternative Establishment, developments in which Cocteau, especially, in his multiple roles as talent scout, publicist, and go-between, played a major part.

In these years, modernism was redefined, transformed under the aegis of Cocteau, his acolytes, and patrons from a radical statement into a socially-palatable style. At the same time, through enterprises like the Ballets Suédois, Soirées de Paris, and to a somewhat lesser extent the Ballets Russes, the private promoters of modernism acquired something akin to a public arm -- one that extended their tastes into a larger arena. Theatrical exposure secured at least in part the hegemony of salon-promoted modernism. But it did something more as well. The commercial setting in which performances took place added luster to their component parts: the artwork itself became a prestige commodity. What occurred, therefore, was a twofold phenomenon: the consecration of key patronage choices as modernist chic and the rapid commercialization of these tastes through balletic enterprise.

The promptness with which modernism triumphed as

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[177]Thomson, p. 57.

the artistic style of the twenties reflects the marketplace setting of its diffusion. But the ballet stage was only one arena where this took place. The new art promoted by Cocteau and his group was a look, a style, a tone that could be adapted with equal ease to the walls of a nightclub, costumes for a fancy dress ball, and score of a ballet. Even before the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in 1925, chic gathering spots had donned a modernist guise. At Le Boeuf sur le Toit, a bar "on the most modern lines"[178] where Cocteau received on almost any evening in the early twenties, Picassos and Picabias hung on the walls. Here, clients "drank champagne for luxury, whisky for style"[179] and rubbed shoulders with celebrities -- Picasso, Les Six, Arthur Rubinstein, Nancy Cunard, Clive Bell, Yvonne Printemps, Misia Sert, Count Harry Kessler, Chanel, Diaghilev, Comte Etienne de Beaumont, Princesse Violette Murat, and the Prince of Wales -- while the best dancers in Paris danced to American jazz.[180] "The Boeuf," Cocteau said later, "became not a bar at all, but a kind of club, the meeting place of all the best people in Paris,

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[178]Count Harry Kessler, In the Twenties: The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler, trans. Charles Kessler, introd. Otto Friedrich (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 209.

[179]Thomson, p. 57.

[180]Hammett, p. 198; Clive Bell, Old Friends: Personal Reminiscences, pp. 184-186; Kessler, p. 209; McAlmon, pp. 123-125; Gold and Fizdale, Misia, p. 216; Steegmuller, Cocteau, pp. 281-283.

from all spheres of life, the prettiest women, poets, musicians, businessmen, publishers -- everybody met everybody at the Boeuf."[181] Paul Poiret's Oasis was another nightspot with an air of avantgarde chic; in step with the times, the erstwhile purveyor of Orientalia had commissioned designs from Cocteau, Derain, Sergei Soudeikine, and others.[182] Count Harry Kessler, co-librettist of Legend of Joseph and an intimate of Diaghilev and his circle recorded in his diary yet another of these ventures: a dance-bar on a launch in the Seine where young Polish artists under the wing of Misia Sert made up the band and where the "fantastically expensive" price of a hundred and fifty francs was charged for a bottle of champagne.[183] In these settings, modernism became the coin of an international pleasure style, the background against which Tout Londres and Tout Paris and Tout New York relaxed and recreated. As much as it dressed the stage of the Ballets Russes, modernism framed the chic lifestyle of Diaghilev's smart, international public.

Unlike London, where a dance boom cutting across the lines of class lent a touch of democracy to the company's social aura, in Paris the Ballets Russes retained the plumage of social elitism throughout the twenties. Yet

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[181]Quoted in Steegmuller, Cocteau, p. 281.

[182]Soudeikine's design, dated 1921, was sold at Sotheby's, New York, on 6 Dec. 1977, Lot 82.

[183]Kessler, pp. 298-299.

the character of Diaghilev's audience had changed, and not only in terms of style. The tightly-knit world of aristocrats and aristocratizing bourgeois that had assembled for his pre-War rituals now yielded to a motley crowd of smart cosmopolitans -- a beau monde where money, art, and fashion were blurring older distinctions of class. Before the war, Diaghilev's stars had danced at the fêtes of the most exclusive society. Now wealth alone seemed to fuel such events. In her memoirs R.S.V.P. Elsa Maxwell recalled a twenties birthday party she gave herself at the Paris Ritz, a gift from Jay O'Brien, the ex-husband of movie star Mae Murray, and his wife, the ex-Mrs. Julius Fleischmann of yeast fortune fame. "Jay asked Cole Porter what he could give me for my birthday and Cole told him there was nothing I adored more than a party . . . Serge Diaghilev was then in Paris and that meant, of course, that I must have his ballet company perform at the party. I had the Ritz build a stage in the garden and sent out 300 invitations to a buffet supper."[184] This was not the only time Diaghilev crossed paths with Café Society's most famous hostess. The two had met before the war in London, and they saw each other "often" the following decade, particularly at Monte Carlo, which Maxwell was paid to promote as a summer

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[184]Elsa Maxwell, R.S.V.P. Elsa Maxwell's Own Story (Boston: Little Brown, 1954), p. 14.

resort.[185] Indeed, the "famous impresario", whom she regarded as a "friend", celebrated her fortieth birthday in Monte Carlo in May 1923 "by staging the *premières* of two new ballets": as an added treat Vladimir Horowitz played Lizst's "Mephisto Waltz" during the interval, his first performance in the West.[186] (At Venice, another of the resorts she launched as a Café Society playground, Maxwell paid an unusual tribute to Diaghilev: in the Russian Ballet tableau that was the "hit" of the 1928 Robillant fancy dress ball, she appeared as the impresario and "made an introductory speech which nearly sent everyone into hysterics".)[187] Few of Diaghilev's Café Society followers were as musically sophisticated as Maxwell, who began her career as a pianist. One of France's madams *de luxe* recalled a Chilean lover, phosphate magnate Pepe Astorica, who would ask Diaghilev's entire troupe to parties at his house on the Avenue Foch.[188]

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[185] *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 90-92.

[186] *Ibid.*, p. 8. Maxwell must have gotten her dates confused (or pared a few years off her age) as the pianist did not emigrate from the Soviet Union until autumn 1925. However, this is not to say that Diaghilev did not at some time arrange such a recital. Indeed, given the importance of the émigré world in Horowitz's early career in the West, the absence of all mention of Diaghilev in the pianist's biography is certainly odd. See Glenn Plaskin, *Horowitz: A Biography of Vladimir Horowitz* (New York: Morrow, 1983), chaps. 5-6.

[187] "Mariegold in Society," *Sketch*, 19 Sept. 1928, p. 557. One wonders what she said.

[188] Brian Moynahan, "Memories of a Madame," *Sunday Times*, 1 March 1981, p. 15.

Paris of the twenties was the capital of fashion as much as it was the capital of art, an emporium for the furnishings of a modern luxury lifestyle as much as a center for the trade in modern art. Ballet, as we have seen, played an important part in advertising the city's aesthetic wares; it played a similar role in promoting fashion. At the afternoon "galas" sponsored by the magazine Femina, theatrical dance was used as bait to tempt prospective clients to displays of couturier models. In 1924, Diaghilev soloists gave a program of divertissements at one such event, another the previous year had featured the troupe of Diaghilev alumnus Alexandre Gavrilov.[189] The opening of the Galeries Lafayette was another occasion where Diaghilev's dancers lent their art to the promotion of fashion. (They did so, as usual, without compensation, and at Ninette de Valois' behest, staged a mild protest: they walked off with the soap and towels provided by the department store.)[190] Nor were private troupes the only ones drawn into such promotions. At a "brilliant fête" organized by France's silk merchants attended by several government officials, including the Minister of Commerce, the Paris Opéra Ballet performed a pièce d'occasion that displayed the famous Lyons silks while illustrating their

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[189]"Fêtes par-ci, fêtes par-là," Femina, Aug. 1924, p. 14; "Courrier des Théâtres," Figaro, 25 April 1923, p. 3, col. 6.

[190]de Valois, Come Dance With Me, pp. 69-70.

manufacture in pantomime. At the same time mannequins from Redfern, Worth, and other couture houses modeled dresses -- silk ones, of course.[191]

By no means was ballet the only kind of dancing on which fashion smiled. At Femina events, eclecticism was the rule,[192] as it was at charity galas: both reflected the pluralism of the Paris dance scene. In 1923, the talent line-up for three well-publicized charity affairs reveals the array of styles that had acquired an aura of fashion: Carlotta Zambelli, Albert Aveline, Tamara Swirskaya, Natalia Trouhanova, Harry Pilcer, Rahna, Anna, Lisa, and Margo Duncan, Yevgenia Nikitina, and Jeanne Ronsay evoked the gamut of French theatrical dance.[193] Indeed, at every turn, Terpsichore in Paris intersected with the makers and purveyors of fashion -- from the couturiers who designed for the stage and champagne prices

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[191]"Paris Notes," Dancing Times, Jan. 1921, pp. 343-345.

[192]See, for instance, the notices in Figaro's "Courrier des ThéAtres" for 25 April 1923 (p. 3, col. 6); 4 May 1923 (p. 5, col. 2); and 19 Oct. 1923 (p. 6, col. 3). Among the dance artists featured at Femina events were Nina Payne, a popular American "excentric" dancer from the Folies-Bergère, Sakaē Ashida and Toshi Komori, Japanese concert dancers, and the exhibition team of Misguett and Maxly.

[193]"Gala à Exposition de la Musique et de la Danse," Figaro, 16 Jan. 1923, p. 2, cols 4-5; "Pour les Veuves et Orphelins des Associations des Jornalistes parisiens et des Nouvelistes parisiens," Figaro, 29 May 1923, p. 2, col. 3; for the "Fête de l'Enfance et des Jeux," see "Le Monde et la Ville," Figaro, 3 June 1923, p. 2, col. 3.

of the era's "dancings"[194] to the glamorous settings for the "negro revues" imported from America. (At the Ambassadeurs, where Florence Mills performed in 1926, Count Harry Kessler "saw 'Tout Paris' together in its full glory," "the first time . . . since the first night of the Russian Ballet",[195] while Josephine Baker's Revue Nègre, a sensation at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, represented "modern jazz" at the Opéra's 1925 ball "Dancing Throughout the Ages".)[196]

The alliance of modernity in dancing with the luxury marketplace was only one of many signs of a larger cultural phenomenon -- the containment of modernism's potentially disruptive force within a milieu of social privilege. Both modernism and its practitioners hovered close to the center of society: as at Comte Etienne de

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[194]Chanel, Erté, Jeanne Lanvin, Paul Poiret, and Worth all designed for the stage. "Dancing" was the fashionable name for a Paris dance establishment, and the very use of an English term suggests the elitist character of a majority of the establishments where "jazz" was danced. Throughout the twenties, the Dancing Times published many reportages about Paris "dancings", which noted cover prices, attire, manners, and the cost of drinks in addition to commenting on the style of dancing. See, for instance, George Cecil, "Paris 'Dancings'," Dancing Times, Sept. 1920, pp. 955-957; "Sitter Out," Dancing Times, May 1921, pp. 630-636; George Cecil, "Paris Open-Air Dancing," Dancing Times, May 1921, pp. 641-642; Len Chaloner, "Dancing in the Quartier Latin," Dancing Times, March 1922, pp. 535-537; Jack Carlton, "Where One Dances in Paris," Dancing Times, Dec. 1922, pp. 275-277; George Cecil, "Parisian Partners," Dancing Times, Feb. 1923, pp. 507-509.

[195]Kessler, p. 302.

[196]"Paris Notes," Dancing Times, Jan. 1926, p. 463.

Beaumont's balls, they brought an artistic theme to the charades of the privileged,[197] the outré note snapped in 1925 by Man Ray's camera.[198] But even in less exalted quarters, links between the makers and buyers of modernism are not hard to find. André Breton, that uncompromising theorist of modernism, not only conducted a gallery devoted to the art of his followers, but served as an artistic adviser to couturier Jacques Doucet, who collected modern manuscripts and paintings.[199]

The containment of modernism through the ballet and artistic marketplace had a number of consequences. It shortened the path for the unknown to fame, making the promise of success immanent in the very act of creation. With the dynamic of the market now intruding on the imaginative process itself, the very concept of the avantgarde was jeopardized: the quest for the new was no more than an economic imperative. From the wedding of modernism to the luxury art world, moreover, came a new and perturbing myth: a belief in the primacy of talent and taste in defining the function of a modern aristocracy. In

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[197]For the program and principal protagonists of Beaumont's 1923 baroque ball, see "Le Monde et la Ville," Figaro, 1 June 1923, p. 2, col. 3.

[198]"'To-morrow's Fashions': Paris Prophecies at a Ball. An English Poet and Her Dress Prophecy," Sketch, 15 April 1925, pp. 50-51. Among the revellers snapped by Man Ray were Nancy Cunard, Tristan Tzara, the Picassos, Baron and Baroness de Meyer, the Marquise de Jaucourt, Madame Errazuriz, and the hosts.

[199]Josephson, pp. 141, 255.

an age where birth counted for less and less, and where wealth had squandered its claim to leadership through public displays of hedonism, art alone seemed to justify the continued existence of older forms of social privilege. Within this redefined aristocracy, however, noblesse oblige counted for little. Indeed, apart from the series of performances given by striking Paris Opéra dancers in 1920, the masses never impinged on ballet in the French capital as they did in post-Armistice Britain. Like the other high arts in France, ballet remained throughout the decade within the traditional framework of salon and State, and neither the makers nor purveyors of modernism showed any inclination to change this. The paradox of the Ballets Russes -- and modernism generally in France -- lay in its alliance of radical form with an older social ideology.

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When Diaghilev returned to the Coliseum in November 1924, an enraptured house welcomed him. But even if many names on the program were familiar, the company itself had changed. Along with trunks of costumes and scenery, another form of baggage made the Channel crossing: the aura of aristocracy and salon modernism acquired during the company's years abroad. The works conceived under the aegis of Monte Carlo and the Paris art market appealed to only a segment of Diaghilev's once broad London public,

above all, to that part of the audience that espoused the snobbery, aesthetic chic, and francophilia they proclaimed. In its final years 1925-1929 the Ballets Russes became a public embodiment of the values and lifestyle of England's dandy-aesthetes.

In 1924 and 1925 Diaghilev presented three seasons at the Coliseum, discharging a portion of his debt to Sir Oswald Stoll and the Alhambra Company. As in the post-Armistice years, one ballet was given at each of the music-hall's two daily shows, and again the troupe was a headliner, with artists like Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake -- two of many black musicians to desert America for the comparatively unprejudiced shores of Europe -- sandwiched in small print between announcements of repertory, cast lists, and critical blurbs.[200]

In 1918 and 1919, the gallery had edged the stalls from the limelight in Diaghilev's audience, a sign of ballet's new public in the theatre's upper reaches. Now, however, the spotlight rarely panned the gods. Almost exclusively, it flooded the boxes and stalls, illuminating the antics and outfits of his smart audience. Between 1924 and 1929, Diaghilev spurned the general public he had once seduced. In its place, he cultivated the decade's latest trendsetting elite, sophisticates who took their style from Paris and aesthetic cues from the Sitwells. As British

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[200]These black Americans "shared" the Coliseum stage with the Ballets Russes in November 1925.

ballet struggled valiently to establish a native beachhead, Diaghilev culled his distinctive audience from the picture galleries of Bond Street and pleasure circuits of High Bohemia.

"The whole high-brow and snob world were there," remarked Arnold Bennett about the first-night crowd jamming the Lyceum Theatre where Diaghilev's popular-priced season opened in November 1926.[201] But even before the move earlier that year from the music-hall to the legitimate stage, the "snob world" occupied a prominent place at Diaghilev events. "How much better suited to a fashionable audience the Coliseum is than any of our fashionable theatres," commented the Evening Standard on the morrow of Diaghilev's return to the house in November 1924. "One noticed this last night, when there was a throng of white waist-coated men and sleek-headed and pearly ladies to greet the Russian Ballet, who wandered about and paid calls in the interval in the manner of grand opera days at Covent Garden. The stalls at the Coliseum are more comfortable . . . than those of any 'legitimate' theatre . . . and a very bright young crowd of first-nighters commented freely on this fact."[202]

In this last half-decade, the Bright Young Things

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[201] The Journals of Arnold Bennett, 1921-1928, ed. Newman Flower (London: Cassell, 1933), p. 133.

[202] Evening Standard, [25] Nov. 1924; quoted in "Theatre Directory," Times, 26 Nov. 1924, p. 12, col. 6.

made Diaghilev their own. They trailed his company from theatre to theatre, their prattle and their gowns providing grist for the gossip columnist's mill and the frivolous setting that appeared inseparable from Diaghilev's newest art. In these years, the Sketch published numerous photographs of the company's dancers, half-a-dozen profiles of its outstanding personalities, and reams of reportage about its first nights.[203] Thanks to "Mariegold", the weekly's pseudonymous, untiring chronicler of parties and premieres, we glimpse the "special and very sophisticated audience" that "haunt[ed] the Russian Ballet" in the middle and late 1920's.[204] Here is her description of opening night at His Majesty's Theatre in 1926:

> "Going on" from one entertainment to another was the order of Monday night, and music-lovers had a perfect feast offered to them that evening . . . Those who plumped for the Ballet included a very distinguished company, headed by Lord Balfour and his clever niece, Mrs. Edward Lascelles . . . What an amusing variety of costume was brought out by this first night! There were women in the latest and smartest of evening frocks, and young men in the gayest of coloured shirts and

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[203]Among the celebrities profiled were Anton Dolin, Eugene Goossens, Stravinsky, and Diaghilev. Martin Lane, "The Irish Russian-Dancer: Anton Dolin," Sketch, 24 Dec. 1924, p. 657; Beverley Nichols, "Celebrities in Undress: Diaghileff," Sketch, 30 June 1926, p. 526; "Celebrities in Undress: Eugene Goossens," Sketch, 4 Aug. 1926, p. 210; "Celebrities in Undress: Stravinsky," Sketch, 6 July 1927, p. 14. These and other Sketch profiled by dandy novelist Beverley Nichols are reprinted in Beverley Nichols, Are They the Same at Home? Being a Series of Bouquets Diffidently Distributed (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927).

[204]"Mariegold in Society," Sketch, 22 June 1927, p. 579.

> softest of soft collars -- the latter, of course, drawn from the camp of the highbrows. Some of the Intelligentsia, however, conform to regulation evening dress, including young "Puffin" Asquith, who was in the upper circle . . . Violet Duchess of Rutland . . . had a long wait in the foyer before she was joined by Lady Diana Cooper, wearing a gold-spangled frock, and Mrs. Alan Parsons (Viola Tree), in a dress of the new pale-green. When they too their seats in the second row of the stalls, I saw Lady Colefax seated just in front of them. Lady Juliet Duff, in bright scarlet, was a little further along in the front row.[205]

Asquiths, Duffs, Coopers, Balfours, Trees -- the names alone evoke the chain of family, social, and political relationships that formed the backbone of Diaghilev's Georgian public. The war ended Liberal rule over England's body politic, but "Souls" still reigned in Society. Their children were the decade's new elect, setting the tone for its high life. Like Lady Diana Cooper, some took to the stage. Others, like Nancy Cunard and Anthony "Puffin" Asquith became writers, publishers, and filmmakers. The faces of this bright young crowd vied with filmland celebrities in the illustrated press, and the beauties of the group lent their names and looks to product endorsements. (Read one 1933 advertisement: "Lady Diana Manners, famed as the most beautiful woman of the English aristocracy, said 'I know that every woman can effectively accomplish loveliness by using Pond's Two Creams'.")[206]

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[205]"Mariegold in Society," Sketch, 23 June 1926, p. 469.

[206]Quoted in Raphael Samuel, "The Middle Class Between the Wars," Part II, New Socialist, March/April 1983, p. 30.

Little wonder New Statesman critic W.J. Turner described balletgoers as "less middle-class and respectable, better looking and more amusing" than the "army of successful wholesale grocers" that invaded Covent Garden on opera nights.[207]

In these years, style became a battleground of Society, a field where Hearties and Arties warred over ruling class values, and, especially, the definition of masculinity. "The Athletes," wrote Jessica Mitford, whose sisters Nancy and Diana led the pack of Bright Young Things, "were direct ideological descendants of past patriots, winners of wars on the playing fields of Eton, Old School Tie men and their horsey-set women."

> The Aesthetes laid claim to a more exotic heritage . . . the Romantics, the England of Oscar Wilde, the France of Baudelaire and Verlaine. Most of the Aesthetes were vaguely pro-Socialist, pro-pacifist, and (horrors!) opposed to shooting, hunting, and fishing . . . They gaily toppled the old, uncomplicated household gods -- England, Home and Glory . . . the axiomatic superiority of the English over all other races; they sacrilegiously called the Boer War . . . "the Bore War".[208]

The rift between these two Englands is a theme that peppers Nancy Mitford's early novels. In Highland

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[207]W.J. Turner, "Mercury and The Nightingale," New Statesman, 23 July 1927, p. 479.

[208]Jessica Mitford, Hons and Rebels (London: Quartet Books, 1978), p. 33.

Fling,[209] she drew an inimitable portrait of an old-school patriarch. Like her father on whom the character was based, General Murgatroyd loathed both modern art and its devotees -- the "languid, aesthetic young men in pastel silk shirts who kept popping up at unexpected moments."[210]

In real life, one such dandy was poet Harold Acton, a longstanding friend of the novelist,[211] who exemplified the combination of aestheticism, frivolity, and social privilege of Diaghilev's "highbrow" following in the twenties. Even before the war, Acton had succumbed to the voluptuous thrills of Schéhérazade: "the heavy calm before the storm in the harem: the thunder and lightning of negroes in rose and amber; the fierce orgy of clamorous caresses . . . death in long-drawn spasms to piercing violins."[212] In Florence, where his American-born mother and painter/art dealer father lived among Berensons, Dodges, and expatriated Grand Duchesses, he had glimpsed Diaghilev reciting Pushkin in the Boboli Gardens and shied from the "autocratic Russian bear" who with Bakst called at the family villa.[213]

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[209]Nancy Mitford, Highland Fling (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1931).

[210]Jessica Mitford, p. 30.

[211]His Nancy Mitford: A Memoir (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975) paid tribute to their friendship.

[212]Harold Acton, Memoirs of an Aesthete (London: Methuen, 1948), p. 113.

[213]Ibid., p. 57.

From 1918 to 1922, Acton attended Eton. Here, among the art-minded collegians of this bastion of English privilege, a minority group that included Acton, Brian Howard, Oliver Messel, Cyril Connolly, Peter Quennell, Robert Gathorne-Hardy, and Anthony Powell, the web of interests lacing the Ballets Russes in mid-decade was spun.

> What they stood for at Eton was modernism in general, understood as the movement against the consensus culture of Victorian and Edwardian England. They stood for French poetry -- Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Verlaine, and Laforgue -- and for French fiction -- Proust, Huysmans, and Cocteau -- and for France in general -- Paris and Poiret and Charvet (maker of the most exquisite ties) . . . They stood for American poetry -- Eliot and Amy Lowell, and some Pound -- and for cocktails and jazz. They stood for modern painting -- Whistler and John, Picasso and Gauguin. Among English people and things they stood for the Sitwells, above all. And, of course, they stood for Diaghilev and everyone and everything associated with him.[214]

At Eton, dandies capered to gramophone recordings of Petrushka, Tricorne, and Les Sylphides in the back room of a local jeweller's.[215] They wrote poems like Acton's "La Belle au Bois Dormant", dedicated to Bakst, and Brian Howard's "'L'Oiseau de Feu,' by Stravinsky", which they published in The Eton Candle, a single-issue glossy lined with advertisements for breeches makers, silversmiths, and cricket bat exporters that sold out on the day of

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[214]Martin Green, Children of the Sun: A Narrative of "Decadence" in England After 1918 (New York: Basic Books, 1976), pp. 125-126.

[215]Acton, Memoirs of an Aesthete, pp. 81-82.

publication and received flattering reviews from the likes of Edith Sitwell.[216] And whenever they could, they entrained for London, where their flamboyant appearance at the ballet raised more than an isolated eyebrow. "One time I happened to be at the Alhambra," recalled a classmate,

> when Brian and Harold walked into the stalls, in full evening dress, with long white gloves draped over one arm, and carrying silver-topped canes and top-hats, looking perhaps like a couple of Oscar Wildes. My step-mother was astonished at the sight of them, and thought they must be foreigners. I was much too nervous, at about fifteen, to say that they were two of my great friends from Eton. I was very much relieved that we were safely installed out of sight in the dress circle.[217]

Here is an early intimation of the reaction that welled in mid-decade against the dandy-aesthetes in Diaghilev's following.

In a memoir written just after the impresario's death, Jacques-Emile Blanche remarked that "the repercussions [of the Ballets Russes] on Britain's university youth are scarcely to be believed."[218] Blanche spoke from first-hand knowledge, although as a society portraitist who included Acton père et fils among his

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[216] The Eton Candle, ed. Brian Howard (Eton: Saville Press, 1922), pp. 30-31 and 81-82; Acton, Memoirs of an Aesthete, p. 108; Green, p. 140.

[217] Quoted in Green, p. 86.

[218] Jacques-Emile Blanche, "Souvenirs sur Serge de Diaghilew," L'Art Vivant, 15 Sept. 1929, p. 714.

sitters,[219] he doubtless based his observation on a rather limited sample. At Oxford, where Brian Howard and Harold Acton matriculated at Christ Church, the most socially elite of the University's colleges, balletomania did indeed infect the dandy coven. The two planned a Queen Victoria ballet, with Acton improbably cast as Lytton Strachey,[220] an unrealized project that anticipated by three years Diaghilev's own incursion into the Victorian period with Sacheverell Sitwell's Triumph of Neptune. (In the crinolines worn by Nature and the Aurora Borealis in the 1928 production of Ode, one detects another Victorian touch.) Other undergraduate ballets rated at least a passing mention in the press, including the burlesques of Petrushka and Les Sylphides staged by the Cambridge Amateur Dramatic Club as part of its 1926 Christmas Revue.[221]

Among the all-male university elite, Diaghilev found the ideal public for his mid-twenties' repertory, an audience attuned to the new spirit of Gallic, modernist chic. Thanks to their connections, dandies penetrated the Russian's charmed circle, cementing the link between "decadence" and ballet. In Memoirs of an Aesthete, Acton recalled a flying visit to Paris when he sat for Pedro Pruna and gossiped with Diaghilev's newest find about the

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[219]Green, p. 90.

[220]Acton, Memoirs of an Aesthete, p. 127; Green, p. 154.

[221]"Undergraduates as Ballerinas," Sketch, 15 Dec. 1926, p. 542.

"jealousies and intrigues" raging behind the company scenes.[222] He was an intimate of Lady Cunard, whom he admired as much as her daughter Nancy, and it was in the company of this remarkable hostess that he supped for a last time with the impresario after witnessing a performance from Covent Garden's royal box with King Fuad of Egypt.[223] During these years when his sketches of smartly-dressed first-nighters decorated the gossip pages of British Vogue, Cecil Beaton extended his admiration of the Ballets Russes to the person of its director. "Diaghileff became my hero," he later wrote, "it thrilled me to see him, dressed like a dandy, in Monte Carlo, in Venice or at the Savoy Grill, London."[224] On the Piazza San Marco, during a Venetian visit that found the tyro photographer hobnobbing with such Diaghilev devotees as Baroness d'Erlanger, her daughter Princess Faucigny-Lucinge, Lady Diana Cooper, Lady Cunard, and Lady Abdy, Beaton cornered the impresario, spilling an "avalanche" of sketches and photographs before him on a cafe table.[225]

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[222]Acton, Memoirs of an Aesthete, p. 152.

[223]Ibid., pp. 221-222. Egypt was in high favor that season. In addition to the Royal performance, Tchernicheva, Doubrovska, Danilova, and Lifar danced at a "splendid party" given by the Egyptian Legation. "Mariegold in Society," Sketch, 31 July 1929, p. 208.

[224]Cecil Beaton, "Designing for the Ballet," Dance Index, Aug. 1946, p. 196.

[225]Cecil Beaton, Diaries 1922-1939: The Wandering Years (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), pp. 127-128).

Unlike Oliver Messel, an Etonian who at 21 designed the golden masks used in the production of Zéphyre et Flore,[226] Beaton never received a commission from his hero, although he did gain entree to rehearsals.[227] Brian Howard, whose amateur ballet dancing horrified his father, also established personal ties with the company. A great friend of Anton Dolin, this aesthete and brightest of the bright young things designed the costumes and scenery for one of Dolin's many revue ballets.[228] In 1927, with Edward Gathorne-Hardy, he organized a Sailor party at the swimming baths in Buckingham Palace Road, where Lytton Strachey, Tallulah Bankhead, Raymond Mortimer, and London's "fast" crowd celebrated the revival of Les Matelots and Serge Lifar appeared in his costume from Triumph of Neptune.[229] Here, in a nutshell, is the smart, sophisticated world of Evelyn Waugh's early novels.

As aristocrats of style, the dandies took their

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[226]This was Messel's first professional assignment. In the summer of 1925 some of Messel's masks for the theatre were exhibited with Pedro Pruna's designs and sketches for Les Matelots at the Claridge Gallery, and it was here, presumably, that Diaghilev first became acquainted with Messel's work. Beaumont, Bookseller at the Ballet, p. 337; "Omicron", "From Alpha to Omega," Nation and Athenaeum, Aug. 1925, p. 544.

[227]Beaton, "Designing for the Ballet," p. 195.

[228]Green, p. 208.

[229]Green, p. 210; Nesta Macdonald, Diaghilev Observed, p.352; "How One Lives From Day to Day," Vogue, Early Aug. 1927, p. 31.

cue from the Sitwells, the gentry triumvirate that embodied the mingling of art, frivolity, and taste that became a generational trademark. In the twenties, Cyril Connolly has reminisced, the Sitwells

> represented the rush towards pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment characteristic of the intelligent young who had come through the war; they were the natural allies of Cocteau and the Ecole de Paris, dandies, impeccably dressed and fed, who indicated to young men down from Oxford and even Cambridge that it was possible to reconcile art and fashion as an alternative to Bloomsbury.[230]

Under Edith's wing nestled Brian Howard and Harold Acton in their salad days as poets, and they, in turn, introduced other dandy literati into her circle, including novelist Evelyn Waugh, who was among the party Acton shepherded to the second performance of Façade.[231] "Back to mahogany," was the latter's "battle-cry" on going up to Oxford,[232] where he cluttered his rooms with Victorian bric-a-brac, yet another taste dandies and Sitwells shared and diffused to Society.

The Sitwell fame rested on more than purely literary merit. Past masters at courting publicity, they were celebrities, who stood out even in the blaze of a Diaghilev first night. Between 1926 and 1929, when the clan -- now enlarged by the addition of Sacheverell's wife,

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[230]Quoted in Green, p. 140.

[231]Acton, Memoirs of an Aesthete, pp. 128-130.

[232]Ibid., p. 118.

Canadian-born Georgia Doble -- rarely missed a premiere, its appearance in the stalls or dress circle was gossip column grist:

> A special and very sophisticated audience always haunts the Russian Ballet, and on the first night at the Princes the "regulars" turned up in full force. The Sitwell brothers were accompanied by Mrs. Sacheverell Sitwell, who looked elegant in a gold brocade coat.[233]

So clicked "Mariegold's" shutter in June 1927. In July 1928, it clicked on the "very brilliant house" that packed His Majesty's for the first performance of Stravinsky's newest ballet:

> Mrs. Henry McLaren was in red, Lady Juliet Duff in black, and Miss Edith Sitwell was impressive as ever in one of her flowing gowns of blue, rose, and gold brocade. She came with one of her brothers and her sister-in-law, and was telling everyone how much she enjoyed "Apollo Musagetes".[234]

Mariegold's shutter clicked again and again on the Sitwells in the theatre and elsewhere. In 1928 we see them at the Claridge Gallery receiving Lady Lavery, Mrs. Henry McLaren, and "the flower of the Intelligentsia", in their campaign to launch Pavel Tchelitchew, the designer of Ode.[235] And the following year, we sight them en masse at the premieres of Le Bal and Lifar's Renard and at

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[233]"Mariegold in Society," Sketch, 22 June 1927, p. 579.

[234]"Mariegold in Society," Sketch, 4 July 1928, p. 10.

[235]"Mariegold in Society," Sketch, 18 July 1928, p. 110.

Diaghilev's "rehearsal party" where Igor Markevitch played his Piano Concerto to "a representative gathering of the Intelligentsia", including Mrs. Asquith (now the Countess of Oxford and Asquith), her son "Puffin" and daughter Princess Bibesco, a writer, in Virginia Woolf's devastating phrase, "without nerves, imagination or sensibility".[236]

As the Diaghilev era drew to a close, Sitwell protégés jostled their mentors in the gossip columns, a sign that they, too, had joined the celebrity elect of Diaghilev's "highbrow" following. But how highbrow was that following really? Where are the Woolfs and Frys and Stracheys and Keynes and Huxleys and Eliots who had leavened the post-Armistice period with the intellect of Bloomsbury? In these last postwar years, when society columnists paired "smart" and "intellectual" as co-equal halves of Diaghilev's audience, England's foremost intellects deserted the Ballets Russes.

In 1924, the Nation and New Statesman had greeted the prodigal's return with genuine warmth. "A large number of people believe that M. Diaghileff provides us with one of the very few theatrical entertainments that deserve . . . to be treated as serious works of art; and the return of his ballet to London is likely to carry most of us to the

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[236]"Mariegold in Society,: Sketch, 17 July 1929, p. 107 and 24 July 1929, pp. 156-157; The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. 3, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), p. 27.

Coliseum in the . . . next few weeks."[237] So opined the Nation's "Omicron" in the first of many capsule reviews of Diaghilev performances published in the next few years. Not even the "baffling heterogeneity"[238] of the Coliseum's other fare could dull the general enthusiasm. On the last night of the season, the "recalls were so frequent and the applause so persistent that the rest of the programme had . . . to be abandoned."[239] Like the Sketch, the New Statesman commented on the two-tier audience drawn to the Coliseum: house regulars who came for the whole show and balletomanes who sailed in for Diaghilev's half-hour turn.[240] The latter went again and again: in the summer of 1925, "Omicron" predicted a nightly pilgrimage of Nation readers to the music-hall in St. Martin's Lane.[241]

In post-Armistice years, commented Turner in 1926, intellectual support for the ballet had made Diaghilev's enterprise a success. Not only had the intelligentsia trooped to the Coliseum -- "a world of innocent and light-hearted children and . . . simple savages" -- but as the

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[237]"Omicron," "From Alpha to Omega," Nation and Athenaeum, 6 Dec. 1924, p. 361.

[238]W.J. Turner, "The Diaghileff Ballet," New Statesman, 6 Dec. 1924, p. 264.

[239]W.J. Turner, "The Popularity of the Ballet," New Statesman, 24 Jan. 1925, p. 446.

[240]Ibid.; "Mariegold in Society," Sketch, 10 June 1925, p. 477.

[241]"Omicron," "From Alpha to Omega," Nation and Athenaeum, 30 May 1925, p. 268.

era's new aristocracy of taste, it had led the fashionable world to the company's unfashionable doorstep.[242] Now, with ballet "as popular as . . . Little Tich",[243] intellectuals could rest on their laurels. "Diaghileff has done more than anyone to make the arts popular in a torpid, niggardly, postwar London," summed up Raymond Mortimer.

> He is the Apostle to the Philistines. Thanks to him not only are the airs of Scarlatti, Schumann, Chopin and Rimsky-Korsakov whistled in the bathrooms of thousands who never go to serious concerts, but the idiom of contemporary composers such as Stravinsky receives the appreciation that only familiarity can breed. Thanks to him, too, the crowd has positively enjoyed decorations by the best and most ridiculed living painters. He has given us Modern Music without Tears and Modern Painting without Laughter.[244]

Fifteen years before crowds of Philistines had jeered the canvases of Picasso, Cézanne, and Matisse at Roger Fry's first Post-Impressionist Exhibition. Then, with peace had come Diaghilev's made-over repertory, which trumpeted the modernist aesthetic from Bloomsbury to London's fashionable and middlebrow quarters.

The very popularity of ballet, however, aroused

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[242]W.J. Turner, "Something for the Sightseer," New Statesman, 17 July 1926, p. 385.

[243]Francis Birrell, "The Last Theatrical Season," Nation and Athenaeum, 25 July 1925, p. 514.

[244]Raymond Mortimer, "Les Matelots," New Statesman, 4 July 1925, p. 338. In 1928, Mortimer returned to the theme of Diaghilev's "educative influence" in a review of the season at His Majesty's Theatre. Raymond Mortimer, "The Russian Ballet," Nation and Athenaeum, 30 June 1928, p. 424.

Bloomsbury's distaste. Already in 1925, Francis Birrell observed in the Nation that the troop "has stopped being a highbrow's holiday",[245] and in subsequent years, the weekly, now under John Maynard Keynes's control and with Leonard Woolf as its literary editor, largely ignored the company, with two important exceptions: Lydia Lopokova's appearances and the production of Les Noces in 1926. The ballerina, who had married Keynes the previous year, remained a Nation favorite: her performances in Les Matelots, La Boutique fantasque, and Pulcinella revived Bloomsbury's erstwhile romance with Diaghilev, lacing once again the thread of personal relations into the circle's appreciation of art.[246] Otherwise, only Les Noces received the journal's mid-decade plaudits: the ballet, opined "Omicron", "is by far the most interesting recent addition to M. Diaghileff's repertory."

> It is no slight, "chic" entertainment, as some of these have been: it is a serious and successful attempt to interpret in dancing music which

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[245]Birrell, "The Last Theatrical Season," p. 514.

[246]"Omicron," "From Alpha to Omega," Nation and Athenaeum, 7 Nov. 1925, p. 209, and "From Plays to Pictures," Nation and Athenaeum, 26 June 1926, p. 444. In 1929, the dancer, in search of new horizons, tried her hand at ballet writing for the journal. See her articles "Enrico Cecchetti," Nation and Athenaeum, 29 June 1929, p. 438; "The Russian Ballet at Covent Garden," Nation and Athenaeum, 6 July 1929, p. 476; "The Russian Ballet at Covent Garden," Nation and Athenaeum, 13 July 1929, p. 507; "The Russian Ballet at Covent Garden," Nation and Athenaeum, 20 July 1929, p. 536; "Serge Diaghileff 1872-1929," Nation and Athenaeum, 31 Aug. 1929, pp. 706-707.

> depends entirely on rhythmical and formal qualities of the severest kind. M. Stravinsky's music, written for four grand pianos and percussion instruments, is extremely dry, without airs and graces, and Mme. Nijinska's choreography follows it with angular, primitive movements which have a great geometrical beauty of their own. Mme. Gontcharova's décor is fittingly restrained and severe.[247]

That summer, the intelligentsia continued to crowd His Majesty's Theatre, although the "excited giggles" that greeted "some of the more bizarre elements of the newer ballets", thought Turner, betrayed "a large sprinkling of a less highbrow audience".[248] The following season, which opened at the Lyceum Theatre in November 1926, brought out an even motlier public, an "enormous army of admirers, who make up an audience as unintelligent as any other, and apparently quite incapable of discriminating between one ballet and another."[249] There is no mistaking in the critic's tone the distance that gaped between the Nation's readers and Diaghilev's fashionable herd.

Indeed, in these years, old Bloomsbury deserted its former love, paying only the rarest of visits to the Ballets Russes. In vain, one combs the chit-chat of Virginia Woolf's letters and diaries for the off-hand allusion to a performance squeezed into the round of

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[247]"Omicron," "Plays and Pictures," Nation and Athenaeum, 26 June 1926, p. 353.

[248]Turner, "Something for the Sightseer," p. 384.

[249]"Omicron," "Plays and Pictures," Nation and Athenaeum, 27 Nov. 1926, p. 301.

pleasure and work: never once, it seems, did the novelist venture to the theatre of marvels of her youth. Nor do Lydia Lopokova's letters allude to backstage visits by the circle's denizens: instead of Bells and Grants, the economist's brother, Geoffrey, and his wife, Margaret Keynes, now dropped by her dressing room and met the company's stars in the corridors.[250] Nor does T.S. Eliot's New Criterion reward our scrutiny: its sole notice of the Ballets Russes appears in a book review of Margaret Morris Dancing.[251] Kitty Lasswade's breezy dismissal, "Ah, but he's not a patch on Nijinsky," toward the end of Virginia Woolf's novel The Years[252] suggests that a distaste for Diaghilev's frivolous public and memories of a golden yesteryear clouded Bloomsbury's attitude toward the troupe in these last years of its existence.

Diaghilev's listing toward dandy tastes also played its part in this divorce: the closer he drew to the Sitwells, that much further he drifted from Bloomsbury. That the Nation panned the Triumph of Neptune comes as no great surprise; that it did so without mentioning the name of the ballet's librettist suggests how wide the rift had

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[250]Lydia Lopokova, Letters to John Maynard Keynes, 28 Nov. and 29 Nov. 1926, John Maynard Keynes Papers, King's College, Cambridge; Geoffrey Keynes, The Gates of Memory (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 198-203.

[251]L. St. Senan, "The Ballet," New Criterion, June 1926, pp. 570-573.

[252]Virginia Woolf, The Years, p. 393.

grown since the coteries had danced together on Armistice night under Diaghilev's eye. In the intervening years, the camps had divided, pitting artist against aesthete, seriousness against fashion, originality against style. Between 1925 and 1929, Diaghilev's British collaborators came exclusively from the dandy fold. Both Constant Lambert, composer of the 1926 "surrealist" Romeo et Juliet, and William Walton, whose music was featured in the symphonic interludes, were Sitwell protégés, while Oliver Messel trod the "primrose path" from Eton to the world of fashionable photographers and West End success that Evelyn Waugh retrospectively associated with Diaghilev and decried.[253] In taste as much as personnel, Neptune was a dandy triumph, and one suspects that behind the Nation's critique of the scenery as being "so strong in tradition and style, that it quite dwarfed the puny efforts of the world in front of it,"[254] lurks Bloomsbury's distaste for the art and values of the Victorians. The Sitwells wore style on their sleeves. Art glossed their lives, taste their achievements: appearance, rather than substance, was the measure of both. Here, again, one discerns Bloomsbury attitudes in the critique of Neptune. "In some ways," wrote "Omicron", "though the whole thing implied taste, it

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[253]Evelyn Waugh, Put Out More Flags (Boston: Little Brown, 1948), p. 48.

[254]"Omicron," "Plays and Pictures," Nation and Athenaeum, 18 Dec. 1926, p. 422.

was singularly lacking in taste, for taste has to be re-created to live, or die."[255]

The Sitwell brothers were not the only dandies to leave their signatures on this English ballet. For the score Diaghilev chose the "rococo Byron" of British composers, a well-bred amateur who trailed in the pre-War wake of that D'Annunzian Muse incarnate, Marchesa Casati, lunched with the brothers Sitwell on their Roman holiday, and traced his friendship with Stravinsky and Diaghilev at least as far back as 1916.[256] The music Lord Berners supplied was "throughout adequate," wrote Turner in the New Statesman, "although it sounds more like the work of a clever, highly eclectic, than of a truly creative, mind."[257] In part because they were French, Diaghilev's other mid-decade composers fared noticeably worse with Britain's nationally-minded musical critics, who abounded in phrases like "strained cleverness" (Auric), "no great consequence" (Sauguet), and "self-contemptuous flippancy"

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[255] Ibid.

[256] Nichols, "Lord Berners or A Rococo Byron," Are They the Same at Home?, p. 59; Acton, Memoirs of an Aesthete, p. 37; Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence, Vol. 2, ed. Robert Craft (New York: Knopf, 1984), pp. 135-159.

[257] W.J. Turner, "An English Ballet," New Statesman, 11 Dec. 1926, p. 275.

(Auric, Milhaud, Poulenc).[258] In his choice of Lord Berners Diaghilev betrayed the dandy network at the core of his ideal public.

Bloomsbury deserted Diaghilev, but it did not lose its interest in ballet: indeed, from within its extended family came the proposal for a ballet which, although turned down by the impresario, outlived nearly all his "advanced" productions. "I have the honor of sending you the book of William Blake engravings which my sister-in-law has spoken to you about," wrote Geoffrey Keynes in late June 1927, referring to Illustrations of the Book of Job.

> Also enclosed is the outline for a ballet based on these engravings. Doubtless you already know the name of this illustrious poet-painter. As the centenary of his death takes place in 1927, a ballet based on his work would evoke the greatest interest in this country . . . and in France as well where his work is being published . . .
>
> I also enclose tickets for the exhibition of Blake paintings now on in Saville Row.[259]

The symbolic ballet proposed by Keynes found little favor in Diaghilev's eyes: it was "too English and

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[258] "C.", "Russian Ballet," Musical Times, 1 Aug. 1926, p. 738; E[dwin] E[vans], "The Russian Ballet," Musical Times, 1 Aug. 1927, p. 744; "C.", "Russian Ballet Season," Musical Times, 1 Aug. 1925, p. 742.

[259] Geoffrey Keynes, Letter to Serge Diaghilev, 29 June 1927, Serge Diaghilev Correspondence, 10-12.6, Dance Collection, NYPL. Keynes' letter was written in French. For his account of these events, see The Gates of Memory, pp. 203-205.

too old-fashioned",[260] the impresario opined. Ralph Vaughan Williams, the eminent British composer whom Keynes had approached to write the score, had few illusions about the fate of the project. To Keynes's sister-in-law Gwen Raverat, who had made costumed figurines and a miniature theatre for the proposed ballet, he wrote:

> I amused myself with making a sketch of Job - I never expected Djag wd. look at it - and I'm glad on the whole - the "réclame" wd. have been rather amusing - but it really wdnt. have suited the sham serious really decadent and frivolous attitude of the R.B. toward everything - can you imagine Job sandwiched between Les Biches and Cimarosiana - and that dreadful pseudo-cultured audience saying to each other "My dear, have you seen God at the Russian Ballet." No - I think we are well out of it.[261]

In 1931, the Camargo Society, of which John Maynard Keynes was treasurer, staged Job at the Savoy Theatre. With choreography by Ninette de Valois, Constant Lambert on the podium, and Anton Dolin in the role of Satan, the production advanced the cause of British ballet as the Triumph of Neptune never did. (Indeed, after Diaghilev's death the Sitwells by and large lost interest in the art they had previously championed.)

The dandy "highbrows" who stepped into the breach left by Bloomsbury found the pages of British Vogue more congenial to their tastes that the small-print columns of the Nation. In these years, Vogue was the beacon of High

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[260]Quoted in Keynes, The Gates of Memory, p. 204.

[261]Quoted in Macdonald, Diaghilev Observed, p. 353.

Bohemia, a London outpost of that cosmopolitan pleasure style which flourished in Paris and the Côte d'Azur and other elite playgrounds of the twenties. Like Vanity Fair, another Condé Nast publication, Vogue minted fashion, francophilia, and modernism into the common coin of international sophistication.

Between 1925 and 1929, no other theatrical venture received the attention lavished by Vogue on the Ballets Russes. Sympathetic reviewers covered its seasons in London, Paris correspondents its seasons abroad, while art critics wrote about its designers.[262] Visually, too, the company held the spotlight, with photographs of dancers, reproductions of designs, and portraits of Diaghilev's "masters of décor" appearing whenever the troupe came to town. In June 1925, the magazine published a Picasso drawing of the camera-shy impresario, nominated along with Harold Acton, Georges Braque, and Eugene Goossens for the magazine's "Hall of Fame".[263] The society pages also paid

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[262]See, for instance, Edwin Evans, "The Russian Ballet," Vogue, Early June 1925, pp. 52 et seq., and "The Truth About the Russian Ballet," Vogue, Early July 1926, pp. 49 et seq.; Nancy Cunard, "Paris To-day As I See It," Vogue, Late May 1926, pp. 75 et seq. and Early July 1926, pp. 50 et seq.; "Pruna and the Ballet," Vogue, Late July 1925, pp. 54-55; Clive Bell, "A Tour of Summer Shows," Vogue, Late Aug. 1925, pp. 42 et seq., and "Round About Surréalisme," Vogue, Early July 1926, pp. 54-55 et seq.

[263]"We Nominate for the Hall of Fame," Vogue, Early June 1925, p. 62. Featured as Diaghilev's "Masters of Décor" in early July 1926 (p. 51) were his Paris-based stars: Picasso, Braque, Derain, Larionov, Goncharova, Marie Laurencin, Matisse, and Miró.

homage to the company in Cecil Beaton's delightful sketches of Lady Wodehouse (in the brocaded cloak she wore to one performance), Mrs. Norman Holden (in the Russian Ballet tutu she donned for the Duchess of Sutherland's fancy dress ball), and "Mrs. Maynard Keynes" (pictured en décolletage watching a performance of Apollo).[264]

In 1924-1926, when Vogue fêted Diaghilev, it also courted Bloomsbury. Indeed, scarcely an issue appeared in these years without an article by one of the lions of the circle -- Clive Bell, Virginia Woolf, Leonard Woolf, Roger Fry -- or its cubs and friends -- Raymond Mortimer, David Garnett, Francis Birrell, Aldous Huxley, George Rylands, Vita Sackville-West, even Lady Ottoline Morrell who contributed a piece entitled "Les Jeunes Filles de Londres".[265] Bloomsbury wrote about books, particularly literature of a modernist bent, contemporary art, French

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[264]"How One Lives From Day to Day," Vogue, Early Aug. 1927, p. 30; Cecil Beaton, "Seen At Mayfair's Latest Parties," Vogue, Late July 1927, p. 27; "Our Lives From Day to Day," Vogue, 11 July 1928, p. 43.

[265]Lady Ottoline Morrell, "Les Jeunes Filles de Londres," Vogue, Late Nov. 1924, p. 41. In addition to Lady Ottoline's article, the November issues of Vogue published articles by David Garnett, Clive Bell, and Virginia Woolf as well as a multi-page spread on the decorative work of Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell, which included phoographs of their panels for the Woolf house in Tavistock Square. "Modern English Decoration. Some Examples of the Interesting Work of Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell," Vogue, Early Nov. 1924, pp. 43-45 et seq.; David Garnett, "New Books for the Morning-Room Table," Vogue, Early Nov. 1924, pp. 46 et seq.; Clive Bell, "Some Recent Exhibitions," Vogue, Early Nov. 1924, pp. 66-67 et seq.; Virginia Woolf, "Indiscretions," Vogue, Late Nov. 1924, pp. 47 et seq.

historical figures, and each other, themes that echoed in the work of other contributors.[266]

If Vogue flattered the worldly side of Bloomsbury, sweeping guineas into the latter's pockets,[267] Bloomsbury, in turn, gave the magazine that air of cultivated sophistication that hovered over twenties' fashion. Its presence there testified to more than the tastes of Dorothy

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[266]See, for instance, Raymond Mortimer's review of Aldous Huxley's Those Barren Leaves, Richard Aldington's translation of Les Liaisons Dangereuses, and Ronald Firbank's Prancing Nigger in "New Books for the Morning-Room Table," Vogue, Late Feb. 1925, pp. 41 et seq.; Clive Bell, "The Art of Brancusi," Vogue, Late Dec. 1925, pp. 43-45; V[ita] Sackville-West, "Madame Dieulafoy," Vogue, June 1926, pp. 77 et seq.; Roger Fry, "Vanessa Bell," Vogue, Early Feb. 1926, pp. 33-35 et seq. For articles on similar themes, see Richard Aldington, "La Pompadour's Poets," Vogue, Early Dec. 1924, pp. 61 et seq. and "T.S. Eliot, Poet and Critic," Vogue, Early April 1925, pp. 71 et seq.; Edith Sitwell, "Some Observations on Women's Poetry," Vogue, Early March 1925, pp. 59 et seq. During these years Edith Sitwell also contributed poetry (e.g. "Four in the Morning," Vogue, Late Dec. 1924, p. 33) and her brother Sacheverell travelogues. Sacheverell Sitwell, "Spain," Vogue, Early Feb. 1925, pp. 48-51 et seq. and "A Journey to Portugal. Empty Abbeys and Palaces," Vogue, June 1926, pp. 64-65.

[267]Virginia Woolf received £20 an article from Vogue editor Dorothy Todd, a tidy sum in those days. The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. 3, p. 31. Not everyone approved of her writing for Mayfair. "I've been engaged in a great wrangle with an old American called [Logan] Pearsall Smith on the ethnics of writing articles at high rates for fashion papers like Vogue," she wrote to Jacques Raverat in January 1925. "He says it demeans one. He says one must write only for the Lit. Supplement and the Nation and Robert Bridges and prestige and posterity and to set a high example. I say Bunkum. Ladies' clothes and aristocrats playing golf don't affect my style; and they would do his a world of good. Oh these Americans! How they always muddle everything up! What he wants is prestige: what I want, money." Virginia Woolf, Letter to Jacques Raverat, 24 Jan. 1925, Letters, Vol. 3, p. 154.

Todd, the art-minded editor of Vogue dismissed by Condé Nast in 1926. It reflected a larger phenomenon of the period: the appropriation by the trendsetting elite of modernism and Gallic culture, those English bugaboos long championed by Bloomsbury that now became the touchstones of a contemporary lifestyle.

Compared to the Times and the Sketch, Vogue paid unwonted attention to Diaghilev's visual artists. Reviews spotlighted their work, while both the art and Paris columns of the magazine alluded to exhibitions at which their theatrical designs and paintings were featured. In Vogue, Diaghilev's artists received the imprimatur of fashion and their wares the stamp of a commodity. As a sign of this commerce, one remarks the attribution of ownership that accompanied reproductions of Ballets Russes artefacts: a Pruna backcloth for Les Matelots "reproduced by courtesy of M. Boris Kochno"; Derain's "original design" for Jack-in-the-Box "in the possession of Serge Lifar"; Miró's "rough sketch" for Romeo et Juliet published along with a photograph of its owner, Boris Kochno.[268] Attributions were not limited to Diaghilev art works. Vogue readers also learned that "La Stylographe," the most important picture at Pruna's first exhibition, was bought by Jean Cocteau, and that Pierre Roy's "Still Life" was in

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[268] Vogue, Late July 1925, p. 44; Vogue, Late July 1926, p. 36.

the "Collection de Madame Peignat".[269] And in singling out the activities of Comte Etienne de Beaumont, that Maecenas of the moderns who had deserted ballet for the cause of avantgarde film, Vogue drove home the theme that modern art was an elite and eminently desirable commodity.[270]

Art was not the only commodity linking Diaghilev's audience and the stage. Fashion also meshed the two, and caption writers were quick to note the overlaps between costume and couture in Le Train bleu, Les Biches, and La Pastorale. But even in ballets with period themes, contemporary illusions abounded. Braque's designs for Zéphyre et Flore, commented the Sketch, were "for the most part adaptations of modern fashions".[271] The Observer was more explicit. As Flora, Alice Nikitina was "modishly attired to the waist -- as for the Champs-Elysées . . . The Muses had chic little pork-pie hats and earrings, quite in

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[269] Vogue, Late July 1925, p. 54; Vogue, Early July 1926, p. 55.

[270] In late January 1926, Vogue published a full-page portrait of Beaumont and on the following page four of Man Ray's rayographs used in one of the Count's "new 'surrealiste' pictures" A quoi rêvent les jeunes filles? (pp. 58-59). Nancy Cunard wrote about another of their joint ventures ("Paris To-day As I See It," Vogue, Early July 1926, p. 50). Vogue published several Man Ray photographs in connection with the Ballets Russes, including portraits of company designers (Early June 1925, p. 62; Early July 1926, p. 51), a portrait of Serge Lifar in Zéphyre et Flore (Late Nov. 1925, p. 83), and portraits of Alexandra Danilova, Tamara Geva, and Stanislas Idzikowski in Jack-in-the-Box (Early July 1926, p. 78; Early Aug. 1926, p. 48).

[271] "'Zephyr and Flora,' and 'Betty in Mayfair'," Sketch, 18 Nov. 1925, p. 321.

keeping with the only Olympus they had ever known -- one nearer Deauville than Thessaly."[272] In Les Fâcheux, Braque's other mythological ballet for Diaghilev, the Venus depicted on the inner curtain wore the "dilapidated peignoir" of a goddess en déshabille,[273] while in Romeo et Juliet a modish pink dressing gown hung from a peg in the rehearsal scene. Alicia Markova's "white pyjamas"[274] in the 1927 revival of Le Rossignol also struck a contemporary note: by 1926, the rage for these trouser fashions had reached fever pitch, christening the Lido the "plage du soleil et des pyjamas".[275] Indeed, in December 1925, Vera Nemchinova, the troupe's star classicist, modeled a Dove "pyjama suit" of black crêpe de Chine in the pages of Vogue.[276] Another telltale sign of fashion's impact on ballet was the slim, leggy look of Diaghilev's latest crop of ballerinas, who exemplified the decade's new fashion silhouette and occasionally doubled as mannequins and cover

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[272]H.H., "'Zephyr and Flora'," Observer, 15 Nov. 1925, p. 11, col. 4.

[273]H.H. "'Les Facheux'," Observer, 26 June 1927, p. 15, col. 3.

[274]"The Russian Ballet, 'The Song of the Nightingale'," Times, 19 July 1927, p. 12, col. 2.

[275]"At the Grotto Restaurant on the Lido: Lady Abdy and Her Peke," Sketch, 4 Aug. 1926, p. 206.

[276]Vogue, Late Dec. 1925, p. 57.

girls.[277] All this cemented the tie between on-stage and off-stage chic, identifying aesthetics with the commodity values of Diaghilev's stylish audience.

The blend of fashion, modernism, and francophilia that spiced Diaghilev's late-twenties' enterprise appealed to only a fraction of his erstwhile public. The theatre, wrote dance critic Fernau Hall, was "sometimes half-empty": "people came to see the novelties, but were not much interested in coming to see ballets over and over again."[278] Empty seats were only one repercussion of the polarizing course steered by the impresario in these years. In skimming the cream off his once heterogeneous following, Diaghilev rent the ballet audience in two, provoking a reaction by the majority public of dance lovers against the aesthetics and "highbrow" defenders of his newer repertory. In a capsule review of Le Train bleu published in the Dancing Times, that middlebrow champion of British ballet, dancer Phyllis Bedells confessed the fear that Diaghilev was "laughing up [his] sleeve at the great British public".[279]

Neither Bedells nor G.E. Fussell, the magazine's

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[277]For the 13 July 1927 Sketch cover, Nikitina modeled "one of the latest hats -- a dainty affair of feathers . . . with ear pieces". The following year in Monte Carlo, she and Danilova posed for a Sketch photographer dripping fox skins. Sketch, 25 April 1928, p. 160.

[278]Fernau Hall, An Anatomy of Ballet (London: Andrew Melrose, 1953), p. 80.

[279]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Jan. 1925, p. 400.

resident decor critic, identified themselves with Diaghilev's trendsetting elite. "If I were a highbrow or really intellectual," Fussell prefaced his review of Marie Laurencin's designs for Les Biches, "I should designate the drop by one or other of the terms common to the somewhat flatulent art criticism of our time. I should say it was primitive or something of that sort. As it is I do not intend to."[280] Fussell was not the only critic whose response to Diaghilev's artists was swayed by a distaste for their highbrow supporters. Consider Howard Hannay's confession in the London Mercury, that "slop pail of stale tea" in Virginia Woolf's phrase:[281]

> The exhibition of paintings by the French woman artist, Marie Laurencin, at the Leicester Galleries has made at least one convert . . . The pictures I had seen hitherto had impressed me chiefly with certain sophisticated mannerisms and abbreviations which seemed to be devoid of any significance, however slight and trivial. And when Mr. Clive Bell called Marie Laurencin "adorable," this appeared to be merely part of his general flattery of all things Parisian. I was mistaken.[282]

Again and again, critics flayed Diaghilev's weakness for Gallic fashions, especially in music. Auric's

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[280]G.E. Fussell, "Notes on Decor. The Diaghileff Ballet," Dancing Times, July 1925, p. 1129.

[281]Virginia Woolf, Letter to Clive Bell, 27 Nov. 1919, Letters, Vol. 2, p. 404.

[282]Howard Hannay, "The Fine Arts," London Mercury, Jan. 1925, p. 313.

score for La Pastorale, wrote the Times in 1926, "is much the same small beer . . . which has been brewed in France for similar occasions in recent years."[283] Only a week later, John Bull roared again: the newspaper dismissed Satie's "quips" as "too feeble to last" even if his "little digs" at Chabrier "amused private parties in Paris".[284] Later that month, Constant Lambert was taken to task for having "chosen to speak . . . French" in composing Romeo et Juliet, even though, like many foreigners, he spoke the language "even better than the Frenchman".[285] The opening lines of its 1927 notice of La Chatte dispel all doubt that at the Times "Parisian" was anything but a pejorative epithet. The column was entitled "The Russian Ballet":

> It would, perhaps, be more accurate if this notice were headed "The Parisian Ballet." For this new ballet, which was produced at Princes Theatre last night, could have been created nowhere but in cosmopolitan Paris, where fashions, in art as in clothes, are subject to rapid change in the desperate struggle to achieve originality and the last word. The new ballet, which is called The Cat, is certainly the "very latest thing," and lest that be regarded as contemptuous condemnation, it must be added that it has good qualities other than novelty.[286]

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[283]"The Russian Ballet. 'La Pastorale'," Times, 29 June 1926, p. 14, col. 3.

[284]"The Russian Ballet. Works by Erik Satie," Times, 6 July 1926, p. 14, col. 5.

[285]"The Russian Ballet, 'Romeo et Juliet'," Times, 22 July 1926, p. 14, col. 3.

[286]"The Russian Ballet. Production of 'The Cat'," Times, 15 June 1927, p. 14, col. 2.

In Britain, modernism sank shallower roots than elsewhere in Europe, in part, because of its labeling as a frivolous foreign import.

If the course steered by Diaghilev between 1918 and 1922 helped to anglicize ballet, the policy he adopted after 1924 had the reverse effect. No longer did the company seem to dwell in Britain's native "halls": it lounged, now, in the foyers of those expensive hotels mushrooming along the Azure and Lido coasts. For the sophisticates who fussed over Diaghilev's periodic descents on London, ballet was not the art taking root in dance studios around the country (which they ignored), but an "imported craze"[287] cementing the cosmopolitan fraternity of Café Society and High Bohemia.

Still another element marked off Diaghilev's audience from the broader public for ballet: the large numbers of male homosexuals who frequented his performances in the late twenties. A review by Philip Page of Anna Pavlova's 1927 season made this point in the Evening Standard.

> Mme Pavlova's season of ballet at Covent Garden . . . coming only a few weeks after the close of the Diaghilev troupe's visit to the Princes Theatre, gives an opportunity for studying two opposite types of the ballet entertainment, both of which have a large following. The audiences for each overlap not at all. One does not see

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[287] "The Dance," Editorial, Times, 16 Feb. 1927, p. 15, col. 4.

> at Covent Garden the ecstatic youth with flowing hair who expresses his appreciation of Serge Lifar with a mass of sibilants.[288]

Page was not alone in remarking the presence of homosexuals in Diaghilev's audience. Vogue drama critic Herbert Farjeon devoted the better part of an article in July 1928 to the phenomenon.

> The Russian Ballet has returned to London, and once again in the long intervals . . . the corridors of His Majesty's Theatre are crowded with sweet seasonable young men on whose highly presentable souls the soft down of aesthetic pubescence is just beginning to appear. It takes all sorts to make an audience, but it takes only one sort to make that audience distinguished; and just as the clientèle of Collins's Theatre may be distinguished by its partiality for pea-nuts, so the clientèle of the Russian Ballet may now be distinguished by the beautiful burgeoning boys who seem to recline on art like Madame Récamier on her couch and to regard the dancers and the décor as a kind of personal adornment. Indeed, they might almost be said to wear the Russian Ballet like a carnation in their button-holes.[289]

In these years when the "velvet-voiced youth of twenty [took] possession of the Russian Ballet,"[290] flowers ceased to be a tribute paid only to the ballerina. "I would like to throw bricks at [Serge Lifar] when I see him receiving bouquets of flowers at the end of the ballet,"

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[288]Quoted in Oleg Kerensky, Anna Pavlova (New York: Dutton, 1973) p. 99.

[289]Herbert Farjeon, "Seen on the Stage," Vogue, 11 July 1928, p. 48.

[290]Ibid., p. 80.

fulminated P.J.S. Richardson in August 1926.[291] Later that year, Philip Page remarked that "'The Triumph of Neptune' was greeted with many floral tributes, even the female dancers receiving some. Many stall-holders were shrilly enthusiastic, but the booing from the profanum vulgus was loud and persistent. And the uninitiated were not alone in their disapproval."[292] Here in a nutshell is the class, sexual, and artistic configuration of the dandy-aesthetes.

Homosexuals had long frequented Diaghilev's entertainments. They had done so, however, as individuals, subtly shading the bolder tints of the audience tapestry. In his late twenties' incarnation, the dandy-aesthete was "more formidable" than his fin-de-siècle predecessor, "not so drooping, so languishing . . . surprisingly unready to go down like a ninepin."[293] He had emerged, so to speak, from the closet. Indeed, by 1928, His Majesty's Theatre had become a privileged area for "cruising" -- to use a modern idiom -- with young men in "strange raiment" crowding the promenade, now off limits to women.[294]

From the crowds that flocked to the Coliseum and Paris Opéra just after the war, Diaghilev might well have

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[291]"Sitter Out," Dancing Times, Aug. 1926, p. 436.

[292]P[hilip] P[age], unidentified review, quoted in Diaghilev Scrapbook, Vol. 5, p. 51, Theatre Museum (London).

[293]Farjeon, "Seen on the Stage," p. 80.

[294]"Dress Reform at the Ballet," Daily Telegraph, 19 July 1929; Douglas McClean, Letter to the Editor, Times, 25 July 1928, p. 12, col. 5.

fashioned an audience of loyal, longstanding enthusiasts. He chose, instead, to court a new elite: the era's consumerist vanguard, tastemakers who created styles of wealth and power from the products of the modern marketplace and purveyed them through the media. By the twenties, mass consumption was already a fact of life in the United States. In Europe, however, this would be the case only after the Second World War. Until then, the accoutrements of modern living -- cars, household appliances, telephones -- belonged exclusively to the upper strata; modernity, as a consumerist style, democratized only the elite.

Hence, the cul de sac in which Diaghilev found himself by the end of the twenties: the vanguard he had chosen as his ideal public was simply too small to support his enterprise. But something besides numbers made this elite a dubious foundation on which to erect an audience. It is the nature of vanguards to change, particularly a vanguard predicated on the laws of the marketplace, where the new sweeps away the old as a matter of necessity. Reviewing Diaghilev's last Paris season, a Times correspondent noted just this phenomenon: the very section of the public whom Diaghilev's novelties were calculated to please

> have decided that Russian ballet in whatever form is no longer to be regarded as a serious manifestation of contemporary art. Thus the true supporters of the ballet are forced, in order to

> enjoy their old favourites, to sit through performances designed to satisfy a section of the audience which has not turned up.[295]

Between 1918 and 1929, Diaghilev created not one, but several audiences for ballet. Just as he swept nearly every artistic current from the galleries of Paris into his repertory, so, too, he gathered to the fold of successive seasons groups that fanned across large stretches of the cultivated population, and in London even the petite bourgeoisie. This remarkable achievement did more than fill his theatres, emblazoning their corridors with the plumage of intellectuals or aesthetes, socialites or Bohemians. It tinted the repertory with the values of those key groups which at a given moment embraced a particular work as embodying their social and artistic ideologies. The survival of the Ballets Russes in the harsh economic climate of postwar Europe reflected in no small measure Diaghilev's genius in adapting the art of his company to the values and lifestyles of his many audiences.

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[295]"Russian Ballet in Paris. Stravinsky's 'Renard'," Times, 31 May 1929, p. 10, col. 2.

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